
The Nature of Tantra:
includes Chenrezig practice

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Excerpts

“...It’s not that you either have faith or you don’t have faith. It’s that faith arises from causes and if we find that the flame of faith is going down we can attend to the causes and then it will go back up again. It’s a very simple approach to things and in fact is very important because the power is in our hands. We are the ones who can direct our own inspiration; we are not puppets dependent on forces from far away. ”



“...If we are mainly practising with a primary spiritual intention of developing wisdom and compassion, then probably one practice done regularly and with faith and with understanding of the meaning of the practice, that’s more powerful than anything else...”



“...One aspect of tantra is that it’s a system of magic. And by magic I mean that it involves the idea that mentally developed symbols or symbolic practices or rituals will have a transformatory effect in the world. So that there are mantras for stopping the rain, for starting the rain, for curing smallpox. There’s mantras for almost anything. And that’s called magic. In Tibetan it’s called magic too. It’s the same kind of thing..”.



“...But the other main aspect of Tantric practices is that they are designed to soften up the world. If this little wooden table in front of me is solid wood and as wood, as a hard thing is separate and exists in itself, then the table and myself are two separate entities. So the reality of the table is the parallel but separate reality of myself. But both the philosophical position and the meditation experience of emptiness are all serving to undermine the sense of a real separation between a hard wooden table out there and some kind of soft, invisible mind inside which is apprehending it through these water-bubble eyes...”

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OK. So Hello. My apologies for being late, but that's my luck and our luck. If we start in our usual way with this refuge and bodhicitta ... start with this three times and then we'll get into what we're about. So I don't know what tune you sing it to here, but if you start and I will join in. I will let you lead because every place I go people sing these things to different melodies.

Last time I was here I talked a little bit about tantra and I'll return to that theme this time. And what I'll do is this afternoon make some general remarks, bringing up the theoretical underpinnings of the practice of tantra and then tomorrow go through a practice that is often done in this centre, the Chenrezig practice, and through making some commentary on that, bring out how the philosophy is informing the structure of the practice.

The relationship between theory and practice is very interesting. It's certainly been a concern in European philosophy in the last two hundred years. Some times it manifests as a discussion between the relationship between metaphysics and ethics, and sometimes between a discussion of a theory of economics and the possibilities of transformational revolution, as in Marxist dialectic. And I think generally there is the idea that if you understand the principles of something, if you understand how things actually work, then when you come into engaging with the world, with an engagement that's informed by this practice, you're probably on the healthiest ground.

In a traditional Tibetan monastic setting young monks or young nuns would start to memorise texts and start to hear some commentaries on texts concerned with the way the world is structured. They would learn logic, which would be an analysis of wrong views and false propositions, and they would learn to review the world in terms of a theory of causation. In particular they would study the idea of dependent origination.

This is an idea that whatever we see manifesting around us arises as a meeting place of many different lines of causation and that what we take to be a simple discrete object is actually like a very busy market place where many forces are meeting together, but because the forces are meeting so quickly it appears as if they are fixed in a place; a bit like if you go to the cinema the film is going so quickly through the projector that you get the illusion that something fixed is being presented in front of you. And by the analysis of the various stages or the various components of forces coming together to create the illusion of things that exist in truth, there is a space in which one is not so seduced by the immediate presence of the image.

That is to say an analytic attitude is built into the Tibetan monastic tradition which acts always to try and cool down the impulse that we have just to rush into situations and just to take them at face value. And this idea of dependent origination finds a visible, visual expression in this motif, the Tibetan wheel of life, which I would imagine everyone has seen. And in the outer circle where there are twelve stages, or twelve *nidanas*, which represent the sequencing of moving from one life into the next. You'll find accounts of these, very clear accounts, in many books that are available in German so I won't go into the details of them of these twelve *nidanas*.

And just really wanting to point out that in the twelve years of training that young monks and nuns would do in the monastery for their preliminary training they would spend a lot of time in quite a rigorous philosophical training, critical, giving critical attention to the various postulates or propositions of different view, different schools of Buddhism. And at the same time these young monks and nuns would be saying their prayers every day. First thing in the morning and last thing at night. And the prayers they would say would be kinds of prayers that you might say here like prayer to the twenty-one Taras, prayers to Guru Rinpoche, but many of these prayers are structured on the basis of a request. On the principle, "you big strong person

up there please take care of and give good things to little small nice person down here.” So two streams are being developed in this kind of education. One is learning a lot of the kind of theory of Buddhism, the way that Buddhism understands the four elements, the nature of rebirth and learning to be logical, to be critical, to challenge other people’s points of view, and as a parallel stream a lot of very simple, almost naïve devotion of the heart just moving out in a very simple direction.

These two streams in a sense merge together in the practice of tantra, because in order to do a Tantric kind of meditation one has to have faith. One has to believe first of all that the practice will be helpful and part of that is believing that the deity that you are meditating on will be helpful to you so that a kind of openness of the heart to the deity that one is meditating on is absolutely vital. And in that moment one should have no doubt. However one also needs I think a distillation of a critical understanding of the structure of the practice in order to understand why this is a suitable practice to do and why faith is a proper thing to have.

The Buddha taught many times about the nature of impermanence and I guess if we’ve been practising for some time (and I think many people here have practised for many years) you’ll be quite aware of impermanence as something that’s all around us. Particularly if we link the idea of impermanence to the underlying principle of dependent or co-emergent origination in which whatever is manifesting is there because of the meeting together of many different causal forces.

This understanding of impermanence and dependent origination would point us to the impossibility of object constancy in our world. Objects are always changing. As the Buddha said many times, everything arises from causes. If the cause ceases the manifestation ceases. Because of this there are no things which are essentially, of their essence, pure and no things that are essentially, of their essence, impure. The confusion that arises in a cultish approach to faith is that some particular person or some particular ideas is essentially correct in itself, and everyone else who doesn’t hold this is essentially wrong.

The teaching, the early teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha are collected together in three groupings called the Tripitaka or the Three Baskets. One deals with a rigorous analytical approach to the nature of the world. This in Sanskrit called Abhidharma. And one section deals with morality, with various rules and instructions about how one should live. And the third deals with, the Sutra section, deals with stories and parables and teaching accounts to make clear the nature of practice and to reflect on how one should be in the world.

This balancing between these three points is very important. This is an absolute safeguard against Buddhism ever becoming a mindless cult. And that in a similar way this education that I’ve pointed to where these young people are encouraged to develop an open-hearted faith and at the same time a very critical analytic questioning of things, these two things act as a very nice balance to each other. They speak to an integration of the head and the heart to bring about a healthy fulfilment of human potential.

One of our problems in the West is that we are often very busy, often we don’t have much time to study the background of Buddhism philosophy and we often come into the practice because we meet a lama who inspires us in some way and we feel a connection with that person and with the practice and we enter into it in that way, which is if you like through the heart. Now hopefully that inspiration and that kind of faith will continue for a long time, for many years until one dies, however the Buddha taught that everything’s impermanent and that everything arises from a cause and it may be that the good karma or the causal force that gives

rise to this inspiration gets a bit wobbly after a while. This shouldn't surprise us. We shouldn't think "Oh I'm a very bad person I've lost all my faith what should I do? Now I'll never get enlightened." and take up a kind of Christian story-telling of this.

It's not that you either have faith or you don't have faith and if you don't have faith you are damned. It's that faith arises from causes and if we find that the flame of faith is going down we can attend to the causes and then it will go back up again. It's a very simple approach to things and in fact is very important because the power is in our hands. We are the ones who can direct our own inspiration, we are not puppets dependent on forces from far away.

So just in that simple example we can see how theory and practice work together - that we start to do a practice dependent on our faith. We become aware that we don't do the practice so much and sort of the energy starts to drift away from it, we can then use theory, the teaching of the Buddha to understand why that is happening and by understanding why it is happening we can then apply an antidote to bring about what we want.

The Buddha taught that the way to enlightenment is to develop wisdom and compassion. And compassion is often expressed as being "method" in Tibetan. And in its most precise form "wisdom" means the understanding of emptiness, and I'll say something more about emptiness shortly, and compassion and method, that is to say everything that arises is compassion. It's the Buddha's compassion because it's there for us to use and it's our compassion because we make use of it. So that the world exists as method. There is nothing in this world that has to be discarded as part of our practice. Everything can be a method. But often we get a bit heavy, we get a bit stupid, a bit obsessed, and at that time we just get caught up in a particular way of reacting to situations where we don't see any possibility of method, we are just in it and it's at that point that if we have studied the dharma as a system of methods we may be on the basis of the learnt experience of trying to apply, through our practice, to put the theory into practice, we will then have an efficiency, an ease of movement with these methods, in a real-life situation.

Because there are two views on meditation, one is that meditation is some how a place that is time out from the problems of the world, it's establishing a little island of nirvana in the hellish samsara of the rest of our lives. And the other way would be to see meditation as a kind of training camp where we go in order to practice very hard so that we become competent in skills which we can take out into life.

So that in the first view there is the idea that this world is bad place, a very dangerous place, and that what one can try to do is to get in touch with a much nicer place. And so one has to cut off one's links with the bad place, a bit like in many kind of rehabilitation programmes for drug addicts. Say somebody's using a lot of drugs and they live in the city and when they walk down the street they can see which people look as if they're also using drugs, and where they can get them from. So that kind of world is dangerous but also exciting. It moves up and down a lot. And the person might decide "Ah it's getting too much. I'm going to stop." So they have a friend who has a little house in the country and they go out there and they say "I am going to stay here for a week and I'm going to come off by myself. And I know if I phone any of my friends I want them all to say "No we're not going to bring you any drugs"" and they sit there shivering. But then after a few days they're back in the city and buying their drugs again and they're feeling better.

Some of us may recognise our own meditation practice in this example. That we would like to get out of samsara, which is an exciting and dangerous place, so we decide we will do a little retreat or we will do our practice every day and we say "No, no, two hours a day I am going to sit there and do this" and then the telephone rings. "No, no, I'm not answering the phone any

more.” and the phone rings “Hello, I’m doing my meditation” “What aha aha” and next thing you’re in the bar and “Hey it’s nice to see you!”

One might do this for a while and then decide “No, I’ve got to do it seriously” just like a drug addict might decide “No, now I am going into a rehab unit. Six months I’m going to live in a little farm place in the country and do all this healthy stuff - macrobiotic diet and lots of encounter groups to talk about my addiction and how I really want to change and then I come back and live in a new city where I don’t know anyone who takes drugs.”

So there’s a lot of intentional striving but underneath something else is cooking and eventually you meet someone or you’re at a party and then you see people going into the back room and they’re taking some drugs and hey, ... back in the cycle. So the cycle of trying come off the drugs goes on again.

A parallel with meditation would be you decide that doing little bits of retreat aren’t enough, you are going to go to India for a year and in India you’ll see all these great lamas and go and live in a cave up in the hills and really finish your Ngöndro and ... everything will be strong and clear. But then you have to leave India and you come back to your own country and your friends are there and they are happy to see you and the invite you out and gradually the daily practice of meditation gets worn down and you have no money and your parents say “Get a job” and you get a job and you’re back in the old cycle of there being not so much time for meditation and losing direction.

Now for people who do drugs the problem is usually easier because either you die or you come off. The impulse, the karma behind it, whatever drives it, the rage with the parents, gets exhausted. But for would-be meditators it’s more difficult because the good Doctor Buddha has point out that we are addicted not just to things like drugs, but to five poisons. And I don’t think that there’s any research evidence that these five poisons burn themselves out by themselves, they seem to just keep running along quite nicely. So we can’t really just wait patiently for the ending of samsara, that would be a very long time.

The reason I have set it down in this way because I think this points to the way in which if one sees samsara and nirvana as essentially different, that one wants to get rid of the bad samsara and get more and more of the good nirvana, one gets pushed into an oppositional place where it’s very difficult to separate out these things. For the addict may be free of drugs in the rehabilitation centre, but living in a rehabilitation centre is not exactly ordinary life. And we may be able to find a better practice if we were living in India in the mountains or if we were to become a monk or a nun and live in that kind of way.

But for whatever reason it looks like you people in this room haven’t decided to live like that. You’ve decided to live in a town in Germany. And so the practice of tantra which seeks to integrate faith and analysis, wisdom and method, samsara and nirvana, is particularly useful to us.

Rather than seeing samsara as the enemy, or the five poisons as murderous poisons, they are seen as opportunities for learning something. That is to say it’s not seeing the error as one of essence, that somehow samsara, whatever or wherever it is, is a bad place and we have to leave that bad place and go somewhere else because samsara in itself is bad, that is to say it’s not a theory of being, rather it is a theory of becoming which deals with the way in which the world reveals itself to us and we reveal ourselves to ourselves. So tantra is concerned really with becoming and it starts from the notion of emptiness. And emptiness which is a very difficult

concept and in many ways as a concept is confusing, in many ways it's a concept which refers to an experience or a moment which cannot be conceptualised, and so the very speaking of the word "emptiness" may create more problems than it solves - it's pointing towards something but the word and the conceptualisation around it fills the space before you get to the experience and so it's a kind of.. in the movement towards wisdom it makes you stupid because you never feel that you've understood it.

But one way of expressing some of the sense of emptiness would be to say "It's that about which nothing can be said." It's the ground from manifestation arises and all thought arises and yet it is itself not an object of thought or construction. And this sense of emptiness is the founding moment, or the beginning point of the practise of tantra. Without some sense of this one is simply engaged in meditation in an elaborate construction of a dream.

The Buddha taught many things about the nature of duality, the way in which we live as we have inside us a mind that is going out and grasping things which exist outside us as real objects. And that we know that some objects, when we are in touch with them, make us happy and other objects, when we are in touch with them, make us sad. So we try to live all the time in happiness by pushing away disagreeable objects and bringing towards us happiness-inducing objects. And when we are unsuccessful in managing this control of the world then when we are small we say, "Mummy, Mummy, Mummy, something very bad has happened. Make the bad thing go away." And then Mummy comes and kissing, and now all the bad things go away and then you feel much better.

And this is the basic principle of prayer. "Oh big god, oh big Buddha, Tara, Chenrezig, somebody, I don't who it is... come now please because it's all very horrible and Uhh." Rainbow light comes and then you feel much better. You go all the way to India and you go and see the Dalai Lama or someone like that and he puts something on your head and everyone comes out with a big smile. "Oh" and it makes you feel very good and then you go and eat some Tibetan food and drink some Tibetan beer and life becomes normal and problematic again and that glow fades away.

And it has to be like that because of the nature of impermanence and the nature of dependent origination. There is no way that anybody, no matter how powerful they were, put something on the top of your head will get you free from suffering forever. This is "kiss me Mummy" territory. It's not the dharma. I say it's not the dharma although clearly it's a major part of dharma culture. When I say that it's not the dharma I mean it's not primarily concerned with bringing liberation. It brings comfort. And of course as a compassionate act there's nothing wrong with comforting people but if we imagine that comforting people takes away the root cause of their distress then that's foolish.

Tantra belongs in the Mahayana dharma and the beginning of the Mahayana dharma is usually to take a bodhisattva vow. And the basis of the bodhisattva ideal is that I will dedicate my energy from now until forever pretty well for the sake of all beings. Because one is saying that I will take on the sufferings of other people and I will use any happiness that I have, any understanding that I have, I will use this to help other people and through helping other people I'll be in contact with their suffering. I won't be turning my head away. I won't be saying take this bad things away from me, but I will actually be turning myself towards whatever bad things are around and making myself available to be in contact with that.

Now it's not that we are going to save all beings by becoming some big Mama or big Papa in the sky with all sorts of magical powers and then send down all these rainbows to save people,

that clearly is not how it works. If that was how it worked it would already have ended because if there's any truth in the dharma somebody's already arrived, and if they've arrived and they had these powers, why aren't they using them? So clearly that's not how it's structured. There are many stories structured in that way in the dharma but these are tales for children.

Rather it's the other way round, it's through understanding emptiness, through understanding openness, that rather than becoming big and big and powerful and powerful and then sending down good things to other people, one becomes smaller and smaller and smaller and vaster and vaster and vaster and so compassion becomes all-pervasive, not as an opposite, not from somewhere else on top of a mountain from some pure Buddha-land, but moving integrated through the texture of life. Because clearly if the idea of non-duality, of emptiness as a place without centre and circumference, is real then all the stories of Buddha realms which are in the western or in the southern direction, are only in relative truth. That is not really how things are structured.

With this understanding of emptiness as a state of openness which is only delimited when we set, through our conceptualising process in our own mind, when we set a boundary saying "this is this, this is that, this is me, this is not me", by establishing these conceptual boundaries it is as if we divide the world up into subject and object. When this is relaxed down through the meditation into a state of openness, that openness is without boundary. It is infinite.

And then in that state, whatever arises is simply the manifestation of openness that arises and passes back. And so there is this endless spiralling as in the traditional example of reflections arising and passing back into the mirror. The mirror itself is without any particular form in terms of content. And the word "tantra" means "connection" or "continuity" and the essence of Tantric practice is to experience for oneself the absolute connectedness of everything that is occurring so that in the meditation when one does the dissolving, and we'll go into all the details of this later, when one does the dissolving, at that moment if thoughts arise, if good thoughts arise, bad thoughts arise, whatever is arising is if you can experience that as the manifestation of openness and not as something arriving (clap clap) into contact with a subject's self. If you can stay open and experience the flowing through without organising, categorising, naming, labelling, placing, then you experience directly the continuity of samsara and nirvana arriving in this open space of Dharmadhatu.

Then in that moment there is no bad samsara to get out of. There is no good nirvana to get into. There is just the totally relaxed openness of this flow of whatever is arising. But then as we arise out of the meditation and encounter the phenomena of our ordinary world it is as if these phenomena of our ordinary world had certain hooks in them that were pulling us back into a more solid way of perceiving things. So just as the drug addict who has been in the rehab goes back to his town and he goes into a little café and there's somebody there who comes up and says "Hey I've just got some really nice powder" and at that word 'powder' there's a kind of embodied movement. Although you don't want to... Mmm.

Now the addict can say, "Well this is powder; I don't want it, I'm going to have an orange juice." or "I'm going to leave the café" There is somewhere else to go. But for us meditators, as soon as we open our eyes everything is very familiar and it's as if the whole world is this addictive powder that pulls us back to seeing things as they normally appear, as separate, as dualistic. So where can we go to get away from that?

We might decide we can never come out of this meditation so we have to stay in our meditation, getting thinner and thinner like some kind of paranoid agoraphobic. But then we

would just be again separating, setting up this boundary of a good place inside meditation, and a bad place outside meditation. The movement of tantra is always to soften these boundaries to find the points of continuity and flow and not split the world up into separate different experience....

[Break]

And this is why at the end of a meditation, say we've been visualising Tara or Chenrezig, at the end of the meditation as we come out we try to see that everything that is in front of us has the form of Chenrezig, has the nature of the form of Chenrezig - appearance and emptiness. All sound is like mantra, sound and emptiness. Because it's through this practice that one is trying to link the vision of the meditation with the ordinary experience of the world, not as two separate things, but bringing them together. Whatever is there it has these hooks, this addictive quality to make is separate, but we, instead of trying to push it away, we welcome the world; we say "Yes this is Chenrezig." and all that arises that would normally be addictive and dualistic we integrate into this one point of understanding - this is the deity and the deity is emptiness.

So everything goes back into emptiness. Because as long as we see the world as terrible and dangerous and enlightenment and spiritual understanding as precious and we have to keep these two things apart, then it's like somebody who has got a precious diamond, they are frightened that somebody is going to steal it and so the world becomes a dangerous place full of exciting samsaric experiences which will steal out little bit on enlightenment away. So we live in this paranoid, "How can I hang on to this wonderful experience from the initiation?" and "I'll go out there and my mother will talk to me and I'll get upset and I'll lose the whole thing." This is simply to remain in duality and to be in fact frightened of the world and if you are frightened of people and if you are frightened of people you have broken you bodhisattva vow.

So maybe it would be useful to talk in pairs for about ten minutes and just see if you have any questions or reflections on this, whether it makes some sense to you or not, or whether you can see it having some relevance to your own experience of practice and then we'll come together again for a final fifteen minutes or so before we stop at six thirty. And I'll say a little bit more about emptiness at that time and I'll respond to any questions that you have. We'll stop at half past six I think. So if you'd like to talk in pairs then.

(Bell)

OK any thoughts of questions or things you'd like to take up?

[How long one should do a practice? How many months, how many years? Should one go on until one reaches realisation or ...? I never know?]

Until you die anyway. I mean generally in the Tibetan idea it's that with this idea of dependent origination whatever we manage to experience in our life, our luck our karma, the nature of our body, our situation, our health, intelligence, all the rest of it, it's always dependent on these different forces, and when these forces don't meet any more that situation falls apart. And that's very much what happens when we die. So in the period after we die we are particularly vulnerable because in losing our body we are losing a very familiar reference point.

And the idea is that the mind continues, but clearly the body is left behind. But the mind creates a kind of illusory body around it because it still can't quite believe that it's dead, that it's lost its body. Now that's a time when there's no firm point to return to and so the clearer one is in having a mental returning point, since the body has been lost, the better one is.

So in many ways the practice is directed towards the long term end of total enlightenment, but in particular it has to be for protecting oneself at the point of death and that the more that one is doing a practice which feels an automatic extension of oneself, that the practice is oneself, that we are the practice, then when the ordinary frame through which we define ourselves vanishes, that feeling, that continuity will continue. Just the way maybe if you watch gymnastics, you know these kids, they practise and practise everyday and they are able they run, run, run and bup! and then their body is just doing all of this stuff. They've learned it and it's flowing right through. They don't need to think. The thinking will get in the way. And that's really how we have to be. The meditation is just like eating and walking and breathing - it's our life.

The goal and structure of tantra

I think all Tantric practices all have the same structure, they are all heading for the same goal and there is this question, in the Tibetan tradition there are many, many different deities and there are many, many different practices and when people have been around in the dharma for a while they get different initiations and then they learn different practices and the question is always "well should I do all of these practices or is doing one enough?" and I think it is a very important question. Because is you have the idea that you know that Chenrezig is especially for compassion and that Guru Rinpoche is very powerful and he can do certain things to help you and Tara might be useful for protecting you from some things and Dorje Trollo might protect you from enemies or particular problems like that, then you can easily end up I think starting thinking "Oh at this moment this is my problem. I need to call on this person to help me with my problem." Because the problem with that construction is that it is as if you have a mandala and in the centre of the mandala is yourself with problems and you pull all of these powerful people to help you deal with the problem. Now that may be a construction that may be useful if you are a lama living in Tibetan and the way you make your money is by doing Tantric pujas for other people - it's a commercial transaction inside a symbolic field and it has a useful purpose in that it helps the whole dharma to be supported and to become part of that culture.

When I was first learning Tibetan I went to Bodhgaya and they used to sell lots of Tibetan books around the big temple and I bought lots of these little books and took them back to my teacher and said "Look I have all these wonderful books. Which one should I study." and he said, "Well this one is if someone has lost their cow. This is the prayer and the mantra you have to say to bring back the cow." Now clearly in Tibetan that is very important. If you are a villager and you lose your cow it's very important. you need to have the milk. You know it's something important. And if you believe that the thing that can protect you in life is the dharma then naturally the person you turn to for help is the lama. Now if the lama has a book with a prayer in it that he can read then the lama will feel confident that he is doing something helpful in the name of the Buddha to help this man have a cow. The man will be grateful, find his cow, make some milk, offer it... So you have a whole system of values moving round there. Some of them you could say are profane or worldly and some are spiritual and they are all mixed together.

But for us if we are mainly practising with a primary spiritual intention of developing wisdom and compassion, then probably one practice done regularly and with faith and with

understanding of the meaning of the practice, that's more powerful than anything else. However we also need to remember that we also live in a culture which is focused very much on the individual, on individual responsibility and on individual need. And Asian cultures are, as a social focus, are much more concerned with interdependence, with membership to an extended family.

Just as in European history when you have the movement of the Protestant Reformation, in the development of economic history you have the beginnings of capitalism in which people need to be motivated by an individual desire. The Protestant teaching of individual responsibility and the individual relationship with God helped to push people forward into an individualistic, striving, competitive approach which helped to fuel the capitalist revolution. Before that where you had a more Catholic culture in which you could buy a Papal Indulgence, you could pay a priest to say a Mass on your behalf, you could do confession and have somebody take away a sin from you; it was more a culture of interdependence.

Tibetan religious culture is very similar in its structure to medieval Christianity. It was very common in Tibetan to get local monastery to perform a puja, or if your mother died you would get them to do the bardo practice for her. So it was very much a thing that you give money and other people do a spiritual practice and then the blessing comes to you as if you had bought the blessing. That is a kind of transaction and in our modern world we think that it is a bit silly or magical, but it's part and parcel of that framework of an interdependent world where people play different roles but it all moves together for one purpose.

One aspect of tantra is that it's a system of magic. And by magic I mean that it involves the idea that mentally developed symbols or symbolic practices or rituals will have a transformatory effect in the world. So that there are mantras for stopping the rain, for starting the rain, for curing smallpox. There's mantras for almost anything. And that's called magic. In Tibetan it's called magic too. It's the same kind of thing.

But the other main aspect of Tantric practices is that they are designed to soften up the world. If this little wooden table in front of me is solid wood and as wood, as a hard thing is separate and exists in itself, then the table and myself are two things. So the reality of the table is the parallel but separate reality of myself. But both the philosophical position and the meditation experience of emptiness are all serving to undermine the sense of a real separation between a hard wooden table out there and some kind of soft, invisible mind inside which is apprehending it through these water-bubble eyes.

So we live in a world which is informed by the radical materialism of late twentieth century capitalism. And capitalism tells us "Don't waste time doing mantras. Get money and buy the bloody thing!" And this is what we've been trained - that we can appropriate anything if you've got money. Money is like a magical substance here. It transforms the world but it transforms it by giving you real solid things that you can look at and think "Now I am a powerful person because I have all these wonderful things." So we work inside this paradigm of science, of clear knowledge of the object world and manipulation of it through understanding the rules. But the magical aspect of tantra is saying something very different. It's saying that by using a mantra I can call things into appearance and I can send things away. By saying the mantra I can make Tara appear in front of me and I can make Tara vanish, but I can also make the clouds appear and the clouds vanish. I can make money appear. I can pray to Kubera, the god of wealth, and money will arrive somehow. Now this is a very different way of thinking about the world from radical materialism.

Now the philosophical view of the tantra is a mixture of Mādhyamika and Yogācāra. And, just very briefly because this covers a huge area, Mādhyamika says that when you enquire into anything, if you take up the question “What is this?” and you can use this question to penetrate down through layer after layer after layer of construction, and you will find at the end there is nothing; that whatever we experience is a patterning of concepts. We create the illusion, through language, that things exist, but when we really examine it there’s nothing there.

Now the ultimate thing of this philosophical view is to say everything is nothing - there is only nothingness. We cannot say anything about anything, there is just it like blows everything open. Nothing. Open. Now the other system of philosophy, Yogācāra, which is sometimes called “mind only” philosophy, says “this is all very well but it’s not just nothing, because somebody’s there knowing it’s nothing. Because otherwise there would just be a bloody hole. So there’s some kind of awareness of that open nothingness. And there’s the understanding that that open awareness, that is the mind, that is the true nature of the mind.” So it says that there is only mind. And this is very, this may be a bit complex, but I think it’s very, very important because this a radical mentalism or a radical idealism. You know it’s the exact opposite through one hundred and eighty degrees of the radical materialism of the times that we live in.

Now for a Tibetan villager growing up in a culture that believed in magic, that you could use mantras to find lost cows and change the weather and protect yourself from hailstones, they are not in radical materialism at all. They are in a kind of mid-way point saying that the mind can affect the material world. The mind and the world are not really separate; you have to have special tools, you need to have mantras and special spells and maybe wear a hat and stab bits of tsampa dough with a phurba dagger or something, you may have to do some ritual, but nonetheless the mind and the world are engaged in a very intimate relationship. So you can hopefully see a little there that it’s easier for a Tibetan believing in a magical world to move into a radical idealism of Mādhyamika and Yogācāra of the basis of tantra than it is for us. And so that is why really for Western people who want to practise tantra you have to understand the philosophy because really understanding critically the view of emptiness will help to critique, to unpack the automatic assumptions that you’ve been trained in growing up in a world that’s focused on radical materialism. Because unless we unpack, unless we deconstruct our own belief system it will automatically layer over this gap in which the mind creates the world. It’s so different.

Tomorrow morning I’d like to focus on this Chenrezig practice and we’ll meet together as a group at ten thirty. If you don’t know the practice there are some copies around here I guess so you could come earlier and read it through and I think that would be helpful that you know what we’ll be talking about. And we’ll focus particularly on the relationship between emptiness, magical ritual and the structure of the puja. So that we can really try to get a sense of what emptiness is and how this understanding informs the whole nature of the puja and what the implications of that are for radically thinking about how we experience the world.

OK.

So we can dedicate the merit. Which dedication prayer do you use at this centre? OK. Right. ...

[Dedication of Merit]

Tantra is continuity and connectedness

[Refuge and Bodhicitta]

OK. This morning I'll say a few more introductory things about tantra and then we'll look a little bit at the structure of Chenrezig puja and then we'll do that together. And then in the afternoon we'll take up some further aspects of tantra.

So as I was saying yesterday this word "tantra" is about continuity or connectedness and this connectedness operates on two levels, one a relative truth level and one an absolute truth level. There is the connectedness, or the connection that we try to make by the effort that we make in our practice, and there is the connectedness that is just given because of the inherent nature of enlightenment, of the Buddha-nature.

So the effort that we have to make in order to do the practice is a method to try to bring us into connection or alignment with what is given. And this energy that we're applying is method in the sense that it's like the masculine mode. And the natural or innate state of enlightenment that is revealed through doing the practice represents wisdom or this feminine mode of openness. And the practices that we do are a way of combining this masculine, or method-focus, or intentionality, concentration, recitation, yearning and attempt to achieve something, to integrating that with an open feminine receptivity arriving, relaxing, and allowing oneself just to be open. So that the very structure of the practice itself is speaking to the unification of method and wisdom. And many of the problems that arise for people in meditation are problems of not keeping a proper balance of these two forces.

For example you might have not so much time for doing the puja and then you spend all of your time trying to build up the visualisation and saying the verses slowly, that is to say you put all of your time and energy into doing the method, of doing the work which will bring towards this Buddha-moment and then there's very little time left when you actually doing the dissolving to stay in this state of openness that the dissolving brings about. And this then means that what one is putting attention on is one's own effort and one's own striving, but not allowing oneself to relax and to receive and to merge into this state of openness. And I think this is really quite a big problem.

It was a problem in Tibet as well where the meditation practices got longer and longer and people's daily practice would be hundreds and hundreds of pages that had to be read and in the if you sit through pujas in Tibetan monasteries there is very little when it comes to the place for dissolving it simply says "at that moment Chenrezig or Tara dissolves into me, there is a state of openness" and then the next verse comes straight out like that. There is no meditation at all. It's simply movement through the text. And partly that because as I was mentioning yesterday afternoon is the nature of magic and a lot of the pujas are about.. they have two focuses of attention, one is about spiritual integration and the other is about shifting the patterns of energy which are the manifestation of the world.

Now in order to I mean the kind of lives that we live in the West are usually very, very busy. We don't have much space for relaxation most of us in our lives, there's always a demand from work, partners, children, whatever it is. So we are used to being busy, acting in order to bring about particular affects. That is to say we are mainly on the method side. And so what is very, very important is to be able to counterbalance this by privileging, by putting to the surface, bringing to our attention rather, the wisdom side. It's really vital when we are doing this

practice, particularly if you are doing it on your own, that you put plenty of time aside for the actual dissolution and going into the state. Because in the outside world we are used to moving objects around and we do different things with various kinds of objects and with a visualisation-directed practice like this we move internal images around. We move these images that we visualise and we make different things happen, lotuses open, letters arrive, people manifest, all sorts of things are going on; it's quite busy.

Now some transformation occurs just by the fact that one is focusing on images rather than on perceived external objects because one is practising that the mind is able to transform objects, from one object shape into another. That's why in the visualisation practice usually what you are visualising changes, you know, something arises then all these gods arise, then they dissolve, rainbows go out.. it's busy in order to experience the fact that the mind can direct its energy to transform images, to transform appearance. So that give us a slightly different sense of the mind from the mind when we drive a car or go to the supermarket. But it is still the mind as an agent. And particularly the name of the agent is "me". "I am doing this. I visualise Chenrezig doing this then I visualise him dissolving. I visualise these rays of light going out, these rays of light going in." There is still a subject-object play in which I become, through my practise, better at it. So you could say that the danger of the focus on the method is that it strengthens the ego-subject sense of bring the one who manipulates these phenomena.

And we often think "I must do more meditation" or "I should do more meditation" because in that sense meditation is something that you do. You spend half an hour taking up the book and reading it through and trying to do what it says you should do. So it's very important then as an antidote, or a softening, or a turning around of this intensification of the "I's" task in developing the meditation to allow the dissolving. Because when we come to do the dissolving in the practice the deity in most forms will come to the top of our head and dissolve down into our body and then our body will dissolve into the essence of the deity, into a point of light, which then dissolves into a clear blue open space. And it's at that moment that our task is completely changed because then what we have to do is to be relaxed, open, not doing anything and allowing whatever thoughts, sensations, feelings arise just to arise and pass.

So in that moment the sense of self is dissolved. One is no longer in here focusing on something, attempting to do something, applying the will from in here onto out there, but the self-experience at that moment is of not any self, not a particular location, but an open awareness not grounded in any body or point of manifestation through which all sorts of manifestation are arising and passing. This is the first taste of the Mahayana notion of enlightenment which is described as being "enlightenment which doesn't rest anywhere." And because this enlightenment is not resting anywhere there is nobody to have it. There is nobody to do it. It's the point that I was trying to refer to last night in the public talk about the relationship between knowledge and wisdom. Because here there is nothing to grasp, no thought that arises, no sensation that arises will complete the experience in any way, there is nothing to hang on to, what is called for is a state of openness of just allowing things to move through, and to recognise that the openness that the things are moving through is in itself complete.

So then as the thoughts are moving through, and they both seem to be moving through and arising from this state of openness, one finds oneself in the experience of being in the room. And the task then is to experience the arising of oneself as being in the room as part of this total field of manifestation. And I mean a common problem or question that people have is "Well how can I decide what to do if I am just in this state of openness. If I am so open how will I get on with my life because I have to make decisions, and as soon as I go into making decisions I am faced with

judgements, “should I do this or should I do that?” and immediately I am into that and there’s somebody who has to make a judgement and a decision and I’m back into the dualistic perception.” And as a general principle when I have asked this question to Tibetan teachers they have always said “Act on the first thought”. And certainly in English we have lots of folk sayings which advise the opposite, things like “look before you leap” and “think twice” and clearly if we are acting from an ordinary karmic impulse or a confused intuition it may be wise to run over our first intention again in order to apply some rational thinking through of the consequences of our action.

Tantra is a ‘result path’: we act as if we have already arrived at the result

What one is trying to at this point from the practice is to integrate wisdom and method, I’m going to say the male and female, or feminine and masculine again, it’s not in a genderised sense, but as this kind of archetypal principles, to in the practice of tantra one is always acting into the experience of enlightenment, one is acting as if one is enlightened. Tantra is described as being a result path. That is to say we act as if we have already arrived at the result.

The Buddha is described as having these three kayas or three modes. The dharmakaya or this natural state of openness, this spacious mind. The sambhogakaya, or the potential for richness, for radiance, for light, for gesture outwards. And the nirmanakaya, precise manifestation in the world in a manner that is integrated with the other manners of arising in the world. And this is what we are trying to bring into being when we come out of the meditation, this is why we do the meditation. We dissolve the meditation, we dissolve into the state of Chenrezig or Guru Rinpoche or whoever and in that depth we recognise this true dharmakaya nature of ourselves and then we arise out from that in the form through sambhogakaya, of the arising of thoughts, as the nirmanakaya of being ourselves in the world.

Now we have to trust this. The whole reason that this is called a path or vehicle of the result is that we have to actually believe that the result is there, that we are not just playing a game, but that this is how it is. So this involves trusting that whatever is arising is inherently good. Not in the sense of good as opposed to bad, but good in the sense of just being perfect, of being the natural expression, the unborn expression of this state of openness. And this it’s the natural expression because it’s pure, it’s unborn. And it’s unborn in the sense that a reflection is unborn in a mirror. When you look in a mirror you see something but remains inside the womb of the mirror. It doesn’t get born outside.

There can be some confusion here because visually, in terms of these tangkhas and paintings and often in descriptions, it’s as if there’s a kind of false description that’s set up. It’s not exactly false, but it’s a symbolic description that I think can be confusing. For example. Here I am over here in the dharmakaya and I am feeling a little bit twitchy and so I start to come out at the sambhogakaya, big radiance coming out. And now I am coming down into a fine precise point as the nirmanakaya. Then I turn around and say over my shoulder “Bye bye dharmakaya, I’ll be safe I’ll send you a postcard.” And I think the descriptions are often like that. That there for example there in his pure realm in Dewachen there is Amitabha and in Amitabha’s heart is a Hri and out of this Chenrezig comes and then out of Chenrezig maybe Guru Rinpoche and you have different lines of people coming out of each other as if things are flowing out. But ‘out’ with a separation, so that out of one becomes two, out of two becomes four, or whatever.

These are teaching images and they are images which are useful for peasant people in

hierarchical patriarchal societies. However they are not particularly useful for meditators who want to practise in the spirit of Mahamudra or Dzogchen. We have to remember this thing about not confusing the finger pointing at the moon with the moon. And that the Buddha taught in many different ways because people have different capacities and different karmas, but the ways of teaching, the methods are not the truth. The method are simply methods. Compassion arises out of the space of wisdom, the space of openness and dissolves back into it. That's what methods do. They have to be dissolved back into emptiness otherwise they separate off and become solid.

When we are taking this meditation into our life and we have some decisions to make: we have to make sure that we experience the thing that we are making the decision about inside this state of openness. If it appears that the difficulties of the world or that the people that we are dealing with are not part of this state of openness then the most important thing is to make sure that we bring them into that state of openness before we do anything else.

For example here there is an electric wire on the carpet. So I am in my meditation in the nirvana side and I am coming out of my meditation getting closer and closer to the line between nirvana and samsara. It's very interesting line because if there is a line dividing samsara and nirvana then nirvana is a lie. Because if the nature of nirvana is infinity, if it is infinite openness, if it is emptiness then it has no boundary. So then what is the nature of this line between samsara and nirvana. When I am coming out of the meditation and everything seems fine and then "Oh god, now I've got to go to work." You know suddenly everything... How did that happen?

[How tantra uses devotion to pull samsara and nirvana together](#)

In some ways this problem exists for us of course because we are caught in a samsaric, dualistic vision because of our own ignorance and karma. But it can also be developed through a false understanding of the nature of devotion. Here I am in samsara and we are all meeting over here. Here is the Buddha. So we say "Come blue Buddha, come blue Buddha. Come into my samsara and take me out. Sort of..." The Buddha comes flying through the sky "Oh Buddha..." (kiss kiss) And then the Buddha goes away. "Oh baby don't go" because he has so many other people to see. Then I realise that I am just one love among many. I am not special at all. and I sit in my little room writing love letters. "Oh I had such a wonderful weekend with you darling... See you again." We know that sort of story. *[Do we?]* I do anyway.

Is that if through devotion we separate samsara from nirvana and we put the Buddha up, up, up and we put ourselves down, down, down, then unless there is an integration through dissolving you will act into a splitting of samsara and nirvana rather than a healing of the split. So that when we do a practice praying to the Buddha as if he is far away or Chenrezig...

We have to be very aware that what we are trying to do in this situation is use a method, a very powerful method, of longing, of devotion, of yearning to pull samsara and nirvana together. I mean part of tantra is to transform the five poisons into the five wisdoms. And in order to transform the five poisons of stupidity, anger, desire, jealousy and pride, one has to be in touch with them. And these practices of praying with longing and praise so that the hairs on your skin ripple, this is a practice through desire

. This is from the western section of the mandala. But it's using desire to dissolve or to end desire. And that involves a loss. As long as there is big powerful Tara to come and save me I can

be small James Low. But if in the meditation practice Tara dissolves into me and I become one with Tara and then I experience the whole world as Tara, then I can't really pray to Tara any more because if everything is Tara, where would you pray to Tara? Psychologically this means moving outside the "Mummy, Mummy save me" paradigm which means taking on the responsibility for one's own experience. No longer calling on a big powerful person to save one, but taking responsibility for self-recognition of when you lose the awareness of natural buddhahood.

And one of the things about being an adult is that we have to take responsibility for our choices, that we are often we take a job and we might not like the job, but still Monday morning nine o'clock we have to go to that job. We have committed ourselves in some way to a particular way of being. We are in our lives. And there's a similar commitment when you do the meditation and you come out from the dissolving, is to simply trust that you are committed to living your life in this world of Chenrezig or this world of tantra and that your commitment is to the continuity of tantra, that is to say to the continuity of the experience that everything is Tara or is Chenrezig, everything *is* this. There is no question. And if one is really committed to this view then it doesn't matter what happens, because whatever happens is simply a form of Tara. And this is absolutely important because it's on this point of recognition that one is able to dissolve the ego's desire or the ego's need to make discriminatory decisions "I'd rather have that. I don't want this."

So this is enormously important and this is why there is the idea to act on the basis of the first thought or the first impulse, not because the first thought will be better than the second thought, but because it doesn't make any difference whether you go with the first thought or the second thought - they are just the same. So why not go for the first thought - it's quicker. And also because the second and third thoughts tend to be editing commentary, taking up of another point of view which moves one off the simple, moment-by-moment manifesting of the world as the mandala of Tara.

The whole purpose of this kind of practice is, as I was saying yesterday afternoon, is the integration of understanding these principles of the nature of manifestation of these three kayas with devotion which is the channelling or the focusing of the karmic energy of desire so that we focus the analytic understanding of the structure of nirvana with the energy that we have which is driving us in samsara, and bringing these two things together so that samsara and nirvana are linked through the connecting point of the deity. And then with that method going into the practice we come out with this integration of our responsiveness into the world as a whole range of methods that we can apply, but because they are arising inside wisdom we have this integration of the male and female, method and wisdom, samsara and nirvana, there is an absolute continuity, there is no differentiation or separation off.

Now of course what I am saying can sound a bit abstract and ideal, and of course we get lost, we make mistakes, we get confused, but I think if we understand these principles it helps us to recognise how we are getting lost and then to dissolve back again. So maybe you've been practising the meditation and then instead of... I think we have to say instead of saying "And when"... I was going to say "And when the meditation ends.." but of course we have to not think of the meditation ending, but rather the meditation going through the visualisation into the point of dissolving, into this experience and then gradually opening into the world again so that the world itself arises as meditation. Then when we become aware of grasping and taking up a separated position and getting into judgement the first thing we have to do is to recognise that we have lost something. Just as when you are doing *shyiné* kind of meditation, and you are

focusing on the breath and then you suddenly recognise “Oh god I am thinking about all these things...” and you gently bring your attention back to the breath, here you gently bring your attention back to this awareness of openness and Tara and Chenrezig.

And of course sometimes, just to remind yourself, you can't quite return to them, in shyiné returning to the breath is quite easy because you are always breathing, I mean there is always something definite there to return to, and but when you are doing this dissolving sort of meditation you may feel that when you've come into judgement, if you like when you have gone into samsara, nirvana's vanished. It's as if the two things have radically split off. Now we have to be very careful here because this is really the point where samsara begins, when there seems to be separation between a state of openness and a state of tightness and dualistic vision in which we say “I've lost it.”

Now if we're normally thinking that nirvana is the property of the Buddha who lives over there and that only occasionally does it come over here, then of course it is natural that we lose it because it doesn't really belong here, it belongs over there. That's why it's so important to recognise devotion as method and not as fact. It's not that the real Buddha is over there somewhere else, otherwise it will simply increase the likelihood of losing meditation. What we must really, really believe in is at the point of dissolving, when Chenrezig dissolves into me, I am Chenrezig. There is no other Chenrezig than this. It's not playing about or just pretending and that really Chenrezig is somewhere else. This is the moment of the total identification with Chenrezig, this is the merging with the method. This is the most important thing to believe, that there isn't another Chenrezig somewhere else. This is real. Because if you do that then you are really allowing yourself to arrive and to be fully identified with the state of Chenrezig. And if you have that then it is much more difficult to lose it because it's what you are. How can you lose what you are?

But if you don't believe that it's what you then of course you are going to lose it. It's a bit like when they used to train spies to go into foreign countries and they would give them special mind-training how to survive torture because they would have surface personality which would be a deceit, they would be covering over who they really were. If in our heart we really believe that we are a bad person and that we are only just trying to do the Chenrezig meditation, but of course we couldn't really believe that we were Chenrezig, then the secret police of samsara will find us out. We may do a meditation retreat for a month, but when we come out and come back to work and someone is rude to us we suddenly find ourselves getting very angry and then we feel guilty because we are guilty and then you know this little tester from samsara has exposed that we are not really Tara, we are not really Chenrezig, we're just somebody playing. So what's really important is not to feel guilty, not to feel bad if we makes mistakes, but simply quickly go back in, do the dissolving meditation, recognise again that we really are Chenrezig and return in that mode. By relying on that confidence we are able to dissolve samsara into nirvana. But if we haven't really believed into the practice, if we really believe that we are a bad person and then we feel guilty and stupid and foolish and feel we must try harder then all we do is to dissolve nirvana into samsara.

So when doing a puja like this it is very important to make sure that you have plenty of time for the dissolving part of the meditation in order to really experience this open relaxation in which thoughts pass through without shifting you, moving you out of this state of open awareness. Because if you have that real realisation then everything that arises is the method for continuing the process of your own liberation and fulfilling your bodhisattva vow to be available in the world for the benefit of others.

OK shall we take a break for some tea and move about for about fifteen minutes. As far I understand the structure of the day we will go on to about one then there us food here. Um then from two to half past two I see some people for interview then half past two we start again and we'd finish.. three we start again? Oh!? And we go on three to about six. Is that OK? Yes. And then in the evening there was one idea to have a short meeting about just to talk a bit about the centre and dharma and things like that but it wouldn't be a formal teaching. It would be more just a general thought about centres and ... What time would you like that to be? Would you like that immediately after at six? We can think about that a bit later.

[Break]

OK so I think you've got half an hour left before lunch, we'll just look a bit at the text and we'll do it together after lunch. So it starts with this prayer to gurus of the lineage. In the sense that this prayer is a continuation of the moment of initiation. Basic Buddhist belief is that all beings have basic Buddha-nature but that is meant that we all have, as the nature of our mind, emptiness. When we recognise the emptiness of our mind, and through that recognition transform the way in which we respond to thoughts and perceptions, then we start to realise this Buddha nature.

So there's a question "If we have this Buddha nature, how come we don't recognise it?" Now one way of thinking of this is to think that we live as humans anyway with our eyes looking out. So we look out into the world and we find meaning outside and we often structure our inner experience on the basis of our experience on the outside and because of this we are not really in touch with our own nature, but with a constructed nature that we develop in order to survive in a world of being with others. And most of the time when we grow up we have people interested in us in order to make something of us. Our parents, our teachers, our aunts, uncles, whatever, are interested in us in order to help us to be good, healthy, happy citizens. That is to say they approach us already with an image of what we should be like and they will try to bring us into an alignment with the image that they already have of how we should be in order to be healthy and happy and all the rest.

Now hopefully the people that we get the initiation from are not working from that point of view because the purpose of the initiation is to help to connect the person with their own nature. So it's a shift of the focus instead of being encouraged to develop an identity which will fit in with the requirements of the world, one is being invited to be in touch with oneself in a way that radically shifts the identification that one has developed in accordance with the demands of the world. And so the guru, particularly in the form giving the initiation, acts as somebody who is cutting through, or subverting, one's ordinary perception of oneself. And in particular to shift the focus of attention from the need to become someone all the time to try harder, to push oneself, which is what we are ordinarily caught up in, towards a moment of recognition of the innate goodness of our being.

And I think it's something very profound, in the fact that initiation is a relationship. Through the initiation one moves into a state of indebtedness to the other. Now we are familiar perhaps with the general Mahayana idea that in all our past lives all sentient beings have been our mother and so we owe them a debt of kindness. But in the Tantric tradition there is also the sense that in order to practise and to gain enlightenment quickly one needs to make use of these Tantric methods, but that the Tantric method will not work unless there is an initiation. Therefore one must get an initiation.

... *[gap in the recording]*

... to the vegetable shop to buy potatoes. It is not a momentary, one-off transaction; it is the beginning of a relationship of an embedding oneself in a particular line of connectedness. Because the person who gives us the initiation also got an initiation and this goes right the way back through the lineage to the initiating point. And in this lineage prayer the prayer starts with the "*kyab dag Dorje Chang*". In the Kagyu tradition Dorje Chang is seen as representing this innate moment of enlightenment. It's almost like an abstracted Buddha principle. But Dorje Chang will also have had a guru because it raises the question of time you know. How do you have a movement from an infinite, endless enlightenment into the precise form of enlightenment as lineage as transformation? It's not as if it all begins with Dorje Chang, because Dorje Chang also has a beginning and before Dorje Chang someone else has a beginning.. it's infinite. It just keeps moving on. It's vast beyond the reach of mental conceptualisation. But Dorje Chang represents here the moment of this particular transmission of the dharmakaya into these nirmanakaya.

So Tilopa, the first human representative of this Kagyu lineage is saying in his songs, that he is both completely open and aware, that he has attained this state of Mahamudra, not dependent on anything, and yet is in devotion to *Dorje Chang*. So there are these two moments which we return to again and again of our own experience in meditation that it is just open, at that moment of it's openness it's not dependent on anyone, and yet the entry into that moment of openness is dependent upon the relationship to the one who gave the initiation.

[Gap in the recording as the tape is changed]

... In some of the Hinayana descriptions of enlightenment it's as if the Buddha, Buddha Shakyamuni, at the moment of his death in entering mahaparanirvana, just vanished into this vastness, but a vastness that was not connected with anything, just out. But from the point of view of tantra this is not really how it is, because Buddha Shakyamuni is perceived as having gained enlightenment before he appeared as Buddha Shakyamuni in this life, and the form that he showed in this world is just one of his many forms. And that after his enlightenment he continued to help many beings by physical manifestations, by visions, by rays of light. And with the great gurus that are embedded in this lineage prayer there is the sense that they have attained enlightenment or some high state and that they continue to manifest and to connect with beings.

And the word tantra that I was saying refers to continuity, in Tibetan has the same root 'gyud' as the word for lineage. So that the lineage of these gurus, which by taking the initiation we in our own small way become part of, is the sense that one is caught up inside a system that is much, much larger than oneself. One is just, like a bead on a mala, one is connected with people, one is not independent and that the goal one seeks for is not an independent liberation where one would be apart from the world, but will be taking one's place in the ordered movement towards universal liberation. So that when we recite the prayer we do it to get the blessing of the lineage and to feel that connection with them which is also to embed ourselves in the lineage. And in that enlightenment is marked out not as a point or a place of separation, not a place of moving beyond suffering and beyond any demand, but of a connectedness and a responsibility in which one will be called upon to play one's part.

And we have many initiations in this life and in future lives. One of the first initiations we have is usually from our mother when she keeps saying our name to us. And the name is planted in your heart as your kind of seed syllable so that when anybody says "James" I always look because this is now my marker which in a sense is a kind of initiation. It's a "I'm initiated into the life of James through that name". And I think that we can find that if we look into our own

history that the moments when we recognise ourself, these moments often occur in relationship to others. We find ourselves through relationship, not as something autonomous, separated off.

And you know in the stories of Buddha Shakyamuni's life, after his first enlightenment at Bodhgaya, he is always with other people. And it's likely that if we get enlightened we'll also be very busy. Because it's of course not that reality or the world or complexity ends, because remember, in the Tantric view, all that arises is richness, you wouldn't want to get rid of that richness, but one is called forth in that richness to express a compassionate being with others.

So in this sense obligation is not a mistake. The view here is very much like an Asian extended family not a Western nuclear family in which one's responsibilities and links with many, many people are part of one's identity. So it's this two-way process, we pray to these gurus and buddhas of the past to give us the blessing and to support us in the present so that in our turn we will be able to be connected with other people and be able to help them, so that it is a whole matrix of connectedness. And this is one of the reasons why we find lineage prayers at the beginning of most Tantric practices because they are a way of reinstating our connectedness, our indebtedness.

Chenrezig practice

The Chenrezig practice, it starts with the refuge and bodhicitta. The refuge and the bodhicitta express the same principles really as this lineage prayer. We take refuge in the Buddha...

[Gap in the recording as the tape is changed]

We'll start going through this Chenrezig practice but starting with this prayer to the Mahamudra lineage and since I've already given some reflection on the purpose of this initial prayer I won't say anything more about it and at the end of it we'll stop and I'll say something about the next section and we'll do it bit by bit going through. So is everybody sitting near where they can see it? OK Are you sure? OK so we are saying this first prayer to connect ourselves with this lineage, and particularly with the idea of the interconnectedness of all phenomena. Just as suffering arises in samsara in relationship, so the path of liberation is through relationship and the fulfilment of our being in terms of open enlightened compassion is also through relationship, there's nothing about separation or a private world here at all.

Chant master!

...

Then we go on to start the Chenrezig practice itself. And it starts with the refuge and bodhicitta which is a very well known verse. And the refuge and bodhicitta balanced in this way help us to explore the nature of dependence. Because in taking refuge we say "I can't do this by myself. I need your help. I need to depend on you." And when we say the bodhicitta part we say "I am prepared to let other people depend on me. I am prepared to make myself reliable and available enough to let other people need me." And the fulfilment of the bodhisattva vow is to become as reliable and as open and generous as we believe the buddhas to be in order for us to take refuge in them.

This development of bodhicitta is a way of stating that all of our life now and all of our future lives we will be trying to open ourselves to develop qualities to develop an understanding that will help us to increase the benefit for others. Now this is something really quite radical. Now although we may know this verse very well and be very used to saying it we need to allow it to waken us up when the words come out of our mouths. Because it's saying I'm going to work hard and accumulate all these riches in order to give them to other people. It's as if you've been working all week long and then on Friday night you go to the boss and he gives you your money in your hand and you go out the front door and give it to all the people in the street. And you feel so happy giving your money to the people in the street that you go straight back into the factory and work right through the weekend! So I think it is very important to remember just how radical this is, how it cuts across our ordinary attention to get good things for ourselves, to make our own situation safer.

So with this awareness we'll recite the verse three times.

...

... Now a visualisation is an act of creative imagination and so we are trying to develop our ability to construct an image which will be sufficiently real to upturn the beliefs that we have that the world that we ordinarily see is substantially real. Now that's quite a difficult task isn't it because the world appears very strong and real, very hard, and our mind often appears very weak, unreliable and unstable, full of thoughts and emotion. Now in Tantric tradition the idea is that there are two stages in every visualisation and in the longer practices the two stages are usually marked out as being separate.

Evoking or developing the damtsigpa form of the deity

These two stages are called the stage of evoking, or developing the *damtsigpa*, which is the form of the deity that one is able to create on the basis of having an initiation because the *damtsig* is the vow or the commitment that one makes having had the initiation in Chenrezig to do the practice regularly. And before lunch I said something about initiation and if there are people who want to do this practice formally in a serious way then it's clearly advisable to get an initiation if you haven't had one already. So the idea is that through the initiation you are given permission to visualise the deity and it's the connection through the initiation that makes this particular visualisation possible for you.

But this is still dependent on one's own effort to a certain extent. Now at a certain point in the practice, often a bit later, after some prayers, one evokes the pure form of the deity to come from a pure place somewhere else and merge into the form that you have made. And these two forms merge together and this heals the split that I was talking about this morning about the idealised pure form of the Buddha in nirvana somewhere else and the messy situation that we find ourselves in.

Now at the beginning of this verse, the beginning of this practice we imagine here, I and all sentient beings, all of us together, and in front of us, slightly above our heads, usually raised on the top of one's head, but usually slightly in front so that you can have a sense of who it is, there is Chenrezig. And this Chenrezig that we visualise and then the rays of light go up and then come down with the blessings of all the buddhas, and at that moment this pure form of the blessing of all the buddhas merge into the form that you've visualised to make it the real pure form of Chenrezig itself. So one wants to have no doubts then that the form that you're trying to

visualise is the actual presence of Chenrezig. And it's this sense that this figure is the actual presence of the three kayas that out of the emptiness of this pure open sky above one, manifests this form which is the radiance of that emptiness. This is very, very important. It's not that Chenrezig, when there is this letter Hri that transforms into Chenrezig, it's not that Chenrezig is coming from somewhere else, this is the gradual manifestation of a blue sky, a lotus with a white moon disc, and then on top of this this letter Hri, and the Hri transforms into Chenrezig. So Chenrezig here is the natural expression of the pure open dimension of mind.

It's as if out of the openness of emptiness this form arises, we do the practise focusing on this form and then we dissolve back into this form, dissolve into it, and it take us back into emptiness. I don't know if anyone saw the film ET. ET's a very nice form. Well ET is about a little guy from outer space who ends up on earth and is very, very sad and lonely. And he has to try to make contact with the place where he's come from, and is always trying to get with his finger some connection of light so that he can make a way of sending a message back to say "Come and rescue me. Oh come." And eventually this space ship comes and rescues him and takes him away again. And in many ways this is the model of this kind of practice. We've somehow ended up wandering around on their weird planet. We're not quite sure what we're doing here, but we want to get home, but we don't even know where home is. And this is really what the practice is doing. It's calling from space, this, if you like, this spaceship of Chenrezig which manifests and takes us back into space. It takes us out of a dualistic world into this world of spaciousness.

And of course if you know the film ET for ET it's quite desperate because he's going to get sick if he stays on earth much longer. And similarly for us staying in samsara every day exposed to all sorts of confusions, all sorts of dualistic experiences, all the demanding projections of other people. To be here is very dangerous. We're likely to get more and more confused, create more and more negative karma which will result in rebirths which will be difficult to manage. So when we do the practice we really want to have the sense that this is enormously important. Most of our lives, most of the days the hours go by and we are caught up in strong dualistic understandings, seeing the world as strongly real. So it's very, very important with as much concentration, with as much intensity as we can. Not a tight, anxious intensity, but a relaxed, focused intensity allowing our sense that this is very important. This practice is a place in which we can transform our experience from dualistic samsara to open nirvana.

And this is a very beautiful practice. The verses are very, very sweet with the words, how they're expressed and it's strongly saying again and again "You must come and give us you blessing. This world is very, very dangerous. We have been wandering in samsara for a long time." This is a time to use attachment, to transform all the attachment that you have, all the hope that you have, the attachment that you might put into getting new clothes, or a better car, or a better job, or a better lover, to put all of that desire and hunger and attachment into the practice. Because it's Chenrezig is described as being a wish-fulfilling jewel. Instead of having to go to this place to get this need met and that place to get that need met, by focusing fully in this practice and entering into the practice the transformation that can be effected turns our experience of the world from being a dangerous and exciting place into a calm, open and easy place.

Now for some people visualisation is quite easy and for other people it is quite difficult. The main thing is to have the feeling of the presence of Chenrezig because it's by having the sense of the presence with as much light and visual richness as you can, with the devotion that brings all your energy contracted into your heart so that when you are reading it and praying it really trying to have this feeling that it is coming through your heart, this helps to bring all our being,

all our diffracted attention into one point and then really helps us to move towards the essence of the practice which is the dissolving.

Using devotion to focus the attention

So that the whole recitation up to page twelve B is about using devotion to focus the attention. Then we recite the mantra many times and again this is about focusing the attention, imagining these rays of light coming from Chenrezig and flowing into ourselves so that subject and object are getting closer and closer in nature. The qualities of Chenrezig are flowing in and getting more close to how I am. And then having done a lot of this "*Om mani padme hung*" when we stop reciting Chenrezig dissolves from the top down and the bottom up into a ball of light and comes down through the crown of our head, down into our heart and then our body also dissolves down into one point, and then you just do this very, very slowly, as slowly as you can, feeling everything moving down into one point, and sometimes you get the sense that this is like a sickening vortex, as if you are spiralling into nothing. And that's the way the energy goes right down into the heart chakra. And you go into that point and then open.

And then one's just remaining as relaxed and open for as long as possible, allowing thoughts to just move through whenever they arise, not chasing after them as they go, not becoming interested in them and not waiting expectantly for another thought to come. And just experiencing the thoughts and feelings themselves, this is the sambhogakaya. This is just the radiance of the empty openness of mind. And then very gently allow ourselves to open within to this room as meditation experiencing the room as the nirmanakaya with other people around with us all as expressions of nirmanakaya. So as the lines say "Our own bodies and all the form we see is the pure form of Chenrezig. All sounds are the pure speech of Chenrezig. And all thoughts are his thoughts."

And then we finally recite the verse to open whatever openings have occurred in this, we open them further to all beings, although all beings are already included in this state of openness, because there's no separation here between meditation and non-meditation, between ourselves and others.

...

OK if we take a short tea break now for a maximum fifteen minutes and as you go into that, try to keep the sense of that meditation with you, just observing how you can be open and how things close, how you get locked maybe in a conversation with someone. And remember that this is a Buddhist centre so it's quite allowed to be weird! So that if you are talking to someone and you are getting a bit lost you can just leave the conversation and sit for a couple of minutes and then go back. Enlightenment is certainly more important than social convention. And if we remember how rude Milarepa was to his poor sister I'm sure we won't be doing anything too shocking.

[Break]

There may be some questions you'd like to raise...?

[She say there is one question after building up, what is the moment where Chenrezig melt into you?]

Now you can do this practice here in two different ways. At the end of doing the mantra, as you are doing the mantra you imagine these rays of light going out from Chenrezig and they go out in all directions so they are also going through your own body. So there's Chenrezig and there's you in your body with Chenrezig above you, but it's all now has the nature of Chenrezig. So if you've been doing that practice and you are very, very clear about this and you feel very open at that point then you can just follow the instructions that's in these small letters there which is saying recognise your own nature which is in this state which is free of any division of subject-object and something in between. So that would mean that you would be reciting this mantra, and if you are going to work in this way then the best thing to do is to as you are doing this "*Om mani padme hung Hri*", at first maybe you're just imagining Chenrezig on top of your head, and all of this rays of light going out and it's purifying you. And then once you've done this for a while and you have a sense of it then you start doing it with your eyes open. So that you are going from this state of purification, working with a kind of mentally developed image, this pure image, and then you are gradually doing it with your eyes open and bringing that sense of that image into the world, you are merging it straight in while you are still doing "*Om mani padme hung*".

And as you are doing this there is no sense of a subject doing it to an object. There is just this sound arising and this state of openness full of light which you could see as self and other, but you experiencing it now as a connectedness. And that then leads you into these next three lines. Where it's saying "all appearance has the body of Chenrezig, all sound is like the mantra of Chenrezig and all thoughts are like the great wisdom of Chenrezig." And that's a good way to practise but I think it can be a little bit difficult at the beginning. It's maybe easier at the beginning to do the mantra recitation and then you have Chenrezig on the top of you head and just as we did it there, dissolve Chenrezig from the top down and the bottom up into a ball of white light, comes down from the top of your head into your heart. Then your body which is now the same as the body of Chenrezig just light and emptiness, form and emptiness, dissolves down into this ball of light and then the ball of light goes out and there is this open space and then you can work with the purification of attachment to thought.

I mean the main thing is that by practising regularly a practice like this becomes just automatic and you just merge into it as you are reciting it. Like if you've ever sung maybe in a choir and you really know a song and everyone's singing it together and just you have this feeling of being completely merged, you don't have to think of the words, you are just moving right through the music and everything's moving together. And really that's how one needs to move into this puja, that it's you and the puja moving together and in that way the sense of being a self trying to do the puja or doing the practice is dissolved into the becoming of the puja. Because the practise of the puja using sound is to bring yourself into an at-oneness with the world, to minimise the subject-object division.

[She say I always try very hard to understand it is Chenrezig not also a symbol for everything or do you ever realise that embodied compassion and is it not that we internalise or we come to identify with Chenrezig to develop our own compassion like a vehicle?]

Yes it is a method.

[she say actually when we use language and the using of language signifies the separation and all the puja you work with the separation like there is the lama or Chenrezig and he is above or

what you told this morning, here is nirvana and guru and here you are in samsara, and through all the thing it goes the separation.]

It's true. There is a separation but you are using separation to end separation. Because usually our separation is spread out and diversified through many different objects which attract us or repel us. So we are pushing and pulling on the world all the time. What we are saying when we sit down to do the meditation is that "You Chenrezig are more important than anything else in the world. Although I've got many demands on my time and there are many things I should be doing I'm going to forget about them and concentrate on you. So all of my energy is going to be focused on you." And so all the kind of ways in which one is extended into the world are pulled into just one point. I mean pujas are often very beautiful in their chants and are often done with instruments, a lot of nice music, you burn incense, you have nice smells, you might have an arrow with five coloured silken threads on it and be waving, you might get up and dance. In the early days people did many different things. The structure of a Tantric puja is really the structure of a seduction.

For example in the bigger pujas you start by building a wall of vajras around you. And you build this wall of vajras and you say "Nothing from outside can come in here. There are no demons in here. Inside we are completely safe." Just as if you might decide that you want to spend the weekend with someone. You take the phone off the hook and you tell people "Don't call" and you answer the door and you can just stay in bed with your friend. And then you might have bought some very nice foods that you want to offer to your special friend and then make sure that the place is warm and have some nice music, and even say some nice things to them "Oh you're so wonderful. I've never met anyone like you. You are my heart's desire. When I look at you I feel so good..." This is exactly the structure of the puja. You are too cynical for this! And so in this atmosphere, in this mood, which if you are doing a big puja maybe takes eight hours or something to recite, there's all kinds of waves of increasing energy and decreasing energy. So the mood is the erotic in general. With this kind of deity it's a soft erotic mood that's being established.

There are four main kinds of activity that are embodied in pujas. And the normal Tibetan name for a puja is a *trinle* which means an activity. There are four activities - pacifying, increasing, overawing, by looking very impressive, and the fourth is destroying. But all of them are posited on a primary relationship of the erotic or the merging with the central deity. A practice with this form of Chenrezig belongs in the first section, it deals with pacification. It deals with cooling down difficulties, pain suffering, thunderstorms, anything like that. In the kind of practices that deal more with increasing and overawing you get more sense directly of the erotic. And you get that in the mainstream practices of Guru Rinpoche or of Kuru Kulla. But anyway inside this structure you set this environment which is rich, sensually exciting and you in doing the practice want to be alive. It's not like doing *shyiné*. You don't want to have it all calmed down as if you are almost near death experience.

Then you start to move into this more close involvement with the central deity. And the mantra remember although it's not visualised here, it's usually imagined revolving around the seed syllable of the deity in the deity's heart. So there's a Hri in Chenrezig's heart and "*Om mani padme hung*" is running round it. And every time you say "*Om mani padme hung*" it's like pulling on Chenrezig's heart strings. "Ahhhhh" It's a bit too romantic for you huh? [*I'm overwhelmed!*] So there's a sense of Chenrezig's heart softening and warming and that's why these rays of light are coming out. This is the gift of Chenrezig's love. So our love is going to Chenrezig and Chenrezig's love is coming to us.

It's with this mood of moving closer and closer together of longing and coming closer together and incredible pulse of separation and the unbearable pain of separation and finally there is the merging. So it's a very erotic moment. It's a moment of complete merging of object into subject, subject into object and just out. There's all the energy build up reciting the mantra, and for example if you are doing a practice with Guru Rinpoche you might do this seven line prayer with cymbals and drums and then there's the great crescendo and then there's silence and Uhh! then there's dissolving. So there's a huge build up and then there's a collapse into one point.

So it's using the language of separation to bring about the dissolving of all separation. And then when we come out of the meditation again we speak language but we understanding, but we are paying attention to the sounds that come out of our own mouths and the sounds that come from others into our ears, this is the play of this state of openness. So that we have used the power of separation, coming into one point, to dissolve separation. And that's why it's really very, very important to really give yourself enough time to do the dissolving. Otherwise if you are doing all these prayers it is like having a lot of sexual foreplay and getting very kind of wired up, and then having no release. It leads into a kind of frustration that makes people feel guilty that their are not making any practise in the meditation and all the rest of it, because they're trying very hard but they don't get anything.

[How do you create space in tight situations?]

Can you give an example?

[An employer tries to put some negative things on you.]

Well from the dharma point of view there are different things that you can do. From the point of view of Mahamudra not to take seriously what is going on is very, very important. If we are not attached to an particular outcome, to any particular idea of how things should be, then however they arise would be OK. In Mahamudra this is called "one taste", where whatever is occurring just has the same taste of emptiness, whether in ordinary terms it would be good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant. And the best way to get into this is through doing the dissolving meditation and then being able to remain open for as long as possible as different kinds of thoughts arise. Because then when we are practising just with the arising of thoughts and emotions, if good thoughts come and we are not enticed by them, we're not excited by them, and bad thoughts come and we're not frightened of them and try and push them away, we get this sense that they are just flowing through.

And then as the meditation evolves and we come into the world with it, coming into the world is essentially only linking perception with thought. That's all it is. When you meditate and then you open your eyes, you have a visual perception which is over layered with lots of thoughts. And so the more one has practised internally without this way of not being pushed and pulled by good and bad thoughts, when good and bad thoughts arise mixed in with perceptions one has more power not to respond to them. And then responding from this one's response usually has some focus in it, not because one's consciously focusing in it, but because thoughts are arising out in a very direct way. And when this hits someone else they get a sense that this is not someone to mess about with.

Because one is entering into the situation not in terms of hopes and fears, of gain and loss, but just being present. I think that's the ideal way to really proceed and of course one has to

have all the preparation before you come into this situation. There's not much that you can do. However through the use of mantras you can also try to shift the energy of the situation...

[Gap in the recording as the tape is changed]

... and these would operate in terms of these four functions that I've just mentioned - pacifying, increasing, overawing and destroying. So that for example you might do a lot of practise of Chenrezig or Tara. Through that you are calming yourself down and you're creating a sort of calm aura around you and you are also directing a very calming energy towards the other so that you are cooling everything down, giving space, pacifying it.

Or by increasing things, by doing a kind of Guru Rinpoche practice for example, you might focus on the richness of the world, the possibilities that are there so that you feel not trapped in that situation with your boss. So that you really know that you can always get other work, that the world is a very rich place with many roads passing through it. And that sense of richness and possibility you also convey through yourself to the other person so that they don't feel so locked or so trapped. Or the third one with the overawing you might focus say on Kuru Kulla or one of the more threatening forms of Guru Rinpoche and increase your own sense of power and staying very, very strong in the sense of this power radiating out from you; that everything is going in one direction. The whole world is shining out from you, that nothing's going to come into you but it's just radiating out. Absolute narcissism. It's quite fun. *[It's very seductive.]*

And the fourth way would be through focusing on a practice that is concerned with destroying. Which would be a wrathful deity like Dorje Purpa or Dorje Trollo. Practices like that there's a lot of symbolism there's a lot of symbolism of grinding people down, squeezing their head till their eyes pop out. *[It's nice isn't it!]* And in that way you would go into the situation with a sense that you are very powerful and you can completely control the situation and you would carry with you a slightly frightening edge. And people who do that are a little bit 'Woah, there' which might make someone back off.

So I hope it would be clear from these four kinds of procedures there is an increasing intensification of subject-object duality in the practise of them. So as a general principle if your experience and understanding of emptiness is not strong you should always stick with pacifying activity because when you go to the other level of destroying then all you do is intensify a strong sense of subject and object. The reason that these destroying practices exist in Tibetan Buddhism is that they are a very radical form of compassion and they are grounded in putting the demon or the disturbing other into emptiness. It's not annihilating them as one ego trying to overcome another, but it's wiping them right out into this emptiness where they can recognise their own nature.

Just as this practice here has some erotic element in it and we can use it as a way of purifying our longing and our attachment so these wrathful practices are a way of purifying our hatred and murderous rage. But it's very tricky to do that unless one is very clear about emptiness. Otherwise you might go into a self-seduction and imagine that you're practising the dharma and becoming more and more angry and perhaps psychotic.

And then as a more general way of dealing with difficult situations is to take the attitude that Shantideva points out when he says that "Our enemies are our best friends" because they show us our anger and they give us something to work with. Difficult employers or difficult relationships really point up to us the way in which become tied in knots ourselves. And in that way one can make use of the dangerous situation by seeing it as something one can learn from

and that way interest and fascination take us into the situation with new eyes rather than a feeling of aversion and oppression.

[She say she has one question of this vajra wall which you build around yourself when you do puja. She don't understand why you have to make a border, a fence around you when you want you make your puja or your meditation practice.]

What do you do if you are doing your practice and somebody comes and rings your doorbell? Depends. Depends on what? So you'd have to think "I wonder who it is?" I remember Chimed Rigdzin Rinpoche saying that one of the reasons they developed these three year retreats in Tibet was that Tibetan monasteries were so busy and there were always so many demands that there was no privacy in them. It was very, very difficult for most ordinary monks to do their meditation practice. And so the ones who did want to practise had to take a space out which was sealed off with protectors on the door. Nobody could disturb. And so anything that can come and interfere with out meditation practice is actually our enemy.

[She says the doorbell will still ring whether I visualise my vajras around me or not.]

When we start a practice like this one with the lineage prayer, we have the sense that these gurus of the lineage and the Buddha of the ten directions and the three times all of these enlightened beings have a positive intention for us, that they rejoice when they see people practising the dharma. But the other side of this is that there are in this world there are also these beings who have a negative intention towards spiritual progress and towards people practising the dharma and so it's important to take that seriously and have some protection.

But the best defence of all is always emptiness. Because however high you build a wall somebody can go under it, or round it, or over the top, but if you have just a space, everything dissolves in that space. Because emptiness has no time, and if we can be in touch with the infinity of time of emptiness then whatever particular problems come to us to disturb us we'll have enough space to watch them moving through in their impermanent flow and they may take one day, one hour, one year, but as long as we don't lock onto them, as long as we stay relaxed these things will move by.

OK That's six o'clock. And that brings us to the end.

So we have some food and stuff and we'll have a small meeting, but essentially the work of the time is over. And some people have to go and look after their children and other affairs.

So if we do a dedication of merit and bring ourselves to peaceably to an end.

Thank you.

End.