

BRIEF TEACHINGS¹

These *Brief Teachings* comprise a range of short notes made when C. R. Lama was explaining texts. He talked very quickly and demanded full attention. These notes give a sense of the condensed and direct way he made his points. They have meanings which are revealed by calm reflection on one's own existence. [*James Low*]

Stay on the one point of presence	2
Empty nature	2
Your own awareness is king.....	3
Space.....	3
Bodhi.....	3
Bring about the result	4
Describing.....	4
Signs	4
Grasping	5
Guru-Disciple behaviour	5
Guru and faith	5
Story about devotion	6
How to get blessing	6
Vows.....	7
Full faith	7
The black and white stones	8
Purifying our bad actions	8
The ground.....	9
Dharmatā	10
Our true nature	11
Atiyoga and Adiyoga	11
Vairocana and Sri Sinha.....	11
C. R. Lama on his throne.....	12
The King tries to help his people.....	12
Dorje and Bell	13

¹ This is chapter 10 in [Collected Works of C.R. Lama](#) compiled and edited by James Low [Simply Being, Nov, 2013] ISBN-13: 978-0956923929

STAY ON THE ONE POINT OF PRESENCE

The main point of all Dzogchen teaching is that everything is empty. Emptiness, or *sūnyatā*, is the ground of all experience. Many different words are used to describe it but it is always the same. Whatever we hear or see or touch or taste or smell or feel or think is simply emptiness which is both empty and radiant. Recognising that all these are manifestations of the empty ground, our grasping at them as being something truly real stops.

If you have a body, then you have eyes and ears. When you die eyes and ears no longer function but the mind is still present. When alive, I am Mr A, but when I die, the dead body is Mr A. Mind always has the same nature, it is empty and open whatever occurs.

What comes in the mind arises due to some reason. For example, what I see is already filtered. I say, *"This is my friend, or my enemy", "It is good or bad."* Similarly through the ear, I say the sound is sweet or not. What we hear evokes many different ideas, maybe with desire, maybe with anger.

At that moment don't look for future thoughts and don't go after past thoughts, just stay in the middle. For example, if you suddenly think, *"I want my enemy to die"*, don't try to antidote this 'bad' thought with a 'good' thought. Just leave it there. Don't grasp after any movement that comes into the mind, just stay on this one point of presence and leave the movement to do what it will. This is *Rig-Pa Rang-Grol*, self-liberating awareness. Awareness naturally comes free by itself in the Dharmakāya. It is never caught, never trapped.

First thought—not stop

Next thought—not wait for

Hold middle point

Always keep original nature

All Jinas go that way.

[Three months before he died the son of Dudjom Lingpa wrote this for C. R. Lama]

EMPTY NATURE

If you see all things clearly while knowing their nature is empty, then you will always be happy. However if you know the good qualities of something, for example your house, but do not know that it is empty of inherent self-nature, then you will be very sad if it burns. If the partner you love dies, there is sorrow but if you know the empty nature of all phenomena, then you will be happy. Appearance and emptiness are naturally joined and in their union is much joy.

Infinite space which offers all-encompassing hospitality, dharmadhātu, is like a ball with no division or end. It has not been made by anyone, neither by Buddhas nor ourselves. It has no beginning and no end and is without differentiation. Nothing is separate from it and it is the depth and expanse of wisdom. It is free of giving and taking, allowed and not allowed, and within it everything arises free of grasping. It is great from the very beginning, pure and complete. Our own mind, our awareness, is inseparable from this great sky-like empty expanse. We are not a thing that can be grasped and we have no need to grasp.

Our awareness is pure from the very beginning, inseparable from the dharmadhātu, free of centre and boundary. Uncontrived and without beginning or end, it is the depth of intrinsic knowing, free of accepting and rejecting, it is the great self-arising nature free of grasping. Primordially

complete and pure, it is the realm of natural purity. We offer this continuously in the situation of effortlessly arising clarity.

YOUR OWN AWARENESS IS KING

Your own awareness (*Rang-Rig*) is like a king. Why? If you recognise the nature of your mind, this is the source and ground, the original stage or situation, and then everything comes free by itself, both what we take to be object and what we take to be subject. Thus the mind is the main thing. It is the king.

Openness or emptiness (*śūnyatā, sTong-Pa-Nyid*) is like the sky, it is everywhere. It is our basic nature. It is free of interpretive concepts (*sPros-Bral*) simple and direct. It has no bias or attitude or limited viewpoint (*Phyogs-Ris-Med*). Emptiness is the nature of all-encompassing space (*dharmadhātu*) and this depth and expanse is unlimited in all directions. It cannot be found anywhere; it has no origin and it never vanishes (*Ong-gNas-Gro-Med*) – open unchanging awareness that is uninvolved with anything which occurs.

In order to get a result, effort must be made but this depends on karma and capacity. We need to have a hook which lets us hold on to the object of our practice until it becomes stable and the natural situation is revealed.

Ordinary karmic results give an intention which is like a lead hook – it bends easily.

If some effort is added to this then it is like a copper hook.

If you practise Dharma according to your own idea but with no Guru this is like a silver hook.

If you have faith and effort and a good Guru who has power and compassion then it is like a steel hook.

True dharma is precisely emptiness, our original nature. Taking refuge in this will never lead to trouble but not understanding emptiness can lead to confusion in Dharma practice.

SPACE

Buddhahood or Bodhi or enlightenment is awakening to your natural purity. Bodhicitta is the development of this experience, developing awareness of the primordial buddhahood of all beings. This also offers space to others which allows their own natural enlightenment to blossom and shine forth.

The ocean has great depth and stillness and also vast movement – neither aspect harms the other. The sky is vast and empty and in it many things move. Mind is vast and empty and in it many thoughts move. These movements cause no harm or trouble unless they are taken to be something real and separate in themselves.

BODHI

The sambhogakāya is reflected Bodhi – it is glorious and beautiful. It is not bodhi itself since bodhi has no form. The sambhogakāya is the shining empty reflection of the dharmakāya which is emptiness itself, inseparable from awareness. Dharmadhātu is the ground of the Dharmakāya. Dhātu, space, is like unworked gold – infinite potential. Dharmakāya, our natural enlightened mode is like a statue made of gold – from the unmoving openness it arises as a single point. This ends all the confusion of duality.

BRING ABOUT THE RESULT

Three causal factors operate to bring about the result. These are

- the root cause,
- the support and
- the secondary cause or circumstances.

From them comes the result. For example, tea, sugar and milk are the cause. The pot is the support. The fire is the secondary cause. The tea is the result. Or, for weaving, yarn is the principal cause, the loom is the support, the weaver's skill is the secondary cause, and the cloth is the result. Or, for murder, stupidity and anger are the cause, an enemy is the support, a knife is the secondary cause and killing is the result.

The object of your desires is what you want, what is important to you, what you focus your attention on. Seeing needs an object, things which are visible. Hearing needs an object, things which are audible. Touching needs an object, things which are tangible. Tasting needs an object, things which are taste-able. Smelling needs an object, things which are smell-able. Mentation needs an object, things which can be apprehended by the mind.

There is an object which is attended to (*Yul*) and a subject who does the attending (*Yul-Can*). The relation between them is one of attention. When we work there has to be a base that we work on and proceed from. The basis is that which is attended to. If there is no basis there is no growth, no fruit. The object (*Bya-Yul*) is what you, the agent (*Byed-Pa-Po*) work on (*Bya-Ba*). In samsara the subject is always in a dualistic relationship with an object. The subject comes into being through relating to the object. They are inseparable. In relative truth practice we work to alter the relation between subject and object. In absolute truth there is no object, no subject and no relation between them.

DESCRIBING

Describing is also creating. *Kun-Tu brTag-Pa* means to identify an object, saying, "It is this", "It is that." We both see and think, "It is this", "It is that." When we are fully committed (*Yongs-Grub*) to this then what we see by relying on our flesh eye seems to be things which are complete in themselves, self-existing entities. For example we might say of a design that it is three-cornered, blue and beautiful. We seem to be seeing its qualities as existing in themselves out there. We can also say this of images in dreams. This capacity for description can be harnessed by both awareness (*Rig-Pa*) and by ignorance (*Ma-Rig-Pa*). When we experience our description inseparable from emptiness, this is the energy or creativity of awareness (*Rig-Pa'i-rTsa*). When we grasp at what we describe and take it to be self-existing this is the ignorance of identification (*Kun-Tu-brTag-Pa'i Ma-Rig-Pa*).

SIGNS

We rely on signs to make sense of our experience. The ground of the sign (*mTshan-gZhi*) is the basis for building meaning; it is the object or ground we build on. This is grasped with the sign (*mTshan-Ma*) which is like the strength of the land, its shape and qualities. On the basis of this we have identification (*mTshan-Nyid*). This is like the materials with which the walls and door and roof of a house are made. This is what makes it a house. If it were made of cloth it would be a tent, thus the identification defines the particularity of what is there. When practice is done physically the person who practises gains qualities (*mTshan-bCas*), for example through the practice of breath control (*rTsa-rLung*). With direct experience, not resting on the body, there is awareness

beyond the identification of qualities (*mTshan-Med*) as in Dzogchen. With *mTshan-bCas* there is a model which can be followed and you know by comparing and contrasting if it is right. With *mTshan-Med* there is no model. Experience is unique. It is as if someone makes something that seemed completely strange and unknown; it cannot be understood by comparing and contrasting but only directly with the clarity of the natural situation.

GRASPING

Grasping (*bDag-'Dzin*) is an enemy for it makes trouble for us. Grasping grasps at entities which it itself creates and sustains. It is a deluded and deluding activity arising from the reification which mistakes the illusory nature of phenomena. Grasping is not a thought nor is it an object, yet it can taint and confuse both thoughts and objects. This grasping ego, the sense of I, me, myself, must be killed by the mind itself, for the mind's nature is free of grasping. It is 'killed' by relaxing, by opening to the spacious source of the mind, by releasing the energy invested in grasping so that grasping dissolves in space, like morning mist into the sky. After one breaks the power of grasping, thoughts still arise, but after breaking the power of thoughts through seeing one's underlying true nature, grasping is finished.

GURU-DISCIPLE BEHAVIOUR

Just as an old man must do many things and offer many presents in order to win a beautiful young girl who has many attractive features, so traditionally the disciple must do many things in order to please the Guru who is the site of all good qualities. And the Guru will always act as if he is not pleased or satisfied. For the very stupidest disciples he will act as if he is never satisfied and always oppress them in the manner of a herdsman with his cattle.

GURU AND FAITH

The 'outer' object is pure and devoid of inherent self nature. The 'inner' subject is also pure. Resting in the middle point, your awareness will become pure by not relying on artificial interpretation. This is the central teaching of Padmasambhava in the *Le'u Dun Ma*. However you must have faith in the Guru otherwise you could recite these verses for 100,000 years and get no result. Doubts are very dangerous. The Guru may be poor or stupid while other people may be very rich but the Guru has the great treasure of the Dharmadhātu and Sambhogakāya. The rich man cannot save you, but the Guru can and you can gain enlightenment. Even if you become rich yourself that cannot save you. You have to think, "This world is a very difficult place so I must get free from it and only the Guru can save me."

Some Tibetans say that Padmasambhava knows more than the present-time Gurus so he is more important but this is not so because we can easily see the Guru but not Padmasambhava. If we have faith that the Guru is not different from Padmasambhava and that he will come to save us, then we get result. Also Padmasambhava, without faith, is a very ordinary man with many wives. Faith is the most important. Dudjom Rinpoche is a very high representative of Padmasambhava. Who you believe much is your root Guru.

If someone is known to be a Tertön treasure revealer then we would ask them, "Do you have *La-Grub?*", "Do you have *Dzogchen?*", "Do you have *Thugs-Grub?*". If all three kinds of texts are present in their treasure, then this Tertön is *Terchen* (*gTer-Chen*), a great treasure revealer. If only two of them, then they are a *Tertring* (*gTer-'Bring*), an ordinary Tertön.

Gya-Shang-Trom, a cow-herder found a *terma* (*gTer-Ma*) under a rock. He showed it to his uncle, *Shang-Bo*, who became his sponsor (*Chos-bDag*). *Shang-Bo* threw it in water but it returned.

Then he put it on a fire but it was not damaged. Then he put it in a clay pot but it was shining and broke the pot open. One day Gya-Shang-Trom was sleeping and he dreamed that cow-herding girls were dancing around him and a man with a big hat came and beat him. When he woke up he could read and write and later he wrote three large volumes. Then when he was old he had cow-herder disciples. They could not read or study so for seven days he did phowa ('Pho-Ba) practice and sent them all to Nirvana and then he died. Three years later his uncle died.

STORY ABOUT DEVOTION

Once upon a time there was a great and famous Guru who had many disciples. Students came from all over to study with him and they would stay for months or years and then leave to practise in caves or become teachers themselves. However this teacher had one student who never seemed to make any progress. He always sat at the front and gazed attentively and devotedly at the teacher. He heard every teaching; he heard it again and again, but he seemed to understand nothing.

After many years the teacher decided he could not help him and asked him to leave. However the disciple exhibited such despair and hopelessness at the thought of leaving that the Guru decided to try one last practice.

He gave his student a recitation mala made of large rudraksha beads and told him that he must go into a strict closed retreat. He was only to do one simple practice – which was to recite the mantra which said, "*Hung. All hail the horn on my head!*"

Years passed and many new students came and people stopped talking of the student who was in retreat. The Guru was getting old and suddenly became very sick. Doctors were called; they tried many medicines but nothing helped. His close students tried many practices but these made no difference. It was clear that the Guru was going to die. A message was sent out to all his students that they should gather to see the teacher one last time.

Someone remembered the student in his isolated cave and sent him a message. When he heard of his teacher's condition he ran as fast as he could over the high mountain passes. He looked crazy when he arrived, his tattered clothes falling about him. He had wild eyes, a long beard and a mountain of tangled hair piled on top of his head. When he came in front of his teacher he made many rapid full-length prostrations and as he did this his hair unfurled and fell about him revealing a huge horn that had grown on the top of his head. When he bowed in front of his teacher his teacher touched the horn and immediately the teacher's health started to return.

Devotion is the heart of practice.

HOW TO GET BLESSING

You must strive for blessing in the way that a child says, "*Mummy, give me an ice cream!*" and then cries and pesters the mother tugging at her until she gives way. If we really believe, the blessing will come. We must think, "*I really trust you so why do you not give me blessing? Why do you not show me!*"

Firstly, we must gain the intrinsic knowing of all-encompassing space, dharmadhātujñāna, otherwise the other four are only names. Whoever gets this wisdom of all-encompassing space, dharmadhātujñāna, automatically gets the other four. The mirror-like wisdom which shows all things clearly, arises with the purification of anger. The wisdom of evenness which, being without bias or preference, shows all things to be equal, arises with the purification of pride. The wisdom of discernment which shows all the details of whatever is occurring, both sins and virtues, arises

with the purification of desire. The wisdom of full accomplishment which displays all methods with full power to act, arises with the purification of jealousy.

The wisdom of all-encompassing space has full power; like the sun shining above a mountain its light goes in all directions. But if the sun is shining on one side of the mountain only then its power is limited. Similarly each of the other four wisdoms can only perform particular functions.

With the arising of these wisdoms the afflictions vanish. These wisdoms are not removed from life, they do not block responsiveness but effortlessly provide many effective ways of relating. For example, if you drink cold water when you are hot you will become hot again very quickly, but if you drink hot tea it has a refreshing effect and will cool you down for much longer. In the sphere of the Dharmadhātu there are no relative positions. What do we find there? Its natural inhabitant is Dharmatā, the actuality which never changes or does anything. This is similar to the sky, which is always the same. From Dharmadhātu comes Dharmakāya. Dharmadhātu is like a place. Dharmatā is its nature. Dharmakāya is its form or presence there.

It is vital to experience the Dharmadhātu so that when you die and go unconscious you recognise the Dharmakāya and so do not go the wrong way. Then you will gain the Sambhogakāya and the Nirmanakāya. Without the Sambhogakāya the Nirmanakāya cannot arise. It cannot appear straight from the Dharmakāya.

VOWS

Why do we take vows? In the Hinayana system vows are like an object made of clay: if they are broken they cannot be repaired. Mahayana vows are like copper: if they are broken then they can be repaired a bit. Vajrayana vows are like gold: if they are broken there is no harm to the gold.

Dam-Tshig, or *samaya*, or solemn promises, are made in order to gain enlightenment, which means recognising one's own original nature. In Dzogchen the vow *is* the original nature since the practice is non-dual. The vow is *Ngo-Bo*, our natural situation or *Rang-bZhin*, our natural quality. Abiding in one's own situation is the fulfillment of all vows. A woman makes vows at marriage to always stay with her husband and serve him – this covers all her later activities of cooking, raising children and so on. Similarly all offerings and practices are part of the vow, for the vow is to see and abide in our original situation.

FULL FAITH

Relaxing and opening to and within the natural clarity of our mind, object vanishes and subject vanishes. The first thought is our present thought, it is the only thought. For example, if a thought arises such as, *'I must do this'* then do not continue it. Leave it as it is. It needs no completion. Do not try to stop it or develop it. Don't examine it or get involved. If it is left alone it will go free in its own place.

The ocean always has waves. In the mind there are always thoughts. It is the emptiness of the ocean that allows the waves to move. They stop moving when they reach the beach. In the same way the mind's nature is open like the sky. Don't make a limit, don't block the movement. It is not possible to hold the mind still, to keep it in one place, for it is always moving. If you try to hold your mind you are grasping at a memory, for the thought or feeling or experience has already gone. That memory is a different thought from the one which it is 'remembering' and 'it' has to be put there again and again. Each repetition is different; no moment is exactly the same as any other. It is not possible to hold the sky, for the sky itself is infinite and ungraspable and its contents, the clouds and the wind and so on, are always changing. Likewise, mind is open and empty. It is not possible to fix it in its own place. Just leave it in its own place which is where it

always is and then thoughts go free. By following thoughts more thought is stimulated and so it never ceases.

To awaken to this you need full faith in your Guru and Padmasambhava. We pray, *“You must do all that is necessary for me. I fully open to you. I want to be like you. You must give me knowledge of my own nature.”* Pray slowly with understanding of the words and with the wish to gain wisdom and be free of the constraint of thoughts. Padmasambhava is the actual Buddha. He is not different from the Buddha and has the same power, qualities and so on. Therefore he is called Orgyen Sangye Nyipa (*O-rGyan Sangs-rGyas gNyis-Pa*), the second Buddha who comes from Orgyan. Some old texts refer to him as Sangye Mi Nyipa (*Sangs-rGyas Mi-gNyis-Pa*), that is, not different (*gNyis-Su-Med*), the one who is not different from the Buddha.

THE BLACK AND WHITE STONES

Geshe Potowa (*dGe-Shes Po-To-Ba*) used to practise meditation with a pile of white stones and a pile of black stones in front of him. He would pick up a white stone if he had good thoughts, and a black stone if he had bad thoughts. At first he only had one white stone and many black stones. After six months they were of equal amounts. After two years he had no black stones at all.

He asked Atisha if this was enough. Atisha told him that he should continue practising till there were no stones at all; he was to free himself from the perception of duality, of distinguishing between good and bad. Atisha said, *“Now you have stopped doing sins but not stopped karma from the past. You must practise śūnyatā, emptiness.”* And he taught him this. Firstly he showed him that all objects are empty and he got the result. Then he showed him that the subject is empty and with this he finished all his sins and obscurations. Atisha said to him, *“Now even if we bind you with chains and weights, and throw you in hell, you would not stay there.”*

Stopping sins is one part of practice but you must get śūnyatā to really stop sins and gain enlightenment. You will only really understand karma when you get śūnyatā. When we do sins we create bad karma. This arises due to the afflictions, whose root is ignorance. Ignorance is darkness from which comes desire, pride and so on. When you know śūnyatā then wisdom shines forth and all sins stop. With śūnyatā you see that the subject is impermanent and so cut egoism.

PURIFYING OUR BAD ACTIONS

The root of all trouble is ignorance. It is the source of egoism and due to it, desire, anger and so on arise. It is the sole root and it is the opposite of awareness, intrinsic knowing, and wise discernment. Whether I become a Buddha or whether I go to hell, awareness never changes. It is always clear, always good, never mixed. Stupid ignorance covers that wisdom for us like a pot placed over a lamp. It is necessary to break the pot so that the permanent light shines forth.

At the early stages of practice we need to say, *“Forgive me.”* We need someone to clean us; this is the first factor of purification. We need to say, *“Excuse me”* to the man who has the power to purify our sins. This is Vajrasattva. All the Buddhas have power to help, so why is Vajrasattva employed especially for purifying our sins? All students while training have some main idea, like medicine or engineering. Similarly when the great Bodhisattvas were training they thought of different ways to help beings. At that time Vajrasattva made a firm intention to free all beings from their sins.

Why do we say, *“Excuse me”*? This is how we acknowledge that we have done bad things; this is the second factor of purification. We know that these actions were sins, for example stealing. This causes trouble to others and it means that I also will get trouble. You must think that you are

dying from sin as if you had taken poison. With this understanding you develop great fear; this is the third factor of purification.

Then you must promise and firmly decide that in future you will never do it again. This vow or promise is the fourth factor of purification.

With these four factors we separate our mind from our habit of selfish egoism. Now we can appreciate how these habits appear to be 'me' and we also see that they are not actually 'me'. When we identify with our assumptions and habits they seem to be 'us'. Yet when we stand apart from them we see that they are not 'us'. This mixing or confusion is what we ask Vajrasattva to wash out of us.

A student of Dudjom Rinpoche's first incarnation was a butcher and while he was washing the stomach of dead animals he believed that all sins were being washed out. After practising this he stayed in a cave in retreat and then flew in the sky. It is also said that when he went for teaching he was taught that everything was illusion, *gyuma (sGyu-Ma)*, but he heard it as everything was sausages made with intestines, *gyuma (rGyu-Ma)*. So by one-pointed attention to his daily practice of making sausages, he became enlightened!

THE GROUND

From the ground (*gZhi*) the delusory appearances (*'Khrul-sNang*) of subject and object arise. They are confusing because under their power we believe that something is the case when it is not. Then, becoming at home in that confusion, it seems to be just how things are and we take our reliance on this to be clarifying rather than confusing. By the interplay of subject and object the ground itself is not recognised. When the ground is recognised their power ends. They are not different from the ground.

For example, if our ground nature is Room 8 in a building, confusion (*'Khrul-Pa*) is to not like Room 8. Due to this we cannot really see Room 8 as it is but only in terms of our prejudice. Truly seeing Room 8 as it is, we awaken from bewilderment and in that liberation we see that confusion, our belief about Room 8, was not different from the ground, the open spacious potential which is the actuality of Room 8. Staying in Room 8 is the ground, not liking Room 8 and so daydreaming that you're somewhere else, is confusion. But actually Room 8 is okay in itself so we must wake up on Room 8 itself as it is. Thus confusion is non-dual with the ground. It is naturally arising, a natural form, empty of inherent self-nature. What gives confusion its power is our own belief in it.

By taking confusion to be something other than the ground, to be an obstacle which has to be removed, one has not really shifted from the position of believing that confusion is truly existing in itself. By recognising the activity of sleep-like confusion we wake up *on the basis of the ground*. Then confusion is self-liberating; it is neither to be adhered to nor avoided.

For example, if a Chinese child was adopted by European parents and raised in Europe the child would one day awaken to the fact that these people were not her biological parents. On the basis of this she becomes what she has always been, Chinese. Or, another example, on the basis of living in a country where there are many snakes, while walking outside in the dark night, you see a rope and think it is a snake, and then many fears arise. If you then take out your torch and focus it at the snake, then on the basis of seeing that it is in fact a rope, you awaken from these fears.

From the ground comes the bewilderment therefore bewilderment must wake up, or dissolve itself, or vanish, *on* the ground. In sleep you could wake up from unconsciousness inside a dream but this is still a form of unconsciousness and you are still confused. It is necessary to wake up *on*

consciousness free of all unconsciousness, that is, on awareness. A prince becomes a king *on* his parents, that is to say, it is on the basis of having royal parents that the prince is entitled to be king. If a thief steals money he *has* money but the situation is unstable because the money does not really belong to him. But if a man inherits money from his father, this money is really his on the basis of his father. It is *on* the fact of his father being his father that he has the money. It is *on* the fact of our source, our ground, that we awaken. What is truly ours arises on, and from, and in, the ground. It is ours, it is us, but not as a personal, private or separate possession.

It is not about developing something new. For fundamental awakening, all the rich creativity of your imagination is not required. Imagining new possibilities and developing new technologies will not lead to enlightenment. Enlightenment is the awakening of the potentiality of the ground. It is not something new. It can't be purchased, or made. It is always present as the ground of every experience.

DHARMATĀ

The knower, awareness itself, our own presence, does not make or do anything but remains true to its own nature without being artificial. Even great scholars are not able to construct it. When we become distracted we can go under the power of various tendencies such as a helpless drifting (*'Bying-Ba*) and sinking (*'Thibs-Pa*). With drifting (*'Bying-Ba*), like a tired swimmer who has no energy left but is kept going by the force of the waves, the meditator has no energy to maintain clarity and direction and is moved hither and thither by the waves of thoughts, feelings and so on. With sinking (*'Thibs-Pa*), the overpowering forces get stronger, increasing one's helpless confusion. Yet the mind itself is never trapped in the prison of these experiences, therefore stay present on the knower itself and whatever is arising will go free by itself without causing help or harm.

Dharmatā is infinite like the sky. It is the actuality of our true nature. It is our ground and so is described as the mother. Our ordinary mind that has been mixed with confusion needs to recognise the mother and to join with it again like a child returning home. If this is experienced, we will not go under the power of lazy distraction and will not get lost and will abide in the house of the Dharmadhātu. If you do this you will have full awareness and be integrated with the Dharmadhātu and so be able to work continuously for the benefit of others.

We must understand Dharmatā or actuality clearly. It is *rJen-Pa*, raw, naked, without secrets, our direct original nature. It is emptiness, *sūnyatā*, thusness, Tathata, Sugatagarbha, Tathatagarbha, the ground or basis of all the Buddhas. If you understand this then all that can be seen or experienced is immediately and directly known (*sNang-Rig*). With this there is great clarity inseparable from emptiness (*gSal-sTong*).

When this is awakened to your body and your world are like a rainbow. If you see *sūnyatā* directly you will not have any sins or obscuration – when the sun rises all the darkness and cold immediately clears. Flesh, blood, and bone are ended and the light body is gained (*'Ja-'Od Thig-Le'i-Khams*).

This term also indicates that when we understand Dharmatā, spheres of light (*Thig-Le*) are seen in front of our eyes. At first they are black and white, and then four or five come one after another in a row, or like a lotus petal, or move, going away and coming towards the eye.

This term also indicates that all that is in the Dharmadhātu is in the form of spheres of light. This is radiance without substance; appearance, clarity and awareness inseparable from emptiness. With the wisdom of all-encompassing awareness the other four are automatically present for

they are its qualities – just as when one walks in the sunlight one’s shadow is automatically immediately there.

From this rainbow-light the symbols of the meditation deities manifest, for example vajra and bell for Dorje Dragpo Tsal and a vajra for Dorje Zhonu, and one manifests full awakening with the five kāya modes of enlightened being, and the five jñāna wisdoms. In this way we gain or awaken to the full primordially pure original śūnyatā nature.

OUR TRUE NATURE

Our true nature (*Ngo-Bo*), is unborn depth. It is awareness inseparable from space and depth (*dhātu*) which is emptiness. It is essential to focus on this, your own nature. This is the infinite space of awareness in your own heart where awareness emerges as a point. This is the heart point (*sNyīng-Thig*) – in the heart there is one empty point which is the form of emptiness, of śūnyatā. This is the site of awareness. If it is blocked by blood then one dies.

From this point, natural clarity (*Rang-bZhin*), the inherent quality of our true nature, radiates as a sphere of five colours within the heart. With this our energy or compassion (*Thugs-rje*) emerges as the display of the activities of the components or skandhas, potentials or dhātus, and so on, as a light form in a world of light forms. Our awareness (*vidya*) is simply knowing, pure knowing. *Ngo-Bo*, *Rang-bZhin* and *Thugs-rje* are its modes of knowing, its non-dual ‘object’ (*dhātu*) and all that appears in the space of dhātu.

Liberation lies in recognising and keeping to our true nature (*Ngo-Bo*), and not getting seduced by the magnificence of self-display (*Rang-bZhin*). As long as there is any resting on or in what arises, there is no security. The secure place of Vajradhara (*rDo-rje ‘Chang-Gi-bTsan-Sa*) is Dharmadhātu. This is the direct experience or knowing of the infinite openness of one’s being. All relative identities, whether as hell-being or as heruka, are the manifesting of dependent co-origination (*rTen-Ching Brel-Bar ‘Byung-Ba*) and so are not ultimate. They are not the natural unchanging situation. If our true nature (*Ngo-Bo*) is directly experienced, not one atom of arising need be rejected because then one sees that everything is non-dual radiance.

But if this is not realised then there is grasping at entities and then karma is produced and one finds oneself wandering in the six realms. One’s behaviour becomes artificial and full of contrivance (*bCos-bCas bZo-Byed*). Interfering with whatever is occurring, the mind is kept busy and is unable to rest in its own place (*Rang-Sar Ma-bZhag-Pa*). Thus due to reification and dualistic vision one experiences fixation and polarisation, involvement of subject and object, and karmic activity.

ATIYOGA AND ADIYOGA

The great perfection or completion, Dzogpachenpo (*rDzogs-Pa Chen-Po*), is also known as Atiyoga or Adiyoga. Ati means topmost, the very highest. Adi means primordial, prime, before mind became false. This teaching appears in three sections or groups. There is the mind section (*Sems-sDe*). This points out that everything is the mind, mind does everything, there is nothing else. Everything is emptiness but it is mind that gives rise to everything. Even emptiness, śūnyatā, is known by mind. The space section (*kLong-dDe*) points out that everything is śūnyatā, infinite depth and expanse. *kLong* is the vastness in which everything is emptiness. It is infinite space itself. The instruction section (*Man-Ngag-sDe*) offers the teachings of the mind and space sections in a form that can be practised.

VAIROCANA AND SRI SINHA

Vairocana had received many teachings from Sri Sinha but still he was not satisfied so Sri Sinha said,

ཚོས་ཀྱི་དབྱིངས་ལ་ཟད་མེད་ཀྱང་།

དེ་བཞིན་ཉིད་ཀྱི་གཅིག་ཤེས་ན།

མ་ལུས་དེ་ལ་ཡོངས་སུ་རྫོགས།

དེ་ལས་ཡོད་ན་ སིངྩ་ཀྱན།

“Although infinite hospitality is never exhausted,

if you know the true nature of just one thing

then you will have complete knowledge of all.

I, Sri Sinha promise this.”

Sri Sinha is saying to Vairocana: you are not satisfied but the Dharmadhātu never finishes so how will you gain full knowledge? How can you possibly keep track of every teaching? But if you know the nature of just one thing, if you see its actuality, its thusness, it's Tathata directly, then that is enough. I promise that there is nothing more than this. This points to the fact that the result naturally comes out, it is naturally revealed within ('Bras-Bu Rang-Chas-Su sTon-Pa). There is no end to looking if you look in the wrong place. Don't look at the object. Don't look at the current content of the subject. Look at the looker. By being the looker enter the situation of non-dual presence and then everything is clear.

C. R. LAMA ON HIS THRONE

Mindfulness is the middle way. To be mindful is to be present, not going to the left or right, not leaping forward and not falling back. For example, when I was young and living in my monastery I sat on a throne like the other high lamas although I did not know very much at that time. At the end of the public rituals, sponsors and other people would come forward to present ceremonial scarves and offerings. When I was presented with a scarf I had to lean forward and drape it around the sponsor's neck. However not every sponsor offered me a scarf. I had to be ready to bend forward if one was offered and to sit still in equanimity if one was not offered. If I leaned forward when one was not offered or sat still when one was offered, my teacher who was sitting beside me, would hit me on the back of the head. Thus I was trained in mindfulness.

THE KING TRIES TO HELP HIS PEOPLE

It is very important for human beings not to waste their life in laziness. However it is also important not to waste your life in unhelpful or unproductive activity. For example, when King Srongtsen Gampo first converted to Buddhism he became very inspired by the beautiful vision of love and compassion that he learned about. He looked around him at his people and saw how different they each were. Some were sick and some were healthy. Some were beautiful and some were ugly. Some were rich and some were poor. He realised that even as a great king he could not alter people's health or beauty by a law, however he could change their financial circumstances. So he published an edict declaring that at the end of the month all the wealth of the country was to be gathered together.

A great mountain of possessions was created and this was then redistributed fairly amongst all the people of Tibet. "Ah", he thought, "now my people should be happy." However after a year he noticed that again some people were rich and some people were poor so he arranged another redistribution. At the end of that year, again he saw that some were rich and some were poor. This awakened in him a direct understanding of the power of karma. What arises manifests the energy and consequence of actions performed long before. No matter how he tried to impose justice, the individual patterns of people's karma caused them to experience precisely their own share of the world.

If we want to help people the key focus has to be on helping them to cut the root of duality for it is this root which generates all the many karmic tendencies and impulses. Trying to alter the patterns of behaviour from outside is doomed to failure. That is why we must recognise and work with circumstances and the precise capacity of different individuals.

DORJE AND BELL

The Tibetan word for a small bell is *Dril-Bu*; *Dril* means sound. Different kinds of drilbu are described in tantras such as the Hevajra tantra, the Kalachakra tantra, the Vajrakilaya tantra and so on and they are also mentioned in Kriyayoga tantras. The mansion or palace of Kalachakra is shaped like a bell.

Instructions for building stupas include the making of a chain of bells, drilbu, around the stupa and the consecration ceremony for the stupa also makes reference to these drilbu.

Monasteries have a bell to waken the monks and another big bell is used during invitations and blessings in the rituals. There are also bells used as wind chimes to remind people of the thirty-seven Bodhisattva practices. Some sutras describe how a bell was tied on an elephant's trunk and then the person whom the elephant touched with its trunk was recognised as a king.

Such bells did not have symbols on them unlike the Tibetan drilbu bells which have om a hung cast inside them at the top, in the area called the 'drilbu's womb'. Some drilbus, like mine, have no images cast inside them and these are called *Myangs-'Das Dril-Bu*, paranirvana drilbus. They were cast when Shakyamuni Buddha died and so were called 'sadness bells'. One hundred and eight such bells were made and many of them, including mine, came to Tibet with the Bodhisattva Atiśa Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna. They were made in different sizes. Mine has a silver head, as do all the original bells. Later copies were made and their heads are of mixed metals.

Drilbus are classified according to shape, for example with five or nine prongs, or according to the country where they were made, or according to the ornamentation on the 'skirts'.

Shapes include those of Uddiyana, Nalanda and Bodhgaya. There is a Nepalese style which differs from that in other countries. In Upper Tibet and Tsang they use a bell which is sometimes wrongly called a Tashilhunpo drilbu since this shape is used in other monasteries also, such as in Khordong monastery. Other bells are the Tsa-dril, Hor-dril, Shing-dril [of the Shan dynasty], Chang-dril, Tsok-dril, Nyarong-dril, Derge-dril, Den-dril, Lhasa-dril, Shigatse-dril, Kalimpong-dril, Bir-dril, Clementown-dril, Nepali-dril, Rajpur-dril, Byalakuppe-dril and so on.

Gold, silver, lead, copper, tin, bronze and iron are the metals used for making dorjes and drilbu as well as alloys such as tung, an alloy similar to pewter which is white in colour and less valuable than silver. Jang (*Ijang*) is a pure metal and should it get broken when it is old, the inside metal has the colour of jade. Jang (*Ijang*) is also an area where jade comes from. Large bells, cymbals, long-life vases, bumpas and butterlamps can also be made of this metal and some of the bumpas have fingerprints visible on the metal.

Bells make different sounds according to the proportions of the various metals used. If there is a lot of gold, the bell sounds hung hung hung. If there is a lot of silver, the bell sounds shung shung shung. If there is a lot of tung white metal, the bell sounds chag, chag, chag. In the Indian system eight metals were used and the proportions varied.

Regarding their shape, the dorje and the drilbu have the same number of prongs. Padmasambhava's termas describe nine-pronged ones and these are used only in the Nyingma practices.

The dorje is a symbol of strength. There is an account of one yogi who died and attained the vajra body, with all his finger joints being separate vajras and his forearms like the vajra of Indra, which is a different shape from the Tibetan vajra. Vajra is something that is very strong and cannot be destroyed. When deities hold a vajra it is a symbol of victory and subduing.

Some tantras refer to a dorje with a hundred prongs, *rDo-rJe rTse-brGya-Pa* and there are also dorjes with four and with five prongs. The prongs pointing up represent the male dhyani Buddhas and the prongs pointing down represent the female dhyani Buddhas. The central prong represents Vairocana. To the East is Vajrasattva, the South is Ratnasambhava, to the West is Amitabha and to the North is Amoghasiddhi.

On the drilbu, below the figure on the shaft and starting under the deity's nose, that is to say, in the East, there are five letters, མུལ་ལམ་མཎ་པཎ་ཏཎ་ Mum Lam Mam Pam Tam. These are symbols for the five female dhyani Buddhas and these letters are the equivalent of the five lower prongs on the dorje. Sometimes there are eight letters, but this is not correct. If there are eight letters, these are ཏཎ་མུལ་མཎ་པཎ་མཎ་ཏཎ་མུལ་མཎ་པཎ་ Tam Mam Lam Pam Mam Tsum Pam Bhrum. These eight letters would correspond to the eight lotus petals around the 'waist' of the dorje, which signify the eight Bodhisattvas and their eight consorts.

Regarding the ornamentation of the drilbu, the eight water-monster (*Chu-Srin*) heads, represent the eight consciousnesses. The long jeweled garlands hanging from their mouths are a symbol of the purification of the obscurations, klesas and also represent the decorations on the outer walls of the mandala. The four drops at the end of tassels signify the 'four immeasurables', love, compassion, joy and equanimity.

Between the water-monsters' faces there may be ornaments symbolising the eight great Bodhisattvas. The sequence starts from the East, below the deity's nose. It may be the eight auspicious ornaments which can vary and may include a wheel or moon, a jewel, a lotus, a knife, crossed vajras, a single vajra, flowers and other additional things. These ornaments are a symbol for the Rupakāya and the eight upper letters are a symbol of the Dharmakāya.

Around the rim at the base of the bell, enclosed within two rows of pearls, is a ring of upright vajras, forming a vajra fence or protective circle (*Srung-'Khor*).

Around the top of the bell, between two rings of pearls, there is a ring of horizontal vajras, a protective circle representing the boundary of samsara and nirvana and the eight or sixteen emptinesses.

Inside the bell, the upper part of the bell represents Dharmakāya and the lower part represents Rupakāya, that is, the Sambhogakāya and the Nirmāṇakāya.

The bell does not vary according to the mandala practice, nor to the tantra nor to the school, however in general we Nyingmapa use a five-pronged dorje and drilbu for peaceful practices and a nine-pronged dorje and drilbu for wrathful practices.

At the base of the upper handle of a five-pointed drilbu there can be a long-life vase (*Tshe-Bum*) with jewels. A nine-pronged drilbu will not have such a long-life vase but instead will have an open ring through which you can put your finger when doing certain practices, such as wrathful dances.

Regarding the use of the dorje and bell, other than when we are reciting mantras, we should hold the dorje and bell all the time, keeping the dorje upright, with the prongs representing the male Dhyani Buddhas on top. Since there is no way by looking to tell the difference between the top and the bottom of the dorje, we need to do something to help us, such as marking the dorje at the time of initiation or at its consecration. Especially when doing Vajrasattva practice we should hold the vajra, or dorje, because Vajrasattva belongs to the vajra family. At other times, according to Jangter and Khordong practice, we hold the dorje at our chest, using the thumb and three middle fingers of our right hand and with our left hand holding the bell at our left knee. When we are saying a prayer, we can hold the dorje and bell, or if we do not have them, simply hold our hands in the prayer mudra.

When we lay them down, the Jangter system is to place the drilbu facing east towards you, with the dorje laid across in front of it, not touching. The upper part of the dorje should be on your left, the lower part on your right. When picking them up, pick them both up at the same time.