

---

# *The Healing Power of Praying and doing Padmasambhava Practice*

## *Berlin Retreat*

---

*JAMES LOW*

*Berlin, 11-12 May 1996*

*Transcribed by Liz Fox*

*Unedited*

Excerpts

*“This is exactly the experience that we have when we try to practise shiné or shamata, when we watch our breath. You have to take the plough of your attention and put it on this little furrow here on your nose and just keep the plough running in a straight line. So how many people were able to plough in a straight line for fifteen minutes?...”*



*“...So then the figure comes to the top of your head and you have all these warm feelings here. And then the figure is getting smaller into this ball of light and coming into your heart. So you are aware of this radiant aware presence coming into you. Very, very deep inside you. So all that you have ever wanted, all that you have ever longed for in another person, in another object, is now present in this radiant presence that is inside your heart so your heart is complete...”*



*“...The lotus is also a very common metaphor or image for the vagina. So although Padmasambhava is seen as being born not directly out of a woman’s body, it is a manifestation out of the feminine. So the masculine appears out of the feminine. Wisdom,emptiness, is seen as the feminine. Whereas form and method and compassion are seen as masculine. So, out of the infinite spaciousness of emptiness of the dharmadhatu, this spacious mind of Amitabha which represents this open feminine dimension, manifests this young boy in the form of a very powerful manifestation of compassion or method...”*



*“...He goes through Tibet and he finds demons and he blasts them away. Everywhere in Tibet he puts everything under his power. You know he’s the tough guy, a real Rambo man! But we have to remember his name is Padmasambhava. “Sambhava” means “born from”, born from the padma, born from the lotus, born from the mother. So although he acts like Rambo his name is “Mama’s boy”. That’s what it means. He is the manifestation of method...”*



*“...The real healing that we are talking about here is not some kind of magical exchange, but is to wake up to the integrated nature of the mind. This is what heals things because it cuts through the basic ignorance which is the root of the five poisons, which is the root of attachment and all of the sufferings that arise...”*



*“Prayer is a method for using the structure of dualistic separation to intensify an energy of longing so that these two points, which appear opposed, can start to vibrate and come together and you get this point of unification. That is really the function of prayer. Prayer, if you use it properly, is a very powerful method for bringing about this unification in the heart. But if you just intone it in a conventional way all you will do is affirm to yourself “I’m a pathetic pile of rubbish and the Buddha’s right up there, perfect and shiny.”*

## Contents

---

<b>Contents .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Is taking refuge, becoming an insider like joining a family? .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Being a member of AA: Attachment Anonymous .....	3
<b>Healing begins with avoiding things that are harmful .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Three kinds of bodhicitta .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Emptiness is the medicine .....</b>	<b>5</b>
A method is just a method: it is not the truth.....	7
Using your knowledge of the Five Skandhas has the power to heal.....	8
<b>For tantra to transform and heal, you have to be in touch with your feelings .</b>	<b>10</b>
King Tsongtsen Gampo’s attempt to redress inequalities .....	12
<b>A mandala is a map of the five poisons .....</b>	<b>13</b>
Tantra uses the power of the erotic desire .....	15
Doing the visualisation practice .....	16
The heart essence of practice is this .....	17
<b>Padmasambhava: his history and his role in our practice .....</b>	<b>18</b>
Kadag and lhundrub .....	20
What does it mean, to see everything as the Padmasambhava? .....	22
<b>Doing the practice .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Tantric pujas and their structure.....</b>	<b>27</b>
Prayer and the heart .....	27
How our emotions and our five poisons can intensify our praying .....	29
Four buddha activities: pacifying, increasing, over-awing, destroying .....	33
<i>Tsok offering and conclusion of the puja.....</i>	<i>35</i>
<i>Why do we want to do these practices? .....</i>	<i>35</i>

---

## Is taking refuge, becoming an insider like joining a family?

---

We will start by reciting the refuge and bodhicitta prayer which is on the front page of the sheet that you all have. After that I’ll say something about refuge and bodhicitta and use that as a way of opening up the whole notion of what is harmful and what is helpful in the dharma. It is traditional that we start with a refuge and bodhicitta prayer. And we’ll do it three times.

Traditionally taking refuge, particularly for the first time, is seen as seen as a very important act because it turns one from being an outsider to being an insider. That’s how Buddhists are described in the Tibetan language, that they are “*nang pa*”, they are insiders, and people who haven’t taken refuge or who are not connected with Buddhism are outsiders.

It’s a bit like a fairy tale. Once upon a time, a long, long time ago, you were all very, very happy living with your Mama and your Papa, your brothers and your sisters, and everything was very, very

lovely. And for some reason, and we don't know why, something terrible happened. A spell was cast over you so that you forgot who you were and you wandered around.

The first you person who came to you said "Papa" and the next person said "Mama" and then you found yourself with a Papa and a Mama and growing up in a family with all these people thinking "Oh this is where I belong. This is what my job is. This is my bedroom. These are my toys. This is my school..." But somehow it is not quite perfect because you fight with your brother and sister, and you get angry because your mother and father don't allow you to do what you want. And you think somehow "This is not really who I am. There is something not quite right in this." And so you set out on your journey and one day you come to the Buddha Adoption Agency!

And the Buddha says "Aha ! I know your real Papa. I know your real Mama. You have been living under a curse. Come and join us in our true family. Don't be an outsider any more." So you think "Hey! This is really good. The Buddha's smiling and happy and golden coloured, and these Buddhists all say they want to be friendly and nice, so I'll join this family. So I'm up for adult adoption. So you go and take refuge and usually when you take refuge you get a new name. So you are really born into this new family.

But things that are new and shiny, after a time, get a little bit shabby and tarnished. And the enthusiasm that you bring to taking refuge for the first time and you think "I'm going to do this meditation every day. My life has really changed. Now I understand about attachment I am going to stop all these old habits and really transform my life. The enthusiasm of that starts to get less and less and less. And we start to become aware that even in this new family there are lots of conflicts and gossip.

According to the traditional view, the reason that this new family is getting in a mess is because we have brought into this new family the habits that we learnt in your old family. So the mother of attachment and the father of anger as our ordinary parents in samsara have given us a very strong way of being in the world in which we experience ourselves and others as separate and strongly real. And between us we have all these powerful passions of liking and not liking, jealousy, attachment, boredom, whatever.

And this is why in Buddhism people recite refuge prayers very, very frequently, often many times a day. Because it's not that you can just say that "Before I was not a Buddhist, and now I am a Buddhist" To become a Buddhist is to struggle to break the inheritance that was developed in the prior family of karmic involvement. Because we have been in these karmic families, or these samsaric families, the families based on ignorance, attachment, for a very, very long time. So on the basis of being immersed in this strongly dualistic mode of perception we have very powerful tendencies to concretise our experience.

And if we remember in the Four Noble Truths, the first teaching of Shakyamuni, our historical Buddha, he said that the origin of suffering—by which he means all the suffering that we experience here—that the origin of suffering is attachment. That's a very remarkable thing to be able to say, that all the multiple sufferings and miseries and troubles that human beings have, that animals have, that ghost, gods and demons have all arise from this one cause.

And you know when we go on shortly to look at Padmasambhava as a healer we are essentially looking at the development of many different methods for dealing with attachment. But the practice

of refuge belongs to the perception of the establishment of difference in which one uses renunciation and new identification to interrupt habitual patterns.

Say you were a heavy drinker and you decided to stop drinking so you join Alcoholic Anonymous. When you join AA you have to decide you will stop drinking. "I will not drink any more. And whenever I feel like drinking I will go to an AA meeting. I belong in the family of AA and by this identification I can stop my old habit.")

### Being a member of AA: Attachment Anonymous

So this little bit of paper with this refuge prayer written on it is your membership card for Attachment Anonymous. You can use this as many times a day as you want. You memorise these two lines and whenever you find yourself getting involved in attachment you do this. And you can visualise in front of you the buddhas. And this is exactly how it's done. In front of you is all the buddhas and bodhisattvas, the great gods, the dharma books, and you say "I belong with you. I am with you. Temptation, distraction, get thee behind me."

### Healing begins with avoiding things that are harmful

So the first stage of healing, is to stop involvement with the things that are harmful. However when we start to think "well what does attachment mean?" Attachment traditionally would mean something like an affectively-ridden dependent involvement. Do you get a sense of what that means? But of course if you really take that attitude up, ordinary life becomes impossible because this is the point of view which is the basis for the renunciation which is made when people become monks and nuns. And traditionally the idea is that one sees this world as a hole array of hooks and inside us because of our own dispositions coming from the past, our loneliness and our sadness and our longing for love, and our anger and our frustrations, all these passions that move inside us, these are like little rings. So outside in the world there are many, many hooks and we have many, many rings. So we very easily get caught up and involved in what's going on in the world. So we have a Velcro situation which happens very easily.

Now clearly it would not be for most of us our desire or our possibility to renounce samsara in that way, to turn our back on the kind of things that we are involved in. So we have to think then what is the value of this way of thinking to us if we are going to continue to live in the world, in relationships, with jobs and kids or whatever. The main thing is to awaken a sense that we are dangerous for ourselves and others, and other people are dangerous for their selves and for us. So if we are a bit dangerous and they are a bit dangerous we have to be quite aware how we move through the world. The world is a minefield.

People are aware now of the terrible effects of all the landmines that have been planted in war zones especially where these mines have been laid in agricultural communities. When the soldiers return to farm their fields and disturb the mines they are blown up and lose limbs or are killed. I think that terrible example reminds us how dangerous assumptions are. Just because as a child you saw your parents ploughing the field, that doesn't mean that when you put your plough into the ground, the worst thing that you will meet is a stone. You might meet a mine nowadays. How can you plough a field if you think that there might be a mine in it?

This is exactly the experience that we have when we try to practise shiné or shamata, when we watch our breath. You have to take the plough of your attention and put it on this little furrow here on your nose and just keep the plough running in a straight line. So how many people were able to plough in a straight line for fifteen minutes? When the mind wanders it wanders into very nice things. All kinds of thoughts come, the usual familiar thoughts. And the tragedy is that we are having fingers blown off, eyes blown out and we don't recognise it. You are sitting in the meditation trying to keep the mind calm, it's wandering here and there. When it wanders off you don't know who you are, you are just lost in this thought. That's the same as having an arm blown off because you've gone. You've lost yourself. So simple. Just attention on the breath and we're blown away. Except we don't see this blood, we don't see the wounds, because we're so used to being lost and confused, here, there, everywhere.

So in some ways that is why refuge is important even if we are not going to take the path of monks and nuns. It is important that it clarifies "This is samsara. That is nirvana. This is the way that takes you into a mess and confusion. This is the way that makes life simple." So that it helps you to recognise "Uhoh! This is where I'm getting lost." When we come into tantra which we will go onto quite soon we take up a very different view, and yet all the tantric pujas will have refuge built into them because this marking of an awareness, of here you are in danger, here you are safe, is very, very important and when we get confused about this our practice can go wrong very easily.

### Three kinds of bodhicitta

---

In the verse that we recited together the second couple of lines deal with the development of bodhicitta which is the intention and the practise of helping all sentient beings. So when we want to help beings we move from ourselves towards others. And the refuge and the bodhicitta go together very strongly because we start with this idea that "I am dangerous and you are dangerous. So I want to help you. Yet how can I work out how to help you if I am dangerous and you are dangerous?"

Helping people is complicated. When we recite these bodhisattva things, "May I help all sentient beings. May all beings be happy", it's this very beautiful big, expanding vision, but whenever you take your beautiful intention to help beings and you locate it on one person, it gets very, very complicated very quickly....

In part this is because we need to combine the sense that although we believe that all beings have Buddha-nature, all beings have an and infinite potential for awakening, and that that potential has never been annihilated, it is still there in a latent potentiality, nonetheless due to having fallen under this spell of ignorance, and having lived in attachment for a long time, the karmic patterns, the deeply entrenched concretised patterns of response make us dangerous. So in developing bodhicitta we focus on developing the skills whereby we will be able to be with other beings without getting trapped into the delusions that they are suffering under.

This is why Buddhism emphasises the union of wisdom and compassion. Because wisdom means the ability to understand the nature of your own mind and your own disposition, both the disposition you have say when you are meditating and you're in a kind of protected space and you're aware of your thoughts and patterns, but more difficulty when you're with other people and their hooks are triggering you and then these old tendencies are coming out more and more. So both inside meditation and in the world, to be able to maintain a clarity of what is arising and the nature

of what is arising. Because it's when things are happening quickly in an interactive way that's when we very easily lose our wisdom and fall back into our assumptions and habitual patterns.

In the tradition bodhicitta, this development of an altruistic attitude to others, is seen as having three kinds. The first is the "bodhicitta of aspiration" which is considered like planning to go on a journey. "I will help all sentient beings. In the future I will do this. This is my intention." So it's a kind of preparation.

The second kind of bodhicitta is the "bodhicitta of the path" which is when you actually go on the journey of engaging in the meditation practices which give you the power and ability to help others. You're now developing the ability that you need in order to do it. It's like wanting to go to be a doctor, so planning to go to medical school, then being at medical school, and learning how to do it.

The third bodhicitta is "absolute bodhicitta" in which there is no object which needs to be saved, no subject who would do the saving, and no concretised relationship between them. And that's very difficult to achieve and it depends on emptiness which is what we will go on to discuss after the break.

*[Break]*

## Emptiness is the medicine

---

All tantra begins with the idea of emptiness. Without emptiness there is no tantra. Because tantra, the word tantra means "continuity". And the continuity that is being described is, if you like, a vertical continuity as in opposition to a horizontal continuity. In the sense that I grew up in Scotland, my parents were there, their parents were from there, and probably back some generations people came from other places who were their ancestors. But if I wanted I could look back through these old books and find out about my family. And also the culture I grew up in evolved through time. So there is like a historical movement which is kind of horizontal. It's moving on a horizontal track and we can identify cause and effect on that line.

Now the idea of karma is saying that the deeds that I have done in the past, in my past lives, have had an immediate effect, for example I steal someone's money then I go and spend the money. Spending the money I have a good time. That good time is the immediate effect of having stolen the money. But they also have a consequence which is other than their immediate effect and that consequence continues into future time. So if I look at my life in terms of a sort of ordinary Western end-phase of Christianity, half-materialistic point of view, if something happens in my life, maybe I get sick, I think "Oh that's due to some genetic inheritance, or it's due to some bacteria coming into the world, and it's my luck. Why did it happen to me? It's my luck." That's a kind of normal way. Things happen. And they just happen. So.

But from a Buddhist point of view normally then we think that "Oh the reason that this is happening to me is that it is the fulfilment, the ripening, of the consequence of a previous action. I must have done something a long time ago which is now coming to fulfilment in the manifestation of this bad circumstance or good circumstance." And so this would be the cause of that event

according to what is described as relative truth. And the “relative” there means that this truth is relative to the domain where subject and object seem separate and real. okay.

So for example if I look at my hand. How big is my hand? Do I have a big hand or a small hand? [Small hand.] Because that is dependent on the notion that you have of hand. It is relative to a baby’s hand or a giant’s hand. And this is how we create the meanings of our ordinary dimension, that we are good or bad in relation to something else, so that if you have an examination you do well or badly relative to people in the past or people doing the exam at the same time, or the fantasies you have about how you should do, or what the examiner thinks should go on. So everything is located in relationship to something else. It doesn’t have an absolute quality.

Now you might remember as a child, and some of us still do these kind of things, but you might remember just sitting going “Ooh ohh ohohoh!” and you are just inside that, whatever it is. And then somebody says “Oi! Stop making so much noise.” So you have been inside this bubble of your own expression, just in there, and then suddenly the world arrives and says “There is a boundary, you can’t do that. You are making more noise than you are allowed to.” So the world places your experience in relation to something else. So the relative truth is the situation in which whatever our reality seems to be, somebody else can hold up a boundary to it. And at that point we feel impeded.

For example, say you’ve done a meditation retreat and you feel very open and you come back to where you are living and somebody says “What were you doing that for? It’s just a waste of time.” And you find yourself explaining or justifying what you were doing. And the more you explain it, the more you lose the flavour of what it was that you had been doing. So your openness hits a boundary which pulls you into this relativising - “I say this and you say that”. So in that moment instead of being able to have your meditation very open so that the words of the other person and your own reply to them were just moving through that space, the space has been lost and you become real and then you justify on to the other and you have a conversation and you weave yourself into a relative, ordinary discourse.

So this is the great poison. This is the actual manifestation of ground-ignorance. The big medicine for this big poison is emptiness. Emptiness opens up an infinite or an absolute truth in which things are just as they are without a projected or fantasised of inherent reality. And the first stage of emptiness is to recognise that all the phenomena that we see external to ourselves, all the things that we hear and our own bodies, and all the contents of our mind are without inherent self-nature. Clearly there are things that are here, but this manifestation, when you examine each part of it, is devoid of any true essence although there is an existence. So how is it that this existence comes into manifestation, that is to say that we are in it, if it is not the manifestation of things which each have their own discrete, separate essence? They come as the display of the open nature of awareness which is absolutely coexistent with the vast extent of emptiness. Everything that we see is the display of emptiness. But ordinarily we see it as the manifestation of its own essence.

Here we have these little cymbals made of different metals, gathered of different ores in different parts of Asia, brought together, heated up, probably made into blocks which are then taken to a foundry, where it’s melted down and turned into these little cymbals. It’s turned into these cymbals and not into something else because there is a market, capitalist supply and demand, and there is a cultural tradition of making them in this shape. So these exist here on the basis of many, many, many, many historical-cultural factors. They seem to exist in themselves, we look at them - we definitely see them, “Is this one? Yes” And yet they are existing here through an invisible network of



dependent origination. They are not self-existing. That is to say the essence of these is outside them, not inside them. Just as our essence is outside ourselves.

You were born in a place, maybe with a Mama and a Papa, and you went to school dadadada... All of these things are your essence. Your history is your essence. Your history is not inside you. And these ideas can be a bit difficult to understand but they are not simply some intellectual fabrication because they link directly to the meditation practice. And they are absolutely essential because they form the basis for tantric practice. If these things were not the case there would be no point to do tantra. All the tantric meditation methods are methods for realising the truth that is revealed through the Madhyamika and Yogacara philosophy systems, This is the historical development of these ideas.

If you live in a village and you believe that there is nothing outside your village then you don't need an aeroplane, unless you want to go straight up and down in the sky. Tantra is an aeroplane for going somewhere. Where are you going? You're going according to the idea of these basic views which are based on a critique and an understanding of the false views which are established through karma.

### A method is just a method: it is not the truth

---

So it's very important to know what is a method for getting you somewhere and that that method for getting you somewhere is not the same as where you are going to. As the Buddha said in one of his very famous things - To get across a river you use a boat. When you get to the other side of the river you don't carry the boat with you. Because you've crossed the river.

What is method is method it is not truth. And the confusion that turns method into truth gives rise to tantra as a socio-cultural-historical-patriarchal-money-focused-repressive whatever you like. It's just another cultural system. Tantra as method is a way of transforming the psyche. You know. Building monasteries is not tantra. Building monasteries is a way of maintaining a cultural social formation. The practice of tantra is to understand the nature of the mind as emptiness. Then whether you have monasteries or jungle huts or penthouses or you live in a brothel it doesn't really matter. And it's a method which says no essence existence because the essence of everything is emptiness. That is why when people say "This person is enlightened" or "This is the truth" we have to think that their enlightenment is not a little pot of enlightenment inside them, but it is an openness and if the person who is supposed to be enlightened is closed and is pulling everything into the centre, then I must have some thoughts about that.

So we have a break now and we come back at three o' clock

*[Break]*

Emptiness is approached two ways, one through analysis, and one through experience. And these are not oppositional. These are actually integrated in the Buddhist path. So as I started to say,

and I'll say again very briefly, through the analytic form what one does is one looks at the basic components of one's own existence and analyses them in terms of whether they contain any inherent self-existence. Now when we, as Western people, read the traditional analysis of the component elements of existence in traditional Buddhist texts we often don't find it very meaningful. The elements that they identify as the basic elements for the construction of a human identity are not the ones that we use in our culture. But what is really important then is to understand the principle that the Buddha taught these things in order to help us get free of our situation and what we have to get free of is our situation as we experience it. So we need to apply the methods of critique to the units of construction which we believe in, that we have an affective identification according to the constructs of our own culture....

...If I tell you that all the baggy minnows are empty that will not be helpful. 'Baggy minnows' is a term for very small fish which, as a child we used to collect using a bamboo stick with a little net on the end. So for me growing up in Scotland that word 'baggy minnow' has a lot of meaning, so to say it's empty makes a big question for me. What does that mean? If the concept doesn't mean anything - no tension. So it has to have the power.

And that is the way when we read for example the Heart Sutra, which some of you may have looked at, when it says "all phenomena are empty, form is emptiness, perception is emptiness, sensation is emptiness, association is emptiness, consciousness is emptiness..." it should have the same impact as saying "Your mother is dead". In the same way if we say "Your mother is not your mother" "What do you mean 'my mother is not my mother'? Who is my mother?" "AH!" Emptiness is your mother." "Where is my real mother?" "Aha you have to look into your mind to find your mother!" "Uh! How could I be born out of my mind? Not possible."

So it's a bit like going to the movies to see a film or reading a novel. If the film or the novel doesn't hook you, if you are not in the novel, if you are not in the movie, if somebody dies or somebody has sex or something, you know it's just something out there but it has nothing to do with you. But if you really get hooked into the movie and suddenly the person you really believe in is about to be killed and you see the knife coming through then "UUUHHH!!!" you feel fear, because you are involved in that. And so we need some flavour of melodrama in the practice of the dharma. Because that heightens the affective field which makes things real and meaningful and can transform them. That is very, very important.

So we as Western people do have some difficulties when we deal with the traditional dharma because particularly in the practise of tantra is it structured around certain basic organising principles which are different from the ones that are embedded in our culture. And my suggestion is that we would probably have to do two things. On the one hand we have to study these traditional concepts and try to get the feeling for what they mean, and I'll explain some of them in a minute, and on the other hand we also need to apply the techniques of analysis onto the organising concepts that we use in the West. So we have both methods in play for ourselves.

### Using your knowledge of the Five Skandhas has the power to heal

Because when we look at Padmasambhava as a healer, most of the healing that he does is expressed in terms of the traditional concepts and again if these concepts don't mean anything to you, it doesn't really help you. So one of the very principle organising categories that I think it is very important to know about is the five skandhas. 'Skandha' means "heap". And these are said to be the five basic heaps, or piles of building components and that everything that we experience in the

world can be reduced to these five heaps. Just as you might have “male”, “female”, “androgynous”. You have certain kinds of heaps or categories in which we take the complexity of human beings and we group them according to certain frames of reference.

The first one is form. And form is essentially shape and colour. So if you just look around this room just now. Everything that you see, pretty well, you could say has a shape and a colour. So as you look round you can see that people are different ages, different heights, different genders, there are many, many things. However we can simplify that for ourselves by simply saying “form”. Because you look at someone and you see something about their hair, and the shape of their face and whether they have breasts or not, and on the basis of these identifications you think “Male - Female”. But these identifications are elaborations on basic form. Because you have to have a form for the shape of the head, or the chest is, the contours, the shadows, to see “this is male”, “this is female”. And whether the face looks smooth or whether you think the person shaves or not. So form comes before the qualifications of form.

These are varieties of form. Just as if you go to the market, you might go to a vegetable stall. there might be five different kinds of potato and each of these potatoes will have a different shape and a different skin on them. But they are potatoes. But of course that is difficult because I can remember going and buying potatoes and a friend of mine saying “No. But you know I’m going to bake them. You can’t bake these potatoes. These are boiling potatoes.” So sometimes the qualities of the basic unit is more important than the fact that it is just the basic unit. And a great deal of the time in the complexity of our ordinary lives we are dealing with very subtle variations of form. That’s what makes a difference. In terms of whether someone’s suitable for a job or not, or whether you feel you could have a relationship with someone, or whether a book or interesting or not, it’s not the fact that it’s film, it’s whether it’s a good film or you like that film or you go to eat a meal, unless you’re very hungry you’re not just thinking “food”. If you’re very, very hungry you’re thinking “FOOD” you don’t care what it is. But if you’re not so hungry, you think “Oh I like this. I don’t like that.” So discrimination, this playing around on the qualities and the variations of form, not on the level of form itself. That’s form.

The second is feeling. And feeling is usually analysed as “good,” “bad” and “indifferent”. When you’re in a situation and you like something, instead of elaborating why you like it and getting more and more into the feeling you just say “good feeling.” If you are in a situation that is shitty and horrible you just say “bad feeling.” And if you’re in a situation where you don’t quite know what you feel about it you just say “indeterminate.” So I think you can see from this how what these categorisations are designed to do is to simplify the field of experience so that it goes from being very, very complex into something quite simple. And having got to this level of simplicity, if you then understand that these five groups, each of which contain all the complex elaborations of everything else, if these five are empty then everything is empty. Because these five contain all the rich complexity of world experience.

I’m not going to go into the details of the five skandhas because these are already present in many books so you can consult them.

The key thing is to understand the principle that in order for the emptiness of the five skandhas to be meaningful for you, these have first to become operational concepts which you can use to make sense of the world.

So the other side of this is that I would invite you to do a bit of homework. I would invite you to investigate for yourself what are the organising categories that you use for your own life? And it may be that you have different categories which you apply at different times. So for example if we have these small symbols. If we look at this we can think this is metal. So metal would be an organising category. It doesn't look like metal, but we see that there are two metal things which are joined by something which is not metal. And if you can see it closely it looks like leather. Leather could be a category or you could say "leather is organic matter and the metal is not". So it could be for you "organic - inorganic" is a basic organising category.

Or you might know about metals so you might and looking at this and knowing how Tibetans make these you might know what metals are inside it. So you might say that this is made of (God knows what's in it. I don't know)... You might know so you might say "copper, zinc, a bit of silver, maybe a bit of gold." whatever. And you might have done some science at school and so you might think in terms of molecules and these basic elements. And you might have done more science at school and know about electrons and subnuclear particles.

So you could have all degrees of understanding of how you analyse these, but the key thing is not what you remember from school in a scientific or a pseudo-scientific way. What is important is how you ordinarily, with your emotions, relate to these substances. That is to say it is not simply and abstracted cognitive knowledge, but "it's metal" as if it's metal that grabs you "its Metal!" You understand what I mean?

### **For tantra to transform and heal, you have to be in touch with your feelings**

It's how you emotionally identify that. Because what we are talking about, going back to what we began with this morning, is attachment. The root of suffering is attachment and attachment is how we become attached to the world in terms of the inherent self nature that we project onto the objects that we see. Do you understand what I am saying? It's very, very important.

Because in order to transform attachment through the symbolic play of tantra you have to actually be in touch through an affective level, through your feelings, with what it is that you are attached to. You can transform neutral categories until you die. But maybe at the point of death you suddenly realise "Oh sweet body don't leave don't leave!" and you suddenly are terrified because you are attached to your body and you'd never really thought about your body before. So that's what you have to do. That's the homework. Is to analyse your own experience in terms of your own attachment and how you relate to things in the world. How do you give value to things? And then look "What are the things I give value to and how can I understand these things in terms of emptiness?"

So we're particularly looking at the organising categories that we have of the world and their relationship to the five poisons - of stupidity, anger, desire, jealousy and pride. So we are going to look at that, examine our attachment to categories, particularly in relationship to these five poisons.

That is exactly the meaning of prejudice isn't it? Pre-judice: that you make the judgement before the event. Now the organising categories that we use for the world are all prejudiced. This is metal - this is a man - this is a woman - this is a nice person - this is young person - this a beautiful person. All of these categories exist in our mind and the world comes towards us and we slot the world into

these categories. So we don't give the person a chance because as soon as we meet them pck! we've categorised them. So we are actually closed and we are putting our closure onto the world.

So what I would encourage you to do is to really examine your own experience of the world and look at the categories that you use to organise situations. And once you have identified the categories to start to examine them. now the traditional way of examining categories in Buddhism is to look at these five skandhas, say for example Form is based, if you take any form down to its basic component you come to an atom. Then you come to these micro atoms which were seen as unitary factors. They are so tiny infinitely tiny little particles. Then when you have this notion that everything arises from these basic building blocks, this little point atom which is irreducible, you have the first level of Buddhist analysis which says that "There are no people. There are no real things. There are simply finite atoms." This is called the view of the absence of inherent self-nature in persons.

Now each of these points, unless there was only one point, existing all by itself, each of these points has to be in relationship to other points. Because if I'm saying I am composed of many, many of these points, then in order to be composed of many of these points, some of these points are having to be juxtaposed in order to construct the composite image of myself. So if we have here these two things. This is the one we are concerned with. There is only this point. But it also has a point here. So if it has a point next to another point it has point facing that other point. So we could say that the point it has facing that point if its front. But we are not one line of atoms thin. We also have atoms on top. And we have atoms on the other side and we have atoms below and we have atoms in front and we have atoms behind. So what you have is the construction of form through the juxtaposition of atoms and because they have faces pointing at each other, they have a front and a back and a top and a bottom and sides.

... okay if something has a front and a back you can split it down the middle. If it has a top and a bottom you can split it in between. So what it's saying is that related-ness contradicts unitariness. Although this may seem a bit abstract and a bit intellectual it is absolutely vital because what it is doing is analysing the basis of the assumptions that we make all the time. And if we really look into the assumptions that we have in this way we will see that our assumptions are floating in air. We believe that our assumptions are buried deep, have long roots into reality, but actually they are phantasmagoria, conjured out of the delusional ignorance which creates the notion of separate real inherent substances. In a sense what we are engaged in here is a project a bit similar to that of Jacques Derrida and the deconstructive movement in literature and history, because as you see as we go on now very shortly now to look at tantric visualisation and the nature of the development of mandalas, they always start from a clear blue sky. And this blue sky represents an absolute openness which is not already filled with anything. A new beginning. How many stories and novels and films begin with the idea of somebody moving to a new country. All these movies about cowboys going to the new frontier where there some hope and they are all in their little wagon train out there on the prairie. But of course the prairie is already occupied by the Indians. And what do we do to the Indians? We kill them! So that we can have a clear blue sky of people just like us!

That is a terrible story and it's a historically true. I'm certainly not saying we should do that story at all, but I think it speaks of a human longing for a new beginning.

And the problem is always when you get to something new, somebody else is already there. When you were born, you know your parents were already there. You may have already had brothers and sisters. Your parents already had lives, they were busy. And you burst out "I want everything! Everything should be for me! I am the baby. I am the king of the world!" And then

gradually you realise you are just a small person and everyone else is kinda busy. So just as we were looking at this morning about the issue of taking refuge, where you go from your old family to take a rebirth in the family of the Buddha when you take refuge, but you take also the inheritance from the old family.

In tantra when we start the meditation with the clear blue sky it's quite difficult because this is usually muddled over with the clouds of our own karma and assumptions and perceptions, and what we try to do in this analytic view is to clean the sky as much as possible before we build the beautiful mandala inside it. Because the more we do the practice the more we realise that the only thing that covers this clear blue sky is our own projection, is the force and pressure of our own habits, our assumptions, the poisons operating inside us, and we have to do the work of deconstructing that ourselves.

### King Tsongtsen Gampo's attempt to redress inequalities

There is a story about King Tsongtsen Gampo who was the first Tibetan king to become Buddhist and to encourage Buddhism. And he had been quite a warlike king. But when he came in touch with Buddhism his heart became softened and he wanted to change his behaviour and he was thinking about all sentient beings having been his mother, and he looked out of his royal palace and he saw all these poor people. So the thought "I should do something about this." So he took all the money from the royal treasury and he distributed it equally among all the people in Tibet. Rather he distributed it in a way that everyone in Tibet had the same amount of money. So he gave more to the poor people than the rich people.

But then after three months he found again that some people were more rich than others. So again he redistributed all the wealth. And three months later he found the same thing so he tried it again. And after three months he found it was just the same thing. So he decided karma is a real phenomena and it is not possible simply to change people's karma by moving external things.

You may have that experience in a relationship - you meet someone new and you think "This time it's going to be different. I realise by now that I can be very selfish, or I'm like this or I'm like that, with this person I'm going to do it different." But then after a while we get into the same kinds of problems and it's quite humiliating often when you think "I know I do this, so why am I doing it?"

That is the power of our karma. And if that karma is operating on the interpersonal level it is certainly operating as well on the intra-psychoic level and Buddhist meditation is not so much like therapy, where you do it by talking to someone else, most of the time with meditation you do it on your own so you are confronting your own self, so you have to recognise your own patterns and combat them in a situation where you can cheat yourself very easily, because nobody else is going to find you out. And that's why some understanding of Buddhist traditional analysis of categories and an analysis of the processes of attachment and how you can tie yourself in knots is very useful for establishing an internal supervisor who will help to monitor your own progress in meditation.

Okay shall we take a tea-break there and then we'll come back and do practice.

[Break]

## A mandala is a map of the five poisons

---

Any mandala is basically a circle, which has five sections in it. A central section and here is the east. And the east is always in what we would consider the south because the east is where the sun rises. So the centre. I'm going to do it through the five poisons just now. In the centre is stupidity. Okay. So we have stupidity, desire in the west, anger in the south, pride over here and jealousy (north) over here. Now what is stupidity? Subject and object. "I see you. I know who you are. I know what this is. I know who I am." So subject to object is both in from self to environment, and self to self. "I know who I am." So it's internal, intrapsychic, or intersubjective, and interactional as well. Intra and inter.

When I am subject, object is different from me. So there is both a separation "I am an entity and object is an entity." and my relationship with the entity which is object is through knowledge. And so we have this very curious paradox that the more intelligent you are, very often the more stupid you are. Because the more subject knows about object, the more it is alienated from the experience of object as something which is arising in the same realm with the same status. This is the basis for the other four. So it is very important that we are clear about what it means. You know probably as a child you had the experience maybe you did to other people or other people did it to you somebody asks you "Who won the world cup in football?" and they say "Ah you're really stupid!" Because we have the idea that knowing things makes us intelligent and powerful. As we say knowledge is power. So then we think "I will not be stupid if I know a lot." So we have to be really clear here that what we say in Buddhism as stupidity, in Tibetan "*timuk*", it means a state of mental heaviness where you substitute a grasping knowledge of things, knowledge about things for the more open awareness, being with in a state of heightened awareness, with the other, whatever the other is. So you are stupid because you know, not because you don't know. It is knowledge that is stupid. This is quite paradoxical.

This is a very, very important idea. Now the reason that we want to have information about things is because we want to control the world, and particularly we want to control other people's opinion of us by showing them that we are intelligent enough not to be laughed at and shamed. So a lot of the struggle that we have is an ego-defensive struggle to fill ourselves with knowledge so that we can manipulate the world and get the other peoples off our back. And again it goes back to cause and effect and the theory of origins. If we believe that knowledge comes from outside, that we then put the knowledge from outside inside, and that we then use the knowledge that's now inside to protect us against what might be outside, then we have a fixed locational theory of cause and effect. However if you plug into the Internet you realise there is so much information out there you will never be in control.

Traditionally in Tibetan Buddhism if you are doing a *chöd* practice or another kind of practice, you imagine that there are four main kinds of demon. The demon of desire, the demon of ego-inflation, demons of a particular kind of pride and so on. But the biggest demon that is coming now is the fantasy that I will be able to control information. Because there will be more and more and more information through the Internet and all these systems and no one will be able to master it - you see how governments now are very concerned that all kinds of pornography will go across countries and state secrets, espionage, you know information is beyond control. And the fantasy that information will save you is the illusion of samsara. So it's really important we get a sense - Stupidity is when subject is in relation to as a separate object and tries to control it in some way, or feels itself being controlled by that object. So there is a state of tension between the two.

Now watching the time. With desire there you have a state where subject is seeking object. Subject is, as it were, has a sense of deficit or negative, and object has a sense of positive. "I want this object" Then with anger subject feels positive, righteous, and object is then negative. "You bad person are upsetting me the good person. And because you are the bad person and I am the good person I am entitled to break your legs. If you were a good person I wouldn't have to break your legs. You are forcing me to break your legs because you are bad!!" Like that. Then pride is subject onto subject in which object is only needed in order to give little presents of positive. Subject says "Hey I'm very good!" [You are aren't you!] You got there! Would you like to say some more about it?! So pride is auto-inflation where subject is addicted to itself and creates a sealed world. Don't be shy!

You know when we are proud we are full of ourselves and we don't want to be criticised because that makes us get small. So when we're proud and we get attacked we get angry. Because although we represent these as being separate, they are very rapidly moving around. Now with jealousy, subject is feeling very positive to an object who is feeling positive, but another object arises that says positive to that one, so this object (second one) has to go negative to that one. So subject to object one is positive. But then another object comes in, who is positive to that object, and so this first subject is feeling threatened. "My good relationship with this object is going to be stolen by this other person. So I hate this other person and I feel anxious and worried of the attention they are getting." First of all I am saying... Because all of these five positions are pervaded by fear. If we go back to the central one of stupidity. I, subject, will feel safe with you when I know who you are. But when you are dealing with real people, you can't know who they are. Because one of the things the Buddha taught is impermanence. People change. They like you, they don't like you, they're in a good mood, they're in a bad mood, they get a telephone call...

Okay so finally we come a little bit nearer to Padmasambhava as healer. Because this is map of the poisons. This is how we mess up in the world. Because we get caught inside these structures of relationship and they happen very quickly and almost automatically, we find ourselves drawn towards the things we like, we find ourselves full of this anger and it's happening very quickly. And all these interactions are on the basis of "I am real and I'm separate from you". This is the basic poisoning and this is what Padmasambhava practice and any of the dharma practices are trying to heal.

And again I would invite you to use this as a way of thinking about your own life. If you can get a direct understanding of how these structures of relatedness operated inside your own life, then you understand something about what you are trying to transform, then this term "the five poisons" will start to mean something. So it's very important to use them as research as you travel home, or go to the shops, or talk with friends or lovers or whoever, and watch how the play of these structural patterns comes into being. and in particular because the more you can recognise how and why you get lost, the more you will be able to return to the practice once you get into it.

...This kind of analysis is a kind of relapse-prevention, so that although you've joined Attachment Anonymous [AA] , you find yourself having a little drink or ten or a thousand and when you realise you are pissed under the powerful affect of these five poisons, you can recognise "aha I am drunk!" Because most of the time when we are caught up in these we don't recognise we are drunk. We think "Listen I am entitled to be angry with you. Because you told me, NOW LISTEN YOU TOLD ME!!" It feels completely justified. You don't realise that "Hey I'm lost here. It doesn't matter what you've



done, I'm lost." And that's what we are trying to remember. The only place to wake up is on subject. It doesn't matter what object does. Awareness is in subject.

Okay So how do we deal with this? As I was saying earlier we have many little hook things, or we can say that the world consists of many, many little hooks and we have our karmic rings. And these rings are moving around. Sometimes we are happy, sometimes we are sad, sometimes we are angry, we're jealous, so we have different vulnerabilities. So for example, say you are with someone and you're very jealous and the telephone rings and they take the call and say "I'll just take it in another room" "UH! What's going on here?!" Now if you weren't jealous about them you wouldn't worry. Or you'd think "They don't want to interrupt me I'm watching TV so that's fine." But because you're jealous there's a little strong connection suddenly here. So these karmic rings come in and out according to the five poisons. And the world is full of many, many possible things for grabbing us.

So the world and our rings, there are many, many, many of them and we slip into this system when we are distracted. And we saw at the beginning of today when we tried to observe our breath how little focused attention most of us have and how easy it is just to slip in here, they just link up very quickly. Does that make sense? So what we try to do in the meditation is not be distracted. Now the breath is for most of us not very sexy.

### Tantra uses the power of the erotic desire

---

Sex, i.e. the erotic, and the aesthetics of beauty are absolutely central to practice of tantra. The erotic in the sense of utilising the power of desire of subject onto object—that is seen as positive. So, I could be distracted by many, many different objects, but I am going to sit down now and imagine here holy guru or Tara or the Dakini and all around them rainbows in very, very beautiful. I look "Hey" They're looking at me. They're not looking at you; they're only looking at me! Because I love them and they love Me. Not you, ME. This is very important.

So at first we might start with many, many gods up here and we have subject down here. So subject is at here and we are visualising and focusing our attention up here. So I am looking at the god and the god is looking at me.

Now if we practise with this bodhisattva idea we might imagine that around ourselves are all sentient beings and they are also getting some benefit from this blessing which is coming. So there's all of these beings here. But at a certain point in the practice these people all vanish because we don't want any voyeurs when we get to the hot bit! So we use the power of erotic desire. "Guru Rinpoche you are wonderful!" or "Tara Devi you are wonderful, you are so beautiful." Then you have in the practice there is always long descriptions of the qualities of these gods. Saying "You are so this, you are so that. I feel so much for you. I pray to you. you please give me this." And the belief in the practice is that the god will give you whatever you want so you're heart opens to the god and the god's heart opens to you.

On Mother's Day you say to your mother "Here are some flowers, and you take care of me for the next year." It's a good deal. [No it's bad deal!] Here's a card with the wrong address!!

When we look at all such complications in relationships, these are all occurring above the green grass of samsara in which subject and object are moving together. But here this god is arising out of a clear blue sky. So we start with the visualisation and in front of me is a clear blue sky, infinite, without beginning or end. And in the centre of this clear blue sky is this deity, whoever it is, whose

body is made of light. This body is not like up on this level of being a separate object with an inherent essence, but is a radiant body which manifests out of the infinite blue sky, is a manifestation of that infinite blue sky and who is there as a radiant warm presence.

So instead of paying attention to these discrete, separate objects of the world, we now are fully giving our attention to this visualised, imagined, deity in front of us and we pray to them with great faith. And it is exactly the work of seduction. Subject is looking at object, object is looking at subject and a little bit of interest. Something is in the air! Now if you think about your own life and how many times you might have been attracted to someone but you haven't said anything to them because you felt shy or you felt you were too ugly or too stupid and that person wouldn't be interested in you. So you don't speak and the chance goes by. It's very difficult to believe that you will really be the beloved, that something perfect and wonderful will want you. And rather than try we cover our face in shame and walk away. Because self-hatred is very, very powerful. Low self-esteem, undervaluing oneself, having doubt and anxiety and fear, fear of intimacy, fear of closeness, these qualities are pervasive in this time. And this is absolutely vital in the practise of tantra because if you feel that you are unlovable, how will you be loved?

### Doing the visualisation practice

---

At the heart of a lot of the visualisation is believing that from the body of the deity rays of rainbow light are coming out and merging into your own body, purifying all your own sins and imperfections so that you become filled with great bliss and you become equal to the deity that you are praying to. So in the longer tantric practices they have a lot of offerings up to the deities and a lot of confession of sins in front of the deities and a lot of times when the light comes from the deities into you. But this is a kind of extended courtship so that the two of you become closer and closer and there is amore intimate, warm field of affection flowing between you. So at a certain point the if you are visualising many, many deities and many, many beings you can imagine all the deities merging into this one central deity. And all sentient beings come into yourself.

So here's this deity in front of you, rays of light are coming from them into you, your body is now full of rays of light and they have become the sole focus of your attention. Just your heart is open and longing, just want to be close, you want to be close... And then the deity is coming closer and closer to the top of your head. When they come to the top of your head they from the top down and the bottom up they dissolve into a ball of light. This ball of light descends down through the top of your head down into your heart. And then your own body which is now full of light because it's been purified by the light coming from the deity, your own body then gets smaller and smaller because it's simply a ball of light itself. And the light of your body merges into this ball of light in your heart.

Then this ball of light gets smaller and smaller and smaller and it's still in this open blue sky. So ball of light smaller, smaller, smaller... But the focus of your attention is completely in this ball of light, so you're not really aware of anything, just this infinity around you and at the same time you are going into this smaller, smaller. AH!! and then just open. So it's using a very powerful erotic and aesthetic field to bring about the experience of the collapse of duality into one point. And this one point, this one ball of light, this one "tiple", this is the door to enlightenment, because at that point subject and object are merged together and through the merging of subject and object you have a reversal of the birth of samsara which is the arising of subject and object, and through the vibration, the construction of the whole world of differentiation.

So, very briefly, that is the structure of the visualisation. We'll do a simplified form of this together.

### The heart essence of practice is this

This is the heart essence of all of these practices, nothing more than this. So subject is imagining object out there in blue sky. As subject is praying to object, object becomes a subject too. So the deity you are now experiencing as a very lively warm openhearted intelligence that is aware of you. So this is a real subject, aware of you, and you as a subject are open to it. So there are two subjectivities playing together with a lot of warm feeling. And while this is occurring you are reciting a prayer or a mantra, maybe "*Om Ah Hung*" or "*Om Ah Hung Benza Guru Pema Siddhi Hung*" or whatever it is. You are making sound and sound is also creating a tunnel of energy so that the two of you are just playing inside this. And then from that deity rays of light are coming and filling you so what was subject over there is now coming into subject over here. So both of you are this play of rainbow-coloured light. So the light is coming down and you are filling with light and your heart is going up with this kind of radiant devotion. So there is a very warm and moving interplay between you. It's not a fixed dead object over there. But there is a very beautiful intercourse.

So then the figure comes to the top of your head and you have all these warm feelings here. And then the figure is getting smaller into this ball of light and coming into your heart. So you are aware of this radiant aware presence coming into you. Very, very deep inside you. So all that you have ever wanted, all that you have ever longed for in another person, in another object, is now present in this radiant presence that is inside your heart so your heart is complete. So it's as if when this ball comes into your heart you can just relax and at that point your whole being which is now full of light can dissolve into that ball, so that you now have subject inside subject. Then out of subject you as subject dissolves into the inner subject. So subject and subject merge together in this one ball in the heart and then this gets smaller and smaller and subject just goes out into space. So it's a subject without identity just an open radiant awareness.

And then at that point one just relaxes and stays open and whatever occurs, whether it's thoughts, or feelings, or sensations, colours, images, or whatever it is, one just allows them to pass through this radiant awareness, knowing that they arise from that awareness. They are not coming from somewhere else to attack you. They are not coming from somewhere else to give something to you. These are simply the empty radiant displays of the open nature of the mind.

So whatever arises is the radiance of this emptiness. So don't chase after things that have already arisen, and don't wait expectantly for whatever might arise. Now this kind of practice can be in a very, very elaborated way that takes many hours to do. What I would suggest that we would take two or three minutes' break just to stretch and to get a breath of fresh air and then we'll come back and do a simple form of this practice. It's a kind of practice that you can do every day. You can do it sitting on the bus or on the train, so it's very useful for our life, but it contains the essence of this kind of practice. Okay.

...

Okay. So we'll do this in the most simple form. We'll start in front of us this clear blue sky and if you are not used to doing this, maybe doing this with your eyes closed is easiest at first. And in the centre of this sky, just see a ball of light. And this ball of light is the essence of all the buddhas: the essence of their body, their speech and their mind. If you are used to visualising a particular deity

like Tara or Chenrezig or Padmasambhava, you can visualise them if you prefer. So we focus our attention on this ball of light and we start to recite “*Om Ah Hung*”.

“*Om*” represents the body of the Buddha. “*Ah*” the speech and “*Hung*” the mind. And this is true for all the buddhas and all the deities. “*Om Ah Hung*” is the essence of all mantras. So it is the absolute distillation of all the blessings of all the practices. So we recite “*Om Ah Hung*” together and as we are reciting it we imagine from this ball of light rays of rainbow-coloured light, red, white, blue, yellow, green, flowing into us with the blessing of the five wisdoms which purify these poisons. Today we’ve talked of the five poisons, we haven’t looked at the five wisdoms, but the five wisdoms purify the five poisons that we have discussed so we have a sense of all the tightness, all the limitations in ourselves being purified by these five lights coming in.

So then we stop reciting “*Om Ah Hung*”. The ball of light comes to the top of our head, dissolves down into our heart, we dissolve into the ball of light, the two balls fuse together and dissolve into emptiness and we stay there for some time.

...

*[Break and this is the end of the first day’s teaching]*

...*Om Ah Hung*...

## **Padmasambhava: his history and his role in our practice**

---

...So good morning. We start with this refuge and bodhicitta prayer. “*Sangye Cho Dang...*”

So we look now a little bit at Padmasambhava and his life and particularly the transition from his historical life into his incorporation into tantric practice. And then we’ll look at the structure of some typical practices to see how Padmasambhava functions in a way to heal us through the purification of the five poisons on the ground of our own original nature.

The traditional account is that Padmasambhava arrives in the world as a gesture of kindness from the heart of the Buddha Amitabha. Yesterday when we discussed the structure of mandalas we saw that in the western section, which deals with the purification of desire, the Buddha for that section, who represents that section, is Amitabha. He is the Buddha whose paradise is in the west and is called Sukhavati [Sanskrit], or Dewachen [Tibetan]. It’s a Buddha paradise of great happiness. From there Amitabha looks out at the trouble that he sees in North West India, in the country ruled by King Indrabhuti, and his heart is moved and out comes the basis for Padmasambhava.

So as you may know in the Buddhist system there are six realms of possible existence ranging from the highest god realms right down to the depths of the hells and each of these realms is governed by a particular one or mixture of the five poisons. And in the human realm it is said that our existence here is primarily dominated by desire and pride. So Amitabha in this western direction, which deals primarily with the purification of desire, has a strong connection with our domain.

The problem with explaining these things is that the Tibetan Buddhist system is very complicated and we don't have so much time. But to explain simply, in the early days of Buddhism you had the Buddha and you had the monks and you had ordinary people. So in this western direction the Buddha is Amitabha, and under him you have Chenrezig [Tibetan] or Avalokitesvara [Sanskrit], who is the Bodhisattva in the western paradise. He is just under Amitabha. So the Buddha is fully enlightened, Chenrezig under him is almost enlightened, but because of the intensity of the bodhisattva vow he is more connected as it were, more accessible to beings. Nevertheless there is a sense of these two levels being "over there", being somewhere else.

Then in the seventh century of this Christian era in this land of Oddiyana in Sindoab area of what's now Pakistan, there was a king called Indrabhuti who was very old and without any children. So he wanted to have some children because many difficulties were coming to this land and he asked his brahmins to say prayers, to give him a son who would take on from him when he died and who would be able to deal with all the problems that were developing because he was too old.

As a result of all these prayers, out of the heart of Buddha Amitabha came rays of light in the form of the letter "Hri", a Tibetan letter, a Sanskrit letter originally, which symbolises the heart essence of Amitabha. And it came down in a lake in this land of Oddiyana, this Danakosha Lake, and where it had descended, out came a lotus and there were more transformations in the middle of this lotus there is a very charming eight year old boy, looks very beautiful with little beads of sweat on his forehead.

In the traditional system there are four methods of birth. Egg birth, womb birth, heat and moisture birth (the way some insects seem to just arise out of heat and moisture) and the fourth kind of birth is lotus birth.

So here we have Padmasambhava born out of the lotus. And the lotus of course also represents absolute purity and it represents in that sense emptiness that we were talking about yesterday afternoon. Emptiness in particular also represents the maternal space because emptiness is seen as the feminine. The lotus is also a very common metaphor or image for the vagina. So although Padmasambhava is seen as being born not directly out of a woman's body, it is a manifestation out of the feminine. So the masculine appears out of the feminine. Wisdom, emptiness, is seen as the feminine. Whereas form and method and compassion are seen as masculine. So, out of the infinite spaciousness of emptiness of the dharmadhatu, this spacious mind of Amitabha which represents this open feminine dimension, manifests this young boy in the form of a very powerful manifestation of compassion or method.

There are many translations now of versions of the life of Padmasambhava you can read. I'll say a few things about his life but I think a very, very important thing to remember is that in the details of Padmasambhava's life he is often in the image of the great hero. He is the lone male who goes on journeys and rescues people and performs wondrous deeds. So this is a very archetypal male presence and he is a real action man. He goes around a bit like Arnie Schwarzenegger in his movies. He goes through Tibet and he finds demons and he blasts them away. Everywhere in Tibet he puts everything under his power. You know he's the tough guy, a real Rambo man! But we have to remember his name is Padmasambhava. "Sambhava" means "born from", born from the padma, born from the lotus, born from the mother. So although he acts like Rambo his name is "Mama's boy". That's what it means. He is the manifestation of method.

Because the essence of tantra, and the way Padmasambhava acts as a healer is to remind us in a very seductive and powerful way of the integration of the ground openness of being and the particularities of manifestation. So it's very important always to remember that when we do the practice and we become identified with Padmasambhava, that we are doing this practice, not to take on all these wonderful heroic qualities just in themselves, because we must always remember that the ground of everything, the basis from which everything arises, is this open dimension of emptiness. Because the activities of Padmasambhava are said to be automatic and spontaneous.

And that's the real difference between Padmasambhava and someone like Rambo. Because although Padmasambhava when he goes to Tibet is taking on the local demons and overpowering them, it's not in terms of subject-object conflict, the way that we were discussing yesterday afternoon, he is not trying to impose his will upon them as if "I have power inside me and my power is bigger than yours and I will crush you down" although that is the discourse that is the structure of the description in the texts because the source of the power of Padmasambhava is emptiness. So it's not as if he has to store it up inside him in a little pot, gathering it from all over the world, and now he has this special pot, like Rambo in the gym doing exercises and eating a lot of very strong and powerful food to build up all his muscles. He probably has testosterone injections. This Padmasambhava doesn't require this you will be happy to know. Because when we read the outer biography, the biography of the deeds and actions of Padmasambhava, for us who are meditators we are not Tibetan people, so he is not our own cultural mythic hero, we don't perhaps need him on that level. But we do need the inspiration for our meditation practice. So we have to remember the Nyingma Dzogchen view of *Kadag* and *lhundrub* which I will explain briefly.

### Kadag and lhundrub

---

*Kadag* means "pure from the very beginning" and *lhundrub* means "effortlessly arising". *Kadag* refers not just to the nature of our mind, but to everything, because everything is the nature of the mind. *Kadag*, this primordial purity, is the way of experiencing and discussing emptiness that is used in Dzogchen. It's an enrichment if you like of the basic Mahayana descriptions of emptiness that you will find in the Heart Sutra and texts like that. So with this view of *Kadag*, from the very beginning, mind has had no top or bottom, no beginning or end, no colour, no shape. When we look into our mind we find nothing. Whatever seems to be reliable, whether it's a thought, a feeling, a sensation, when we wait it vanishes. Nothing remains in the mind as something to hang on to and so the more we explore and explore the more we find that the mind is infinite, open, empty.

Now although the mind itself is something that we cannot find, yet it is ceaselessly full of things. Something is going on. When we do our meditation and we go deeply into this depth, it doesn't mean that thoughts stop. There is still things going on; thoughts are coming, sensations, feelings. So this is a very vital understanding because usually we experience our mind as something inside ourselves looking out at a world that is separate from us. Then by doing the kind of dissolving meditation practice that we did yesterday afternoon where we bring subject and object together, we go through this narrow gate of everything coming into one point, we come into this relaxed openness in which whatever is arising is we experience as not arising to the mind - "I am the subject and this is happening to me. I can see what is going on" - but it is arising in the mind. Because the mind at that point is not located here or there. It is a relaxed openness.

So when we go into that state in the meditation and we'll do that meditation again quite shortly, when thoughts and feelings arise, our habitual tendency is to think "Oh!" so we go out towards the thought. Then the thought seems to be coming towards us. Then we have a relationship subject and

object. And at first it's in a very subtle form, just a kind of shimmering together, but if we stay with that shimmering then the energy between the two gradually builds up until "I am here, my eyes are now open and I'm looking around the room seeing you." Then subject and object, subject on to object here, this is samsara. This is the basis for the five poisons to continue and for rebirth...

*[Gap because the tape is being changed]*

...so every time we do this meditation we have the possibility of staying more and more on the nirvana side where we experience all that arises as flowing out of, through and within this dimension of openness, or we can move towards the samsara side and say "This is happening to me". Now the particular method of tantra is that when we come out of the meditation and we start to see the phenomena that are around us, although we still have these hooks inside us which are going to link into the particular phenomena we see outside us, we still have this strong basis for dualistic attachment, we soften this by overlaying a transformatory perception that says, "Whatever I see is the form of Guru Rinpoche. Whatever I hear is the sound of speech of mantra of Guru Rinpoche. and whatever arises in the mind, these are the thoughts and feelings and sensations of Guru Rinpoche."

So whatever is happening, you don't need to worry about what it is because you already know what it is. It's a bit like yesterday when we were looking at the uses of classifications to simplify perception. When you have a notion of the five skandhas - form, feeling, perception, association, consciousness - and whatever arises you simply identify it through one of these categories. So you look around the room and say "Everything I see is form." So you don't need to worry about the particularities of what you see you just bung it in the little pot "Ah...form. Ah...form Ah...form." and you only have five pots, so it makes life very simple. So when we do this with Padmasambhava we then only have one pot. So everything is now Guru Rinpoche. So because it's Guru Rinpoche and you have already decided that Guru Rinpoche is a good guy, everything then must be good.

So if you eat something that is very delicious, that's Guru Rinpoche. And if you eat something that's not so delicious, that's also Guru Rinpoche. Everything is Guru Rinpoche, therefore everything is good. It's a very basic principle. It's very difficult to put into practise. Why? Because we have very powerful tendencies of karmic discrimination. If we think about the development of personality with small children one of the first things that they can learn is to keep their mouth closed. And even if you get the mouth open and you put the breast in the mouth they dribble and it all comes out. Yet they can make the pee and the poo come out as and when they like. Through language this develops as being able to say "No" and then they go on to develop these two most important defining qualities of the ego, the ability to tell lies and to keep secrets.

So we develop our sense of ourselves through keeping secret things inside, through refusing to take things into us that we don't want, through putting things out that we don't like to have inside ourselves and the ego is defining itself through this complex boundary-focused interaction with the world. So we define ourselves in terms of our discriminations. In terms of what we eat, what we wear... You know if you go shopping you can immediately see all kinds of clothes that you couldn't possibly wear. You just couldn't imagine wearing these clothes. And it's the same with everything. You look at the list if you want to go out to the movies you look at the list of what's on and you think immediately "I don't want to see that". "Not my cup of tea.", as we say in Britain.

So who we are is developed through this system of discriminations. "I am this because I am not that. I am this because I won't wear that. I won't eat that. I won't do that. I don't like that." That defines how we are, and the place we take up, and the kind of friends we have, and the kind of work

we have, when we go to bed at night, what kind of drugs we might take, what kind of sex we have... This is the particular configuration of our being is constructed out of many, many, many, many little discriminations. But this pattern or this quality which is defining us and giving us our identity, is also restricting our possibility of being because when we go into a new situation we are already editing it in terms of these discriminations that determine who we are and what we like. So when we do the practice and we come out of the practice with this perception that all that we see is Padmasambhava, and all that we hear is his speech, all thoughts that arise are his thoughts, we are making a fundamental attack on dualistic perception; good-bad, I like-I don't like, friend-enemy... Most of our experience is constructed around these organisations of binary opposition, but if everything is Guru Rinpoche the basis for this collapses.

This is what is meant when we refer to Guru Rinpoche, to Padmasambhava, as a healer. It doesn't mean he's somebody who goes around, lifts his hand, a ray of red light comes out and your leprosy is gone. That's very useful but we now have western drugs and as we well know most lamas when they get sick don't go for rays of light; they go in New York clinics and get the best medical treatment.

So one needs to think very carefully about healing as an interpersonal domain. There is a lot of power in healing. But there is also a lot of power in medicine. The real healing that we are talking about here is not some kind of magical exchange, but is to wake up to the integrated nature of the mind. This is what heals things because it cuts through the basic ignorance which is the root of the five poisons, which is the root of attachment and all of the sufferings that arise.

But if we are going to be able to use Padmasambhava as an antidote to this deeply entrenched poison of dualistic perception that we have, then the antidote has to be invested with some emotional energy, as we were speaking about yesterday.

If we accept this traditional view, that we have been in samsara for millions and millions of lifetimes, then in each of these lives we have been intensifying dualistic perception. It's absolutely automatic for us to see ourselves as separate from the environment - I am real. You are real. Some thing will happen between us. - so we have had this poison inside us for such a long time that the poison seems normal and the medicine seems weird. So we have to reverse that so that the medicine seems normal and the poison seems "Oi oi I don't want this one."

And the way that we do this is through intensification of our relationship with the practice that we do through devotion. So maybe we'll take a tea break now

*[Break]*

...We often want to imagine that other people are better, more reliable, more loving than they actually are. It's very tempting to idealise people into saying "Oh this person is very special. I love this person. This person is enlightened." We have such a terrible longing inside us to meet the perfect, good person, the perfect good object in the world that world that we will project it onto any old fraudster who comes along. This is our stupidity as human beings. Because we want to love and to find something, anything, to love is so difficult that we just put all this deep, deep heart longing into anything.

[What does it mean, to see everything as the Padmasambhava?](#)

---



It might appear that there is a contradiction with what I was saying before our teabreak. When we try to perceive everything in the form of Padmasambhava, because the water is Padmasambhava it doesn't stop it being water; I can drink it. I can't drink this. I can't bite it really. So everything is as it is, as Padmasambhava. Even liars and cheaters are liars and cheaters, as Padmasambhava. This is the reality, because the root of all phenomena is infinite emptiness. As everything arises in infinite emptiness, as infinite emptiness, if we recognise this we see that this is a manifestation of infinite emptiness, but the form as we perceive it in an interactive way, even with a minimum of dualism, is that these all of the manifestation have their own qualities. They are as they are. They manifest as they are. Some good, some bad. In their true nature they are good because they are Padmasambhava, but in their relative nature they are truly good and bad, they are different.

Just because you go to the market and you buy an apple and it is rotten and you bite into it believing that it is Padmasambhava, you still have a mouthful of rotten apple. Now you may be wanting to work with your taste buds. When I first went to pujas where they make offerings and they have a *tsog*, and they are handing everything round, I was believing all this food is blessed. So when I got a banana I would eat it with the skin on and these Tibetans would look at me. "Western people are very funny." Because the skin of the banana is not what one eats. The skin of the banana is Guru Rinpoche but it is *inedible* Guru Rinpoche. Inside the banana is *edible* Guru Rinpoche. So discrimination and openness have to go along together. And we can cheat ourselves by saying "Everything is so empty we don't need discrimination" but we can also get so tight and paranoid that we only have discriminations and have no openness. And the relationship between the two has to be mediated by ethics. Basically our relationship to the world is an ethical one. The essence of the relationship between the view that everything is Padmasambhava, this open wisdom view, and the need to have precise discrimination, the relationship has to be ethical so that one is not lost in an openness that has no discrimination, neither is one lost in a tightness which only makes discrimination.

[Question: Where is the ethical aspect in the term "liar and cheater"?)

The ethical aspect is that if you don't realise someone is an liar and cheater and you allow them to harm you, you are colluding in their abusive nature and that is not ethical. The reality is that, as I was saying yesterday around refuge, I am dangerous, you are dangerous; we are all dangerous because of these five poisons. We try to do the meditation practice on Guru Rinpoche in order to transform these five poisons, but until these five poisons are not fully transformed, they are operating. Because they are operating, to pretend that they are not is dangerous. This is where the meditation (and it's a very good question you are asking) this is where the meditation is very tricky because we have to take the view of the meditation that everything is Guru Rinpoche into practise, yet still knowing that people are dangerous. When you go to cross the road you have to know the motorcar is Guru Rinpoche, but if you stop to admire Guru Rinpoche coming towards you he will kill you. The motorcar will hit you and kill you. So although it's Guru Rinpoche it's Guru Rinpoche in a car form, in a dangerous form.

So it's not that we blend into everything is just Guru Rinpoche. That's what you do in the meditation, but as you come out of it you see Guru Rinpoche as the richness of the world, each thing in its own place, because when we say something is Guru Rinpoche we mean it is form and emptiness. It is a manifestation of an open dimension. But it is a precise manifestation in a particular form. So a knife, even although you see the knife as Guru Rinpoche, if you don't look, it will cut your finger. You have to know "This is my finger. This is a carrot. This is a knife. The knife is Guru

Rinpoche, the carrot is Guru Rinpoche, my finger is Guru Rinpoche, but I want Guru Rinpoche-knife to hit Guru Rinpoche-carrot and not to hit Guru Rinpoche-finger.” So it’s difficult.

There would be no point to practise the dharma if it simply made us more confused and lost in the world so that the ability to protect ourselves that we have learned laboriously through heartbreaks and mistakes and confusions, if we were to throw all that knowledge out through the window and just say “Now everything is Guru Rinpoche I trust the world” it would be difficult to do that and not very wise. However what we attempt to do is to transform our anxious relationship with the world, that “What will they do to me? Oh God I can’t trust myself - what bad things will I do?” We transform that into compassion to that our attitude to all beings is an intention to be open and to help them. And in order to help beings we can’t just say “I like steak. I’ll buy steak for everyone.” because some people might be vegetarian. So we have to look at the quality of the other first.

Now when we look at the qualities of some people we see that some people are very angry or some people are very selfish, and so in order to help them we have to find ways of managing their selfishness so they don’t exploit us and we help them to reduce their selfishness. So we go from a slightly neurotic, anxious discrimination which is based on keeping ourselves safe “Oh my god, how can I protect myself.” to an attention to the world, a very focused attention to the different qualities of people, trying to be in harmony with them, attuned to them, but without giving them the power to simply dump their karma on us. Because dumping karma on someone else is un-virtuous. And simply grinds them further into the habits that they’ve been doing already. So the gift of space is a space in which habits can be transformed, but it’s not a space of collusion with other people’s self-destructive habits.

That’s what people do to us. They can’t help it. That’s what karma is. Karma is in the past there was an action, which has a consequence coming in the future. Karma is the excreta of past action. You eat chocolate and dirty, smelly pooh comes out. You do something in a past life and you now dump all this crap in the world. I think it’s very real. It’s one thing to love all sentient beings, it means “May they be happy”. At the moment they are rather dangerous wild beasts who might rip me apart. It’s a future movement. That’s why it says that the path of a Bodhisattva takes a long, long time. To empty samsara will be very difficult because most people are very happy to shit on other people. You see this again and again and again. I think that, unfortunately. this is true.

That’s why the first line of this prayer says “**KYAB NAE LU ME KON CHOG RIN PO CHE**” which basically means that if you look around in this world you won’t find any refuge place that is totally reliable. Like if you have as it says in the Bible you know if you have some grain and you are sowing it on the ground, you’re planting the seed, in the old days when they put the grain out like that some of it goes on stony ground, some of it goes on dry hard ground and some of it goes on fertile ground. From planting the seed we should make sure that we are putting it in the good soil and not on a rock because seeds don’t grow well on rocks. So we take this seed of our love and our devotion and all the longings that we have, both the longing for wisdom, for depth, truth, honesty, and the longing for compassion, to be open and warm and loving towards all beings, and we take this seed and we plant it in the good soil, the good soil of the heart of Guru Rinpoche....

*[Gap because the tape is being changed]*

...and this is why when we do this tantric practice, devotion is very important. That’s why it’s helpful to read books about Guru Rinpoche if you have to possibility to go and visit some of the

shrines and places connected with Guru Rinpoche. If Tibetan lamas come over, get initiations about Guru Rinpoche. Because all of that is a process of taking all of these unfulfilled longings in yourself and gradually building up the confidence that there is a good soil to plant it in.

So when we do the practice and we visualise in front of us Guru Rinpoche or even this essential form of a ball of white light we are believing that this is not simply the creation of our own ego, but that from the pure lands where Guru Rinpoche and all the buddhas are dwelling, they see that our heart is opening and wanting to do this practice, and so they send their own rays of light to potentiate this image which we are creating out of our connection with Guru Rinpoche and our aspiration. The form that we create with our effort, in Tibetan it's called the "*dam tsig pa*", means the form that we can create on the basis of the vows or the connection that we have through the initiation into a practise of Guru Rinpoche. And then the other form that arises from the pure land is called a "*ye she pa*" or a wisdom form which is the actual unartificial unconstructed form of the guru who comes and is present. So that when these two forms fuse together and you do the meditation and you fuse in you can have your heart totally open to believing that you are now merging with this form which represents the highest and most open form of infinite wisdom and compassion. [merging..?] If these both merge you can be open with this merging of the actual presence of the most infinite form of wisdom and compassion.

Wisdom and compassion are united together in this form of Guru Rinpoche, who is not only there because of your aspiration and desire to do the practice, but he is there because he himself has come and made himself manifest in this form. So your longing and their blessing meet in one point that comes into your point and then you go out into space.

## Doing the practice

---

We want to go and do the practise now. It's very important when we do the practice to open ourselves up as much as possible as long as we are monitoring ourselves and we are thinking "I'm not sure this all makes sense. It all seems a bit funny..." As long as we have these kinds of conversations inside ourselves, our energy is held back. In a traditional view these restrictions and tightnesses in ourselves are seen as a manifestation of our own karma and so we should endeavour to overcome this by identifying through the practice any points of positive delight and beauty that we experience in the world. And that's why when you look at Tibetan tangkhas and Tibetan monasteries they are very beautiful, that they make it as evocative to try to pull the heart energy up and out.

Again we all have different natures. For some people very elaborated forms are very beautiful and attractive, and for other people more simple forms are more appealing. But the main thing is to be able to use devotion to bring your attention into one point.

You can probably see if you go into a restaurant and you see maybe say a man and woman and they are sitting across the table and they are just talking. And then you look round at another table and there are people who are absorbed in their bubble of attention. They don't really care what else is going on whereas the other couple are looking around and quite distracted. So devotion, apart from it maybe being a good thing, and that the Buddha is worthy of it, is primarily a method to utilise this erotic intensity, this aesthetic intensity, to stop the mind being so distracted. When you are gazing into the eyes of the beloved then your mind doesn't want to wander here and there

because all you want to do is look at this wonderful face that's shining and you're pulled more and more into one point. That is the way we come into the dissolving part of the meditation, which is the essence of the practice.

So now we will do the same practice as we did yesterday afternoon.

In front of us we visualise this infinite clear blue sky. And there in the middle of this clear blue sky we visualise Guru Rinpoche. You can see Guru Rinpoche usually in his right hand he has a vajra here, placed at his heart. His left hand is holding a skull-cup full of *amrita*. Then if you are not familiar with this visualisation or you find this difficult to do then you imagine just a ball of white light which is the heart essence of Guru Rinpoche. And these forms are manifesting out of this infinite emptiness, coming from this pure domain of Zangdopalri where Guru Rinpoche resides. And as we look at this form we recite "*Om Ah Hung*" which is the essence of all the mantras. "*Om*" is the Buddha's body. "*Ah*" the speech and "*Hung*" the mind.

So by reciting this we evoke the blessing of the body, speech and mind which comes to us in the form of light pouring into us and filling our own body with light. So our heart is opening in devotion saying "Please come. Please come. I have been wandering here in this world so long I am so lost I get confused all the time. I need you to open this door into my own heart so that I recognise the nature of my mind. You have the key. I want to open..." This is not the same as the shiné practice where you just focus on your breath and keep everything very calm. This is a practice where you use your emotional energy to provide a focus so that all of your being, all of your attention is coming into one point. You are praying through your heart and feeling this light flowing into you so that your body is full of light.

Then after we have finished reciting "*Om Ah Hung*" the form of Guru Rinpoche or this ball of light comes to the top of your head shrinks down, top down - bottom up, into this ball of light sinking down into your heart. At this time your body is full of light and you now have a ball of light in your heart. Then our body which is full of light gets smaller and smaller as the light flows into the ball of white light in our heart so that the essence of the guru and our essence merges together in one ball of light and then that ball of light, which is the only focus of our attention, the whole world has shrunk to this one ball of light, is getting smaller and smaller. So you feel your all your attention just going into one tiny point. Tiny tiny tiny and then phut! vanishes. And then just relax into this openness. Then we just remain in this open state, relaxed and whatever arises is just the form of Guru Rinpoche, so there is not need to be anxious, no need to make any discriminations of good and bad, one is simply allowing this to flow through.

Okay. So let's try this. *Om Ah Hung*....

...

Then very gently relax your awareness into the room, bringing the room into your meditation and then we move into our lunch break. So in your own time, just with the sound of the birds, just being open and peacefully here...

...

## Tantric pujas and their structure

---

Now we'll look a little bit at tantric pujas and their structure, bearing in mind that the purpose of such practices is to bring about a re-linking with the ground of all experience.

So, the ground of everything is the mind. But we see that the ground of a lot of our experience is things happening inside us and things happening outside us. When I asked C.R. Lama about the brain he said "It's quite nice when you cook it with chillies." Because in the Tibetan system the mind is situated in the heart, where an eight-petalled lotus contains the eight forms of consciousness. These are the five consciousnesses of the senses, an organising consciousness, a consciousness which deals with the five poisons and the consciousness of the basic subject-object duality. These consciousnesses when we look at it from the point of the manifestation, these are the basic pattern through which emptiness and the awareness which pervade emptiness comes into a more precise level of being.

So when these eight consciousnesses are working inside us and seem to be self-existing, to be moving out of their own selves as an essence, they stabilise the sense of a subject who is relating to objects outside. For example the eye-visual-consciousness. I look out of the window and I see the roof over there. "I" see the "roof". How this would be understood traditionally is that my eye-consciousness is organising the information that is coming through this organ of perception, the eye, and this eye-consciousness is linking down into one of the petals of this lotus which deals with that information. It's a bit like a computer. A little database that take only that source.

Then the sixth consciousness, the organising consciousness, takes that information which has come through the eye consciousness and processes it in relationship to the consciousness that is dealing with the five poisons and this ground ignorance, or this ground samsara consciousness. So I look out and I see a roof. Eye consciousness and this mental consciousness now have this idea of a roof. Then I think "Oh no, there is actually a hole in my roof in London and when it rains very heavily it comes through and then I have a big wet patch." Then I think "This is the room with all my books in it" and the thought of some helpful tradesperson coming in to repair my roof going near my books and papers fills me with a lot of fear! The visual consciousness mixed with this mental consciousness has created an identification of the roof out there, with the roof in my house in London. This then links to the consciousness that is dealing with the five poisons, evoking desire to have a good roof, fear and anger at the thought of somebody coming in and messing up my papers, and many other poisons.

So in that way that is how a simple perception of something like a roof gets us tied very quickly into patterns of thought. And we see you know when we do this shiné practice focusing on the breath, how the mind is wandering all over the place. Very similar to what Freudians refer to as free association. But all kinds of possible connections weave themselves out and we don't know why these connections are going on.

For example, yesterday when we looked at this central place in the mandala where we have stupidity, where we have subject and object working together, what we referred to as subject is actually these eight consciousnesses and they are working together very quickly...

*[Gap when tape is turned over]*

## Prayer and the heart

---

...and that's why when we pray, traditionally we put our hands in front of our heart because it completes a circle going round through the heart. When you pray, you pray like this. And we pray very tightly, we pray very strongly and you know when you pray very strongly, you find that the muscles at your back tighten up, the anal sphincter will tighten and the diaphragm rises so the energy is being blocked at the bottom and coming up. And you are also praying down, so you feel the *[indistinct recording]* ... the energy is also coming up and is meeting in the heart. So you have a unification of the distraction through this energy. Then this ball of light is coming into the heart so that everything is coming into the heart and at that point this eight-petalled lotus comes together into one point. Then you have this complete ball. And the ball goes out.

So this again is absolutely essential practice. We don't need to do things which are terribly complicated. All the complexities of these big pujas where you ring bells and doing movements with your hands, these are all ways of ways of trying eventually to make things simple. Yes, partly it's because these monks in the monasteries didn't do any work while the lay people worked hard in their fields, with their animals to feed them. If you've been working all day in the fields and you come into the monastery and the monks are just sitting around doing nothing... eventually you feel you are not getting value for money! But if the monks have a little bell and put a fancy hat on and off, then you get a very good show! This may be a cynical view but I think there is some reason in it.

Translating Tibetan texts can be difficult because Tibetan culture is saturated in hyperbole. Most texts will have titles like "From the Secret Mind Treasure of the Dakini comes the most Amazing Wonderful Secret Teaching Doctrines which are the Glorious Treasures of the Profound Depth of the Buddha's Understanding." Baroque. Of course the reason it is expressed like this is because the person who has written the text thinks that it is a very good thing.

"Porsche presents a new generation of vehicle" "Renault, for those who want to control their own lives." But if every car manufacturer uses this kind of language, how do you know which is really the good one? All these Tibetan books, the puja texts, have very similar titles like that so *the one that is good is the one that you do*. But again, the reason that they have these very inflated titles is because they want you to believe that this is a very powerful, important, good practice to do.

As you go through the practice you will find certain basic elements repeating. The first is prayer. Most of the prayers are prayers asking for something. "You are very wonderful. You have all these qualities. You are very compassionate. Please come here, and give me what I want." This is the essence of Tibetan prayers.

Now we might think that this is again a little bit foolish. In fact many people who have a Christian background, left Christianity because they didn't like this kind of very humble praying which didn't seem to get anywhere. Because sometimes prayer has a *function* of affirming the separation of states of being. "You are very big. I am very small. Big person take care of small person." But this is very, very rarely the structure of Tibetan prayers. Mainly they are saying "Please make me the same as you." So, "I want you to come here and give me this supreme siddhi of buddhahood. You are the Buddha. Come here and make me the same as you."

If you look at the first prayer in the text we have,

**KYAB NAE LU ME KON CHOG RIN PO CHE  
THUG JE NGA WAI UR GYEN PAE MA LA**

"You are the best refuge. You are very powerful. You will never cheat me. Guru Rinpoche you are the essence of compassion." So we start up, up, up, up... "Nobody is higher than you. Nobody is better

than you.” Aha, now we get something. “

**DAG GI JI TAR SOL WAS TAB PA ZHIN  
NYUR DU DRUB PAR JIN GYI LAB DU SOL**

“According to what I am going to ask you, come here quickly and give it to me.”

So this is very important because “I respect you, but also you, through your bodhisattva vows, have made a commitment to help me. Therefore I am reminding you of what you have already said you will do.” This brings about a kind of equality in it. It’s not that we are helpless, awful people, but we are saying “I have this Buddha-nature. My Buddha-nature is covered over with obscurations. By praying to you I need you to come and with the power of your light, to bring your pure nature and my pure nature together, so that your light comes down and penetrates the obscuration, and binds into me so that we merge together. And at that point your nature and my nature are the same.”

So prayer is a method for using this structure of dualistic separation to intensify an energy of longing so that these two points which appear opposed, can start to vibrate and come together and you get this point of unification. That is really the function of prayer. So prayer, if you use it properly, it’s a very powerful method for bringing about this unification in the heart. But if you just intone it a conventional way all you will do is affirm to yourself “I’m a pathetic pile of rubbish and the Buddha’s right up there, perfect and shiny.”

### How our emotions and our five poisons can intensify our praying

Bringing emotion to prayer is the important thing. Tantra uses the power of emotion to transform samsara into nirvana. So you must bring emotion, passion, into it and that passion may arise in the form of the five poisons. Let’s look at these five poisons and how they are used in prayer.

We use stupidity by saying, subject and object. “I am real and very, very stupid and very, very humble. You are real and very, very, very, very wonderful. Uhhhh...(crying)” The essence of stupidity is the dualistic separation of entities, yet by praying with this terribly frightened, fearful dependence, one is simplifying the structure of the world, and bringing it again in to a point where subject and object can collapse. Stupidity is when subject and object are at their most stupid and not very much else is going on.

We have to remember all the buddhas of the three times have prayed in just this way. Nobody gets enlightened without praying this way. It says so in the texts. This is not just my fantasy. Milarepa, many, many great meditators and yogis, Padmasambhava himself, said “You must pray till the hairs on your head stand up, till all the pores on your body open, until tears flow out. You must pray as if you were dying.” That’s one reason why I think that doing group practise can be quite nice, but can also be limiting because if you are practising on your own and you get into that mood you might want to carry on praying for a long time and just go into this tunnel of just one point.

We can use other emotions too. One can say, “I want to get what you have. What you have is very, very good.” We can use the part of us which wants to do practise, to attack the bit of us that doesn’t want to do practise. Maybe we are praying we think, “I haven’t done this for a very long time. I used to do this a lot. So why did I stop?” Then we can get angry with ourselves for your own laziness and stupidity and while we are praying we can chastise ourselves, thinking, “This is so terrible. What am I doing wasting my life?” We can use these thoughts to drive the energy into one point.

We can also do it from pride. "I am very good. I have this Buddha-nature. I have been doing this practice. I have been praying to you. Why on earth don't you come here? Come here. I am important. Don't go to anyone else. You come here first! Padmasambhava, here there everywhere, you go giving blessings to other people. What about me?"

Likewise with jealousy you can notice and exaggerate the sense of how we get distracted and become jealous of other practitioners, who seem to be doing better. We need to be aware of that. Or when we do a visualisation with Guru Rinpoche in front of us and all other sentient beings around us. Then we have to imagine that the rays of light, when they come, go to these other beings first. I think for many of us this, if you really get into it, will bring about quite a lot of jealousy. Because the bit of us that wants to be prime is quite frightened of these good things being taken away. By being in touch with such emotions, we can channel them to intensify our practice.

When we were born into this world and came from our mother's womb, through the birth canal, a lot of squeezing was going on and when we come out we are usually covered in messy things. So why should we be surprised if to be born as a Buddha is a bit messy too? When you see these statues of the Buddha, beautiful golden in colour sitting very peacefully. This is like the photograph of the baby taken after the birth when it's wrapped in the nice clothes. But the process of becoming a Buddha involves a lot of passion and pain and effort and confusion.

*[Gap when tape is being changed]*

They say that in order to get to enlightenment you have to develop, like these two wings of a bird. Wisdom and compassion. And then you can fly very nicely. What we are talking about just now is the wisdom side. So inside this attitude of openness and seeing everything as absolutely equal, this attitude of wisdom, one can also have the spontaneous arising of the compassion which says "Asshole." Because although we see everything as equal, some things are not effective for people to do. If you are walking along the road and you see a parent slapping a child in the face you say "Hey what are you doing?" What they are doing is not a neutral activity.

You try to have these words coming out of you with an awareness that everything that occurs is empty, but the fact that they're empty doesn't mean that you're not called upon to speak out and waken the other person because this is movement of compassion. Real compassion has to arise out of wisdom. If it arises from a strong political belief or a fixed position it will just be a display of stupidity. But if our awareness is open we are still called upon to respond to the world which means to speak and to act and to save. "I don't agree."

*[Question: He heard Tibetans say that if two people are fighting for example and one has no connection, one doesn't know them, one shouldn't interfere with them. What do you think?]*

This injunction comes in the category of the ten basic sins and it comes in the third of the four sins of speech where they say if people are arguing about something and it's not your business, don't interfere because then you will be pulled into that argument and your own mind will get disturbed.

But that's very different from two people who are fighting in the street and somebody has a knife. You say "Hey! What is this? Stop!" But of course the big problem in life is that so much of our own experience of the world is our own projection onto situations. We think we know what is good for other people. "If only you would do this. If only you would do that. If only YOU would do that."



We think that that is a good thing to do. And we have some basis for thinking, "That's not a good thing to do. Listen. You shouldn't do that." And one can have many, many reasons for having exactly that thought but nonetheless it is very difficult to know what is good for someone else. So unless we have the wisdom in the beginning so that we are free of a strong subject onto a strong object what we think is compassion may well be the manifestation of our prejudice which may have dogmatic justification and yet nonetheless still be a tight and unhelpful movement.

Oh I've just realised I have made a mistake. This is not the first mistake I have made in this life! The purification of anger is called "*mé long ye shé*" It's the mirror-like wisdom; it's not the wisdom of equalness which is connected with pride.

In effect they are almost the same because when you look in a mirror, what you see on the mirror is a surface which is without depth. So everything that is there is equal in being simply an appearance without any substantial reality. So in the mirror there is no substance. The substance comes from our mind into the mirror. So when I look in the mirror and I think, "My God I am getting very fat!" this is absolutely an illusion because there is no substance in the mirror. It is a projection of my own mind! Unfortunately no!

So with this idea of everything as being in a mirror, when we look around the room if we can see everything as if it were a transparent image arising in a mirror, because the people who we see have no depth, there is just this surface manifestation, and any essence or depth they have is emptiness, because that is the ground that we have realised through this central awareness of this infinite openness, there is no basis then for anger because there is nobody there solid enough for us to bang on.

*[Question: Has compassion to be cultivated or is it a by-product of the development of wisdom?]*

It is both. It arises from wisdom itself. Real compassion is the fruit of wisdom. However we also need, on the relative level, to attempt to be compassionate, because when we attempt to be compassionate and find ourselves tightening up we become then aware that there is some more work to do on the wisdom side. The more open you are on the wisdom side the more free you can be on the compassion side. The more you have the openness of wisdom, then the more you can trust the spontaneity of compassion.

I will just finish this little bit and then we will have a tea break because I can see that people are getting a bit tired. But I just I want to finish these other two wisdoms.

So pride is transformed into the wisdom of equalness, in which we see that everything that arises, because it arises from the same ground, is equal. This is a very important point in the view of tantra and dzogchen; if things have the same ground, if they have the same basis, they will have the same nature. The traditional example for this is that a mother will love all her children the same. There may not be too much evidence for this, but it's a nice idea! Something to aim for.

A positive aspect pride is that we can be important and other people can be important. Tantric methods aim to develop in us the pride or the confidence of being the god "*lha'i nga gyal*". "I am the deity, I am Padmasambhava. But you are also Padmasambhava. So I am respectful to myself, and I am respectful to you." And in that way it's not that your qualities will come up higher than mine and then I will feel very small so I have to keep inflating myself. But the whole world moves towards enlightenment in the same way. Your enlightenment is not a threat to my enlightenment.

That's again why this central wisdom, this wisdom of openness or infinite spaciousness is absolutely important. Most of the time we operate in quite a small economy. Part of our karma is to be constantly looking at the environment in terms of sexual possibilities and aggressive possibilities. It's a Tibetan story, where most things are focussed on men, but they would say that the great demon, Matramrudra killed all the men he met and raped all the women he met. This is a basic expression of this dynamic. And his name Matramrudra means "mother eater", because he ate his own mother. It's like the absolute opposite of Padmasambhava who is "mummy's boy"!

So in terms of yes oh the reason of this ground nature, infinite nature, is because if we see that the situation we are in is not just this small situation where we have to work out who might threaten me, who might be a sexual danger to me, who might be sexual attraction to me, this constant checking out that we are deeply programmed karmically or ethologically to do. Because in any situation there is fears of dominance and control. Who could control us? Who could exploit us? When we start to experience the world in a more infinite way we are not so attached to the limited resources that we have and are not then so fearful that someone will take away what we've got or give us something we don't want, or offer us the possibility of getting things. So the infinity protects against pride, because pride is about I am more important than you. Whereas if there is an infinite possibility we can all be very important because there is enough space for everybody to be king of their own territory.

The purification of jealousy is "the wisdom which accomplishes everything", "*ja wa drub pa'i ye she*". Now one of the things about jealousy is that it can either paralyse people or motivate them to a lot of uncontrolled and very often meaningless activity. So here's the sense "I am involved with you and no someone else wants to be involved with you, and you want to be involved with that other person. So that I feel that my power to hold you has gone right down. I feel disempowered." My power has been dominated by someone else's power. But of course the basis of jealousy is usually dependence. "I can never be happy unless you are with me. I need you. I love you. Don't leave me." Like that. Let's not stay with this terrifying subject any longer!

Because jealousy is very, very terrifying because it is so humiliating since it reduces you very quickly to the status of being a small child and something is going to be taken away from you and you are not powerful enough to get it. So the path to jealousy goes through stupidity and desire. "You are very real and I am very real. I want you because you are very real in the way that I want. Only you have the reality that I want." So now out of everybody here, all go away. I don't care and you can all die but now I have my baby! So I am now very happy. You are not getting my baby. I have my baby. She's nice.

So we have stupidity. "I am here. He is there." We have then the desire making the connection. But this connection is not secure because all these other people are there and I am aware that the baby is actually looking over there. "Don't forget me..." So jealousy is the tunnel, is trying to hold the person desperately "We are special. What we've got going between us is too good to destroy." And so in that moment I feel that my world is very, very small.

I feel I can't have anything to do with you. You all exist only as a threat to my world. So the purification of this is the wisdom which accomplishes everything, again starts with this open infinite. Because of this purification of desire, since everything is fascinating in the world, it is not necessary to put all one's eggs in one basket... One is then not trapped into believing that this person is the only one who has the solution to my situation. By not investing that one person with that importance, one is free to have a wider-ranging relationship with the world.

Shall we take a tea break?

### Four buddha activities: pacifying, increasing, over-awing, destroying

I want to talk a bit about the four activities and then return to the some of the main topic of this tantric practice.

As we go round these activities in the mandala, the first section, in the east, is about pacifying. Then in the south we have increasing. In the west we have over-awing. Like awe-inspiring but using that to overpower others. Not over-whelming, but over-awing. It comes from the basic image where the Buddha is compared to a lion and when the lion roars in the jungle all the other animals go quiet. And the fourth activity is destruction.

These are the four activities of the Buddha. And in many ways you could see that these encompass the four basic moves in any magical system. We can see them operating on the subject level and on the object level. Subject level is in terms of us developing these qualities in ourselves. Object level is when we imagine that through doing a puja, doing a ritual worship and meditation, the energy that is generated through that practice is able to bring about some kind of effect.

So through pacifying what we endeavour to do is we take up an attitude which brings peace into the world. "May hailstones be peaceful. May early frost be pacified. May all sickness be pacified. May all wars be pacified." We want to make the world easy where people get on with each other and love each other.

Although in large tantric practices in large complex meditation practices all of these four activities will be present, nonetheless certain gods, or the practices of certain gods tend to be associated with particular activities. For example Chenrezig and Tara get particularly associated with this pacifying activity because they are seen as being very beautiful and peaceful and pure in themselves.

The activity of increasing means "May the harvest increase. May the happiness in the world increase. May all good things go up." So the first activity, pacifying, is "May all bad things go down." The second one is "May all good things come up".

*[Gap because the tape is being changed]*

One might have a general practice of say Guru Rinpoche, or more specifically you might have a wealth god practice, because you want to bring money into the world "May I become rich." In the Western tradition the Christian or Judaic tradition it wouldn't be particularly normal to pray for money, but in the Tibetan Buddhist system it's very normal to pray for money because money is not seen as a sort of dangerous temptation but is seen as part of the richness of the world which you can use for building monasteries or statues or going on pilgrimage. What one's saying is that there are many, many wonderful qualities in this world, may all these good qualities, including money, health, happiness, ease of life, may this be up for everyone.

If you go back to what we focused on yesterday morning about the refuge, the basic hinayana view is that the world is a dangerous place and so one wants to make boundaries to keep the danger at some distance. That is not the view tin tantra. The tantra view is that we are part of the world. We cannot be separated from the world and so, as part of the world, increasing the value of the world

benefits us and other beings. The world is not a temptation or a danger or an enemy, but it is that which we are just in. We have no choice about it. We are en-worlded.

The third activity, over-awing or showing a powerful presence, is used in order to make sure that the disruptive and distracting elements that are around in our world can be controlled just by a glance. It's like the quality that a good school-teacher needs to develop. The just look up and the children are attentive and afraid. If you have to shout as a teacher, the children have won. You have to keep the power. The children have to know you have power and that you are a dangerous person. But you are very nice. So it's about being nicely dangerous.

With this activity it's like the early stages of war. It's not yet war, but there is a sense that the environment has to be controlled. I remember sometimes in India coming out of the railway station or the airport and there are all these rickshaw wallahs or taxi touts who immediately want to grab your bag and for you to go with them. You have to use a little bit of energy to say "Hey. Back off! Just back off. I will decide." Otherwise they take up your bag and go off with it. They are pushing you and pulling you and it's as if you are there to follow them. So over-awing is about using your own personal power, your own energy, to be able to dominate the situation with the minimal intervention. And that involves believing in your right not to be controlled by the situation, but rather to be in control of it.

To really bring this out in a clear way you have to have overcome pride. With all of these qualities you have to have some understanding of emptiness to make them effective, because otherwise you just become arrogant. You think "I'm entitled to do what I want" It's not that at all. It's that when there is a situation which is dangerous you are able to control that situation and when that situation has passed you let go of it you go onto something else.

These are activities that you are manifesting because of the situation you are in. They are not your qualities, they are simply the colour, the mode of your interaction in that moment. Arrogance has a solidity to it, whereas this is an up-swelling of energy that shifts your relationship to the environment and then goes back down again. It's just a wave.

So the fourth section is destruction and this activity is used in order to destroy demonic forces. And you may have read in some of the pujas, it's also a little bit in our Big Rigdzin puja, that at a certain point there is a practice for killing demons. This usually means that you take a sword, or spear or knife, and cut it into the heart of the demon and then you take the blood and the meat of the demon and offer it and eat it. Clearly this is a symbolic representation of early human sacrifice. But of course every time we practise tantra and we do the dissolving meditation and we come out of it and we see all sentient beings as Guru Rinpoche. If they are Guru Rinpoche then they are a manifestation of emptiness, they have bodies of light, and we have taken the knife of wisdom and cut out their flesh and blood heart.

So when we do the practice I am doing my best to stab each of you through the heart and you are also attempting to stab me and each other through the heart! Not even any corpses left. Fifty rainbows seen moving through the sky! I am saying this like a joke but this is actually what the practice means. As long as you believe myself is real and other is real you are a demon to other beings and other beings are as demons to you. So we have to cut the root of the belief in duality. We have to take this sharp sword of wisdom and to cut out the heart - when it says "Take out the heart" it means these eight consciousnesses which are setting up self and other as real and separate. By

cutting that into open spaciousness you have the vast expanse of awareness, of *rigpa*, which includes all phenomena.

So these four activities are very important and we have to learn to practise all of them. It's very important to be a peaceful, caring, nice warm-hearted person. But it's also very important to be able to take up other positions when the situation demands it. So if you get stuck in simply being nice and kind you have to perhaps put more energy into practice with wrathful deities, or certainly identifying with the power of Guru Rinpoche to control situations and to destroy trouble-makers. Otherwise you would be like a doctor who can write prescriptions of medicine, but if a patient comes in with blood coming out of their arm the doctor faints. So we have to open up our range of responses to situations.

In these pujas that we do, what we have covered in these two days is the essence of why we do the puja and the main parts of the puja. The other things like making *tsok* offerings are extensions of the mood of devotion.

### Tsok offering and conclusion of the puja

---

There are two kinds of *tsok* offering. One kind is the offering that you imagine, that you visualise, all kinds of beautiful things, and rays of light which you offer to all the buddhas. And the second is when we offer some actual food offerings as a *tsok* as a collection of offerings and then invite the buddhas to come and partake of this and bless the food. And then we eat the food. And then it's as if the blessing of the Buddha comes into us in a more concrete form. So that's basically all there is to these offerings. And there are many, many offerings, it's just a way of having connection. Like you meet someone and you get friendly with them and you say "Come and have a drink." So you have a drink and maybe they invite you for dinner and then you invite them for dinner. And then the giving and receiving of gifts is the most common way that we as human beings make friendships. So that's really all we are doing in these practices.

### Why do we want to do these practices?

---

And again, just as a final thought before we do this last practice, we each of us have to think "Why are we involved in Buddhism?" and "Why do we want to do these practices?" Hopefully we want to do the practice because we are interested in bringing about some profound transformation in ourselves and through that in our relationship with the world. In order to do this we have to learn many things which are foreign to us. But I would suggest that it's very, very important to struggle to understand why you are doing what you are doing. All of these practices are meaningful. They have meaning in them. Their meaning is generated out of a structure. If you don't understand the structure how will you know why you are doing what you are doing?

Some of us may have learned some cooking working with our mothers in the kitchen. So when you go to make some pastry you don't have to think, you don't have to open a book, you just remember what you did with your mama and you make the pastry. But we are not in the kitchen of our Tibetan parents. We are in a foreign country. It is not our home. And we have to look up recipe books. So it's then very important to have some thought, "Why do they cook it this way? Why do they prepare it this way?" It used to be very common for Tibetan ordinary people when they met an official or a high lama to show respect by sticking out their tongue. That custom has not been imported to the West but many other things have been imported and maybe it's very important to think why they are important. One of the things we know is that Western medical pharmaceutical

companies frequently export medicines that they can't sell any more in the West, because they are deemed illegal. So they sell them in third-world countries. It is very important at times of cross-cultural meeting, both to have some degree of trust and good will and openness, but also some degree of awareness and insight and ability to check things out.

If we study and we look into the heart of the practices we will then be in a much stronger position to make sense of why we are doing what we are doing and that is very useful when we meet obstacle, because if you do these practices for many years tiredness will come, laziness will come. If you understand the structure of why you are doing the practice I think that is a very good resource for overcoming these difficulties. A simple naïve faith is a very beautiful thing, but in many circumstances it is just not enough. The truth of the dharma is strong enough for you to kick it about a bit.

So again we do this visualisation and recitation and then dissolving. And I think this is a very useful practice because you can do it very quickly. Often if you have a longer practice to do you want to do it, but you never have enough time. And if you tell yourself you don't have enough time to do this then you know you are a very bad liar, because you can do this practice in five minutes.

When you have time it's very useful to do the longer practices because they have more prayers in them and more elaboration. You can use that to build up these very powerful images, develop a clearer visualisation, and get more sense of devotion and connectedness, so that when you come to do this very brief form you can transport all this feeling that you've developed in the longer practice, over into the brief form.

So, clear blue sky, either Guru Rinpoche or a ball of white light.  
Then we do "Om Ah Hung". Rays of light coming filling our body.  
we stop the recitation.  
the figure comes to the top of our head,  
dissolves into this ball of light,  
comes down into our heart;  
our body into that ball of light.  
this ball of light, still in the place where the heart was....  
smaller, smaller, smaller, vanish.  
openness.  
sit there with whatever comes, coming, whatever goes, going.  
then gradually returning to the room and  
finally we'll do the dedication of merit....

Okay?

Any merit that has arisen through this practice in these two days we dedicate for the benefit of all sentient beings.

End.