

PURIFICATION IN HINAYANA, MAHAYANA, TANTRA AND DZOGCHEN

INCLUDING DORJE SEMPA, MACHIG LABDRON AND OTHER
MEDITATION PRACTICES USING AA, PHAT! AND PAINTING.

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Editor's remarks

James Low has been asked to publish some of his talks for quite a time. Coincidentally, serving as his translator during several workshops in Germany I had the idea of translating some of his talks into German in written form. Then we realized that the English material first needs to be edited.

As usual the edition of this sort of spoken word needs a balance between the original spontaneity and an added coherence that replaces the lacking visual and contextual experience of the workshop situation. As I actually like very much how James Low is talking, I always stayed hard on the side of the original word and tried to intervene only in places I felt it is necessary - of course with all the risk of not being a native speaker (if that really exists!-one could doubt about that in Germany).

I hope this *ansatz* worked well and the reader will have the full enjoyment of his speeches, and their clarifying effect as well.

Robert Jarolawski, Freiburg (Germany) 15 August 2000

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PURITY AND PURIFICATION

The ideas of purity and impurity are very basic in most cultures. People have many notions of impure behaviour or impure foods, impure thoughts, and they try to stop having these and have pure thoughts instead.

In buddhism one important aspect is conflict. We recognize that we are doing things that we believe we shouldn't be doing, and so when we wake up and accept responsibility, we think, "I don't want to do this" or "I shouldn't do this" and then we are in conflict with ourselves. So then we start pushing against a part of ourselves to try to make us change. That is very important because that is a key function in the *theravadan* view, and also in the mahayana view, particularly in what is called the *paramitamahayana*, where one is trying to develop generosity and kindness—just like it is expressed in the well known Bodhicitta Prayer.

In dzogchen it's different. We are not trying to be in conflict. In the tantra aspect, which in the nyingma tradition is quite close to the dzogchen approach, you still have the issue of conflict because you have an idea of demons and you have an idea of mobilising all the buddhas, all the meditation deities, to act against the demonic forces which are both external and internal. There we imagine the buddhas sending rays of light into ourselves and purifying ourselves, so that we are here and we gladly say, "Take away this impurity".

Just as if you had cancer and you go in for radiotherapy, and you say, "Please use your powerful machine to burn this cancer out of me," we say, "All buddhas, come burn all these bad things out so I can go on and be very happy."

This is obviously a conflict model. It is oppositional. It sets the good against the bad, to use the good to dominate the bad. dzogchen, on the other hand, is rather a collaborative approach. It is about working with yourself, with whatever occurs for you, in the attempt to use the energy of whatever is arising to maintain the awareness of the essential purity of all that is arising. That's a very, very different approach.

So during this retreat we will explore these different views with the key focus, as always, on trying to get some experience of the absolute purity of our own nature - which is the buddha nature - represented by Kuntuzangpo, the Buddha who represents that which is 'always good'. If the essential nature of the 'lineage', of the universe is always good, then everything that comes from that 'lineage' must be always good.

KUNTUZANGPO

In the nyingma tradition we imagine Kuntuzangpo naked, with long hair, blue in colour, in sexual union with Kuntuzangmo, who is naked, white, again, with long flowing hair—the long hair represents freedom and relaxation—and they are always together. This male and female, all the possible dualities of existence and non-existence, are merged together in absolute purity. All these forms of duality give rise to whatever experience we have.

Coming here today, we were caught in a traffic jam, so the car was stuck there, going very, very slowly. Then sometimes, people were passing us. We were in the fast lane, and the other cars in the slow lane were going faster

than us—because it was a traffic jam... One could have many thoughts and feelings about this. Everything is good in a situation like that. If you go quickly, it's good; if you go slowly, it's good.

But of course, it's very easy to lose that view because you might think for instance, "Oh, it's a nice day, I can go for walk. If I spend all the time in the traffic jam, there will be no time to go for a walk." This becomes a crisis, a tragedy. Very easily our minds create, because of their desires, a very small box in which one thing is grinding against another and we don't realise that all of these things that arise are the children of Kuntuzangpo and Kuntuzangmo.

Kuntuzangpo and Kuntuzangmo are always having sex and so they are always having babies. That is what happens, that is how life is! Yes, no condoms! And babies that come out of this eternal sex are all the thoughts and all the feelings and all the experiences that we have. This is the fruit arising out of this creativity. But we don't recognize all this experience as the fruit of these two open and perfect divine forms, we think, "This is a traffic jam! I don't want to be in a traffic jam. I don't want the car to be moving slowly. Why is the car not going quickly?"

It's very, very easy to lose the lineage of purity and to collapse into separated ideas of good and bad. Some of you have been to these kinds of retreats and meetings before and we have gone through the various stages of ignorance in various way. I may review that again briefly here, but the key point is to keep some sense of where things come from.

At first, when we hear buddhist teachings, they represent just somebody's idea. Somebody says something and it's interesting and you believe it or don't believe it or you are interested and it is a kind of dogma for you, it's a kind of ideology. Gradually, (hopefully), we get some experience and we start to see that it's true. But that experience has to struggle for survival in a world full of our habitual assumptions, so even when we have studied these things for a long time, if the study of the dharma simply remained a pattern of thoughts, if it has not been made alive through any kind of realisation, then when some event arises which brings up some kind of assumptions, we get trapped again.

I can remember. When I was a child and my father had a car, he would be very proud of his car, he hated any traffic problems because he wanted to drive in his nice car. His father had never had a car, and it was a sign of success and of life going forward. So we would get very irritated in traffic, and I can remember as a child having that feeling of some kind of anxiety when there was some kind of traffic. So today, on a subtle level, again there is an extra hook from my own experience for that.

In that way we have these assumptions, which are not just thought assumptions, they are in the body as well, they are energetic assumptions, sensation assumptions, where we find ourselves pulled into a fixed position, and that fixed position stops or blocks the direct experience of the stream of manifestation, arising ceaselessly from the pure ground.

That is why, according to the tradition, when people do longer meditation practices, there is always a lineage prayer, and for nyingmapas, the lineage prayer always goes back to Kuntuzangpo. This is of absolute importance. It says that all realization comes from being connected to the mind of

Kuntuzangpo. Kuntuzangpo on this level is not just some kind of figure, some kind of picture, or something you make a sculpture of and put it on a pedestal somewhere.

Kuntuzangpo here is an experience, or rather it is a way of experiencing, because what we come to experience when we recognize the nature of our mind is that we are all within the mandala of Kuntuzangpo. That is a symbolic way of expressing it. It means that the original purity has never been lost, and when we recognize that the productivity, the fecundity, the richness of Kuntuzangpo is ceaseless, we become just one more form of recognising it.

Every thing is a form of Kuntuzangpo but not everybody recognizes it. That is why it says in these dzogchen texts, if you recognize this in the morning, you are a buddha in the morning; if you recognize it in the evening, you are a buddha in the evening. This is what buddhahood is: it is the recognition that the lineage from Kuntuzangpo has never been broken, that we are all arising ceaselessly in this energetic play of the unborn nature. In dzogchen this is called *ka dag* (Tib.). *Ka* means the beginning or the origin. It also means a pillar like those in a monastery that hold the roof up. It's also the first consonant of the Tibetan alphabet, so it has the idea of something primary and that holds things in place. The second syllable, *dag*, means pure. So *ka dag* means "that which is pure from the beginning", the support of the world, or a kind of 'world axis', if you like, that everything is turning around. The very core of everything is pure.

This purity is described in many different ways and you will find many of the definitions and explanations in *Simply Being*. (*Simply Being*, James Low, Wisdom Books, UK) They are very, very important to understand because if we, first of all, believe that our nature is pure and then start to have the experience of that purity, we get a lot of freedom, we can really relax. But most of the time we are somehow anxious that we are going to make a mistake. In life there is a lot of anxiety. We want people to like us; we don't want to be rejected; so we're always a little bit, kind of, trying to play a situation so that we get included and we belong. We can't really relax because of the fear of being turned away.

Through recognition of this pure nature we understand there is nothing at all in us that could ever be rejected in a valid way. There is no basis for rejection. Because we really know this, there is wisdom and then we feel compassion for the people who reject us, because they are trapped in assumptions, judgements and confusion. This is how we bring wisdom and compassion together. Instead of being afraid of other people we feel compassion for them. Those who are going to tell us off, those who are going to say we don't dress the right way or we are too fat or too thin, or we are too old or too stupid, or whatever the judgement they want to put on us is, they rather make us think, "Oh, how sad to be trapped in a mind making judgements." We can do so because we ourselves taste some freedom from judgement. Of course, we still have our judgements, but they pass through us more like the clouds through the sky. We just can see that for these people, the judgement arises, it bangs right through and they are completely committed to their judgement.

This weekend, England is playing Italy at football and all week the English newspapers have been full of fears that the Italian police is going to insult and beat up the British, and that yet again the British fans might get drunk and go

crazy again. There is a lot of anxiety over national pride and questions like *'Will we win?'* You can see how many, many millions of people are completely caught up in this. They are handing over their identification, their reality, to eleven men running around, kicking a ball. And if these men don't kick the ball in the right way, these people will feel their place in the world is debased and destroyed. *"We lost! Oh, hell!"*

What is this 'we'? Eleven men run around, kick a ball, and that is where the national pride is located. People can create wars out of this. Regularly, in Britain, people get stabbed; they even get killed because of someone kicking a ball into a little space. This is the incredible power which comes from ignorance, which comes from not recognising our own nature. Having a huge need for identity, a huge need to belong, and sticking it onto anything you can find, whether it's a national flag or a hero or a history or a motor car, we put identity outside of ourselves and then we try to protect it. As a consequence we are always in conflict, because as a human being we are living inside our skin; however when we identify with these things outside ourselves, we become huge, vast, and then we have to protect this huge frontier. Then, for example, if someone insults our football team we get very angry.

I read yesterday in the British papers about what a protestant man did to a catholic man in Glasgow, where I come from. The catholics had been celebrating because they had won the football match, and this catholic man was dancing around but some protestant people emptied their beer over the catholics and shouted at them. Then a protestant man came up behind one man and cut his throat right open, so deeply that it was right open and you could see his spine. Blood all over the place. Why did he kill him? Simply because he was a catholic. We know that in wartime too, killing is just that easy. Why is it like this?

All this are the fruits of having the wrong notion about who our parents are, of believing that our mother and father are our real parents. If our mother and father are our real parents, we are born in a group, in a race, in a club, in a nation, in a culture. But if we recognize that these are only our karmic parents, the parents who had sex and we then came out of our mother's womb, these parents are a manifestation of our own karma. Our real parents are this absolutely indulged couple who spend all their time completely wrapped up in each other. They are so wrapped up in each other, no wonder they forgot about us and we forgot about them. They can't think of anything else! It's a scandal. That's why we have to pray a lot and say, "Hey, forget about sex for a minute and think about me!" and then they send down rays of light.

These are our real parents. This is the whole idea of dzogchen and if we find our real parents again, we return to this state of absolute purity and we believe: if my mother is pure and my father is pure, then I am pure. If the parents are pure how will the child be anything but pure? If your mother is German or your father is German, you will get a German passport.

The idea of Kuntuzangpo and Kuntuzangmo as parents is very important because when we return home - this is a bit idealised, but never mind -, so the idea is when you return home, there is always a bed for you, food for you, there is a welcome at home. That is what it means. If you go back to your parents, they will always take you in. This, again, is the idea.

When we recognize our original nature, although we have been away from it for millions of lifetimes, you just knock on the door, and when the door opens: *"Ah! Sit down and have a cup of tea, have a buddha conversation."*

The purity is always there. It's very, very much like the story of the prodigal son in the Bible, and there is a buddhist version of this story as well. There is also a sufi version. Most Middle Eastern cultures have it. It's an archetypal story. But when the child wanders away and says, "I don't want you parents, you're useless. I want to get to my own life. Give me my money. I'm off." And the child gets lost and gets into a lot of trouble, and then in deeper, with nowhere else to go, it comes home and the parent looks at it: "Oh! My child!"

The parent doesn't say, "Split off, you little shit!" They do a lot nowadays, but we deal with an archetypal story here, this is not the kind of family that social workers deal with. So the parent says "Welcome back". In the sufi version of the story it's very interesting because on the way back to the home, the young man who has left home meets an old meditation master. When he tells him what he is going to do, the master says, *"No, no, you can't do this, because you hate yourself now. You feel you're a bad person. How can you go back home feeling you are bad?"* So he gives him many, many tasks to do and then he says, *"When you get to your father's house, disguise your face and offer to feed his pigs."* The son does that. He spends many, many years in his father's house, and his father doesn't recognize him, but gradually, because he works hard, he is promoted. Then his father thinks, *"This young man is very good. I can rely on him."* And one day he says, *"You know, you're like a son to me. If only I had a son like you."* And then his son says, *"Well, you know, I am your son!"*

They can meet because the young person has returned to a certain level of belief in himself. This is what we do a lot in dharma practice. It's not that the parent's door, or the door of Kuntuzangpo and Kuntuzangmo is closed to us, it's that we, believing we are bad, turn our faces away in shame. We expect to be rejected because we carry this burden that we are inadequate, poor or stupid. We still have a strong attachment to the five poisons in ourselves. So the purpose of the purification practice is for us to distance ourselves from these aspects that we are so attached to, so that then, when the door opens, we actually go through it.

This is very similar to the idea of preparation for death, the idea that when we go to die, we need to be looking forward. We are leaving and going towards this clear light, towards the state of reality which opens up when we die. But our problem is that mostly when people are dying, they are looking back. They are looking back at their possessions, the people they are leaving, the things they didn't do, the pains in their bodies. They are attached to what is now in the past, and because they are attached to the past they are looking to the past, and so when they advance, they don't see where they are going, and then they can't recognize what it is that they see. And that is a real problem.

There are many buddhist practices of purification. In dzogchen, the idea is that the ground, the basis of our existence, is pure. If we recognize the pure ground, everything is pure, because that is the source of everything. Dzogchen purification is also called 'purification on the ground'. When ignorance arose, we forgot what the ground of our being was. That is what ignorance is. Ignorance is to fall into the process of becoming very mixed-up

in all the things that are going on. When that happens, ignorance becomes a cause which has effects. That is to say, we start acting, me acting on the world, and when I act on the world, it has an effect, and the effect also affects me. The effect has an affect, creates affect, creates feeling, creates a sense.

THE BASIC SINS

When we are on this level, we need to think about stopping the bad actions. So on the level of being people who are in the world and who are caught up in difficulties, we need to remember—like it is said in the first chapter in *Simply Being*, the first part of Chetsangpa's writing, where he is talking about the ten basic sins—that there are three sins of the body, four of speech and three of mind, and we have to take these things seriously. As long as we are people trapped in our bodies we will have a result, our actions will have consequences. So Chetsangpa says sins of the body are: killing, stealing or really taking what is not given, and sexual misbehaviour. It's fairly easy to see what killing is, it's fairly easy to understand what taking what is not given is, but sexual misconduct or misbehaviour is much more complicated.

For Tibetans, sexual misconduct is very simple—no sex with the mouth, no sex with the anus, no masturbation, no sex in front of statues, no sex on full moon days, no sex on new moon days, no sex on tenth day, no sex on the twenty-fifth day..... Many, many, many things. No sex if you're living near a lama. Anyway, they have many, many ideas like that. What to say about that? Anyway, I'm not Tibetan and so I choose to treat these ideas for myself as one possible local cultural tradition.

Most generally, the big negative thing about sex is hurting people. Sex carries a very powerful energy. Nowadays, many people are lonely and sad, so sex is a good way of not being so lonely and sad, but it then becomes a very powerful trap. The positive side of sex is that it can make us feel more alive, more out, more through our senses, more connected and in the world. In that way, it's a very powerful way, a very useful thing to play with in a real sense, not in a silly sense. It's an energy that can be moved to make us just appreciate the world. Get some sexual energy and the trees look a bit brighter, everything is a bit more shiny because you come into yourself—if everybody can take responsibility not to create a situation in which they harm themselves or another, which means that people need to know what they are doing.

We always talk about that you can have systems of rules and that the rule often is a defence against responsibility, while actual responsibility, actual human lives, are very complicated. You make a list of when not to have sex but then there is never any time for sex left. As soon as you get involved with people, hot energy is messy, so it's not going to follow the rules. These things are tricky. So even on that level, one has to pay a lot of attention and be very aware of what the issue is.

Then, as to the sins of speech, the first one is lying, saying things that are not true. Then you have a kind of malicious speech, that is to say, speech which has the intention of causing harm to others. Then you have undisciplined speech, which is just saying any odd thing just for the sake of talking. Some people just rabbit on without stopping; that kind of thing is meant here. Then you have backbiting or gossip, and linked with that a kind of rough speaking

which provokes people towards arguing and disturbance.

What we can see is that these forms of speech are all conflictual. The first, lying, is that you go into conflict with yourself because you know something is not true and yet you say it. What is coming out of your mouth has one simple line, but inside you have cut yourself in half. It looks honest to other people, but you, you carry the conflict inside. With the other forms of speech, you put the conflict out into the world.

Then the sins of the mind: the first is strong grasping, or avarice, hanging onto things very powerfully. Then, wrong views, and especially around that is not believing in the dharma and not believing in emptiness. The reason that not believing in these buddhist views is considered to be wrong views is not that you should believe them just because the Buddha said them and therefore they must be true, rather they are presented to us as being the fruits of research. Anybody can understand impermanence if they look. If we look in the world we see impermanence, it's just there; it seems to be a fact of life. So not to believe in impermanence is a commitment to our own stupidity. It means we believe things are permanent because it's more cosy, more safe to believe that. It's an offence against the real work of the mind, which is to examine.

The natural function of the mind, this human mind developed in the brain, is examination—that is what it does all the time. The brain is there to examine. We walk down the street. Our brain, coming through the eyes without us even being conscious of it, is examining so many things. We put our foot down and there is a hole in the pavement. Our body starts to move, our brain is doing so many things to work out “Is this an accident? Am I going to fall over?” We feel with your foot, “Oh, it's just a hole in the road,” we find our balance and we go on. Huge numbers of transactions have occurred in the brain to make sense of that event. We are all the time evaluating things.

That is our natural makeup, but we choose not to do that. We believe assumptions. We believe assumptions of racial superiority, gender superiority, age superiority, whatever it is, and we hang onto these assumptions, we don't want to examine them, and so in that way we act against our own nature. We take things for granted, we become lazy, and that is the real reason that it's a sin.

On the level that we get trapped by thoughts, we need to think very strongly about changing our behaviour. Even if you practice dzogchen it's not enough just to say “I understand and I can self-liberate everything.” One's own behaviour in the world should have some degree of integrity in it. In the dzogchen texts it says, even if you are a murderer or a thief you can be enlightened. That may be the case, but after enlightenment, if you could continue murdering and stealing, one would have to have some doubts about that. What would the purpose of murder be? Dzogchen is very difficult to understand, and it's particularly difficult to understand if our minds are closed.

A STORY

After a long day I will just tell you a little story. You might have heard it before, but anyway, it's the link across these forms. I will just tell it in a very simple form.

Once upon a time, there was a rich young man, the son of a wealthy landowner. He had a servant who was very hard-working. A great buddhist teacher came to their country, so the rich young man went to see this buddhist teacher with his servant. The dharma teacher gave them a basic dzogchen teaching. He said, "From the very beginning, your mind has been pure. It's like the sky, very vast, very open, with no clouds. Whatever arises is empty and it is pure, so whatever you do, recognize the purity of everything."

They went away. The servant had heard this so he practised every day, tried to meditate and to see his mind like the sky, and when any impulse came in his mind to steal or do anything like that, he watched it passing through the mind. And he came to realise, yeah, there are good things and bad things just passing through the mind. It doesn't matter if it's good or bad, it's pure. And his behaviour was very pure.

But the rich young man, he heard the teacher saying "Whatever you do is good." So he said, "That's very good!" and so he went out getting drunk, having sex with everybody's children, causing a lot of trouble. The father was thinking, "I don't know. It was not exactly a Swiss finishing school I sent him to. These dharma teachers are very strange. I think we should send him back."

So he went back to the dharma teacher, and the dharma teacher first asked the servant what he has been doing, and hearing the servant's report the dharma teacher says, "Very good, you have really understood." Then he asked the rich young man, and the rich young man says, "I recognize whatever I do is perfect, so I do whatever I like. I am completely free!" And the dharma teacher says, "You are very bad. You have completely misunderstood my teaching. You must stop following this teaching and really you should leave this place now." And the young man says, "You're telling me to leave? Who the hell are you? Who the hell are you?" And he beats the dharma teacher and pushes him out.

Then he leaves the place, he causes more and more trouble, he gets a gang of people around him, they start killing and raping, and eventually, they cause a lot of troubles, kill many, many people. When he dies, he spends a hundred thousand lives as a worm and then as a frog and a rat, and he goes down to the hells; he has many, many, many lifetimes, but then, a very disturbed prostitute woman in one night has sex with three different kinds of demons—in the Tibetan tradition very rough and dangerous demons—the semen of these three demons mixes together and she becomes pregnant with that. The mind that comes into that meeting of these three seeds and her ovum is the mind of this rich young man.

In the course of the pregnancy, the woman dies and the people think, "Ugh, this is really a disgusting woman," so they drag her out and leave her dead body in the charnel ground, the place for dead bodies. In those days—it's a long, long time ago—it was a very terrifying place. Bits of bodies were there, all kind of wild animals. Inside this corpse there is the foetus. The foetus keeps growing and gradually he comes out of his mother and he has three heads and wings. He is very small but very hungry and he has three heads, so a lot of eating power as well. He finds his mother's breast and he sucks and he sucks all the milk out, then he sucks all the blood out, then he sucks all the puss out, and finally he eats his mother.

That is why he gets the name Matram Rudra, mother-eater, or the demon who eats his mother. Then he starts to roam around the cemetery eating dead bodies and killing anybody who comes by, he kills an elephant and wraps its skin around him, and he kills a tiger and wraps its skin around him. He takes the blood and he rubs it in his cheeks, he takes the ashes of the dead body and he rubs it all over his face. He takes the fat from the dead bodies when it has been cooked a bit, like on an Indian burning-ghat, and again, he rubs it on his skin so he is shiny. He wears snakes around himself, and he dances. When he dances, the world starts to shake. These are the eight cemetery ornaments which he starts to wear, like his necklace of skulls.

Then he moves out, and every man he meets he kills, every woman he meets he rapes, and he kills half the people in this world. Then he goes up into the god realm and he kills more and more and more people.

The buddhas are watching this. And they are thinking, "Hey, there's a problem here. We are nice, theravadan, hinayana buddhas. We like pure foods like white rice and yoghurt. Now this very bad person is coming, and although we are reminding ourselves, 'Everything is impermanent. Everything has no self', he still comes. Now instead these buddhas are thinking "This is very, very bad. Will you please go away?" and they go back into their meditation. However, each time they come out of the meditation Matram Rudra has become bigger, bigger and bigger, so he presented them with a little bit of a problem.

Anyway, he builds for himself this huge palace, and in this palace, Matram Rudra has his wife, who is called Wheel of Dark Time because she reverses the world. It's set out like a mandala, because a mandala is really like an old defensive fort. European forts are like that with a central tower, with windows looking in the four directions so you see where the enemy comes from; then you have the outer walls, the drawbridges, and all the rest of it. It's a defensive, medieval structure. He is causing a lot, a lot of trouble and then, finally the buddhas decide that something must be done. And Dorje Sempa has the job of arranging what should happen.

They send out an emanation of the lotus family, Hayagriva—it's the basic pre-form of Hayagriva—and this form goes into the body of Matram Rudra, in through his penis and up through his body and comes out the top of his head in the form of a horse's head. This is the beginning of Hayagriva. The wrathful form of Tara who is sent out as well, goes in through the vagina of Matram Rudra's wife, and rises up through her body and comes out the top of her head with a pig's head. This is the beginning of Vajravarahi. Hayagriva and Vajravarahi are the first wrathful male-female couple. The valley of Kathmandu is a mandala of Hayagriva and Vajravarahi. Vajravarahi is the main goddess of Kathmandu valley.

Then, many, many other events happen from this. These two then have sex and their son becomes Mahakala, and Mahakala is established to protect the dharma.

This is the beginning of the manifestation of the wrathful forms in the world. It's a very helpful story. What it does is that it points out the real danger of misunderstanding the dharma. The higher the teaching, the more dangerous it is to misunderstand them. Just as a nuclear bomb is very, very dangerous,

and a hammer is quite dangerous, but if you have a hammer and you want to kill people you have to hit them each one by one on their head with it. If you have an atom bomb you can kill many people at once. Dzogchen ideas, if you misunderstand them, although they are talking about innate purity, they can make you very, very bad.

For us, in these troubled times, when we haven't grown up in a buddhist culture, for us it's very important to continue the nyingma tradition of practising all the nine yantras together, so although here we will be doing a lot of dzogchen meditation with the dzogchen view, we also need to remember the ten sins of the body, speech and mind, and all the other sins. We need to remember as well to pray to Padmasambhava, to develop and make use of devotion, to think of wisdom and compassion, to practise the six paramitas.

If we practise on the relative truth level, the level of subject and object separate and real, and at the same time practise on the absolute level of this original purity, they will balance each other and help us to be useful in the world.

This is just an overview of how we can start to think about purification. From the point of view of absolute truth, there is nothing to purify. From the point of view of relative truth there is a lot to purify. If you only have one part of these views, you can get lost. What we practise is the integration of the two truths. Again, in the abovementioned book, the chapter by Patrul Rinpoche on the inseparability of the two truths is vital. If you really understand that these two belong together, then in your heart you can be infinite and open like the sky, and on your skin, in being with other people, you are always going to be respectful, kind, considerate and very tuned-in to where they are. One is vast, and the other is very precise. That is a key issue, I think.

Comment: I struggle a little bit with it because on the one side this is very clear and very nice to hear and nice to feel, but I sometimes see the practice in my job, I'm working with quite difficult children, and they are getting worse and worse. And when I notice how they fight with very strong aggressivity then, of course, I know why that is and that they actually are pure and...and...and... But when I watch how they hurt, really badly, each other, it's very difficult for me to say anything that's good. It's sometimes very hard when I look around and see all these, in my reality, very bad things. It's very hard for me sometimes. Especially if there are things which go very quick, like fighting, where I can't eject, just have to watch, and I can say, "Oh, it's like that and afterwards I can do something, but not in the moment. Sometimes it's very difficult.

I think in that case, sometimes all we can do really is to practise compassion.

Comment: I know that, I know that, but it's very difficult.

It's very difficult.

Comment: Because when I see bigger young adults fighting or small children, and I see that and I watch that, and of course, I try to stop that but in this situation it's very difficult...

I think it is very difficult _

Comment: Even when I say OK, that's ignorance etc., I feel very sorry with it. Of course it's compassion but it's not a kind of getting freedom...

I think this points to one of the paradoxes in buddhism; that although we take this Bodhisattva vow and we say that we want to practise the dharma in order to become enlightened in order to save all beings, buddhas can't save all beings. If they could, they would have done it. So if there are any buddhas around, either they are on strike or they took early retirement, or they're on heroin or something, but they're not really hanging around in your school and helping people. We have to imagine that in some way the Bodhisattva vow is part of a technique to help us develop wisdom.

One of the big problems, of course, is that every religion gets caught up in myths of power. People imagine that big lamas can do many, many wonderful things. I am sure they can do some wonderful things but they cannot save all sentient beings. They cannot go into a cancer hospital and stop everybody's illness. They cannot do that. So you have a situation where people have faith and see the lama or the buddha as this wonderful person to whom we pray: please help us; but the level of the help is very subtle. In a sense, the buddhas can only help you if you want to help yourself. They are a method that you can make use of, but the children in the school don't want to make use of the method, so on that level the Buddha is then just sitting on the shelf. The Buddha can only act if somebody asks him.

That is a very key thing in buddhism. Remember the story when Shakyamuni, Gautama—who then became Shakyamuni Buddha—after he got enlightened he was walking up and down near the bodhi tree thinking, "What should I do? Should I speak? If I speak no-one will understand me, so I can't offer this because people won't know what to do with it." Many, many people came and asked him, and these gods like Brahma came and asked him, "Please teach, please help us," and only then he did it, and he would only teach if somebody

asked him. If you look at these early Pali texts, they will always say, “One day, the Buddha was sitting under a tree, or sitting in a mango grove, and this rich man or this poor man or this monk came to him and said, ‘Oh, Buddha, how is it that such and such....’ Then the Buddha spoke...”

He spoke because he was asked. This is the reality of our situation: we can only act really when we are asked. If we try to intervene when we are not asked, we get into more trouble. But we also all carry a fantasy that somewhere there is a big mama and a big papa who will make it safe.

Comment: Maybe great teachers know what to do with people? Perhaps they understand what to do? There’s a story with Patrul Rinpoche and, you know, Patrul Rinpoche knew what to do...

I don’t doubt that some of these stories are true but there are many, many terrible things that happen in the world on a daily basis, and nobody can act upon them. So on the one hand we need to have faith but at the same time we need to not get into a kind of ideology that if the Karmapa snapped his fingers, samsara would end. There are some people who say this kind of things. Clearly, it’s not true. That is our reality. In some ways, maybe, what Ulrike was saying is that the more we study and the more we know, the more sensitive we become to the suffering of others.

THE THREE KINDS OF SUFFERING

Buddhist tradition describes that there are three kinds of suffering: the suffering of change, the suffering of suffering and the pure suffering. Pure suffering, this says, for ordinary people it’s like having a piece of dust in the palm of your hand, they don’t feel it. But as people get better in their meditation, the bit of dust goes into their eye and then they feel it. You start to feel samsara all the time and everywhere you look, you see people suffering. You walk down the street, and before, you might have seen an old man going for a walk and said, “Good Morning,” but now you think, “Oh, old age, suffering and death!” You can see they have arthritis, and you can see that life is difficult and they are walking slowly, so you identify more with other people but you don’t have any power to change their situation.

Comment: Well, I don’t want to change their situation. I know I can’t do that. What I wanted to say is that it’s very difficult to watch this, because you feel very helpless. It’s hard in such situation to develop compassion as well. I’m very, very angry very often, and of course, I know I am angry and so on, nevertheless, in the end, I’m finished, you know.

Maybe if you keep that kind of awareness through the next few days and we can return to it because I think it’s a very helpful example, probably for many people here, how we will need to make these ideas work for us in ordinary life, otherwise they remain just abstract.

Comment: I would like more to know about the practice of the wrathful deities. How we can make use of this.

Okay, we’ll certainly deal with that because I’ll look at purification in terms of hinayana, prajnaparamitayana and mahayana, tantra and dzogchen.

During this retreat the key thing is to be in collaboration with yourself; which means to spend time with yourself. Everybody here is very nice, so it’s also

very interesting to talk a lot to people. Decide for yourself: when you are talking with people, are you losing any awareness of what you are trying to practise?

Find out for yourself what you need. If you want to lie down, whatever you feel is right for you, do that. And if you feel guilty when you do something like that, that is wonderful, because guilt is something we need to explore. So many of you, and me too, have grown up with many rules from outside, and these rules always tell us when we are wrong. Learning how to manage these rules is very important and guilt is very helpful because guilt tells us when we are getting trapped by the rules. You feel tired and then you think, "Oh, god, what will people think of me, I'm lying down, I should be showing everybody I'm a proper meditator."

This kind of thinking is demonic. It has no benefit; it makes you false because you are not yourself. The only way to be enlightened is to be yourself. And you cannot be yourself unless you have the courage to be yourself. And the courage to be yourself means that you know critical judgments from others are the eyes of the demon. That is the where the demon is. The demon is in criticism. I have been with Tibetan lamas and if you stick your feet down and the feet are pointing towards them they feel this is a terrible, mortal insult. This is madness. This is a cultural form of respect, but it doesn't mean anything. It's just a cultural form; it has nothing to do with torture in Rwanda or the many, many terrible things that happen in the world.

We shouldn't get into this working out what is right and what is wrong. Everything is right if it's integrated with emptiness. Everything is wrong if you cling to it as strongly real.

NINE-ROUND BREATHING : *SEE ALSO ATTACHMENT 1*

We'll do the nine-round breathing just to relax the body and open it up a bit. For our purposes just now, you don't need to visualise anything but just stay quite relaxed. Women start using the left arm first, men start with the right. So for women it's left-right-left-right-left-right and for men the other way round.

With this kind of breathing, always breathe in and out through the nose. The reason is that as the air goes in through the nose, it gets warmed up in the sinuses, helping to clean them. It's also warm for breathing into the body.

If you breathe in directly through the mouth, especially if it's cold outside, you change your body temperature very quickly, and that causes a kind of shock, so it makes a tension in the body. Warming it slowly through the nose is better.

We start by breathing in while using our left arm if female, right arm if male. This wide opening gesture releases the chest. Then bring your hand towards your face and use the middle finger blocking the nostril of the same side; then breathe out the other nostril. As you're breathing out, lower the arm bringing compression on that side. Then bring your hand down, and start to breathe in, using the other arm. So we do that alternately, both sides three times. After that breathe in, and leaning forward go down as far as you can, using the pressure that's being exerted on the diaphragm to help bring out more of the air. We just do that slowly in our own time. There's no special visualisation to

do.

PURIFICATION OF THE BODY

KILLING

I would just like to go back to the sins of the body. The first one is killing and traditionally three kinds of killing are described: killing through anger, when you don't like someone and you kill them; killing through desire, because you want to eat them; and killing through stupidity, like animal sacrifice. If you have a copy of the *Simply Being* book it's all in there.

I think we also need to reflect: What is killing? Something is there which I don't like, or I do like, or which I don't respect. That is what these three things mean. You are my enemy: I am going to kill you. You are my dinner: I am going to kill you. You are something to offer to the one big god up in the sky: therefore I kill you. We have anger, desire and stupidity. The three basic poisons mixed with killing.

These poisons rest on the basis of a subject and object relation. We see these things as real, we see ourselves as real, we feel the impulse inside us as strong, and we act onto the world, against the world, either trying to push things away or to pull things towards us. It's essentially a kind of manipulation of the situation.

Most of you are familiar with the idea that ignorance starts as a kind of uncertainty, and stabilises itself through the conceptualisation of "I live in this world which is different from me, and I want some things from the world and I don't want other things." This is how our ignorance manifests. A sense of a separated, isolated self in a world which is both hostile and exciting. A kind of manic-depressive mood, if you like. There are good things and bad things, things we hope for and things we fear. That is arising due to our experience of being separate from the world. The basis of these sins of the body is the sense of separation.

When we go out for our early morning walk and it's very dark and we don't see what is under our feet, no doubt we kill ten or a hundred little somebodies wandering around. We do that because we want to have a walk, so we might then decide: clearly we are very dangerous creatures. We burn down the rainforest and we cause all this trouble. If we want to be good buddhists we should have ourselves put into prison and remain the rest of our life in a little cement room, where we won't cause any trouble to anyone.

In many ways, this is what the yogis do: they go and live in a cave. They put themselves in prison to stop causing trouble to others. Even then, if the yogi goes out to have a shit in the nice nature, the shit comes out of his bum onto some poor little insect! When I was in Manali, in a little monastery there, they had a big pissing stone, and all the monks would come up and lift their little skirts and piss on this stone because monks have to piss on stones, not on the earth. If you pissed on the earth you might kill insects. So there was one very smelly stone in the monastery garden.

It's very, very difficult not to kill. We are in a world where there is impermanence and change. In particular, one of the things that makes our

killing very bad, is the fact that we don't accept that we kill. One of the reasons we don't accept that we kill is because we don't accept that we are going to die. Birth and death flow together all the time. Our lives are based on the deaths of others. Even if you are purely vegetarian, insects will be killed in production of what you eat. You cannot have flour without killing insects, it's absolutely impossible. Every kind of agriculture involves killing of insects. To be alive is to be involved in a relationship with the world where our basic activity is against the existence of others in some way. That is just an existential fact.

If we accept that, then we can be part of the world because we realise we are not operating against that but we are in a force field of energy where whatever we do has consequences. This is a buddhist idea of karma, of cause and effect, that you cannot put yourself into a little, isolated tunnel and just go down it without causing any trouble. It's not like living in a metro, where all the trains are going in the same direction. It's much more like a traffic situation, where cars are coming from all directions and every now and then, they bang. We cannot help but bang into things.

That kind of killing, if we accept it, is different from what I described as these three sins because these sins involve intentionality. We act onto the world out of thinking and we use our body as a tool for the gratification of our thinking. That is really our essential situation. So when we are using our body in that way, we are privileging our own experience over the experience of others.

When we are in our thoughts, and we are using our body to get what we want, we pay more attention to our own experience than to the experience of others. Of course, we can never know someone else's experience directly. We can be quite intuitive or quite empathic and pick up some flavour, but we are, each here, strangers to each other. Some of you know each other quite well, and when you meet you can start a conversation about babies or work or whatever, and you can start to weave together the threads of your friendships, through asking these questions. You smile and you have an open face and you think "Oh, I like this person," but still, who is this person?

The karmic quality of sin—and I keep using this word 'sin' because it has a heavy, bitter taste to it; people don't like that word much nowadays, but its quality is that we don't attune to others; we don't attune to the environment—so this quality of a sin arises when we don't pay attention to the consequences rippling out of our activity. For example, if you are killing animals to eat, Tibetans certainly would say you should eat the whole animal. Many people will say, anyway if you are a meat-eater, to eat every part of the animal. Nowadays, people don't eat the intestines, they don't eat the brain—for many reasons, e.g. it's not very healthy to do that, but that again is because they were feeding chickens and sheep to cows. To feed a sheep to a cow...! This is completely perverse. That is the sin of greed, of desiring profit.

Very often we waste things; we throw things away because we don't recognize what we do. If you kill a cow there is a real creature there. A steak in a supermarket is not the same as a cow. Between the cow grazing in the meadow and the steak frying in the pan with such a nice smell, there is a moment when death comes with a bullet or a chop, and then the cow hacked

open and all the guts come out. It's a very disgusting business, and mostly we don't want to look in there too much.

The reduction of any kind of sin comes about by being aware of and present in what is going on.

Comment: Could you please repeat that?

The reduction of sin. We make it less powerful the more aware we are.

So many activities around the body are forbidden or hidden. Menstruation is just starting to come public, certainly in Britain, but it has been invisible for a very, very long time. Birth control is, in Britain, still primarily a woman's business. Men usually don't really want to know about that kind of thing. There is a way in which physical realities, body realities, get covered over. People don't really want to think too much about what goes on. People who are very sick go into special homes. Nowadays we don't care so much for sick or old people in our own homes. We are not so connected with the stages of the body. Many adults now have no connection with children. They don't see small babies, so they don't see breast-feeding, they don't wipe bottoms; they don't have that kind of relationship with the body.

It's only through knowing what a body is that you can have a healthy relationship with it. Bodies really have to be explored and accepted as they are.

So many rich and powerful people demonstrate: the body must be beautiful. If it cannot be beautiful, it must be spectacular in some way. The body is fetishised and turned into a thing for which, when you look at it, you have no notion of the process of eating and chewing, of bits of food getting stuck in your teeth, rotting and causing bad breath, or of having all this weird stuff going on in your guts, of shit coming out your bum.

None of that experience is present in the world of fashion. The body as it exists is always hidden and forbidden. The body as a fantasy is promoted more and more. Fantasy bodies are dangerous bodies. Beautiful fantasies are one thing but the other side of that is dreadful fantasies. The fantasy that if you are a Jew you're not entitled to be alive; if you are a Tutsi or a Hutu, if you are a Croatian or a Bosnian or a catholic or a protestant, your body is subsumed under this fantasy title, and so I can annihilate it. I can do that because I'm not aware of you in a flesh body, I don't have a body sympathy with you. I know who you are. You're just rubbish. You are something else.

See what I mean? The existence of the body no longer insists, and physical existence is then covered over by ideas. This is the real danger of fashion, which takes people over more and more and more. This is playing with a presentation of self which denies birth, old age, sickness and death. That is exactly opposite to what the Buddha said about the body.

One of our tasks, if we are interested in the dharma, is to really know our body. We have touched on this sometimes before. For example, one time you can urinate in a cup and drink some of your urine. it's a medicine in many traditions anyway, but it's also something coming out of your own body. You should taste everything that comes out of your own body. You can suck your hair. Get to know what a body is, because very often we are in fear of our

body. We don't want to die; we don't want to get old. We see wrinkles as an attack. In that way we try to maintain the fantasy body over the reality body.

This is ignorance of the body. It's the basis of so many of the sins that people perform because we will do anything to maintain our fantasy.

TAKING WHAT IS NOT GIVEN

The second sin of the body is taking what is not given. What is given to us? Is the air given to us? Who gave us the air? Do we have a right to breathe? We breathe in all the time and we take this air and we put all the bad things of our body back out into the air. We take things from the world and use them. Who gives us the right to make use of the world? It's quite an important question because you cannot have a notion of stealing or taking what is not given unless you have some notion where things come from and what entitlement is. An anarchist of the last century, Proudhon said that, "*property is theft*" but we all own things. His idea was that we always steal from the world because we say, "This is mine, that is yours," and we cut the world up into parcels and we own some of these parcels and so we have to push other people out.

That is quite an extreme view, but it's also very similar to buddhist phenomenology. When we do the meditation and we relax, we open to everything that is there, and in that sense we can experience everything. If you have a nice car, I look at your car and I enjoy it. I can have full enjoyment of your car without making it my car. I can have full enjoyment of anything that comes my way, and the pleasure dwells in the experience, not in the ownership. Very often the ownership destroys the experience of pleasure. This is a really important thing. It's certainly the experience I have in my life. The builders who are repairing the flat below me have built their scaffolding up by my window, and they are not even working on the house, and I phone these builders all the time, saying, "Take your scaffolding with its ladders away from my window. I don't want anyone to steal all my important possessions."

I was thinking about this: for a long time I lived with almost nothing, just one little bag, and now I have so many books and papers and all of these things, and as I was leaving my flat to come here I was looking at my statues of the buddha and thinking, "Well, I hope nobody steals these!" Very silly kind of idea. I want this statue of the buddha. When the buddha statue is there I don't look at it too much, but the idea that someone else would take it disturbs me very much! My anxiety is increased by my ownership. When I was young and poor in India, the buddha was this big open thing, everyone was buddha. Now buddhas are things that I have and own.

We have to really think, who gives us what we have? And were they entitled to give it to us? One of the great factors of socialization is that big thieves—not little robbers, but big, stock exchange thieves and big capitalist thieves who started in poverty, send their children to expensive schools, and these children then think they are the haute bourgeoisie. This is socialization, it's normal, but their expensive education is the fruit of theft. And when we see that people are rich in our culture, we worship them. It's the same everywhere, same in Tibet. Robber kings are kings. We don't think who gives things: as long as somebody has the money we don't really care where it comes from.

London is full of drug smugglers and all the rest of it, and London is desperately trumpeting into the world, "Bring your drug money here." Frankfurt says the same, Switzerland has an advantage. All of these big money centres are very, very keen to be legally illegal. There is a lot of profit to be made in it. So it's always a question: who gives us things? What is our entitlement to take what we have? Where does it come from? Traditionally, Christians say, "*Our Father, which art in Heaven*"—this is the *Lord's Prayer*—"give us each day our daily bread." Where does the bread come from? It comes from god.

Traditional Christian idea is one of providence: everything comes from god. We have talked a little of this before, but I think it's a very important idea.

Since the French Revolution and the development of the modernist movement, a humanist movement, human beings believe that they are the creators of things, and certainly, if we are not the creators, we are the inheritors of the right of ownership over the earth. But all the more traditional cultures say that everything comes to us from someone else. We are, at best some kind of custodian, some kind of concierge of this property which we have inherited. It really belongs to god, and it's our duty to pass it on to other people. But our modern, individualistic, appropriative culture doesn't say that. It says things belong to whoever can grab them, so the better you are at grabbing, the more you'll have. Ownership is a right. If it's in your hands, it's yours. We know this in court settlements. In English we say, "Possession is nine-tenths of the law." So, taking what is not given...

Buddhist texts also mention stealing from holy people or stealing by using sweet words. There are various kinds of ways of stealing, various people to steal from, but the essential thing is our relationship with the world. Is our relationship respectful? Do we make use of what we have.

One of the biggest things nowadays, I think for people in the west, is that we have many, many more things than we can use. I have so many books now, I will never read them, but I cannot stop buying books because they all look very interesting. I have all these shoes, I look at them and I think, "*Why do I have all these shoes?*" Well, sometimes I need them, but really two pairs of shoes should be enough. We have got all of these things we don't need.

What is the purpose of having these? They act as a kind of symbol for our security, for our safety. "I will always be wealthy, I will always have it easy in my life, I will never grow old, I will never be helpless because I have got this." This is the real fantasy. We will grow old, and when we die, they will maybe bury us in a good suit. In England, old people often say, when they go to buy something, "Oh, this one will see me out." Or they buy a new suit and they think, "I will be buried in this one." How many things do you need from the world? How many things do you want to leave behind you? A great big cupboard full of things?

Do we want to move through the world in an almost invisible way? Making use of things in a respectful way but not leaving much trace behind? A bit like nomads in North Africa. Actually, most nomads take a great pride in leaving no trace behind. Very often, if they make a fire, they will dig a pit and cover it over. The idea is to leave no trace, and that image is often used for yogis: that they should pass like a shooting star through the sky. Whereas, very often we

want to leave a trace, we want to mark the world in some way; we want people to remember us. But acts of kindness can be done in a very invisible way, we don't need to announce them, we don't need to take on titles. If we are invisible in that way, we can connect with more people perhaps.

Although these things are presented in lists of rules, the key question is for us to think: How much do I need? What do I take from the world? The best compensation for taking is giving, so that if we take, we should give back, and then in some way we can even it up. If we take too much we feel sad. If we don't take enough we are often left with envy of other people who have things and we feel frustrated. Many people are very shy; they would like things, but they cannot ask for them and then they look with very big eyes at those who have got them, enjoying them. That is also quite common. Like people who, when somebody says, *"Oh, I've got a free ticket. Would anybody like it?"* think *"Ah! Oh, I wish I had asked!"* The desire comes too late. Not being able to speak your desire is also, in many ways, as bad as speaking it out too much. It's about finding the balance so that you make use of things, and that use is of use to you and of use to other people.

Comment: Did you say it's not so bad?

Yes, making use of things is not so bad. It's not a bad thing in itself.

SEXUAL CONDUCT

Then the third issue about the body is sexuality. The body is always sexual. Nowadays because you have scans it doesn't matter so much, but traditionally, as soon as a baby is born the first thing the people look at is the face: is everything there? They look at the fingers, and then they look at what is between the legs, because that is a very important determinant. It determines the name, the identity, the status. In many countries, if there is a dangly thing between the legs everyone goes "Hey!!" and if there is no dangly thing, then they go, "Oooh!" That is how many cultures are constructed. Gender and sexuality are immediately a given in our life.

How should we deal with sexual energy? It's a very important thing. The reason why this theravadan approach of seeing sex as a bad thing was because of its power to disturb. Desire is not something we can control. You can switch desire off but when you are in a state of desire, it moves, it's not a rational phenomenon. Desire is fundamentally irrational. Learning how to manage and work with the irrational takes a great deal of effort. It cannot be done just by thinking.

Broken off while tapes change

In the theravadan system they try to cut it off and so sex is seen a bit like in a catholic view of it, sex is for procreation because the pleasure element of sex can lead you astray. If you keep it simple like that, then it's not so bad. However, if you start to experience sex as something pleasurable, what do you do with that pleasure? Like any appetite it can grow and increase and you can spend your time thinking about sex, so that can become uncreative in life, because it knocks people out of their ordinary existence. The key thing, clearly, is: can we manage these boundaries? That is the key thing. We have to remember that these rules were written in cultures where there was no

contraception. Getting pregnant was a very real danger. It was an absolute danger for women but also a danger for men, for all sorts of reasons, primarily because of revenge. You got into trouble through sex. Nowadays, with effective contraception, that element of fear has been removed from most peoples' lives, certainly in the west.

RESPECT

The next element is about respect. Does respect for a whole person vanish in the cycle of sexual arousal? A great deal of sexual connectedness is fetishised. In this room, for example, people will have different erotic feelings. Some people will be more interesting for us, sexually, than others. That will depend very much on early childhood imprints of sexuality, from a western perspective, or we could say, on karmic imprints. Whatever it is: some people interest us more than others.

Now why is that? It's not that you can have a computer print-out for it; it's just that there is something intriguing about some people, but also, probably, at different times of the day, different people would be interesting. It's something moveable. That kind of attraction is very unsettling. The things that might interest you sexually about someone may not be the whole of the person. It may be the shape of their cheekbones, it could be the shape of their breasts or their bum, or it could be a dominantly sexual thing or just it could be the tone of their voice. It could be all sorts of things.

We then actually are relating to an aspect of a person which is not a whole person, and so, often a lot of sex—although it's concerned with intimacy—is not really about connecting with a person, it's about being turned on in response to a particular signifier. That is dangerous because it's a basis for hurting people, because you might want to have sex with someone because they interest you in a particular way but then, having had sex with them, they don't interest you anymore. Probably most of us have had that kind of experience and often it's very saddening afterwards. You maybe felt you were in love but afterwards you realize you were caught up in some particular kind of obsession which had more to do with your relationship to something in your own mind, or to your own memory, than to the actual person you were with. That is, I think, not an uncommon experience.

The sins of the body are very much more related to not experiencing somebody as a whole person. We have sex with bodies, with people, but it's a person living in a body. To have that openness to the whole aspect of the person is quite rare. Putting the person first, respecting the person, is very, very important.

WHAT IS THE BODY?

What is the body? Clearly, we here all have a body. We can touch our bodies, so: I am banging my knees. I don't know why I'm doing it but I do it. So I am banging my knees. I don't mind me banging my knees because it's my body. If someone else was to come and start banging my knee I might say, "Oy! Why are you doing that?" I have a special relationship with my body; I allow myself to do things to my body that I might not want anyone else to do. Even if I was completely in love with someone I don't know if I would want them to clean my

teeth for me. I like to clean my own teeth myself.

This body is a very complex private domain of all sorts of memories and habits and traits, and we have relationships with our body that are completely private. We do things with our body in private that we don't want anyone else to know about. The body is a very special domain. It's also the place where we become most public because people can see our bodies, even when we don't talk or want to attract their attention.

The body is a thing and it is not a thing at the same time. In our culture we have a lot of emphasis on the body as a thing; we have also seen on television and in photographs many pictures of bodies as things, both sexualised things in terms of modern advertising, and horrifying things in terms of bodies from car accidents, concentration camps, Sarajevo and all the rest of it, so we are quite familiar with the process of living bodies becoming dead things. We have also probably seen many films in which people used other people's bodies as things. We have probably experienced people using our bodies as things for violence, for sex or whatever. At school, in the playground—and maybe that is what Ulrike was gesturing towards yesterday—we see how children often have their body turned into a thing by someone else that is a thing for beating or stealing things from or whatever, but in all that there is no real sense of a living person.

From the point of view of yoga and tantra and particularly in dzogchen the body is seen as a process of manifestation; it is the manifestation of the energy of reality. The core nature of the world is seen as infinite, open emptiness but it's not empty of everything because energy keeps manifesting, and it manifests in the form of the world that we experience, and particularly, of our bodies.

In that way, we can see how the form of our experience is dynamic and moving.

You can go here in the hills and you see a river coming down, and the water is tumbling and moving, and you really see water is very dynamic, but then you can take some stones and make a little wall in the side of the river, and so you make a little pond. The water becomes very still there. Just next to the moving water is now still water. When you look in the still water you cannot imagine it moving, you just think, *“Oh, water sits, that is its nature. Water doesn't move. It just sits there.”*

That is very much how it is for us. When we focus on 'me', 'my body', we become like a still pond. We seem to have a stasis, a lack of change, "I'm just me", but actually "I'm just me" is a moment of the river. It's not a separate pond. It's like a series of photographs or a movie, and you stop it, you press the pause button, and you get a still. We are all the time in process but we think of ourselves, often, in terms of stills.

We distil an essence of ourselves, and we relate to as if it was a thing. In that way, we then think of our relationship with the world in terms of a fixed object. *“I am hungry, I need to eat.” “I am lonely, I want to be with you.” “I need this, so I will take it.”* This 'I' is talked of as if it were a thing. *“I had to do it.”* There's a substance in the 'I', a kind of *gravitas, a weightiness, of entitlement, and children pick this up very early: “But I want you to!” “I want to!”* the 'I' insists,

and what is this 'I'? When we say that kind of thing, it feels very, very heavy.

FIVE ELEMENTS

Another way of thinking of this would be that we have this ceaseless process of the five elements, of space changing into wind, into fire, into water, and into earth, and that all the aspects of ourselves can be experienced through each of these elements. For example, when we start to reflect on impermanence and look into our body and examine it down to the level of the atom, we find that basically we are space, but we are not just space because we manifest. Out of the space there is the movement of the breath, the fire of the liver and the heart, the water element of the blood, and the phlegm moving in the body and the earth element of the bones. Psychologically as well, when we are healthy and happy, our minds are light, the five elements are integrated.

FIVE POISONS

But when we come under the power of the five poisons, when we have strong anger, when we have strong desire, jealousy and pride, you get a concentration down to that kind of earth element like when we say, "I'm terribly pissed-off with you! I'm really angry with you!" The 'I' has a real heaviness, it's really condensed like condensed milk, it's thick. Desire is like that. In English we talk of 'cloying', it's got that kind of sticky feel to it, you cannot get out of it. You get caught up in it. It has got an obsessive quality. The same with jealousy and pride.

However, what we can do is keep trying to reintegrate the elements. In doing that we don't stop being angry, we don't stop having desire or jealousy or pride, but we don't get trapped in this concentrated form of it. We feel the concentration and then we can relax it back into the space. So we have a kind of vertical pulsing, if you like, between this space, the wind, the fire, the water and the earth which is loosening up the concentration that happens on the horizontal level when I am angry with you and you seem like earth and I feel like earth and it's banging together. Of course, if somebody is angry with us, we go into earth too, don't we? We get immediately frightened, "Oh, god!" Your body does that, your muscles tense, you think, "*Oooh, shit, what's going to happen?*"

You have maybe a trouble at work: you get a memo, "Your boss wants to see you". "Oh, shit!" You can just feel it in your body, the earth becoming tighter, the fear of being annihilated, "I'm going to lose my job!" You will be cut out. Here you are, plugged into this institution and suddenly, snip, snip, snip, out you go, goodbye! And there is an enormous fear in that because you then experience yourself as a thing which has been cut off.

If any of you have experience with bereavement, with the death of parents or children or loved ones, you know the feeling of how solid it can make you when you miss someone in that way. If you have had the feeling, it's quite solid to really be sad, to miss someone, it's very heavy. Maybe you say the same thing in Germany, in English we talk of 'heavy with grief', you get 'weighed down' by the 'burden of grief'. This is the sense of being cut off. If someone is alive and you can be with them, it's quite energetic—and then when they are gone, you are left with all this energy which you cannot play

with any more, and it sinks down into this solid burden. Hopefully, some day, you will meet someone else and it starts to loosen up again.

People who have been hurt in love and who have sealed themselves off, if they fall in love again they have a kind of springtime, it's like waking up from the winter. Winter is a compression, isn't it? We would say the earth nature sinks back into itself. Everything falls from the trees (which was an expansion into space), back into the earth.

In dzogchen, what we are trying to do all the time is to stay with the experience of the body as energy and be aware of when thoughts, feelings, sensations become very heavy. That heaviness shows that we have lost the stream of our being; we have gone into a little pool. But if we can just relax and jump back into the stream, we find ourselves in the dance of life again, just moving with whatever is going on. Sounds very romantic, doesn't it?

A key notion is that if we are able to stay relaxed and open with the flow of things we will not be drawn towards bad activity. Our nature, when we relax into it, is self-regulating. Most animals eat what they need and they don't store things too much. Even if squirrels are very, very active, you can say, "Oh, we're going to have a cold winter," because people have observed over the years that animals store things up when they get a feeling of a bad winter, and if it's not such a bad winter coming they don't store so much. In a sense, it is 'easy come, easy go'. Like with this beautiful cat that is around here, it's a very nice way of us thinking about dzogchen. Just moving through things, not taking things too seriously. If it's good, it's good; if it's bad, it's bad. And cats know when they have had enough. They come and sit in our lap and then they get bored. We want to hold them more, but we don't have the power to seduce cats. They seduce us all the time, but then they slip out and they are gone.

This is something to explore for yourself. Aren't you a better person when you are relaxed? Do you get so angry? Do you get so full of jealousy and pride? If you are just simply satisfied if a bird sings, you hear the bird. But if you are dreaming of someone else or you want some thing, when the bird sings you don't like it, you cannot be with what is there because you are already with something else. This is the problem of preoccupation. We are preoccupied. To be preoccupied means we are filled with a thing, some thing is inside us, we are hung up on something, and then we are not free just to flow. As the Buddha said, all suffering arises from attachment, because it's attachment that pulls us out of the moment into the past and the future. The more we relax, the more we enjoy whatever is there, and when we enjoy whatever is there, we are not so desperate to get other things and extra things. And if we have to leave everything, then we just leave it.

When we do exercises and meditation and practice around experiencing the body as energy, the key in this is to research it for yourself. It's not a matter of concepts: if you have some tea, explore the process of drinking tea. If you go to the toilet, explore that experience in terms of energy. What is going on? If you are urinating, this water is coming out of you, and then you drink some more, water is going in, and that we are this process. All the time we are breathing in and out, there is absolutely no doubt. Take your pulse, just feel

the beat of your heart, put your hand on your heart. Boom, boom, feel it in your neck. This is what is going on. Thoughts, feelings, experience.

At the same time, we have these very powerful organising thoughts which tell us who we are. What we are trying to do is increase our attention to the phenomenological basis of our experience, what is actually here, and use the reality of what is here to antidote the power of assumptions and concepts which we have inherited and which tell us who we are and who we should be. Most of us are involved in constructing our lives out of ideas rather than out of direct experience, but dzogchen is very much saying: unless you can really be in what you are about, then where will you be?

For example, a certain lama always tells me about his intestines. He always talks a lot about his stomach and what his shit is like, and I always, for years, wanted him to tell me some dharma story or some great teaching. But he is interested in his body; he is interested in his own state and he comments on his own state. Many of the things he says are just *expressing* “*This is how I am.*” But I am not so interested in how he is! I want him to give me this dharma thing that I can take away because I want to fill myself with all these dharma ideas. It’s all so amazing, like little squirrels, we store up all this kind of knowledge as if it was the real reality. But part of our reality is just exactly how our stomach is, how we sleep, and we often talk of these things as a kind of social format, “*How did you sleep?*” or whatever. But really, “*How did you sleep?*” is a very real question. “*How do you eat?*”

The actual reality of the body is very, very profound, and the relationship of the body to the mind in an integrated way is a reversal of the way our western culture has separated the body and the mind and made the conceptualising mind the master of the body. It’s quite a struggle to practise this integration, and we will do some various things around that.

We have the sense that the body is here as this experience of the five elements, but it’s also our mode for acting in and on the world. One of the things that both—the nature of our body in terms of our health or beauty or whatever else, the qualities and characteristics of our body, as well as our activity—highlights for us is the fact that life is not fair. Life is not fair and what we can understand from that, I think, is one of the most important issues.

I was recently at a psychotherapy meeting in London, a meeting of psychotherapists who belong to the same psychoanalytic institute. The people who started the institute about thirty years ago are called the Members, and there are about ten of them, and all the other people who have graduated are called Associates of the Association. Some of the people who are Associates were saying, “*I have worked very hard. I have done many things. I want to be a Member.*” The Members were saying, politely, “*Give me a break!*” Politely, with a lot of analytic cover.

The members are people who started the organisation, who have been there longest, who have the most experience if you like, they have the lineage, and they give the transmission of the lineage. They have problems as well, they are not always wise, they make mistakes, but you can say the same for Tibetan lamas. But, they have something which is a distillation of experience. Out of that experience they invite people in, or not.

This is exactly the same in terms of dharma transmission, that teachers say to their students, "I recognize you as a dharma heir," or whatever, or they don't. Very often, when that transmission occurs, other people become very envious or unhappy. The most famous example of that, I think we have talked of here before, is the story of the sixth patriarch of Ch'an buddhism in China, who when he was appointed as the patriarch by his teacher, he had immediately to go into hiding and run away from the monastery, otherwise the monks would have killed him. He had his little robe and then he ran up into the hills and he wandered like a poor beggar. He had inherited the main teaching of the dharma in China but due to the envy of other people he had to hide.

There had been in the monastery the abbot, the senior monk who had been there for many, many years and who had done many, many things and who had been the closest disciple of the fifth patriarch. In this form of transmission, each of the candidates had to write a small poem and this abbot wrote a poem, and then Hui Neng, the sixth patriarch, wrote a poem and Hui Neng's poem was perfect, and it was also a slap on this abbot's poem, just showed it as empty nonsense, as simply words he had heard without realisation. But the monks in the monastery liked their abbot, so they were very unhappy that their abbot didn't get it. It's exactly the same system. The abbot is there for many, many years, he is very, very helpful, he is very, very good but he didn't get it. So he didn't get it.

That is what happens in life. People can be hard-working, dedicated, but they don't get it. They don't have the luck. They don't fit. Life is not fair in that sense. You can't work out cause and effect principles: if I do this work... These psychotherapists are saying, "But I've served on all these committees, I've done more work than these Members! Why can't I be a Member?" It's not that game. It's another game. The game is those who have it, invite you in, or not. And if they don't invite you, you cannot come in. Which takes us back to being children in the playground at school and you want to join with other children and they turn their back. We all know that feeling, and we know how good it feels to be inside, and then you want to say, "No! No, we are in here doing this!" and make a very small circle.

The body is where a lot of that occurs. In the west, rationalism, the rational function, which is not a bad thing in itself, has been elevated to create a notion that through democracy the world can be structured in a very orderly place, so that everyone will get what they need. Even on the table here, I noticed that the coffee they are serving is from a 'fair trade' outlet.. In England also we have fair trading, whereby we try to help these poor coffee farmers in Colombia or wherever so that they can have direct access. However not every coffee farmer in Colombia gets to join that organisation. Thus after a short period of time, this 'fairness' becomes a privilege. The world is not fair.

Comment: But why is the world not fair? Where does it come from?

It's a good question.

Comment: Because I hardly can accept to say the world is not fair. Okay, the world isn't fair but then, what can change it? I don't know.

Your question is very good and the way you say it carries that very modern dynamic to make things fair, and that comes out of our rationalist education

which was developed as an antidote or a counterpoint to the christian idea of god's grace, of providence. The Lord will provide. Insha'Allah. Every religion that I know of, every major religion is essentially passive in its orientation. It says, however the world is, our task is to accept it, to be aware of it, to be open to it, but not to try to change it too much. Different religions give different reasons for this but the basic buddhist idea is, if you get involved in the world, trying to change it, it is like honey, it will stick to you. You will get hot, you will get excited, you will feel pushed about, like these poor psychotherapists. What they were saying was absolutely true. They had worked very hard, but the world wasn't the way they wanted it to be.

In order to make the world the way they want it to be—and they may be able to do it, they will get enough people and they will vote—they will destroy the world for the other people. So their fairness would be an attack on the other people. This is how our world is. It's very complicated, it has many dimensions and to make the world fair is, if you like, an aggressive act. Not in the sense of hostile, but it means you act on things, and that movement is a reaffirmation of subject/object duality. In trying to repair the problem on the level of manifestation, you actually support the structure which causes the problem. It is iatrogenic: the effort to heal the condition actually creates or sustains the pathology. That is tragic.

In Tibet they have this story of the first buddhist King Songtsen Gampo who three times distributed the wealth of Tibet because he decided that everybody should have a fair share, so he gathered all the money together and gave everybody an equal amount. Then, after a short period of time, some people had become rich and some people had become poor. Then again he tried it, and the third time he realised, "Oh, something is operating here." Buddhists call that karma. "That is your karma." Some people can make money, they have a nose for it; they can sniff it out. Other people they sniff all the time but they don't get anything!

That is a very important thing, I think, around the body. What sort of activity should we do with our body? Basically we take an orientation that we want to help people and some of us have looked at this question before: how do you help people? What is the basis of helping? It would be easy if we could do an action and have a guaranteed outcome.

Nowadays there is a great pressure for public institutions to show that the money they are given is being spent very efficiently, so every kind of clinical service has to prove itself. In order to prove that you are good, you have to reconceptualise what you do. For example, psychotherapy in Britain fifteen years ago was very much about containment, about holding, welcoming, providing a space for connection and for a relationship to evolve. It was operating in a kind of organic time. Now, with this thing of audit, people say, "*Oh, we only have ten sessions, or maximum twenty sessions, so we have to be very efficient, we have to be very task-focused.*" When you are task-focused, you do different things and you have a different experience from the other way of working .

We could link that to buddhism. Buddhism, if you like, works basically with organic time. People are in their own processes with their own karma, and for

them it takes as long as it takes. That is why, when we do the bodhisattva vow, we say *"I will stay in samsara for as long as it takes."* We don't try to blast people instantly into enlightenment, because they can only go at the speed they go at, which means if we are going to help them, we need to respect the situation there is. Although throughout tantra there is a developed technology of method, it still has to be applied to people who want to work. When we do things, we have to ask ourselves, *"What are we trying to do?"* What are we trying to achieve?"

TRAGIC ILLNESS AND CANCER

That will be affected by how we understand our own body and the bodies of others. Briefly, I think everybody here is quite aware of the idea, and hopefully has some experience of impermanence. Our own bodies are impermanent, the bodies of others are impermanent; the world is impermanent. When something tragic happens to someone, that tragedy is arising in the flow of their manifestation. It is an impermanent phenomenon. Even if it lasts from then until the end of their life, it is still impermanent.

Say for example, your parents or some friend has a stroke and they become paralysed. We say, "Oh, their life is almost finished. Before they were so active doing so many things, and now they slobber," and you look and think, "Oh no. What is that? It's so terrible!" That is impermanence. For buddhism it is a given that phenomena are impermanent. There is a patterning of the five elements, and what has happened was a blood clot came in the brain. What is a clot? It is blood which usually is fluid, it's the water element taken over by the earth element, so you have 'earth' where you shouldn't have 'earth', it solidifies, and it blocks the movement in the brain which kills off a part of the brain functioning. That is not a great mystery. These things happen.

If we have this perspective of many, many, many lifetimes, which is the only buddhism perspective—buddhism is about infinite time—in another life, they will be reborn with another kind of body. But we get upset: "Oh, god! We remember, oh yes, Hans, he was like this and like that, and now, oh, so tragic!" This person was like that and is now in a state they shouldn't be in, this is a bad thing. We don't see impermanence, we don't see the play of the five elements, we don't see the absence of inherent self-nature. We see poor Hans, how sad. When we see Poor-Hans-How-Sad, we are not practicing the dharma; we are just being nice middle-class German people. Bourgeois morality and etiquette and politeness are not a bad thing but it is not the dharma.

The dharma has a different view. The dharma says: there is space, there are processes arising in space, whatever comes, comes; whatever goes, goes. If a stroke comes, if cancer comes, let it come. You cannot stop that anyway, so at least stay with a basic common sense. If it comes, it comes. Nobody can stop cancer. So you have cancer. Okay, you didn't want cancer, but you have cancer. You can say, "This cancer doesn't belong to me, it shouldn't have been there, I'm going to change my diet, I promise I'll only ever eat cabbage from now on." You can do that, but that is not the practice of the dharma. That is the practice of saying cancer is a big, bad thing and I don't want it. Yes, it is a big, bad thing, but it is also the process of the body. It is a mutative process

in the body. The dynamic, impermanent nature of cells manifest in a form the ego doesn't want.

When we look at a picture of the Buddha he has a lump on the top of his head called an ushnisha. You can imagine the Buddha meditating, suddenly he gets a funny sensation, "Oh, god, what's happening?" He looks in the mirror, "Oh, my god! What has gone wrong?" He looks around. Everybody else still has a flat head; he is the only person with a lump on the top of his head. He is completely traumatized. That is why he tied his hair up, to try to cover it over.

People are not in control of their fate. The buddha has these marks on his hands and his feet. He has webbed fingers, like a duck. Imagine that. On the palm of his hands, he has wheels. He has conch signs on his body. He has thirty two major and sixty four minor marks of the Buddha's body. He looks weird. If he is not weird from human realm up, then he is alien descended from Tushita heaven down.

For the ego the key issue is always control, because of the nature of ignorance—because ignorance is the separation out from the stream of being—ignorance is a setting apart. That setting apart creates an anxiety, the anxiety of the refugee, of the emigrant who is not quite sure and who is always trying to fit in. This is what we carry all the time, and this anxiety means that we become externally focused because the world that we try to adapt to is out there. We either make the world fit in with us or we fit in with the world.

Dharma says what we should try to do is relax back into the stream. Relaxing into the stream of becoming is to give up control, but the ego, feeling isolated, tries to control the situation by making the world fit me or making me fit the world. These are two very different ways of behaving. Real dharma is not about control, although some dharma methods involve aspects of control. It is about just being open to the world as it is. It is phenomenological, that is to say, it is concerned with what is there. It is not ideological. Of course, buddhism has a lot of ideological aspects but it uses ideology to serve heightened phenomenological experience. The theories or the dogmas of dharma—these mental constructs and ideas—are used to help us return to our senses. To return to the direct experience of what is here. If the dharma concepts just take us away into being a buddhist and knowing all buddhist philosophy, it then becomes an ideology, it becomes a theoretical, dogmatic movement which is not alive. It is not in the tips of the fingers.

Comment: I don't mean this as a 'but'. Nowadays we have cancer, we have the technology partly to do something about it, like chemotherapy or radiology. This exists and that exists. You can find this with that, to a certain degree, and it may also be okay to a certain degree. There is no need to say "okay, so I'm twittering away because I have this cancer"...

Sure, that would be hopeless and we are trying to avoid hopelessness but we are also trying to avoid the manic hope of 'we will control everything.' So, if we take this idea of whatever comes, comes, what comes through the post is an appointment for the hospital for radiotherapy. Should you go along? If you do this thing your hair falls out and you think, "*Oh, whatever goes, goes. Now I have no hair.*" You look in the mirror—gone, it is a strange looking person.

Then, afterwards, your hair grows back and you have a healthy life or you don't. Whatever comes, comes.

It is not that we set ourselves apart from the world. Hospital departments are in the world, so we can be in a hospital department as well. We can make use of whatever is there but it is not to take it too seriously. "Oh, my cancer! Oh, this! Oh, this!..." And then you live in this mental world which cuts you off from the world. We know that people do get cancer; probably some of us will get cancer. We can say it is a tragic thing but it is also what happens. We can understand the nature of cancer. Cancer is an imbalance of the five elements. We live in a world which is absolutely unbalanced, and increasingly so, in terms of the five elements so it is not surprising we will get that.

The way to rebalance the five elements is to return to the meditation practice, so you can go for radiotherapy but you have to do the meditation as well. Particularly Patrul Rinpoche says i(See *Simply Being*) , when bad times come meditators run around crying and screaming and stop their practice. They go to talk to their friends, "*Oh, my god, this terrible thing has happened!*" They don't go and pray to Guru Rinpoche. They don't go and do their Dorje Sempa meditation. It is like keeping the steady beat of the practice and when you get distracted then you can return to it

PRACTICES OF BREATHING AND THEN PAINTING

It's also very interesting, because this is the season for colds and many people have colds, so look at this water element coming out of your nose! Being sick is very, very helpful to us because when we are sick, we are different. You can watch your internal shape — your sense of who you are — changing as you get sick. You don't want to eat the same things; you don't want to do the same things. That is the process of the change of your identity. "I don't feel like myself any more. I wish I could get back to how I was." It's very important just to observe how the body is changing all the time, and that the ego wants to control it and say how we should be, but the reality is: this body has a life of its own. And either we are in the body, living an embodied existence with all its changes, or we try to create this pure ego realm in which we distance ourselves from our body and tell the body how it should be.

This is the thing: to integrate the body as experience; then we can use any cures or medicines as required but with more subtle attention to what is going on. We know that the best investment for money is the pharmaceutical industry. Generally you get the highest returns on investment there, and that's because people buy medicine all the time. We go into many people's homes and find in their bathroom cupboards full of packets of stuff they bought and never ate, because they bought it like a kind of magical thing. So there is a kind of manipulative play there which speaks of an absence of attunement to one's state. But we cannot do dzogchen without being in our own skin.

Comment: If we meditate it's also the ego that is involved, and if we meditate, the question is whether we just have to sit down and let come what comes, or, like in Dorje Sempa practice, there is also something like a control, we don't let come what comes, rather it's a method and we control it.

Yes. We practice Dorje Sempa usually from the point of view of tantra and tantra is very much about control. Tantra is a path of power and dzogchen is

not a path of power. Dzogchen is a path of integration and acceptance, so it's different. It's a good point about the ego in the meditation. The more ego we have in the meditation, the more we will want to control what goes on. The less ego we have in the meditation, the less we need to control things. The less you need to control things, paradoxically, the more you will control everything. That is to say, in dzogchen they talk of *lhundrup* which means spontaneously arising, and I think it's a common experience for people who meditate a lot, that their life gets easier. Things just happen. Somebody phones you or somehow there is a kind of goodwill that you tune into in the world. You may have had that experience. In that way, the less you try to control your situation, the better your situation becomes. It's strange, isn't it?

For example lamas—even in India, when they were refugees and I was meeting them in the sixties—they would live in a little room, and all day long, people would come and see them, and these people would come in the rain and in the storms and everything, and they would bring them at least some vegetables or a packet of biscuits or incense or a few rupees. The lama is sitting on his bum, within a little room, and food is coming in the door. For us, we have to go out to the office or the factory or wherever we go, and do work. So there is a way in which the meditation brings things. You may have that experience in your life, that things come easier.

The other possibility is for people to bring things for each other. If people collaborate, not so much needs to be done. So many things are made much more simple by people working together in a helpful way. Instead when we have a lot of isolation, people do so many repetitive acts. We've talked before about cars, the number of people who drive to work in their own car with nobody else in the car, and you ask yourself, "Why don't people go in the same car?" Practically it may be difficult and "I just like being in my car with my music." Individualism does make particular demands.

BREATHING WITH HOLDING: SEE ALSO ATTACHMENT 2

We start again with the nine-round breathing. Then we go on to breathing in and out, but we start to extend the amount of time we have with the different stages of the breath. At first we can breathe in for a count of four, and then breathe out for a count of four. Each count is about one second. Often people will time it on their pulse which is a bit faster than a second. You can also make it slower.

Our breathe is like a muscular system, so we need to exercise it slowly, respectfully and gently. The more you do that, the more you will have the capacity to hold.

So just breathe in for four, out for four; in for four, out for four, in for four, out for four.

Once that is stable, you can then hold for two. So, in for four, hold for two, out for four. Later you can go in for four, hold for four, out for four. Then you can do in for six, hold for four, out for four.

You can also hold on the out-breath, but I think at first it is better just to hold on the in-breath. Usually, you take longer breathing in and you breathe out more quickly. Basically on that system you can do eight, four, four then eight,

six, four.

You build it up for yourself, usually keeping the amount of time that you breathe in, two more than what you hold; and what you hold for can be the same as breathing out, or two more. So you could do ten, eight, six. Breathing in for ten, holding for eight, breathing out on six. Just practise it for yourself, slowly building it up. E.g.:

IN	HOLD	OUT
4	-	4
4	2	4
4	4	4
6	4	4
8	4	4
8	6	4
10	8	6

With this kind of breathing it's useful not to do it for too long at first when you're not used to it. According to the Tibetan system, our energy is quite subtle and is very much linked to mental functioning, so if you do a lot of it, you will find that your mood changes. You might get very happy or you might get sad. It often has a psychological effect.

That would be seen as a purification but there are times when you may not want that effect. If we're on a retreat like this, it's not a bad place to get a bit crazy, but if you're driving or something like that, don't do this kind of exercise then. Driving is an ego function and this is designed to displace the ego, so you should only do this kind of thing where you're reasonably safe.

Comment: I'd like to know why we're trying to make the in-breath longer than the out-breath because I have learned a lot about prolonging the out-breath.

Yes, we'll also do that later. At first we should focus on the breath, since many people do shallow breathing from the upper chest; so just getting used to a very slow in-breath and keeping a focus on that is helpful. Then later, once it becomes more stable we do more slow out-breath.

Generally in the hindu and the buddhist traditions, health is seen as linked to a very long, slow, even out-breath, but that first requires the deep in-breath. It's for that reason.

BREATHING WITH MUSCLE CONTROL: KUMBAKA: SEE ALSO ATTACHMENT 3

In order to help us hold the breath we make use of the muscles in the body.

Breathe in then tighten the muscles of the anal sphincter, so you're holding in your buttocks. You feel your buttocks getting tight, and you also tighten the muscles of the diaphragm, trying to 'lock' the air inside. So it's taking it in and then locking it. Breathe in, in a very relaxed way and then, when you want to hold, try just tightening and tightening, so you feel this rising pressure and lowering pressure, and hold it there.

You can do that for a count of four and then relax the muscles and the breath comes out.

Comment : Do I have to push it out, or let it come out?

The whole thing is to tense and then relax, and if you relax it will come out. The body wants to breathe. You can't get fresh air in when you have got all air inside, particularly if you've been doing deep breathing. So it will come out.

PAINTING: THE BODY IN MOVEMENT: SEE ALSO ATTACHMENT 4

Now we will do some painting. We are going to focus on the body in activity, to get a sense of the body as energy and movement.

We start with a little quiet sitting, focusing on the breath, and from that relaxed space we start to make marks on the paper. As you're doing this, keep the awareness in your body. If you get into thinking, go back to your breath, but try to keep your attention really focused on the sensation in the muscles in your body. We're not focusing so much on the image out there, but rather using the process of painting as a way of helping us simply to pay attention to our body in movement.

However you also have eyes, so you see what you are creating. Be aware of how the perception of what you are creating changes your body; the kind of movements that you make. You're observing both activity, and the result of the activity, as well as the feedback loop between them – all within the meditative state.

When you finish painting sit quietly with the image for a minute or two and just experience the physicality of the image. See if it holds for you your own body's energy in making of it, if you can feel the kinaesthetic energy that's gone from you into the image. With that, reflect on the process of making the image. Were you aware of your body? When did you lose awareness of your body? When did you just get caught up in what you were doing?

Reflect on that for a minute or two and then share and discuss it with a partner.

PAINTING: CREATING AND DESTROYING: SEE ALSO ATTACHMENT 5

Sitting in a circle we start with some meditation on the breath and then from that, just for a couple of minutes, we will make some marks out from our body, something that feels quite positive. Let's see if we can get something positive out from our body on the paper.

[Meditation and painting period]

Pass your painting around to the person on your right. Does everybody now have something? Good.

Now you have one minute to make this image in front of you very horrible. As horrible as is necessary. This is the wrathful god moment.

[Painting]

Now sit with it for a moment, feel the impact. Then pass it to the person on your right.

Okay, now you have to improve what you have here now.

[Painting]

Continue this process of improving and destroying until your original image is back in front of you.

Just sit with it now for a minute or so and then discuss in pairs, both the impact of getting your own image back plus the process of making these changes.

[Contemplation and discussion]

The key thing is, whatever we want to do, to observe ourselves in the process of whatever is going on. This is the key thing, whether it's eating or sleeping or walking or talking: try to catch yourself in the process. Again and again we fall into the process, we're just in it, doing it, and we have to try to catch that and be aware. This is the essence of the dzogchen way of purifying behaviour. You purify it in the moment that it's going on by having awareness present. The key thing from the dzogchen point of view is to observe yourself because if you are there with yourself, in all activity, that changes the quality of your activity. That is the process of purifying stupidity. Stupidity is when you get trapped into just being somebody, in it. Observing, awareness, brings up presence. You start to be present, and when you're present, you then have purified the basis of accumulating karma. The state of presence, the state of *rigpa*, awareness, is devoid of karma, it just doesn't accumulate it.

One of the reasons for doing this kind of activity [i.e. painting] is to experience how, when we act, we somehow get involved in what we are doing. It's as if a part of us goes out there into the world and even although we might not have enjoyed the painting too much, or even been very connected with it, somehow there is an emotional impact. All the time we are acting, through our body, we are making marks on the world and doing various things. You offer someone some tea or you pass them the milk, little gestures like that are extensions of ourselves, and we are also monitoring how they're received. Does somebody pay attention to us? Do they thank us? All the time our sense of self is being affected by the responses of others.

It's like the boundary of self and other is just moving and waving all the time, and we are really quite vulnerable, because we cannot help but be in touch with others. People do destroy our paintings in life, they park their car next to yours so you can't get out, they bump into you in the supermarket, people smash into your little paintings of life all the time. It's something about recognising how invested we get, how extended into the world we get, which makes us very vulnerable. In dzogchen, we really want to let go of whatever is arising. This is the idea of self-liberating; that of course we have impulses to act, to do things, but if we hang onto them, then actually, people can hurt us in many, many ways. We create something like a spider's web around us and anybody can land and pull a bit of it, and we get jangled and we run around.

In that way, the more power we have, the more possessions we have, the more we are at the mercy of other people. It is a strange thing. The more busy you are, the more connected, the more friends you have, the more people you can be rejected by. The more money you have, the more you can have stolen. The more children you have, the more worries you have. It's like that. So there's something about being present, being committed to what we do,

without somehow becoming enslaved to the product, because then it's difficult to be fresh in the moment because we're tied to all these other things from our lives.

If you do exercises like this, take the feeling of this exercise and just observe for yourself how you get extended out into the world and how to practise just letting go of it, not getting tied up in things. It's a really, really important practice. We often don't know that we are attached to things until someone insults the thing we are attached to. You often find that people will happily insult an aspect of their own life and not feel anything, and someone else insults the same thing and they feel very upset. Attachment leads to suffering in that way, and the attachment is the extension of the self. We can't help but extend ourselves, but it's how we do it, it's seeing that this is this rippling flow of the whole world, and if we recognize object, as well as subject, are part of the manifestation from the ground, then we don't feel so vulnerable when object acts on subject.

Q: please explain this more.

It means we often feel that we are the agent, we are in control of the situation, we are doing the painting, but in life we don't often start with a fresh bit of paper. If you get a new job, you go into an office. That's already a painting. People already their ideas about who sits where, who's the boss and all of these things. So you can only do your little painting in the corner that's left to you. In fact, your action as subject is determined by the nature of object. Even when we're an agent, we're often a kind of puppet-like agent; we don't have a real independence.

DEPENDENT CO-ORINATION

This corresponds to the buddhism idea of dependent co-origination, the idea that subject and object are arising together, interwoven. If we can accept all that arises as arising from the ground, we don't invest ourselves so much in our own position. We have so many buddhism practices for doing that.

When we rejoice in the happiness of others, it means trying to put ourselves into their lives, into their happiness, so that we don't become so envious in the face of their happiness. Rather than thinking, "Oh, god, why didn't I get it?" we learn to say, "Oh, that's wonderful!" and in that way we come out of ourselves into the world of object. We balance and relax out of our self-referential position so that we can experience subject and object arising together.

Comment: Yes, but that's theoretical. I just think of some clients of mine, for example, one a woman of thirty-five, who never has had a love relationship, and every time she's speaking with some people in her job when the subject is private life, she doesn't know anything to say, and she envies the other ones for their situation because they are in relationship, and families and so on. And I think it's very hard for her. If I would tell her, "Don't envy these people, look at the reality, and they all have problems, be happy just like you are," I find it's very hard for somebody who never had a nice picture for example, and has to say okay, and paint it over.

I think that's a very good example. In some ways, it's an example of why therapy can be very limited. I find this more and more. If you think back fifty

years ago, if that woman had gone to the local minister or elder, they would say, "Well, life is hard. We have to make the best of it. Think of other people. Don't be so focused on yourself." Very traditional advice, and if the person was able to hear it, they could change their life: "Okay!" And if they changed their life and became more hopeful, more positive, at that point, someone would see, "What a radiant woman! I must marry her!" That's the fantasy. But it may be true. Very often, if we pay attention to our wound, we sink more and more into it and our wound becomes very special. The big difference between religions and psychotherapy is that religions say, "Oy, stop it! Wake up!" and therapy can take us more into the wound. We have a culture where people feel somehow entitled to be wounded, whereas actually, I think we can all have that experience, if we really practise compassion, we become different. People become more friendly to us and it's easier to be with us because we are warmer somehow, and people can feel that.

Comment: But some people don't want to hear this. Absolutely not.

Indeed. Therapy is probably good for the people who really can't hear it because that's what they need. They are so attached to their hurt, lost, lonely, victim place and only when that's filled up a bit can they hear really, that the world only gives you what you give in return, and often you have to start with a gift.

Comment: I heard buddhists say sometimes that even to make oneself little, belittling oneself, is the same as pride, just with a meditative side in front. I found this sometimes very helpful. It's nothing different. Even when I say, "Oh, I'm bad, I'm worst, I'm the worst of all," it's at the same moment something very similar to being very proud. Because I make myself the centre, and just because I can't be the biggest, then I'll be the smallest, and so something special.

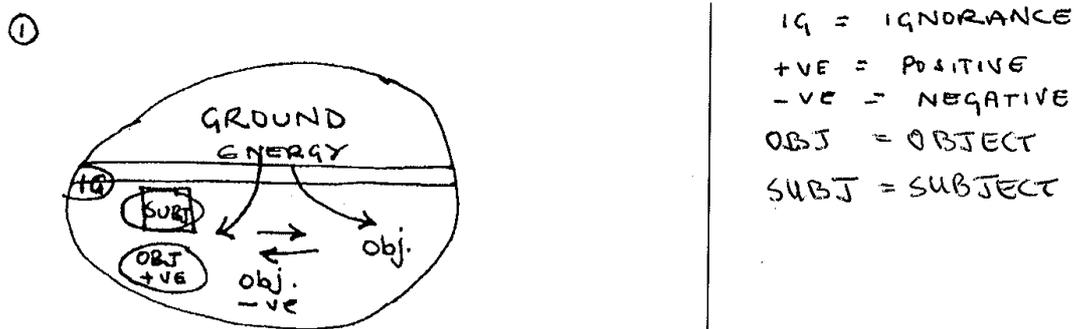
Comment: Isn't that the point where you see they're both not the right position, they're not a useful position? One's either too much in pride or too much the other way.

Comment: Yes, exactly.

PRINCIPLES OF PURIFICATION

I want to outline a little the principles of thinking about purification, to look a little bit at its structure and then show how Dorje Sempa practice fits into that.

[Diagram 1]



From the ground all things arise. All these things include subject and object. The nature of the ground is emptiness. This is what we call the true nature of the mind. There are many, many words for this. Emptiness, like dharmata, dharmadhatu, all of these terms refer pretty much to this idea of an open expanse, which when we look for it we can never get it. So although it's the ground of everything, it doesn't exist anywhere.

Comment: It doesn't exist anywhere, or it exists everywhere?

You could say that. But it doesn't exist anywhere *as something*, so it is everywhere, but when you look for it you don't find it anywhere as a substance. In fact, the ground really is a great circle or a great sphere, which is sometimes seen as this great bindu or great tige meaning a shining sphere of light. From the ground and in the ground and as the ground, subject and object arise. Because they are arising in the ground, as the ground, they don't have a separate existence, and the traditional image used for it is that of the mirror. Subject and object arise like a reflection in a mirror. It's there, and we see it, but you can't grasp it and you can't find it existing truly. This is a three-dimensional mirror so that the trees, the cars, can arise there.

Subject and object are not things. They arise as processes, so that's why, when we look backwards as it were, when we look from our world back towards the original nature, we do it through impermanence, we do it through analysing things down—like in the story of the king's chariot that we've looked at in the past—down from what appears to be a separate real entity, down to small, small sub-essences which eventually vanish. So everything can be reduced down, just as this chalk which seems to exist, but if you grind it, it will just turn down to powder and you can blow it away. It seems to be solid and real, but that's just a form held in place by causes and circumstances. You can reduce anything that arises back to the ground.

From the other side, which is more the view of dzogchen, everything manifests as the energy of the ground, so what we experience as subject and object is the energy of the dynamic quality of the ground itself. But it's arising inside this mirror-like state. It doesn't come out, so it doesn't get dispersed.

Now, when ignorance arose, what happened was it created a block here. So ignorance creates a kind of wall and at that point, instead of this being in a dynamic wave-like movement across, subject separates off. Subject is then seemingly in relationship with object, with objects which are separate. Subject

is frightened of some objects, subject wants some objects, subject wants to destroy some objects, so the five poisons of stupidity, anger, desire, jealousy and pride arise very quickly, when subject experiences as separate, cut-off, isolated, and surrounded by many different objects which it is trying to balance.

For example, I came down and there are cakes, two different kinds of cake, and cream. So from the point of view of one kind of object—that is to say, some of the trousers I have in my house, the trousers I can no longer get into—if I was keeping these trousers in mind then I would not look at the cake. But unfortunately, the trousers are in London and the cake is here in Germany, so I establish my relationship with the cake, and the trousers vanish further and further away.

Whatever decision we make to one object is likely to have consequences for some other object. If you please one person, you'll make another person upset. Gradually, we find this kind of difficult movement and often we try to solve the problem by putting on blinkers because the whole situation is too complicated, and we make our lives narrow just because it's all too much. So subject then puts itself into a little box, and tries to secure some positive object and to reject what it experiences as a negative object. That makes us very busy. This is how karma is accumulated. Trying to please friends, trying to control enemies, trying to manage work situations, constantly, every time we act we connect to a world which acts on us.

Some people decide, having acted and been acted on, that "I'm not going to do that again," and they withdraw from the world. It seems more and more people do that. They decide, "I don't want to get involved with things, it's all too much," and try to simplify things. But if you do that, then you are tormented by these inner experiences, because subject, unfortunately, has objects inside—that is to say, thoughts, feelings, "Oh, I hate being so lonely, but if I go out people always betray me and hurt me." Many, many people feel trapped in that situation. This is karma.

HINAYANA

In terms of purification, in the hinayana or the *theravadan* system—I'm using these terms together; clearly they're a bit different but just for simplicity's sake—in this hinayana system we work with subject and try to change the blinkers on subject. We say, "*The world is a dangerous place. There is a lot of temptation in the world. I will simplify my world by putting many rules around me which will prohibit me, which will stop me getting involved in situations.*"

So I become a monk or a nun, and ideally I don't need to worry about sex and other things. Being a monk or a nun, means you shouldn't masturbate, so the whole world of sex goes out, and also you learn how not to go into sexually-hot situations. A good monk or nun shouldn't carry any money, so they don't have the opportunity to buy things. They also look a little bit strange, so they're also excluded from many situations. In order for monks and nuns to remain calm and mindful and thereby protecting their vows they need to avoid disturbing situations, that is, situations which hook into the underlying karmic impulses that we all carry, such as sex, violence, greed etc.

Changing myself, I limit the kind of objects that affect me and I'm trying to do

that by also working on the objects I have inside me—my thoughts and feelings—first of all, by calming the mind through the breath, then by observing the kind of thoughts that arise and not being involved in them, as we've talked about it before. The basic hinayana teachings, which came when the Buddha first taught at the Deer Park, were concerned with three topics. The first is suffering, the second is impermanence, and the third is absence of inherent self-nature, which means no-self. These are the three main ideas.

So everything is suffering. Because I know things are suffering I don't want them. I could have come in, looked at the cake: "Suffering!" I didn't do that. I didn't do that. If you know suffering then you don't have to get in trouble. You know things are dangerous and so they don't even tempt you. It's like sailors, if their ship goes down at sea, they know salt water is poisonous, and once you drink salt water, if you are in a little open boat, you are pretty much dead. You mustn't do it! So although they are thirsty and they are surrounded by water, they have to think, "Poison!" "I want, I want.." "Poison!" And if they drink, they're done because the body will react very strongly.

This is our situation from this hinayana point of view. Looks like water, looks like it will satisfy my thirst, but if I drink it, it will make me mad. So I just tell myself, "Poison, poison, poison, dukha, suffering, suffering!" Also, the thing which seems so important to me now, the thing that I must have, is impermanent. So although I must have it, or for that matter, although I'm so terrified of it, after an hour or a day or a year, it will be gone. The most terrible situations don't last. They are impermanent like everything else. If we really believe in impermanence, even when great waves of pleasure and fear arise to move us, we will be able to stay calm because we understand impermanence.

The third is absence of inherent self-nature, which means when we see something that attracts us or frightens us we recognize: this is a construct. It is arising due to causes. These causes are impermanent. There is no essence in this. The cake, sometime before, was just packets on a shelf. Later the packets were mixed up with some eggs, flour, butter or whatever, and then a cake is there. If we leave the cake on the table, after some time it will start to look not so interesting, and the more honest the cake, the more pure the cake, the more quickly it will rot, If it's full of chemical preservatives, you can keep it for a long time, but if it's made with real butter and cream and all the rest of it, it will go rotten pretty quickly. All the objects of desire become putrid. Everything fades away.

If you have these three understandings very clear, this is a very strong protection against temptation in the world and also the thoughts and feelings that arise inside you. This is the main purification in the *theravada* tradition, which is one of avoidance. If you avoid external situations you will not accumulate future karma, and if you learn to avoid the internal situation of the thoughts and feelings that arise in meditation, you will be dissolving the force of past karma. So in that way, the hook from outside and the hook from inside gets turned over, it can't catch you, and you become very simple. In that way you have no connection and so you slip out of samsara into nirvana.

MAHAYANA

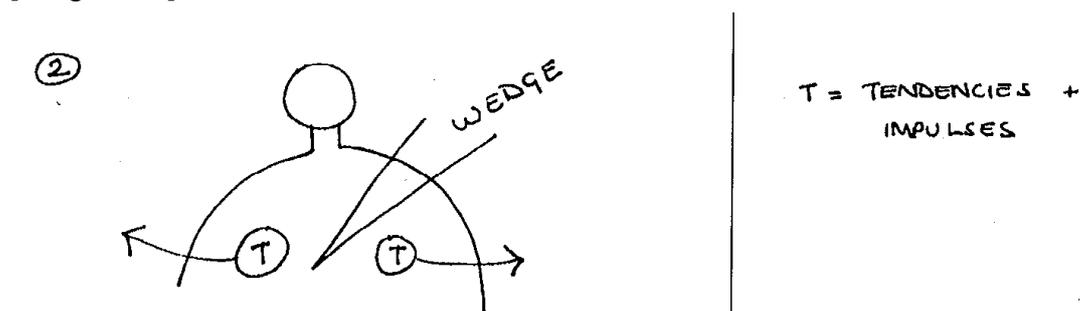
In the mahayana tradition, particularly in Paramitamahayana, which is the mahayana which is concerned with developing the good qualities of a Bodhisattva, we purify ourselves in order to help others. What you have immediately is a shift in the motivation. Whereas in the hinayana system the motivation is to save yourself from suffering, in the mahayana tradition the motivation is to save others from suffering; and that strengthens your commitment not to get lost.

Say, for example, it's not a good example, but anyway, let's take a man who's always out drinking, who spends a lot of money on drink. Then he meets a woman, they have a good time but still he continues drinking. The woman gets pregnant and they have a child. Unfortunately it's not a very common story, but in a good story the man will recognize, "Well, now I have some responsibilities I can't spend so much money on alcohol because I must put the child first." The presence of the other would act as a force to stop the person's selfishness, to stop their indulgence. Of course, that often doesn't happen because the power of selfish attachment is very great. But in principle, that's how it works in the mahayana, that because we become committed to saving all sentient beings, we put them first, and that gives us an extra pressure or an extra weight to put against our own selfish impulse. You might not be able to do something for yourself, but you do it for the sake of others.

We may know this. We may know that if somebody asks you to do something, you do it for them, but if you know you should do something for yourself you don't do it. It's often that other people will help us mobilise ourselves.

Also one of the great forces in the mahayana is confession and regret, which works very much in the roman catholic way. Shame, guilt and confession are used to put a kind of wedge.

[Diagram 2]



Here we have a person, and if you like, the person has inside them tendencies, many different tendencies. And these tendencies or impulses are experienced as self. I wanted a piece of cake. That was a tendency arising in me, which I identified with, so I had the cake. Now, the tendency, as long as it stays in connection with the self, will motivate the self to act. So what one tries to do by a kind of confession is to put a wedge inside that puts this tendency outside, and so I then have to think about what I do. I don't go with my impulse so much because I doubt myself. I think, "Oh hell, I do so many wrong things, I make so many mistakes, it's not safe for me just to act on the spur of the moment."

Essentially what you're doing is you're putting some brakes into your psychological functioning. You're using worry and anxiety as a means of slowing down your self system. That's not very popular nowadays but it's very traditional in most religions as the standard teaching for people who are not yogis or mystics. Most religions, for ordinary people, say, *"Put other people first, and don't trust yourself. You already have this poison inside you, whether you call it original sin or primordial ignorance or the five poisons. As long as you're identified with these five poisons, you are a danger to yourself and to others."*

PARAMITAS

The antidotes that we make use of here are putting others first; so we have generosity, giving to others, supporting them, being kind to others. We have diligence, working hard. We have ethical reflection. We have all of the six or the ten paramitas which are used as a way of braking, of holding back impulse. So we develop focused meditation, we develop wisdom; these are in themselves antidotes to the karmic impulse. It's like having your mail intercepted or having your telephone monitored. Say someone has been making problem calls to you. Then probably, the telephone company will monitor the call and try to find out who's making the call. They will filter it in some way, so that if it's a sexual harassing phone call, it won't come through to you. So what we're trying to do in this mahayana practice is to put this filter into ourselves, so that when the impulse arises, it's filtered out. We do that by trying to divert our conscious intention towards good deeds for others.

Of course, that's a lot of effort. That's a lot of effort because if you're not being busy doing good things these old impulses will come back. It's just like they say, "The devil finds work for idle hands to do."

It means that with this system, you make this commitment that for many thousands of millions of lifetimes you will be available for others and you will be always busy doing things for them. And by making yourself busy, busy, busy, busy you will be protected from your own tendencies to do harm. This is quite a crude way of stopping it. It's a bit like somebody who smokes cigarettes and stops smoking. Then they are always eating. And if they stop eating, then they want to have a cigarette.

Comment: How you are presenting it sounds like cutting myself out of the real life...

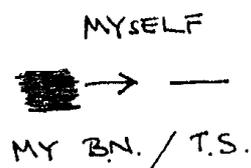
Yup. I did not invent this. Not my responsibility. The Buddha taught this, so please address all criticism to the Buddha! It's exactly that point. It is very artificial, and in traditional cultures religious life is artificial. You don't have an ordinary life if you practise this kind of religion.

Comment: When you say everybody has the buddha nature, in the mahayana tradition it doesn't seem to me like that, or not so strong, because I always have to doubt myself.

Right, but what we have is we have myself and my buddha nature, or we could also call it 'my true self', if you like

[Diagrams 3]:

③



THICK + THIN SELF
 BN = BUDDHA NATURE
 TS = TRUE SELF

. My self and my buddha nature are not the same thing. If I pay attention to myself, I will never realise my buddha nature because what stops me recognising my buddha nature is myself. In a sense you have to wipe yourself out in order to recognize your buddha nature. Once you've recognized your buddha nature you may be able to reincorporate your self. This is the transition point, because according to dzogchen, enlightenment is this integration. According to tantra it is the integration, but according to this basic level of mahayana, it's separate. You have buddhas over there and sentient beings over there. Like in the playground, boys over there, girls over there. But it's not as separated as that.

Who you are and what you are is the enemy of who you really are, so you have to stop being who you are in order to really be who you are. Christianity says pretty much the same thing. You have to forget yourself to find yourself. It's a very common Central Middle Eastern idea. It probably came into the mahayana from the Middle East, anyway. Most of these religions are the same, fundamentally.

The question is to transform myself so that I no longer stop my buddha nature from manifesting. One idea is that my bad self, if you like, my heavy, powerful emotions, all of that, is a very thick screen to my buddha nature. But when I am good and kind and thoughtful and practise meditation, then my ordinary self becomes quite thin. If I can change my crude, ordinary nature to a fine, ordinary nature there is more chance of this buddha nature coming through.

That's why people do a lot of purifications like offering butter lamps, building monasteries, building stupas, feeding the poor, printing dharma books, building hospitals, these are ways of trying to refine ourselves. To have a sensibility, that we become sensitive to others, we become soft and gentle in some way, and then there is more chance of recognising something. That's the general notion here. When we have the opportunity, it's useful for us to do things like that. It's always useful to feed the poor, or do acts of kindness, because they help to create an environment in which other people inhabit us.

If we are the sole inhabitant of ourselves then we can only act for ourselves. But of course, we are also inhabited by our school teachers, our parents, people who've been unkind to us... So we have impulses arising from these voices which lead us into trouble. This is the common work of psychotherapy, to help people recognize the voices they have inside themselves. But what we do consciously in mahayana buddhism is to invite the whole universe to be inside ourselves. We say, "I am with you. I come into myself to you. I will think of you." The basic vow in mahayana buddhism is "*I will never abandon sentient beings. I always keep them with me.*" If you think of that, it's an incredible thought. Even when we go to fall asleep, you should be imagining

all sentient beings are wrapped safe in arms of the buddha and fall asleep together. Every time we eat, we imagine the food is going to all sentient beings. Every time any good thing happens, you try to share that out to all sentient beings. Any time a bad thing happens to you, you want to take bad things like that away from all sentient beings.

In that way, you become very, very, very big, and you become full of all these beings. Having these inside you makes it very difficult to act out of your solid, heavy, bad self because you are thinned-out because you are so spread-out in helping others. But of course, you are quite vulnerable as well. As I was saying yesterday, you become sensitive to the suffering of others and that's very, very painful because often we are powerless to change it. That's why in the Tibetan tradition there is this idea that Tara was born from a tear in Chenresig's eye, and Chenresig has these thousand eyes and they are weeping as he sees everything and he must weep, because he cares.

This is part of the pain but it also means we are no longer preoccupied with ourselves, but we are preoccupied with others. Others then become a kind of wound that stops the self closing in on itself. We're always available to others. We have this cut right down through our heart. That is a very profound commitment to make to sentient beings, and that in itself purifies this grasping at a self, putting oneself first.

By doing that, what we are actually doing is unifying subject and object, because everything in the world, we want to share. All the good things in the world we want to share with other beings. Whenever we see something lovely, maybe you go for a walk and you see the trees in this autumn colour and you think "*May all beings have that. May all the beings in the hell realms who are tormented by cold feel this gentle rain*" and in that way, everything you experience becomes a hook for taking your attention out to be with others. That's a very beautiful thing.

Comment: Do you mean beautiful: seriously or ironically?

How could I be ironical? Can you imagine me being ironical? No, exactly! I'm always straight down the line! No, no, of course not.

Well, it is a very beautiful thing. I think it's the kind of thing that can make us cry, just to think of that. It's like seeing the Pietà of Michelangelo, I think there is something enormously beautiful in these buddhist ideas; they have exactly that quality of suffering together.

Comment: And not having the intention to change it?

Having the intention to change it but not having the power. Wanting to change it but accepting that it may take a very long time to change, so it's no longer me, this isolated subject trying to get to enlightenment, but I'm now making a bond that in terms of the objects who are also sentient beings, we will all go into enlightenment together, so it makes for a much broader situation.

Because of this movement of thoughts and connections with other people, we cannot be so solid. We cannot be indifferent to others. If we hear of some tragedy in the world, we are touched by it and we say, "I want to be touched, it's important for me to be touched" and that means then that if any event anywhere in the world comes to us, we are connected with these places and

people in the world. That means the separation of these two gets less and we have a more energetic relationship there which helps us to move towards understanding this as energy.

It's quite an important idea, because it's the root of this mahayana practice.

Comment: I think it's—well, sometimes for me—a very difficult idea. Perhaps in my case it is a little bit attachment, but when I have the feeling, I go to the forest, everything is beautiful, and I share that with every sentient beings; or if I have pains I feel connected with many people who suffer as well. I see that and I feel that. Then, there comes a little bit the hope that if I do that, feel some connection with everybody, then my pain will get less. But of course, that doesn't work: I still have the pain, And I have lost the joy.

I think the idea to be connected with everybody or to suffer, to feel joy with everybody, a connection with everybody, is a great idea, but I think it's difficult if you have this feeling of connection, to also have a positive feeling.

James : Yes, it is difficult to have a positive feeling. You are quite right. It is always an effort. This is a path of martyrdom, and not just with one lion or one sword, this is everyday cut, cut, cut. That's because it's not just life you're cutting, but the ego. We know that the ego goes from life to life to life to life, so it takes a lot of cutting to cut it up.

Comment: I want to see a result of what I am doing...or have a better feeling. Just a little. And it isn't like that.

James: The danger is in depression, that if it all gets too terrible, we feel hopeless and depressed. I think it's more that we... say you get some back pain or something. Then you imagine all the people in the world tormented by arthritis, who can't even eat or hold a cup, and then you could think, "Oh hell, well maybe I'll get bad. I don't want to get old..." Then you recognize, "Oh, these are the thoughts of fears, but I know life is impermanent..." So this connection with the suffering of all beings scoops up the mud at the bottom of the pond, and then you have to do the next stage of purification of what it scoops up. In itself, it doesn't purify. It makes a connection, and through that we recognize: "Oh, I am attached. I do have a lot of fear, so now I have to work on that."

In general though, in the mahayana, we have these two forces of wisdom and compassion. If we remember, we've talked before that these are like the two wings of a bird. If you have too much compassion without the wisdom, you will fall over. Wisdom is difficult because here it means emptiness. So if we start to think about the suffering of all beings, and the suffering becomes very real, it will become so heavy that we'll get really quite crushed with it. We have to hold the idea: *"All sentient beings, from the very beginning, have had the nature of emptiness"*, and through our own meditation try to have that experience. That is what keeps us light in the place of the difficulty. If we don't have that and we only go in for more of the connection, I think we're likely to feel overwhelmed. It's a bit like therapists or teachers who don't have good supervision or support or a good manager, if they're not well-trained they try to help everyone and then it all gets crazy. They need somewhere to go and think about what is going on.

In buddhism we use meditation as our supervisor, as a place where we can

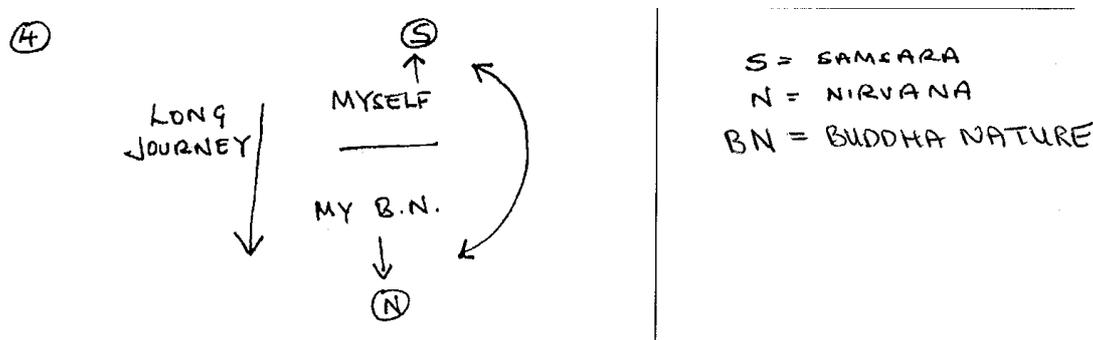
get some fresh ideas. What you're saying is very important, to balance these two, and we should never take in more than we can chew. It doesn't make sense otherwise you feel sadness and regret afterwards.

TANTRA

I just want to connect this now with tantra, because it's tantra that takes us into Dorje Sempa.

Tantra works on the same principles of wisdom and compassion. The view of tantra is the same as the view of Prajnaparamitayana. It says all beings have a buddha nature and it seeks to find rapid ways of bringing up that buddha nature, my buddha nature. From the mahayana point of view, to get from myself to my buddha nature is a long journey.

[Diagram 4]



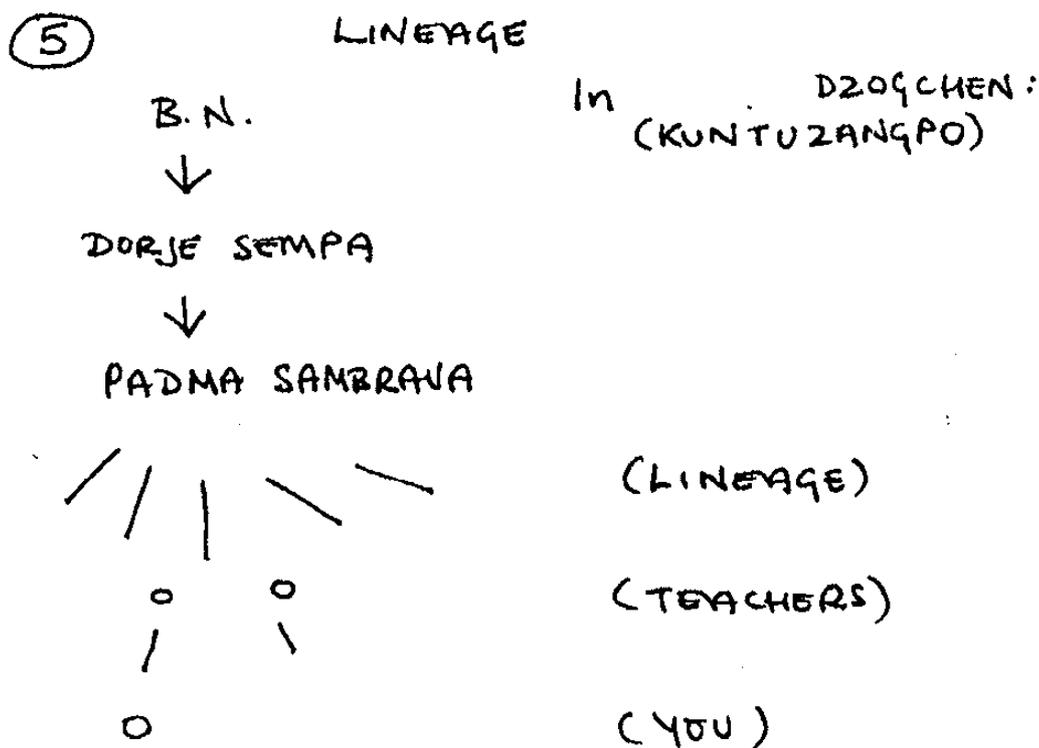
Many, many lifetimes, many, many experiences to go from here to here. The word tantra means continuity. Some of you are quite familiar with it, but, to repeat it, it's continuity like with a *mala*, a small rosary, in the middle there is a thread. The thread holds the beads and the beads go round. That's really what tantra means: the continuity of connection.

What is connected? We could say this area of myself, this is samsara. My buddha nature, this is nirvana. Tantra says, between samsara and nirvana there is a connection. Experiences of samsara, experiences of nirvana are just moving one after another on the same thread. What is this thread? It is emptiness. Emptiness is the thread connecting all experience. Because the basis—and this takes us back to the idea of the ground, because this thread that connects everything is the same as the ground—because of this, we can find a way to connect more quickly with the thread. If we find the thread we move from samsara to nirvana very quickly. That's really what tantra does.

LINEAGE

Every tantra has a lineage and all the lineages begin with a representation of the buddha nature.

[Diagram 5]



In the nyingma system the buddha nature is represented by Kuntuzangpo. In the kagyupa, gelugpa and sakyas lineages it's represented by Dorje Chang or Vajradhara. These deities are the symbol and also the living presence of our own buddha nature, of the buddha nature of all beings. At one stage, this buddha nature communicated itself across. That is to say it manifested in a way towards the world. In general in the nyingma lineages, particularly for dzogchen, is from buddha nature to Dorje Sempa, or Vajrasattva. Dorje Sempa is just the Tibetan name.

From Dorje Sempa you have many people but you certainly get to Padma Sambhava and then from Padma Sambhava you have the various nyingmapa lineages. Then you have whoever it is who teaches you, and then you have you. So you get connected back up there. You can see this as a historical or vertical line, but it's also the lineage through the heart. By doing the prayer and the meditation, the lineage comes to live in you, and through your heart you go and meet Kuntuzangpo directly. This is the practice of all tantric meditations.

It's very important to remember what the lineage is about. It's to show that we always have the possibility of being connected back with that buddha nature. That's what the lineage represents. It is a living transmission, and the reason it has to be transmitted is that you could read about this in books but somehow it is being returned to yourself. Because ignorance is the separation of subject and object, in a sense we need an object—that is to say another subject—to introduce us to us. If you just had to do it by yourself then it's as if subject is trying to solve its own problem. But when the teacher explains it to you and you do the practice from the teacher, the teacher as object moves

into relationship with you as subject, and you as subject realise who you are through your relationship with the object.

STRUCTURE OF THE PRACTICE

Then, when you come to do the meditation practice and you visualise the lineage and then all the deities on the top of your head, the Dorje Sempa on the top of your head is the form how your teacher appears here. Then your teacher dissolves into you, and your teacher carries the whole lineage. So you have object as buddha coming into you, subject as lost samsaric person, and subject and object merge together, samsara and nirvana merge together, and you recognize yourself. This is the structure of the practice. As is clear from this, faith in the lineage is very important.

TRANSMISSION AND INITIATION

The teacher gives the transmission of the practice which can be done formally through initiations or informally, through teaching it very clearly, so you understand what it is, because the whole issue about an initiation is that somebody gives you something. You can have a formal initiation and get nothing and you can have quite another kind of connection and get something. If you didn't get something you didn't have the initiation. If you like, you can go to India and buy yourself a degree. You can buy yourself a driving license; you can buy yourself anything in India. I don't drive, so I could go to India and buy myself a driving license, but if I was then to get in a car, I would not be a very good driver! I would have my license but I wouldn't know how to drive.

You can go to teachers and get many, many initiations and then you can keep a little notebook with all your initiations inside it but that doesn't help you to drive the car. You have to get something; you have to get an understanding of what a car is. And that's what a driving teacher does. It's important to check out that somebody can actually show you how to drive.

Comment: Are the initiations not useful?

Oh, they're very useful. Very useful

Comment: For later? For when you start to drive?

Well, they're useful because sometimes you get something in an initiation. You get the driving transmission. But it's also that the initiation draws you into the family. Initiation also happens. Initiation is a connection. You can make a connection happen in a formal way or an informal way. For example, say you meet someone and you like them and you think, "Oh, I'd like to be in a relationship with this person." So you might invite them for dinner, you might invite them to a nice restaurant or you might invite them to your home. If you invite them to your home and you get some flowers and you make something very nice and you have a good wine—at the end of the evening you think, "Christ, I hope they leave soon. I don't want to sleep with this person." You've had the situation but the energy wasn't there. And another time, you could just meet someone by chance, and then suddenly you're talking, and you think, "Oh, now we're into something!"

Setting things up doesn't necessarily create the situation. In the early days in

India when Tilopa was giving initiations, he used a clay pot, like many of these yogis. In Tibet now they have these very beautiful pots for doing the vase initiation with the gold and silver and peacock feathers and all of that. In the old days, it was just a pot, a water pot. It's just water; you pour water on your head. The main thing is you understand the water is pure. But now it looks all: "Now you are getting this pot initiation..." But you have to get the experience. If you don't get the experience it's just like christian baptism, very similar. Most of these religions have the same idea. Hindus go and bathe in the River Ganga and have all their sins washed off. It's exactly the same idea.

Comment: But what helps you to get the experience for one time and then later, it's gone because if you don't practise and it's like a memory but I don't know really where it's coming from.

Well, I think in the Tibetan tradition it was the custom for many lamas to receive many, many initiations, sometimes more than once. If you read these lamas' biographies you will see how they detail the numbers of teachers from whom they received sometimes many hundreds of initiations in total. The biographies can be like extended CVs. It doesn't necessarily speak of what the person really got. The main thing is that one should somehow feel connected with what is going on. Initiations are done to make connections; because the connection of the lineage is this connection of samsara into nirvana. That's why in the tradition faith is very important because we have to believe that the guru represents nirvana, and nirvana comes to you. So if you don't have faith that the teacher is a living form of nirvana you won't be able to do the symbolic transformation.

That's how it works. It is a privileging of a symbolic reality over an ordinary perceptual reality. One figure becomes invested with all your hopes and dreams and all your belief in the dharma, so that this one person represents everything which is good and then using that one person you can make a change. Everything you need is in that one person. It's a kind of mnemonic device, that's a memory device, a way of helping you remember something, but not in a cognitive way but in an experiential way. Say, for example, you wanted to remember what beauty was. You might have the feeling of a piece of music or a painting you had seen or a sculpture or a sunset, and so, whenever you wanted to be in touch with beauty, you would evoke that. The way an actor can learn to cry or to laugh because they have some experience which triggers a particular experience. And it's not artificial when it happens.

The teacher takes on the same function. It is all method. These are all methods of helping you realise the mahayana teaching. They are not true, but they are methods and because they are methods...

Comment: And because they are methods they can get true.

Yes, they can be true for you. What makes them true is that they work. But if we make them true and they don't work for us then we end up feeling that we are very bad, and that's not helpful because life is very short.

We're coming close to Dorje Sempa now.

Comment: But this teacher, is this an actual this-life teacher that you're talking about or is like Padma Sambhava or a sambhogakaya?

FAITH

Well, it doesn't really matter too much. They always say, it rather depends on what kind of faith you have. We've really looked before at this story of the dog's tooth becoming for her, the Buddha's tooth.

To retell the story in short: the business-oriented son of a pious Tibetan mother went few times to India for business, each time asked by the mother to bring her from the holy land of the Dharma a relic of the Buddha that she could venerate. As he kept forgetting her wish being absorbed in his business, once the mother threatened him to commit suicide in front of him, would he forget her heartfelt wish once again. On the way back from his next trip and almost arriving home he realized that he again had forgotten his mother's wish. Knowing that his mother was able to fulfil her threat of killing herself he looked around in despair for an object he could bring her as a relic and found a dog's skeleton. He took out one tooth, wrapped it in beautiful silk and brought it to his mother with the words, "*This is a tooth of the Buddha!*" She, having no doubt in her son's words, prayed fervently to dog's tooth and obtained Buddha's blessings.

In Tibetan buddhism it is faith that's important so if you have faith in something it will work, and if you don't have faith it won't work. What is really important is to find something you have faith in. That's what's really important. And just because other people have faith in something, doesn't mean that it's good for you. You have to have the heart connection. Without the heart connection it's not going to work.

Sometimes in the past we've talked of this in terms of sex. You can do these prayers again and again as a kind formality, like a sexual act which is merely a rubbing together of the sexual organs. This won't necessarily generate any feeling. You might get kind of hot and all the rest of it but you won't have the satisfaction, unless you feel from your heart.

You can't really make love unless you have a heart connection with the person. When we do this tantric practice it has to be really from the heart, because in the end the god comes down into your heart, and your heart has to be completely open so that these two things merge. It's as if the deity is like the phallus, like a penis, and the heart is like a vagina, and the two come together and go into one point. But if you are not open and ready to receive it, your heart will be closed over and you just go through the motions.

Comment: The drama is always the same. It's the same if I am by myself practising or if I pay other people to do practice for me.

James: I could pay you to eat the cake for me. The advantage would be I could get into my trousers; the disadvantage would be I don't taste the cake.

James: Yes. But you have to taste the cake.

Questioner: Why?

James: Because the cake is yourself.

Comment: Even if three others eat the cake, for me it's nothing to eat the cake.

James: But if they get their buddha nature and you don't get your buddha

nature...

Comment: Maybe they in future they give me cake.

This is a very, very interesting idea. This is exactly the heart idea of you could say, the patriarchal line of the tradition, which is that somebody will give you enlightenment. Now, it says very clearly in the dzogchen texts, not so clearly in the tantric texts, but all these dzogchen texts say, *"Nobody can steal your buddha nature, nobody can give you buddha nature, from the very beginning you have buddha nature, but only you can taste your buddha nature."* Nobody else's enlightenment can make you enlightened. This is the understanding of meditators. The understanding of monasteries and thrones is that somebody puts something on your head and you get enlightened.

People travel miles and miles to see Karmapa put a hat on his head. I saw Karmapa's hat many, many times and Karmapa gave me teachings, I got many things from Karmapa but, you know, Karmapa was Karmapa. I came away just me. I was me plus... You can have many experience which are you, plus that experience. Then you can have an experience where... something else. It's the shock that we need, it's the 'something else' that we need.

Comment: But if we all are in the ground, why do I need it?

Because the ground at this moment is 'feeling' for you. Otherwise we probably wouldn't be here. If you were really living in the ground, with that as your exact experience integrated, you wouldn't need to come here. It's because we have an idea of the ground, and we want to get the experience we go to the teacher to help us get an experience. If the teacher only gives us theory, like we're doing a lot of theory just now, it's not so good—hopefully we use this concept when we do the practice, to go right into the experience. If you taste this, you have the taste. Nobody can take it away from you. You know what it is.

Many, many times Tibetan lamas say this, "If I put sugar on my tongue, you don't get the sweet taste. You have to get your own sweet taste."

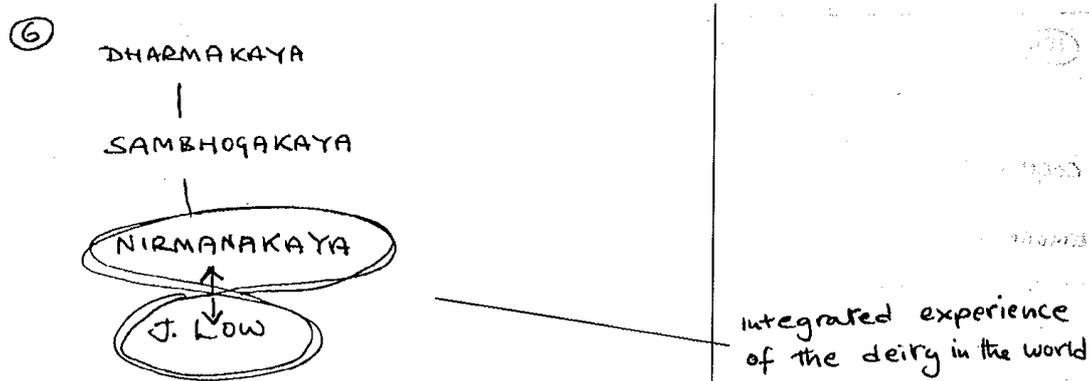
Usually we are not in relation with the ground. The ego-self can never find the ground. You only get to the ground by being the ground, at which point you are no longer in this subject/object relationship. It's a radical relationship. Hopefully, it will become a little bit clearer. You can't go out and plant seeds in this ground; it's not that kind of thing. It is emptiness.

Comment: Not to make the ground a higher level?

No. No. Tibetans always talk of ground. If this is emptiness, so you can't find it, it's not anywhere, it's not a thing. When we are on the path and have a longing and intention to integrate with the ground, it often becomes something wondrous for us. It is the yet-to-be-achieved and therefore can take on a transcendent aspect. Actually the ground is present here and now, it is the very basis of our existence, immanent rather than transcendent.

THREE KAYAS

[Diagram 6]



We have this idea of dharmakaya and sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya. Dharmakaya is the realisation of the ground. Sambhogakaya is the first manifestation of the energy of the ground; you could say it is a symbolic dimension. It is composed of light and sound in a radiant form but which is not precise. The nirmanakaya is a manifestation into the world on this level. If we visualise the guru in a flesh form we use the nirmanakaya to go up. If we visualise a symbolic form like Dorje Sempa or Padma Sambhava, we go from sambhogakaya up to dharmakaya.

In tantra, after we do refuge and Bodhicitta, we create the visualisation. In a big practice you have many, many separate stages, but the main thing, you create the visualisation, having had permission to do that from the teacher. Then you recite the mantra and the mantra connects the deity to you.

The mantra has many functions but one key method is it helps the mind not be distracted. You focus in on what you are doing. Also it's an activity, so it gives a dynamic sense of the connection, because usually if you're reciting a mantra, you imagine it turning around the seed-syllable in the heart of the deity, and you may be imagining rays of light going up to all the buddhas, rays of light going down to all the human realms and hell realms, purifying them, so there is a lot of activity going on. It's creating a whole world.

Then the deity comes to the crown of your head and descends gets smaller and smaller into a ball of light and this goes down into your heart. Your body, having been purified by light, merges into that ball and then gets smaller and smaller into emptiness. There are many different ways of dissolving, but that's a fairly standard way.

The key requirement in the practice is that you have a one-pointed focus of attention. By having a big visualisation it allows your mental distraction to be transformed into creative activity.

For example, children are running around and they're very, very busy, and they want something to do. If you're lucky and you have a garden, you take them out in the garden and you say, "Okay, now autumn's coming and you have to cut down all these old plants," and you give them a knife that's not too sharp, and cut, cut, cut and they have a good time. You get your garden cleaned and they're not so excited. This is the practice of tantra. We have a very excited, busy mind that does many things, so we give it something to do. If you give your mind activity to do outside in the world, it will create karma. So you put your mind in the safe prison of a clear, blue sky, and in the clear, blue sky you don't bump into anything, so you drive around, "toot, toot!" and make

a lot of trouble—it just vanishes. In this clear blue sky you make the god and you have lights going up and down, but anyway it doesn't bump into anyone, it doesn't hurt anyone. A very safe practice.

Having used all this mental activity the mind becomes a little tired, a little focused, and then you bring it all into one point. Through that bringing it into one point, subject and object come together and go into the ground. In terms of this 'myself and the buddha nature' [Diagram 6], here is me, James Low, and I am doing my practice, so I am going up the way to this deity, and the rays of light are coming down into me. Then the deity or the god, who represents the integration of these three kayas, comes down into a ball of light and goes into me, and I dissolve into the god.

So James Low and the god go into one point, which is the ground. That's the ground. It's the ground which exists before subject and object. So we use the pure object of the visualised deity as a focus for attention for the disturbed subject, so that the subject becomes calm and focused. Through that, because of devotion, the subject is willing to die. That's what we do. Every time we do this puja, we die. Just like the sufi practice, melting of the heart, the dissolving of the heart into god. Gnostic practice, very similar. Because, as long as I continue as James Low, I am myself. If I want to realise my buddha nature I have to let go of myself. But if I'm out walking in the street, I have to know I'm James Low, otherwise I get in trouble: I don't know who I am. "Who are you?" "Buddha nature".

So I have to find some way of being James Low without causing too much trouble. That's difficult. A lifetime's effort! We use the god to dissolve us because it is safe in meditation to lose yourself. Because sure enough you will come back. Nobody here, I think, has a good enough meditation to vanish forever! After one hour, or one minute, after one second, we will be back again. *"Hello? Hello? Eh, what's happening?" "Still here?" "Oh, yes! I'm your best friend. I'm me. I'm you."*

This is the practice. Through this dissolving, we get the taste of the ground and then, having done this dissolving into the ground, the ground reveals itself as dharmakaya. At that point, we try to stay relaxed. Whatever arises, thoughts, feelings, sensations, memories, we just try to let them go. If they come, they will go. If they come, they go.

The longer we do that the more we experience dharmakaya, or in dzogchen you call this rig pa, this state of awareness, the presence of the purity, the presence of buddha nature.

When thoughts and feelings arise, if we grasp at them, then they're immediately down to being ourselves. The more we can stay with this open dimension, as the thoughts and feelings arise, and we're not anxious with them, they start to reveal themselves as radiant. You start to experience thoughts, feelings, and sensations as shining energy, sometimes as colour or light. Everything takes on a lighter quality. This is the sambhogakaya. We experience thoughts and feelings as sambhogakaya in our meditation and from that state we move in the world with the practice of the nirmanakaya.

The practice of the nirmanakaya is to see everything, including ourselves, as a form of Padma Sambhava or Tara or Dorje Sempa, whoever. All thoughts

are the thoughts of Padma Sambhava, or whoever. All sounds as the mantra. We integrate the experience of the world into the mandala of the deity. In tantra, we're using the deity which is basically the Sambhogakaya, as the transformational aspect for linking our ordinary self with our buddha nature. It is a technique for using this realm for connection of the ordinary self to the absolute self so that it is then revealed back as nirmanakaya. That's the structure of the practice.

Now, in some ways it's very easy for us to think that love, kindness, generosity, are divine qualities. If we are thinking in terms of these positive qualities, it's very easy to think that this is how a god is. However, we also have our bad qualities, or rather what we call our bad qualities, our anger, our cruelty, our selfishness, our jealousy and so on, and we tend to think that these are bad. In fact in many of the dharma paths we looked at earlier, we think of these as bad.

WRATHFUL DEITIES

Remember here, we are thinking, "Myself I am very thick with all of this stuff, and in order to become good I want to make myself a bit thin, a bit pure." But it's going to take a very long time to make this pure. In tantra we try to recognize that this thick, ugly, ordinary self is also a form of buddha nature, and that is very hard. That is the purpose of using the wrathful deities for the mediation. A form like Vajrakilaya, who is dedicated to killing, who is rolling his big dagger with which he is going to stab people, represents a force of anger. We use the deity to transform our anger into the service of wisdom. The demon that Vajrakilaya and these other deities are killing is the demon of egotism. It's not real people in the world but it is the demon of ourselves. So I get angry and now I am going to use an angry form to stab myself—so I'm using my anger that gets me into trouble, and I'm taking that anger and putting it into the practice ... you can feel this coming ... so you get a lot of energy. And I'm going to use that to put it into emptiness.

I am now emigrating from samsara into nirvana and I'm taking two suitcases, one with loving kindness and one with smelly poo. We need to have the peaceful gods and the wrathful gods. If you get into nirvana just with your good suitcase, after some months: knock, knock, knock, comes the postman with a big box, *"I don't know what's in here, but it smells very bad!"* And then, you are a nice, clean buddha... and all the other clean buddhas say *"Get out!"* Like that. So if you arrive with your shit and you can roar, people will leave you alone. They say, *"Oh, that smelly buddha, James. Don't know what he's doing, but anyway, he's a bit dangerous."*

That's basically what these wrathful deities are for. They are a way of allowing ourselves to integrate all the bits of ourselves we would want to deny, because if you are denying something, you push it away but it remains connected with you, and sooner or later like a boomerang, it will come back. If you own it, if you say, "I am cruel, I am selfish, I am a bad person," then all these bad qualities can be incorporated.

Comment: Then why do you call it bad?

Well, when it's transformed it's not bad; it's not bad at that point.

Comment: But it's just a juicy energy, like if you have anger, if you are angry then you have some energy and then you use the energy to put against yourself to cut up this habit of what caused this trouble. It's still against something; bad habits still exist, so now I just use the energy which comes out of the bad habit to maybe have some counterforce.

Indeed. Of course, doing this wrathful god practice is also dangerous. Many lamas who do a lot of these practices become very rough themselves. They shout and they're rude and they're selfish, so I would take a little bit of care. If you hang out with bad people you get in trouble. And these gods are a little bit dangerous. It's a bit like, say for example, you have special police who are looking into terrorism. They have to go and hang out with terrorists and in some cases, they also have to be involved in exploding bombs, and in their behaviour, at a certain point, between them and the real terrorist there's not much difference. But somewhere, hopefully, there's still a policeman. Hollywood always makes movies about these guys and then they really become bad and then you don't know if they are bad or good.

Between Vajrakilaya and a demon the only difference is the secret passport of emptiness. If the emptiness is not there, this is a demon. That's the only difference. If you, in doing the practice, have no emptiness you will become a demon.

Emptiness is at the heart of tantric practice and that's why, traditionally, people had to have some understanding of emptiness before they did this initiation, but nowadays initiations are given everywhere to anyone and no explanation of emptiness is given. That's very difficult because people say 'faith is enough', but 'faith is enough' means that the god will save you. That's not traditional practice. Traditional practice implied that it's the meditator himself has to understand what they are doing because the meditation is a method to help you, and if you don't know what you're doing, then it's a very dangerous method, it's like a chainsaw. It's very, very helpful if you know what to do, because if you use a chainsaw and there is a nail in the tree, it's going to jump and you have to know how to jump with the chainsaw.

Comment: Is it important to exactly know what the symbols mean?

When you don't know what the symbols mean according to the tradition, you will tend to project your own understanding onto them and cover the symbols that are meant to liberate you with your own confusion. I remember two small children, two brothers, and one of them was nine and he came running—it was in India—he came running into the house, and he was crying and crying, he was really upset and couldn't really say what the trouble was, he was completely upset, and eventually he was able to say that his brother had called him a 'homo sapiens'! Words are very powerful but they are not the reality. So to know that some goddess is the wisdom form is not enough, because unless we have a taste of wisdom, we don't know what a wisdom form is. It could be anything. This is always the problem. It cannot be done from object side alone, although object and subject arise together.

We have to understand something. The god has something, and together with our something, it makes a lot. We need to get some understanding of emptiness from our studies—that's why I spend a lot of time doing these

diagrams and stuff; it's just to get some sense of what we are doing.

DORJE SEMPA PRACTICE: *SEE ALSO ATTACHMENT 7*

[Note: For fuller commentary and explanation see [Being Guru Rinpoche](#) James Low, Traffords, 2006] Page 168 begins with some prayers, then we now go into the Dorje Sempa practice.

**HRI RANG GI CHI TSUG PAD DA JA OD LONG
LA MA DOR SEM DORJE DRIL DZIN KAR
LONG KUI GYEN DZOG THUG KAR DA TENG HUNG
YIG GYE KOR WAR DUD TSII GYUN BAB NAE
TSANG BUG NAE ZHUG DIG DRIB DAG PAR SAM**

Hri. In the midst of rainbow light upon a lotus and moon on the top of my head is my guru in the form of Dorje Sempa who is white in colour holding a vajra and a bell. He wears all the sambhogakaya ornaments and in his heart upon a moon disc is the letter Hung around which the hundred syllable mantra revolves. From it a stream of amrita descends which I visualize as entering through the hole in my cranium and completely purifying my sins and obscurations.

On the crown of your head is Dorje Sempa. There's a little picture of Dorje Sempa in the practice text. He is white in colour, he holds the vajra in his right hand, a bell in the left hand. He is dressed in the sambhogakaya ornaments: the tiara on top of his head; big earrings; arm bands; wrist bands; upper necklace; waist necklace; and scarf. In the centre of his heart is the letter



hung and round that **hung** the hundred syllable mantra is turning in a spiral. The spiral is turning around the outside of this core mantra, coming out the top and in at the bottom and then up.

You should try to visualise the whole thing at once. The main thing is the feeling. Feeling opens the heart and it's the heart that gets the blessing. You could be very, very clear in a cold, clinical way but it wouldn't help you because it would be *far*. You want this to be a *near* experience, so even if the visualisation is not very clear, try to have the feeling that this is your living experience.

As this mantra is turning around the letter **hung**, drops of nectar are falling from it and filling up his body. His body is getting full, and then the nectar

flows out of his right toe and drips into the top of your head, and your body becomes filled up with the nectar.

You can imagine this is a white fluid coming in through the top of your head, and as it goes down in your body, you imagine all the bad things, all the negativity that you have accumulated in any way starts to be pushed down as this pure stuff comes in. It goes out through your anus and down into the earth, which cracks open. At the bottom is a big demon with his mouth open and he swallows it up. He is very happy because he's getting something he likes, and we are made free of all of these sins. Then we imagine that our body is like a crystal, shining and very clear. As we are doing this meditation we recite this hundred syllable mantra.

When the mantra recitation ends Dorje Sempa's body from the bottom up and the top down melts into a ball of light. It just turns towards the centre and becomes shining like a ball of mercury, and it descends down through the top of your head until it's shining in your heart. You are like crystal, with this shining ball in the centre, and then your body moves in and dissolves into this ball. At that time there is nothing else, there is only this ball, it is the only thing. This ball gets smaller and smaller until it's gone. Then just sit quietly.

In that state, if thoughts come, just let them come and go. Don't try to control things, don't welcome thoughts. If thoughts or feelings come, don't push them away, just allow them to come. You are no longer a private person protecting a small garden. This is now a public arena. This is the infinite *dharmadhatu*, we don't own it, it doesn't belong to anyone, anybody who wants can walk through it, it's not your private property anymore. The ego will still try to protect and play and shape, but it's not your territory anymore. If the ego makes it their territory, the meditations finished, you're back just in your ordinary thought. You will feel this urge to ownership—just relax back. Keep relaxing.

And then we come out of the meditation, and recognise that everything that we encounter including ourselves, has the nature of Dorje Sempa.

With this practice, we're using the visualisation as an antidote to the poisons that we have, to the sins that we have. We're using the purifying power of Dorje Sempa to empty the bad things out of us, just as if you are sick and you go to the doctor with a poison, he puts some medicine into you that drives the bad thing out of you. That's the basic principle. It's very, very simple.

The relative truth level of the purification of Dorje Sempa is the replacement of what is poison with nectar. The absolute truth, purification, lies in the dissolving practice. The dissolving is very, very important.

It's quite late now. Tomorrow we will focus on purification of the voice, which also represents energy . Maybe tomorrow evening we can have a little party with some dancing and movement and general *joie de vivre*?

Monday we will be doing the purification of mind, so we might have that day more as a day of silence. Tomorrow we can have quite a lot of talking, and then on the Monday, if you like the idea, maybe we can just be very, very

quiet, not talking too much at meal-times, just trying to maintain the mind. Every time we move into activity we get hooked out of ourselves, so if we want to purify our mental experience on a more subtle level, silence is helpful.

Sunday

PURIFICATION OF SPEECH

Today we start with refuge prayer and bodhicitta prayer but first we will do the nine-round breathing. Concerning the voice, as for any of this chanting, just try to keep your awareness on making the sound. Just feel what the body is doing as you make sound. Both making the sound, and hearing the sound, these two functions happen together.

[Refuge and bodhicitta]

[See Attachment 1 for a description of the nine-round breathing]

WAYS OF USING SPEECH

On the first evening we looked a little bit at sins of speech which was essentially the use of speaking, of language, to cause trouble. Telling lies, saying hurtful things to other people, stirring things up in some way and gossip, just talking that goes nowhere. We have the same possibilities as yesterday: in the general hinayana level we should recognize when we engage in this kind of speech and try not to do it. Very simple. You watch how you spend your time with other people, what use you put your speech to, and unless you have a good reason for telling a story about someone else, then one shouldn't do it.

More generally, in the mahayana, we use speech as a way of making positive connections with other people, of expressing our concern, our compassion for them so that by the use of gentle words we can get closer to other people. Also for compassion to operate, we have to allow the words of other people to come into us, it's not just going in one way, so we have to hear what other people are actually saying. That means that we have to allow space inside ourselves for other people's words, even when they say things we don't like. We have very good filters on our ears to deflect things we don't want to hear, and part of compassion is—especially the integration of wisdom and compassion—is to allow ourselves to experience what is there, for that's wisdom, and then respond to it in an open way, and that's compassion. That, of course, is quite hard because we all have our limitations.

In buddhism there are many, many practices involving speech and involving language and using language as a kind of traffic policeman, installing certain ideas and certain concepts which help us to keep our thoughts and behaviour going in the right direction. For example, when we say the refuge and then the bodhisattva vows, the Bodhicitta idea, we are shifting our orientation. We are using language, we are using sound to speak back to ourselves and remind ourselves, re-mind, to make your mind in a particular way, what it is you want to do. So we're using language as an antidote to our karmic impulse. The more we recite these phrases and they become embedded in our conscious awareness, the more they can act against the karmic impulse. It's one of the

reasons why Tibetans do a lot of recitation, it's that it's to fix in the mind and to almost kind of convince oneself that this is what one believes. So you try to replace your ordinary responses to the world with the dharma response.

SOUND AND MUSIC

In tantra, sound is very important. We've often talked of these images of the lamp and the mirror and the crystal, which are used in both tantra and dzogchen. The visual metaphors are not the only ones that are used. Sound, aural metaphors are used a great deal as well.

Particularly from India, there is a huge science of sound. Sound is one of the earliest forms of enquiry in Sanskrit literature, and there are very, very complex theories of sound. Some of the earliest Indian mathematics was focused on sound, and of course, Indian music is incredibly mathematical. In *tabla* playing, there are these incredibly complex rhythms moving up and down, and these rhythms are organised in terms of ragas, and the ragas are fixed in terms of times of days, seasons of the year, so that the rhythm becomes a counterpoint or it's in play—it's not really counterpoint—it's in play with aspects of the world, and there are ways of harmonising with a particular time. So that by listening to an early morning raga, in the early morning, on the banks of the Ganges, looking at the sunrise, you get the whole trip. It's a way of using sound to break down the walls of isolation so that we can be more connected with the world.

Hindu and buddhist ideas of sound are not so different. Basically there is an idea that the cosmos, the universe is created out of sound. Sound exists before anything and it exists after anything. Everything has a sound, and if you understand the sound of the world, you can bring about changes. We know these stories of singers who can pitch their voice so they can break a glass. That's a kind of a crude way of doing it, but in a more subtle way one can affect changes. If you have a small baby and it's your small baby, that baby's cry will do a particular thing to you, it changes your energy. Someone else, who it's not their baby, would have a different change, they would have a general concern, but if it's the cry of your baby it's a particular response that gets pulled out.

If we close our eyes we don't see the room any more, but it's very difficult to close your ears. We have eyelids but we don't have earlids. At night you can't just put the flaps on your ear. When you sit in meditation sounds come in from outside. Sound is what distracts us. But sound is also what draws us into the world.

SOUND AND LANGUAGE

As babies we get talked to a lot. People want to make sounds with us, if we're babies. We feel we want somehow to gesture towards the infant with sound because we know that sound gets through, and if someone is very, very upset and huddled in a ball and crying, we would probably talk to them gently, and the sound of our voice would find a way through all the layers of pain and upset so that gradually they could come out. Sound can be a very, very subtle way of attunement. I don't know what you say in German but in English we say 'affective' or 'emotional' attunement which is the idea of tuning in through

music, we get on the same wave-length or vibration. Sound is the main way that we do that.

The basic idea is that the basic sound of the universe is 'AA', and this little baby is doing a lot of AA and it does quite a bit of EE as well, but quite a bit of AA, and when people are dying they often say AA as well. They often sigh "Aa", final breath. When people have sex, they also go "Ah, ah!", and similarly if you get an accident or fear. Most of these basic, strong emotions are just AA, and then we have development on that, "Mama, Mama, Mama". Can you remember saying "Mama,"? "Mama, Mama, Mama!" Try it, say it. It's very nice! Powerful. And you want to tug, I always want to pull, "Not my brother—me!"

This sound has so much echo in it, and words of course, then come to carry emotions with them. So that for some people "Mama!" would be loss, and for other people it would be joy. Each of us has our own relationship with very powerful sounds. The phrase "I love you" can conjure up terrible feelings of pain and sorrow, or wonderful feelings of joy and hope. Language is not neutral in that way; the words can be neutral out there, but from our own experience they are layered through with our own biographical consequences.

A very important thing for us, I think, is to try to separate language and sound. In western countries we have a lot of studies on language, we're very concerned with language, there are big theories of linguistics and all the rest of it but there isn't so much attention just to sound itself. That tends to be shifted over onto music, so people study a lot of music but there isn't that kind of linking over, whereas in Indian thought sound moves into language very easily, and language as such is not so important. What is more important is sound. The words, the semantic significance of the sounds, is not as important as their phonetic quality, so that the phoneme, the basic particle of sound, can also be carrying semantic meaning, can have a significance, can become a morpheme that builds up, but it can also just be sound. If we hear it as sound we don't get so hooked.

That's why for me it's very nice when I come here and I sit in the evening and everybody's talking in German and I have a beer and I look round and everybody looks very happy, and I don't understand a word you're saying, so I hear just burr-burr-burr and it's very nice. It doesn't hook me, it's like a holiday because it's just sound and often I think it's one of the reasons people like to go on holiday to foreign countries because they're surrounded by all this stuff and it's not their business. Whereas if you go to a place and people are talking a language you understand, you get pulled into it.

MANTRA

In tantric buddhism there is a lot of emphasis on mantra, and that mantra is basically a meaningless sound. Mantras do have some meanings to them but the meanings they have are not ordinary meanings. Some teachers will explain them in terms of meaning, but most teachers don't explain them in terms of meaning.

Generally, the mantra is understood though as a way of attuning with the deity, not so much in terms of the linguistic significance, the semantic significance of the words, but more in terms of an energetic attunement. So

when we say “*Om Mani Padme Hung*“, maybe reciting it very fast, we go into a tunnel of sound and this tunnel of sound separates us off from our ordinary concerns.

That’s why the word *mantra* is often explained as *man*, from the root *man* meaning mind, and *tra*, from the root meaning protection, like in *rudra*. *Rudra*, wrathful demon, is connected with *tra*, to protect. So the mantra protects the mind and it protects the mind by focusing it on something which doesn’t hook.

When we come out of the practice, the instruction is you should hear all sound as if it is like a mantra, so we hear a car or someone walking on the stairs or people talking, we should understand this as mantra. And what is mantra? It is sound and emptiness.

[Diagram 8] Let’s say we have emptiness and out of the emptiness arises a sound and then the sound comes into culture as words having significance. Once we go into the level of words we get caught up in what they mean. If we can pull the energy back onto the level just of sound, we don’t get hooked so much. What do you think?

Comment: I think I am just going crazy.

Good. Do that. Keep those ears working.

If, for example, you go to a country, say you go to China and somebody says, “I really like you,” and somebody says, “I really hate you,” you don’t know the difference, it’s just sound. It’s just sound! If you know Chinese, it makes a big difference. You get hooked into “Why don’t you like me?” or “I’m really glad you like me.” We get very, very busy there.

INSTANT COMMUNICATION

But our problem, being in samsara with this karma, is that we have—from our ego—a lot of interest and enthusiasm. We have really hooks that we put out into the world and the world sends us many, many hooks, and we are living in the time of communication—media revolution, internet—internet’s now going to come in on telephones, it’s going to come in through television sets, it’s coming into people’s homes very, very quickly. Instant communication all over the world. We are drowning in a sea of words and most of the words are complete nonsense.

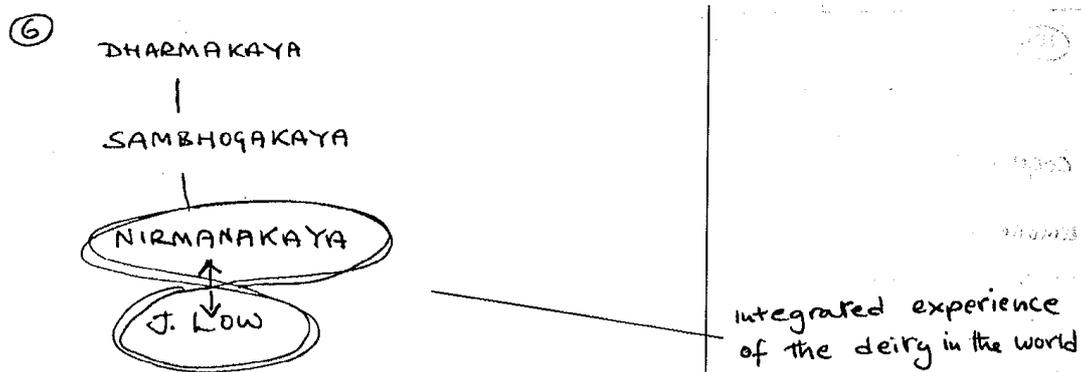
When I go into the hospital, every day I have big piles of e-mails that get sent round, and the front page is simply a list of people’s names. Somebody in the hospital sends out the message to everyone and I get my name on this. I get informed about theatre tickets, trips for locked patients to some special hospital. I don’t need to know this! Somehow people want to tell me what they’re doing, so all of this stuff is coming, and probably you get all these special circulars from the banks, and in Britain you get it on the envelope it says, “You lucky winner! And you open it up and it has all these details and you have to read all of this thing and write in, and more and more words, and then you get nothing. Huge oceans of words and they’re very, very seductive, very seductive.

VIBRATION

Again, the standard buddhism practice is that we try to put our attention on a

level which is free of this involvement, so that if we can, by the use of the mantra, we practice listening to everything that arises just as sound and emptiness, just as vibratory energy, like with these bells: one shake and something goes baaannnggg and, if you look at the bell you can see the metal go. When we speak our voice goes, and if you see these beautiful photographs of the larynx working, it's exactly the same system. And that's what it is, it's just vibration.

But we now turn the vibration into particular meaning. And we feel safe and secure in that meaning, but the safety and the security of the meaning traps us. Here we get out of the trap, into the mantra, which in some level is unsafe because you don't know what things are. You can get very spaced-out if you do mantra, but if you really understand the mantra as sound and emptiness, then by re-integrating sound and emptiness, when you start to speak and when other people speak, you are able to have this level integrated as well. Emptiness then is, if you like, dharmakaya, sound and emptiness is sambhogakaya, and the specific meanings of words are nirmanakaya. "How are you doing? How do you feel? Have you had a good time?" That's words which connect us. If nirmanakaya is coming into the world in a way that one can help beings, but it also means not getting trapped. Nirmanakaya always goes back into sambhogakaya and dharmakaya so this is a very dynamic flow. [See Diagram 6]



The mantra is the bridge between the dharmakaya and the nirmanakaya . It takes us into the emptiness and then, with the freedom of that, brings us out into a creative and dynamic relationship with the everyday world. The goal of these practices is not to lead some strange, esoteric life; it's to return to very ordinary life but with freedom. But at the moment, in our ordinary lives, we get trapped because of attachment on this level.

MEMORY AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

I don't know if you have any memories yourself about learning to speak and can remember at all any of your experience before language. It seems to be almost impossible for human beings to do that. Sometimes we have a kind of visual memory, you might remember sitting in a pram and looking at something, or some sound but it's very difficult to have what we call an adult kind of cognitive memory because these memories are processed through language. A great deal of our sense of who we are is constructed through language and what this is saying is: you don't need to work out who you are if you understand the three-kaya system of sound.

Psychotherapy is a world of words; it is the 'talking cure'. People say words and you shuffle their words around for them. You get them to tell you terrible words or crazy words, free association, you get people to tell you things they don't know what it means and then you tell them what it means and they say "Thank you". It's also like a narrative therapy. It's a very common notion now even in psycho-analysis that we are involved in psychotherapy in story telling. People come to us with a screwed-up story: "Nobody ever loved me, and my life is hopeless and I'm a bad person" and then somehow we find a way to tell them a story so that they think, "Well, actually, when I was a child I didn't get what I needed but I'm grown up and I know what to do." So they feel a little bit more empowered by telling themselves another story. That's the level of psychotherapy.

But it does not effect a structural transformation because it's dealing with words as real. Our sense of subject and object is mediated through words. "I see you". If I just look over, at a certain point of time, if we stop speaking and we just look, we get a bit spacey. Maybe some of you have done that in gestalt workshops or something, where you just sit and look at someone, you don't say anything. After a while you start to feel very strange. Maybe you do that for five minutes and then somebody says, "*Now talk about your experience,*" and immediately you go bla bla bla ... so many words wanting to explain what it was like not speaking, because words bring us back to who we are. We've gone out on a journey but we want to bring something home so we can explain it. This is what the ego wears. The ego wears clothes of words.

SANSKRIT ALPHABET: ALI KALI

In the Sanskrit alphabet, you have fifty vowels and consonants altogether, so *ali* is for vowels start which start with *a*, and *kali* is for the consonants which start with *ka*. The hindu goddess Kali wears a necklace of fifty heads; some are skulls, some are fresh heads. This represents the *ali kali*, the vowels and consonants of the Sanskrit alphabet. The same for the heruka forms in Tibetan buddhism. Everything comes out of the *ali kali*.

INTERNAL SOUND

When we do mantra practice we are using the focus of our attention on the sound to try to stop going into thought. Thinking is a kind of internal sound. People often speak of hearing voices and I think, certainly in the nineteen-thirties and forties, if you were to say that you were hearing voices people would say "*Oh, you are psychotic, you are very seriously ill.*" Nowadays I think there is much more understanding that we hear voices all the time, and that the mental function includes a kind of auditory hallucination. Some people have a very, very visual mental life and may see words internally, but for most people it's somewhere between a sound and a feeling. Would that be right? A kind of sensation?

Just stop for a minute and let some thoughts arrive... What is the thought like? Is it like language?

A: Just language, like words but without sound.

A: Sometimes there are accents as well, kinds of voices that I don't even recognize, although they might have come off the radio, but I don't know. Just

turning up.

James: So maybe several people's voices inside you.

A: Oh, yes.

James: And maybe some voices appear to be coming *at* you and some voices coming out of you. They might have a spatial feeling as well.

A: All voices in silence from here, not outside.

A: Mostly I hear music not words but like from up, not words. Very high tunes, not deep, like singing or...

A: It's more like a friend in my life when I let my thoughts come and go it's often from the past or from the future.

A: If I close my eyes sometimes, very nice colours but it's very silent. I like it but I don't see why it does come...

Hmm, esoteric knowledge at a premium! Who knows? There are many different ideas about these things. Guru Maharaji, who was very popular for a while, he used to give people initiation. They would come and he would say "Close your eyes", when the person closed their eyes, he took his two fingers and push into their eyes, and then he would say, "Now, do you see light?" "Yeah!" That is one way of getting this experience.

From a Tibetan point of view the idea is that the five elements carry sound and light, so each of the five elements has its own colour. Strong impressions of the five elements, or imbalances in ourselves of the five elements, result in experiences of particular colours or sounds as well as particular illnesses. Out of the kind of colours a person was seeing a lot you could identify some problem with their health.

Another form of that is people who can see auras and who use that to make some interpretation about the person's state. Why some people see a lot of colours and others don't, it's just your luck, how your brain is wired. You can say, how your karma is.

Comment: Sometimes I see this dark violet. Is it that my body needs this colour because I like it? Or is it following one element and so my body wants harmony and wants colour, that I see this?

I have no idea. I think this is exactly the point where interesting symbolic structures which can help us get turned into patterns of esoteric knowledge which people will claim to have access to. Whether they do or they don't, I don't know, but many people do. I'm not somebody who knows about these things; also I don't want to know about them because life then becomes incredibly complicated. All these new age healing things, you know, this and that, and they may be true and they may not be true but what people are telling is stories. If we say, "I like to tell a story, if you like this story, have this story," that's one thing. Another is to say, "My story is true, but only special people can understand it. I think you're one of these special people, somehow."

The world is a lot like that. It's very difficult for us to have a sense that with many things, we don't know what they're for. Tibetan literature is full of books which explain almost any sign. There is a book which was translated some

years ago of bird cries, particularly blackbirds. If it cries from the east, that means someone will die, if it cries from the west it means...you know, you can look up your little book every time you hear a bird crying, and it will predict what you're going to do. There is a story of Milarepa. He was going to see Marpa, he was meditating in his cave, and he goes out from the cave and he sees a bad sign so he goes back into the cave and does some more meditation. He goes out again and sees another bad sign. And every time, day after day, he goes out and he sees all these bad signs and he suddenly realises, "I can be here for the rest of my life!" What are these signs? These are only conventional truths.

In general, whenever we see lights and colours in the tantric system, this is a manifestation of the energy of the five elements but what their precise combinations mean, I don't know that anybody would know that. Maybe a Tibetan doctor might know that kind of thing.

DEPENDENT ORIGINATION

Comment: Sometimes we get some ideas like we hear some sound or we have some experience, some light and some special moment and it seems like it has a meaning. Sometimes it becomes very real and for me it's very hard to distinguish: it could be it's nothing, you could say, okay it's just a symbol-meaning and it's something made up, but somehow it has something to tell, you can use it also maybe on a relative level, so it's a question how to distinguish between what is real and what is really made up. Or, what is the distinction between illusion and intuition? What is the difference between them? Maybe it's just everything illusion or it's because of the nature of the things but also it's something like intuition.

It could be intuition. Say for example with the colour violet, you or some person might have an intuitive response to that and have an idea, but the general buddhism teaching on cause and effect is the theory of dependent origination, which says each thing arises on the basis of the existence of many other things, and each of these things also arises on the basis of other things, so we are in this huge net of inter-related causes. Because of that any phenomena that manifests can be manifesting for a whole variety of causes. That's why one needs to look very particularly at a particular situation to see why it is arising. It is then very difficult to make a general rule to say violet means this or yellow means that. You can say, "Yellow means that according to this system."

I remember, when I was translating this big meditation text with C.R. Lama, that in one text yellow would be connected with this god and in another text, the same god would have another colour. And I would say, "Why is that?" And he said, "This is this text. This is what this text says. Don't get funny." "Generally, the reason it's yellow is because it's yellow. There's no other reason except it's yellow in this book." Then otherwise he would say, "If you want to know, you ask the buddha, I don't know! You go find the buddha, you ask him!"

The general principle is that life is very, very complicated, which we already know!

Comment: So you're saying it's simpler if we don't ask why, we just drop that

question?

Well, we know why in terms of these structures. The structure is useful but if you ask for the particular, any event, because of dependent origination, any event has so many factors backwards, that by the time you sort these out, time has moved on and these factors have also changed. One has to have a very intuitive response. Like, for example, some of us this morning went out for a walk, and we went it was quite dark. We were walking along and you couldn't see so clearly, and I was aware when we came back, looking at the time, it took us much longer to walk now than in the spring, because in the spring it was light and people marched ahead. Now we had to look. If you have a road, you don't need to look at it too much, if it's the daylight, you feel quite safe. In the city, although there may be thieves and robbers, generally you can walk down the street. There, in the dark there's maybe a puddle or you might slip so there's a little kind of caution. You cannot predict what will come.

Buddhism grew up in dark country lanes. It grew up in India and in Tibet, no electricity, no lights. People go quite tentatively and they have to work with the whole body awareness, if they are walking in the Tibetan countryside at night time, or even in India. There's a particular kind of feel in your body. That's the approach, in a sense, we take to the dharma. You can't know in advance. In the west we get this kind of prediction of quality, of standards, every packet of toothpaste has a guarantee that it will be the same as every other packet of toothpaste. Coca cola is sold all over the world and they say it's the same taste wherever you go. Anywhere, it doesn't matter, you have the same taste. That is not a positive quality for most of us; it's not really what we would want. We want to have different things.

In order to appreciate the complexity of how things arise we have to walk slowly and one of the advantages of doing this kind of mantra practice is that it slows us down. Again, when we're in this world of words which are familiar, we go very fast. "What is that?" "Oh, it's that!" We've often talked in the past here about children learning language. It's again the same thing. When children are first learning language they're very, very curious, they have all these questions about what things are and sometimes the parent, if they are not too busy, can also be suddenly inspired to be curious again. After a while, the child going to school needs certainty, because if you have to write an essay, you have to know what it means and so you can't be curious, opened, any more. You have to be precisely knowing. And by the time we are our age, our mastery of our world depends on knowing what things are. To have a normal usage. We know the proper way to use language. That is, again, very secure but it's also very blind. We're not curious, and yet the key purpose of dharma is to put this level into question so that there is some gap to go down into this.

In some dharma traditions people do a lot of study and you study to cut up the world of words, they study logic and debating. That is all just a way to make some holes in words, to make people shocked that they don't understand. In meditation we use focused attention on the breath, on the body, on mantra sound, to take us away from words. When we do tantra and we do pujas, like the little bit we were doing last night, a prayer links words with sound, so you

have—like we begin today, we do this refuge: you don't normally sing: "Good morning, how are you?" It's not normal.

Normally language is quite clipped and efficient but when we slow down and we have these elaborated melodies, we take the words into sound and sound into words. We're opening this boundary here, in which words have meaning but suddenly, as we are chanting, it's just vibration, it's just energy. Then it comes, and you think, "Oh what does this mean? Oh, yes, now we do this," and you come back up into the world. Going down there, and then the more we practise, the more we have this as well so that when we do the puja, we are moving up and down these three levels. [See Diagram 7]

Comment: During the pujas, normally the mantras are said very quickly. Why do they do that? I don't like it because it is so very quick, so very fast.

It's a shame. It's because of a real problem. How can one say this? Tibetans are very crude people. India is a very, very sophisticated country. Indian music is wonderful. I remember C.R. Lama telling me, "*Oh, you know, in Samye monastery before the Chinese destroyed it, they had sitars and vinas, they brought from India a long, long time ago.*" I said, "Did anybody play them?" "No, no, just keep them there. Very nice thing, nobody goes ting-ting-ting." Tibetan music is a little bit crude. Maybe we shouldn't take this kind of thing....

Indian culture is absolutely an aesthetic culture. In Indian philosophy they have probably the most developed theories of aesthetics in the world—even now. Enormously complex theory of aesthetics, particularly in Kashmiri shaivism, theories of [Abhinavagupta](#) who wrote a whole study of every experience in terms of aesthetics. It's an aesthetic phenomenology. Very, very beautiful and wonderful ideas. As some of you know, this theory of rasa, of tastes, which is used in music and drama and poetry in India. It's been there for a long time. Tibetans don't have that.

The Indian appreciation of sound and recitation, when it came to Tibet, somehow came a little bit short—I don't know, Tibetans are good business men, they are good traders, so they get into a trade-off, that in order to get enlightened you have to do twenty million mantras, so then ... more fast mantras..., you can imagine having a little calculator instead of a rosary! It's a slightly mechanical idea and it works, again, on a nice principle: if one is good, two will be twice as good. So if you need to have a hundred, and each thing is powerful in itself, then it doesn't matter how you do it, as long as you do it. That's a bit crazy. It's how you do it that matters.

The problem in these systems is always that in order to help ourselves we create a system or we idealise: now we have a god, there we have on the wall one picture of Dorje Sempa, so "Dorje Sempa, wow! I like you, Dorje Sempa, so come and help me. Dorje Sempa come and help me!" How can we make sure Dorje Sempa comes to help us? Dorje Sempa is very, very busy. So you store up all your mantras until you have ten million mantras, and then you write it on the cheque, you put it in the envelope and send it off and then Dorje Sempa comes. That's the way that system works. Unless you do a lot of it, you won't get it back. First pay in your money, then you get your pension. One can understand why. It's a very good way of thinking about it for simple

people. However, Dorje Sempa is not something there, who comes to us, here. Dorje Sempa is an experience. It's an experience!

LOWER TANTRAS

So how do you bring about the experience? Well, in what's called the lower tantras, they follow very much the Indian puja system where, if you've ever been to an Indian temple, in the morning they wake the god up, then they give the god a bath, they feed the god, then in the evening they give it some light, some incense and they put the god to bed. And they wake it up again in the morning, every day. The statue gets wrapped and put to bed, "Good night, God, now sleep," and come back again. It's a very nice idea.

Tibetans have almost the same idea but not quite so in that form, but the idea was that if you are going to do a practice you should always take a bath before you do your meditation, you should change and put on clean, white clothes, you should only eat pure food, particularly yoghurt, white flour and honey, things like that, no garlic, no root vegetables, no meat, no alcohol. You make yourself very pure, the god is very pure, and then you have this aesthetic merging on this, what's called, a sattvic level, or pure level.

HIGHER TANTRAS

That is modified in what are called the higher tantras where there is much more use of the ordinary things of life, so you offer alcohol, meat, you offer human meat, dog's meat, elephant meat, you offer all kind of things to these gods, and they accept everything but it has a different quality to it. It's not so much about the aesthetics, although clearly if you've ever seen a big puja in a Tibetan monastery, there's a lot of beauty involved. They even have a kind of choreographer for it, or a director who's called the dorje lopon, and the dorje lopon does the meditation direction, and the production assistant is called the karma lopon, karma means activity and he is the person who runs about and puts the tormas up and the tormas down, and the lights and does everything. It's a very choreographed thing and you have to be completely ready to raise your damaru at the right time, everybody does these mudras at the right time, which is a way of harmonising the energy.

But it becomes a bit like a factory. Aesthetics is then prescribed: this is the right way to do it; if you are a good person, you will like to do it the right way. It becomes dharma etiquette and that's different from aesthetics because aesthetics is always individual, but etiquette is social, so when these two get merged you have a bit of a confusion and everything then becomes a production system and you can produce more and more, and if you can standardise production, you get a greater profit.

This is the problem of being a one-man business: I am just one person doing psychotherapy. I can only charge so much per hour so if I want to make more money I have to work many, many, many hours. If you're just one person doing business, that's the problem. If you are just one person doing mantra, the only way you can do more mantra is to do them quicker. You don't have any other opportunity. You could pay people to do mantras for you, that also happens in Tibetan buddhism, but generally, if you're going to do your mantra, either you do them slow or quick. And if you decide you need a lot of them,

where a lot of mantras equals a lot of merit and you need a lot of merit, you get into a mathematical equation of having to go very quickly.

This is a long way of saying that there is a belief that just the sound itself is enough. But this is now sound coming at you, as it were, whereas what we are talking about here is the aesthetic appreciation of sound, so that we allow the sound to move through us and to transform us. That may take more time. That means you have to know yourself. It's not like making coca cola, it's more like making home wine, and you have to taste it, and maybe someone else would like it but you might not like that taste or you want to add some sugar or whatever it is, or leave it for longer, because it has a particular taste, it is specific. We are specific, so our relationship with the practice is going to be specific.

Buddhism in Tibet, particularly these puja systems, became something that was done for other people. The monks perform the activity on behalf of others, so it is a performance art as well as a personal meditation. And performance art has to be choreographed. After all, if you just want to dance for yourself that's one thing, but if somebody says, "Okay, we want to put on a dance show. Are you going to come?" then you think, "Oh, I'd better practise a bit." Even if you think you're quite a good dancer, you want to practise because it's going out towards the other, it has to be standardised, whereas if you're just practising for yourself, if you have a false start, or if in the middle you change your mind, it doesn't matter.

That's a little bit about why it comes, historically, in that way. I think the important thing for us, if we are going to do these practices, is to explore for ourselves how they work for us. We've been in this area before. It's so much easier just to obey orders, to do what guru says than to try to explore for yourself what is good for you. That's why if somebody says, "Do five million mantras!" it may be a bit boring but you just do them, and at the end you didn't get any benefit and then you say, "Oh, I didn't do them properly," or "I have a very bad karma, so I'll do some more," that's the rationale in that system. If you want to get the blessing of the god and you believe the god has a blessing, why would the god not give you the blessing now? Do you think that god is some kind of mother who is saying to you, "You can't go out and play until you've done your homework,"? A little silly.

Comment: Mantras always have a good effect, or good vibrations have a good effect. For me, it deepens the tenderness. I think it may be so for others too. I can't imagine that to do mantra has no effect on a person, or a bad effect.

I don't say it would have a bad effect, but I think it can have no effect. There are many people in Tibet who have done millions of mantras and don't seem to be particularly clear about anything.

Comment: C.R. Lama said that if you make mantra and make no visualisation your mind could be still like a monkey. They make mantras just like automatic, like a tape recorder saying mantras but the mind goes wandering, wandering... what sense does that make then.

And that's exactly the point. That's what I mean by examining yourself,. Maybe for some people here, doing mantra very quickly is fine and that really helps you to focus your attention. For other people it's better to go slowly. If

we want to get enlightened we have to be involved in the procedure. It can't just come in a packet.

Later we will do some more mantra practice and we can look at different kinds of chanting.

MAKING SOUND

One of the most terrifying things I became aware of recently: I was watching a programme on television about Cambodia because of this discovery of Pol Pot, and they were interviewing people who had been in these torture and death camps, and one woman was saying how there was a sign on the wall that said, "Make no sound. All crying is forbidden." It's quite a thought that when somebody is cutting your fingers off, you have to make no sound. That is truly terrifying. But also for us, at various times in our lives, people have told us to be quiet, and for many people to make a sound is quite a difficult and a scary thing. Like the voice is an expression of yourself, and when we go out of ourselves, we can also be criticised. It may be an important thing we can practice today, is just making sound, and really trying to be aware of the blocks to making sound. These feelings of guilt or shame, all the judgements that you have about the kind of sound you make.

In the practice of the dharma what is really important is to make the sound. Sound is a way of harmonising breathing and harmonising the meditation, so if we always do things very quietly we're missing out on quite a lot of the benefit. It's very important to do that.

Comment: But there is a question about whether the sound should be beautiful and harmonious, or if it comes out in an ugly fashion how is that in terms of dharma?

I think when people are meditating, they don't know whether it's beautiful or ugly. Only other people make these judgements.

Comment: Oh, I think you can feel it in yourself.

I don't know whether you can feel it. I think if you are really involved in the sound you won't know whether it's beautiful or not. A sound is a sound. When you harmonise into the sound it will have a particular form.

Comment: What I mean is, if it's not harmonious, to me that would be ugly, and if I can't tune in sufficiently then it will come out in a way that will actually increase my feeling of discomfort because I'm not able to express the harmony that the mantra will need, if you see what I mean.

I don't think the mantra needs any harmony. This is a critical judgement in your own mind or a feeling that you should do things in the right way.

Comment: But it feels better if I do.

That's a judgement.

Comment: Well, no, then I would say that my experience of the practice deepens, my insight increases and so on. If it happens in harmony, my whole body vibrates with it. If I can't do that, for some reason, I'm blocking it, then I feel very uncomfortable and my practice doesn't progress. That's how it seems.

But that's the manifestation of the desire to control the situation. Then you

become limited by your desire to produce a perfect form, and this, I think, is the real problem in the dharma, of people practising together. It's good to practice together because it harmonises but it always exteriorises what we do, and we already have internalised critical aspects in ourselves which externalise ourselves. We are self-conscious. Meditation is to try to dissolve self-consciousness.

Comment: But the bliss won't arise if the body is literally not able to harmonise with the sound. If it doesn't come out at certain wave-lengths then it can have a very disruptive effect, and bliss is not possible.

I don't know. I don't think in those terms so I don't have that problem. I think that's a problem of a theory.

Comment: I wasn't talking about it in terms of theory but in terms of experience.

I don't know about experience. I can't help. It sounds to me like it is self-consciousness, and that's the problem. It's always a problem if we predict something: "Unless this happens, that can't happen." I don't know.

Comment: I'm not saying it was a prediction. I'm saying if I can sing in a way that I happen to know because then the body vibrates—probably everybody knows that sensation—you know it's in tune, and so it feels comfortable and it feels rich and melodious and then it has all that richness that goes with it. If one's not able to do that, all those things are lacking. I'm only predicting in the sense of, say, that it might be so because that's in terms of all the experiences up till now.

But I don't believe it's true. I think that's a judgement. For example, if you go to a football match and if people are singing, then they sing in a funny way but they are caught up in the spirit of the thing and they have a good time and they have a very strong feeling. The energy of the heart will overcome all these problems but the head which wants to evaluate and control will step back and judge. So not judging is very important.

New Day

Okay. What I would like is to make a request. I would like to hear the singing of "Stille Nacht".

Comment: If the night is quiet why should we sing?

You can have a critic's corner if you like and you can write a report. Probably most people know this song, I would imagine in Germany, and if you don't remember the words you can just la-la-la along to it. These tunes, especially these songs that we learn in childhood often have quite a strong feeling because when we learn them, it's often at a time when we feel not so oppressed. Later, we're more aware, but when we learn these first like Christmas songs we're often very open. Shall we do that? ... It's difficult? Maybe just go into the breath a little, just a little calm and then you can sing it out of this, very calm.

Comment: What for shall we sing that song?

What for? Well, to get into the experience of singing a song that might be

quite familiar and the words are quite simple, they also express just a very peaceful feeling. But it's a way also of using a song that everybody might know to see how that harmonises the experience of being here. Just to see. It's not a conversion campaign. I haven't come from Rome!

You have to visualise you're five years of age and Christmas is coming and you have a little candle.

[Meditation]

And just let the sound come out.

[Singing]

For different people that will have different memories and different resonances, some pleasant, some unpleasant, no doubt. But one of the powerful things is the way in which we can connect with emotion through sound. When we come into a tradition like Tibetan buddhism we are learning it as adults and so a lot of the childhood connections are missing for us. I think it's important just to remind ourselves of the cultural loss of that. Words like that can evoke so many kinds of feelings and memories which adult learning probably doesn't quite get so in contact with.

Also, one of the projects that we've talked of in the past has been putting some of the buddhism texts into western music or some new kind of arrangements that be easier to access, and so it's also important to allow yourself the freedom to do that and to take melodies which have an emotional impact for you and sing buddhism mantras or songs to that, as a way of integrating the affect of what you're familiar with, with this new understanding. I think that way it can make it more real and more personal.

Comment: What about the difficulty of singing it in Tibetan? Where one can often cut off from the meaning? We don't have so many buddhism songs that we can sing in our language, do we?

No. It's also possible to write songs. There's a lot of freedom at this time to create songs. The main thing of course would be to think about the kind of mood you are trying to create, and that song has a particular mood that it creates on many people. It's quite sad, quite full of sentiment, of a sense of loss, for some people. People will have different feelings.

DIFFERENT WAYS OF USING CHANTING

What governs Tibetan buddhist chanting is the nature of the Tibetan language, which is built up of syllables. Almost all the syllables in the Tibetan language have a meaning, so that the functional phonemic mass, the mass of sound, is semantically significant. Most words are built up of two or three, usually maximum four, parts. Most of them have two or three syllables, sometimes just one. Sky is *nam-ka*. Dakini is *ka-dro-ma*. You don't usually get more than that. So *ka* is sky, *dro* is to go and *ma* indicates the feminine. It's very easy, given this kind of splitting of meaning and sound or the fixing of it, to create balanced melodies, because you can just cut them up in lines, and that's what happens. So most lines have seven, nine or eleven syllables.

What we were doing last night, we began with a nine-beat for the prayer *kyab ne lu me kon chok rin po che* and then with the seven line prayer it goes into a

seven-beat. Most of the chanting, if it's nine it's usually one-two-one-two, one-two-three-four-five. What we had last night was one-two-one-two, one-two-three-four-five. It was going, in terms of the beat, it was one-two, one-two, one-two [this last very drawn out], one-two-three. Once you get the sense of the order of that, it's quite easy to break it down. You just need to remember where the stresses are.

Once you've got the basic rhythm you can do it fast or slow depending on the time you have available and the mood you want to create. Usually, the more we slow it down the more effect it's going to have on us, I think. Just the lengthening of the sound takes into a domain away from language. The rhythm of speech is like I'm speaking now, so if I recite fast: *kyab ne lu me kon chok rin po che* etc, it's very close to speech rhythms and often Tibetan pujas are read like that or even faster. If you're reading on an ordinary speech rhythm your mind is focusing in the way of speech, so you start to construe it on the speech level, but if we do it very slowly: *kyab ne...*, you're out in the middle of nowhere! You left the *kyab*, you're in the *ne*, you haven't got to *lu* yet, I'm lost in the *kyab ne...*

With each one, as you break it down, instead of it being *kyab-ne-lu-me* where you have a sequence of words building up, you're just going into these levels of sound, *kyaaaaab nnneee*, and as you recite these slowly for yourself you can start to feel what the energy of this sound is, of *kkkyyyaabb*, what does the sound *nnee lluu mee kon chog rin po che*.

It's very important to have the freedom to explore these things. Everything is useful if you know how to use it. But you can only know how to use things if you practise with them and you can only practise if you allow yourself to make what might be called 'mistakes'. Practise means trying a variety of options until you get to one that really works for you. Looking back or looking from the outside you could call these other options 'mistakes', but essentially they are trials, aren't they? If a child is starting to learn to speak, it says some funny words. You could say, "Oh, it doesn't speak properly," and try to correct it all the time. Or you could say, "Oh, it's doing some interesting experiments with sound."

Again, a lot of this can be done in your own time, in your own walk out in nature, take one of these little prayers and just explore the sound, going very, very slowly, and you can just count the beat on your hand and keep slowing it down. You could take one that probably most of us know, this *sang gye chö dang*, I mean we can do it quite fast, or we can do it slow, and we see what these rhythms do. They produce a mood. If you know that, then when you come to do some practice for yourself, you can use the speed of your chanting and the force, to harmonise with your mood, to take you further into it.

Comment: To force, did you say to force?

To force? Did I say that?

Comment: I don't know. I understood.

You can use it to harmonise, you can use the force of your voice, like the intensity, and the pitch and the mood, so you could go with your own way. For example, say you were feeling very sad and you might be feeling kind of

helpless. You could let all of that go into the sound. If you're feeling very expansive, sing accordingly. Singing can change your feelings.

Depending on your mood, you could go with your mood to really use the sound to help you explore the mood, or you could push against it to use it to change your mood. That is the purpose of these things. Rather I should say that is the energetic purpose on the level of the voice because on the level of the words we are saying we take refuge in the buddha, so we do it in a standard coca cola form, we all know the rhythm and it's straightforward. That keeps the meaning clear, but in terms of exploring sound as an energetic system, we need to have the freedom to make that exploration, so I would really encourage you to do that.

One of the biggest problems is to see these texts as holy, which means they have to be handled with kid gloves. The buddha's teaching is to help you. You are messy. So it would be ridiculous to give a small child a Dresden porcelain figure because small children play about and drop things. These practices are not made of porcelain, they are very strong, they are made of rubber, so you can play with them and the buddha will not be insulted. In fact the buddha will be happy that you play with them. This is the reality, because only by playing with them do you have the freedom yourself.

REFUGE: RECITATING IN DIFFERENT RYTHMS : SEE ALSO ATTACHMENT 6

Okay, shall we just recite the refuge prayer? We can see that the verses allow nine possible stresses.

Let's first just recite them three times in a fairly fast reading form.

[Recite 3 times fairly fast]

How does that make you feel? Your breathing's going a bit faster because you weren't able to take such deep breaths since you have to breathe from your upper chest when you recite at that speed. It brings your energy up.

Let's now recite them a little bit slower.

[Recite 3 times slowly]

I'm sure you have a different kind of feeling with that. For me, it's a bit like in a tank or something; you imagine that you could just drive over anything. It's quite strong, quite powerful, quite relentless. That kind of tune can be good if you need to strengthen yourself. You get the feeling you can cut through anything. This is powerful.

Next, let's do it more slowly, like we were doing this morning.

[Recite 3 times more slowly].

That again, has, a different feel to it. You will have your own sense of what that feeling is.

Actually we can learn some more of these tunes but I think the key thing is—particularly from the point of view of dzogchen—to use the tune to harmonise with your mood, to strengthen it or to change it.

When we use it from the point of view of tantra, the pujas have a particular given rhythm to them. You meet with people together, and together you do it in that rhythm, and so it's a kind of lineage tune. It gives a sense of belonging,

that it's the proper way to do things.

In the evening we'll go on doing some different kinds of singing and chanting and clapping and moving around, all to try to integrate sound and energy.

Okay, shall we just recite the refuge prayer? We can see that the verses allow nine possible stresses.

Let's first just recite them three times in a fairly fast reading form.

[Recite 3 times fairly fast]

How does that make you feel? Your breathing's going a bit faster because you weren't able to take such deep breaths since you have to breathe from your upper chest when you recite at that speed. It brings your energy up.

From the point of view of dzogchen we are trying to be more subtly in touch with our own energy and to change it if it needs changing, or to be strengthened. For example, if you feel sad, reciting maybe the seven line prayer could make you weep and weep and weep, and that might be very helpful for you to connect up with some emotions which are not being expressed. Or, if you were maybe having to go to a difficult meeting maybe at work, or in a relationship and you're feeling quite fragile, you could chose a melody which would strengthen you, it would put some kind of protection around you. The important thing is for you to find out what really works for you because it's your relationship with it, and the fact it that our moods are changing all the time. We are not consistent so we need to be shifting our relationship with the dharma according to our mood.

And that is a big difference from how many aspects of buddhism are presented. A lot of buddhism is 'for all sentient beings', it's like the Ministry of Defence, the military headquarters says 'all soldiers will wear this uniform' so we make standard-issue uniform and a soldier should fit in. It goes out in that form. But in dzogchen we try to be more sensitive to ourselves.

Comment: How about integrating Sanskrit mantra from the dzogchen point of view?

You could use any mantra you like. The key thing is, if you understand the principle: out of emptiness sound arises and through sound we enter into the creation of the world. Both through language and also through the energetic experience, things exist as a vibration of sound. You could do *Om nama shivaya* if you wanted to do, there's no real difference. In reality, there is not a kind of buddhism passport office and if you come in with a Shiva mantra round your neck they're going to cut your throat. It's not Sarajevo, though many people would like to turn it into that. You can say *Om nama shivaya* or *Maaa-maaaa, Maaaa-mmaa, Maaa-mmma, Maa-mmmaaa*. In Bengal I met many Kali babas who only sing "Ma". They wander around singing "Ma! Ma!" all day long. They are completely gone. Ramakrishna spent a lot of his life singing "Ma, Ma". Just try it: five minutes of reciting Ma and you will be in an altered state, you go into trance very quickly. "Ma! Ma! Ma!" You empty out quicker. It's very nice to do these things and to try.

If you understand the principle, everything is dharma. That's why the Buddha was able to teach, as they say, eighty-four thousand dharmas—that just

means many, many, many—because he was able to use anything to help sentient beings. Just as in Tibetan medicine they say anything can be medicine, it depends on the person and their condition. So we have to know what is our condition, we have to know the structure of the practice and then we can use whatever we need.

Buddhist practice is mainly solitary or in a group. Certainly in the Tibetan tradition it's not often dialogic, as a real communication between two people. Sometimes they have an interview or something but that again is structured in a particular way, it's often a question-and-answer rather than an exploration going on which is supported by someone else. That's quite a rare kind of thing, where you have a kind of interlocutor who's only task is to help you stay with your own narrative, and who is not interested in pulling your story towards them to make it interesting or whatever. We may feel ourselves that there's a demand to be interesting but actually there's no demand. That's part of how we define ourselves.

I think, for me, the benefit of this kind of practice is that through unification with the deity and the dissolving meditation we get a moment of some kind of openness, and then become very aware of thoughts coming back. The thoughts hook us somehow because we go after them and then we're back in our ordinary life. I think this kind of practice can help you to examine the kind of thoughts that you easily get hooked by because how you define yourself gives you a sense of your inner geography, and it's that geography which is there filling the space from the meditation. So when you do the dissolving you have a bit of space, and then very quickly, it's filled again with these hills and valleys of your familiar thoughts; you fall into a whole pattern of construct. If we can use this enquiry to investigate this geography, it can also help us to loosen up the addictive power of these.

PURIFICATION AND THE FOUR POWERS

I want to say a little bit about the four powers that are used for purification. They're explained quite clearly in the chapter by C.R. Lama in *Simply Being* but they're always useful to think about anyway.

FIELD OF ACTIVITY: FIRST POWER

These four powers are very traditional in buddhism. The first is the power of what's called the 'field of activity', which means the power of what you're going to rely on to purify you. In the old texts, it referred to the bodhi tree in Bodh Gaya, so people would go to visit the Bodhi temple in Bodh Gaya and make their practice of purification in front of that place. The idea is that, for two reasons, you should have a very holy object to do the confession or whatever in front of. One is because you can believe it has the power to actually purify you, and secondly because it has the power to shame you. In Europe as well, people go on pilgrimage to holy places and they often walk on foot or on their knees as a form of purification. Tibetans do the same. You get Tibetans who do prostrations for two thousand miles across Tibet, ten years on the road, doing prostrations. People do all sorts of things, but the idea is that when I get to this holy place, the power of that place will change my feeling.

Now, when we do this in a tantric way, we visualise the deity, so we use that presence to confess things in front of. The other notion of doing it in front of a deity, is that we believe that these gods have wisdom so they can see everything, so there's no point in telling lies to someone who already knows all about you. Again, it's a way of trying to stop us covering things up.

EFFECTIVE POWER OF THE ANTIDOTE: SECOND POWER

Then, the second power that's required is the power of a useful method—in fact it is called traditionally the 'effective power of the antidote', which is to say that you should have a method of practice which is strong enough to antidote whatever you're going to do. You could imagine, you know, in a small traditional catholic village, some old person, someone who's always done their confession, goes along to do confession and there is a new priest. They make their confession and they're waiting at the little window, and the priest says, "I've nothing to say! I'm a priest because my mother wanted me to be a priest. I don't believe in any of this and I can't help you." The person would be rather shocked. There would no longer be the power of the perfect method. They would no longer be saying, "I am empowered, through the lineage, to free you from your sins."

It's very important to find somebody who actually has the power to do that. If you go to a bank and you want to have a loan and you go and tell the cleaner of the bank all your financial problems and why you want a loan, and at the end of it they say, "I have to go and clean the toilets now, I'm sorry!"— it's very important to ask the right person and to find the right practice to do it!

This power really means that the method of making purification is a proper one. Any Dorje Sempa practice falls into that. Also prayers like Narak kang shag which is included in many purification practices. All it means is that you should have a good method, a method that will work.

POWER OF CONFESSION: THIRD POWER

The third power is the power of confession. That means that you say what you have done and through this saying you distance yourself from the activity. Usually we cannot confess things because we are still caught up in them. Once you separate yourself from them it's much easier to confess. They often say, for example, in treating habitual sex offenders, that one of the reasons that they are so difficult to help is because they can never really confess what they have done because they are still caught up in what they are doing. They still have the place inside them that is interested in having sex with children, or whatever. Only if they make a real confession do they get the separation from the bit of themselves that would carry out the act.

Confession is very, very important. Traditionally it says that when you confess you should be crying, you should be weeping, you should feel very, very upset, you should feel completely ashamed. The important thing about the confession is to renounce the activity.

CONFESSION AND THE FOUR STAGES OF KARMA

I will just insert here briefly a reminder of the four stages of karma. Very briefly, any karmic action is believed to require, first of all, a basis. This is the

perception of subject and object as real and separate. On the basis of this separation, thoughts arise, thoughts of intention towards another person, thoughts to harm them, thoughts to get things from them, also thoughts to help them, if it's about good karma. Then, the thought leads into an action and the action leads to a result which you can then agree with or not agree with.

A full karmic effect arises from seeing something, "I want this bowl. I am going to take this bowl. I have now taken this bowl, and I'm glad I have taken the bowl." If these four things are there, you get the full impact. Or, if it was my bowl, I might think, "I want to give this bowl to you, I am now giving this bowl to you, you now have this bowl, Oh, how good you look with the bowl!" But we can block the action on the fourth stage, so I now give this bowl to Johannes and then I think, "My bowl! I look better with the bowl! It's me. Of course, you don't really want it anyway!" In that way, we can have regret after, and the regret will cut the positive karma of a good action, but if I have stolen the bowl from someone, it will also cut the negative consequence of the bad action.

We can also stop in the moment of the action, of stealing it, "Oh, better put it back!" That has a weaker effect than if you actually take it and have to return it. Or you can just have the thought, "I'd like to steal it," and you think, "Ach, never mind!" Best of all is to have the realisation that the bowl is a form of emptiness and has no inherent nature that one could take anyway. That you can't really steal a bowl, all you do is change a relationship which you're not in control of anyway. Even if I steal the bowl, what will I do with it? Unless I decide to carry it around with me all the time, I have to put it someplace, when I've put it there and then I'm talking to you, I've forgotten about my bowl, so where's my bowl? My bowl. We see this with small children. They often carry their teddy bear everywhere because they want to know where it is. They are very, very wise. That is pure attachment. As adults, we forget how to do that. Children are able to attach to just one object. We get so in to attaching to everything so we lose all the other things!

The connection of this with the third of the four powers is that the confession is the method of renunciation. In a sense it is cutting on this fourth level of the generation of karma, of the conclusion of the action. So I have now stolen the bowl and I want the bowl and then afterwards I think, "Oh, god, I wish I hadn't done that!" So confessing "I stole the bowl" puts the bowl somehow there. I'm no longer saying, "I want to keep the bowl," I'm prepared to say, "Taking the bowl was a bad action. I don't want to do a bad action, so I'm putting the bowl away from me." I say, "I want to return the bowl. I don't want to keep it." I am renouncing the action itself. I am saying, "Stealing the bowl was a bad thing to do. I'm very sorry." Again, I'm putting myself away from the action, but in the moment of stealing it, I don't want anyone to see, because I want the bowl close to me, I want the action close to me and I don't want anyone to know.

The stealing is secret and the confession is public. That's always the tradition, isn't it? In most religions there is an idea that we can only be at peace with ourselves if we don't have secrets because in order to cover a secret, you cover part of yourself. If you have very big secrets you get so full of this inner covering that you hardly can exist at all. Confession makes you light, you feel light, because you let the light of the world in and you become more public.

That's a very important power to use. In particular, if we take up an idea that we have been born many, many lifetimes, then it's very important to confess all the sins that anyone has ever committed at any time. By identifying with all the crimes that exist in the world, we make sure that we also confess the possibility that we might have done them.

For example, if we have been born many, many lifetimes it's likely that we have killed someone intentionally. We have murdered them. We have acted out of anger and killed someone. If we take up this idea, and make confession to the buddha of all the people we have killed, it does two things. It allows us to connect with the cruel, hurtful aspects of our personality, which we might be hiding. I say, "I'm a nice guy, I just all the time try to help people." It brings that back out, and it also helps us to connect in this life, with the people who do terrible things. Very often there is a huge rejection of people who carry out crimes.

There is one woman in Britain called Myra Hindley who was involved in killing some children. She exists as a kind of icon for the bourgeoisie of the 'bad woman'.

Comment: She is in the new exhibition in London, a big photo of her, and it was so scandalous that hundreds of people wanted to come to see it, and one man wanted to destroy the art object. So many emotions were involved...

Absolutely. For Conservative politicians, all they have to do is stand on a platform and say, "*Myra Hindley will never be freed,*" and everybody claps. Just completely in an orgasm of joy that this woman, who's all evil, can be put away. But if we, ourselves, recognize that given certain circumstances, we would do the same...

But we are dishonest about that. I was watching a programme that's on British television at the moment about the Nazis, and there was a very interesting report—I don't know if they will show it in Germany—but it's made out of old film, shot at the time. There's an interview with an old Lithuanian who was one of the guards who were shooting Jews in Poland. After the war he was caught by the Russians and he was sent in prison in Siberia for twenty years, but when he was talking about it, he couldn't understand at all really what the problem was. He was just describing, "*Well, we got a lot of vodka, and we just shoot them!*" And he said, "*When you have many people you just shoot one, two, and then they are all dead and then you shoot some more.*" Just the way he was describing it was as if he was been punished for something that he doesn't understand. "*Everyone was shooting them. I was shooting them.*" This is stupidity as a cause of killing. He wasn't even angry with these people, he never really realised that shooting people was wrong. He did it because "*everybody was shooting them*".

We can see how easy it is for people, due to their mind being dull or heated up by anger or too much vodka or race hatred, for the minds of ordinary people to be disturbed so that they do terrible things, and afterwards they don't even know that it was wrong.

In Britain we never, ever will hear of the British torturing anyone in the world, but we know that in the time of the Vietnam war, British squads were sent to help the Americans learn torture techniques in Vietnam. It's public knowledge

but there's a complete denial that British soldiers would do any of these things. Britain is one of the biggest exporters of torture devices in the world, but this is never publicised in the official communications. For the British, the Germans are those who are bad. It's that simple, so all the evil goes onto the Germans so the British can just be completely pure. Being completely pure, they can do whatever they like and there is no guilt. This is why it's often very, very difficult to work out who is good and who is bad.

As a kind of insurance policy, as good buddhists, we admit to everything. *"I did it! I did it!" Who did that? "Me! Me!"* And if you do that, you can never be caught out. From a buddhism point of view, people who kill are not killers because they are bad people. From the buddhism point of view, the reason we kill is because of the five poisons and we all have the five poisons. It's just like Jesus saying, *"Let the one who is without sin throw the first stone."* When we look inside, we have the five poisons. At the moment our five poisons are cooking a little bit on the back burner of the stove, it's not boiling over, but we just need to move the pan a little bit and we heat up and we can do terrible things.

In this way, through our own examination of our minds, we can have a lot of understanding of why people do these things. We all have the seeds of terrible crimes inside us. This is not a romantic statement—from a buddhism point of view it's a technical reality, and until the five poisons are transformed into the five wisdoms, we are dangerous. Again, from a buddhism point of view, everything arises due to causes and conditions on the basis of dependent co-origination.

We are quite lucky. Most of us have not really had any part of our life in wartime. Europe has been quite safe, but if a war was to arrive next year and we had to go to fight, what would happen? The women here might be in a factory making bombs, maybe making poison gas bombs. The men would be out there with a bayonet trying to stick it in someone, or up in an aeroplane dropping napalm on children. And we would probably do it. We might really not want to do it or reject it politically, but if the Zeitgeist changed and became so powerful... The sense of self is very weak, and the five poisons are very strong. You just need to have a whole lot of propaganda and your anger rises up. *"Yes, we are suffering because of these damned people!"*

That comes up very quickly. We see all over the world it happens to people. It's for that reason that confession is very important because it's a way of thinking just how easily we could be caught up in these dangers. In English we say, *"There, but for the grace of God, go I."* Lots of people go astray in life and we're kind of lucky, it hasn't hit us that way, but it could happen quite easily.

With accepting that as a given, the only real way to renounce bad activity is to renounce the five poisons. And the only real way to renounce the five poisons is to understand the nature of your mind, which is emptiness. Although it starts with these reflections on activity outside, it takes you back very quickly to the central theme, which is to do meditation.

ABANDONING ANY RETURN TO ERROR: FOURTH POWER

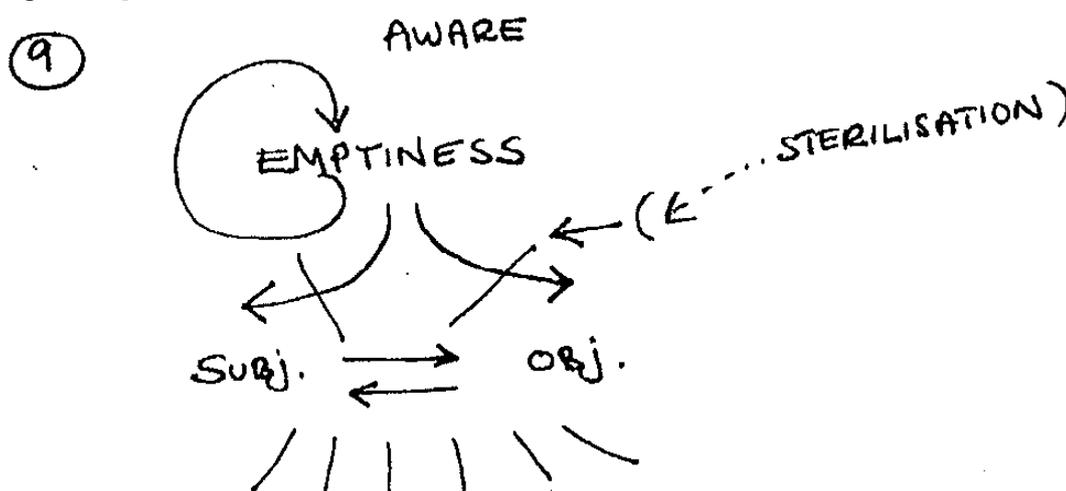
The fourth power is to abandon any return to error. It means to make a strong

promise never to do bad things again. It's not a good idea to lie, so if you say, "Okay, I will never do any bad things again," are you just telling a lie? Clearly, we do end up doing bad things. What would be the method for never, ever doing bad thing? It would have to be to move beyond the possibility of doing bad things. This takes us back to the structure of karma: the basis, the thought, the intention, the activity and finally the consequence. As long as we have thoughts of subject and object, the five poisons can come into that and we find ourselves acting in bad ways.

We must cut on the ground. We must look at the base of dualistic activity because only if we have understood the basis of that can we stop the five poisons arising.

If you like, it would be a bit like being sterilised. If you get sterilised, a man or a woman, you're not going to have children. It's that simple. You have one little snip, and you don't have children. This is the idea of cutting the basis for the production of bad karma.

[Diagram 9]



We have this emptiness and out of emptiness subject and object. Subject and object are always copulating, they are always in interaction. All the time, we as subject are in interaction with the world. The coupling, the copulation of these two, gives rise to all the babies of karmic activity. It's a factory. If we only could sterilise on object!—but that's difficult because there are already so many objects. Much better to sterilise on subject, then at least you know you're not going to be responsible. Many, many people will tell you that they worked out their birth control problem, however it is still best to take your own precaution.

If you want to cut, put your subject into emptiness and cut the birth, this little passage, for subject to come out. That is to say, keep awareness in emptiness, so that one practices being aware all the time, and if you're aware of the subject, the subject remains unborn in emptiness. If it's unborn then it doesn't have any genitals, and if it doesn't have any genitals it won't cause any trouble. Babies don't copulate in the womb, not till now, anyway. So if you keep subject and object unborn, in emptiness, you will have no karmic production. That's the theory, anyway.

That's one of the reasons why we try to practice awareness and emptiness. It

is the only reliable way to stop the continuing of activity which generates karma, which generates rebirth, which generates becoming. When we do Phat! we can visualise a little scalpel—the dakini holds in her hand this chopper—Snip! Snip!

Without changing your experience of perception, the rest is simply concepts. Making confession and feeling very humble can also be a perverse activity. It can be a pride in being very, very bad. In buddhism everything has to go into emptiness. If anything remains outside emptiness it's still going to cause friction, and it's friction that makes karma. It is subject and object rubbing together that makes karma, so you've got to keep them apart.

That's really the basis for thinking about these five poisons and bad activity for body, speech and mind. Why do we say bad things to other people? Or what's the basis of gossip? What's the basis of lying? Usually, it's because if we are the subject we want to hide something from the object, so we tell lies, or we want to impress the object, and so we tell lies, or we don't want the object to get something, we want to block them in some way so we tell them lies. The basis for lying is because we are connected with other people. We tell lies to people because we are connected with them. I'm real, my world is real, you're real, I don't want your reality onto my reality. I don't want you to know my reality. Therefore I hide things from you in order to protect myself here.

Clearly lying arises from this subject/object division. Same with backbiting, same with putting people down, and same with gossip. Why do we tell people gossip? Why do we want to be fascinating? Why do we want people to listen to our stories? Very often, it's because if object is smiling on us, we feel good, and if we don't feel good, we feel bad. If we feel bad, we might feel terrified that we won't exist anymore. The basis of our existence becomes our ability to seduce other people by telling stories or whatever it is.

So we continue to exist, but at the price of always being tied in with object, that is to say, with other people. And these other people are unreliable, so we are always on the move, being very busy. And because we are being very busy developing this subject/object connection, we've no time to experience any emptiness. Once you understand the emptiness a bit, it doesn't matter so much whether people like you or not, because the people who would like you are already in emptiness.

That's what makes the difference: there are no real people any more, so words of praise or words of blame don't matter so much, because all sound is mantra. Everything links up in this system, it's quite coherent.

In all the practice that we try to do, and we'll do a little bit more soon, but particularly tomorrow when we focus on the mind—the mind is the main focus for the meditator. We can use body and speech to support mental work but the key issue for all of us is to recognize how the mind is operating moment by moment. If we don't recognize how the mind is then we are just at the mercy of thoughts, and we may feel that we are in control of our lives, but we are not. I think this is one of the big problems in the world at the moment: the rich, western people have had quite easy lives. We don't have monsoons here, we don't really have snakes or scorpions out in the garden. We have so few reasons to be frightened. We know there are drunk drivers and car accidents

and terrible diseases, but we have some faith that technology can control these in some ways. We end up with this fantasy that somehow we can fix it so that we'll be safe, but most people in the world don't live in that situation.

We have to remember when the Chinese came into Tibet, with just all of these monasteries with their big statues of the buddha and their lamas on nine-level thrones with dorjes and bells and hats going back five-hundred years, they were not able to do anything. You get some Chinese guy out of a village, with a gun, and he just goes *Pop!* Om Mani Padme Hung ... *Pop!* Aa.

Not so long ago, in west Africa, and also in south central Africa, there have been groups of people going into battle having washed in the sacred, blessed water, believing that the bullets will just turn into dust when they hit them. Have you read about that? There was a woman leader, I can't remember her name but she was quite famous and she had many, many of her followers were killed because they would go naked into battle having rubbed this special red oil onto their body, fully in the belief that the bullets would never come into them.

Tibetans were not so different. Just before the Chinese were invading, all these high lamas were making big tormas and riding out on their horses and throwing them. And then you have a Kalashnikov. Kalashnikov is quite powerful. Mantras don't stop Kalashnikovs, they really don't. Good luck or something got many of these lamas over the hills, but many people suffered. Control is a fantasy. Control is a fantasy. Sometimes we are in control but most of the time we are not. It's good luck. And good luck goes with karma, which is to say, for this moment in time, as the result of previous good actions, we have a brief moment of happiness. When the cause of that happiness is exhausted, it's over. As we've looked before, you save up your money, then you go away for your summer holiday and you're in a very nice place, and then your money's used up and you have to go back to work. You can't stay on holiday for ever.

This human life that we have in western Europe now is a holiday. If you think—most of you are German, and if you think of your parents' or grandparents' experience in the war, that was not a holiday. That was a hellish, hellish time and it's not very long ago. We live in this island of illusion where we imagine all sorts of securities and beautiful futures but it's just a hair's breadth away from disaster. All kind of problems can come to us. From this point of view we're not trying for this control over the environment but to integrate the environment, however it is, into the understanding of the buddha nature.

WHAT IS DORJE SEMPA? SEE ALSO ATTACHMENT 8

Dorje Sempa is Tibetan and Vajrasattva is Sanskrit. *Vajra* means 'indestructible' and *sattva* means 'being', so Vajrasattva is the indestructible being. What is the indestructible being? It is awareness. Awareness and emptiness merged together is Dorje Sempa.

Dorje Sempa is inexpressible. Dorje Sempa is the nature of our own mind. We use the form of Dorje Sempa to help us realise our own mind. When through the meditation we get to a state where we can relax and our mind is not changing—the thoughts are moving through it but we are not distracted and

we are quite open—that is the indestructible nature of the mind. That is Vajrasattva. In this Vajrasattva nature everything is purified. When the mind doesn't move, everything else moves. Then the mind and the production of the mind are separated. At the moment we are inside the production of the mind, we identify with the process of the mind's fabrications, and because these are good and bad and moving all the time, we have the experience of samsara.

When through the meditation we calm down and the thoughts come and go, the state of the mind at that time – which is sometimes called rigpa or awareness, or the merging of the mind in the dharmadhatu or dharmata – is also called Dorje Sempa. Dorje Sempa is pure because it's not touched by any of the thoughts that pass through. The thoughts just go past and no trace is left.

This nature of the mind is indestructible because it has no self to touch. There is no friction because there's nothing for anything to bump into. You cannot write graffiti in the air, you can't write your name all over Dorje Sempa because it just goes through Dorje Sempa. It cannot be stained, it cannot be touched, and for that reason it is completely pure. This is the nature of Dorje Sempa. Because it is completely pure, it can purify everything.

Because in the dissolving stage of the meditation everything goes into this nature, we also recognise that everything is coming out of this nature. Thus the end of samsara reveals nirvana and simultaneously reveals the nature of samsara. It's not that thoughts come out of samsara, pass through this little window of nirvana and go back into samsara. When the thought arises from the nature of Dorje Sempa, if you take it as real, you pull the thought into samsara. If you leave the thought alone and it goes free, it remains in nirvana. We purify everything by maintaining the state of Dorje Sempa.

So when we pray *“Dorje Sempa please purify me”* what we mean is, using the power of the meditation—symbolically with rays of light—we loosen ourselves up so that then, when we do the dissolving practice, we merge into this pure nature. Remaining in this pure nature, our thoughts and feelings pass through without pulling us into activity. This is the purification of all karma. This is the renunciation of all bad activity, and so all our sins are purified.

SOUNDING AA: SEE ALSO ATTACHMENT 9

Simply let the body be nice and relaxed, the spine straight. We simply make the sound **Aa** and keep it going in a continuous stream, as we breathe from the belly. Some people do it aloud, some people do it quietly. Work out what is good for you. As this wave of sound arises through you, just unify with the sound itself. So we'll start this and do it for some time.

Place your gaze in the space in front of you, not on the far wall but just in the space in front of you. As we recite the **Aa** feel the unification of the **Aa** in the heart and the **Aa** in space. Have the sense that **Aa** is the basic sound of the universe. **Aa** is the sound of emptiness, the basis of everything

AA AND TONGLÉN: SEE ALSO ATTACHMENT 10

Please stand up and find a space where you can move your arms out and in. We make the continuous sound of **Aa** because it expresses the nature of emptiness. We can keep the sense of **Aa** in our heart as we do it. The first stage is to put our hands at our hearts in the gesture of prayer. Then we extend our arms out straight ahead and sweep them out in a great circle leading back to the heart. As we do this we imagine all our happiness, all our merit, all the good things we possess flowing out from the **Aa** in our heart to all sentient beings, filling them up and removing all their pains and sorrows.

Then we change our gesture, moving our hands from the heart out to the side and then round to the front, and pulled back to the heart. By this we gather into ourselves all the suffering of all the beings in the six realms so that they dissolve into the **Aa** in our heart.

Then we shift again to the sharing of happiness. Alternate these moves for as long as you like and end with the sharing of happiness.

The **Aa** in the heart is infinite. It has an infinite capacity to generate light, love and all good things and an infinite capacity to absorb trouble, difficulty and pain.

The important thing is the **Aa**, because the **Aa** is emptiness and emptiness is infinite protection. If you simply take everyone's problems onto yourself you'll sink down very hard. So we have the sense that we are quite open, we are transparent—like the gods, who are form and emptiness—the sense of just being very light and luminous, and so this whole thing is happening like in a dream.

Comment: Why are we doing it standing up?

So we can make this movement. If you prefer to do it sitting down, you could do that, if that feels better.

[Practice]

Now we just do three **Aas** with the sense of the space in front of us and just relax into the space before we go for dinner. Take the space of meditation with us, so that we bring this feeling into being together, eating, talking. If you get lost just bring yourself back into the meditation. Very gently.

MACHIG LABDRON PRACTICE: SEE ALSO ATTACHMENT 16

We are going to start with the Machig Labdron song. As we sing this Machig Labdron song we imagine this woman. She is naked, white in colour. She lived in Tibet, and she had a very difficult life. She was born as a woman and now people would see her as a dakini, that is to say, she is a wisdom form expressing the enlightened nature of the buddhas. We imagine her white in colour, dancing, and in her right hand she has a little drum and in her left hand she has a bell.

On the drum she is playing one side is samsara and the other side is nirvana, so she goes click-click-click-click, means samsara-nirvana-samsara-nirvana. The same. It's the one sound of the unification of samsara and nirvana.

SINGING

We sing this song to her, imagining her in the sky in front of us, and then at the end we imagine she comes to the top of our head, then she shrinks down into a ball of light, goes into our heart, and we go into the ball of light, and then the ball of light vanishes. We stay calm for a little bit and then after that we will have a brief pause and then move into some other kinds of singing.

We sing different kinds of songs. A really important thing is to take the *flavour* of the recitation on Machig Labdron into the other singing. From the approach of dzogchen, all sound is arising out of emptiness so whether the song we sing is a kind of sacred or holy song or of an ordinary song, it has the same nature. If we make discriminations between pure songs and impure songs, we just develop dualistic vision. If we understand that sound is the energy of emptiness arising out of our heart through this vibration in the throat, then whatever we are singing is the sound of emptiness. If we can maintain that understanding when we go back to work or whatever, every time we are speaking we are speaking dharma, every sound we hear is dharma. It's very important to practise making the transition here.

When we do that breathing exercise one of the things that we do in it is to become more conscious of breathing. Most of the time, we're not very conscious when we're breathing. We were saying yesterday when we were looking at the voice and speaking, a lot of the time when we are speaking with people, we're not very conscious of it, we're just talking. Somebody says "Hello" or "Did you sleep well?" or whatever, and you start talking.

If we are not conscious of things, we can't change them. The same is there with the nature of the mind. All the time we have thoughts and experiences occurring, but a lot of it is unconscious. That is to say, we're not conscious of it. It's not a Freudian unconscious, but it just means we are caught up in what is going on and because we are in it we don't often even know that we are doing it at all.

The first stage of buddhism practice is to recognize what is going on. You may not be able to change it but if you don't recognize what's going on you have no chance of changing it. Practising conscious breathing, conscious use of the voice, and consciousness or awareness around thinking, feeling, sensations, is the basis for beginning to change things.

A lot of the time we are on automatic pilot, but our automatic pilot is karma or habit or assumption, and that pilot is drunk and rather dangerous. A very common assumption is "I will live for ever." Most people, if you said that to them, "Do you believe you will live for ever?" they would say "No", but we live out life as if we lived for ever, as if each day will just go on and on and on. So becoming aware of these assumptions helps us to realise how silly they are. When we are well we think we will be healthy for ever. It's like that, and we get very surprised when we get sick. "Oh, this shouldn't be happening to me!"

BODY AND VOICE ARE NOT SEPARATE

In Tibetan system the body and the voice and the mind are not considered separate. The three are moving together all the time. Although, in terms of cosmology, there is a notion that on the top of Mount Meru, this central

mountain of the world, there are various levels of gods. The very highest levels of gods have no form at all, they are just a disembodied consciousness. In general, mind gives rise to form, that's one of the things it does.

Traditionally, people imagine that the body is a very difficult and bad thing and they want to get away from the body somehow. The body is where you experience pain, so there are many kinds of meditations which are a kind of dissociation from the body—all trance meditations—meaning that you go into a state where you are not so aware of your body. You may use your body to get into a trance—most systems of trance involve the body, rhythmic movements or whatever—but once there, you get into a state where your body is no longer experiencing this in its usual way. You can then feel a bit safe because you don't experience so many sufferings.

However these trance-like states are cut off from ordinary reality and so you go deeper and deeper into a meditation, which can be useful but it's somewhere else. It's back there or up there, it's not here. Then, when you come out of 'up there' or 'back there' you think, "Oh hell, here I am again!" It's always like that, and it's very disappointing, like a post-coital depression. That kind of meditation is not of much use in dzogchen because we are concerned with being present in the situation, not with trying to get away from it.

New day

PURIFICATION OF THE SINS OF THE MIND

In order to help us to be present we make use of the body and speech. First I want to go back to the basic level, to the sins of the mind. You'll find an elaboration of them in *Simply Being: Texts in the Dzogchen Tradition* (Wisdom Books, 1998)

THE SINS OF THE MIND: AVARICE

The first sin of the mind is avarice. Avarice means greed. It's a kind of permanent hunger. It's a relation where the subject always feels empty somehow and wants to get objects to fill it up. It can never really be satisfied because the subject cannot really incorporate objects into itself. Subject and object, in that sense, are different. So avarice leads us into stealing, telling lies, killing; all the possibilities of body and speech.

A lot of other sins arise out of avarice. For example, if you work in a hierarchical office, if you want to get promotion, you have to please your boss, so you end up talking in a nice way, or staying on later in the evening to please them, and your motivation is avarice. You want more money and then you'll do this and that, so you have a whole plan in your mind and your motive for being nice and helpful is actually greed. So in that sense, although it looks helpful, it's nothing to do with compassion, it's not a particularly good action because it's the motivation that determines the nature of the action. These sins or poisons of the mind are very important because they influence, they permeate behaviour and alter its significance.

THE SINS OF THE MIND: ILL-WILL

The second one is ill-will. Ill-will is not exactly the same as anger. It's wishing

someone harm, being out to get someone. That is to say that you have a fundamental opposition to the person, and you wish them ill. You're happy if bad things come to them. Most of the time we would think we don't really have this attitude too much, since we are trying to be good. But ill-will arises very easily because you certainly hear nyingmas saying that the gelukpas are very bad. The gelukpas are another buddhism sect, but even inside nyingmas people in one lineage will say that teachers and students in another lineage are very bad. These religious wars go on all the time. In every big religion that we know of, people fight and kill each other. And a lot of that arises from ill-will.

The basis of ill-will is the paranoid fear that my position is endangered by other people. It's the sense that other people are somehow expansionist and will move into my territory. If you had brothers or sisters when you were growing up you probably had the experience that your brother or sister were invading your toys or stealing something from you. Sometimes you would find yourself hating them or you would be very angry.

Ill-will arises because of the division into subject and object, and because subject feels very fragile. We can be pulled into it very easily. We often experience ill-will as a quickly-arising thing, we are suddenly angry about something when we feel invaded. One of the things that many of my patients tell me is how whenever they return to work from a holiday—a lot of them work in large modern open-plan offices— someone will have rearranged the office and their little partition space. Someone will have encroached on their space, so there's a feeling that the world is against them. They are very angry and they want to tell me all the faults of this person, and behind that there is a desire to kill that person or at least to make them go away.

We often want to kill people, except we do it, by wanting them not to exist or not to be troubled by them, but the desire is the same, that they would vanish and not exist in the world, because they are dangerous. As long as we experience ourselves as cut off from other people we will have that sense of danger.

Comment: Very close to jealousy?

Yes, it's like jealousy. It's like the outward moving of jealousy. Jealousy you often feel coming in, and then wanting some bad thing. It can come from jealousy.

THE SINS OF THE MIND: WRONG VIEWS: FIRST ASPECT: NOT BELIEVING IN KARMA

The third sin of the mind is wrong views. Wrong views are essentially of two kinds. The first one is not understanding karma, not believing in karma. The second one is not believing in the absence of inherent self-nature.

If we don't believe in karma, we then have our own views as to why things happen. For example, cultures develop their own notions of causality. For example, when the German economy is going well, you will have politicians who say, *"Well, the German people are very intelligent and hard-working and we have created this wealth for ourselves. Other countries are lazy, we work very hard and so we are entitled to this."* So you have a notion that the wealth of this country is generated from this cause, and there's a pride that goes with

that. Then, something happens. The economy starts to go down, and you have to think, *“What is the cause of this? We have already decided we are good, hard-working people. The cause must be somebody else!”*

In that way, the cause is located *somewhere*. It moves around in order to maintain our own notion of ourselves. The causes that we create are often influenced by avarice and ill-will, so for example, unless Germany is doing well financially, avarice arises—this need to have more—and it fits in with pride. *“Ja, we are entitled. We work very hard. Why should we not have long holidays and money and houses? Why not? We deserve it. We work.”* We have a theory which is influenced by avarice, and then if the economy goes down, a new theory arises but this time it is motivated by ill-will. *“These damned foreigners! They’re trying to destroy us.”*

If we understand karma, we understand that our own experience arises from the fruit of own past action. This is to say, that we have a disposition and our disposition gives us our experience. In a simple way, for example, we see the world according to the strength of the lenses in our eyes. I went to the optician who put in all these lenses, and suddenly, I went “Hey! This is a different world here!” I always forget to wear glasses, so anyway I get a slightly foggy world. That’s quite nice. I get used to my foggy world. What we see depends upon the organ of perception. Some people have ears that can hear a very wide range of notes, and other people’s ears only pick up middle notes or high notes. In the same way, some people’s tongue—they’ve done some very interesting research on the number of nerve ends on the tongue, and some people with a very, very small area have thousands, and some people have almost none. As we get older, these nerves die off and so our tongues get less able to taste, and old people often say they can’t taste, things don’t taste the same because the nerves are going.

Our experience is mediated through our physical existence, and this physical existence—from the buddhism point of view—is the result of our previous action. We make sense according to our own lanes, our own way of dealing, so we get, uniquely, our own experience. Someone may have very good eyesight but their hearing is not so good, or they maybe see and hear very well but they don’t taste very much, or their skin is insensitive, or their body is very heavy and they don’t have much sensation inside. The complexity of the balance of that gives us our unique form.

Accepting that how we are, and what we experience, arises from ourselves means that we can take responsibility to change it. If the cause of our situation were something external to ourselves it would be very difficult to change it. This is the real benefit of thinking in terms of karma. It puts control, or rather responsibility, back onto ourselves.

WRONG VIEWS: SECOND ASPECT: NOT BELIEVING IN THE ABSENCE OF INHERENT SELF-NATURE

The second aspect of wrong views is not believing in the absence of inherent self-nature. Many things have already been written about this and I’ve talked about it a lot in the past. I won’t say too much just now. By inherent self-nature we mean that the form has a self-definition arising out of itself. A thing is what it is because it defines itself.

For example, the pen is a pen. It's just a pen. Have you got a pen there? Here's a pen. We think, "Here's a pen," and we don't usually think any further because the name 'pen' and the presence of something that looks like a pen and can be used like a pen coincide—and we leave it there. We think, "Yeah, it's a pen. Nothing more to say." But when we look into the nature of the pen we can start to take it to pieces. We could open up the tube and the ink would be everywhere and it wouldn't function as a pen anymore. What appears to be a unified object is actually the juxtaposition, a placing together, of many different parts which function for a period of time as if they were truly one thing. This is again referring to the buddhism idea of dependent co-origination, that many factors come together to create the existence of this object. We have technology, we have marketing. This pen is actually a freebie, it's a free pen given away by some big company which I picked up on a table in a counselling service many years ago, so this is an example of my sinful act: taking what is not given! But if I hadn't taken this pen I wouldn't be able to use it now for teaching the dharma!

This pen is created in this culture at this time. The style of it belongs to a particular era. This pen is made by an American company, and they've been making this style for a long time. They like this style, they could call it their 'classic' style, so they keep making it, and because it looks a little bit chic people buy it. It's not all that expensive but it looks chic so it's nice thing for companies to give away. Marketing ploy. All of these factors are part of the existence of this object. This object wouldn't exist unless people had all these thoughts, so we see the object as existing in itself just as a pen, but its existence depends on many, many factors. So when I was leaving my flat to come here, I was looking for some pen. This was lying on the table so I picked it up. The fact that it's here was dependent just on my distraction early in the morning.

A great amount of our experience is just like this—something happens and suddenly we're doing this. We feel suddenly we're doing this but the force of it coming together is the force of karma. The ego, often, makes its decisions after the fact. You know, we do something and then we give ourselves a reason why we did it, but the real reason we did it was because there was an impulse to do it, and it was an impulse we weren't even conscious of. That's karma. Karma is, if you like, the programming or this pattern of these assumptions where we do something. And then we think, "Oh, yeah, I did it because..." Most of the time, these forms of experience are just arising, like waves from the past. Like in the ocean you have these currents of water which swirl around, these wind currents that move and turn the clouds. We also have these karmic currents where movements from the past suddenly arise in us and we suddenly have an impulse to have that.

My mother will sometimes say, "Oh, I don't know why I bought this, but I was in the shop and I saw it, and I suddenly thought, "Yes, I want to have that."" She wasn't going out, thinking "I want to have that" but suddenly, "Oh!" This impulse - it's not really a conscious thing. "Oh, oh yes, I'll have that," and you put it in your bag. You're not really sure why, and then after you say, "Oh, yes, I'm glad I bought that." The impulse itself, as it were, just passes through the ego and this is why changing behaviour is very difficult. On the ordinary level

of morality we can recognize: “That is a bad action and I don’t want to do it.”

But if the force of the arising of the action is outside our consciousness, we often only recognize it in the moment of its doing. If we think back to the four stages of karma: the basis, the separation of subject and object; the thought or the intention that sets it up; the action and the happiness at the fulfilment of the action, we often only know we’re doing something as we do it; we’re not aware of the intention because the intention is an old habitual one that comes through.

That’s why struggling to purify your mind is very difficult. Maybe we’ve all had that experience: you’re just doing something and you don’t really know why you’re doing it.

Comment: I think, one idea why I find it sometimes very problematic, this motivation to do something good for other people, is because my experience is like this: It’s very easy to get into the habit to think, okay everything is now good for other people, but I even don’t really realise what is the real importance of this, real reason for why I’m doing something, but afterwards I can say, “*Oh, yes, I just do it because of... I want to do something good*”. And sometimes it could be that I’m ignoring something in some way but on the other hand, I can excuse everything because it was motivated for the good of other beings. Sometimes I find this very problematic.

Absolutely. Absolutely. It’s very common to see that around big lamas. You always have these people who want to give the lama his tea and do all these things for the lama. But a lot of the motivation is the narcissistic desire to be special or to be close to papa, or some unmet need is coming from the past, or: “Look at me! Hey, I’m close to Dad!” This kind of thing happens, but it’s not clear in the person’s mind, and I’ve seen people really elbowing other people out the way to perform their virtuous act of giving the teacher a cup of tea! It’s exactly like that. We often just have no idea on the impulse, and that’s why in buddhism, they always say that meditation is very important. In meditation we allow some of these undercurrents of thoughts to come to the surface and then we start to realise: who we think we are is not at all the whole story of this mental functioning, and it’s much more complicated.

EXAMPLES OF WRONG VIEWS

Now, these two kinds of wrong views are called *lok ta wa* in Tibetan. *Ta wa* means a view but it also means something like looking and seeing at the same time, and that what you see. It’s a nice set of meanings. *Lok* means reversed or wrong, so it means not seeing correctly. That’s the difference; it’s not a wrong view in terms of a dogma.

For example, for a christian, if somebody doesn’t believe that Jesus Christ is their saviour, that would be a wrong view, because only through Christ can you get into heaven to be with God. If you deny Christ, you have a problem. That is one particular truth. That is a truth of faith. It may be true or not, we don’t really have any means to prove it, but it is a kind of abstract truth. It would be difficult to prove that in the world. If we want to believe, if we have an idea that this flame is hot and will burn us, we could go one by one and stick a finger in it. We could prove that, and we would have an appropriate kind of proof.

In the same way, nyingmapas might say, “Oh, yes, the best way to get enlightened is to pray to Padma Sambhava,” but that’s just like praying to Jesus. It’s very helpful, but who is to say that Padma Sambhava is better than Jesus? Wrong views are not referring to that kind of reality. That kind of reality can be helpful as a private truth for people who practice, but when it becomes a public truth I think it’s very dangerous, because it becomes political. These recent troubles about Karmapa and Sharmapa in the Kagyupa sect are exactly on this level of a dogmatic belief which cannot be proved...

Comment: So the wrong view links with stupidity, as well?

Yes, absolutely.

Comment: Very close connection?

Very close. If somebody really believes in Karmapa, that’s fine. If somebody really believes in Sharmapa, that’s fine. But to say in public, “My teacher is better than yours,” or “You have a false teacher,” is crazy, because to have a teacher is a relationship. If somebody loves somebody, Mr. A. loves Miss B, and Mr. C. says to Mister A., “Miss B. is an old bag. What are you doing with her?” But Mr. A. says, “Maybe, but I love her!”

That often happens in life, we say, “Why can’t you see what I see?” Because that is faith, that is love, that’s the luck of the draw, that’s karma! So whether you end up with a Karmapa or a Sharmapa, that’s your karma. It’s a personal relational truth—it’s a real truth but it is personal, and it’s not objective. One person might want to have coffee first thing in the morning and another person wants to have a tea. I don’t want to have a coffee first thing in the morning! It’s the last thing I want. I want to have a cup of tea. Tea is good for me, but that’s a personal choice. I’m a tea-Karmapa follower, and you are a coffee-Sharmapa follower. It’s not any different to that.

What we are talking about here in terms of wrong views are: not understanding karma and not understanding absence of inherent self-nature. These are believed to be qualities of reality in the same way that Newton’s notions of gravity are rules of reality. Of course, gravity is not quite the way Newton was thinking of it, due to the revisions of Einstein, but nonetheless gravitational thinking is very useful inside certain domains. If you look at it again and again you will see that gravity holds true. Basic equations for gravity are very useful, if you are an engineer.

IMPERMANENCE

In the same way, absence of inherent self-nature is linked with impermanence. Impermanence we can check out for ourselves. Nyingmapas say Padma Sambhava is in Zangdopalri and if we pray, we can go to Zangdopalri. Very difficult to check that out, but if you want to check impermanence, you just look out the window and see the trees changing colour. You see, the rain is falling now, and when we went for a walk early in the morning, there was no rain. This is what’s happening all the time. You go into breakfast hungry, at the end of the breakfast, you’re not hungry any more.

All the time, our experience is changing. This is a fact. We often don’t recognize it. That’s stupidity, but if we look, we’ll see because it’s not a construct from anyone’s mind, it’s not a religious dogma. It’s just what’s there.

The link with inherent self-nature and emptiness is that because of impermanence, what appears to be a real thing, a thing in itself, is actually impermanent. For example, say I'm in India with this pen, and I use it a lot, and then this empties, and I go in the bazaar and I don't get any the same size. What can I do with this? You could do all sorts of things with the pen, but it's not very useful, so you throw it away. It's lost an essential part, and if you go in Indian villages, you always see these mountains of old tractors and water pumps because at a certain point, the World Bank was giving money to buy these tractors; America exported lots of tractors and made a lot of money out of doing that, and then they wouldn't supply the spare parts and so many tractors are lying there. That's impermanence. The tractor only works if all the parts are there. As soon as one vital part is not available, the tractor stops.

What we see is: a tractor as a functioning together of many, many parts. Just one little bit goes wrong, and it's like you go out to your car and you left the light on and the battery's flat, or the sparking plug's gone. It just takes a little, little thing like that, and it doesn't work. What appears to be a unified, composite form, it takes just one little thing, and... For example, the heart is going boom-boom, boom-boom because the little electric current is going... Electric current stops, heart goes poop, person goes poop, that's it! It's that simple, isn't it? Or, a little bit of blood gets thick, goes in the brain, poop! Just like that. So all these wonderful complexity that we are is wiped out very easily. This building, for example, if we feel delinquent we could take a match, make a little fire, and burn the whole place down! It would be ill-will. (If we had insured it first of all, that would be avarice.)

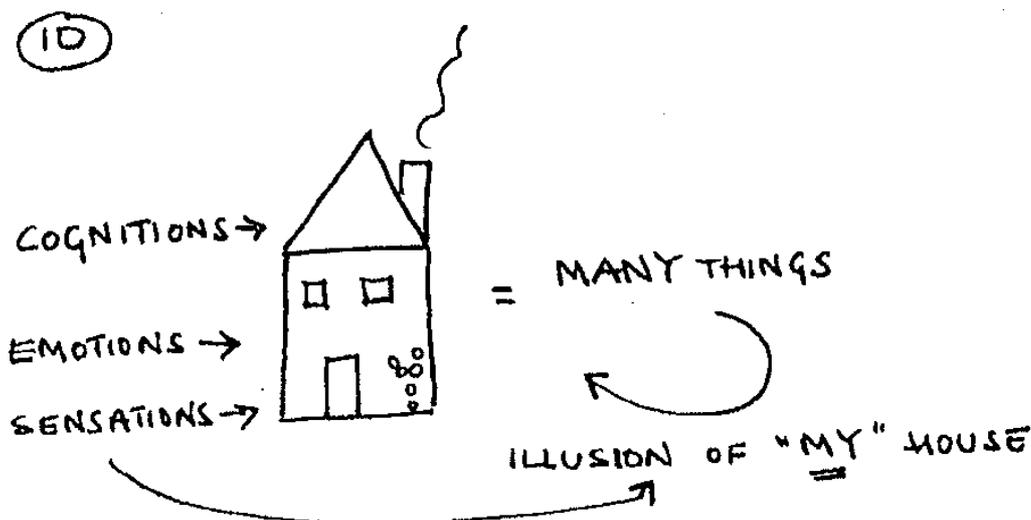
We can carry out this examination to everything that we encounter, and see how things are in existence because of many, many factors outside themselves. This is one of the most basic ideas in buddhism, but also most difficult for us to do. We are so trained to see the thing in itself, to see this gestalt formation, something that has a seeming sense of just being something. That's what it means by inherent self-nature.

When we see that we live because we breathe in and out, and if we stop breathing we die, so we are alive because of the air. It's that simple. We cannot not breathe. Death is when somebody stops breathing. We can see we are not separate. We need to eat, we need to drink, we need to breathe. If you wrap someone in clingfilm, they will die because the skin needs to move and have air and water passing through it. If you cut off this life of the breathing, you get quite sick. In that way, just with our own bodies, we cannot be separated from the environment, and so changes in the environment affect us. In London, the number of children with asthma is increasing every year, and there's now more and more evidence that it's linked to pollution. It's also linked to some particular microbes that seem to be affecting the lungs, but there are many factors, outside ourselves, that affect us and we're not aware. For example, skin cancer is definitely increasing in Europe because of the changes in radiation coming through.

EMPTINESS

In that way, what appears to be us is shifted and changed by factors outside ourselves. We can examine that for everything. Things do not exist from the

inside out, but they exist as a manifestation of the meeting many factors.
[Diagram 10]



Here we have a house. The house is made of little bricks. Now, if this is your house, you see it as “My house!” and it has an affective existence for you. You have an emotional relationship and it makes you feel safe and all the rest of it, and you think of it as a thing. But it is made of these bricks, and if we take all the bricks away and the wooden frame and the slates off the roof, we don’t have a house, it’s just not there.

A house equals many things, and when we put these many things together we have the illusion of a house. ‘Illusion’ in the sense that what we actually see, when we look, is little bits of brick and wood and some glass. That’s what we see but we think we see a house: “It’s my house!” so what we recognize doesn’t exist.

Comment: It’s illusion of the permanency of the house?

It’s even the illusion of the house, because the house is a mental formation. What you have there is bricks and wood and glass which we, in our culture, call ‘house’. And we have a particular notion of what you should do with a house. In England, now it’s not so much the same but in the 1940s the government decided to resettle gypsies and travelling people, and put many of them in houses. But they were used to live differently—certainly in Scotland, they lived in caravans or benders, little curved shelters made from branches.

The houses became very, very dirty and people would say, “But this is a house! It should be clean!” But for them, none of them ever had a house, they didn’t want to live in a house, they’re being pushed into this house. For them, a caravan or a bender is much better than this, but for people who live in houses, a house is important— “How can you treat a house this way?” so they get that feeling, because the house carries all kind of emotional connotations and security.

House is a concept. What you see are these many things. The house is something we *add* so that we say the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. If the whole is greater than the sum of the parts this added thing is illusion, and it’s the *illusion* which disguises emptiness. What you have is a

construct which somehow, you put it together, and *ping!* the magic fairy makes it a house. Probably you've seen that with these *gestalt* drawings or maybe somebody's making something and you don't know what they're doing, and then suddenly: "Ah, now I see it's a car!" Or it's a boat, or somebody does a drawing—they used to have that on children's programmes in Britain. The artist Rolf Harris would draw on a board and then he'd stop and say, "Can you guess what this is?" And then suddenly you would see, because of the final thing, and it would all drop into place. At that point, the *recognition*, you relax.

So when we see things and recognize them, we relax because if we don't know what things are, we feel anxious. This is why, when we reverse this process and do the meditation into emptiness, we can feel very anxious. We are deconstructing the illusion here, we take the illusion away, and then we're left with just many things. We take the many things away, and then we're left with nothing, and then we feel, "Ooooh! I want my house again."

Comment: Where does function come in here? An emotional investment in that and then I have a house and I think that not just the things also the function and there's a notional function, and so forth, and all those together makes more than the sum of the parts, physical parts.

Absolutely, absolutely. But take for example the need for a house, when you leave here you've got to go somewhere. So it's nice if you've got a house you can go to. If the house you go to is one which has many memories in it, it feels more familiar, more at ease. It might be terrifying memories, that could be bad, but you know, it's not a neutral relationship, that's very true.

We have cognitions around the house and we have emotions or affects, we also have physical sensations. Some people, when they go into their house, they relax, other people become tense, they have a feeling. For some people, their house is a place that's full of demands and if they come away to a retreat it's like a free time. For other people the home, their house, is very warm and friendly and they come to a retreat that is less cosy and they say, "I want to be home in my own room." We could have very different relations going onto this, but these are part of the many things that go into the house as well.

It's not just the bricks and the wood and the glass but it's our emotional things. All of which go into—if you like, the bricks and stuff make the illusion of the house—but when we add this we have the illusion of my 'house', it becomes invested with personal value and this acts as a final glue bringing all the parts together in one place.

Comment: Isn't it the same with our body?

Absolutely. We can look at someone else's body and see it in terms of its parts, but for our own body, it's even more complicated because of these added factors.

Comment: But babies don't have these concepts, these have to be taught as part of socialisation. It's not possible for us to 'be' beings in this existence and not have these.

Well, from a buddhist point of view babies have these as well because that's the inheritance of the karma, so babies are born with predisposition to making sense of things. It's not that the world gives babies these things.

Comment: Oh, so we're not a tabula rasa?

No, not at all. Karma means that this idea can't be true. Babies come full of all their stuff.

Comment: But they won't have concepts about putting perceptual phenomena that might then, as we're socialised, become a tree or a house. Babies wouldn't have that. Would they then have patterns of light, and so on?

Comment: They have fewer concepts, maybe.

Yes, they have less but they're still operating. Right from the very beginning, babies are organising. Babies, even in the womb, are organising phenomena. You can show changes in the heartbeat according to the sounds that they hear, and emotions that are expressed.

Comment: Are they forming those into patterns that will remain with them?

Then they manifest as structure. We reinforce the structure.

The link with this to the idea of emptiness is that what we take as real things, are illusions. That is to say, they are empty of the reality that we take them to have. Empty, devoid of, or have an absence of... For example, if I'm thinking about my own body, I can start to analyse it in terms of the five elements, or I could analyse it in terms of soft tissue and hard tissue, I could break it down in many ways into molecules, could break it down in many ways, and I would then see that what I take to be 'me', my body, is the interaction of many, many things which I know nothing about.

When we make this analysis we come to see that what I call 'my' body is only a name. Once I accept it and use that name, that naming has a function, but it's a function of increasing more illusion. Part of the painful illusion that 'my' body creates is "It's my body, so I should be in control of it." But I'm not making my heart beat and I'm not making my digestive system take care of my breakfast, and I'm not dealing with the micro changes on the level of cells, as they take in oxygen and process and do various things. When my cells mutate, it's not me who makes them mutate. When we get attacking diseases or degenerative diseases, they are not in our control. We are somehow a spectator of something of which we have created the illusion that it is ours. Just to say it's 'my body' doesn't mean that I know what's going to happen to it.

Comment: What is then the meaning of disease from a karmic point of view? And then, a karmic point of view does not mean that I somehow I have no responsibility, and responsibility itself, can it not be close to a kind of control?

Yes, for example, it feels as if I may be getting a cold or something. I can take some medicine, but basically the cold is in my body. Bodies get colds. I then say, "I've got a cold," but who is the 'I' who has got a cold? It's me, observing I've got this thing now, I've got to have some tissues, and if I sneeze maybe snot goes flying out. These are the anxieties of having a cold. Who is the 'I' in relationship to the cold?

Comment: Does buddhism consider psychosomatic causes of illness? Are you responsible for getting ill?

No. In buddhism you are maybe responsible for getting ill but the cause is very, very long ago. It is not at all like 'new age' ideas that if only you hadn't eaten this, or if only you'd shown your mother you were really angry with her, you'd never have had that problem. It's not in that kind of a way, because that is just a manipulation of the world. What this is talking about is that for many, many past lifetimes we have impulses, and these impulses arise in various ways, and we don't understand them. 'New age' kind of thinking is still within the modernist trajectory, the modernist notion of control. There was a place in England, the Bristol Cancer Centre, which did many interesting things, but they got completely taken over by the idea that you can work out the reasons why people have cancer. And people there then had the idea "Oh, if only I had done this" or "I must do this." "It's because of that." I don't think one can do that.

The buddha was able to say, "Oh, the reason you are sick now is because three lifetimes ago you chased a pig," or something like that.

Comment: What about perhaps it is one aspect of illness? The reason, not speaking to the mother or something, to give an example. Perhaps it's one aspect, it mightn't be the whole aspect, but it can be one of them. One of many.

It's certainly one of them.

Comment: It's arising also from karmic relationship to the mother.

Yeah. Yeah. That can certainly be true. The external thing is a stimulating factor for the arising of the karma. I think what we are trying to get away from though is this notion—because what happens if you say, "Well, it's my house, my body, and if I do things right it will all work out?" So if you're a good person and very aware, you will definitely have a long and a happy life. That's a nice idea, but by definition, then it means that all those who don't have long, happy lives are bad people. That's the other side of it. Having a personal aspiration that inspires you to take care of yourself is one thing, but if you turn it into a general theory of reality, it becomes quite persecutory towards many people.

Just to try to bring the focus in on emptiness: my house or my body is empty of the quality of 'my house' or 'my body'. 'My body' comes onto the body, not from within the body.

How my body is now is affected by many, many things which have come from the environment. It will change, if I live another twenty years it will definitely be looking different, so what I call 'my body' is a kind of snapshot, or a kind of idea about what is there, but the actual reality of what is there is much more complicated and much more out of my control. In that sense there is no 'my body'. This is something which I appropriate or I, in a sense, steal or I put this name onto it, but I don't know what it is.

It's only very recently with developments in microbiology and biochemistry that people understand a lot of the processes that are going on in the body, and the more we understand about the body, the more we understand that it's this absolutely incredible thing, it's just unbelievable how complicated all these changes are, and how the systems balance each other. It's just unbelievable.

On top of that we just say 'my', 'my body' but 'my body' doesn't describe it

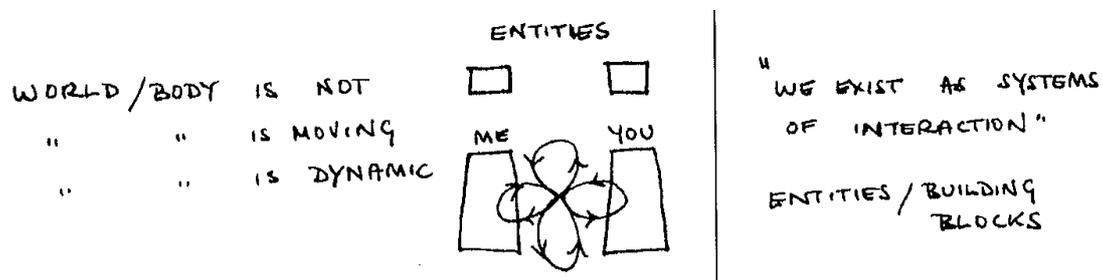
because what you have is systems, systems of blood, systems of heating and cooling, systems of defence, all sorts of systems which are interacting with each other in a complicated way. These systems are all dynamic and all changing all the time because they are open systems. Any closed system is a dead system. Systems must be open to stay alive. They must have boundaries and borders for bringing in food and sending out waste material. That's the pulsing of living beings.

Because there is this movement across boundaries, the thing which appears to exist in a boundary breaks down. Just as there is this movement to European financial unification, because when you drive on the roads around here you see these trucks coming from everywhere, from Spain and all the rest of it. Clearly, in some way, what we call a national boundary doesn't have too much meaning, especially because the national boundaries change. If you looked at a map over the last hundred years, the national boundary of Germany has gone through quite a few changes, so what is Germany? Germany is a concept. A concept which is imposed on areas and it can lead to peace or it can lead to war. What is actually there is very, very complicated. It's the same with the sense of self.

Everything is there but it's there in complex interactions and because these complex interactions are going on we cannot cut out separate parts. It's not as though we have building blocks and you have this basic monad, or a basic separated individual entity, and by bringing these together you build it up, like you have bricks and with the bricks you make a house.

The body is not like that. The body is not like that. And even bricks are not like that as modern physics shows. Everything is in interaction all the time. As we are sitting here, millions and billions of rays are passing through our bodies: from space, coming in, passing through our bodies, and going right through the earth and coming out the other side. We are constantly interpenetrated by all sorts of rays, bacteria etc. We breathe all sorts of living things all the time. This is a really, really important point because we want these building blocks to exist, we want to know what is what; we want to know where things are and how they function.

[Diagram 11]



But actually the structure of the world is much more interactive loops, and these interactive loops are of course, multi-dimensional. The world is a system of feedback loops and interactions, and because it's all looped together and moving and dynamic, it doesn't make much sense really to cut a bit off and say, "This is me and that's you" or "This is my body."

For example, we might say. "Listen, it's really important for me that you

respect my personal space. You know, if you want to talk to me I'd like you to stand about this far away. Some people might be okay with you closer, but me, I like this amount of personal space." And while we are saying that to the person who is there, you're breathing all over them and you're breathing in their breath! It's a damned illusion! All this air that's hot and sweaty coming out of their lungs is going right up your nose and into your lungs, and then going into your blood, so to say personal space is just ridiculous. We are not separated from other people. This is a really, really key idea, that we exist as systems of interaction, not as entities. That is what emptiness means, because systems of interaction are dynamic. This is the energy of the dharmakaya, this is the energy of the dharmadhatu which moves in complex interweaving, but it is a process.

No entities exist. This is the teaching of emptiness. There is only process. There is only becoming. This is what we try to understand, but all the time we try to create entities because you can control entities. Processes are much more difficult.

You just have to read the financial pages in the newspaper to see that world economies are systems. Nobody can predict the future. Financial currency rates change every day. The Frankfurt stock exchange is moving up and down and it moves up and down in relation to what happens in Malaysia or what happens with the Dow Jones or whatever. These interactions are pulsing across the world, and they arise because there are all kind of interactions, you have huge international black market of illegal money changing, money laundering, and that all affects stock exchanges as well.

What we have then is interaction, not entity. And if we can understand really this one idea, you've really understood emptiness because the teaching on emptiness comes in two forms. The first is in a kind of a critique, a critique on the belief in entities. This is the form for example, in the Heart Sutra. Because we normally believe in these entities, the belief in entities is analysed in great detail. [See Diagram 11 above]

It is shown that what appears to be an entity is actually devoid of inherent self-nature. That is to say, it's not an entity, but it is part of a process. That's the analysis, and some of it's done as a reduction to its ultimate point of absurdity.

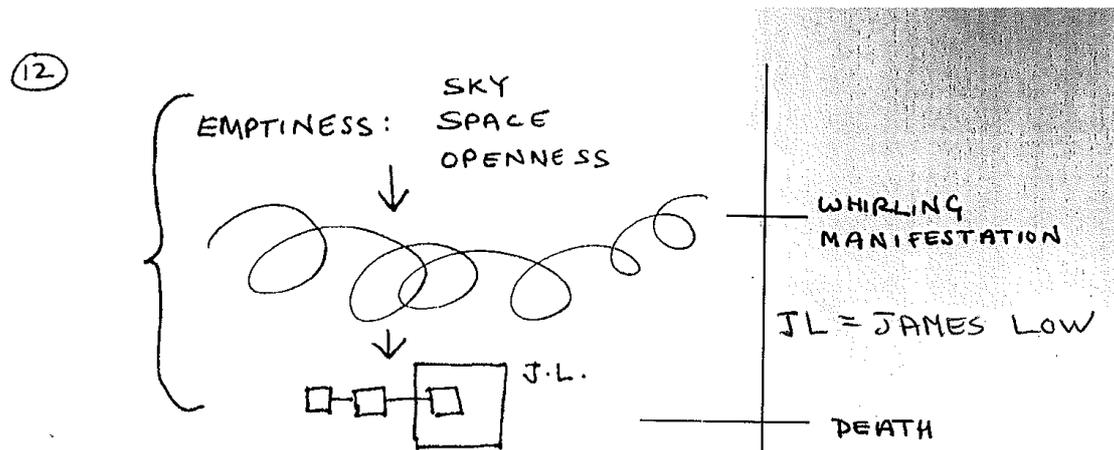
The other view of emptiness starts with the end point of the result of the analysis. Okay, so there are no entities. Is there nothing at all? Clearly there's something. What is this something? It's experience. Where does the experience arise from? What does it arise from? Emptiness. Because there is nothing actually there as an entity and yet things exist, these things are the presentation, or the manifestation in the system, of the emptiness of the underlying nature.

The first form is the form which is used in the mahayana or the sutra path, through the prajnaparamita literature, and that is the basis for the actual practices in tantra and in dzogchen. Some dzogchen practices make it slightly different but basically you could say that tantra begins with emptiness. Many, many meditations in tantra say, "In front of me in an infinite clear blue sky," and this clear blue sky always stands for emptiness. When the sky is clear it just goes on forever and ever and ever, it's open, you can't hold it or grasp it,

and yet in the sky, clouds come, sun comes, moon comes. Many things come and go. It's a sphere or a space, a dimension, in which manifestation occurs, but a manifestation which never is really separate entities, but rather is the processes of manifesting.

This is really important because then what we have is empty space, or emptiness becomes like space or openness, sky.

[Diagram 12]



In this there is all whirling manifestation and then the whirling manifestation becomes more precise. This is the three kayas or the three bodies, or the three aspects of the buddha's existence. The open dimension here is the dharmakaya. This complexity of experience which we can experience in meditation sometimes – lights or very *unformed* experience, this is the sambhogakaya. The precise form, like being here, in our bodies, this is the nirmanakaya. What makes it the nirmanakaya is that even although I am in my body, if I experience that my body is the manifestation of these systems of interactive energy, although it appears like an entity, I don't grasp onto it as a thing because these three aspects are integrated.

This is the essence of the Buddha's teaching here. It's very, very important.

Comment: Does it really mean it exists at the same time?

Yes, it's existing at the same time, always. Because otherwise, what happens when ignorance arises is that we lose the sense of space and then this complexity generates this level and then we're trapped at this level, thinking "*I'm me, and who are you?*" Then all our interactions are just going on at this level and we take them as completely real. Because I then cut this bit off [See Diagram 12 above] and say, "*Hang on, this is James Low, and this is James Low's house,*" I now feel safe because I can put this in a house and close the door and say, "*Leave me alone! My house!*"

But of course it's not like that. This person is connected with everything else that's going on and this person is existing as a process of manifestation out of this empty space. Again, the key thing here is that when we recognize this, nothing very much has to change on this level. You can still have the same kind of breakfast. When I look at what some people eat for breakfast, I'm very surprised! Some people are probably quite surprised at what I eat for breakfast. We are all very different but we can continue being different, it's not that we have to make big changes on this level, it's the integration of this

experience through here, and this is important.

DEATH

In terms of purifying our existence, it doesn't mean that we say, "Oh, I'm a bad person, now I have to turn into the shape of a good person." We can also do some of that, but the key transformation arises in "I am this manifestation." So we experience ourselves much more as this dynamic, changing process of becoming, and that lightens everything up by itself. We're not trapped in our box any more. We're much, much bigger. We're infinite. So that when the point comes for us to die, we experience death simply as a reversal of this, and we move out of our box into this energy that's collapsing and falling, and back into space. And then, when we're reborn, we come back out in this way. This is the pulsing of the universe. Really, it's about just relaxing back into the natural situation. It's not about becoming very different.

Comment: Death is going into emptiness? It's not just that we dissolve down into the flux of our own karma?

No. The traditional idea is that emptiness is revealed during the death process. [See Diagram 12 above] I'm in my body and I'm now lying in the bed and I'm going to die—I wonder if I'll die in a bed? Who knows?—Anyway, I'm now in a nice, comfortable bed, clean sheets. What is happening then is that the earth element is collapsing into the water element, water element into fire, fire into air and then air into space. It goes through this. What you have here is the form of the five elements, so we go through this into space, and in that space this is what is called the *chō nyid bardo*, the bardo of reality, where there is just this great openness and everything is very clear and luminous. And you can completely dissolve, like we do when we do the dissolving meditation, but usually what happens is, because it's so open, if you've been living in a box all your life, when you get open you say, "Oh, damn it!" and you want to shrink again.

You could just merge into that and be very happy, but you retreat into yourself because you always wanted to spend your whole life retreating, and then, in that retreat you descend from here, and you experience the sambhogakaya where you meet these peaceful and wrathful gods. Again, they are very, very big, and you feel very, very small. It's as if you had been on the beach all day and you're just wearing some beach things and then suddenly you find yourself walking into having a dinner with Helmut Kohl, and everybody is dressed very, very formally, and then you think, "Oh!" and you want to walk out, and then you're saying "Calm down! Calm down!" "Oooh, no, no, no!" Like that, you run away from all these gods and look for a little box, and you're back in your box.

Comment: Needs a lot of courage to think like this. Where does this courage, this spark come from?

The spark essentially comes because either you recognize that this makes sense or, on another level, because of fear. We're frightened when we die because if we're in our box, death is like being in a car and driving into a wall. We're in this car of our body ... Ah! Not very nice. We think that the wall and us are very different. Which they are. If you practice a meditation you get used to dissolving : "Oh! Hey, something's going through me. I think it's the

windscreen.” If you have that openness, then you don’t get so frightened, then you can be interested in the process of your own death.

I remember seeing C R Lama having some cuts on his hand. He was looking at it with great interest and his curiosity freed him from a self-referential emotional response to the wound, blood and so on. There is a way in which we can just be interested and what makes us not want to be interested is fear because this new information doesn’t fit the shape of our box. When we practice the meditation what we are doing is practising coming out of the box. We focus perhaps on the deity, a god on this level, and then through the god we try to go into this level and open up. And then we come back, from the meditation, into our box, but with the practice everything we see is the form of the god, everything we hear is a mantra, so we are trying to take this level into the box. That’s the practice of tantra and that opens up the box.

Or, in dzogchen, we try to integrate the box into space. We are not trying to see things as gods or mantras, this form and emptiness, we’re just very relaxed allowing experience to come and go. We integrate our awareness into emptiness, and then whatever arises is just the experience from emptiness.

TWO PURITIES IN DZOGCHEN

This space in dzogchen, this emptiness—the term ‘emptiness’ is not used so much in dzogchen, they talk much more about the real nature, what’s called *ngo wo*. That means basically what is there when you’re not doing anything. When all activity ceases, all the construction of the world starts to dissolve. The anxiety that’s involved in that also dissolves when we are really able to relax, and then it’s open and very spacious. This spaciousness is our real nature.

KA DAG: FIRST PURITY

It’s said that this real nature has been pure from the very beginning. It is called *ka dag*, and *Ka dag* is a very important idea in dzogchen. Pure from the beginning. Always pure. It means that the purity of this situation is not a construct, it’s not created by anything. It is not that it is pure because somebody’s just washed it or cleaned it. It’s pure because it is open and cannot then receive any dirt. This is really important. It cannot be made dirty. So no matter what arises, it does not make the real nature dirty.

Now, when we were living in our little box of self, there are many things that can make us dirty. People can insult us, somebody could pour bucket of pig’s blood over you, and you would look pretty disgusting. Then you might feel shame. Or, you could get some disease on your face with huge lumps coming and feel terribly ashamed. It’s very easy for us to feel that we are not as good as we should be. We get wrinkles or our hair falls out, whatever, and then we think, “Oh, we are not so attractive!” We have become less than we should be, and some people will experience that as being impure. So we become unemployed and then we have no money and then we think, “Oh, very bad, I can’t afford this,” and we feel very small. There’s many ways in which we can feel dirty or bad or unacceptable. That happens because our box can have things taken out of it or added to it.

If you don’t have any box, what can you add to it or take away from it? If we

have this sky, what can you add to the sky? I'm not talking about the atmosphere but infinite space. Space is just a space. You can put something in space, but it won't stay there forever. You can't steal things from space because you can't grab space. So you can't add to it and you can't take anything away from it and that is the meaning of pure from the very beginning. If nothing affects it, nothing touches it, and in the dzogchen teaching it says this is the nature of the mind itself. By mind here, we mean a basic, noetic capacity, a capacity to be aware. In this awareness, which is itself empty, all sorts of thoughts, feelings, and sensations arise.

One of the thoughts that arises is "*I am thinking*", so the thinker is not awareness, the one who seems to be thinking is usually a manifestation arising. So when we say to someone, "Oh, I was thinking about you yesterday and I wondered..." that is a stream of arisings, that's a stream of thoughts arising. Who is the one who is thinking? This is awareness. This awareness is not a manifestation. Rather, it is the ground of all manifestation. It's said to be like a mirror, and in the mirror many images arise, many impressions, many reflections, but the mirror itself is not scratched or made dirty by any reflection, so the mind is never made dirty by anything that arises in it. From the very beginning, our nature has been completely pure. This is the ground.

THE GROUND IS IGNORANCE

Now, we all have inherited ignorance and are wandering in samsara, we have inherited these three stages of ignorance: spontaneous ignorance when we first lose the natural condition, the development of the ignorance of identification where we create all kinds of categories, and then, thirdly, the ignorance of not understanding karma, where we are just tossed around in the world and we don't understand why things happen. Due to the force of these three ignorances, we run into our little boxes to hide and we don't want to look outside too much unless we can steal something to make our little box more comfortable. Basically, we are like a little mouse.

Comment: Where's the link between this open space and the karmic way...?

That's what I mean; it's in these three levels of ignorance. In the first ignorance, we just lose it. In one second it is gone, and instead of "Oh, there it is!"... Like say, for example, I have my watch here, and I put my watch down. I'm talking and I put the watch down, and then I say, "Oh, what time is it? Where's my..? Hey, where's my..? Oh, damn! I think I left it in my room. I'm going to get my watch." That's how ignorance starts. I could have just turned round and seen: "Oh, here it is!"

If I had recognized it, I would have gone back into this natural condition, but because I go wandering and looking for the watch—in fact the watch is not even here, it's in my pocket—so even when I'm walking over there looking for my watch, I had it right here but I don't see where it is. That's the link. And the more I look the more disturbed I get, and at a certain point I'm up there and somebody says, "Hey, do you want to have a drink?" and I say "Okay, fine," and then we're talking, and after a while I wonder what I was doing up there. I forgot I even had a watch.

Comment: And in buddhism?

In buddhism, you forgot this original state and now, once you get into your box, you start talking box things. It's very rare, when you're on this level to have anybody say, "Does this exist?" This is very, very rare. Mostly people tell you things about their boxes. They want to tell you things about their daily lives, their children or with whom they're having sex or whatever they're doing. So that's why we don't understand it, that's how it gets lost, and the connection is that *this* is always *in this*. The disconnection is that we don't recognize it. If you recognize it then it becomes linked up because it's always linked. But if you don't look you won't see it and then it will never be linked, although it's always linked, because it's a matter of an experience. That's the thing: it's an experience.

What we're doing here is talking lots of concepts but this actual thing is an experience. An experience is very simple but the concepts help to give a sense of it. Especially why we should be careful about developing these box communications. Today we're practising a little bit in silence, so if you have an impulse to say something it's very useful to think, "Why do I want to say this? What is the benefit of doing this box-to-box communication?" It's very, very tempting.

Especially, many people will feel insulted if we don't support them in this box-to-box communication and so as a kind of misguided compassion, we do box-to-box talking and get lost ourselves. To help the other person not feel rejected, we continue nonsense conversations and make ourselves stupid.

Then, they haven't been changed and we haven't been changed. If we want to change we're going to have to be rude. That's a fact. You have to do things which are a bit strange. Somebody starts talking to you and you say, "Hang on, I'm sorry, I just don't want to hear this. I don't know why you're telling me all this stuff." Interesting thing to do. That's also a gift. Why is the person telling you all this stuff? Everybody's in this collusion: "I'll tell you my nonsense out of my box if you're willing to listen and then I'm willing to listen to yours." We exchange nonsenses, box to box.

Comment: It's very difficult to stay in contact with people if you don't do that.

Yeah. Yeah. If you practice meditation you can have the experience that if you pray for people you're in contact with them. Yogis who live in caves are still in contact with people because in fact they're thinking about people more of the time than people who are down in the village, gossiping. If you really think about people, you welcome them into your heart but when you do this box-to-box talking you're mainly thinking about yourself.

STAINLESS PURITY: SECOND PURITY

Now, just very briefly, I will describe the second purity. The first is this original purity. The second is what's called the stainless purity. When we have this experience that we are now down in our box, we are very frightened of being stained, and of course we already have, if you like, these karmic stains. We have in this life, the inheritance of our family and our fears, and we don't want to upset people. By staying here you could also see it as a kind of shaping, that we are shaped by the world. Inside and in our social action we are all a bit crippled, somehow. We are not free. When we feel this crippling, it feels like us, so often we don't want to relax it, because we wouldn't know who we were

if we weren't crippled. To be a person is, in many ways, to be crippled.

Through doing the practice we reverse the three stages of ignorance, which is the loss of the awareness, the development of complex thinking and entering into the box. We reverse this in terms of going through the sambhogakaya into the dharmakaya, and in that moment, having got a taste of the dharmakaya, we return through the meditation in the nirmanakaya, and then we realise, crippled as we are, we are also pure.

Pure doesn't mean looking like some kind of fashion model. You don't have to be beautiful to be enlightened. It's a bit of a persecution with these icons that they all look beautiful. That is for the purpose of inspiring people. Yogis themselves are often not so beautiful. Nowadays some lamas, old lamas, when they come to the west, they may have false teeth. In Tibet these old lamas didn't have any teeth. Sagging jaws and all the rest of it. They didn't wash too much either.

It's not about beauty in that sense. But, however we are, it is pure. Pure means unborn, having the nature of emptiness. Pure doesn't mean good. You can be pure and a bastard at the same time. You can be a real bastard and be pure. That's the reality. From the very beginning, everything has been pure, even Myra Hindley has been completely pure from the very beginning; Eichmann was completely pure from the very beginning. All of the most terrible people we can think of, their nature was completely pure from the very beginning. What made them bad was not recognising that their nature was pure from the very beginning. This is why we do bad things.

When we recognize we are pure from the very beginning, we recognize this stainless purity, and we accept that, however we are, that this is pure. At that point, we stop trying to change ourselves. We stop trying to become something different. Through accepting the purity of how we are, we become lighter, more free, more spontaneous and that, on a relative truth level, purifies us anyway. This is the second purity, stainless purity. That means: however stained things appear to be, we recognize they are without stain. The stains that arise are the stains of the judgement of subject/object perception. Again, this is not to say that we should just do what we want. If we remember this story about the rich, young man who then turned into a demon, it doesn't mean you do whatever you like, it means that you recognize that whatever occurs is pure. That is to say, is empty. That is to say, is not an entity but is a process, is arising and manifesting, arising and manifesting, and so you don't get too disturbed by it. You know it's impermanent, it's going to change. If good things come, they come. If bad things come, they come. Anyway, the good things will go, the bad things will go.

If you have space, you can allow processes. If you don't have space, you can't. For example, during the great depression starting in 1929, the German economy was in a particularly bad shape. If you were very poor, it was very, very difficult. One loaf of bread was twenty million marks or something. Very, very hard. But if you are rich and you have some estate, and if you're some Prussian general, then you have your own crops and you grow your own food, and although times are difficult, you don't feel the squeeze, because you have space, you have a big wall around your land and you have your own food,

your own fruit and your own cow.

If you have space, the pressure doesn't get to you. This is a really important thing. But when we are poor, the pressure gets to us. So what we are trying to do here is, not to be poor in spirit. The people who live in boxes are poor in spirit because they're very thin. They say, "It's just me, me, me." Whereas if we can walk outside and meditate and integrate into the sky, even if we don't have much money in our pockets, we are very rich because we take the whole world as our own. When a bird cries, it cries for us. When a flower blooms we are filled with joy. Everything makes us happy, everything makes us sad. When we see horror on television, we cry. We are completely open to whatever is happening. And that means we are not just in our box but we are integrating it.

Comment: When you were talking about the crippled aspect of personality and I was thinking about what you said, James, about needing courage, what kept coming up in my mind was the one of censorship in the mind. That sometimes one intellectually thinks about these ideas, but actually really allowing them to be there, to imagine oneself as the buddha and so on, all those kind of really expansive thoughts, I find that there is an aspect which definitely doesn't want to allow that to happen. Now, is that karmic or is that socialisation processes of not being allowed to think beyond the group ideas. Connected with that was the idea of contaminating thoughts, that if you open your mind, if you remove the censor, then in can come thoughts that may be very dangerous in some way. There's that idea. I don't think this is just my idea, is it?

Social control is karma, so everything is karma from this point of view. Whatever limitations we have these are our limitations. If our mother told us something or our school teacher shouted at us and we got a fear, that's our fear, that's our karma to have that fear. Saying it came from them doesn't really help us. The fact that we got shouted at and not the person sitting in the next desk to us, that's our karma. So whatever socialisation pressures we carry, that's our luck, and on that level of result, karma is basically just luck. It's what your luck is, it's what you get. Everybody gets something different. That's what we have to struggle with.

The key thing is, whatever arises, if you can recognize that its nature is pure, then that's okay. If you don't recognize its nature's pure, that's difficult. If you cheat yourself into thinking that you recognize it's pure when it's not pure, you get in a mess, like in that story of the rich young man. Whereas if you really get an experience that everything is pure, then you won't be troubled by whatever arises.

Comment: But if there's a censor operating, then it's hard to experience that, is it not?

But the censor is your karma. The censor is an idea. So, if you are attached to ideas, you are your own censor. If you stop being attached to the censor, the censor will dissolve. The censor is not there forever, the censor is a manifestation. Like many people have inside them a kind of critical voice that will be saying "You're very stupid," or "Why did you say that?" You speak and then afterwards you can sometimes feel it in the body. That internal critic is

simply a thought manifesting. That's all it is. But it seems very real and on reflection you can work out where it came from; a parent, a school teacher or whoever. Then it takes on almost a sort of anthropomorphic quality and appears to be like a person inside you speaking, and speaking the truth. It's only a thought arising. If you follow the thought, the thought will get real. If you leave the thought alone, it will go away. So every time you believe your critic, every time you believe the voice inside you that says you can't paint or you can't sing or you're stupid or you're fat or you're ugly, whatever your personal demons are, every time you listen to that and believe it, you make it stronger.

When you listen to it and you don't believe it and you just say, "Oh, funny thoughts today," then gradually it gets weaker. We make these things strong because—again it goes back to this basic buddhism idea—everything is impermanent. If you believe that the censor or the critic is permanent, then you're an idiot, and if you're an idiot you suffer. Don't blame anyone else. If that is how it is...

Comment: ...one might go to therapy.

That's what you might do in therapy? Yes, but therapy is different from dharma. Therapy's about trying to work out who these things are so you can describe them. From the buddhism point of view, they are all impermanent, and if you understand the impermanence then, when you start to make them real and true and self-existing, and every time the voice comes... then you are caught up in subject and object separated, object is real and attacking subject. That's the function of that, so remembering "It is impermanent", you relax, and it will go. If you relax it will go. If you don't relax...it's like a child going for an injection, and they go like this and all the muscles in the arm get very tight and when the needle goes in... Ouch! The nurse is saying, "Listen, just relax, just relax, if you relax it goes in and it comes out."

Comment: These five poisons which are in a sense to be overcome, are they the same function as the censor?

Yes. Except often, the five poisons, sometimes they come on object side, inside your psyche. In your meditation, subject and object are there. It's not that I am a subject and you are the object. Subject and object are inside the path of experience. Some thoughts arise as object, like when you tell yourself off: "Oh,damn, I forgot!" that kind of thought. That's like thought as object attacking subject. Then some thoughts: "Ah, I really want that!" that's a thought arising as subject onto object. So the five poisons can be in either kind of thought. The five poisons are kind of your mood, the tone, the colour, of the thought. Of course, there are different ways of approaching this.

For example, when we do the breathing meditation, and we're trying to focus our attention on the breath, the instruction is always the same. If you find your mind has wandered off, recognize this, and gently bring your mind back. You don't blame yourself. What you're developing there is an observing self, which is the beginning of awareness. That's different from a critical self. If every time you forget the meditation: "Oh, shit! Oh, hell!" this is not helping. An observing self is not a critical self. If you have grown up fortunately, with a kind, supportive, loving situation you will have an observing self because the observing self, on one level, is the internalisation of the mother who looks at

you with love and care. The mother observes the baby and sees what's going on.

An observing self allows space for things to occur. A critical self tries to confirm space. It's the critical self that tightens the five poisons whereas the observing self is neutral. It won't dissolve the five poisons but it will start to give a bit of space. Then, in dzogchen, we dissolve the observing self, so when the observing self relaxes into awareness—if you like, with these three levels of ignorance—you have an involved self, then an observing self, and then an aware self. Most people have to go through these levels. It's a very high notion, if you like, whether you can go from an absorbed self, and involved self, just to an aware self. Mostly you have to become a kind of an observing self first, that's why we usually start with some quiet sitting. Just to separate out a little bit.

THREE AAS: SEE ALSO ATTACHMENT 11

Aa represents emptiness, it represents *ka dag*, the primordial purity. Everything arises from this and returns into it. The whole universe comes out of **Aa** and goes back into **Aa**.

Reciting Aa three times we allow the openness of the heart and the openness of space in front of us to reveal their non-difference.

We are meditating with our eyes open, not wide-open and staring but just gently resting in the space in the middle distance.

In that state, if any thoughts come, just let them go. Whatever is coming, things arising there or things arising here, don't separate subject and object, don't separate self and the room. Whatever is arising let it come, and then let it go. It doesn't matter what comes. The important thing is to relax so that it can go. If good thoughts come, don't hang onto them; if bad thoughts come, don't try and push them away. Everything will go free by itself.

[Meditation practice]

PHAT! SEE ALSO ATTACHMENT 12

Now we do the same 3 **Aa** practice but this time we incorporate the use of Phat!

Phat! is a syllable which we use to cut off thoughts which are obscuring us. We use these three **Aas** to relax then maintain the open, sun-like awareness. It's as if our mind is like the rays of the sun spreading out and everything is very clear. Then we get involved with thoughts and they become like clouds covering over the sun and we get very dulled. When we feel that coming, we just do Phat!

Try to have a sense of the sound arising from just below the navel, coming straight out of the top of your head. The sound should be loud and intense so that we shock ourselves alert. We destroy everything and then relax. We do Phat! and then it just goes free by itself. Don't get caught up with the Phat! That's not going to help. Just clear yourself away. Then continue just to stay relaxed and open.

When you close down, just use a Phat! You want it to come short, sharp and clear, so your body might move a little bit too. It's not something to think

about.

It takes a little while to get used to it, but once you're familiar it just comes out by itself, a bit like sneezing.

[Meditation practice]

Just relax for a few minutes and then we'll do it again. With this kind of practice it's good not to keep pushing yourself if you get tired. It's a very different way for the mind to be; we're not usually in that state, so do it for five, ten minutes, take a brief break and then go back to it. Don't keep pushing and pushing. If you're pushing you're not doing the practice but merely intensifying duality.

[Meditation practice]

Once you have tasted the experience you can simply relax into out-breath. This kind of practice is very simple. You can do it any time. You don't need to say the **Aa** out loud or use Phat!. You can simply breathe out, nobody needs to know what you're doing. You can do it in any kind of space. You can do it at work, or sitting in a bar. You can do it anywhere you like.

Then you need never get bored because you always have something to do. For me, it's always very interesting in dharma events, for example if there are lamas, the lamas always seem to be late. People shuffle around, waiting for 'the dharma' to begin, looking a bit bored, and thinking 'This is not dharma'.

In any situation where we feel nothing is going on, we should be interested in the nothing that's going on, because for buddhas, nothing is better than something! We need never have time on our hands.

If life is a bit boring or depressing or whatever, you can just relax with **Aa**, and include your experience in the space. You don't have to push it away, you can just be with it.

We're going to do this meditation with our eyes open, here in this room, very relaxed. We're not putting the meditation apart from the room; we're meditating in the room, with the room. The room is part of the meditation; the other people are part of the meditation.

Then, at the end of the meditation, when we start to do some activities, try to keep that flavour through into whatever we do.

[Meditation practice]

SPECIALNESS

In Tibet they have many, many different practices for many different kinds of gods, but these tantric practices are all pretty much the same. Either the god is in front of you and dissolves into you, or you dissolve into the god, or you become the god. Not many other options. Although the practices are said to be very, very different and there are many different lineages of them, structurally they're not very different. However, looking at the practices structurally is not particularly a tradition in Tibet, and so they are presented much more in terms of lineage and affect.

Somebody says, "My teacher taught me this, and I want to teach it to you, and

it's very special and very precious because my teacher was precious to me," and that is the traditional language of the practice. So they will say, "I have a very special practice." The practice is very special, or it's very special for them, and we're back with the same issue of subjective and objective truth. In terms of the structure of the practice, it's not all that much difference.

There is a point here though, that is important for us in the west, which is how we understand specialness, particularly in objects. For example, in London, I think it's still in the Tower of London—I think they were going to move them but they're still there—they had the Crown Jewels. There's this special thing, particularly the coronation crown of the royal order. So when somebody becomes the king or the queen they put this crown on their head. And this crown doesn't go on anyone *else's* head, just on the king and queen's head, so when people look at that crown they think, "Oh, very special."

What is special about this crown? Where does the specialness reside? This crown is form and emptiness. The specialness resides in the kind of thoughts people have about it, the associations they make. Part of the dependent co-origination of the crown is not just the fact that it's made of very expensive materials but that it has history, that it's been on particular people's heads, that it's protected by armed guards—there's a whole situation that shows you the specialness of it. But in fact, it's form and emptiness.

When we look with the understanding of form and emptiness, nothing is special. When we look from another point of view some things are much more special than others. In Tibetan buddhism we are moving around through these points of view all the time, so a special teaching is a teaching that somebody has found special. Whether it is really special or not, how would you know? The specialness is built into the system of the transmission. Like some lamas will possess a statue or some implement that they say was given by Padma Sambhava or used by Milarepa, and so it's all very wrapped up, and every now and then they take it out and if you're very lucky, they put it on your head and then you think, "Ah, I got this very special blessing!" Or if you go to Sri Lanka, or if you go in Sarnath, they have some relic of the Buddha and if some rich person comes and offers a bit of money, they open up the box and then you can see this relic of the Buddha.

AT THE HEART OF THE WORLD IS THE LETTER AA

There are all kinds of ways in which that specialness can be created. The important thing is the use that it is put to.

Specialness is method. Nothing is more special than anything else because dharma texts, although they disagree on many things, all agree: at the heart of the world is the letter Aa, everything is emptiness. If people don't believe that, they are not involved in Tibetan buddhism. This is a basic thing. If everything is emptiness, everything has equal value. That's why we have, in the five wisdoms, this fourth one: *nyam nyid yeshe*, the wisdom of equality, that everything is the same.

Teachings which are special, statues that are special, teachers who are special, are all special in terms of your relationship with them, and the question is whether you use that relationship in a helpful way or an unhelpful way. You could use it to inflate your own ego, or you can use it to develop

your devotion to the practice, but objective truth and subjective reality are not the same. From a buddhism point of view, objectively, everything is the same value because it is emptiness. All sentient beings have the same value and should be respected. All beings have buddha nature. If we bow to the guru, we should bow to everyone else because you bow to the buddha nature in the guru. One of C.R. Lama's gurus used to bow to everyone he met, and that's not an uncommon tradition because everybody has buddha nature.

Somebody who's in a hell realm doesn't have a buddha nature that was worse than the Karmapa's or Padma Sambhava's. Everybody's buddha nature has the same quality. In some people it is more revealed than in others, but the actual thing that one respects is the buddha nature. It's very important in these hierarchical, patriarchal systems not to get carried away with the delusion of confusing subjective experience with objective reality; because from the buddhist point of view, when subjective associations are removed, then the objective experience of reality is that everything is equal and the same, in the nature of emptiness. The nature of all manifestations is identical however various they may appear in their display. That is the dharma view. If we feel someone is better than someone else that is our subjective opinion, and maybe useful for our practice but it is the understanding of the path, it is not the understanding of the result. If you confuse the path with the result you get lost.

That's why with these political battles of Karmapa and Sharmapa, and many, many other people—I just used these names because people know them—but many, many other of these dharma battles, it is because people forget that lamas are there to serve people and whether they are wonderful or not wonderful is a subjective opinion a lot of the time. We need to have our subjective opinions, but a subjective opinion is always subjective. The fact that I like something doesn't mean it's good, it just means I like it.

I think we have to think very carefully about these issues. What I'm saying is not a particularly popular view but it's very popular with me, because I've had it a long time!

Comment: About specialness: Some people can see auras and energy fields around others and around places where great beings have done practice. Can you explain this?

Who knows? One story I heard about this was from Namkhai Norbu. When he was young, he was studying a text with his teacher, and in the text it was talking about the qualities of great bodhisattvas and buddhas, and it was saying that their bodies smell like roses and even their shit smells like roses. So in the evening he went to the toilet of his teacher and with a stick he was poking... But his experience was: *"Smells like shit!"*

I myself haven't seen auras, so I wouldn't really know. I know some people are very concerned that you shouldn't sit on their cushion, but if somebody had a very powerful cushion they could make money, couldn't they? Every guru could sit on a cushion for five minutes and then someone else could come and sit on it and suck the vibrations up! And of course, that's not a new idea; people have been doing it for a very long time. For example, marketing bits of the 'true cross' saying that is potentiated with special energy.

Someone might tell you that round their neck they carry a little box, and inside the little box they have this special thing, perhaps a hair... You know. Whether it's a hair of your beloved or a hair from Guru Rinpoche doesn't much matter. If you believe in it, it's going to keep you warm.

People talk symbolic languages and confuse them with literal discourse, and then can't distinguish between the literal and the symbolic, and when something happens in the world that's not very good—someone's behaviour or whatever—they only way they can make sense of it is to return it to the symbolic and say, "Oh, it was a blessing," or "It was a teaching." So if somebody screws you up in some way, you say it's a teaching. Of course it's a teaching! It's to teach you how to be screwed up! That's what it's a teaching on, if you are a sensible person. If you're not a sensible person you say it's a real teaching, screw me up again.

Comment: The events that seem special really seem to be special, for example feeling a blessing, but actually is it just form and emptiness?

Absolutely. which makes it relatively a subjective experience, not having an objective reality. And this is the very important thing in terms of dogmatism, because dogmatism arises when you turn a subjective truth into an objective reality. Just because something is true for you doesn't mean that it will be true for anyone else. I think that's very important for us to think about. Hopefully we all find some benefit from the things that we do, and hopefully we understand something from them, so that to call them special and to think about them may be helpful for us, because it may encourage or remind us to do more practice. But at the same time we need to know that the specialness resides in the relationship, not necessarily in the object. Otherwise, when the object changes, we're trapped.

The Buddha said everything is impermanence, and that seems to be one thing we can definitely prove. People's behaviour changes through time, conduct changes through time. One of the interesting questions is: do Tibetan lamas ever get Alzheimer's disease? We have no research on them, but throughout the world people have degenerative, ageing diseases, and we do have some signs, through Tibetan history, of people being kept out of circulation for various reasons. Although the old yogi who mumbles his mantras might be merged in the dharmakaya, he might also be mumbling because he suffers from a degenerative disease. This is reality. Nobody has done any neurological checks, so you don't know. It's a terrible mistake to confuse faith with fantasy. Dharma is about reality.

I was just reading a paper by a colleague of mine, a professor of psychiatry in London, who had been doing some research in Haiti. In Haiti, as you probably know, they have this whole cult of zombies. So he went as a psychiatrist. He's written a lot on Afro-Caribbean mental experience, so he investigated a whole series of people who were seen as zombies. You become a zombie because somebody steals your spirit. Yet he found one of them was autistic, one was congenitally brain-damaged, two had degenerative brain disorders, and one had had a stroke. It was a whole series which could be explained with a much more clear western diagnosis.

Different cultures will interpret phenomena in different ways and as western

people, we are quite vulnerable to misunderstanding the symbols and interpretations of other cultures. While respecting what Tibetans and Chinese and different people say, we also need to respect our own understanding. This is directly related to dzogchen because the path of dzogchen says 'observe yourself'. If you're a stupid, ignorant person you cannot observe yourself. If you imagine that everybody else is one thing and you are another, or you are the highest or you are the lowest, if you start with assumptions, you cannot practice dzogchen because dzogchen begins with observing your assumptions. If you want to assume your guru is enlightened, that's an assumption. It's an assumption that the Tibetan culture supports but it's still an assumption.

LOOK AT THE ONE WHO IS THINKING

In dzogchen the teaching is to observe the one who is making the assumption. It's very important on the one hand, relatively, to have faith and to believe and to pray and to feel all of these feelings, but at the same time the one who is feeling is a subject in relation to object. It is a purified form of relative truth, but it's not absolute truth. *It is a method.*

Let's do a little practice on this. One of the key practices that we do is to try not to become absorbed in whatever is arising in the mind. Thoughts, feelings, sensations arise and as they arise, they often arise with the sense of 'I am having this experience' or 'This is happening to me' so I'm maybe sitting here, and I'm thinking, "Oh, when does the plane go?" This arises, and the feeling of 'when does the plane go'. That feeling makes it my thought. I identify not "Oh, I am having a thought" but I'm in the thought, "Oh, when does the plane go?" I am kind of born-together-with the thought. The self is riding on these thoughts and giving itself a temporary home. It's very easy for the self to hop from one thought or sensation to another. It jumps around.

So what we try to do is to look at who is the one who is thinking about the plane. We're just opening up a little gap in which we question the nature of the one who is doing the activity, and then when we have got the flavour of this awareness, we try to stay with that. It's quite a tricky thing to do because most of the time our sense of self merges in the thought as it arises. Now, we're just trying to step back and be aware. But when we step back, it's not as if the object vanishes, for here I am as subject and if I look over at you Andre, you are there as object, so as I am looking at you, the fact of looking at you helps me to know where I am. Without looking at myself, just by looking at you, I know I'm here because I can feel the intention of the perception. If you're looking at me you can feel the same. You know you're there because you're coming over here.

As the subject moves towards the object, it's not just defining the object. It's defining itself. Of course, we know whether we're hearing or seeing. This gives us an affirmation of our existence as existing somewhere. I'm here! And here—Could also be here—But wherever here is, I'm here. That's the amazing thing about 'here'. It's always got me in it. 'There's' got you in it, but 'here' has always got me in it. So wherever here is, here I am. It's amazing.

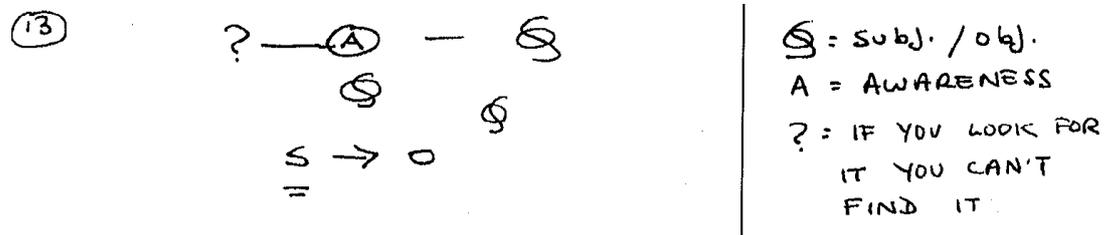
Now, of course, when we go into the meditation and the object you're dealing with is a thought, I can't see my thoughts the way I can see the people sitting

here. I look over and there you are, and you have a shape. But when the thought arises in my mind, it's not like that, is it? It's as if, when we're in the meditation, it's some mix of subject and object together. Would that be your kind of experience? It's one thing. The thought and the thinker seem to be merged, so there's very little clarity. "When's the plane going to go?" There's a thought, but I'm in the thought, I am the thought.

To use the image that we've used before, it's as if the self has fallen into the mirror and the subject and object are arising as reflections in the mirror but the subject is in it, so I'm in whatever's arising. What we're trying to do now is make a little separation, to separate out the subject and object, so what we're actually separating out is separating subject from subject/object. Does that make sense?

Here is the subject.

[Diagram 13]



So now the subject, which is this—maybe I should be a bit more clear. What you have is an awareness which is awareness of subject/object. That's different from the subject here, because here we can separate these two, usually reasonably clearly. But to separate awareness from the subject/object melange, this mixture, this fusion, that's quite tricky. There's no clear separation of space. Subject doesn't have a shape and awareness certainly doesn't have a shape.

And this is the problem. When we look into the nature of the mind, we don't find anything there. Mind has no shape or colour or form, so the awareness, the one who is looking, can't find it. So how to look from the position of awareness, which doesn't rest anywhere, at something which is a fleeting phenomena, which is just passing through.

Comment: Very good question!

Very good question. This is the essence of dzogchen and of course, when you understand it, it's very easy but it's very difficult to understand. It's really simple and complex at the same time.

SEPARATING OUT AWARENESS

The first thing that we have to do is to try to separate out awareness. Like it says in some of the texts, pull it out like a hair from a lump of butter. Standard of hygiene in dairy production in Tibet was not very high so they always had a lot of hairs inside. So you pull the strong yak's hair out, slowly and carefully. If you tug it, the hair will break. Slowly and carefully. That's what we try in the meditation, say when we do the three Aas, and then we just relax. As we relax we try to feel this kind of a shift in our relationship with what we are perceiving.

We're here and the knowledge that we're here is not inside us any more, but is present. So there's a sense of a presence which is not a defined subject. Then of course we lose it, and that's where we can use the Phat! to try to separate out from this again to make the gap. Or we can use calming ourselves, we can use many methods.

Comment: What's the question mark on the diagram?

The question mark is that it's not something you can find. When you look for it you don't find it, so it remains somehow, not tentative but not something that you can know. For example, I can know this pen but I can never, ever know my mind in the way I know the pen. In more traditional knowledge, the mind itself never becomes an object of knowledge. Everything else is an object of knowledge; it becomes something we can know. But when you look for your mind, you don't find it as an object. We are so used to looking for objects that we often look for our mind as if we were looking for a pen. We are somehow trying to find it as if it would be a thing, and wondering where it is. If you look in that way, you'll never find it because it's not that kind of thing.

Essentially, what one has to do is to shift the mood. An interesting example for this is children when they're interested in sex. They are maybe ten, eleven, twelve, so they haven't had any real sexual experience yet. They've maybe read books or looked at some photos, and they have lots and lots of thoughts about it but they can't really imagine what it will be like to touch someone's body in that way. It's only when they actually go into a relationship and there is some new mood, that it makes sense. So you have to be in the mood to have that experience. It is mood-directed.

And similarly with this state of awareness. It is a particular mood. In a sense it is a mood, which we say is naked, relaxed, open. It's not busy, it's not tight, it's not one of mastery or control, but it's a mood. It's not a cognition, it's not a thought about something, but it's a way of being, being with yourself and the whole of reality, which has a particular flavour.

Like last night, there were certain tango movements going on. The tango and any of these dances is not just a series of steps, but it's a mood. Every now and then, just watching people dancing, you think, "Oh, there's the mood!" And you see it. There's a certain gesture a kind of flamboyance, and you think, "Oh!" Because they're caught up in something and then next it sort of shuffles again a little bit. Our meditations are a bit like that. You get the beat, but the flavour is much more difficult to get, and the flavour comes to you. You can practise the steps again and again, but the mood is a gift, like that wonderful music, in the mood. You get caught up in it. You can't make the mood, the mood comes to you. You can be dancing and then suddenly, you're dancing, and when you're dancing it's different from dancing. Something shifts.

That's what we try to do. The best we can do is put ourselves in the place where that possibility might arise for us, but we cannot make it happen because it's not an 'it' to make happen. This is quite a shift away from some of the styles of meditation.

THREE AAS: STAYING ON THE ONE HAVING THE EXPERIENCE: *SEE ALSO ATTACHMENT 13*

We start with the three Aas again, and then whenever a thought or a feeling arises we just stay on the one who is having the experience. We will not do this for too long because it can be quite exhausting, quite difficult to get the feeling of it.

As each arising manifests, in order for us to have that experience, some noetic presence, some kind of aware presence, must be there. It often feels as if this presence is inside the thought that's arising, in which case it's somehow being inserted into each one, like a cocktail olive with a bit of pimento inside. What we have to do here is take the pimento out and keep it separate. You need a good toothpick to take it out.

You've done the relaxation, you're in the meditation, a thought is arising and immediately you're drawn into it, but instead, step back, relax in the openness of the mind. The tendency is to merge, but here we're just relaxing, and being present. Stay on the one who is aware.

The one who is aware and that which one is aware of, are very, very close but they're not the same thing. The one who is aware and looking is not the ordinary subject, it is not a concept. If you experience the one who is looking or knowing or thinking, as a concept, then you've fallen into another concept. And concept shall speak unto concept! Concepts talk to concepts.

Awareness doesn't talk to anyone. Awareness, the mind itself, from the very beginning, has been naked, single, alone. It's not caught up in anything. It's not trying to make anything; it's not trying to destroy anything. It's just by itself.

NON-MEDITATION

This practice in dzogchen generally, and in Mahamudra as well, is often called 'non-meditation'. By that they mean that most kinds of meditation have some intention or purpose. You're trying to control the breath or visualise a deity, or purify sins or make offerings. You're setting out to create a system where you can achieve a particular goal. But in this meditation, basically, all we're doing is sitting, not doing anything. We're just sitting, breathing in and out, and not getting involved with whatever's going on. We're just looking at whatever's happening. It's like someone on holiday, sitting on a chair someplace, just looking, nothing much to do. People walk on the street. Like an old lady, sitting looking out the window—this is the meditation of early retirement.

It's often in fact called that, because it's often said that the goal of this is to be free of activity, *chag tral wa*. There's one famous lama called Chatral Rinpoche, which means beyond activity, or free of activity. All the time we are busy doing things, aim-oriented, goal-oriented, trying to achieve things, and in this all we do is sit, not doing anything.

Of course, it's very hard not to do anything, if you're having to try to not do it. If you're giving someone a massage and you say, "Just relax, just relax!" it's very difficult to relax. You have to forget in order to relax. Non-meditation is also non-intentionality. That's why we do things like movements with the body, because if we are carrying a lot of anxiety and tension in our body, we are

wired-up, we're carrying a charge in us. That charge is energetic, so that we go into a situation and suddenly we find ourselves crying or suddenly we find ourselves being very, very angry, or suddenly we get very hurt and we're not sure why.

This is because we've built up this charge inside us and we need to discharge that, e.g. through body movements or breathing, there are many yoga techniques for that. Also just putting on Bob Marley and dancing. I think it's probably just as good as any kind of Ta'i Chi. Bob Marley has a very nice beat and if you do a bit of meditation and relax, the words of his songs are usually very friendly and nice. Once the body is moving like that, gradually, things are being shaken loose, and the anxious tension that we always carry starts loosening out.

Though sometimes Tibetan texts also say you shouldn't do jumping about and wild dancing, I remember Namkhai Norbu would often say that an important part of Dzogchen Community retreats was to have a party and a dance. Some lamas are not so convinced of that because Tibetan dancing is often quite formal and designated through mudras.

The clear thing is to become aware of tension in the body and shake it loose. Of course, you can't shake things loose if you're intending to shake them loose. If you're dancing to music and it's not a tight, rigid dancing that's probably quite a good way to get loose. Last night, when I went up to bed, some of my body was feeling a little bit "Ouch!" because I'd been stressing bits of it with the meditation posture, but generally I was feeling kind of loose. I think dancing can have that effect.

Non-meditation is not having a goal. It can be very hard to do that. The question is how to combine it with the bodhisattva vow where you want to get enlightened to save all sentient beings.

All meditation texts say you should practice like a person with a fire on top of their head. You're in samsara; you should recognize that you have swallowed poisoned food and because of this it is very important to waken up and take some antidote, since if you don't take an antidote you will die. So we also have this kind of teaching, which is a teaching to motivate you generally.

However the kind of meditation we are talking about here is very different. It's a meditation where, in a sense, these other aspects of buddhism culture should be in place, if you're going to do it from a buddhism point of view.

HELPING STARTS WITH QUESTIONS

Wanting to help people should be installed as an attitude. But then you have a question, how do you help people? What's the best way to help someone? Generally speaking, it might be to ask, "What would you like?" or "What's the matter with you?" For example if somebody is taken into an accident and emergency hospital ward, they suddenly come in, and are wheeled off on a trolley; if the person is still conscious, they ask them, "How are you doing? Can you say something? Where does it hurt? What happened? What did you swallow?" It always starts with questions. Helping starts with questions.

If you're a school-teacher, you know, it's very useful to start with questions, "What would you like to learn today? What shall we talk about?" And then

there's some space for people to be interested. If you start with the answer, "Today, lesson is...sit down and be quiet, I'm going to tell you!" it's much more difficult. (Though of course, I'm doing this all the time here.)

Helping people in a direct way, not in terms of transmitting knowledge, but of making relationship with them, means to be open to finding out what they want. If you get a lot of mastery you might not be so willing to do that. If you have spent all your life getting answers, then you may be so full of the answers that you don't want to ask people questions, you just want to tell them your answers.

In dzogchen, we start with questions. Now how can we be open to someone else's question if we don't have any space inside us? The best place to respond to another is from being relaxed and open. Through non-meditation we practice compassion, but we don't practice the compassion of knowing how to help people, we practice the compassion of being available to respond to people, which is different. You don't need to have any special knowledge in advance to do that; you just need to be willing to be pulled out of yourself. It's difficult to be pulled out of yourself if you're attached to yourself or to some kind of plan. If you have some idea of how a painting should be, and think, "Oh, I don't like it now because that shouldn't be there, that's spoiled it," then immediately our sense of freedom is limited.

Again, for non-meditation, we try to start without any goal or desire, so that when we start with the three Aas, just "Aaaahhhh," just completely letting go. You're not psyching yourself up, "Now I'm going to meditate," one's not trying to build it up into anything, but just to go out with the Aa, "Aaaaahhh," laying down your burden. Laying down your purpose, and then relax. Then, when you're relaxed, not do anything. If any thoughts or feelings come to visit you, you just give them a seat for a moment and then they go by, and then you have a look: "Who's there?"

It's not your job to make the tea, it's not your job to cook the meal, it's not your job to welcome the thought, it's not your job to say goodbye to the thought. You're just there to sit and look. That's a very important thing to be clear about, and of course, it's not a usual activity. Usually, we're very busy people. It's quite hard to do this because the impulse is to be actively engaged, but the one who is actively engaged is the subject, and it's the basis of samsara.

[Period of meditation practice]

PURIFICATION OF THE MIND

In terms of the purification of the mind, from what we talked of this morning, in terms of the hinayana aspect, we purify the avarice, the ill-will and the wrong views by not engaging in them. That is to say, we develop an observing self which is also critical. We watch what we are doing and we also make judgements on it. Then, in terms of the mahayana view, we purify the mind by developing wisdom and compassion. Wisdom protects us against wrong views and compassion purifies us from avarice and ill-will. That's fairly straight-forward.

Then, in the tantric method, we purify the mind by shifting the basis of subject/object perception through the use of visualisation and the dissolving

practice. The visualising practice, when we see the god in front of us and we see that god as form and emptiness, helps us after the meditation when we go out in the world, to see everything as form and emptiness. But not just as a neutral form and emptiness but with having this divine quality to it as well, so the whole world becomes a mandala. In a sacred place like that there's more of an inhibition on stealing and acting in an angry way. If you see the people around you as gods and goddesses, then stealing from them or attacking them would be more difficult.

We steal from people and attack them when we don't feel respect for them, and we often lose respect for other people when we feel that they don't respect us. Our sense of self-respect is often quite weak. So when we feel someone else is starting to treat us with contempt, then we sink because we are quite frightened, and then we come out and attack them or cheat them in some way.

In the tantric practice, in most of the practices, at a certain stage we become the god. We become Tara or Padma Sambhava, whoever. We become a god! That is to say, we become divine, we have many qualities, we are beautifully dressed, we have a voice which has all the qualities of Brahma's speech, everything about us is soft and gentle and subtle or very powerful and dignified—many, many, many qualities. This gives us a deep self-respect all the time. As long as I am Padma Sambhava why would I hate myself? Why would I think I'm stupid? In this identification with the god there is no basis for supporting our usual negative views of ourselves.

Then, when somebody insults you or attacks you in some way, you are so in touch with all these rich qualities that you don't feel the bumps so much and you can even feel compassion for them, how deluded they must be to be angry with a god like you. But that's a little tricky! Naughty, but nice!

Comment: It's quite hard to be the god if you're aware or inhibited by your sense of being such a crummy being.

Exactly. Exactly. That's why we practise a long time with these mantras to build up the sense of identification. If this space is occupied by the god it can't be occupied by you. You're trying to displace yourself by this activity. Just as, if somebody is training to be an actor, when they first get into stage school, they may become fall out of character and become themselves again quite easily. They forget their lines, feel self-conscious, lose the character and then they go back into being themselves. Even professional actors can forget their lines but they just carry on, make a joke, ad lib, make it up as they go along. And that is the confidence of being a star. You know that people are going to believe in you, so you can believe in yourself, and you never get wrong-footed, because you're so used to being a star that where is the ordinary person to go back to?

That example may give you the kind of the flavour of being Padma Sambhava. You are practising with this pride, but because it's the pride of form and emptiness, you're safe from an egotistical inflation. Knowing it's empty, you're safe from vulnerability and being put down because you have the pride. In that way, by maintaining this stance of being the deity you purify these three sins of speech.

In dzogchen, doing the kinds of exercises we've been doing, the purification lies in not protecting any particular position. When you are relaxed and these thoughts and feelings are coming, we are completely at one with the truth of impermanence because clearly, everything is dynamic and flowing. We're also completely in tune with the teaching on karma, because we are not creating any karma. We're in tune with it but not confirming it. And there is no ill-will or avarice, because in that state we're not pulling in any thoughts. When an interesting thought comes we don't hold onto it, and that's the basis for purifying avarice. And if a difficult or a bad thought arises, we don't push it away, so that's the purification of ill-will. In that way, the three sins of the mind are self-liberated in this practice. So it's very useful to do.

Comment: It's very difficult to make this practice and afterwards listen to so many words...

Yes, it is hard. But I'm a bit obsessive and I always want to complete these teachings, to fill in all the cracks. What you're saying is important and of course, we can have too many words.

However the effect of the meditation goes, and in order to return to it—if you understand the structure it gives you—the real thing is to have confidence in the practice. If we go back to these three sayings of Garab Dorje: direct recognition of the mind; resolving all doubts; and continuing in that way; we are not going to continue in the practice if we have doubts about whether it works. If we can understand theoretically why it should work then, even when our own practice is not all that strong, we have the confidence to keep going with it and not lose hope. Then gradually it becomes easier. What we need to develop is stamina, endurance, being able to take things through time.

MEDITATION POSTURES: SEE ALSO ATTACHMENT 14

So sit up straight. We can do sit up straight to do the three Aas but if you want to lie down, that's fine too. So long as you remain aware. If you're falling asleep or if you want to sleep, that's fine too. The Buddha did it also.

You see these pictures and statues of the Buddha when he goes to die? He is lying down like this, his arm is like this, and he's got his thumb here on the neck, just here. This is also not a bad position to meditate in. It's very peaceful and it helps you to work on the pull of falling asleep but without falling asleep. It's a good balancing for the nerves, so you can also practise in that way.

Or, you can practise leaning against the wall with your arms out like this, this is also quite a nice balancing. It keeps your shoulders up from collapsing too much, the chest is still open. Head back on the wall.

Comment: First we try lying down?

Maybe also a few minutes getting up and moving around is probably also very wise.

In dzogchen we try to fit the meditation to our mood, to our energy. If you've got to go out into the world and do things and you're feeling very vulnerable, it's probably better to do some visualisation of and identification with Padma Sambhava or some deity like that, and to use that protective quality to go through the situation.

As some people have noticed, if you do this very opening kind of meditation you become more sensitive and potentially more vulnerable, This is useful in the sphere of meditation, but not in business or in teaching etc. where you have to be quite robust, quite protected. When you've done the practice more, the openness becomes very strong by itself but at first, it feels like you're taking some layer of skin off. So maybe do that kind of meditation when you have a bit more space and time.

If you're low on energy but you want to do the practice, then you could do this Phat! because it also wakens you up quite a bit. If you're sitting and you're a bit tired, if you go Phat! you will find yourself coming more awake.

If you're just tracking the thoughts as they arise, at first I think it makes us very, very tired because it's not a normal activity and there's a lot of disappointment in it because you seem to lose it. Think how when you do the basic *shi ne* watching your breath, it can be anyway quite difficult. You get distracted. So now you're looking for something a hundred times more subtle than the breath, so it is very easy to lose it. So again, do it for short periods of time. Don't push this kind of meditation. If you're getting too tired, just stop. Have a cup of tea, do something else.

WHERE DOES THE MIND COME FROM? SEE ALSO ATTACHMENT 15

This is a brief enquiry practice looking into the nature of the mind, where it rests, where it comes from, where it goes to. Those kinds of question can be quite useful if your mind is a bit speedy, when you're quite awake and you're in the mood to do something. If you're in the mood to do something, just trying to relax and be open is not very helpful. You're going across your energy. Perhaps if you come home from work and you're quite speedy, you could focus onto this kind of question and use the energy you've built up to put it in this direction.

There are many ways into this meditation. You can start it through the visualisation and dissolving, or through the three Aas.

Then, when you're feeling a bit relaxed and open, just gently allow the question to arise. "*Where does the mind come from?*" Then just let it hang there, and see what happens. Or ask yourself, "*Where is my mind?*" "*Where does it rest? Does it rest on anything?*" "*What is the basis of my mind?*"

As you're sitting, see "*What is my mind resting on? Is it resting on my body? Or is my body in my mind?*" Inquire into that, not too critically but in a very kind and tender way as if you were giving a lover a massage. So that you're just following the contours of your mind and exploring it.

Okay, shall we try that?

[Meditation practice]

... Now maybe let's take some time talking in pairs just to check out how you're doing so far with everything and what's clear for you, and what's not so clear; what your experience in the meditation is. Let's do a kind of review about how you're getting on and see if that generates any questions.

[Talking in pairs]

Now we will just do a final little meditation quietly together and the dedication

of merit.

MACHIG LABDRON PRACTICE - SEE ATTACHMENT 16

When we pray to Machig Labdron, one of the things we can specially pray for is for the blessing of understanding emptiness. In the prayer we say **OM MA CHIG MA LA SOL WA DEP** and we imagine her in the form of the *dakini*, in front of us, and dancing. Even if you can't see her very well, you can just imagine lots of rainbows in the sky, and this very beautiful woman dancing, very freely and happily.

In the middle of her forehead is there is a white letter Om — Tibetan letter — It doesn't matter too much if you know what it looks like. At her throat she has a red letter **Aa**, and in her heart she has a blue letter Hung.

When we say **OM MA CHIG MA LA SOL WA DEP**, we pray to Machig Labdron with this white Om on her forehead. When we say **AA MA CHIG MA LA SOL WA DEP**, we're praying to Machig Labdron with the **Aa** on her throat. When we say **HUNG MA CHIG MA LA SOL WA DEP**, we pray to her with the Hung in her heart. Om **Aa** Hung represents the three kayas, that is to say the white Om is the nirmanakaya, the red **Aa** is the sambhogakaya and the blue Hung is the dharmakaya. That is to say, it is the buddha's body, speech and mind. In the Tibetan system, the body is on the head, the speech and the voice in the throat, and the mind is in the heart.

When we say, **KAR PO OM GYI JING GYI LOB**, we are imagining from this white Om on her forehead rays of white light are coming into our forehead. The white light comes into our body and purifies all our sins of the body and makes our body full of white light. When we say, **MAR PO AA GYI JING GYI LOB**, from the red AA in her throat, red light comes into our throat and fills our body, purifying all our sins of speech. When we say, **NGONG PO HUNG GYI JING GYI LOB**, it means rays of blue light comes out of the Hung in her heart into our heart, filling our body with blue light and that purifies all the sins of the mind.

In this one practice we have the purification of all sins, so it's a very powerful brief practice to do.

With **OM AA HUNG** we get the first three initiations, and then, in this seventh line, when it talks of all the blessing coming together it means light comes from the Om and the **Aa** and the Hung at the same time into us, purifying all the defilements of body, speech and mind together, which gives the basis for the svabhavikakaya, which is the integration of the three kayas.

Just in this one verse we get the four initiations, and the four initiations are the basis of the tantric systems. It's quite complicated to explain, but without the four initiations they say you can't practice tantra. So it's very helpful to get an initiation into this practice if you can, from some lama who knows it well, in this lineage preferably C.R. Lama. If you can't do that, even just doing the prayer will give a blessing because this prayer is a public prayer.

That's really what we do the practice for, to gain the unification of the deity and ourselves, because her nature is form and emptiness, sound and emptiness, awareness and emptiness, and when we merge with her we gain the same qualities.

We can maintain this blessing all the time. We can do it in two ways. One is to do it generally in the tantric way: externally, everything you see you imagine has the quality of Machig Labdron's body, everything you hear has the quality of her speech, and everything you think, experience mentally, has the quality of her mind.

Also, you can do it just with breathing. When you breathe in, we breathe in on Om. When you hold your breath, you hold it on **Aa**, and when you breathe out, you breathe out on Hung. So that all the time Om **Aa** Hung is occurring and you integrate the three kayas of the buddha into yourself on an energetic level, without effort. Once you have this awareness going, you are purifying yourself all the time.

TEACHING DHARMA

This morning we'll look a bit more at the integration of this purification of body, speech and mind. First, I'll say just a little bit about teaching these kinds of things

According to the tradition the only reason that you should teach dharma is if your own teacher says you should do that. Even if your teacher says it, you should think about what you do because you have to carry the consequences of your own action. If you're teaching car maintenance, it's very easy to know whether you have repaired the car properly or not, because if it's a proper repair the car will go, if not the car won't go. But human beings are not like cars.

It's very difficult for us as human beings to know whether something is useful or not. There's all kind of reasons why we can imagine something is useful. We can delude ourselves. We can cheat ourselves in all sorts of ways. Probably some of us have spent our time doing things and then, afterwards, thinking "That was very strange," but at the time it seemed a good idea. It's very difficult for us to know what is helpful. In teaching the dharma it's also very difficult to know what is helpful to people.

You can't do it just from a text book, you have to use yourself, but since the self that is being used is also in the world with different aspects and qualities, you always get one person's take on things. That's why, in the Tibetan tradition some lamas say you should travel around and meet different teachers and study different books. I also think it's very good for people to have different therapists. When I hear somebody has been in therapy for eight years with one person, I get very worried about that. It's very easy to make a folie à deux; it's very easy to make some kind of peculiar collusion, some kind of lostness.

That happens between teachers and students as well. We always need a bit of fresh air coming in. Recognizing the limitations of a situation is not an enemy of devotion; it has to do with just the sense that nobody is complete for us. That's the way it is. That's the tradition, that's not my prejudice. That's always what the tradition says. All the lamas you meet will tell you all the different teachers they have studied with. They will say one teacher was especially useful for this or that but generally, people have different lines in. This, I think, is important because what we've been looking at is how

complicated we are, how complex we are.

If we look at ourselves we start to see that there are things that we need. Then we should be active in getting the things that we need. We may need to go to different places for that. If we just focus on what is available, focus out on object, we can think, "Oh, that's so wonderful! That must be giving me what I need." But when we do that, we don't look at whether we're getting our needs met or not. We only know what our needs are when we look inside, and the basic, basic truth in dzogchen is to observe yourself. Look into yourself, and then you can go out to look.

I think we've talked of this before. If you're going to the shops to buy food, first of all you look in the cupboard, you look in the fridge, you think what you're going to cook in the next few days and then you go shopping. If you go out shopping and you think, "Oh, I like that and I can buy a lot of it" you come back and your fridge is already full of it because it's the thing you always like. You get an awful lot of one thing. It's important to look before you go shopping, but you're shopping to get something. If you go out to the market and there is some shop keeper with a very silver tongue, you might come home with a whole big bag of bananas or something, and you think these bananas were very cheap, but after three days you are tired of bananas and they're starting to rot.

It's very important for us to think about what is good for us. We of course, don't know. This is the problem. It's difficult to know what is good for you. Again, the question is: does anybody know more about you than you do yourself? In the tantric tradition there is the idea that the teacher knows more about you than you do yourself. Teachers will know quite a lot, generally, about the human condition, and they will have a good intuition about human circumstances. But students themselves have to have an understanding. If you don't know, just to trust somebody else is probably not going to be very helpful in the long run.

There are many people who started on practices and give them up because they weren't really connected with them. They were told this is a very helpful practice, or some lama comes and inspires you and you start to do something, and then it doesn't really fit for you. Then you have two choices. Or three choices. You can say the teacher was very bad. You can say the teaching doesn't help me. Or you can say "I am very bad." Blaming the teacher's not very helpful, blaming yourself is not very helpful. All of the teachings are methods. If the method doesn't work for you, use another method. It's very simple. If we get trapped in situations it won't be useful.

Thinking is an important part of this dharma practice. Thinking is not the enemy, examination is not the enemy, evaluation is not the enemy, judgement is not the enemy. The same problems arise in psychotherapy trainings. Students come in and they have read Carl Rogers or someone like that, that judgement is a very bad thing and you just want to be open and have empathy. But psychotherapy is also thinking about what is going on. Dharma practice is also reviewing your own progress and thinking whether it does help you or not.

If you don't know whether it's helping you, then you're in trouble! You've got

no quality control in your factory. You are likely to go bankrupt. The first thing is have quality control. Quality control means examining what is going on. Schools have examinations. They have examinations both to see whether the children are doing okay and can progress, but also to see whether the teachers can do what they are supposed to be doing.

When the students are very bad, the teachers say, "How can I possibly teach these crazy children? They never listen." Then the head of the school has to think, "Yeah, well what to do? We need to get the children through the exams, but also the children are a nuisance. The teachers have a very difficult job, but still, they must teach." This is exactly the same problem in the dharma. We have to struggle to make sense of this. It doesn't come easy. Whatever comes easy will go easy. Easy come, easy go. If you want the dharma to become part of your heart, you'll have to struggle.

This is the story of Milarepa. He had to think, "What is Marpa up to?" Milarepa had many doubts about Marpa. Doubts are not a problem. Working with doubts and trying to understand doubts is very useful because it helps you to understand your mind. This is a key thing

The world is complicated. It is not just good and bad. The level of understanding of Kuntuzangpo is not ordinary. This is very open. Most of the time we become very cluttered, and inside the clutter, we have to sort things out. To sort things out we need to make judgements. From the dzogchen point of view, keeping your intelligence is important. Keeping the knowledge you have already built up in your life is important. When we talk about visualising the teacher or visualising Machig Labdron as the essence of the teacher or Padma Sambhava as the essence of the teacher, this means all your teachers.

This is really important. This means your mother, your father, your primary school teacher, your secondary school teacher, your bosses at work, your lovers, all the people who have taught you something, even your driving instructor. All of these people have taught you discipline, control, focus, language, respect, how to have relationships, so we need to respect all of these people, and then if we do that we see again, that it's a complex situation. It's not just one guru living in a ball separated from everything else. When the guru speaks, if your mummy hadn't said, "Hello, hello, hello..." if your mother hadn't helped you to speak language, or somebody hadn't helped you to speak language, you'd never understand a word the guru said.

So before the guru, comes the mother. Without the mother there is no guru. This is really important. Without your school teacher there is no guru. Without the person who teaches you reading and writing, you'd never read a dharma book. We are indebted to many, many people. Again, our relationship is very, very complicated, we can't just cut everything off and say, "My one hero of this, this is my only path!" Because this is then to reject and abandon all the other people who have helped us.

We can bring the quality of all these people into the form of the guru or Machig Labdron, but this is their symbolic presence. Respect for people is very, very important, and that means honouring all those who help us, even if they have made mistakes, because it's impossible to live without making

mistakes. That's just how it is.

A very interesting idea that was developed by Melanie Klein, a famous female psychoanalyst, is when she says that the real evolution of human beings comes through forgiveness. Children usually carry some kind of deep anger or hatred towards their parents, often towards the mother because she has blocked us in some way or we have been in an envious position towards the other. The mother had a lot of freedom and power, and often as a child we feel that our parents abused that power. They tell us to go to bed, they won't let us do what we want to do... We keep a lot of hatred and frustration... We construct a whole theory that if only they had given us more then we wouldn't have these problems now.

Melanie Klein's idea is that we have to make reparation for these feelings, to move into forgiveness. Only once you have forgiven your parents for their faults, can you be reborn. In the same way, in the dharma, we have to make reparation. We have not done as well as our teachers wanted for us, and our teachers too may have behaved in ways that made it difficult for us to learn. It can be a two-way street. Although in the Tibetan tradition teachers don't say such things to their students, nevertheless teachers always have the sense that they haven't taught as well as they should, or they haven't helped people as much as they wanted to. That's the private thought of a teacher. Just as the private thought of a therapist is always "I could have done so much more to help." It's not very helpful to say that to your patient, but without that kind of thinking you probably wouldn't be very effective.

And from the other side, as students, we often think, "Oh, how many times I've heard this teaching and I always forget," or "How often have I practised since the last time I heard it." And we also feel a bit of sadness. This is the sadness of samsara. We can always do better. This is the relative truth and it's important. Then, from the other side, from the very beginning, everything has been pure. Our depression has been pure, our sadness has been pure, our anger has been pure.

INTEGRATION IS THE KEY POINT

The key point is: in the nyingma path we try to integrate all the paths, although the main view is dzogchen. From the hinayana is to avoid the impure. This is really important to be able to identify for yourself what is difficult, what is unhelpful for you. Things can be very good formally, but not helpful for you, they can be disturbing for you. For example, there might be a big retreat with hundreds of people but if that kind of energy disturbs you, even although it's a holy activity, it doesn't help you. Going on a pilgrimage might be very helpful but if it just makes you upset and disturbed it's not helping you. Just because something is formally good doesn't mean it's good for you. When it says 'avoid the impure' it means what is impure for you, using your own understanding.

That is very, very important because the key issue is observing yourself. What is your own condition today? What is your capacity? If you go beyond your capacity, you can't work. Like you were saying last night, 'James was talking too much, it was all just too much', and that's exactly right. Maybe for some other people that particular point was helpful, so we ourselves need to know,

“Oh, I’ll just relax or have a little snooze. I don’t need all of this, I’ve had it to here.” And for someone else, they say, “Oh, I want to have more of that.” That’s why it’s very important that in a situation like this people take their own positions regarding what’s going on.

IMPURE IS ALSO EMPTY

The second thing that we take from the mahayana is the idea that the impure is empty, that the nature of all the impure activities is actually empty. When you steal something, say I go to steal the pen, the pen is empty, I am empty and the action of stealing the pen is empty. It is a construct; it is devoid of inherent significance. Of course, since somebody owns this pen, they say, “Oh, I’m calling the police!” and the police come and say, “Did you steal the pen?” “Yes, I stole the pen.” “Now you have to go to court”. “Mr. Low, you stand accused of stealing a pen.” “I’m very sorry. I would like to apologise to the Court for my grievous action. I don’t know what came over me. I was at a buddhism retreat and doing a lot of meditation and my thoughts became very disturbed, so I stole the pen.”

In that way the world can turn a momentary action into a very real thing, and we have to face that consequence. We do something, the world we live in, the world of samsara is subject and object hard and separate and if you go out of line, you get a bang in some way. That’s reality.

At the same time, from the point of view of practice, through the study of the *Heart Sutra*, through the understanding of the five skandhas, we see that all the aspects of the action are empty. Because they are empty – they are if you like plastic, moveable – they don’t have an essence inside them. For example, the baby has a nice little puppet. It’s very bendy but if you put your hand inside it, it won’t bend unless you put your fingers in. When things are empty, they are much more flexible.

When we do the visualisation to become Padma Sambhava, we can only become Padma Sambhava if we are not fully ourselves. Otherwise we are just doing some kind of play-acting. “In the great Theatre of Samsara we have today, come all the way from Berlin, our friend Jens who will be performing for us Padma Sambhava!”

Comment: Starting in one minute!

It’s not like that. We’re not adding something onto ourselves or making ourselves false, but from the mahayana understanding of emptiness, we relax, open in this clear blue sky and then arise out as Padma Sambhava. In that moment there isn’t a Jens, or a Ruth, or an Elke or anybody. There is just this arising. The more one-pointed we are in the openness, the more that’s what there is, when we come out in this form. So one’s not in bad faith with oneself.

Because of this, any impure form can be transformed. If you’re thinking, though, “I’m a bad person, I’m too selfish and greedy, I’m always making mistakes,” then it’s very difficult to do the transformation. But we also need to remember the hinayana view that we do make real mistakes, so this is quite complicated. If you only say you don’t make mistakes you can go into an inflated delusion. The transformation of everything that’s impure in body, voice and mind arises out of emptiness, so the key thing is to go back again and

again, to read the Heart Sutra, to study the texts on emptiness and to do the practice of dissolving which gives you the possibility of experiencing that.

And to do this analysing method of breaking things down. You can do that very easily, taking some simple objects in your house and taking them apart and putting them together again, and having the experience of when there are just pieces there, and then they are all in one place.

KA DAG: PRIMORDIAL PURITY

The fourth thing that we try to look at in terms of dzogchen is primordial purity, *ka dag* that we've already looked at a little bit. This refers to the idea that the mind is empty—because when we look for the nature of our mind we can't find it anywhere—and yet it is full of energy and manifestation. This energy and manifestation has been pure from the very beginning because it is arising out of and within this infinity of emptiness. The world is experience. The world is an aesthetic reality. It is one which touches us in that way, not a material way.

Even if I bang a wall and I think, "Oh, this is a hard wall," what I'm having is an experience. When I say "Ow! Why am I banging my hand on the wall? I'm very stupid, what am I doing?" I'm having lots of thoughts about what is essentially a sensation. Because of my history, I know "Ow! Ow! James! Ow!" so there's something there. I am banging the wall. I am here and the wall is there. These are concepts. Actually, there is a sensation and if I just feel the sensation, it's neither good nor bad. It's a little bit warm, there's some force.

Just to drop the concepts, something is happening but what it is, we don't know. When we apply the concept: "Oh, I'm banging my hand on the wall. The wall is stronger than my hand. If I keep doing that I'll hurt myself. I should stop." These are all concepts and these concepts come from where? They come from the same place as the sensation. Everything arises from the same source which is the pure nature of the mind.

This is not our ordinary experience. Our ordinary experience is "I am having a sensation. It's arising in me. The wall's not having any sensation because the wall doesn't have a mind." So we have all of these concepts and we think the wall is different from me.

From the point of view of dzogchen, when we do the three Aas and we relax, we include in this relaxation this room here, and we try in a very open way just to be with the experience of the presence of this luminous reality which is arising and shifting and changing as experience. It's not that we are having thoughts about things but we are just in the experience. When we get into having thoughts about the room, the room will become separate, we will become separate and the mediation will be through the thoughts.

When we see that the thoughts arise from the same ground as the sensation of the body itself and from the sensation of the world around us, everything has the same source. This source is emptiness therefore everything is always good, this is Kuntuzangpo. In that sense, everything is pure. No matter how it is, it's experience. Experience is always pure and all we have is experience. It's not just like a dream, but it is an energetic reality that we can act on, and the one who is acting is also empty.

That's why when we were doing this meditation yesterday, stay on the one

who is doing whatever is going on. So if you find yourself walking, stay on the one who is walking. When you're eating, stay on the one who is eating. When you're talking, stay on the one who is talking.

Comment: Do you have other words for 'stay on'?

Yes, you could say "Stay with". But it's not the one who is talking and me. By 'stay on' it's like very, very close tracking of it, remembering of course, that the one who is staying on is not a someone. It doesn't have any form or colour or shape. It is just awareness itself. So one's not coming from a position.

This is the path of self-liberation of all phenomena. You absolutely experience whatever is arising as impermanent, changing, arising and liberating on the ground of this open awareness that never changes. This is the dzogchen way of the purification of body, speech and mind together. One method purifies everything. It's very easy and it's very, very difficult. It's easy because it's always there and it does itself, and it's difficult because we have, for a long time, been practising doing something different.

This is, as we know, very, very hard. For example, if somebody plays golf or tennis, and they've been playing by themselves for many, many years, and then they decide they want to improve their game. They go to the coach, and very often the coach will say, "You have to start from scratch. The way you're going is completely against your body." The person says, "But I always do that. It's worked for me till now." "If you want to do it, do it that way but if you want me to show you really how to play tennis, this is what you have to do." And when the person practices, it doesn't feel right because they have a deep body memory of doing it their familiar way. So they have to unlearn before they can relearn, and the unlearning makes us feel stupid.

A part of the issue in learning meditation is that we're so used to constructing and controlling our thoughts and we know how to do it, we have some competence in that, that it's much easier to go with the habit where we are competent—although it's fundamentally incompetent, it's deeply incompetent—on the surface it's competent. To stop that makes us feel the deep incompetence. But only by feeling the deep incompetence can we move through to real competence.

THREE AAS: SEE ALSO ATTACHMENT 17

Shall we do a little practice? If we start with the three Aas and then just sit for a while, very open, and when we sit there we have our eyes open, and we're looking in space in the centre of the room, you're aware of the walls and the people around you. These are not an obstacle to the meditation. Include this in the meditation but don't strongly identify the people you're seeing or think "*Oh, she's wearing yellow or green or red, or whatever*". If that thought is arising, just stay on the thought – not going into it, not being busy, but just relaxed – and you will gradually find that what you're seeing, transforms.

[Meditation practice]

Today, like we did yesterday, we'll do a series of these short sessions.

Comment: It seems to me to take me a long time to work out what's going on so I get to the point when other people have already moved on. What can I do about this?

One way of thinking of this is in terms of a kind of attunement. Something is going on that people are getting into and to get on the point or on the beat of what they're doing, you have to get into the rhythm of that. So how to get into that rhythm without being lost in it? Just practise, really. You have to have the two things: one is a desire to get in the rhythm, and the second is the desire not to get lost. And you have to keep the two desires together.

Part of it of course, depends on taking what these people are doing seriously. If you practice dharma, then you can think, "Oh, all of this stuff is just samsara," and not be very open to it. But if it's also how you earn your money and you need your money, you also need to pay attention. Also it's what's happening. It's just reality. Your reality as you manifest is office politics, yes? And in office politics, either you win or you lose, so it's a battle. Awareness is a very good way of winning because then you can even be ahead of the beat, you can see what's coming.

The thing to do then is to keep the attention focused on what is going on, but a very light focus. If you lean into the politics too much, into the conversations, you lose yourself. And then emotion arises and emotion, particularly anxiety, makes us stupid. This is absolutely true. I am completely convinced anxiety makes you stupid. If you're relaxed, you're more intelligent. I see this happening again and again with patients, who as soon as they start through the therapy not to be so frightened, become much more intelligent. Then they go back into a situation where they get frightened and they become stupid again.

Other people's power can be frightening to us. From our own childhood, our own karma, we have particular vulnerability to situations where we feel people will put us down or shame us or people will find us stupid. A lot of it is monitoring your own anxiety, which will make it easier for you to come out. Anxiety often arises when we feel that the world is against us. If we get into a situation where we feel the other people, the colleagues, are against us, and we are on the outside, that will make anybody feel anxious.

The first part is seduction. How to belong to the group because without belonging to a group you can't move? It's the shift from the hinayana desire to protect oneself by stepping back—which makes a lot of sense, usually in life somebody hurts us and we think, "Damned, I've had enough, I'm going," but in the mahayana we think that anyway we need compassion, which takes us back. But we recognize that all of these people in our office or wherever have the five poisons. They are greedy, they are selfish, they are out to win, they have many of these emotions, so you are moving in a field of the five poisons and you have your own five poisons.

FREEING OURSELVES TO BE POWERFUL

What is the goal? What is the real aim and intention? You have to be clear what you are doing there. It is our intention which carries us across this bumpy water of the poisons. On a general level, an intention to help all beings. Another intention is to be reasonably powerful.

I think power can be very, very important. Power exists. We can't get rid of power. I have some intention and I want to carry it through, so I need the

power to do it. One question is how do we stop ourselves from being powerful? How do we sabotage ourselves? It might be a fear that if we are powerful, people will envy us; they will reject us, they won't like us. We might decide that the only way to be included, to be liked, to be loved is to be powerless and to please other people. That's a very, very common belief, particularly for women. Also for men, but more for women. So it's something about freeing ourselves to be powerful.

That's why doing this Machig Labdron practice is very good. This is a good example of a powerful woman but who is using the power in a very creative way. But part of being powerful is that we are not always liked, so we also have to look at why we want to be liked. This is the terrible thing. We want to be liked because we feel lonely and if we don't have people saying we're okay, then we feel we're really awful and no-one will ever love us ever again. This is a romantic delusion which sells many, many Mills and Boon, these romantic novels, about how one says this wonderful person will come, and everything will be... "Ah, now I've found you, I'll never be lonely again!" Unfortunately, this is not really how life is because when we die, we go all alone. All alone.

When we do our meditation, we are all alone. Meditation can be filled with gods and goddesses and all the rest of it, but in the moment of the meditation it says the nature of rig pa or awareness is naked, single, alone. Out of that aloneness, we can go out to make connection. If we really taste aloneness, being alone, being this complete but open—that's the whole thing, that it's complete and it's open. Usually, complete is a bit closed but this is complete and open—the great perfection, the great completion.

From that, we can be with people or not be with people and we don't feel so lonely. Somebody wants to like us or talk to us, that's fine; if they don't, that's fine. Because we always have something to do. Again, when we are alone in the ordinary sense, when we are on our own, fears arise and we often want to get rid of these by having some distraction.

I know somebody who is very, very busy all the time and when he goes home in the evening to his flat, within half an hour, he finds himself going out to a massage parlour. He just can't stop it. There are all kind of reasons. But he is also aware that one reason he has to go out is because he can't contain himself, he doesn't have a pot of the self. In many ways what we need to develop is a pot to hold ourselves. The best pot is emptiness because whatever kind of shit arises, it's big enough to hold it. That's the best pot. But anyway, just the pot of ordinary self-belief or self-esteem is very important.

Questioner: Why?

Because when we don't have that, we go out of our pot to try to get what we need, which means, "I need you to love me, to put some nice things in my pot." But through meditation we can fill our pot just with this natural peace, natural satisfaction. Then we are not so needy for other people. When we are not so needy we have the basis for power.

The first basis of any power is to be able to walk away. If you can't walk away from a situation, half your power is already gone. You're trapped.

C R LAMA SAID TO “ALWAYS GET A RETURN TICKET.”

I think many of you have heard me say this before, one of the best teachings I ever had from C.R. Lama was “Always get a return ticket.” Wherever you go, always have a return ticket. He had many experiences of going and staying with people and going to do teachings and these people were very strange to him. At first, on the telephone it was “Oh, Rinpoche, oh, Rinpoche,” then he gets there and they feed him some very strange food and they’re not very nice to him.

At first when he was coming from India he didn’t have so much money and he would be a little bit trapped there, and he was trying to help these people and at a certain point he recognized, “Oh-oh! You go in, you go out!” If it’s not good when you’re in, get out.

That’s very, very important. Of course, when the economic situation changes and jobs are more difficult it’s easy to feel that one is trapped. That’s why, at a very minimum, we should be clear about the contract or the deal in any situation we go into. The contract is always to be clear, why am I doing this? What am I doing it for? And what are they doing it for? So that we’re both clear why we’re doing it. It could be something very important, or not so important, but we should at least know why we do it. So, if you go to work, you have to know why you do it. Are you there for money, or status, or because you want to have friends, or because you really believe in the project, or whatever it is? Desire, even good desire, the desire to help people, easily becomes an attachment which takes us into the world where we get trapped.

As I was saying the other day, very vicious fighting happens in left-wing politics. Most of these people would say, “Well, we want to transform society in order to help people.” But then they fight each other, all the time. Same with alternative groups and radical groups, they get into fissions very easily, because people lose sight of why they’re there. The five poisons start to cook up. Originally they start with a quite altruistic, generous focus and then suddenly they’re very concerned about power and status.

SETTING BOUNDARIES

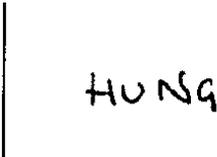
The other important thing clearly, is the ability to set boundaries. For some of you, if you do the Big Rigdzin practice or other tantric practices, one of the first things you have at the beginning is setting a boundary. You visualise around you a wall of vajras, sometimes a big wall of vajras, and walls of fire. There are many different systems of doing it, but you imagine that where you are doing your meditation is cut off and protected from other people, and that they can’t cross that boundary.

It is very important, to have some notion of where you end and where the other begins. We discussed yesterday how on a more open level, we are intermingling and are interdependent. However on our ordinary social level, we do need to set boundaries.

If people won’t let you set boundaries, these people are against you. And if they are against you, they are your enemies. What’s very difficult for many people is to recognize that they have enemies. People who invade us, who boss us, who control us, who don’t respect us, are our enemies. It’s very

frightening to realise you have enemies, that you actually have people who wish you harm. They may wish you harm in a very unconscious way, but if somebody is going to take all the power, then there's no power for anyone else. People who want to steal your power and steal your freedom are your enemies. The dharma is full of methods for dealing with enemies. All these wrathful god practices are entirely about strong protection of boundaries and filling the space.

When you do these strong deity practices it is often using the letter Hung.

When we send out a Hung. Hung! Hung! Hung! there's a sense that it's very active. If you can't kick ass, you're going to get your own ass kicked.

Comment: I see that people rather are a mosaic of let's say, hostile / enemy action, and friendly action. Whether conscious or not, I am the same. I sometimes cross their boundaries, sometimes I respect their boundaries, sometimes I even leave them more space than they have, want or deserve. It's not that a person is my enemy now and forever, it's now in this moment that I have to settle down...

Yes, absolutely. Absolutely. So it's being very flexible. The most important thing I think we often need to learn is how to be angry without hating, and how to be angry without getting ourselves anxious. By angry here, I mean having this assertive force, aggressive force, a force that moves out. So that if someone is giving you trouble, you can push back. Then once they're back, you just relax. You're not trying to annihilate them or kill them; you're just saying "Oh, oh, back there!" Once they're back there, then fine, carry on. We are not saying, "Oh, from now on, I'll never speak to you." That's why learning a range of meditation practices is useful.

CUT SUBJECT, THEN OBJECT GOES FREE. CUT OBJECT, THEN SUBJECT IS FREED.

One of the functions with Machig Labdron is that she is connected to the practice of cutting off the ego. It's a good way of dealing with pride. Chöd is mainly a practice on attachment to the body and pride. Of the four demons that it deals with, two of them are demons of pride. If you want to deal with hostile other people, chöd would not be the best practice.

Chöd deals with our fear of hostile people by cutting away the basis of the self which gets frightened.

That's a very different approach from the practice, say of Vajrakilaya, a wrathful deity, where you go out actively to stab on the other. With chöd you stab on yourself. If we cut subject, then object goes free. If we cut on object, then subject is freed. We need to learn both methods for different situations. Sometimes you need to put aggression out. At other times we need to open more space inside.

OUR COMMITMENT NOT TO LET OTHER PEOPLE DO HARM

For example, my patients sometimes are very insulting and aggressive towards me, and at times that seems very healthy to me. Maybe they've never been able to do this before and so I become the first focus of their tight feelings. That's okay with me, it's also part of my job. But if somebody is just dumping their shit on me, then I won't put up with it and might respond, "Hey, come on. This is a hospital. What do you think you are doing? I might be working here but I won't accept you treating me like this! Don't you dare speak to me that way!" That's important too, because that says I exist. I'm a person. How dare you speak to me like that?

One has to be able to move in and out of these positions and if we are locked in a position from the outset, then we are trapped. When we are in one position, then the many, many positions other people take up won't fit with ours. It helps if we can sort of hang loose, and be aware of our intention toward the other. The key thing is our intention towards the other. If it's to help them, then I have to evaluate in our interaction now, is this being helpful? Just to let someone repeat a perpetual pattern onto us is probably not very helpful, although now may not be the best time to stop it.

They may have no ability for insight, so you might need to stop them quite crudely. If they have an ability for insight you could interrupt them much more gently. I think it always depends on our own situation; the situation of the other; and the third factor, the methods we know. How to assess the other's situation, how to assess our own situation, and to have many techniques available to us. That's the important thing.

Comment: Are you saying it would be good to know a wrathful practice and to maybe use it sometimes?

Yes.

Comment: I've never done one, so I always thought that was...

A very simple practice is to do the three Aa practice and then from this very relaxed state, you can imagine fountains of Hungs coming up and going out and clearing the space. Sounding a bit like what we hear now with the lawnmower outside cutting the grass..., Huuunnnnggg.

Comment: Well, it's very helpful. I do it if I don't forget it, nearly every morning before I go in the school building, and especially when I go in the room where the teachers meet. I don't jump in now, I wait a little. Here I am. It's very helpful, really.

As buddhists, we commit ourselves to trying to gain enlightenment for ourselves and others. That means we commit ourselves to intentional activity, and we're aware that karma and all these habits come up like waves passing through us. Sometimes in meditation you can just let these waves pass through, but if you act out of these waves, you're likely to get trapped. So we need to learn how to be intentional. To take up an intention. My intention is do no harm and the second intention is to do some good.

This is the basic hinayana notion, but because we're practising in the mahayana, part of our commitment is also not to let other people do harm. If people are harming us, they are getting themselves into a bad situation. So

then it can be important to say to people, *"You're hurting me. Please stop! Why are you speaking to me in this way?"*

Comment: And to mean it...

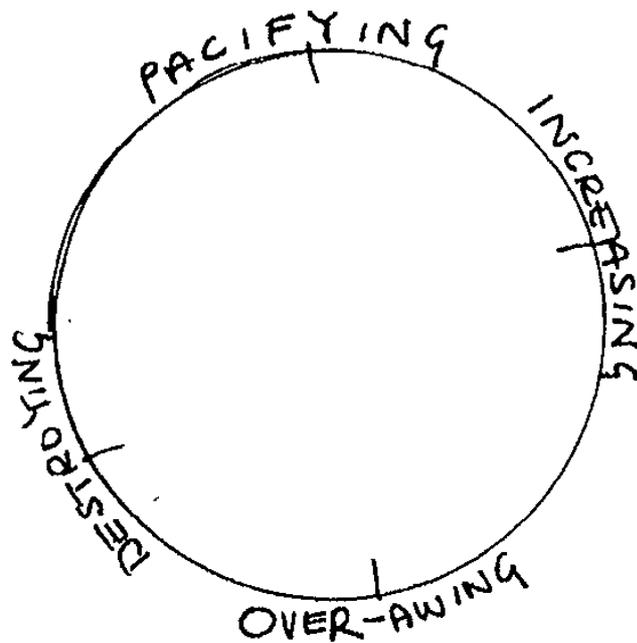
Yes, to mean it. It's simply not acceptable to speak to me this way. Many people have childhood experiences of very critical parents, or shaming parents, and they themselves speak in this same way to other people. Sometimes, in order to wake people up we maybe need to hit them a little bit, but in general we should be respectful and polite. However if people are not being that way towards us, we need to stop them. Which means knowing where your boundary is.

If on your side you're thinking, "Oh, well, maybe I'm not entitled to do that," you might have lots of doubts, and you step back. But if you turn it around and think, "This person is out of control. They're lost. They're getting angry and they're dumping all this stuff on me. They shouldn't do that. This is not good, because if they do it to me they're likely to do it to other people. I have the benefit of having some meditation and thoughtfulness, if I don't stand up to them, who will?"

Primo Levi famously asked the question, *"If not me, then who? If not now, when?"* Who is going to stand up to the bully? That's always a question. The world is full of bullies. It's very difficult to stand up to these bullies. We have to do it ourselves.

FOUR ACTIVITIES [DIAGRAM 14]

①④



In the mandala we have these four activities which are very, very important. The activities pacifying; increasing; over-awing and destroying are the four

activities. In Tibetan the big puja texts are called *trin le*. *Trin le* means an activity. The reason these big pujas are done is because they are seen as being activity performed on behalf of the world. Tibetans believe that when they do these meditations the effect is not just for themselves, but it actually goes out and helps other people. They believe that because the mind is important and because there is no real boundary to the mind, if our mind is very big we can also change things in the world.

The first activity, pacifying means sickness, illness, famine, crop-failure, hail-stones, all of these should be pacified. This is also an activity that we need to do as people. The babies cry, you pick it up. Somebody's upset, you say, "*Hey, what's the matter?*" We do those kinds of things, don't we? We know how to make things peaceful.

The second activity, increasing means making things grow and develop. So you have a garden and you make flowers. Or you give a party and you help people to feel better. In those sort of ways you make good things happen. Another example is a teacher who spreads knowledge and helps people develop their lives, so that instead of being restricted they start to open up. , All that is meant by increasing.

These two activities can also be attitudes we have towards the world: I want to pacify what is difficult; I want to increase what is good. So pacifying is like 'do no evil', bring down the bad things. Increasing is 'trying to do good', to bring up the good things.

Over-awing, the third activity refers to awe, a quality of grandeur or splendour. You often see this in paintings of Guru Rinpoche. He looks very proud, like an old-fashioned king, who wears wonderful clothes and you can imagine that trumpets would be blowing and people thinking, "Ah, the King!" Then they might go down a little bit. So there's the idea that in the face of this awe, or this majesty or presence everybody else is put down a little bit. If you have trouble with people at work, one way is just to become very big, and then you don't need to do too much more.

You just look at the lamas. C.R. Lama is very good at this. Sometimes he just looks at people and.... Maybe you can remember when you were in primary school, perhaps you had a teacher who would just look at you. You want that teacher to like you, you feel very bad if they look bad. When a person has this kind of power, it's a powerful way of controlling but it's also very soft, isn't it? Because somehow you adapt to it.

Without them acting on you, just by them being themselves, somehow you come into that position. It's an adaption that comes about. If we, in ourselves, feel weak and stupid and powerless, the opposite of over-awing, we are under-awing, which invites people to come on top of us. That's not very helpful because when they come on top of us, they come on top of us with the five poisons.

Filling your own space, living in your own skin, being fully yourself. You're not invading other people's space, but you're not frightened to fill your own space. You're just in your own space. The unfortunate thing is most human beings are not really people. We are more like frightened ghosts.

Comment: This over-awing. Awing, okay, but over-awing...?

To over-awe other people means your awe goes over them and puts them down. In Tibetan it is called *wang du dud pa* which means 'put under your power'. Sometimes it involves magic, doing spells on people, that kind of thing.

The key thing is that you can only do this if you have power. Remember the Tibetan words *wang du dud pa*, put under your power. If you have no power, what are you going to put them under? First of all, you have to have power, and you have to carry your power with you all the time and not give it away.

By power here, we basically mean self-respect. When we have self-respect, we are not anxious. When we are not anxious, we are intelligent. When we are intelligent, we remember who we are and we have all our qualities. But if we go into a situation where somebody shames us, we shrink and we become stupid, and we forget all that we know. Have you had that experience? You don't know who you are? Taking power means to hang onto yourself, to have access to all your resources because then you can mobilise the meditation methods you need in order to help other people. If other people frighten you, you can't make use of these methods.

An example is if someone invades your country and you run away like a refugee. Then you want to buy some guns to fight back, but now you have no money because you left all the money in your country. Your enemy now has the money. That's the reality for many refugees. If we become a psychological refugee, if we run out of our own self to be frightened somewhere, we leave behind all these tools, all these methods that we know. We can't fight back. Then you have to wait for the enemy to retreat which may take a long time.

This is what can be happening when people get trapped in destructive relationships. They can't get out because the other person has got hold of their resources. Friends might say to them, "*Why do you let him talk to you in that way? I wouldn't stand for it.*" But once the person is in this situation, they don't have a place to stand any more. Their feet are being cut off, and they're now in this position. We can all get frightened out of our selves. That's why respect and power are very important qualities.

Destroying, the fourth activity, describes when we use our power to nip something in the bud. When plants are growing and there's just a little bud coming out, if you just nip off the bud, it's easy to kill the plant at this time. If you notice when bad things are coming, it's best to destroy them 'in the bud'. If you wait till the full battle comes up many people will die; you will get really burned. This is noticing—it's exactly the issue, I think, the issue of getting the point – because to get the point is to be able to see when to act.

Timing is always very important. If you let people get too big—this is exactly what happened with Yugoslavia. There was a lot of warning, there were reports which I certainly was reading in the Britain papers before the fighting started, but nobody did anything. Later, of course, it's too difficult. But if somebody had gone in right at the very beginning and said "*Stop it!*" then maybe many people would still be alive.

The destroying means to cut nonsense as it starts. Somebody starts to speak to you in a funny way and you say "*Oy, what's that?*"

Comment: Normally that's difficult, but that's the way?

That's the way.

Comment: The first time?

The first time. Otherwise you have to go into it. The more the problem comes up the more you have to become big. Then you go into this big, big wrathful god practice and the symbolism with that is very bloody and very murderous. That's quite difficult.

If you're doing the practice—at the moment we're talking about other individuals—if you're doing the practice on behalf of all beings, clearly, there are many evil people around and they need to be stopped. So you can try to do a practice to stop that.

But as regards yourself, it's just watching the boundary. Of course, it's the boundary of yourself, so if you don't observe yourself, you won't feel the vibration. Very often, we make relations with people out of an empty part in ourselves, and we're so happy to meet them we don't check out who they are. Then, we'll say "Hello" to somebody who's actually dangerous. But we did say "Hello" and having said "Hello", we get trapped.

There's a nice example of this in a novel from the sixties by Terry Southern, called *Candy*. It's a rather silly novel, but it gives a quite nice example of this very beautiful young girl, she's about eighteen, and she's out on the street and she meets a man with a hunched back. She invites him home and he sort of pesters her a little, but anyway she takes compassion on him and she gives him a cup of tea. Then he asks about a book which he has noticed on the top shelf, so she climbs up on a chair and she's leaning up to get it. Then she suddenly realises, "*Oh, my god! What is he seeing here?*" because it looks very provocative, and she turns round and she sees his eyes are getting a little bit red. Then she thinks, "*Oh, my god! What have I done? This poor man, I've tempted him,*" and then of course, he gets her. Because she thinks "*I've done this.*" She blames herself.

That kind of thing happens. You make a gesture and then you feel it's your fault, because you made the gesture. It wasn't clear what the deal was. They didn't have a contract and so he was pushing the boundary and she was retreating out of her guilt. These situations happen a lot in life, sexually, financially, in all kind of ways.

Generally speaking, we need to practice clear intention, and linked with the clear intention is the ability to activate these four kinds of activity.

This is the method of tantra which is about transforming situations by taking up particular positions.

In dzogchen, it's much more relaxed and we are much more tolerant of situations but you can only do that if you are not protecting anything. That's why, in the nyingma system, they have tantra and dzogchen mixed.

Monasteries are situations of absolute power, they are the absolute shrines of patriarchal authority, so naturally, they are very interested in power.

In dzogchen, as the texts say very clearly, whatever comes, comes. In the workplace, maybe what comes is that everyone in the office hates you and they laugh at you when you come in, and they pour coffee on your papers—well, this is what is happening. And if you feel distressed, then you just stay

with the one who is being distressed. And if you find yourself being thrown out in the street, you just stay with that too.

This is not most people's desire. However, if you want to follow that path, which is a very powerful way of seeing attachment, at what point will you say "Hey!" and what is that 'Hey!'? If you really want to do that then you have to make a deep commitment to the practice and study very well, and first of all, ask these questions *'Where does the mind rest? Where does it stay? Where does it go?'* Because unless you're very clear that the mind is empty, the more generous you are, you will get stretched and stretched and stretched, and then one day you will snap. Bang! That will happen, that's absolutely sure. If you are generous, like Jesus, at the final moment you will snap and ask, "Oh, my God! Daddy, do you really want to do this to me?"

You have to let go before you can be generous. If you try to let go after you've been generous then it's very difficult. Don't be like people who have a party in their house and then run around saying to people, *"Oh, watch the carpet! Oh, you're going to break that! Oh, my God!"*

MORE ON PHAT!

Now I want to go back to the Phat! a little bit.

Phat! has the idea of cutting something. If you're cutting a log you put the full weight of your body into the axe, so when you do this Phat! to be in it, really to let the sound express the force that you are putting to it. In this way it's also a good way of practising power and bringing your energy up.

If you're feeling emptied and down, use the Phat! before you go out. It's difficult to do in a work situation but you can do it at home before you go out. Really have the sense of bringing your energy up when you do it. It's very much from the belly, where the centre of the energy is.

PHAT! : SEE ALSO ATTACHMENT 18

First let's practice making the sound Phat! and then we can do some meditation with it.

Once again, watch your energy as you say it. If you find yourself getting a bit frightened or your voice comes out very weak, stop, take some breaths, open up your shoulders and just let it come out. One way maybe to get into that, is maybe to imagine someone is coming to attack you and you want to say "Hoy! Phat!", to push them away.

Give yourself the sense that this is a life and death situation. Really, meditation is life and death. We can stay asleep, we can get distracted and lost and that way we have one kind of life, which is half-dead. Or, we can really try to wake up and be much more alive. If we bring that energy into the meditation we can really connect with ourselves. It doesn't matter what other people do, focus in on your own experience.

[Phat! Practice]

Good. You want to shock yourself out of the continuity of the pattern of your thoughts.

I can hear that some people are still sounding the Phat! from the upper chest

so just watch that it's coming from below. You should really feel your body move. The whole body lifts up a bit. If you do it from the chest, you'll also strain yourself plus you won't get the same force.

So now we'll do the three Aas and then some sitting with Phat! Just for a shortish time.

We're using Phat! to open the space, whenever we get trapped in thoughts, or covered over by sensations.

The more intolerant you are of confusion covering you, the better you'll be able to see when other people are covering you with confusion. We can get into trouble in situations where other people's five poisons cover us over. Also our own confusion covers us over. Until we are able to clear these coverings in ourselves it's very difficult to clear them with other people. So this practice of Phat! is very, very helpful.

However, remember that these kinds of practices open you up a great deal, so you should, if possible, practise them quite a bit before the event you're going to.

Now, we're coming to the end. We'll do the Dorje Sempa and the Machig Labdron. We do that also because these are quite focusing practices. We do a little dissolving at the end of them but mainly focusing our energy through the sound, which gets us a bit grounded again.

If we were to keep doing this Phat! and open, then when you get in your car and drive away, it's not a good idea. If you're going to deal with more concrete kind of realities, the world as it is, you need to be in a place where you can mobilise your energy.

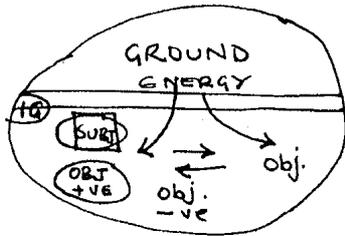
Use these opening practices such as Phat! to loosen yourself inside and then use the more focusing practices for dealing with the interactive energy.

We have to remember in Tibet, they didn't have the autobahn, they didn't even have motor cars, and they didn't have carts. In fact, they didn't have wheeled vehicles in Tibet. So if you did a whole lot of Phat! and you went outside, the worst thing that could happen is a yak would walk into you. Here, it's very different.

End

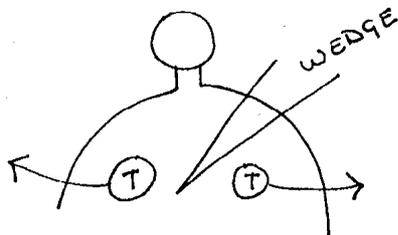
DIAGRAMS 1 - 14

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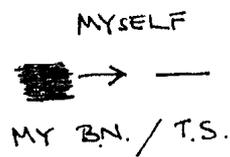
IG = IGNORANCE
 +VE = POSITIVE
 -VE = NEGATIVE
 OBJ = OBJECT
 SUBJ = SUBJECT

②



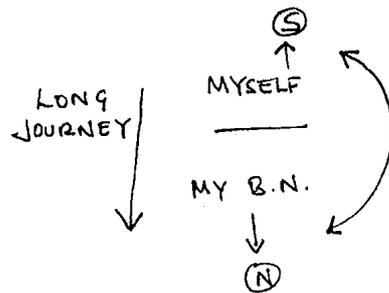
T = TENDENCIES +
 IMPULSES

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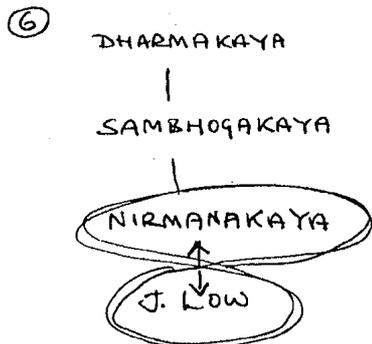
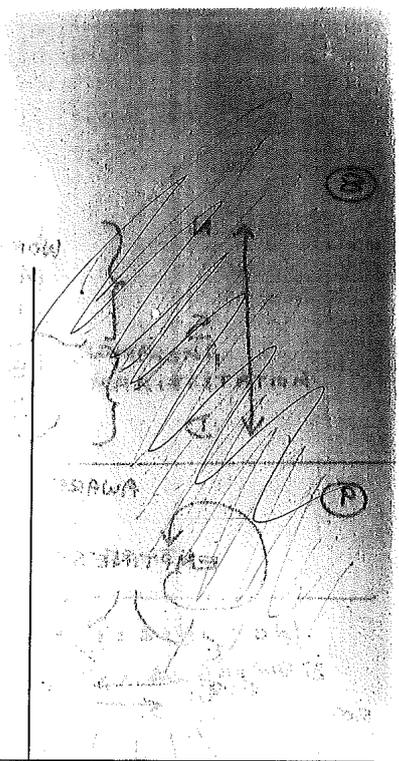
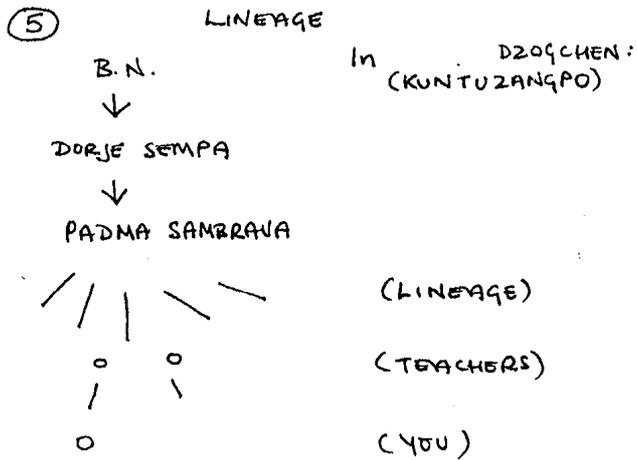


THICK + THIN SELF
 BN = BUDDHA NATURE
 TS = TRUE SELF

④



S = SAMSARA
 N = NIRVANA
 BN = BUDDHA NATURE

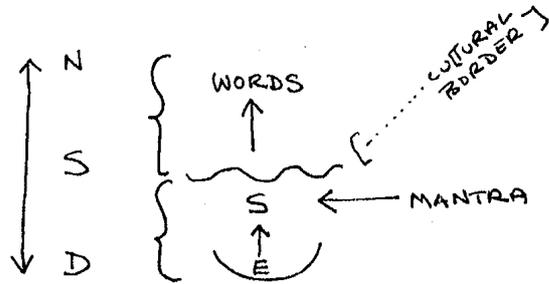


Integrated experience
of the deity in the world



HUNG

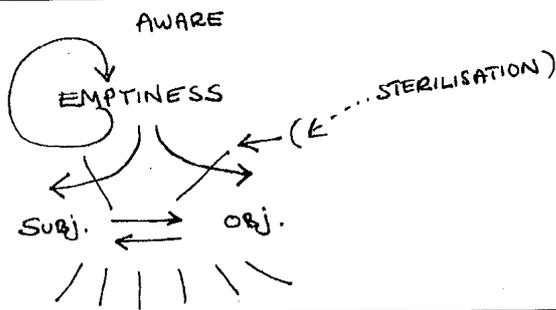
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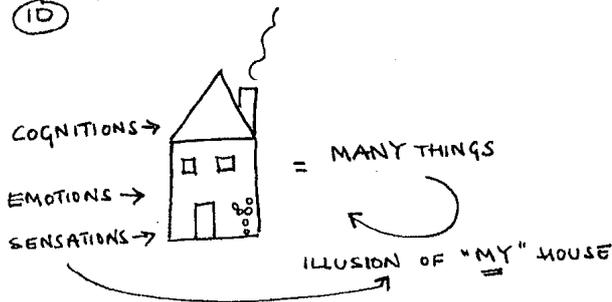
"REINTEGRATING SOUND + EMPTINESS"

N, S, D = the KAYAS
E = EMPTINESS
S = SOUND

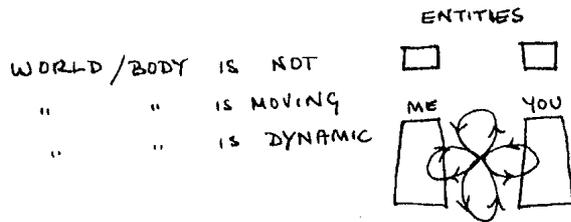
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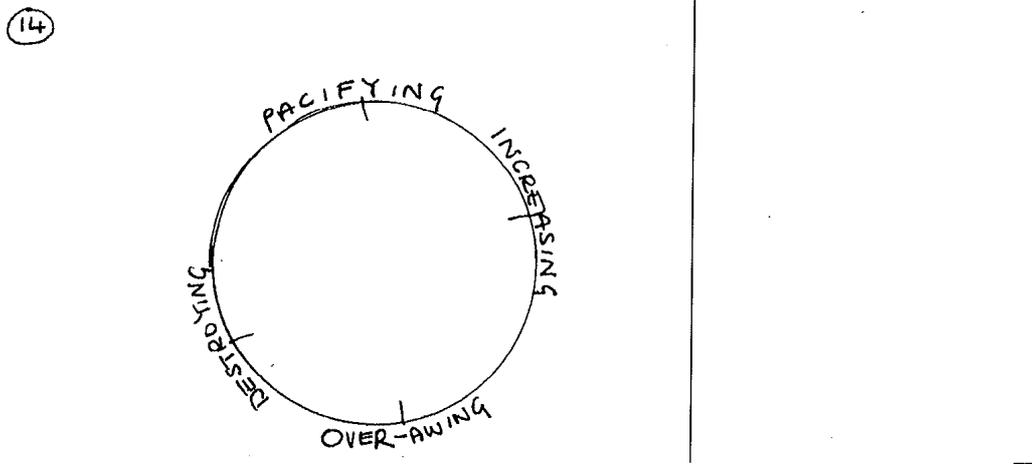
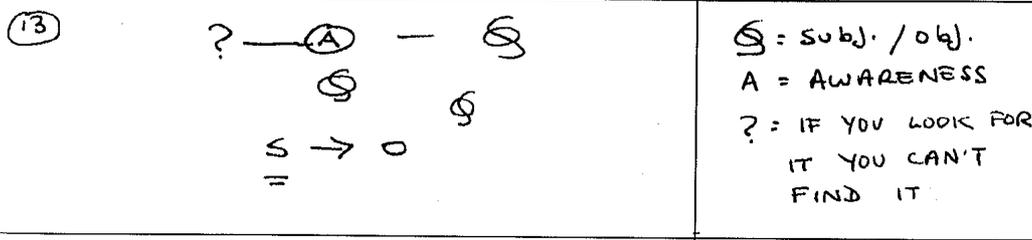
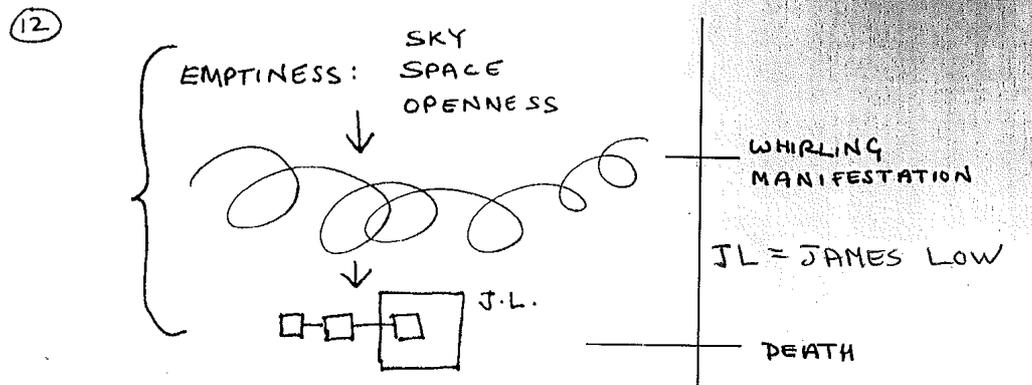


11



"WE EXIST AS SYSTEMS OF INTERACTION"

ENTITIES / BUILDING BLOCKS



PRACTICES TAUGHT DURING THE RETREAT

ATTACHMENT 1 - NINE-ROUND BREATHING

We'll do the nine-round breathing just to relax the body and open it up a bit. For our purposes just now, you don't need to visualise anything but just stay

quite relaxed. Women start using the left arm first, men start with the right. So for women it's left-right-left-right-left-right and for men the other way round.

With this kind of breathing, always breathe in and out through the nose. The reason is that as the air goes in through the nose, it gets warmed up in the sinuses, helping to clean them. It's also warm for breathing into the body.

If you breathe in directly through the mouth, especially if it's cold outside, you change your body temperature very quickly, and that causes a kind of shock, so it makes a tension in the body. Warming it slowly through the nose is better.

We start by breathing in while using our left arm if female, right arm if male. This wide opening gesture releases the chest. Then bring your hand towards your face and use the middle finger blocking the nostril of the same side; then breathe out the other nostril. As you're breathing out, lower the arm bringing compression on that side. Then bring your hand down, and start to breathe in, using the other arm. So we do that alternately, both sides three times. After that breathe in, and leaning forward go down as far as you can, using the pressure that's being exerted on the diaphragm to help bring out more of the air. We just do that slowly in our own time. There's no special visualisation to do.

ATTACHMENT 2 - BREATHING WITH HOLDING

We start again with the nine-round breathing. Then we go on to breathing in and out, but we start to extend the amount of time we have with the different stages of the breath. At first we can breathe in for a count of four, and then breathe out for a count of four. Each count is about one second. Often people will time it on their pulse which is a bit faster than a second. You can also make it slower.

Our breathe is like a muscular system, so we need to exercise it slowly, respectfully and gently. The more you do that, the more you will have the capacity to hold.

So just breathe in for four, out for four; in for four, out for four, in for four, out for four.

Once that is stable, you can then hold for two. So, in for four, hold for two, out for four. Later you can go in for four, hold for four, out for four. Then you can do in for six, hold for four, out for four.

You can also hold on the out-breath, but I think at first it is better just to hold on the in-breath. Usually, you take longer breathing in and you breathe out more quickly. Basically on that system you can do eight, four, four then eight, six, four.

You build it up for yourself, usually keeping the amount of time that you breathe in, two more than what you hold; and what you hold for can be the same as breathing out, or two more. So you could do ten, eight, six. Breathing in for ten, holding for eight, breathing out on six. Just practise it for yourself, slowly building it up. E.g.:

IN HOLD OUT

4	-	4
4	2	4
4	4	4
6	4	4
8	4	4
8	6	4
10	8	6

With this kind of breathing it's useful not to do it for too long at first when you're not used to it. According to the Tibetan system, our energy is quite subtle and is very much linked to mental functioning, so if you do a lot of it, you will find that your mood changes. You might get very happy or you might get sad. It often has a psychological effect.

That would be seen as a purification but there are times when you may not want that effect. If we're on a retreat like this, it's not a bad place to get a bit crazy, but if you're driving or something like that, don't do this kind of exercise then. Driving is an ego function and this is designed to displace the ego, so you should only do this kind of thing where you're reasonably safe.

Comment: I'd like to know why we're trying to make the in-breath longer than the out-breath because I have learned a lot about prolonging the out-breath.

Yes, we'll also do that later. At first we should focus on the breath, since many people do shallow breathing from the upper chest; so just getting used to a very slow in-breath and keeping a focus on that is helpful. Then later, once it becomes more stable we do more slow out-breath.

Generally in the hindu and the buddhist traditions, health is seen as linked to a very long, slow, even out-breath, but that first requires the deep in-breath. It's for that reason.

ATTACHMENT 3 - BREATHING WITH MUSCLE CONTROL: KUMBAKA

In order to help us hold the breath we make use of the muscles in the body.

Breathe in then tighten the muscles of the anal sphincter, so you're holding in your buttocks. You feel your buttocks getting tight, and you also tighten the muscles of the diaphragm, trying to 'lock' the air inside. So it's taking it in and then locking it. Breathe in, in a very relaxed way and then, when you want to hold, try just tightening and tightening, so you feel this rising pressure and lowering pressure, and hold it there.

You can do that for a count of four and then relax the muscles and the breath comes out.

Comment : Do I have to push it out, or let it come out?

The whole thing is to tense and then relax, and if you relax it will come out. The body wants to breathe. You can't get fresh air in when you have got all air inside, particularly if you've been doing deep breathing. So it will come out.

ATTACHMENT 4 - PAINTING: THE BODY IN MOVEMENT

Now we will do some painting. We are going to focus on the body in activity, to get a sense of the body as energy and movement.

We start with a little quiet sitting, focusing on the breath, and from that relaxed space we start to make marks on the paper. As you're doing this, keep the awareness in your body. If you get into thinking, go back to your breath, but try to keep your attention really focused on the sensation in the muscles in your body. We're not focusing so much on the image out there, but rather using the process of painting as a way of helping us simply to pay attention to our body in movement.

However you also have eyes, so you see what you are creating. Be aware of how the perception of what you are creating changes your body; the kind of movements that you make. You're observing both activity, and the result of the activity, as well as the feedback loop between them – all within the meditative state.

When you finish painting sit quietly with the image for a minute or two and just experience the physicality of the image. See if it holds for you your own body's energy in making of it, if you can feel the kinaesthetic energy that's gone from you into the image. With that, reflect on the process of making the image. Were you aware of your body? When did you lose awareness of your body? When did you just get caught up in what you were doing?

Reflect on that for a minute or two and then share and discuss it with a partner.

ATTACHMENT 5 - PAINTING: CREATING AND DESTROYING

Sitting in a circle we start with some meditation on the breath and then from that, just for a couple of minutes, we will make some marks out from our body, something that feels quite positive. Let's see if we can get something positive out from our body on the paper.

[Meditation and painting period]

Pass your painting around to the person on your right. Does everybody now have something? Good.

Now you have one minute to make this image in front of you very horrible. As horrible as is necessary. This is the wrathful god moment.

[Painting]

Now sit with it for a moment, feel the impact. Then pass it to the person on your right.

Okay, now you have to improve what you have here now.

[Painting]

Continue this process of improving and destroying until your original image is back in front of you.

Just sit with it now for a minute or so and then discuss in pairs, both the impact of getting your own image back plus the process of making these changes.

[Contemplation and discussion]

ATTACHMENT 6 - REFUGE: RECITING IN DIFFERENT RYTHMS

Okay, shall we just recite the refuge prayer? We can see that the verses allow nine possible stresses.

Let's first just recite them three times in a fairly fast reading form.

[Recite 3 times fairly fast]

How does that make you feel? Your breathing's going a bit faster because you weren't able to take such deep breaths since you have to breathe from your upper chest when you recite at that speed. It brings your energy up.

Let's now recite them a little bit slower.

[Recite 3 times slowly]

I'm sure you have a different kind of feeling with that. For me, it's a bit like in a tank or something; you imagine that you could just drive over anything. It's quite strong, quite powerful, quite relentless. That kind of tune can be good if you need to strengthen yourself. You get the feeling you can cut through anything. This is powerful.

Next, let's do it more slowly, like we were doing this morning.

[Recite 3 times more slowly].

That again, has, a different feel to it. You will have your own sense of what that feeling is.

Actually we can learn some more of these tunes but I think the key thing is—particularly from the point of view of dzogchen—to use the tune to harmonise with your mood, to strengthen it or to change it.

When we use it from the point of view of tantra, the pujas have a particular given rhythm to them. You meet with people together, and together you do it in that rhythm, and so it's a kind of lineage tune. It gives a sense of belonging, that it's the proper way to do things.

In the evening we'll go on doing some different kinds of singing and chanting and clapping and moving around, all to try to integrate sound and energy.

ATTACHMENT 7 - DORJE SEMPA PRACTICE

[Editor's note: For fuller commentary and explanation see [Being Guru Rinpoche](#) James Low, Traffords, 2006]

Page 168 begins with some prayers, then we now go into the Dorje Sempa practice.

**HRI RANG GI CHI TSUG PAD DA JA OD LONG
LA MA DOR SEM DORJE DRIL DZIN KAR
LONG KUI GYEN DZOG THUG KAR DA TENG HUNG
YIG GYE KOR WAR DUD TSII GYUN BAB NAE**

TSANG BUG NAE ZHUG DIG DRIB DAG PAR SAM

Hri. In the midst of rainbow light upon a lotus and moon on the top of my head is my guru in the form of Dorje Sempa who is white in colour holding a vajra and a bell. He wears all the sambhogakaya ornaments and in his heart upon a moon disc is the letter Hung around which the hundred syllable mantra revolves. From it a stream of amrita descends which I visualize as entering through the hole in my cranium and completely purifying my sins and obscurations.

On the crown of your head is Dorje Sempa. There's a little picture of Dorje Sempa in the practice text. He is white in colour, he holds the vajra in his right hand, a bell in the left hand. He is dressed in the sambhogakaya ornaments: the tiara on top of his head; big earrings; arm bands; wrist bands; upper necklace; waist necklace; and scarf. In the centre of his heart is the letter



hung and round that **hung** the hundred syllable mantra is turning in a spiral. The spiral is turning around the outside of this core mantra, coming out the top and in at the bottom and then up.

You should try to visualise the whole thing at once. The main thing is the feeling. Feeling opens the heart and it's the heart that gets the blessing. You could be very, very clear in a cold, clinical way but it wouldn't help you because it would be *far*. You want this to be a *near* experience, so even if the visualisation is not very clear, try to have the feeling that this is your living experience.

As this mantra is turning around the letter **hung**, drops of nectar are falling from it and filling up his body. His body is getting full, and then the nectar flows out of his right toe and drips into the top of your head, and your body becomes filled up with the nectar.

You can imagine this is a white fluid coming in through the top of your head, and as it goes down in your body, you imagine all the bad things, all the negativity that you have accumulated in any way starts to be pushed down as this pure stuff comes in. It goes out through your anus and down into the earth, which cracks open. At the bottom is a big demon with his mouth open and he swallows it up. He is very happy because he's getting something he likes, and we are made free of all of these sins. Then we imagine that our body is like a crystal, shining and very clear. As we are doing this meditation we recite this hundred syllable mantra.

When the mantra recitation ends Dorje Sempa's body from the bottom up and the top down melts into a ball of light. It just turns towards the centre and

becomes shining like a ball of mercury, and it descends down through the top of your head until it's shining in your heart. You are like crystal, with this shining ball in the centre, and then your body moves in and dissolves into this ball. At that time there is nothing else, there is only this ball, it is the only thing. This ball gets smaller and smaller until it's gone. Then just sit quietly.

In that state, if thoughts come, just let them come and go. Don't try to control things, don't welcome thoughts. If thoughts or feelings come, don't push them away, just allow them to come. You are no longer a private person protecting a small garden. This is now a public arena. This is the infinite *dharmadhatu*, we don't own it, it doesn't belong to anyone, anybody who wants can walk through it, it's not your private property anymore. The ego will still try to protect and play and shape, but it's not your territory anymore. If the ego makes it their territory, the meditations finished, you're back just in your ordinary thought. You will feel this urge to ownership—just relax back. Keep relaxing.

And then we come out of the meditation, and recognise that everything that we encounter including ourselves, has the nature of Dorje Sempa.

With this practice, we're using the visualisation as an antidote to the poisons that we have, to the sins that we have. We're using the purifying power of Dorje Sempa to empty the bad things out of us, just as if you are sick and you go to the doctor with a poison, he puts some medicine into you that drives the bad thing out of you. That's the basic principle. It's very, very simple.

The relative truth level of the purification of Dorje Sempa is the replacement of what is poison with nectar. The absolute truth, purification, lies in the dissolving practice. The dissolving is very, very important.

ATTACHMENT 8 - WHAT IS DORJE SEMPA?

Dorje Sempa is Tibetan and Vajrasattva is Sanskrit. *Vajra* means 'indestructible' and *sattva* means 'being', so Vajrasattva is the indestructible being. What is the indestructible being? It is awareness. Awareness and emptiness merged together is Dorje Sempa.

Dorje Sempa is inexpressible. Dorje Sempa is the nature of our own mind. We use the form of Dorje Sempa to help us realise our own mind. When through the meditation we get to a state where we can relax and our mind is not changing—the thoughts are moving through it but we are not distracted and we are quite open—that is the indestructible nature of the mind. That is Vajrasattva. In this Vajrasattva nature everything is purified. When the mind doesn't move, everything else moves. Then the mind and the production of the mind are separated. At the moment we are inside the production of the mind, we identify with the process of the mind's fabrications, and because these are good and bad and moving all the time, we have the experience of samsara.

When through the meditation we calm down and the thoughts come and go, the state of the mind at that time – which is sometimes called rigpa or awareness, or the merging of the mind in the dharmadhatu or dharmata – is also called Dorje Sempa. Dorje Sempa is pure because it's not touched by any of the thoughts that pass through. The thoughts just go past and no trace

is left.

This nature of the mind is indestructible because it has no self to touch. There is no friction because there's nothing for anything to bump into. You cannot write graffiti in the air, you can't write your name all over Dorje Sempa because it just goes through Dorje Sempa. It cannot be stained, it cannot be touched, and for that reason it is completely pure. This is the nature of Dorje Sempa. Because it is completely pure, it can purify everything.

Because in the dissolving stage of the meditation everything goes into this nature, we also recognise that everything is coming out of this nature. Thus the end of samsara reveals nirvana and simultaneously reveals the nature of samsara. It's not that thoughts come out of samsara, pass through this little window of nirvana and go back into samsara. When the thought arises from the nature of Dorje Sempa, if you take it as real, you pull the thought into samsara. If you leave the thought alone and it goes free, it remains in nirvana. We purify everything by maintaining the state of Dorje Sempa.

So when we pray "*Dorje Sempa please purify me*" what we mean is, using the power of the meditation—symbolically with rays of light—we loosen ourselves up so that then, when we do the dissolving practice, we merge into this pure nature. Remaining in this pure nature, our thoughts and feelings pass through without pulling us into activity. This is the purification of all karma. This is the renunciation of all bad activity, and so all our sins are purified.

ATTACHMENT 9 - SOUNDING Aa

Simply let the body be nice and relaxed, the spine straight. We simply make the sound **Aa** and keep it going in a continuous stream, as we breathe from the belly. Some people do it aloud, some people do it quietly. Work out what is good for you. As this wave of sound arises through you, just unify with the sound itself. So we'll start this and do it for some time.

Place your gaze in the space in front of you, not on the far wall but just in the space in front of you. As we recite the **Aa** feel the unification of the **Aa** in the heart and the **Aa** in space. Have the sense that **Aa** is the basic sound of the universe. **Aa** is the sound of emptiness, the basis of everything.

ATTACHMENT 10 - Aa AND TONGLÉN

Please stand up and find a space where you can move your arms out and in. We make the continuous sound of **Aa** because it expresses the nature of emptiness. We can keep the sense of **Aa** in our heart as we do it. The first stage is to put our hands at our hearts in the gesture of prayer. Then we extend our arms out straight ahead and sweep them out in a great circle leading back to the heart. As we do this we imagine all our happiness, all our merit, all the good things we possess flowing out from the **Aa** in our heart to all sentient beings, filling them up and removing all their pains and sorrows.

Then we change our gesture, moving our hands from the heart out to the side and then round to the front, and pulled back to the heart. By this we gather into ourselves all the suffering of all the beings in the six realms so that they dissolve into the **Aa** in our heart.

Then we shift again to the sharing of happiness. Alternate these moves for as

long as you like and end with the sharing of happiness.

The **Aa** in the heart is infinite. It has an infinite capacity to generate light, love and all good things and an infinite capacity to absorb trouble, difficulty and pain.

The important thing is the **Aa**, because the **Aa** is emptiness and emptiness is infinite protection. If you simply take everyone's problems onto yourself you'll sink down very hard. So we have the sense that we are quite open, we are transparent—like the gods, who are form and emptiness—the sense of just being very light and luminous, and so this whole thing is happening like in a dream.

Comment: Why are we doing it standing up?

So we can make this movement. If you prefer to do it sitting down, you could do that, if that feels better.

[Practice]

Now we just do three **Aas** with the sense of the space in front of us and just relax into the space before we go for dinner. Take the space of meditation with us, so that we bring this feeling into being together, eating, talking. If you get lost just bring yourself back into the meditation. Very gently.

ATTACHMENT 11 - THREE AAS

Aa represents emptiness, it represents *ka dag*, the primordial purity.

Everything arises from this and returns into it. The whole universe comes out of **Aa** and goes back into **Aa**.

Reciting **Aa** three times we allow the openness of the heart and the openness of space in front of us to reveal their non-difference.

We are meditating with our eyes open, not wide-open and staring but just gently resting in the space in the middle distance.

In that state, if any thoughts come, just let them go. Whatever is coming, things arising there or things arising here, don't separate subject and object, don't separate self and the room. Whatever is arising let it come, and then let it go. It doesn't matter what comes. The important thing is to relax so that it can go. If good thoughts come, don't hang onto them; if bad thoughts come, don't try and push them away. Everything will go free by itself.

[Meditation practice]

ATTACHMENT 12 - PHAT!

Now we do the same 3 **Aa** practice but this time we incorporate the use of **Phat!**

Phat! is a syllable which we use to cut off thoughts which are obscuring us. We use these three **Aas** to relax then maintain the open, sun-like awareness. It's as if our mind is like the rays of the sun spreading out and everything is very clear. Then we get involved with thoughts and they become like clouds covering over the sun and we get very dulled. When we feel that coming, we just do **Phat!**

Try to have a sense of the sound arising from just below the navel, coming straight out of the top of your head. The sound should be loud and intense so

that we shock ourselves alert. We destroy everything and then relax. We do Phat! and then it just goes free by itself. Don't get caught up with the Phat! That's not going to help. Just clear yourself away. Then continue just to stay relaxed and open.

When you close down, just use a Phat! You want it to come short, sharp and clear, so your body might move a little bit too. It's not something to think about.

It takes a little while to get used to it, but once you're familiar it just comes out by itself, a bit like sneezing.

[Meditation practice]

Just relax for a few minutes and then we'll do it again. With this kind of practice it's good not to keep pushing yourself if you get tired. It's a very different way for the mind to be; we're not usually in that state, so do it for five, ten minutes, take a brief break and then go back to it. Don't keep pushing and pushing. If you're pushing you're not doing the practice but merely intensifying duality.

[Meditation practice]

Once you have tasted the experience you can simply relax into out-breath. This kind of practice is very simple. You can do it any time. You don't need to say the **Aa** out loud or use Phat!. You can simply breathe out, nobody needs to know what you're doing. You can do it in any kind of space. You can do it at work, or sitting in a bar. You can do it anywhere you like.

Then you need never get bored because you always have something to do. For me, it's always very interesting in dharma events, for example if there are lamas, the lamas always seem to be late. People shuffle around, waiting for 'the dharma' to begin, looking a bit bored, and thinking 'This is not dharma'.

In any situation where we feel nothing is going on, we should be interested in the nothing that's going on, because for buddhas, nothing is better than something! We need never have time on our hands.

If life is a bit boring or depressing or whatever, you can just relax with **Aa**, and include your experience in the space. You don't have to push it away, you can just be with it.

We're going to do this meditation with our eyes open, here in this room, very relaxed. We're not putting the meditation apart from the room; we're meditating in the room, with the room. The room is part of the meditation; the other people are part of the meditation.

Then, at the end of the meditation, when we start to do some activities, try to keep that flavour through into whatever we do.

[Meditation practice]

ATTACHMENT 13- THREE AAS: STAYING ON THE ONE HAVING THE EXPERIENCE

We start with the three Aas again, and then whenever a thought or a feeling arises we just stay on the one who is having the experience. We will not do this for too long because it can be quite exhausting, quite difficult to get the feeling of it.

As each arising manifests, in order for us to have that experience, some noetic presence, some kind of aware presence, must be there. It often feels as if this presence is inside the thought that's arising, in which case it's somehow being inserted into each one, like a cocktail olive with a bit of pimento inside. What we have to do here is take the pimento out and keep it separate. You need a good toothpick to take it out.

You've done the relaxation, you're in the meditation, a thought is arising and immediately you're drawn into it, but instead, step back, relax in the openness of the mind. The tendency is to merge, but here we're just relaxing, and being present. Stay on the one who is aware.

The one who is aware and that which one is aware of, are very, very close but they're not the same thing. The one who is aware and looking is not the ordinary subject, it is not a concept. If you experience the one who is looking or knowing or thinking, as a concept, then you've fallen into another concept. And concept shall speak unto concept! Concepts talk to concepts.

Awareness doesn't talk to anyone. Awareness, the mind itself, from the very beginning, has been naked, single, alone. It's not caught up in anything. It's not trying to make anything; it's not trying to destroy anything. It's just by itself.

ATTACHMENT 14 - MEDITATION POSTURES

So sit up straight. We can do sit up straight to do the three Aas but if you want to lie down, that's fine too. So long as you remain aware. If you're falling asleep or if you want to sleep, that's fine too. The Buddha did it also.

You see these pictures and statues of the Buddha when he goes to die? He is lying down like this, his arm is like this, and he's got his thumb here on the neck, just here. This is also not a bad position to meditate in. It's very peaceful and it helps you to work on the pull of falling asleep but without falling asleep. It's a good balancing for the nerves, so you can also practise in that way.

Or, you can practise leaning against the wall with your arms out like this, this is also quite a nice balancing. It keeps your shoulders up from collapsing too much, the chest is still open. Head back on the wall.

Comment: First we try lying down?

Maybe also a few minutes getting up and moving around is probably also very wise.

ATTACHMENT 15 - WHERE DOES THE MIND COME FROM?

This is a brief enquiry practice looking into the nature of the mind, where it rests, where it comes from, where it goes to. Those kinds of question can be quite useful if your mind is a bit speedy, when you're quite awake and you're in the mood to do something. If you're in the mood to do something, just trying to relax and be open is not very helpful. You're going across your energy. Perhaps if you come home from work and you're quite speedy, you could focus onto this kind of question and use the energy you've built up to put it in this direction.

There are many ways into this meditation. You can start it through the visualisation and dissolving, or through the three Aas.

Then, when you're feeling a bit relaxed and open, just gently allow the

question to arise. *"Where does the mind come from?"* Then just let it hang there, and see what happens. Or ask yourself, *"Where is my mind?" "Where does it rest? Does it rest on anything?" "What is the basis of my mind?"*

As you're sitting, see *"What is my mind resting on? Is it resting on my body? Or is my body in my mind?"* Inquire into that, not too critically but in a very kind and tender way as if you were giving a lover a massage. So that you're just following the contours of your mind and exploring it.

Okay, shall we try that?

[Meditation practice]

... Now maybe let's take some time talking in pairs just to check out how you're doing so far with everything and what's clear for you, and what's not so clear; what your experience in the meditation is. Let's do a kind of review about how you're getting on and see if that generates any questions.

[Talking in pairs]

Now we will just do a final little meditation quietly together and the dedication of merit.

ATTACHMENT 16 - MACHIG LABDRON

When we pray to Machig Labdron, one of the things we can specially pray for is for the blessing of understanding emptiness. In the prayer we say **OM MA CHIG MA LA SOL WA DEP** and we imagine her in the form of the *dakini*, in front of us, and dancing. Even if you can't see her very well, you can just imagine lots of rainbows in the sky, and this very beautiful woman dancing, very freely and happily.

In the middle of her forehead is there is a white letter Om — Tibetan letter — It doesn't matter too much if you know what it looks like. At her throat she has a red letter **Aa**, and in her heart she has a blue letter Hung.

When we say **OM MA CHIG MA LA SOL WA DEP**, we pray to Machig Labdron with this white Om on her forehead. When we say **AA MA CHIG MA LA SOL WA DEP**, we're praying to Machig Labdron with the **Aa** on her throat. When we say **HUNG MA CHIG MA LA SOL WA DEP**, we pray to her with the Hung in her heart. Om **Aa** Hung represents the three kayas, that is to say the white Om is the nirmanakaya, the red **Aa** is the sambhogakaya and the blue Hung is the dharmakaya. That is to say, it is the buddha's body, speech and mind. In the Tibetan system, the body is on the head, the speech and the voice in the throat, and the mind is in the heart.

When we say, **KAR PO OM GYI JING GYI LOB**, we are imagining from this white Om on her forehead rays of white light are coming into our forehead. The white light comes into our body and purifies all our sins of the body and makes our body full of white light. When we say, **MAR PO AA GYI JING GYI LOB**, from the red AA in her throat, red light comes into our throat and fills our body, purifying all our sins of speech. When we say, **NGONG PO HUNG GYI JING GYI LOB**, it means rays of blue light comes out of the Hung in her heart into our heart, filling our body with blue light and that purifies all the sins of the mind.

In this one practice we have the purification of all sins, so it's a very powerful

brief practice to do.

With **OM AA HUNG** we get the first three initiations, and then, in this seventh line, when it talks of all the blessing coming together it means light comes from the Om and the **Aa** and the Hung at the same time into us, purifying all the defilements of body, speech and mind together, which gives the basis for the svabhavikakaya, which is the integration of the three kayas.

Just in this one verse we get the four initiations, and the four initiations are the basis of the tantric systems. It's quite complicated to explain, but without the four initiations they say you can't practice tantra. So it's very helpful to get an initiation into this practice if you can, from some lama who knows it well, in this lineage preferably C.R. Lama. If you can't do that, even just doing the prayer will give a blessing because this prayer is a public prayer.

That's really what we do the practice for, to gain the unification of the deity and ourselves, because her nature is form and emptiness, sound and emptiness, awareness and emptiness, and when we merge with her we gain the same qualities.

We can maintain this blessing all the time. We can do it in two ways. One is to do it generally in the tantric way: externally, everything you see you imagine has the quality of Machig Labdron's body, everything you hear has the quality of her speech, and everything you think, experience mentally, has the quality of her mind.

Also, you can do it just with breathing. When you breathe in, we breathe in on Om. When you hold your breath, you hold it on **Aa**, and when you breathe out, you breathe out on Hung. So that all the time Om **Aa** Hung is occurring and you integrate the three kayas of the buddha into yourself on an energetic level, without effort. Once you have this awareness going, you are purifying yourself all the time.

ATTACHMENT 17 - THREE AAS

Shall we do a little practice? If we start with the three Aas and then just sit for a while, very open, and when we sit there we have our eyes open, and we're looking in space in the centre of the room, you're aware of the walls and the people around you. These are not an obstacle to the meditation. Include this in the meditation but don't strongly identify the people you're seeing or think "*Oh, she's wearing yellow or green or red, or whatever*". If that thought is arising, just stay on the thought – not going into it, not being busy, but just relaxed – and you will gradually find that what you're seeing, transforms.

ATTACHMENT 18 - PHAT!

First let's practice making the sound Phat! and then we can do some meditation with it.

Once again, watch your energy as you say it. If you find yourself getting a bit frightened or your voice comes out very weak, stop, take some breaths, open up your shoulders and just let it come out. One way maybe to get into that, is maybe to imagine someone is coming to attack you and you want to say "Hoy! Phat!", to push them away.

Give yourself the sense that this is a life and death situation. Really,

meditation is life and death. We can stay asleep, we can get distracted and lost and that way we have one kind of life, which is half-dead. Or, we can really try to wake up and be much more alive. If we bring that energy into the meditation we can really connect with ourselves. It doesn't matter what other people do, focus in on your own experience.

[Phat! Practice]

Good. You want to shock yourself out of the continuity of the pattern of your thoughts.

I can hear that some people are still sounding the Phat! from the upper chest so just watch that it's coming from below. You should really feel your body move. The whole body lifts up a bit. If you do it from the chest, you'll also strain yourself plus you won't get the same force.