

LAMA YESHE

KNOWLEDGE-

*The Peaceful Path  
to Liberation*

WISDOM

COLLECTED TEACHINGS • VOLUME 1

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never be reborn in unfortunate circumstances, receive only rebirths in situations  
conducive to the perfect practice of Dharma, meet only perfectly qualified  
spiritual guides, quickly develop bodhicitta and immediately  
attain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.*



LAMA YESHE

# Knowledge-Wisdom

*The Peaceful Path to Liberation*

COLLECTED TEACHINGS

VOLUME I

Edited by Nicholas Ribush

Part 2 edited by Uldis Balodis

Compiled by Sandra Smith

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## Preface



THIS COLLECTION is drawn from teachings given by Lama Thubten Yeshe in the 1970s and 1980s, when he and Lama Zopa Rinpoche traveled the world, teaching extensively. Lama Yeshe was a pioneer in bringing the Dharma to Westerners and the teachings in this book demonstrate his understanding of the Western psyche and his ability to express profound truths in simple terms.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche has described Lama Yeshe as a great, hidden yogi, with high attainments that weren't revealed to others. As well as showing the path to enlightenment to his students, Lama was like a parent, giving advice and happiness. Rinpoche said, "Lama's particular skill was to know exactly what was needed right at that particular time, so even with just a smile or a few words he made others happy and gave them hope."

In Part 1 of this book, Lama Yeshe advises how we can transform our lives by developing warm-heartedness and "knowledge-wisdom," while maintaining a relaxed attitude to our practice. He discusses the principal aspects of the path to enlightenment and gives general advice on relationships, educating children and a range of other issues. Part 1 includes *Integrating What You've Heard*, an edited transcript of the earliest recorded teaching given by Lama Yeshe at Kopan Monastery, Nepal, in 1972.

Part 2 features three discourses given by Lama Yeshe at the sixteenth Kopan meditation course, held at Kopan Monastery, Nepal, in November–December 1983. These were Lama's last public teachings before his health suddenly deteriorated and he was rushed from Kopan to Delhi and then to the United States for treatment. Tragically, Lama passed away in March 1984, so these three teachings have a special significance. In these final teachings at Kopan, Lama offers essential advice to students on how to integrate Dharma when they return to the West. He gives an overview of refuge, the five lay precepts and bodhisattva vows, and teaches

on bodhicitta, advising students to hold others dear and benefit them as much as possible.

The teachings in Part 1 of this collection are edited by Nicholas Ribush and include new material. The complete discourses are published here for the first time. Excerpts from these discourses were previously published in the ebook series, *The Enlightened Experience: Volumes 1–3*, online at Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive and in other publications including *Mandala* magazine. Uldis Balodis edited Lama’s final teachings at Kopan, presented in Part 2 of this book. The editor of *The First Clear Step* is not known.

The archive numbers for these teachings are: 011, 025, 046, 072, 147, 224, 337, 395, 443, 447 and 711. To access the teachings online, go to [LamaYeshe.com](http://LamaYeshe.com) and search by teaching title or by entering the archive number using the Search the Archive Database link on the home page. A comprehensive glossary of the Buddhist terms in this book can also be found on the Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive website.

Please enjoy these precious teachings, which contain essential and practical advice for both new and old students. Lama consistently encouraged students to recognize and develop their limitless potential, and his dynamic teaching style means that these teachings are as relevant and accessible today as when first taught. As Lama said, “Be wise. Treat yourself, your mind, sympathetically, with loving kindness. If you are gentle with yourself, you will become gentle with others.”

Sandra Smith  
Palmwoods, Australia  
August 2022

PART 1



Collected Teachings from 1972 to 1983

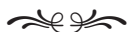


MORGAN GROVES

Bloomington, Indiana, 1975

# 1. The Simple Art of Meditation

*Bloomington, Indiana, USA, 25 July 1975*



MEDITATION IS very simple. When hearing about meditation for the first time you might think, “That must be very special; meditation couldn’t be for me but only for special people.” This just creates a gap between you and meditation.

Actually, watching television, which we all do, is a bit like meditating. When you watch television, you watch what’s happening on the screen; when you meditate, you watch what’s happening on the inner screen of your mind—where you can see all your good qualities, but all your inner garbage as well. That’s why meditation is simple.

The difference, however, is that through meditation you learn about the nature of your mind rather than the sense world of desire and attachment. Why is this important? We think that worldly things are very useful, but the enjoyment they bring is minimal and transient. Meditation, on the other hand, has so much more to offer—joy, understanding, higher communication and control. Control here does not mean that you are controlled by somebody else but rather by your own understanding knowledge-wisdom, which is a totally peaceful and joyful experience. Thus, meditation is very useful.

Also, if you exaggerate the value of external objects, thinking that they are the most important things in life, you ignore your inner beauty and internal joyful energy; if you look only outside of yourself, you neglect your most precious human qualities—your intellect and your potential to communicate in higher ways. Thus, meditation shows you clean clear which objects of attachment confuse you and with which kinds of mind you relate to them.

Furthermore, meditation is a very quick method of discovering the nature of reality. It’s just like a computer. Computers can check many

things extremely quickly, put them together and all of a sudden, *pam!*—we're on the moon. Similarly, meditation can quickly make things clean clear, but we don't have to go to the trouble of learning by trial and error through laboratory experiments. Many people seem to think that making mistakes is a very important part of learning. My point of view is that this is a misconception. "To learn the reality of misery, you have to have miserable experiences"? I say that this is not so. Through meditation we can learn things clean clear, without having to experience them.

Thus, meditation does not mean the study of Buddhist philosophy and doctrine. It is learning about our own nature: what we are and how we exist.

Some books say that the purpose of meditation is to make us conscious, but despite the usual Western connotation, the terms "awareness" and "consciousness" are not necessarily positive. They can be selfish functions of the ego. Awareness and consciousness do not mean the fully awakened state of knowledge-wisdom. Awareness can simply be an ego-trip. I mean, many times we're aware and conscious, but since we possess neither wisdom nor understanding, our minds are still polluted. We think that we're conscious, but our minds are foggy and unclear. Therefore, awareness and consciousness are not exclusively the result of meditation. What has to happen is that through meditation, awareness and consciousness must become knowledge-wisdom.

Another idea that many people have is that meditation is beautiful because it produces calm and relaxation. But calm and relaxation are not necessarily the result of meditation. For example, when we are asleep and our mind has sunk to an unconscious level, we are relaxed. Of course, this is not the same relaxation that meditation brings.

Meditation releases us from the uncontrolled, polluted mind. Automatically, we become joyful and can see meaning in our life. Hence, we can direct the energy of our body, speech and mind in beneficial directions instead of wasting it through not knowing what we want.

In fact, most of the time we don't know what we want. We try something, but then, "Oh, I don't want this." So we try something else, but again, "I don't want this either." Our life is constantly changing, changing, changing; again and again, our energies are sublimated into one thing, then another, and we reach nowhere—doesn't this sound familiar?

We should make sure we understand our behavior. We put ourselves on so many different trips and into so many life situations with no understanding of what direction is really worth going in, thus wasting enormous amounts of time. Meditation purifies and clarifies our view, enabling us to understand the different lifestyles and beliefs of basically every sentient being in the universe. Thus we can see which are worthwhile and which are not. A human being, sitting in one place in meditation, can see all this. It is definitely possible.

When our minds are clean clear, we can choose a beneficial way of life.

Most of the time we're confused and don't know what we want out of life. As I said, sometimes we think that we have to make mistakes to learn. No, this is not necessary. If, through meditation, our mind is clean and clear, we can see all the different trips, ways of life and actions of the universal living beings. A human being sitting in one place in meditation can see all this. It is definitely possible.

From one point of view, meditation is easy; from another, it is not. Why do I say this? Take, for example, the question: "What is water?" How can one know what water is? An easy way to tell someone what water is would be to reply, "That's so simple—go over there and drink some." The complicated way to determine the essence of water would be to undertake a variety of analyses in a scientific laboratory. Similarly, meditation can be easy or difficult.

If we really want to know what meditation is and put it into action, we should first check with someone who has already had some meditational experience and then try it for ourselves. That's more worthwhile than getting a book on meditation from the library and trying to practice from that, because words are merely a picture of reality and the reality of personal experience cannot easily be expressed in writing. Furthermore, our limited minds often distort what words say. Of course, we use words to train our mind, but there is often a big gap between words and reality.

Our parents always told us to be good, advising us against such things as getting angry and smoking. But why didn't we change? Intellectually, we knew our parents were right, that such actions were bad, but we didn't change. We should check up. In the same way, books might say, "This is good, this is bad," but we still don't change and remain as uncontrolled as ever. Why is that? It's because we lack the experience. We've knocked

here, we've knocked there, but we've never knocked on the essential door. Therefore, the lamas have found that it is most useful to learn from people who themselves have had real experience.

But still, we are funny. Although we have an experienced teacher of meditation or philosophy or whatever, we get attached to that teacher, meditation or philosophy. Then when somebody tells us that our teacher, meditation or philosophy is no good, we completely freak out and almost become violent. We react in this way because of misconception; we regard our spiritual path or meditation as we do material things in a supermarket. We sublimate our attachment to supermarket goodies into attachment to religion or meditation. Instead of benefiting by releasing ourselves from emotional attachment, we only produce more. This point is extremely important to understand. No matter what our religion, what our philosophy, what our highest goal, we should not be attached to it.

When we want to cross a bridge over a river, we recognize that the bridge is very useful. But we are most unwise if we get attached to it and think, "Oh, fantastic! I want to stay on this wonderful bridge. Before I came to it, my life was so complicated and I couldn't get anywhere. Now I'm so attached to this bridge." That way of thinking is very mistaken indeed.

So, being attached to the Dharma is just another trip, albeit a spiritual trip, and not in the least worthwhile. Instead of solving our problems, we only create more. What I'm saying is this: whether our meditation practice and religious life are worthwhile or not depends on how we interpret what we have learned.

Unfortunately, our minds are limited and we paint our own pictures of what meditation and religion really are. With limited minds, we make limited pictures: "Meditation means this," "religion means that," "this is religion," "this is meditation," "this is that." Therefore, it is very, very important that no matter what we are doing, we use correctly whatever wisdom and method we have. We should use them correctly and not be attached to them. If somebody tells us our philosophy or meditation is bad and we get upset, it means that there is something wrong with our practice.

This is the trouble with the world nowadays—the biggest trouble. Although we think that society, politicians or the economy are the cause of all the troubles we face, in fact, our troubles come from our own mind.



Our mind is the creator of all problems. We should not blame society; we should not blame other people: “He makes problems for me.” The problems come from us; mostly we make our own problems. We apply so much paint to cover things up that we prevent ourselves from seeing the reality of any existence, inner or outer.

Anyway, no matter what we say, “Religion is this, religion is that”—as long as we don’t put our religion into action, we are merely being hypocritical. Moreover, there will be no useful results, although superficially we might say, “Oh, it’s good, it’s good.” Why do I say this? Religion has nothing to do with such fixed things out there. Whatever our religion, as soon as we put it into action and experience it through the action of our own knowledge-wisdom, the result will be there immediately. We shouldn’t get hung up wondering what the future results will be. Instead, we should put all our effort into the right path.

All the energy of this earth and its human beings is included in two divisions: mental and physical. Whatever exists, all is included completely within these divisions, internal and external. Most subjects of meditation concern mental rather than physical energy. But our problem is that we are always interested in and overestimating the value of physical energy and ignoring mental energy. That is the problem. Meditation, however, can clarify our mental energy and reveal the reality of the mind. Through meditation, we can discover that the joyful life does not come from the outside world but from within ourselves.

Good human relationships and mutual respect come from each of us. The way we usually decide whom to respect comes from such ways of thinking as, “If he respects me, I’ll respect him. If he doesn’t respect me, then I’m not going to respect him.” That is a completely ill-conceived way of thinking and totally unrealistic. Reality is something else; that’s why I say these ways of thinking are unrealistic. Our mind just fabricates such philosophies—philosophies of attachment—emotional philosophies rather than scientific ones.

If we perceive the reality of the mind of attachment and how it functions within our consciousness, we can transcend yet enjoy the sense world at the same time. Our present enjoyment of the sense world comes from grasping it tightly. As long as we continue in this way, instead of experiencing good results, the sense world will continue to hurt us. In other words, the way attachment works is to disturb our mental peace.

Now, many spiritually inclined people have good hearts and want to help everywhere. But unless their mind is clean and clear, they cannot really help other people. It is impossible to help others with confusion, attachment and emotion. Instead of trying to help our partner, motivated by emotional confusion, we should first make our own mind clean clear. Once we have achieved a strong, clean-clear mind, trying to help others is reasonable. But until then we only create more and more confusion, and saying that we are trying to help is just words. Although we always say it is good to have a good heart, if we lack wisdom and understanding, it doesn't work and we can't solve our problems. So, if we really want to solve society's problems and not just create more confusion, first we have to get ourselves together.

Meditation is medicine for the sick mind. The only way to solve mental problems is through mental energy. It is impossible to stop mental problems through the physical energy of drugstore medications. Of course, for temporal problems such as headaches, instead of saying, "Oh, that doesn't help" and rejecting drug treatment, we can try to destroy the cooperative conditions with drugs, and it might help the actual problem. But the basic problem is in the mind and all physical sickness is a manifestation of the sick mind. Sickness comes from the mind.

We always think sickness comes from outside. But, for instance, if there's tuberculosis in the room and it is likely to spread to all the people in it, if one's mind is strong, it will control the energy of the infection. The weak, however, will not be able to resist disease in this way. Thus, physical illness originates from the mind. This we should know well. Mental energy is much more powerful than physical energy.

## 2. What Is Dharma?

*Chenrezig Institute, Eudlo, Australia, 8 September 1979*



SUPPOSEDLY, all of us, including myself, should be Dharma practitioners, and here, the important things to know are what Dharma really is and how it should be practiced.

Generally, the word Dharma has many meanings, many different connotations. For example, there are various philosophical explanations, but we don't need to get involved in those. Practically, now, what we are involved in is *practicing* Dharma.

First of all, it is very difficult to understand exactly what Dharma really means for each of us as individuals. The reason is that we have to understand to some extent the relationship between the Dharma and our mind, or consciousness. In order to understand that, we need to understand that the mind, or consciousness, has two characteristics.

I am sure you have heard the philosophy of relative nature, or character, and absolute nature, or character. The relative nature of the mind, or psyche, or consciousness, is clarity and perception: the clear energy that has the ability to perceive reality, to allow the reflection of the reality of all existence. That is what we call the mind. People who have studied Buddhist teachings on the primary consciousnesses and the fifty-one mental factors will have some understanding; for them this will be easy.

But what I want you to understand is that our mind is the clarity and clear perception that can reflect the reality of existence, that's all. If you understand it in that way, the advantage is that when we talk about buddha potentiality, you can say, "Yes, we have buddha potential and can reach the same level as the Buddha." We understand the relationship between the Buddha and ourselves.

Otherwise, most of the time, sentient beings have the tendency, or dualistic attitude, to think, "I am completely dirty and unclean, totally

deluded and hopeless—sinful, negative, wrong, worthless.” Whether we are believers or nonbelievers, we human beings always have the tendency to identify ourselves in such a negative way. In other words, we are limited, like a passport identity. Our ego projects for each of us a very limited identity. The fact that we believe in and identify with such narrow, limited energy already begins to suffocate us. We are suffocating because we have a suffocating attitude.

*You* cannot make me limited; *you* cannot make me suffocate. My suffocation comes from my own limited neurotic thought. For that reason, each of us is responsible for ourselves. I am responsible for my confusion; I am responsible for my happiness or liberation or whatever I think are good things. I am responsible. Kangaroos cannot make me satisfied.

Then maybe the question arises that if the mind is clean-clear perception, how do we become confused, mixed up? Why are we neurotic? It’s because our way of thinking is wrong and we do not comprehend our own view, or perception. So the perception of consciousness is here on your side, reality is over there on the other side, and the view is somewhere between the reality and the consciousness—the perception view is somewhere in between.

We are too extreme. We are too obsessed with objects and grasp them in such a tight way; our conception is so tight. That is what we call confusion—not the perception itself; perception itself has the clarity to perceive garbage also. Its good side, its natural clarity, perceives the garbage view, but we don’t look at that clarity perception, we can’t see it. What we see is only unclear. So forget about the absolute—at the moment we don’t even touch the relative nature of the mind.

Thinking that human beings are hopeless is wrong. My thinking that I am hopeless, always beset by problems, is not true. From the Buddhist point of view, that is not true. Thinking that my consciousness, my mind, is absolutely hopeless is wrong. It is making a limitation that has nothing whatsoever to do with my own reality. Or sometimes we think that we are clever, but the true fact is that we make ourselves confused; we make ourselves dull by grasping at the hallucinated wrong view. The object of that view could also be Dharma, the philosophy of Dharma, the doctrine of Dharma.

Let’s say I ask each of you the question, what does Dharma mean, what are you doing, practicing? If you answer what you feel in a really open way,

each of you will answer differently. I bet you. That shows that each of you has a different view of what Dharma is and what it isn't. Even just Dharma philosophy itself creates confusion, makes some kind of thinking, trying to say what is Dharma, what isn't Dharma: "This is not Dharma, that is not Dharma, this way yes, that way yes, this way is Dharma, you should not do things that way because my lama says, because the Buddha says." Before you contacted Dharma you were already complicated; now that you have taken on the Dharma you've become even more so.

Of course, first, in the beginning, you see it as good, fascinating: "Dharma, wow!" It is kind of new, a new adventure, a new discovery in this Australian kangaroo land. But in fact, if you don't understand the relationship between your own mind and the Dharma, Dharma also becomes the source of confusion. We do know. I have experienced with my students that many times they come crying, crying. Every place I go, they have the fantasy, the idea, "OK, Lama Yeshe's coming, now I will tell him all my problems," or "Oh, I am so happy to see you," and they cry, cry, cry: "I broke these vows; that makes me upset. I told you when I met you a couple of years ago that I will be a good meditator and now I am not meditating, therefore I am completely upset." You see—what good is Dharma? Their meeting Dharma becomes the source of guilt and confusion, so what good is Dharma? I would like to know, what good is Dharma? Is that worthwhile or not worthwhile?

Actually, in truth, the Buddhist teaching is very simple, very simple. Mostly we emphasize knowing the two levels of truth of your own consciousness—the relative and the absolute—and then gradually making that understanding more and more clear. Making it more clear sounds like it was first totally dirty, but it's not necessary to think that way. Also, it is not necessary to think that at first it was perfect either. What we should understand clean clear is that our conceptualization, which daily interprets things as good or bad, is exaggerating and neurotic, and by thinking in that way we build up a fantasy. This means we are never in touch with any reality—inner or outer. Nor do we leave it as it is.

Good example, when you grow up in Western society and are like fifteen or between fifteen and twenty, or twenty-five or thirty or something in that area, confusion starts; more confusion, more neurosis. I want you to understand why. Check it out. Buddhist teachings show you what life is, what your lifestyle is. Check out how you were confused at the various

stages of your life; check out why you were confused. It was because you had the fantasy attitude of grasping a certain reality. You thought that that was real reality, solid; you had some kind of notion of indestructibility. Even now you think, or believe, that way, which is unrealistic.

Especially check out your up and down. Each day, how many times are you up and down, each day how many times do you say good or bad? It's like you believe that you can bring a piece of ice to Queensland, here, and sit on it, saying, "I want to stay here for a whole year." How can you stay there? It's too warm; the ice is going to melt. But still you believe, you hang on as if that can happen. Such a polluted ambition. Yet that's the same as what we have now. I definitely say that Western life, the confused Western life, is unbelievably up and down, up and down; even more so than life in primitive countries like Nepal and India. You can see why this up and down disturbs your whole life, makes you unstable. Why? Because you hang on to the unrealistic ideas that you hold on to in such a concrete way. There is no way you can hold, no way you can hold.

It's the same thing with relationships that human beings have with each other in the West. Human relationships are a good example of what I'm saying: they're also like the ice fantasy. You put a piece of ice here and say, "This is fantastic, I want it permanently." But the nature of ice is to melt, so disappointment is certain. That is why there is one time disappointment, broken heart; two times disappointment, broken heart. You know what broken heart means? I am not sure what broken heart means; I need an interpreter! Broken heart, broken heart, shaking your heart, crying. Each time you cry, cry, down, down, dissatisfaction each time. So you build up, build up disappointment, and each time your heart is broken you get more insecure, more insecure, more insecure. That is the source of the confusion. And also, we do not rely on each other. Each time you break with another person, "He did this, she did that," you distrust this, you distrust that, you distrust everything.

Perhaps you think, "People from primitive countries hang on and get some satisfaction, but here in the West we often change, so we become advanced." That is not true. That is garbage thinking. The point is that in your mind, first you think that something is concrete, it is lasting, you determine that, and the next second it disappears. That is the point of suffering. I am not saying that you necessarily do this, that it's wrong, but the conception, always thinking this way, this way, this way—that is painful;

that is really painful. It has nothing to do with advanced modern ways of thinking. That makes you more split rather than a complete modern person.

Now, the point is that, remember, the human consciousness, the human mind, has a relative nature, which is clean-clear energy and has the ability to reflect all existence. Therefore, if we contemplate on the clean-clear energy of our own relative consciousness, we automatically eliminate the concepts that make us irritated, that trouble us. For that reason, we say that human beings are profound. I am sure that Lama Zopa Rinpoche has explained the perfect human rebirth to you. It is precious because it has profound potential, a profound quality. You can even say its quality is pure. The sense of this is that the relative character of the human consciousness is not inextricably mixed with negativity or sin. That's all I'm saying: thinking that the human being is fundamentally negative and sinful is wrong.

In one of Maitreya's texts, he gives the example of how the nature of human consciousness is clean clear; how it has never been negative in character and never will be. It is like the nature of the sky—the sky's nature is always clear; it hasn't got the character of clouds and never will have. This example is so clear. Cloud character and space character are different. It's the same thing that our consciousness has clean-clear nature. But when we are caught by the ego's wrong conception way of thinking, the concepts that identify "that-this," that is what is wrong. But I am not saying that that is always wrong, the that-this thinking. But most of the time our thinking that-this has nothing to do with reality; it's only a superficial fantasy.

My point is that any time, no matter how much you are confused or fearful or in a suffering situation, you look into the clarity of your consciousness, your mind—it is always there, always there. This is the human beauty: human beings have the ability, human consciousness has the ability, to perceive things—good or bad, whatever it is—and also to use wisdom to discriminate between what is worthwhile and what is not. Good or bad, impure or pure, we can discriminate—that is the human beauty. Don't think that human beings are hopeless; that's not true. You are not a good meditator, therefore, "I am hopeless"—that is also wrong. "I cannot sit like this for one hour, therefore I am not a meditator." Again, that's your limited judgment. We do that, don't we? Who in Buddhism said that

you can only sit this way to become enlightened? Who said that? Where is that person? That's why human beauty, human profundity, is always existent. Even though intellectually you make yourself too limited, it is always existent.

You should not think, "Buddhism makes me good or bad. Now I have many ways to assess what is good, what is bad." As long as the relative mind is moving, day and night, twenty-four hours, karma, or good-bad, is existent. It is like, if I ask you Western people when we produced television, "Is television a fantastic vehicle?" When it first came out everybody said, "Wow, yes, fantastic." But now maybe some hippies say television is horrible, because there are too many garbage reflections. Similarly with our consciousness; it is like a clean-clear screen: it has the ability to reflect phenomena. So look at that. Here we have the real television; our consciousness is television, so we should look at it, we should contemplate on that clarity, and penetrate. In that way we can discover tranquility and peace.

When we say "Dharma," Dharma is our consciousness, part of our mind. A Dharma book is not Dharma. A Dharma teacher is not necessarily Dharma. Dharma philosophy is not Dharma. Dharma doctrine is not Dharma. Dharma is the action of that part of our wisdom energy that has the power to eliminate one thing in particular: the concepts of delusion. In other words, it becomes the antidote or solution to particular delusions and dissatisfaction. Then it is worthwhile; that is the reason the Dharma is worthwhile. That's the reason that we say that Dharma is holy, Dharma is worthwhile. Otherwise, if you understand it incorrectly, Dharma is not worthwhile; Dharma becomes a problem. You know—we already talked before how Dharma becomes a problem. So, developing comprehension of the relative mind or relative consciousness is the source of developing comprehension of the absolute character of the mind.

Also, that relative mind is an interdependent, composite gathering; an interdependent gathering of energy; not one absolute thing. When we say, "I am deluded," you cannot blame this side, "The perception side is bad, I want to smash it." Also, you cannot blame the object side, "That is bad, I want to smash it." Let's say, when you have some dirt on your face, you look in the mirror: "Wow! I am dirty, ugly. Ooh!" You cannot blame the mirror, nor can you blame your face. It's the gathering of parts that creates this phenomenon.



Similarly, no matter how much we think “I am bad” or “I am terrible,” if we examine the conception that thinks these things, you’ll find it’s a composite gathering. Many factors gather and then we say, “That is this, that and the other.” If you know all these things—each part gathers to make the relative phenomena—you can understand that there is no concrete, relative phenomenon inherently existent. Then you can see. All relative phenomena are superficial, impermanent, momentary, set up in such a way; then we say, “That, this, that, this, that, this,” including ourselves.

You see, actually, it has never occurred to our conception of ego, even in dreams, that the entire relative character of the I, the self, is composite energy; many parts of energy have gathered to become a bubble, or some kind of cloud. As a matter of fact, our body is like a cloud—one bunch of clouds come, one bunch of energy comes—this is the body. Each day when you wash, some part of the energy goes from the skin; each time you breathe, some kind of energy goes out with the breath. Then you eat and some kind of energy enters you. You probably know this kind of thing better than I do.

Therefore, the ego mind, the conception of ego, has never understood this relative notion of what I am, who I am; this relative way of constructing reality. It seems sort of indestructible. Actually, when you say, “I am good,” and try to prove it, it means you believe you are bad. I tell you, psychologically, inside you believe you are bad. Superficially you try to prove the opposite by saying, “I am good, I am good, I am good,” but that’s wrong—your mind is psychologically sick. You don’t accept the relative truth.

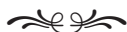
When you begin questioning the view and concepts of your ego mind, the possibility of opening, of understanding the absolute quality or characteristic of consciousness, begins. If you just leave it, if you never question—in other words if you believe that your concepts and your concrete view are true—then there is no way for you to begin to discover the absolute quality of consciousness, or mind.

It seems that Western scientific education has very much developed the idea that the whole thing—myself and everything else, the object—has some kind of concrete existence. That is wrong. I want you to understand that the Western scientific way of thinking, Western philosophy, has basically built up the concrete dualistic entity. I want you to understand that, instead of being proud of Western thought. Education gives us the

tendency to hang on to this basic way of existence, to hold the world as concrete: concrete Australia, concrete Australian beings. So, we suffocate easily. Maybe this freaks you out: “This man is making a revolution for us! Wait a minute!”

### 3. The First Clear Step

*Seventh Kopan meditation course, Nepal, 14 November 1974*<sup>1</sup>



FROM LAMA'S POINT of view, Buddhism is about you. The subject of this meditation course is not Lama—Lama is not interested in talking about Lama—the subject of this meditation course is you; this course is about you. So, learning Buddhism—learning about yourself—is that simple. It really is such a simple thing.

And Lama is not trying to be mystical, as written in some books, saying, “I am a magic Lama.” We don't try to teach you that way. Actually, we don't need to show you how to make magic—your mind is already magic, isn't it? We've always made magic: for countless lives, and even from the time of our birth until now, we've been making magic, cheating ourselves. Nobody else has had to teach us—we've taught ourselves to cheat ourselves.

Our schizophrenic mind always blames others for our problems. From its point of view, “He's causing my problems, she's causing my problems, my parents are causing my problems, this society is causing my problems.” From Lama's point of view, these are completely wrong conceptions; this way of thinking is schizophrenic; this is mental disease. With these wrong beliefs, misconceptions, you will never be able to solve problems.

We often think, “This is negative; that is negative.” But we have a wrong conception about what causes negativity, and the problems we experience are reactions to this wrong conception.

Therefore, you have to determine that during this meditation course you are going to realize completely that the problem is your misconceptions and that the blame definitely does not lie with others.

<sup>1</sup>This teaching was first published as a booklet by Manjushri Institute for Wisdom Culture, England, in 1977.

We always think, “He causes my problems, she causes my problems,” because our mind is not integrated. Our mind is split, so we always blame this and that. We don’t have straight understanding, right understanding, right view, right wisdom—that’s why we’re always confused. So this time you have to decide clearly what really makes you happy and joyful and your life meaningful, and what makes you unhappy, sorrowful and depressed. If you come to this conclusion then your meditation course will have been worthwhile.

Don’t think that meditation means simply sitting still trying to concentrate on only one thing. It’s not just that—that’s not nearly enough. If it were, that would mean that when you went back down to Kathmandu your concentration would disappear and, being left without wisdom, there would be no benefit from having taken the meditation course. Rather, you should have great determination to develop discriminating wisdom by understanding perfectly clearly—at least intellectually—what really causes problems. In this way, even when you are not sitting cross-legged, trying to concentrate, but walking down a Kathmandu street or back in the West, you have something to hold onto, something that allows you to judge how your mind is interpreting things—you are aware.

Otherwise, if you don’t have at least some intellectual method, how can you check yourself? There is no other way you can check to see if your mind is on some illusory, samsaric trip, full of wrong conceptions, or perceiving the right view. Without this, how can you know?

Why is it that many people say, “I’ve been meditating two years, six years, more . . . but I’m nowhere. I’ve gained nothing”? It’s because they don’t have understanding knowledge-wisdom; they cannot discriminate between right actions and wrong; they can’t see.

Maybe you can say intellectually, “Oh, what is right? What is wrong? Right and wrong are the same thing.” I’m sure many people in the West say, “Oh, what’s right? What’s the use of saying this, Lama? It’s all the same thing. Samsara is the same as nirvana.” But this is a wrong conception; everything is mixed up. Those people cannot discriminate between what is reality and what is false, and all they are doing is using the terminology of Dharma wisdom in the wrong way.

Of course, in absolute terms the ultimate reality of right and wrong, or samsara and nirvana, is the same thing. But when somebody makes you agitated or angry and you get red in the face and start to tremble, can you

really say that your peacefulness and your anger are the same thing? That example shows you reality, and you should not get hung up on some intellectual point of view that is way up in the sky, while you are stuck down on the earth all tied up by that. It does not help because the words you say are not true.

If somebody says to you, “Oh you are such a bad person,” and someone else says, “Oh you are so good,” it should never affect your mind. Good and bad come from within you and other people cannot make you good or bad. You have to realize this, and once you have you cannot be moved by what people say.

If somebody tells you how good you are and you grasp at it, “Yes, yes, yes,” and somebody else tells you how bad you are and you get depressed, “No, no, no,” it shows that the words you say, “Good and bad are the same thing,” are mere intellectual garbage rather than a realization of reality. If you had really realized reality it would be reflected in your actions, which would not be in conflict with your words, and whatever situation you were in, it would not matter—your mind would not be moved and you would always be in control.

We usually think that our point of view is correct. Yet if somebody comes along and says, “You’re completely wrong,” we get nervous because we pick up on his opinion—and that’s all it is—and believe what we are doing is wrong. His opinion alone makes us freak out. So, our becoming agitated and freaked out does not come from absolute reality, does it? All we have picked up on is the relative idea, yet we become confused and upset. This shows how we are, how our relative mind functions in normal, everyday life.

Checking such experiences is much more interesting than talking a lot about some philosophical point of view, some higher subject. That isn’t interesting; it does not help us because it is merely intellectual, it is still an idea. So why do you get angry? Your anger is not an idea! Your jealousy is not an idea!

And also, you should know that Buddhism is not a diplomatic religion. Lamas are not diplomatic people! Without hesitation, Lama will tell you about dirty things and *kaka*. It’s true!

We always talk diplomatically, saying, “Oh, you’re nice, you’re nice,” or “How are you today?” and so on. Of course, this is necessary in everyday life when we contact other human beings; being respectful to others

is worthwhile. But when talking about the truth, Dharma wisdom, being diplomatically nice cannot help. You have to check up the nature of negativity; you have to check up the nature of positivity. You should check up every day. But I'm sure you people—all European people—always want to see only the positive things in life, while hiding the negative things under your sweater.

But this is not the character of Lord Buddha. This is not the character of Buddhism. Really! Buddhism tells you exactly the way you think, the way you lead your daily life. Therefore, when you really communicate with Lama or with a Dharma book or whatever, you can correct your actions. It is fantastic for your mind—you can solve your schizophrenic mental problems. And then, whether others tell you that you are right or wrong, it does not matter. Your being right or wrong does not depend upon what other people say.

So you can see how much we suffer from schizophrenic mental disease. Somebody tells you that you're good: "Oh yes, yes—I'm good," you're up. Somebody tells you that you're bad: "Oh no, no—I'm bad," you're down. So that's really our mind's nature. That mind is samsara. Lama thinks that is samsara. Lord Buddha thinks that is samsara.

What I'm saying is that you should have perfect determination, knowing that understanding knowledge-wisdom is the only solution to problems, the only source of happiness and joy. That is what we call Dharma. Understanding wisdom is Dharma. Dharma is not this robe. And actual Dharma has nothing whatsoever to do with the culture of a particular country: it is not the culture of Western people; it is not the culture of Eastern people. Culture is the point of view of the ordinary people, the unwise majority who spend their whole time grasping at sense pleasures with attachment. Dharma wisdom has nothing whatsoever to do with the point of view of the foolish common people. Perhaps you could say that your understanding knowledge-wisdom is your own culture.

Lama does not discriminate in favour of Eastern culture. Just try to interpret the nature of your own mind, the nature of your own motivation. When you come to the conclusion that understanding knowledge-wisdom alone can make your life happy, joyful and meaningful, and that that is the only solution to problems, you will no longer hold the common view that, "As long as I have ice cream, I'll be happy; if I can't get ice cream,

I'll be unhappy." I mean, this is just an example, but we always think this way, don't we? It's a wrong conception, a wrong conception.

You know the Western way of life. Since you were born, your parents have been teaching you what are the best things to eat, how to be healthy and, especially, how to show that you are good. Everything is for show, for showing others how good you are, for ego. So your mind also grows that way. You think, "I should have good things. Comfortable property, a comfortable house, a comfortable wife, a comfortable husband. Perfect this, this, this. . . ." So much dreaming! You check this up—it's not just Lama's words, you know. You check up.

Check your own life's experiences. Once you might have dreamed, "If I could only get this, I'd be happy, perfectly happy." You decided something like that. So you got what you wanted but two or three days later, "Oh, if only I had that, then I'd be happy." Such experiences accumulate because the wrong-conception mind, believing incorrectly, always functions in this way. The constant craving, "I want this, I want that," can never finish. Desire is unlimited.

Of course, in the West the great explosion of material makes people think, "Ah, I can feed my desire. As long as I have money, I can buy everything and satisfy myself." You think like that, but it's a wrong conception; it's not true. How can you satisfy desire by feeding it? The philosophical or psychological point of view of Lord Buddha is that this is impossible—desire is unlimited and there is no way that you will be satisfied by feeding it with objects of desire. Impossible! Impossible! You check up now—we can debate it.

So you can really see, to make your life meaningful, to satisfy your mind, the only solution is Dharma knowledge-wisdom—understanding your own psychological nature. That is what makes you really happy; that makes you controlled. It's natural.

But perhaps you people think that being happy through control is pretending—a pretence by religious people. But it's not pretending; it is natural. You check up now, your experience of these first seven days of the meditation course. Just one hour's good meditation and good concentration in the morning and the whole day goes so smoothly. Just one hour's meditational experience and for all the hours of the day you can be healthy and happy, communicating with others well instead of nervously. So this

is your own experience—experience, not just an idea. That’s much better, isn’t it?

You know—after one hour you can control your mind and be happy, just naturally. From Lama’s point of view this is much more realistic than saying, “Everything is the same thing; I don’t want to hear that it is not.” That’s just an idea. An idea is not realistic. Realistic means action; your action. For instance, your present action of checking is more realistic. Although relative; of course, it’s still relative.

So you see, through your own small experience, the experience of your morning meditation, you can discover that your life—your body and mind—can progress continuously until you discover everlasting, blissful peace within your mind. You don’t discover it with intellect or through Lama’s words but through your own experience.

It’s so logical. If meditating for a short time in the morning gives you the control to be evenly happy all day, instead of up and down, then by keeping this meditation up for a year, you can be peaceful for two or three years. That peaceful mind can be developed continuously until you become everlastingly peaceful, joyful and understanding with people. I mean, you can see this possibility; that’s what Lama’s talking about.

I think it is most worthwhile that each morning you people put much effort into sitting here in this unusual position, with pain in your knees. You have some understanding to do this; it is meaningful. It is action rather than hypocritical talk about Dharma or religion.

Dharma, or religion, is not merely philosophy, doctrine or ideas; it is not just words. When you put Dharma into action you can feel, “My life is hopeful, meaningful.” But if you don’t put it into action, if you keep only the idea of it in your mind, you become depressed. Then you think, “Oh, I’m hopeless. I cannot do that. My life is not meaningful.”

You don’t put the idea into action, so you think like this. But if you do, you will know it’s really worthwhile, because you can see the result within you. You can see your karma—acting with such wisdom brings such a good result—through your own experience. Then you can say, “Ah, I think my life is hopeful and useful; it can be meaningful.” Then you can solve problems and eradicate depression.

You’re often up and down; you’re always saying, “Oh, I’m hopeless.” This is hypocritical. You talk about Dharma, but don’t act. You don’t actualize. You’re not integrating your life with Dharma. Therefore, you get depressed.



You might think that Dharma, or religion, is just an idea, but it is not. Therefore, we make rules for you to observe while you are at this course. Those rules are to help you—it's not that Lama is on some power trip! They're useful, very useful, really useful. You see, Lord Buddha's psychological treatment of the patient is not wrathful. We don't put you in jail. Instead, we put your mind into an atmosphere of discipline. That is Lord Buddha's treatment, psychology. The environment created by mental rules is our mental hospital.

Of course, you people are mentally healthy; I'm joking when I say "mental hospital." But we can interpret the rules in such a way. Still, you need to check up continuously and develop by realizing your own mental attitude, which is not the approach of Western psychologists. The way psychiatrists tend to interpret problems only increases the patient's superstitious mind instead of decreasing it.

For example, telling a person their suffering experience is the result of something their mother said or did during their childhood only produces more problems. It makes them angry with their parents, which merely makes them sicker. These are wrong interpretations. Instead of trying to get you to understand your own nature, they use different methods. Buddhist methods of psychological treatment and those of the West are not the same. But that's just for now—who knows how it will be in the future? Western psychologists often take something from here, something from there and then put it into Western terminology, so you can guess how it might go.

However, this meditation course is not easy—we know it is not easy. Why? Because Lama wants you to become the perfect psychologist, fully knowing your own and others' mind. But for you to become a psychologist through Lord Buddha's method takes time; and the process itself is difficult. We understand that it really is not easy, and you too should understand this point. I mean, how many years does it take for a Western student to become a psychologist? And we have only a month to make you a psychologist, to make you perfectly healthy mentally, understanding what you are, how you are. That's all we're trying to do, but it's a lot, isn't it? I think so! I think it is a lot. But worthwhile.

It is possible, you know. For someone who has wisdom and can put it all together, it is possible to quickly discover all this instead of always running from one place to another, thinking, "Oh, this place is no good," going

somewhere else, and then leaving that place for yet another. One day playing with monkeys, then, “Oh, monkeys are no good,” then playing with dogs. Then, “Oh, cats are not good,” and then another something.

This is not like that. This school, or whatever you want to call it, is not only for learning ideas. Here, at the same time you receive ideas you put them into action. Action! Action! That’s the way you learn. Learning with action is much more difficult than learning from university professors. Putting ideas into action is much more difficult than just talking about them.

Anyway, that’s enough. Instead of my continuing to talk, perhaps it’s better that I try to answer a few questions. Do you have any?

*Q.* How do we keep our attention on what we’re thinking and doing when we’re not angry? Anger draws attention to the mind, but how do we maintain mindfulness during normal times, at times when we’re not angry?

*Lama.* That’s a good question. Actually, anger arises from misconceptions, wrong conceptions. It comes from a mistaken mind. As I said before, it’s a mistake to think that it’s others that make you attracted or agitated. You yourself are responsible for what happens in your own mind. Blaming this and that on other people or things instead of yourself always brings problems and just makes you an angry person.

It’s good to understand the nature of anger. It’s a very strong emotion; it’s like a nail. If you stick a nail into yourself, you automatically feel pain. Craving desire is not like a nail. It creeps up on you slowly. Anger is wrathful, so you can see it easily. You can’t see desire; it’s sneaky, very difficult to recognize. Anger is easy to recognize, firstly because it’s painful but also because it’s stronger than attachment. Its function is to destroy; it’s like atomic energy. Atomic energy is automatically destructive. Anger is like that—it automatically destroys.

For example, say you have a partner and you’ve decided to live together to help each other, share experiences and so forth. You stay together peacefully for years, but then, one day, one of you gets really angry and it’s over, as if all those years never happened. Completely finished. So anger has both obvious results that we can see from the outside and also a tremendous effect within us. It almost creates another world within. It makes us extremely upset. Just one episode of anger can dramatically change our life.

If I explain anger from the religious point of view it can be difficult to understand, but if you harbor anger within, your state of mind becomes like that of a snake or some other fearful animal. That's the result anger brings. So, when Lama Zopa Rinpoche explains that we have a precious human rebirth, we have to understand that to mean that this is our opportunity to actualize Dharma knowledge-wisdom and destroy anger completely. That's the Buddhist point of view; that's why lamas explain the perfect human rebirth. Is that idea too much for you? It's true, though. Each time you get angry you're taking rebirth as a snake, tiger or some other kind of angry-aspect animal. Like a scorpion, whose nature is anger. Whenever you touch a scorpion, it lashes out. If we get bitten by a snake, we think that we caused it to happen but that's not necessarily so. Snakes are angry by nature; if we accumulate anger in our mind, we become like that. Physically we may appear to be human but mentally we can be like a snake. Similarly, at other times we can have the mentality of a dog or a cow. We can act like animals. So we have to be careful. If we take advantage of the opportunity that this perfect human rebirth gives us to gain knowledge-wisdom, our life will be worthwhile.

Actually, anger is so easy to control. We think it's difficult but in fact it's easy. So easy. Absolutely. In the morning, we generate the strong determination not to get angry: "I'm not going to get angry today. I'm going to remain completely aware of my emotions." Say that we're successful, and for that one day we control our anger. Fantastic! When you go to bed that night you can look at yourself and say, "Good boy, good girl, today you didn't get angry. You're such a good person." So, for that one day you're a good person. The next day, make the determination to continue being a good person. It's true. Doing that is the lamas' experience. Tibetan lamas experiment in that way. It isn't just leaping to some fantastic theoretical idea; it's not a hallucination. It's wisdom, isn't it? It's logical: if you can control your anger for one day, why not the next? If you can control your anger for two days, why not five? If for one week, why not two? If for one month, why not two? If for two months, why not a year? If we practice incrementally like that, it's so easy. It's so logical and scientific. And it's not something that you just have to believe; it's experience.

Also, you can see, angry people have so much pain that they become thin. Anger makes people thin. It makes their nervous system completely tight. Check up. When you're angry, your nervous system is so tight that

you feel pain, which is a function of anger. Then, other people fear you. They understand your temperament and are afraid to be around you; they feel, “Maybe I’ll make a mistake when I’m with him.” It’s the nature of anger to destroy the pleasure and happiness of yourself and others. Therefore, there’s no reason for you to let anger persist or to think that other sentient beings cause your problems. Neither is worthwhile.

*Q.* You can feel anger; it’s easy to see. But how about recognizing and controlling desire, since it’s so sneaky?

*Lama.* Yes, you need much experience to understand desire. To be aware of it you have to understand how your mind interprets your conceptions; how your mind interprets phenomena as good or bad. Then you can understand desire. Desire can come from ideas, human beings, animals, colors and so forth. In fact, practically any object can produce desire. All universal phenomena are objects of desire.

Now, we usually think that desire is something nice. Everybody thinks desire is good. But it’s not. Furthermore, desire is not necessary, so be careful with it. Watch how your mind interprets things as good or bad. That way you can understand desire. It’s difficult, because within desire lies a mixture of a little reality and a little totally wrong conception, and it’s very difficult to separate the two. If you are constantly aware of how you interpret the sense world, you can control desire. By knowing how desire perceives objects, you can tell if you’re overestimating or underestimating the object. Most of the time, the nature of desire is to overestimate the object rather than seeing its real nature.

*Q.* I talk to myself a lot. Does that prevent me from understanding the outside world?

*Lama.* Well, you should probably stop doing that. Inner conversations happen because for countless lives you have developed your ego’s conception of the self-I. What is your name? [*Daniel.*] OK, so you have your ego’s conception of Daniel; the self-idea of Daniel: “I am this.” You build up a universal Daniel through conversations based on that: “This is *me*.” When that collapses through checking with introspective knowledge-wisdom,

through cutting the universal idea of the “I,” then you know your reality. Then there’s no problem. Beautiful. Thank you so much.

*Q.* I was wondering about the use of karma in the life. It seems we are continually being used to work out each other’s karma and are also working on ourselves. Most of us will be going back to the West, won’t be taking robes and will be living an everyday life. And while we will also be working on ourselves Dharmically, at the same time we’ll have to keep checking on the reality of the world. It seems there’s a twofold approach. The first is a bottom-up approach, where we sit and do puja and send out mantras and hope that the energy filters up to the sentient beings’ universal mind. But is there a possibility of a second, top-down approach, where we could take, say, one hundred and fifty highly evolved beings, not necessarily completely conscious, and choose people who seem to be controllers of this particular planet, and through something like dream telepathy, knowing sentient beings’ sleeping schedule, when their defenses are down, could we send in positive precepts such as . . .

*Lama.* Yes, it’s possible; sure. Now, you’ve mentioned several subjects that would be good for us to talk about. I’m very happy. First of all, we’re not trying to make everybody monks and nuns. You can’t make that generalization. We’re not interested in that. What we *are* interested in is trying to help you understand your nature. That’s why I said at the beginning, no matter if you come from the West or the East, knowing your own nature is your own culture, isn’t it? Western or Eastern cultures are not what I’m talking about when I talk about misconceptions. Misconceptions are in the mind. So, you don’t need to change your appearance. We’re not interested in your changing your clothes or shaving your head. That would not be the real cutting. Cutting your hair doesn’t mean you’re cutting your misconceptions. I’m joking! Therefore, be careful, really. You should know that we’re not pushing you to change outwardly. Laypeople can practice Dharma perfectly. There’s no distinction.

But still, even if you go back to the West, you still have to check up. You must understand what your mandala is, what kind of atmosphere you need to practice Dharma. You definitely have to check up on that. You think that living in the West means that you’re always immersed in a

confused situation. That's not necessarily true. You can also live a monastic life in the West. You can create any kind of situation there. It's possible. Who stops you from living in a peaceful place, from having good friends and things like that? You don't have to follow all Western customs just because you're there, just as it's not necessary to feel that when you see people in Kathmandu drinking wine that you have to drink wine as well. You must, however, understand the way society is. You really have to know that.

Putting Western life and Dharma wisdom together doesn't need to cause conflict. That's why I began by saying that wisdom—understanding your own nature—is neither Eastern nor Western culture. We think that belonging to a Western culture means having a *samsaric* point of view. We think that Coca-Cola and cake are Western culture, that they have nothing to do with wisdom. But wisdom is understanding the nature of Coca-Cola. No matter whether you are Eastern or Western, that is wisdom.

*Q.* When we go back to the West, would it be good to spread the Dharma by telling others about it or should we concentrate on ourselves?

*Lama.* That's another good question. Very good understanding. Beautiful, dear. If, from your own experience, you get a clear vision, clean clear understanding—wisdom about how to solve a certain problem, and if the situation arises where somebody asks you about that problem, then you can talk. But if you just go up to somebody on the street and say, “Hey, come here—you should be worrying about death. Come here, I'll give you something,” that's not wise.

This question is beautiful. I'm not saying you would do this, but I'm saying that Western people are too emotional. Wisdom is not emotional. So, you should be wise. Buddhism never says emotionally to people in the street, “Oh, you're suffering. Come here, I'll give you food, I'll give you religion.” No! It's not necessary to do that. That is too emotional.

But say your friends come to visit you and they're interested in what you've been doing—they've been watching your actions and talking about you—and the time comes when they ask you about your travels or about what you've been studying, then, at that time, according to your understanding and Dharma knowledge, you slowly, slowly explain. Don't talk

too much; just slowly explain according to their ability to digest wisdom. That way is very good. Quietly do your own thing and wait for them to start asking questions.

I'm very happy you asked this question because we don't give these meditation courses to make people become Buddhists. Why should we care if you become Buddhist or not? We care about you; we want you to be happy; we want to reach beyond wrong conceptions, beyond schizophrenic disease. As long as you are happy, the energy we have expended together becomes worthwhile.

And especially, when you go back home, you shouldn't say to your parents, "I've found my religion." Then your religion is gone. That you shouldn't do. You should respect what your country's religion is doing. I'm sure, from my own experience, that the more our students understand Buddhism and Dharma wisdom, the more they understand and respect their own religion. That's beautiful. That's better than rejecting your country's religion and saying, "I've found a new thing." You shouldn't act that way.

*Q.* How is it possible for us, with our limited minds and understanding of Dharma, to decide which teacher in the West is best to study with? How can one judge a guru? How to know who is the wisest person?

*Lama.* Good, that's good. If you are really, sincerely searching and seeking, and if you are checking that what you want is complete freedom—inner freedom, inner liberation—then according to what you want, you need to check up to see who has that kind of realization, who can give you that. You don't check up by thinking, "He's a nice man; his face is nice. He's handsome," or, "He's not handsome." You know what I mean. That's not the way to check.

Or, you might think, "Maybe he'll show some magic. That'd be good." Don't check that way. We say, when you are searching for a guru, don't check who makes magic. Magic is not necessary. And don't search for someone who has telepathic powers. Telepathic power is something even birds have. Vultures have this power; they can sense a dead body from a hundred miles away. You can see this.

Actually, the Mahayana texts mention that that kind of guru is not

interesting. When you feel that you have found a teacher who is really realistic, who actualizes what you want, you can accept that person. Checking very carefully is the wisest way to find your guru. For example, many ancient Mahayana pandits and disciples would check a lama out for twelve years. One disciple checked on a lama for twelve years and finally told him, “I’ve been checking for twelve years whether you’d be good for me and now I realize that you are indeed my guru. Please explain the teachings to me.” Then the lama said, “OK, you’ve been checking me for twelve years; now I’m going to check you for twelve years. Then perhaps I’ll give you teachings.”

It’s true. Careful checking is more realistic. But we Westerners don’t really check. Somebody talks about this or that and we’re curious, but we’re not curious about wisdom or the path to liberation, are we? We’re always curious about samsaric things, but when it comes to Dharma, not so much.

That’s why you should be careful. Be careful, really. Be careful about who you choose to follow. It is very dangerous; we Tibetan lamas think this can be a very dangerous thing. We think that choosing the right guru is something you have to be very careful about. It’s not a normal thing, such as having lunch. This is your whole life we’re talking about. If you choose the wrong guru, a teacher spouting wrong conceptions, you’ll waste your life and have misconceptions for countless lives. Therefore, be really careful. Be careful.

Once, in ancient India, a man searching for a guru saw someone who looked like a sadhu sitting in the jungle. He told the seeker, “If you want realizations, bring me a rosary made from a thousand fingers. Then I’ll give you liberation.” So the seeker, who became known as Angulimala [Finger Rosary] believed what the sadhu said and killed nine hundred and ninety-nine people and made a rosary of their fingers. Anyway, it’s a longer story that tells how the Buddha eventually saved him, but it really happened. It’s not just a dream world I’m taking about. The conclusion is that misconceptions are the most dangerous things in the world.

Since this world began, everybody has wanted happiness and has shunned unhappiness. But everybody searches in their own way. Even the butchers of Kathmandu kill animals and sell their meat in their quest for happiness. The search for happiness is a psychological thing. Take war, for



example. Countries fight each other because they think that's the best way to make themselves happy. Check up; wisely check up.

Thank you so much. I can come again, sure, dear, continually. Thank you. Thank you so much. I'm very happy. Excuse me. Thank you.



ROBBIE SOLICK

Kopan Monastery, Nepal, 1972

## 4. Integrating What You've Heard

*Kopan Monastery, 2 January 1972<sup>2</sup>*



YOU'VE SPENT quite a lot of time with me now, listening to my explanations of Lama Tsongkhapa's approach to both the fundamental human problem and your individual ones. After all these months, you need to come to a conclusion from what you've read and heard; you need to integrate the teachings within yourself.

Listening to my words you might think, "Yes, what he's saying is true," but experience and actualization are very different from mere intellectual understanding. Therefore, to experiment with what your intellectual knowledge-wisdom has understood from what I've said, to see if it exists in reality or not, is very important.

Otherwise, what happens is that, while we understand intellectually that happiness, unhappiness and so forth do not depend on outside conditions but on the interpretations of our wrong-conception mind, we still believe what our ego tells us; we don't realize the meaning of our words; we don't follow our intellectual understanding wisdom. Although our intellectual knowledge-wisdom agrees that external phenomena are not the main thing, that the objects our senses perceive depend on the interpretation of our own mind, we don't actually understand this; we have not yet realized it. To arrive at this deeper wisdom, you have to experiment within yourself, without listening, without reading.

<sup>2</sup>This is an edited transcript of the earliest recorded Lama Yeshe teaching by at least two years. This recording is the only one that has survived from the early 1970s, when Lama Yeshe gave Sunday afternoon lectures at Kopan Monastery and people would come from where they were staying in the immediate vicinity (very few people were able to stay at Kopan at the time) or Kathmandu.

That's the reason retreat is very important. Whereas modern science conducts experiments on external phenomena, we experiment internally, examining mental phenomena introspectively and penetratingly.

So, I think you people have gained enough intellectual understanding but have not yet actualized the teachings to the point of gaining realizations. Therefore, at this stage you need to say, "I understand that I've been following my old habits for countless lives. I no longer want to go on like this; I want to stop following the interpretations of my wrong conceptions." If you begin to experiment and act in accordance with your intellectual understanding, then you'll really affect your mind.

Otherwise, you might know all the words, but when real trouble comes you go berserk, the same as you always have. If you don't change your mind, you will continue to react in the same old way, no matter who you are—a lama, a yogi, a meditator in a cave—arrogantly thinking, "I'm special." If you get down and depressed when difficulties arise, that shows you have no understanding.

The ancient Mahayana practitioners of India and Tibet would first listen to teachings and study deeply. When they felt they had gained enough knowledge, they would go into solitude and, avoiding all contact with other people, look completely within and experiment with inner realizations. It's now necessary for you people to do the same thing.

What's the point of listening, listening, listening to teachings, collecting words, but then not integrating what you've heard with your mind or gaining realizations? You're not here to learn language from me. Your English is much better than mine. You're not here just to listen and collect words; don't believe that it's only through listening to words that you can gain realizations. That's a wrong conception.

You have to integrate into experience whatever you understand. Once you have gained experience and realization of one topic you need to go on to the next, which takes you further down the path. Without moving forward step by step, it's impossible to progress; you can't simply collect high-sounding words while leaving your actions down here on the ground. Collecting words that talk of flying to the moon doesn't mean you fly to the moon; with words alone, you remain earthbound. It's the same if you think arrogantly that you can get higher realizations simply by listening to Lama's words. Without actualizing that which you understand and integrating it within you, you can't.

We think we learn from people: “I spent a long time with him and learned a lot.” What did you learn? I don’t think you learn from somebody by spending time with that person. You learn from yourself, from what your own mind says—everything’s in there. For example, the thoughts of everybody in the universe are already within you, so you can learn from your own mind; others’ expressions are already within your mind. If you listen to yourself, to your mind, you’ll find others’ expressions are there. So, you might say, “I’m learning from him,” but I don’t think you are. Listen to your own mind; check yourself—that’s the way to learn and solve your own inner problems. I don’t think it’s so beneficial to always be looking, listening and searching outside. That’s just externalism.

Check up, for example, why you can’t stay alone for a week without seeing or talking to somebody. Why can’t you? What makes it difficult? The difficulty comes from your own mind.

You should realize that all such experiences—happiness, peace, good, bad—completely depend on the interpretation of the individual wrong-conception mind. If you realize the teachings beyond words, you’ll really be able to solve your inner problems.

So, from this Sunday until the end of February there’ll be no more of these classes. At that time Lama Zopa will begin a one-month meditation course. But, if it’s beneficial, at two o’clock next Sunday afternoon you should come together for a one-hour practical Mahayana philosophical discussion without me present. If any unresolved issues remain or complications arise, I can come for an hour on Monday afternoon to answer questions.

Why am I stopping these Sunday afternoon talks? You are beautiful people; I like spending time with you. One thing is that I have duties around the center; during the day I need to keep an eye on how things are going around here. [*The first Kopan gompa was being built around this time.*] These can interrupt the class and that might disappoint you. Also, for the next couple of months I want to retreat in the mornings and evenings. So there are several reasons I want to stop for now. I hope you won’t be angry.

Next Sunday’s discussion should cover subjects such as: What is Dharma? What is samsara? Where do samsaric beings come from and why are we born on this earth? Why do we die? What causes death? How do the twelve links come and go? Those things are necessary to understand. None

of this is talking about external phenomena; this is all about their inner expression. Without knowing how these things express themselves within you, you can't go beyond the wrong-conception mind.

So if you're going to come to these discussion groups, read and think about these topics and then question each other with compassion. Discussion, or debate, doesn't mean, "I understand; you don't." It's not like that. Compassion between Dharma friends means, if I don't know the answer to a question I'm given, I think about it and try to reply as best I can; if my answer is unsatisfactory, you kindly explain the right answer to me so that my understanding will become more definite and not like a yo-yo. Most of the time our knowledge is like a yo-yo: today I say yes; tomorrow somebody contradicts me and I say no. This really is a problem.

The Mahayana Buddhist philosophical doctrine is like a diamond, indestructible, but our inner doctrine, our understanding, is like a yo-yo. Doctrine means inner understanding, not words in a book. Therefore, if you really understand doctrine, things make much more sense within you.

What I mean when I say "yo-yo" is the situation where somebody tells you something and you think, "Oh, that's nice," then somebody else tells you something contradictory and again you think, "Oh, that's nice." Accepting every interesting thing you hear just makes you confused. Somebody persuasive tells you one thing and you accept it; somebody gives you good reasons for something contradictory and you accept that too. Two opposite things cannot both be correct, but because your discriminating knowledge-wisdom is weak, you have no ability to discern which is correct. So, like a yo-yo, your understanding goes up and down according to what people say.

You're never sure of anything. You think that Dharma is interesting, but when you encounter a few difficulties, you think Dharma is complicated and give it up. That means you don't really understand. Dharma philosophy is not just ideas. Practical Mahayana Dharma philosophy is within you. It's about your consciousness, your conceptions, not trees and plants. Biology doesn't affect your mind but understanding practical Mahayana Buddhism does; it makes your understanding better and stronger.

In the past, religious doctrine and expression were widespread in many countries, but because such things are inner phenomena, people didn't really understand them. What they understood much more easily is the doctrine of materiality—people understand objects of the five senses with-

out being taught. They see others get jobs, work, make money and buy things. It's obvious; nobody has to explain it.

Because material philosophy is so much easier to grasp than spiritual philosophy, nowadays many more people are interested in material things than in religion. This is simply the way the human mind evolves. It's so simple: you work, you get material; you make something, you get material. You don't need anybody to teach you this. It would be silly to teach this in school—everybody knows it automatically: if you work, you get things; if you sell something, you get money. This is the philosophy, doctrine or conception of materialism.

Check within yourself—don't look outside. How strong is your material philosophy? Don't think, "I have no philosophy or doctrine." Everybody does. Your concepts are your doctrine. The idea you have that it's better to go out for dinner than to cook at home—that, in a small way, is your doctrine, your philosophy. Don't think doctrine and philosophy can only be grand ideas.

I know you people understand something, but you haven't realized it; you haven't actualized what you know intellectually. But if you engage in philosophical discussion—how, why, reason, enumerate, look, think—and go deeper in a skillful way, you will develop great understanding.

A simple example: go home and check out your mother's philosophy. It's reflected in the way she arranges things in her house: "I want this here; I don't want it there. Don't tell me to change it." This is her philosophy, her doctrine.

Now, say somebody says to you, "I don't believe in the spiritual life any more. I don't think that happiness and unhappiness depend on the interpretation of your own mind." What are you going to say? What sort of rational, logical refutation can you come up with? Saying, "I believe in the Dharma because Lama said so," means nothing. You have to come up with the why and how.

"Happiness and suffering are externally caused. The shape and color of phenomena do not depend on the mind. Things exist in and of themselves, out there. You can make them; you can see them." If somebody tells you that, how do you reply? If you have truly realized the way in which things exist you can calmly, slowly, refute these statements without emotion and make the other person understand. But if you have a yo-yo mind, you might actually come around to that person's point of view and that

can be the end of your spiritual path. It doesn't take much to change a weak person's mind.

When the Chinese tortured the Tibetans, they'd lock them in a cell without food or clothing and say, "You believe in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Let them feed and clothe you." Those with little understanding might think that since the Buddha didn't bring them food or clothing in prison, the Buddha doesn't exist. But the Dharma teachings don't say that Buddha gives you food. People who think that Buddha gives food or Buddha causes problems misunderstand Buddhist doctrine. When you tell them, "When you were in prison and asked Buddha for food, he didn't give you any; therefore there's no Buddha," they might accept that as true. And even though it's false logic it can be enough to destroy the faith of somebody with no understanding.

The same thing can happen to you. You come here to Kopan for teachings with certain expectations and when the conditions change you make some excuse and leave. This shows that you don't have a rational, logical understanding of the diamond philosophy of Buddhism. Don't believe the Western view that philosophy simply means conversation. It's deeper than that; it's about how things affect the mind: what causes bring what results and what can stop them. Deep understanding is very, very important. And Mahayana philosophy is also very practical; it doesn't simply describe external phenomena. Everything is linked to better understanding.

I'm not telling you what to do. I don't care. But I am saying that if you're interested, make sure that what you do becomes real. I know you understand something; I know you've discovered something. But much of what you've understood is simply intellectual and not yet at the level of realization. Therefore, you need something more.

So the topics for next Sunday are what I mentioned. We'll decide those for the following week next Sunday. That's all, thank you so much. If you have any questions, please ask.

*Olivia.* Isn't understanding also very much dependent on good karma?

*Lama.* Of course. Good karma means that you have to work for understanding. Without your putting in the effort, there's no understanding. Understanding doesn't just fall out of the sky, like that. You have to put much effort into meditating. That's what makes Olivia a smiling, happy



person. Without Olivia's effort there's no relaxed, happy Olivia. The deeper your understanding, the more you're relaxed, the greater your happiness. Definitely.

*Olivia.* I think my understanding has more to do with Buddha than me.

*Lama.* Yes, when you understand Buddha's qualities within yourself, you become peaceful. So of course it has something to do with Buddha, because you discover these things through his teachings. But that doesn't mean Buddha gives it to you *pam!* just like that.

The many beings who solved their own problems and attained everlasting peaceful realizations did so by practicing the Buddha's teachings. To the extent that they were practicing his teachings, it has something to do with him. Although he passed away over 2,600 years ago, the power of his mind still permeates the world. We're enjoying it here even now. But we have to make an effort. For example, if you want that delicious Kathmandu cake, you don't get it up here at Kopan just by thinking about it. You have to be practical: get your money, go buy it and bring it back.

Look at how you live here in Nepal. The houses are cold; the toilets are not what you're used to. You can live much more comfortably than you do here, but you still enjoy yourself here: "I'm much happier here; I have everything I need." It all depends on your mind. That's what you've discovered. Your mind does not need luxury accommodations to be peaceful and happy. Nobody told you this is good; you discovered it for yourself. Even if somebody told you it would be good here, without understanding you wouldn't be interested. You can't just put anybody into this situation. But with understanding, you enjoy your Nepalese house, Dharma friends and simple food.

*Olivia.* I think the essential things are here in Kopan.

*Lama.* Thank you so much. If there are no more questions . . .

*Steve.* I have one question. [*Yes, thank you.*] You had mentioned that one can't learn, or whatever anyone can tell oneself, you already know, inside. [*I don't follow you completely.*] You said that whatever you can hear from someone else, whatever someone else has said . . .

*Lama.* You can hear what your mind has to say but you have to know how to listen. Lord Buddha spoke about airplanes and rockets but he didn't learn about those things in school.

*Olivia.* Many times you mention that Lord Buddha said this and that, but we don't have those translations.

*Lama.* If you want those things translated, bring me a hundred writers. I'll bring the books and we can translate them. We have books in which Lord Buddha spoke about medicine, chemistry, all kinds of things. None of those things existed on earth at that time but he listened to his inner voice and could see, imagine, how things would be on earth in future times. He saw such things much more clearly than we see each other sitting here right now.

*Q.* You mentioned answering questions with compassion to help people understand something that you understand. How do we develop compassion with understanding?

*Lama.* Developing compassion means first understanding that all human problems come from the ignorant mind. On that basis we develop the wish to share our own understanding with others, wanting them to reach beyond their ignorance. Most of the time people investigate external phenomena, objects of the ego, but it's much more beneficial to learn about everlasting peaceful liberation, which is totally beyond ego.

In debate and discussion you also learn patience. Somebody tells you, "You're wrong, because this, because that. . . ." Now, the personality of ego is to always think you're right, so when somebody tells you you're not, you have a tendency to react. I'm not saying that you have ego, but ego's personality is like that and to see and deal with it is another benefit of discussion. It has really helped me.

*Q.* What is the best method to do this, since I still have ego? Is the best method to speak up anyway, even though ego is involved, or to keep quiet until the ego is no longer involved?

*Lama.* The best thing to do is to try to generate compassion for the other person who is talking. You don't necessarily have to make a big show of "You are my object of compassion," but that's how you should feel within yourself.

Thank you, thank you so much.



UNKNOWN

Chenrezig Institute, 1979

## 5. Refuge Is a State of Mind

*Chenrezig Institute, 12 September 1979*



WHEN YOU TAKE refuge in Buddhadharma, the important point is that you have recognized your own profound potential, and from the beginning can see that, “I can do something; I can take responsibility for liberating myself.” This is different from the attitude we normally have: “I’m hopeless, I’m hopeless; maybe God, maybe Buddha, maybe Lama can do something for me.” This sort of human attitude is wrong. From the Buddhist point of view, it is wrong to think, “I’m hopeless, Buddha can do something for me.” That attitude is wrong because it’s not true. By believing that you are hopeless you have already decided that you are nothing; you have already put a limit on your profound quality. The important thing in taking refuge is to have the understanding that you can *do* something to solve the problem of everyday life by relying, with confidence and trust, on the Buddha’s wisdom—you can also call it your own activated wisdom—to liberate you from confusion and suffering. So it is really worthwhile. The real significance of taking refuge in Dharma wisdom is that it is the entrance to the path to enlightenment.

That is why, traditionally, people in Buddhist countries take refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha every day. But Western people don’t need to copy this, going to the temple daily, taking refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha without concentration. We don’t need to follow the customs of those countries. What we need to do is to recognize what brings us a liberated, joyful life. Instead of relying on, taking refuge in, chocolate and apples and biscuits and toys, instead of taking refuge in the beach, movies or popcorn, we should understand in our hearts that the liberated joyful life does not depend on those conditions, those worldly phenomena.

The *lamrim* shows exactly, logically, scientifically that human happiness

and joy do not depend on material conditions. You should understand this clean clear and determine that that is reality. Then you will not be upset when you don't get presents or chocolate or when people don't pay attention to you. Otherwise, small things always upset you and small things make you dissatisfied. The over-extreme expectation of getting things from the external world makes problems. So, taking refuge in Buddhaharma instead is really worthwhile.

Some people feel that by taking refuge, "I have to remember my lama's nose, my lama's head." That is not necessary. When you take refuge it is not necessary for you to always remember your lama's nose. Others may feel, "I have to go to the temple every day," or "I have to say Buddha, Buddha, Dharma, Dharma, Sangha, Sangha, Buddha, Buddha, Dharma, Dharma, Sangha, Sangha every day—if I forget to say those words, I am completely guilty, I am not acting correctly for one who has taken refuge." It's not that way either; that, too, is a misunderstanding.

We are not trying to get the Western mind to copy these aspects of Buddhist culture. Westerners should understand that taking refuge is a state of mind. It doesn't matter whether you are in a plane, in the subway, in a train, in a bathroom or wherever—somehow, you recognize your buddha potential and rely on that inner wisdom to stop the problems of everyday life. Furthermore, you understand that you can deal with these through meditation, through intellectual thinking, or through enacting the six perfections. From my point of view, that kind of thing is good enough, and if you are really taking refuge you don't need to say the word "Buddha" even once.

And also, ordinarily, when you are depressed, you can ask Buddha for help. By recognizing Buddha's unlimited wisdom and universal compassion, it helps psychologically. When you remember his universal compassion, when you think of his universal wisdom, somehow, from your side, you open up a little bit. In other words, you just think about the reality of the whole world; you look at what's going on in the whole world: what's going on in Africa? What's going on in America? What's going on in India? What's going on? Just by thinking about all the different conditions of human existence, you find, "Somehow, I'm not too bad, I'm not too bad." So that's the way of opening up, that's what being open means. When your mind opens to such a profound universal object, it has space.

It's the same thing when you remember Buddha's unlimited compas-

sion, unlimited wisdom and unlimited power. Thus, it is easy to see that taking refuge is not something where you are just relying on words.

Even if you have kind of enormous pleasure, kind of everything coming together, you can't believe it: "How is it I have so much pleasure? I have this, I have this, I have this; I don't know how, what kind of fortune I have; everything is coming together for me." At the same time, instead of becoming concrete inside, concrete and grasping onto this, you think, "Hmm, all this is coming together so easily, yeah, but it's good that my happiness and pleasure do not depend on this." [*Lama shows material object.*] You use your wisdom.

For example, perhaps you have some ambition, "I want this, I want this, I want this, I want this, I want this." So even if somehow everything you wanted comes to you, if whatever you thought of, all the material things you wanted come together, still you are not too excited: "Well, it is true, it is there, everything has come together, it seems that I can enjoy myself. Hmm. Still, I hope that I can feel satisfied and together without all these things too, that my satisfaction does not depend on all this." Thus, Dharma wisdom not only liberates you when you are miserable; it also liberates you when you have tremendous pleasure.

We always need Dharma wisdom. Even when you have great pleasure, you need wisdom to really make your mind stable. Normally the Western mind is up and down, up and down, up and down; up and down twenty-four hours a day—maybe a hundred times a day. Westerners believe that these outside things are solid: "That makes me happy. This morning I was happy. Now you say that I am bad, so now I feel terrible." This is no good, no good. This up and down comes from recognizing neither the inner wisdom that can be relied upon nor the inner ability to liberate yourself. I think you people understand; I don't need to talk about this too much. We can explain refuge in so many ways. I think you understand.

In the West, so many people are suffering incredibly; you don't realize. Especially, you are young people, you can do so many things, can't you? Now, at the moment, you can do so many things—you can travel, you can meet interesting people, you can do this, you can do that, you can do the other. But when you're old you can't do those things any more. Automatically, when you merely think about miserable conditions, you become so afraid. However, now you're training your mind to understand the profound, so when you become older, at that time you will have a better life.

OK. I think you understand what Buddha means. But still, when you have taken refuge, it is good to put a Buddha image in your room or to make a small shrine room. Then, when you simply look at your Buddha Shakyamuni image you can remember his qualities and his history as well. How many times did he sacrifice his body for mother sentient beings? Sometimes he gave his eye for sentient beings; there are many different reasons. Sometimes he gave his leg, sometimes he gave his life. At other times he was a monk but had to marry some woman, so completely gave his life for her. Sometimes he gave his body to the tigers. He did all kinds of things; unbelievable things. He cut the flesh from his leg and offered it to mother sentient beings. At the moment, we can't do such things.

Actually, people who have studied Madhyamaka might remember the bodhisattva who cut off a limb, piece by piece, and with respect offered it to others. Instead of feeling pain, he felt blissful, completely blissful. This is a good example for us. It's not that he didn't have the conditions for pain; his body was a condition for pain, made for pain. But he had the key of mind control, and through his psychic power, the power of his consciousness, instead of pain, he felt bliss.

Normally my guru, His Holiness Trijang Rinpoche, uses the following example when he gives teachings. In Tibet we have a lot of beggars; in one day perhaps ten beggars might come before you and say, "Hello, I need something." Most of the time we give them some *tsampa*, the Tibetan national food. It's a kind of muesli, sort of ground roasted barley flour. Some people give the beggars just a little, others give quite a lot. It depends. So Kyabje Rinpoche says when somebody knocks on your door to ask for a little *tsampa*, you can get a bit irritated, annoyed. But when somebody asks a bodhisattva for a piece of his body, he is completely blissful. The bodhisattva sees this person as a helper: "This person is helping me complete my perfection of charity." So he is completely blissful. That is his attitude.

When somebody asks us to give them something, instead of having the attitude of wanting to give, we get irritated and angry. But the bodhisattva who has really trained his mind in such a way is blissful: "Because this person is asking me, I can do something. This beggar is helping me develop my path to enlightenment." So, when he cuts off his flesh, he is completely blissful. Those are good examples and not just stories. Like when Jesus was crucified, he manifested ordinary suffering and a horrible appearance,



but actually he must have been totally blissful, giving his body in order to take on the negativities of mother sentient beings. Although outwardly he appeared to be suffering, inwardly he must have been blissful.

You can see that inner progression is so profound, so profound. Another good example in the West is the Christian missionary. Those Christian people are good; they take refuge in God. Somehow they understand that God is responsible for everything, so they go to Africa or some other difficult place to serve others. They are the same as us—do you think they don't like muesli? They like muesli, they like chocolate, they like cake, but they give all that up and, because of their devotion to God, go to troubled places and accept the suffering in order to help those poor people. I feel they are wonderful. By taking refuge in God, they find within themselves the ability to cope. I think they are profound.

But we Buddhist people, even though we know that if we do an hour's meditation in the morning the whole day is completely blissful—each of us has had that experience—still, we are lazy, aren't we? Even though we know clean clear, through experience, not just words, that if we have a good meditation in the morning the rest of the day goes very easily, sometimes we degenerate, we don't meditate. We forget things. Maybe when you come here to Chenrezig Institute you meditate, but when you go back to Melbourne or Sydney you do less and less, and by the time you've reached the middle of Melbourne, it's completely finished. All that's left is ice cream. I'm joking!

Anyway, it's good. We should understand that there are also examples in the West, such as the Christian people. There are some very sincere people and they get something, they get something. So it's important that we learn to meditate, have some experience and then continuously develop.

Actually, meditation is taking refuge. Meditation *is* your taking refuge, because inside you have the attitude, "If I meditate, I can liberate myself." By using Buddhist wisdom and Buddhist method, it is really worthwhile. Otherwise, I myself feel that without recognizing the profound inner ability and having confidence in and relying on that, human beings are useless. Especially in the West, it is very dangerous—we dedicate our entire life to the pursuit of happiness but the result is misery. That's the story of our lives, isn't it? So you understand, it is really worthwhile.

Old students, especially, should try to set a good example for new ones. The bodhicitta attitude is to help other sentient beings, and the Buddhist

way is just by being a good example to others. That is good enough. Not just words: be a good example and give energy to new people. That is the way in which you help. Otherwise, perhaps you have a fantastic intellectual understanding of the teachings, but if by your behavior you set a bad example, it can't help; you can't help other sentient beings.

Anyway, I don't intend to talk too much, but if you have any questions before taking refuge, please ask. It's good to make everything clean clear. The subject of refuge is so vast that we can't possibly cover it completely in a single talk, so if you have any questions, please ask.

*Q.* What is the difference between Jesus and Buddha?

*Lama.* According to their appearance on this earth, each of them was relatively different, but absolutely, they were the same. Basically, Jesus taught by his actions of compassion and love—perhaps the Western world needed to be taught that way. When Buddha Shakyamuni came, he taught through his profound speech, showed his enlightened realizations through his actions and demonstrated the function of his omniscient wisdom.

*Q.* If the Buddha represents one's higher self and universal wisdom and compassion, does that mean as a woman, I can imagine the Buddha as being female?

*Lama.* Yes, of course. Definitely, yes. It is very important to understand that even if you are a woman, the profound buddha potential is exactly the same as it is in men, even though relatively the structure of our bodies is different. This is temporal, relative, but when one is controlled, what is the difference? Like Tara—you can see paintings of that female aspect of Buddha. And also, there is no distinction between the length of time it takes men and women to attain enlightenment. It completely depends upon the development of the individual. In tantric yoga we have explanations that even in this life, starting from knowing nothing of inner reality, one can reach the enlightenment of Shakyamuni Buddha—both men and women are equal in their ability to do this.

*Q.* I would like you to tell us a little about the benefits of taking refuge.

*Lama.* The benefit of taking refuge is that you liberate yourself, as I said before. Taking refuge in Buddha and Dharma means . . . first of all, what is Dharma? Dharma is wisdom; the clean-clear sharp wisdom, seeing clearly, is the Dharma. And taking refuge means you become Dharma, you become the Dharma wisdom light. Perhaps at first, at the beginning, you are a small candlelight, but by meditating each day the small candlelight is activated and becomes bigger, bigger, bigger, bigger—and then your Dharma wisdom is transformed into omniscient wisdom, totality wisdom. And in the same way, by taking refuge and so on, you increase your compassionate loving kindness. When you increase your loving kindness actions, you liberate yourself from the self-cherishing thought. Then you have no conflict with other human beings. Even if other people come into conflict with you, instead of getting angry you have compassion: “How can I help?” You control yourself. But not like this [*Lama squeezes himself up into a tight ball*]: “I am controlled, I am controlled.” Relaxed control; easy control. [*Lama shows relaxed aspect.*] It doesn’t need much effort.

At first, we do need a lot of effort, sort of meditation and effort, but after some time you don’t need this—just your *being* is meditation; just being *is* liberated, just being *is* loving kindness, just being *is* bodhicitta. It may be difficult at the beginning, but also, I cannot say, “You are a beginner, therefore you should squeeze yourself,” Perhaps you are more advanced than I am, who knows? We never know. The thing is, in Buddhism, we don’t judge, we cannot judge. For example, I cannot say “I am the wisdom man, your teacher—you have to learn from me.” No, I cannot; I can learn from you too; we are helping each other. Even though we are not yet enlightened, each of us has different aspects of wisdom more developed—so you have certain wisdom better than mine and I can learn from you too.

*Q.* When you take refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, you are taking refuge in the higher, pure, clean-clear self. Since the guru is the embodiment of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, is the guru like your clean-clear self also?

*Lama.* That’s right. Yes. If you understand it in such an absolute way, it is like in Christianity, we have one God. Similarly, the guru is the Buddha,

the guru is the Dharma, the guru is the Sangha—you can understand it in that way too. Good.

Q. Could you talk a bit more about refuge in the Sangha?

*Lama.* There are two levels of Sangha: relative Sangha and absolute Sangha. We are all relative Sangha. I am learning from you people, you are helping. If I have some understanding, if I am receptive, I learn from you people. You people also give me energy. Actually, we give each other energy. Let me make an example. I have the attitude that when I give my students the Vajrasattva initiation, they have to retreat for three months; do a strict retreat for three months. If they do a group retreat, they are almost always successful. But some people say, “Lama, I want to retreat by myself, alone; please let me.” I say, “All right, all right.” You know—what can I say? Baby cries, wants—what can I say? It is not my way to say, to insist, “You have to do it with the group.” Then they would freak out, wouldn’t they? Anyway, I know they would freak out, and instead of their experience becoming positive it would turn out negative. So I have to say, “Yes, yes, yes.” Then, with big eyes, I watch what they are going to do. The result is always disaster; they never finish a good retreat. They always break down and end up neurotic, saying, “Not possible, I get much *lung*,” and these things. It’s obvious, I understand.

But retreating with a group is always helpful. Let’s say today I’m down, a little bit depressed. My negative mind is questioning, “Ooh, why Vajrasattva? I don’t understand.” Actually, the negative mind doesn’t want to understand, so, “Why are we doing this? We are European people, all these Tibetan trips, Vajrasattva and *yab* and *yum*, all these things make me really crazy. Instead of staying here meditating, I want to see my girlfriend/boyfriend.” Anyway, all these ridiculous kinds of minds come out. So then you tell your friend, “I have this happening, I don’t understand.” Then your friend, who may be a bit stronger, says, “Wait a minute, maybe you should think this way,” and tells you something positive. Actually, that person is really the one who brings you up and helps you get yourself together. Then you can control your negative mind a little bit. In other words, we learn from each other, kind of recycle each other, help each other. Really, human beings are so kind, incredible. From the time we were born up to now, sentient beings have been the source of life—our growth

and everything. So you can understand the idea of the kindness of mother sentient beings; you can see.

So, we are Sangha: you are my Sangha and I am your Sangha too. We are all Sangha for each other, we help each other. What is the reason, why do we need this? The need is simple. What happens if you stay someplace where you are surrounded by people drinking wine all day, every day, intoxicated every night, with all kinds of activities going on? Say you stay there a year. Every day, they're giving you teachings: "Drinking wine is very nice, it brings your spirits up; whenever you are lonely, whenever you are depressed, drink some wine." Then you're like, "Maybe, yes, today I don't feel so good, perhaps I'll have a drink, check it out." Then you feel, to some extent, for a short time, it helps. For a short time, you can ignore the problem; you become sort of unconscious.

However, I know, most of our students, when they go back to their own home, their old samsaric home, they become a complete disaster. One day they say, "Oh, last night I stayed up late talking with my friends; I can't meditate this morning." So they sleep in, and when they get up it's already lunchtime, so it's too late for meditation. Then, the next evening, it's the same old story, "I have to go to a party." Two days no meditation. That is the samsaric environment—not enough Sangha vibration. Look, we are sick people who cannot stand by ourselves. We need a cane or some other kind of help to stand. We are not yet liberated, so we do need Sangha to help. We definitely need. For that reason, relative Sangha, we are all Sangha.

Now, absolute Sangha. We need a better Sangha, actually; Sangha who understand the inner, absolute quality of reality, nonduality. That is the real Sangha. We are relative Sangha, but we are not perfect Sangha. We can still help each other, but not in the most profound way; not until we discover nonduality. So, we desperately need the help of the absolute Sangha.

Also, you can see, you come here for a meditation course, you know it's going to be difficult. Most students know it's going to be difficult: "I'm sure my knees are going to hurt, especially listening to this monk pumping, pumping, pumping, pumping for two or three hours." A situation in which you have never been before. And then sitting for six hours every day. "Six hours of sitting?"—you can't even believe that yourself. "I can't believe it." I'm sure you could not believe it.

But it's true, this is the human beauty, the beauty of the human quality.

You could not believe it, I tell you. You cannot judge yourself, “I can do, I cannot do.” Human beings can do unbelievable things. Take Milarepa, for example. It seems to us that he was outrageous, doesn’t it? But if we want, we can do exactly what Milarepa did. You can never put any limits on human potential; it is so profound.

So you can see, here we put everybody’s energy together. I’m sure that the spiritual program coordinator sometimes makes you irritated—the SPC is Chenrezig Institute’s police, so sometimes he makes you irritated, telling you, “Please come to meditation, please come to puja. It’s not so nice if you don’t.” Then you’re like, “Why? Leave me alone. I want to be free from you. I don’t want your samsara.” Anyway, you understand.

The thing is that when we meditate, when it’s meditation time, we somehow make it sound a little bit exclusive. I tell the SPCs to use their wisdom and request people to come to puja sort of lightly: “Please come; the others need the help of your energy.” I believe that, too: everybody sitting together, giving each other energy. You could not believe it. I mean, some young guy is sitting in front of you, practicing very sincerely; you’re an old man like me, feeling terrible, your mind going sort of, *eerh*, so you learn from him: “I have to do better.” As soon as you have decided that you want to do better, you’re starting to get better. If you say at the outset, “I’m hopeless, I don’t care, I’m jealous of these people,” you become worse.

So, we do need Sangha, we do need the help of Sangha, I tell you. I think that most of our Western Dharma practitioners’ problem is that when they go back to their own samsaric nest there is no spiritual support. Everything is delusion, delusion, delusion. I mean, it is obvious. We take all that garbage into our minds, so then it becomes difficult for us.

Until you reach a certain level, you do need that help. If you discover the absolute truth and are on the first bodhisattva bhumi, you don’t need any support. Absolutely, you don’t need any external support. Then you can go anywhere—you can go to Sydney; you can go to Melbourne—you can liberate yourself. Sometimes students come to liberate other people but instead of their liberating others, the others liberate them—to samsara. Even I’m afraid that if I were to stay a long time in the West, Western people might liberate me into samsara—by giving me the chocolate initiation!

*Q.* When we meditate, is there any structure that we should follow to remind us of the refuge that we have taken?

*Lama.* Normally, when we take refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha before starting a meditation session, we recall the profound wisdom, compassion and power of the Buddha. We recognize that through having developed these three, that totality is Buddha. There is no more significance than that. “That is the Buddha. So, if I actualize, I can develop the totality of these three within myself. Not only me, but all universal living beings.” With this profound remembrance and compassion for all mother sentient beings, we enter the meditation. That is good enough. That is the structure of entering meditation by taking refuge. Thank you, good question.

The formal way of taking refuge is to visualize your father on your right side, your mother on your left, all people who irritate you in front of you, the people to whom you are greatly attached, who you love, behind you, and all universal living beings surrounding you. Then you take refuge in the Buddha, as we do in the lamrim. In that way, when you take refuge, you make everybody take refuge together. Then, from the crown of the Buddha’s head, different colored light rays radiate to each sentient being, purifying each one’s impure body, speech and mind and transforming them into liberated beings. That way of taking refuge is also very good. After that, the Buddha dissolves into you. Thus, you identify yourself with the totality of the Buddha’s nature; you become completely of the nature of the Buddha rather than feeling hopeless. This is very helpful psychologically to eliminate the low opinion and limited view of yourself. So, the first of these methods is sort of instinctive taking refuge; the second one is the formal way of taking refuge.

*Q.* Is it preferable to meditate at the same time every day? Before, you only spoke about meditation in the morning, but can you do it at night?

*Lama.* Yes, sure, sure, you can do it. But what is important about the morning is that it is the beginning of the day. When you get up in the morning you have to face the day, you are beginning your activity to enter that day of life. So it is good to think, “Well, fortunately, today I’m alive. I could have died last night.” You don’t want to think that you might have

died last night. If you had died last night what would have happened to you? Would you be really upset? Maybe if you died last night, you would be very upset today. I'm joking!

In the Western lifestyle, it is sometimes difficult to have time to meditate in the morning. You can never predict what life is like, so at least for a short time you should think, "Today I have a human life, it is so worthwhile. I am so happy to be alive. So what I should do today is to be as happy as possible myself, control my situation, and help those surrounding me as much as I possibly can." You just have to think that way for a short time; it is very powerful. If you develop that determination in the morning, even if during the day somebody tries to irritate you, you still have space. And also, meditation does not necessarily mean sitting in the formal meditation posture. You can meditate while you are having your morning shower or while you are traveling by car or bus. Meditation is just thinking the words or remembering the Dharma subject, that's all.

## TAKING REFUGE

Now we are going to take refuge, but our approach is a little different from the one I have just explained. This time you visualize the object from whom you are taking refuge in front of you. You are taking refuge from Lama and the higher beings—the buddhas and bodhisattvas—of the ten directions. In front of them you promise or determine that, "From now, until the end of my life, until I reach enlightenment"—make such a powerful kind of determination—"I take refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha for my inner wisdom to progress. They are what really lead me to liberation. I have discovered that the light of wisdom is the only vehicle that can liberate me from confusion, suffering and ego conflict. So now, instead of taking refuge in chocolate and ice cream, I will really inwardly trust, inwardly completely rely on, the objects of Buddha, Dharma wisdom and profound Sangha, especially in order to transform myself into Buddha, Dharma and Sangha." In saying this, you recognize their profound qualities.

"Also, I am really fortunate that I don't have the concrete conception that always takes refuge in and relies on material objects. If I had that kind of belief, it would be extremely disastrous; it would be completely stupid—I would waste my life, making it worthless, absolutely useless. If



I were to spend my life believing that ice cream is the source of my happiness, I would be totally stupid. How could I be happy in this life, let alone the next, creating such unbelievably negative karma? Somehow, I am really fortunate that I can understand intellectually really clean clear that if I develop my Dharma wisdom through becoming relative Sangha, I can transform myself into absolute Sangha and gain realizations equal to those of Guru Shakyamuni. It is unbelievable. This is the right approach. It doesn't matter what kind of life I am involved in—movie star life, nightclub life, whatever. It doesn't matter to which class I belong; I am never going to give up this profound understanding. This is the most profound and precious thing. It is beyond compare with any kind of Western material pleasure. This awakening totality life of Dharma wisdom is beyond compare. The Dharma is the way to eternal bliss, eternal happiness, enlightenment.”

Then make the determination, “Not only myself.” Visualize on your right side your father; on your left, your mother: “They are so kind, even though sometimes they are mean, telling me that I am not good enough. Actually, in their own way, they want the best for me. Even though my father and mother are ignorant, they want me to become a film star or a millionaire, this kind of thing. They mean well; I cannot blame them. In fact, they want me to be happy and free from miserable situations. Also, it is through their kindness that I have come in contact with Dharma wisdom, the profound wisdom and method of the Buddha. I am grateful to my mother and father for this great good fortune. They are very kind.”

Then, in front of you, visualize your enemy. Of course, normally, we don't have enemies, but you can put there whoever has irritated you in your life. And behind you, put all the objects to whom you are attached, at whom you grasp.

Finally, visualize that all universal living beings surround you and that you are their leader in taking refuge; you are leading them to refuge. And think with much compassion, “I and all these surrounding universal beings have been confused and uncontrolled for countless lives, and through wrong conceptions have been taking refuge in material atoms, a completely wrong attitude. Who have really eliminated all these wrong attitudes that lead to misery and dissatisfaction? The Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. The Buddha can read my mind; he sees whatever I need and shows the method and wisdom to liberate me. The real, profound liberators are

Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, so from now until I have completely transformed myself and unified with the Triple Gem, I take refuge.” Your object of refuge is not only Lama, but all the buddhas, bodhisattvas and arhats of the ten directions, so make this determination in front of them all.

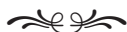
Then, white light radiates from the crown of the head of each of them and enters your own crown, purifying all your impure thoughts and your blocked, uncondusive nervous system so that you can now control your body. Red light radiates from their throats into your throat, purifying your uncontrolled energy of speech. And blue light radiates from their hearts into yours, purifying all your wrong conceptions and fanatical wrong views. At the same time, repeat after me . . .

*[Lama performs the refuge ceremony.]*

Thank you. It is good that each time you meditate, go for refuge or, actually, do anything else, recall the experience of clarity and just contemplate on that. Even if you are eating, contemplate on that clean-clear experience. That’s good enough.

## 6. The Enlightenment Attitude

*Chenrezig Institute, 14 September 1979<sup>3</sup>*



THE BODHISATTVA VOWS were requested when I was at Chenrezig Institute two years ago, but I was unable to give them at that time. Now you have asked again, and I'm very fortunate to be able to give them to you. And you people are also very fortunate in having come to the conclusion that you would like to take them. These vows can be taken in either of two ways. One is the wishing way, where you think that you would like to actualize bodhicitta as much as possible, understanding that this is the best way to live. The other way is by taking the vows—the eighteen root vows and the forty-six branch vows—in a serious way. I am sure you understand this; I am not going to go into detail.

The thing is, from the Buddhist point of view, it is very important for one to have the enlightenment attitude. It is an important thing. The reason is, I think I can say, that without some kind of attitude or thought with which to transform the actions of our daily life, life seems to be a disaster. If you are living in a couple relationship, or even if you are just a single person, you still have to relate with human beings. Even if you go into the Himalaya Mountains, you still have to relate with sentient beings, human beings. There is no place that you can go where you don't have to relate with human beings, so it is very important to have this attitude, because all actions, both good and bad, depend on it. You know—I'm not going to tell you that; you know already. So in order to transform our lives, to live in the best way, we desperately need to constantly have the divine quality enlightenment attitude, bodhicitta.

Otherwise, you can see how, in the West, people dedicate their entire lives, or most of their lives, totally to sense pleasure. Can you imagine? It is

<sup>3</sup>Lama gave this teaching prior to bestowing the bodhisattva vows.

obvious why human beings in the West are easily depressed and kill themselves—it is because their purpose, goal or destination in life is so narrow: “If this man or lady cannot give me satisfaction, there is nothing worthwhile in this earth.” Can you imagine that? This is their life; this is their life. It is a completely cold, narrow mind. They particularly mention, “*This lady, this man does not give me satisfaction, therefore I’m not worthwhile.*” It just isn’t true. There are so many millions of ladies and gentlemen who have such a neurotic attitude, such a wrong view, so fanatical, such a self-cherishing thought, not seeing beyond the limitation. You can see. Their lives are so empty, so empty.

So you see, in the West, it’s unbelievable. They try *so hard* to make themselves happy by arranging their material possessions into different perspectives. “Maybe if I put it this way, something interesting; maybe I put this way, something interesting; maybe I put this way, something interesting; maybe I put this way, something interesting; maybe if I put this way, something interesting.” [*Lama turns his body in all different directions.*] All those things are not true—can you imagine? This way, this way or that way—what difference does it make? I mean, of course, relatively there is some difference, but that doesn’t make you satisfied, does it? Yet they try so hard; unbelievable.

It is very good to see the reality of Western life, or the Western way of living life, to check up historically. If you do, you will really get a bit of a hard shock, I tell you. It is not happy, Western life is definitely not a happy life, I can say. I’m sorry. Even though you think your life is happy, it’s not true. I’m not saying that I have investigated each individual and discovered that each one is unhappy. I am not saying that. But I am just looking at it sort of generally. It is a very difficult life. And also, people in Western samsara have some kind of instinctive attitude. I don’t know, perhaps I can say instinctive—there is no checking, no observation. They just do things, just spinning, just doing things instinctively, instinctively, spinning themselves. This makes me so afraid. No observation, no checking what’s going on. That’s dangerous.

I can see when Western people start to meditate, when they begin to observe their attitude, then they can see, “What has been happening to me?” At some point they really become crazy. Why? Because before they were just going round and round like this, then suddenly [*Lama circles his finger round and round in the air and suddenly brings it up to his eyes indicat-*

*ing that people first circle around until they suddenly see themselves for the first time], pam!* So their nervous system is shocked. Then, instead of meditation making them better, they get worse. But it is much better to question for a minute and then rest, rather than just spinning around. That way you do not become worse.

Therefore, it is good to learn how to change one's instinctive behavior in order to transform the Western life. It is the instinctive attitude that leads to certain actions; any movements of the body and speech result from attitudes of the mind. And in order to transform that, you need quite a lot of effort, observation and penetration on the motivation.

What I'm saying is, my point is, that it is important that each of us has the attitude or aim of looking beyond sense pleasures. Even philosophically, we can think, "Well, yeah, today I'm not getting any chocolate. Yeah, OK. I'm not getting chocolate. Well, I'm not going to die. I can have other pleasures. I can eat muesli!" Or you can think, "My boyfriend has disappeared. Well, he is one man. OK. He has disappeared, but there are so many of them. So, if I wait, maybe another one will appear." Instead of being so concrete, which makes you kill yourself, which is so dangerous, relax. But that doesn't mean, I'm not saying that you should not be concerned with this life's pleasures at all. You can have pleasure, but you should know that this pleasure is not the only one and that you should not grasp at it in such a neurotic way. It is not worth it. This pleasure is temporal: it comes, it goes, it comes, it goes.

Let me give you an example. I was a Tibetan refugee. I had a samsaric nest, my parents, my siblings—I had four or five sisters and three or four brothers. My pleasure did not depend on my sisters or brothers; it did not depend on the Tibetan environment. I still have pleasure in Australia, don't I? However, many refugees were very sad and sometimes they even killed themselves, thinking, "Now I have lost my country. I have lost my wife, my husband, my children. I have lost everything. There is no more point in living." So they killed themselves. Attitude is so extremely important. The only thing that makes me happy is that I think, "Hmm, not too bad." That is profound; from the Buddhist point of view, that is profound. With this, you are almost Buddha. You can see that another condition can make you just as happy as the previous one. And understand that relative conditions change from time to time; they cannot last permanently. That gives you room; you have room.

So actually, attitude is the essence of life. Just like a pillar keeps a house from falling down, attitude is the source of life. A good life and good relationships come from a good attitude. A bad attitude causes human beings to fight each other and have disastrous relationships. A good attitude is, “We have the same potential, we live together, we help each other and we can grow and be helpful for each other.” If we humans have that kind of attitude, human relationships can be good and worthwhile. But if we have a low attitude, our lives become very shaky. Western life in particular is so shaky, unbelievably shaky.

The greatest suffering in the West is the incredible changing of life; the fickle mind changing, changing, changing. This creates most of the suffering of the Western life. This is my observation. Because fundamentally, there is no stability in our relationships. We human beings live with each other. Whatever you do affects me, whatever I do affects you. So if you are shaking, if you are spinning, it makes me go like that as well. I cannot cope. In fact, I cannot cope with Western students’ attitude and life—it would be much better if I went back to Nepal! [*Lama pretends to get off the throne.*] I’m joking!

Well, you understand what I mean. I’m sure you people think I’m crazy: “He’s been here for such a short time, just a couple of days, and he’s immediately judging our way of life. This man is making incredible presumptions!” Well, perhaps I am presumptuous, but perhaps I am looking at you like this: you are there, and I’m looking from the outside, like this. [*Lama shows looking at students from a distance, in perspective.*] Sometimes tourists can see better than the people who are inside, rolling each other. Rolling each other? They themselves don’t understand what is happening.

I’m not criticizing Western life, saying that it is the worst life in the world. Western life could be perfect, really profound. It depends. It is up to the individual transformation, the individual attitude. What I’m talking about is the majority of people who do not have a philosophy of the reality of life, the right life; who do not live in the right livelihood. That is the problem.

I want you to understand that Western relationships are always shaking, shaking, shaking. Why Westerners’ interpersonal relationships are like a tornado is because they have a fickle attitude. Their attitude is so limited; their expectations are a fantasy; their aim is so small and narrow. As I say, if the only reason someone is in a relationship with you is that they are

expecting chocolate, how can it last? From the beginning, their thinking is limited. The basis of the relationship is already narrow, a fantasy. I'm not sure if my language is expressing this clearly enough for you. My language is not so good. I would really like to make this clean clear. It is important to know. It is true that when two human beings come together in a relationship, if their attitude in dealing with each other has such a narrow destination, then what happens is [*Lama snaps his fingers*], you crash. That is the result.

Of course, the West also has its good side. The Christian religion has a great deal to offer. Really, I see many Christian people coming together in a relationship and they stick to each other very sincerely. Many of them are very happy, through their belief that "God created us, we are coming together, our aim is to work toward God, salvation." There are many good things in Western religions; you can see. But many people reject religion. They believe themselves to be like fish or chickens; they have chicken religions, chicken thinking, fish religions, fish thinking. They reject Christianity—they create a fish religion, a chicken religion.

Anyway, attitude is so important. In the West, we always talk about the "profound life," don't we? Everybody uses the term "profound life." Profound life means profound meaning, profound destination or profound aim. The reason that we human beings are bored with each other is that we don't have a profound destination. We shake hands with each other and that is it, that is the aim, our aim is finished. Then we are bored. We can't see that besides shaking hands there is some profound meaning and reality. That is what's wrong. Really, the point is that we Westerners should live as much as we can by taking what life and society offer. You should have a comfortable life. You can do that, you can take that advantage, you can use that. But at the same time, you should know that sense pleasures and the comfort of this life are not the only things to live for. We can do better, better. Each day we can live a better life. It doesn't matter whether at the moment I'm young, stupid or old. Still my potential for a joyful life can grow infinitely.

Also, you understand that the characteristic nature of the bodhicitta attitude is that you are not only concerned with the comfort of your own life. Moreover, you are not only concerned with your own liberation. You see, or recognize, that the potential for everlasting peace and the blissful state of enlightenment exists within the minds all of the universal sentient

beings and you therefore take personal responsibility for leading all these sentient beings to the realization of their own potential. You take this responsibility completely upon yourself. This attitude is very important.

For example, we all have friends. One day, one of them might say something like, "I need somebody to do this." He expresses a need for help. He doesn't ask in a heavy way, but our self-cherishing thought doesn't have the room or the sensitive awareness or understanding to take that vibration into our mind. We are already blocked. Human psychology is such that really, if you have not prepared yourself, even when your friend expresses his need to you in this indirect way, you just ignore it. You can see, your friend is not stupid. He knows, "I tried to express myself in such a way but look, he never heard, it never went into his mind." Unbelievable, that's the way it goes. I think we all do this. It's not so good, is it?

Or say you have a relationship with a person who has really given their life, their energy, everything to you for a long time. Then perhaps that person finds himself in difficulty for some reason and expresses his need for help in a very gentle way. But your concrete mind is so strong that it never occurs to you that he needs something and you ignore him. Can you imagine? I mean the other person is going to be hurt, isn't he? That means you have no preparation; you have no foundation to receive; you have already rejected, closed yourself off; you have already built a wall. The door is already closed, so there's no room. That's the way that human problems and conflict arise.

Then the next day perhaps intellectually you say to your friend, "Can I do something for you?" And he thinks, "Forget it. Yesterday I told you so many times that I needed help and you didn't pay any attention and now today you are just saying, 'Hello, can I help you?' Do you want something from me now?"

It's true, completely true. You see, this is the way human conflict comes. Some reason, incredible. I tell you, it takes tremendous energy just to hear, let alone share. I don't understand human beings. Just to hear, just to be receptive is difficult, let alone saying, "Oh, you have this problem; I'm sorry, I have compassion." Even though these things are not new, still, to be kind of sympathetic also takes time. It takes time. We are just like stone, so much like stone; with no response to the needs of any humans or other sentient beings. That is the problem. In human relationships it is very important to be open to each other, sort of willing, determined, wanting



to help each other. If you prepare yourself in that way, there is room for the gross information to come in through here to here. [*Lama points at his ear, then his heart.*]

The Tibetan yogi Lama Je Tsongkhapa said that the enlightenment attitude, bodhicitta, is the essence of the Mahayana vehicle and the foundation for the development of the six perfections (Skt: *paramita*) and the ten bodhisattva levels (Skt: *bhumi*). It is also like alchemy, the energy that has the ability to transform iron into gold: with the enlightenment attitude we can transform our mundane Western life into the transcendental path to enlightenment. It is possible.

From the Mahayana point of view, if we are concerned with getting only ourselves healthy and liberated, it is still the self-cherishing thought—concern for only oneself and not for other sentient beings. Actually, it is quite profound to comprehend that the source of human problems is ego conflict and to want to reach beyond that and attain the cessation of suffering—liberation, or nirvana.

I mean, sometimes we have difficulty understanding the concept of complete freedom from suffering even intellectually let alone attaining it, which is very difficult. But from the bodhisattva's point of view, aspiring to that is still a baby attitude—self-cherishing and not at all profound.

All human problems come from a lack of wisdom. To gain wisdom, tremendous wisdom, we need to be open. To discover profound total openness, the totality of the enlightenment, or buddhahood, the state of totally conscious, omniscient wisdom, we need to have the totally open attitude of bodhicitta.

Let me give you an example. When I was learning English, if I had not opened myself to my teachers, if I'd have thought that I cannot learn anything from Western people, if I'd had that kind of attitude, that wrong conception, I could not have learned anything. The path to learning would have been blocked.

My point is that when you are open, when you are searching, then there is the possibility to discover, for example, uranium, which is the energy to produce the nuclear things. Because you are seeking it, looking for that, you discover it. Those examples are good. Then they discover how to make things from it, how to use it; they discover nuclear energy. It is similar when human beings are striving to become totally perfect, which is possible. When we say "buddha," we mean totality and perfection, not

something partial. We do need sort of concentrated totality wisdom. If we are not open, gaining it is not possible. When you are open, even when you look at how children are acting, what dogs and monkeys are doing, how the weather changes, you can learn from all these things, you can learn something. All the movement of things in the world is showing you reality. For me, perhaps I have learnt words, maybe I talk a few words to you, blah, blah, blah, but perhaps the real teaching is what I am taking from you. I feel I learn a great deal from Western people. Perhaps the attitude in the West is that the students know nothing and only the teacher is knowledgeable. Do you have that attitude in schools? [*Yes.*] You do? My goodness, that's dangerous, that's dangerous. It is not true. You can see how those teachers waste their energy.

Even higher bodhisattvas can learn from children, sure. Amazing. Do you know Gudrun, the daughter of Tom and Kathy? When I was here two years ago I invited them all to come for lunch and we ate together. I was eating like this and saying to Gudrun, "How are you?" She was young, so young two years ago, and said to me, "Lama, don't talk." She was my guest, and I said, "Why?" Incredible, she was so precise, so serious: "When you talk with food in your mouth, your words are not clear." Fantastic! Such a young girl but so precise. How could I reject that? For me it was perfectly logical.

I am giving you simple examples but they relate to such a profound thing, the enlightenment attitude bodhicitta. This is because I want you to see clean clear how beneficial it is; I want you to understand that it is really worthwhile. Human beings just existing without having a profound attitude or a profound destination, just living for temporal chocolate, are so dry.

To give a more tangible example, we have come here, we talk some kind of intellectual teaching to you and you sort of understand, "Maybe what this monk says is half true, not too bad; hmm, maybe he is a little bit kind." Sort of, we have some feeling for each other. Even Lama Zopa spends maybe twelve days, always pumping, pumping, pumping, but still you don't feel tremendously upset with Lama Zopa, do you? The reason is that we are not involved at such low levels; we are trying to relate to each other in a higher way. We are not fighting with you as you fight with your boyfriend or girlfriend.

I want you to understand. How many times do you fight with your girlfriend or boyfriend in one day? I'm joking! But the important thing is this,

that in our relationship with each other we do have some kind of lower attitude, and that is why we fight. There are two kinds of relationship we can have with other people: we can relate at the mundane level or we can relate beyond that by having some kind of higher destination. I'm not sure what I'm talking about!

Remember, many times Buddhist scriptures mention "beyond" something. Well, we have the attitude that we like to eat chocolate, we like chocolate, but at the same time, inside, we can see beyond chocolate. I think it is better to put it that way, so then you can understand clean clear. So this we have to learn. Men can deal with ladies, ladies can deal with men, but at the same time they can reach beyond that. It is important. Check out how to reach beyond normality while at the same time you are living in normality. It needs a profound attitude, profound nuclear wisdom to go through those obstacles.

Anyway, I'm not going to talk too much more now, but I do feel that it is so important that when we do things, we do them correctly and that the things we do do not bring problems. You see, when I talk about bodhicitta philosophy I expect you to understand, but if you don't see how it relates with your own life then you don't know how to hold it: "Bodhicitta, yeah, there is bodhicitta, but I can't put it together with my life. My life is involved with chocolate, so how can I integrate it with bodhicitta?" This is not so good.

You see, the Buddhist teaching is so down to earth, I tell you; actually, so down to earth. It's so simple, so logical. I myself don't have much wisdom or method, but I'm not afraid to give Buddhist teachings, even in the Western intellectual world. Those teachings are so logical, so simple. If you don't understand these two things—that you are dealing with the world and at the same time you are reaching beyond that—then you cannot practice Dharma, you can't put it together. There are always problems and conflict.

Take, for example, the many young hippies living in the Australian bush. They are extreme, living without a house. That's what I hear but I'm not sure. However, houses are not the problem, muesli is not the problem. The problem is the grasping, narrow mind that cannot see that you can go beyond all that.

I have to say that many times hippies misunderstand renunciation.

Their renunciation is fickle; they can only stay in the bush for a few months. They cannot hold their reality—they are just joking, playing games, sort of reacting against their parents and society. This is unrealistic; it does not help themselves and the result is that they become sick. They get hepatitis, cancer, bitten by insects . . . anyway, you know what I mean: an unhealthy body. What are you gaining? Your attachment is still there. I can immediately recognize anybody who lives in the bush criticizing society people as terrible, bad and impure as one who himself has the impure, sick mind. I don't care who it is, I am going to say that.

Renunciation means having no problem, but there you are, living in the bush, thinking that society people are bad: "Society people are bad, they do this, they do that, this, that," completely obsessed with society people. "Society people, *grr*." How can you be free? How are you renouncing society? You are *more* involved in society instead of renouncing it, aren't you?

There is a story that once there were two Buddhist monks about to cross a river when they saw a lady with leprosy standing near them on the bank. Out of compassion, one of the monks went over, put this lady on his back and carried her across the river. As he was doing this, the other monk was thinking, "Wow, he just broke his vow, he broke his vow, he broke his vow, he touched a woman, he touched a woman." His mind was going like that. Once across, they argued about who was right and who was wrong all the way to the monastery. Eventually they asked their teacher, who told the one who was criticizing, "This is your problem; your mind is caught up with that. Your brother monk didn't even think about it. He just carried her across the river, that's all."

I think you understand the psychology. Buddhist philosophy and meditation teaches you to follow the middle path to enlightenment; to live in the middle way. It does not say that you have to lead a miserable life in order to become enlightened, in order to work toward enlightenment. It never mentions that you have to be miserable in this life to discover enlightenment. Where is the Buddhist scripture that says that? Anyway, the Dharma scriptures say that anyone who practices Dharma goes from happiness to happiness; from the happy path, the path to enlightenment, to the happy goal, the destination. If your understanding is that first you have to renounce, give up society and a comfortable life, go into the jungle and be miserable, that is a misconception.

But of course, when you think about it the other way, it is better to be

simple than to have tremendous, outrageous grasping onto one, two or more and more things. That is also painful, isn't it? But Australian life also allows you to be simple and comfortable at the same time, doesn't it? You can definitely live a comfortable life without tremendous effort. That is the beauty of what your life offers—your karma to be born in Australia and the kindness of the people in this society. You have something to really be thankful for. This is your karma, so take advantage. Use those energies but also go beyond them, seeing that the comfort of this life is not your only destination, that there is something beyond it. So slow down. You are not craving; you know that these are not the only things, not the most important things.

Anyway, I'm sure you have already understood all this from the lamrim, but I want you to be clean clear. Really, for some reason, human beings are really unbelievably kind to each other. It's true. There is a bodhisattva vow that states if somebody accidentally hits you and you get so angry that when the person apologizes you don't forgive them, that is a transgression. If somebody apologizes to you, you have to accept. And there is also a vow against praising yourself and putting other people down. It is no good to put other people down. Actually, if you put others down it means that there's something going on within you yourself. If I put you down it means that there is some psychological reasoning going on within my mind, some resistance, some weak mind, some insecure feeling with myself. That is why I put you down. People are always involved with each other, so it's easy to get angry and accidentally hurt someone else. Therefore it is important that we create the space to accept when somebody says, "Please forgive me." In Buddhism, acceptance is very important.

Perhaps this is not the Western mentality. If I have cancer, the Buddhist attitude is that I have to accept and not reject. How can I think, "Oh, I am Thubten Yeshe, how can I have cancer? How can I have cancer in my nose?" If I think like that you can see that I am stupid—I want to demonstrate to you the stupid way of thinking. The cancer is already here on my nose or somewhere; it is already here. It is a continued existence from the past, whenever it began, so as that is the reality, it is best that you accept.

Of course, at the same time you can do something about it. If it helps, you can go to the doctor, you can do so many things. But those whose minds are narrow and ignorant—not only people in the West—cannot accept cancer, so psychologically they add to that; they have double

cancer. Each time you psychologically add more cancer, the symptoms get bigger and bigger and bigger.

From the Buddhist point of view, you can have cancer but be completely blissful at the same time. It is possible. It depends upon your mental attitude; complete control. Physical pain can be controlled by the mind, I tell you. A Western example is boxing. I mean, can you imagine that? For me it is too much. When I watch boxing, it is too much. I find it difficult to watch boxing on television; I get pain. They beat each other incredibly, unbelievable. To some extent the boxers control the pain, but in a negative way. It is not through the positive mind. Do you think they control it with a positive mind? Doubtful. Unbelievable. My goodness.

So, can you imagine, all these things. Like the motorcycle stunt man—how many times did he become unconscious? Do you know this man or not? [*Students suggest Evel Knievel.*] It is unbelievable. He knocked himself out so many times yet still his ego is completely blissful. He is intoxicated; his ego says completely, “Yeah, yeah, I want to do it again because. . . .” Actually, it is rubbish. Who thinks he is wise? I think people who are really interested in this kind of thing, who think that it is worthwhile, are completely foolish; definitely, absolutely foolish. It is a complete waste of life. I’m sorry. I could not believe what an unbelievable waste of life it is. It is unbelievable the way mother sentient beings’ minds work.

Anyway, I think I’m going too extreme, excuse me. It is really fortunate that all of you have somehow come to the conclusion that in this life it is worthwhile to develop the enlightenment attitude, bodhicitta, “From now and forever, as much as possible I am going to actualize being more concerned for other sentient beings.” You know, that is not telling a lie. The way to take the bodhisattva vow is to think as much as possible, “I understand my limitations. I look at my own life—so many times, with this narrow mind, with this self-cherishing thought, I have given incredible harm to the friends who surround me. I have harmed my parents so many times; even though they have been kind, I have rejected them. Not only that, as I have grown up with my friends and they have tried in their way to make me happy, with my self-cherishing mind I have made so many problems for them. But now I understand that all these self-cherishing thoughts are the source of confusion and dissatisfaction, and that I and all universal living beings have equal potential to reach beyond the egotistic,

self-cherishing thought and discover the enlightenment realization, by actualizing the six perfections.”

The first perfection is that of generosity, giving. Don't think that giving is not possible, that you are totally miserly. When you meet a friend, who says, “Hello, how are you?” and you reply, “Oh, I'm OK,” this is also giving. Giving does not necessarily mean handing over some kind of material object. Listening to other people, being patient and sympathetic, is also giving. For example, here in meditation, just being a good example and well-controlled is giving. As a matter of fact, you are giving. Remember, I talked about this before. By being a good example, we are showing each other our potentiality. The best gift is to be a good example. That is true giving. And being sensitive and aware is the real gift.

The second perfection is purity, or morality. At least we should not cheat our parents and friends, who are very kind. Nor should we cheat those who give us education, our teachers and so forth. We should have a good feeling toward all of them and not tell lies; generally, there is no good reason to lie. If there is a good reason to lie, you can do so, but if there is not, you should not. I'm not going to go into all the details, but there is this perfection of morality.

Actually, all this is wisdom. I want you to understand that this is wisdom. The way of explaining the Buddhist point of view is that morality comes from wisdom. Without wisdom it is not possible. There are six perfections. Perfection means beyond: beyond, or transcendent, giving, beyond morality, beyond patience, beyond enthusiastic perseverance, beyond single-pointed concentration and beyond wisdom. All these things are a bodhisattva's actions. When you become a bodhisattva, this way of thinking is your equipment, and your duty is to actualize these six wisdoms as much as you possibly can.

Think about the profound beings who really have the highest attitude, which leads to the highest destination, which they have already reached. If you have a Christian background, you can think about the Christian saints. Or, as we say, “All the past bodhisattvas, by actualizing the bodhicitta attitude and open universal thought have reached the highest destination, the highest consciousness, and become buddhas. They have reached beyond limited thought. So, as they have acted, I myself am also going to actualize bodhicitta as much as possible. Each day from now on

I shall develop the understanding of the totally open attitude toward the reality of all universal beings. From now and forever.”

### TAKING THE BODHISATTVA VOWS

So now, at this time, you are taking the bodhisattva vows from the supreme beings of the ten directions: the higher beings who have reached beyond the self-cherishing thought are in your presence. Kneel on your right knee, like you do when you take the eight precepts in the morning. This symbolizes having the single-minded thought; not having the dualistic thought. Then, with the understanding that you are developing the enlightened attitude to lead all universal sentient beings to the highest destination, the eternally blissful state of consciousness, think that from now you are going to actualize bodhicitta and the six perfections as much as possible. Think that you are making this determination in front of the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions. Feel that it is extremely worthwhile and that you are doing amazing things. You're kind of surprised yourself!

It is not an easy thing, but really worthwhile, to transform and attain the transcendental experience, understanding that buddha potential lies equally within all universal sentient beings. Then generate the strong motivation, “From now until I discover enlightenment I shall actualize the enlightenment attitude, bodhicitta, in order to benefit all universal sentient beings as much as I can, and day by day I shall also actualize the six perfections, as all the higher supreme beings—the buddhas and bodhisattvas—did.”

*[Lama performs the bodhisattva vows ceremony.]*

The merit of having taken these bodhisattva vows is infinite. This energy becomes universal because your attitude, the way you have opened, is toward the reality of all universal living beings. For this reason, the energy of taking these vows is infinite, so powerful. Therefore, traditionally, we dedicate the merit immediately. Dedication means directing that energy to the highest destination before it can be destroyed by the circumstances of anger or hatred, so it is very important that at this time you dedicate very strongly. But when you dedicate, it is not necessarily only the merit you have created at this time. Of course, at present you do have the infinite



powerful attitude nuclear energy, but besides that there are the merits of the six perfections of countless previous lives—you have practiced the perfections from time to time before. And not only that, there is also the merit of all other beings. So we offer all this energy right now. This offering is like investing the energy or directing it for the future—enlightenment.

Also, traditionally, we offer this energy to Maitreya Buddha. Maitreya means universal love, compassionate love. Maitreya Buddha is the relative buddha who will come after Shakyamuni's teachings have finished on this earth. We deposit these merits in the divine wisdom bank of universal love. This becomes auspicious for the energy to become exhaustless, so we transform the energy, or merit, we have created into whatever you think is beautiful. Those offerings fill the whole of universal space and we offer them. So now, all the bodhisattvas of the ten directions are paying attention to you, saying that at such and such a place in Queensland there is Lama Thubten Yeshe, and these students have taken the enlightenment attitude bodhicitta, and they are praying for the success of this newborn attitude to become firmly established and increase without interruption. They are praying for it to increase infinitely and you should also pray for that.

So, we are offering all the merits of the past countless lives' good energy. Also, during this meditation course you have meditated so much, and throughout your life you have had the thought of loving kindness toward other beings, so we dedicate all this nuclear energy, putting it into the one direction. Thus, we offer it to the divine universal love. This is a very good way for you to direct your energy so that it becomes exhaustless. Contemplate that your energy spreads throughout all universal space and, as well as giving it to the buddhas and bodhisattvas, give it to all universal sentient beings.

*[Lama recites the dedication prayers.]*

Actually, you have already had some experience of a totally opened mind. It's there, it's there. So, instead of always thinking garbage thoughts, remember it every day. Sometimes, in order to relax, remember that. We call that meditation on bodhicitta. Right now, you do have some experience of bodhicitta; to some extent you have experienced being beyond the self-cherishing thought. That itself is clarity, so contemplate on it every day. Remembering it every day is the method for increasing that energy.

Traditionally, we should remember bodhicitta three times a day. You don't have to, but it's good. In the West, you can remember bodhicitta when you eat: once at breakfast, a second time at lunch and a third time at dinner. In that way, remember bodhicitta three times a day. You don't need some kind of formal meditation; you can just be talking with your friends, but inside you are remembering bodhicitta. You can do it; the human being is unbelievable.

Don't think, "How can I talk, communicate with my friends, but at the same time remember bodhicitta?" You can. Simultaneously, superficially you can be talking to your friends but inside be remembering bodhicitta. There are many different ways to practice, to keep the bodhicitta energy going by remembering it every day as much as you can. Just remember it, that's all.

Also, you can reap the benefits of bodhicitta. That is very important. Some people misunderstand the enlightenment thought, bodhicitta. They say, "Oh, thought—thought is no good, thoughts are my problem. Bodhicitta is thought; thought is my problem. I want all thoughts to vanish." That's wrong. As long as you exist, you are thought. Consciousness *is* thought. Don't try to contradict this in a rubbish philosophy kind of way. There are two divisions of thought: negative and positive. When you open yourself to other sentient beings, when you open your heart to the highest destination of enlightenment, it is incredible. That has nothing to do with mundane, irritated, dissatisfied thoughts. You can see there is a distinction.

Anyway, I think you people understand. Thank you so much. I think it is worthwhile. Myself, I am very happy. We are too arrogant in a "good meditator" sort of way. Instead of that, we should actualize bodhicitta, loving kindness, the understanding of the enlightenment attitude every day. That way it gets better and better every day and that keeps your life meaningful. Therefore, it is so worthwhile.

Especially in Western life, we have to deal with people, we have to act, so if we don't have that kind of attitude, it is very difficult. First of all, you have to have a job in order to sustain your life, your Western life, don't you? When you have a job, you have to deal with your boss. So if you have the enlightenment attitude of bodhicitta during the day, there is space. Even if your boss gives you a hard time, there is space, there is some exception coming in your mind. So it is really worthwhile. I'm very happy that

I'm so fortunate to have contact with so many bodhisattvas! It's true, you know.

Remember, the history of Atisha, the great Indian Mahayana pandit, in the lamrim? Atisha had more than one hundred teachers. But these were not like the academic Western teachers. In the West we have mathematics teachers, geography teachers, who only talk garbage. Excuse me, you know what I mean, I think you understand. He had more than one hundred Dharma teachers and he respected them all, but none could compare with the one who taught him bodhicitta.

I'm not saying that I am giving this to you. I want you to understand that I'm talking about a way of thinking. Atisha was not stupid; he understood who really gave him the method of actualizing bodhicitta, the enlightenment attitude. Whenever he heard the name of this Lama Dharmakirti [Serlingpa], he would come out in goosebumps and tears would fill his eyes. This kind of expression was beyond the intellectual.

My point is that Western Dharma practitioners should not be arrogant, intellectually sort of, "I am practicing higher, higher, higher." There's no higher—you have to go from where you are now; you have to be led from here. So the most profound way is the universal practice that does not contradict any other religions in being concerned with other sentient beings. Western religions also do not contradict the bodhisattva path. I can see that all religions, and even nonreligious, people in the world are beautiful. They say, "I don't have any religion but as I live, I try to help other people." That is their religion, I tell you. Their attitude is their religion. So the bodhisattva's way of life does not contradict Buddhism and does not contradict non-Buddhism. It is the universal way, so we are very fortunate. It is really worthwhile.



ECIE HURSTHOUSE

Waikanae, New Zealand, 1975

## 7. The Experiential Nature of Lord Buddha's Teachings

*Christchurch, New Zealand, 14 June 1975*



*[Lama makes prostrations.]*

THE NATURE of emotional pride is such that you go around with your nose in the air. You never want to see what's in front of you or look down. The antidote is to do prostrations.

When I talk about prostrations, I don't mean that you prostrate to only the Buddha. As Shantideva said, we can also prostrate to all mother sentient beings by remembering that the basic, fundamental nature of their minds is as equally pure as that of an enlightened being.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, doing prostrations doesn't necessarily mean doing either the full-length or five-point physical ones. If you're out on a busy city street and suddenly go down on the sidewalk people are going to freak out. Instead of doing that you can simply make mental prostrations. Remember, there are three ways of prostrating: with body, speech and mind.

The Buddha was so skillful. He gave us methods for every situation. So even if you're on a crowded street and want to make prostrations, instead of putting on a big show and doing them physically, where everybody's going to think, "What on earth is that?" you can just prostrate mentally.

If you do things with understanding, it's so worthwhile. If you do them without understanding and then ask yourself, "Why am I doing this?" you'll conclude that you're regressing instead of advancing. Practicing with

<sup>4</sup> *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, 6:113. "A buddha's qualities are gained from the sentient beings and the conquerors alike, so why do I not respect them in the same way as I respect the conquerors?"

understanding is helpful in treating your uncontrolled mind. If you practice like that, everything will become worthwhile.

The same applies to making offerings. We don't offer food to the Buddha because he's hungry. We do it as part of training our mind to release emotional miserliness. The way we should look at charity is that no matter what the material value of what we give, the real value of generosity is in what we gain: knowledge-wisdom. Of course, it depends on your attitude. Even if you offer only one dollar you can still gain a lot. Basically, you have to understand the psychology of the various Dharma practices you do, especially those that initially make you uncomfortable.

But everything has meaning. For example, incense symbolizes the pure energy of body, speech and mind, especially pure thoughts. The real essence of incense is within you and the sticks we burn are external symbols of that. The real incense is in your mind. You have to know that, otherwise, when you offer incense you're just imitating other people you've seen doing it, just copying Easterners. That's not right. The real incense is your pure thought that gives pure vibrations to others.

It's the same when you're offering light. External lights have the function of destroying darkness, of making things clear. But the real candlelight is within you—it's your wisdom. So whenever you offer incense or light you should do so with a dedication like, "May my mind and those of all mother sentient beings be filled with the light of knowledge-wisdom and completely purified of the darkness shadow that makes us totally unconscious and is the cause of all suffering."

In other words, everything we do that might look like ritual is actually training our mind and freeing us from agitated states and negative impulses. It's very useful.

Then why do we have all these physical objects on our altars? Buddhists are supposed to renounce material things, but then we put all these statues and paintings up there? That's kind of strange. Well, we think it's far preferable to have pictures of holy objects in front of us rather than pictures of fashion models and rock stars on our walls. Those things automatically grab our attention and stimulate attachment. It's like when we're in the supermarket and see all these desirable foods and think, "Fantastic! How much money do I have? Oh, not enough, how can I get some?" and then we go, "Mom, Dad, can I have some money please?" "No, you can't!" and we're so disappointed.

That's all visualization. Expert marketers know how to display products in order to trigger our attachment and make us want to buy them. They understand people's basic psychological energy and what the combination of appealing object and craving desire results in. That association makes us go *pam!* There's contact and we go berserk. We lose wisdom and become unconscious.

We have to know this. We think we're conscious and aware but we're not. When we're overwhelmed by attraction and attachment, we actually become unconscious. If you check carefully at such times you'll find that perhaps at first your mind is very clear, but as attachment takes over, something dark seems to envelop it. Check up. That's experience. You see, Lord Buddha's psychology is not about what you believe but what you experience. Go into town right now and see what happens! That's reality.

And that's why I always say that Lord Buddha's teachings are so scientific. They're very different from Western modes of religious expression. I'm not complaining. I'm just saying that Buddhist psychology and teachings may be different from what you were brought up with. They're not about believing certain things and then going to heaven when you die; they're not about doing something now and waiting for a long time to experience the result. No! If you act correctly with wisdom right now you can see the result in the next second. It's so simple.

For example, after you've meditated for just half an hour, it's incredible: you can see other people in a whole different light. And a short morning meditation can make your whole day so peaceful. This is our experience. You don't need to wait a long time to see results: "I've been waiting for realizations and enlightenment for such a long time." Don't think like that. Don't grasp at enlightenment. Just act in your daily life as much as you can. The result will be right there. The result of half an hour's morning meditation can last all day. Isn't that beautiful? And you expend almost no energy.

How much do you have to pay to enjoy *samsaric* pleasures? And they come with much conflict and other complications. You have to know that. While actually, real happiness lies within you. And through meditation you discover that.

That's why I always say that Lord Buddha's teaching, *Buddhadharma*, is so simple. Trying to be happy the materialistic way takes so much energy. In Europe, for example, there's so much material wealth, but how much

effort do you need to expend for it to make you happy? It can be difficult to get a job; earning a decent salary can also be difficult. It's not easy, even amongst all this material plenty.

It's really incredible if you compare the benefits of material pleasures to those of meditation. You work at a difficult job and make money, but it can often get complicated, even though your polluted mind thinks, "Oh, I'm happy. I get paid today!" And in between paydays your mind remains in that expectant condition, which really agitates you. On the other hand, if one morning you spend an hour in meditation, you can make your entire day peaceful. How can you buy that? That sort of happiness is beyond material. It's so simple. Don't you think that's simple? Really think about it.

Take, for example, a couple living together. Most of the time their arguments are in their home. These are just ego games. They have no understanding. They want to be happy, they want to live together, but, "Yesterday he hurt me; today I want to hurt him," and then they just bump heads all day. It's incredible. So ignorant. They mean well, but the psychology is, "If you hurt me, I have to hurt you back, otherwise you'll just keep hurting me." That's such silly psychology. You know what I mean.

If they understood that real happiness comes from within, from understanding their own true nature, from understanding their partner's nature, that wouldn't happen. But they don't look within; they just look externally. If they understood this, besides seeing the external appearance they would also see each other's powerful inner beauty and potential purity, and in that way come to respect one another. This would lead to a much better relationship in everyday life.

So, forgetting about the realization of enlightenment for the moment, simply understand that daily meditation can at least bring good vibrations to your family and your home. The better we understand each other, the better we understand human nature, the better our lives will be. All problems, all ego games, come from a lack of understanding. OK, I think I've gone off on a tangent!

The material objects you see on the altar and hanging on the walls of this meditation hall, these statues and thangkas, are symbolic. What do they symbolize? Wisdom, or understanding. Tibetan Buddhist psychology would say that these physical objects are talking to you beyond words.



Take my dorje and bell, for example. The person who created them had pure motivation, so they have a certain energy, what we might call “good vibrations.” This energy too communicates with us beyond words.

Similarly with pictorial representations of buddhas, bodhisattvas, realized lamas, yogis and yoginis. Yoginis are sometimes shown as dancing—if you want to dance, realized dancing is OK! Anyway, such art also automatically transmits informational energy to your mind. Spiritual art gives you wisdom vibrations rather than the emotionally ignorant energy that ordinary art conveys.

You can see this even here. I think Westerners find this kind of thing easy to experience. For example, at this seminar you're all sitting in the meditation posture for long periods of time, whereas at home you might find it difficult to sit like this for even five minutes. You're surprising yourself: “In my life, I never thought I'd be able to sit this way!” Don't you think that people new to this tradition might think like that? “I can't believe I'm sitting cross-legged. I never dreamed I'd be able to do that. But here I am at this meditation course doing it.”

This is partly because of the influence of the Buddha statue on the altar and the thangkas on the walls. You think, “He's a human being; I'm a human being. He's sitting like that; I can sit like that.”

Then there's the female buddha, Tara. She's an enlightened being with perfect power and perfect knowledge-wisdom in female aspect, in a female body. She's completely controlled; a female who has attained realizations equal to any male. So when women see her they think, “Wow, if she can become a buddha, so can I.”

Look, I can't generalize, but I've heard many women say, “I can't control my body; my energy's too strong.” We always devalue ourselves like that. It's a weak mind that does so and many women feel their mind is weak. They feel that they need somebody else to depend upon. Without grasping at another person, they feel lonely and lost. This is symptomatic of the weak mind. As long as you're on this earth, there's no way to be lonely. You're surrounded by all living beings. But when people—both men and women—are depressed, they do feel lonely because the lonely mind is unrealistic and emotional. So archetypal images of perfection are part of Lord Buddha's psychology and are really very helpful.

Tourists come to the East and see Buddha statues and so forth in the temples and think that we believe that these material objects are God:

“Buddhists worship graven images.” You can even read this in books. Isn’t that silly? We don’t believe that those material images are Buddha. They’re symbolic. You have to know this, otherwise you’ll get yourself into trouble. Mahayana art is not Buddha, Dharma or Sangha. When we place light, incense, flowers and so forth on the altar we’re not making offerings to the material objects there, we’re making offerings to the Buddha’s mind, his wisdom consciousness.

So it’s very good that you keep images of enlightened beings in your room. Just looking at them can give you control and everlasting peace. They leave positive imprints in your mind; they impart knowledge; they give you teachings. They’re like a fulltime meditation course. So it’s very helpful for you to have holy objects in your room rather than ridiculous samsaric pictures polluting your mind.

Actually, when you go to your friends’ houses you can see what their interests are by the art on their walls and the way they decorate their rooms, because what they do is a projection of their minds. You can see what trip they’re currently on, no matter what they say. People can talk all they want but what they actually do speaks louder than any words.

The way people put their lives together demonstrates whether they’re living with delusion or wisdom because it’s symbolic of their state of mind. You can see what’s going on in their mind because its vibration manifests externally.

However, the characteristic nature of all of Lord Buddha’s teachings and methods is psychology and knowledge-wisdom. And what he taught was not just theoretical but practical and based on experience.

In general, theories and ideas are inadequate if they lack the key of understanding. We need to know *how* to put them into practice. Because of this, the Tibetan tradition has always emphasized the importance of passing the experiential lineage, not just the theories, from guru to disciple, and in this way the living teachings of the Buddha have come down to us today.

There are four different schools of Tibetan Buddhism but their similarities are far greater than their differences. They all contain the complete methods for reaching enlightenment, from beginning to end, and all practice tantric yoga, the Vajrayana. But while they all have the same methods, some emphasize certain meditation techniques over others. That’s the

main difference. But they're all equally Mahayana and all practice both Paramitayana and Vajrayana.

While the Hinayana, the Southern School of Buddhism, contains neither the practices of the Paramitayana nor those of the Vajrayana, it in no way contradicts the Northern, or Mahayana, schools. Lord Buddha sometimes said "yes" and sometimes said "no."

We can understand what he meant by looking at how a skilled physician treats a patient. When somebody is sick the treatment can vary during the course of the illness. For example, at first the doctor may recommend fasting, but later, as the person recovers, the doctor may recommend meat or other heavy foods. When that happens, you don't get angry with the doctor for contradicting himself: "First you said no, now you're saying yes! Do you know what you're doing?" No—rather you think how kind and wise he is.

It's the same thing with Lord Buddha's teachings. Different people need different methods. For example, I'm a monk. I took my vows on the basis of my own decision. Strictly interpreted, according to the *Vinaya* rules I'm not supposed to look at women's faces. I can look at men but not women. The Mahayana view qualifies this. For monks, just looking at women isn't the problem; it's looking at them with an attached, grasping mind; with craving, emotional desire. That's what disturbs you. You can't say that just looking automatically means that you're sick. It depends on your mind.

Similarly, Lord Buddha never said that monks can't touch women, just like that. He never proscribed any actions without explaining why and under what conditions. Lord Buddha's *Vinaya* psychology is incredible. He explained in minute detail with what kind of mind, what kind of attitude, you should avoid doing this or that. He never, ever said, "You can't do that because I said so." There's a profound psychology behind all his teachings.

So, monks cannot touch women with craving desire and nuns can't touch men with craving desire. Doing so makes you lose conscious awareness. That's the danger. If you have the power to stop your finger from burning, you can stick it into a fire. But if you don't and your finger will burn, why stick it into a fire? That's all Lord Buddha is saying. Anyway, whether or not something will burn when it's put into a fire depends on what kind of material it is. It's not automatic that whatever's put into a fire will burn.

So you can see that there's no contradiction between the Hinayana and Mahayana schools of Buddhism. And with respect to the four Tibetan schools, there's no such thing as "this one takes this kind of precept, that one takes a different kind." All four schools take the same precepts.

Also, it's not necessary that everybody who wants to practice Buddhism takes ordination as a monk or nun. The Mahayana offers people many different ways of practicing Dharma. In particular, the Mahayana does not emphasize external signs of practice; those are not important. What matters is mental attitude. On the other hand, the Hinayana, or Theravada, school does emphasize physical actions—how you act and so forth. Some of their rules are very strict and definitely needed. But none of this is contradictory.

Much of the time our mind is running amok, like a mad elephant, so sometimes we need rules to keep it in check. Rules can be incredibly helpful. Since this is just a weekend seminar, don't worry! We don't have time for too many rules. Normally, when we conduct a one-month course, the students take the eight Mahayana precepts ordination daily for the last two weeks. They find the experience very helpful. I'm not just saying this; it's what they've told me. We've been doing this for the past few years and I've been watching how the students react, and that's what they say. It's an incredible experience.

One of the eight precepts is to not eat after the midday meal until the next day. At the one-month course we just did in Australia, one woman unconsciously ate an apple in the evening. Then, after she had eaten it she remembered that she had taken that precept and kind of freaked out: "Oh, no! I took a vow not to eat and now I've broken it," and came to me crying to confess. Normally she's very conscious, but if you don't test your mind, sometimes you don't really know how aware you are. You think you are aware but you actually do all these unconscious actions. When you take a vow, you watch your mind and increase your awareness of what you're thinking, saying and doing. You notice how many polluted things you unconsciously do. Often we don't even notice what we're doing. Most of the time we eat, drink and talk unconsciously. So the precepts help us notice.

Some people think that vows are just something you promise: "I promise not to do that." It's not that simple. Lord Buddha said that his vows should be given only to people who *really* want to take them. They should

not be given to people who don't understand what the vows are, how they work or why they're given. Lord Buddha's psychology is that the wish for the vow must come from the person who's taking it, not from someone who says, "I want to give you these vows."

These vows, whichever ones you're taking, are part of the method of Buddhism. We sentient beings are psychologically sick, and precepts are Buddhism's mental hospital [*Lama holds his outstretched fingers to his head, suggesting a cage*]. We can see that when we voluntarily put our unconscious mind into this situation, it's a great test for our mind. But it's not going to work if it's done forcefully, if someone compels us to take ordination.

Otherwise, if we're not tested, it's difficult to control our mind. Our unconscious energy sort of becomes universal, bigger than the whole world. Of course, it's only mental, not physical, so we can't see it. Anyway, you have to understand what Lord Buddha taught and why you want to learn it. I'm not saying you have to do this. I'm just suggesting you try to understand how Buddhist psychology works, how Lord Buddha's teachings elevate the human mind into enlightenment.

If you know the whole scope of his teachings—study, reading of the sutras, meditation and so forth—your understanding grows so comfortably. Even if you don't practice, everything you read can bring you to, "Oh, this is fantastic. This really speaks to me." You can see how all the teachings relate to you rather than, "Oh, this is ridiculous. This is not for me; it's for somebody else." In that way you end up with nothingness.

And you can't take everything the Buddha said literally. For example, as I mentioned, the Vinaya rules state that a monk cannot touch a woman's body. So what happens if a monk's mother falls down. Can he not help her up? Or like in the story I told before, when the monk carried that female leper over the river. Even though he wanted to help her, if he'd thought, "No, I can't touch a woman" and left her there, would that have been the right thing to do? That would have been silly.

If you study the teachings correctly, you'll see how they relate with your own mind. That is really fantastic. That is extremely helpful.



ANILA ANN MCNEIL

Mooloolaba, Queensland, 1975

## 8. The Dharma of Dancing

*Chenrezig Institute, 15 September 1979<sup>5</sup>*



FROM THE BUDDHIST point of view, the human consciousness, or mind, is the source of all human activity. Therefore, human beings can do all sorts of things, internal and external; human power is such that we can do anything. We can put our energy into any direction we choose. That's the power that humans have.

The human mind is the source of all people's happiness and unhappiness, and the Buddha's teaching emphasizes the gaining of discriminating wisdom so that you can see the reality of your mental attitude and thereby direct your life and energy in the right direction toward tranquility and peace.

Buddhism also asserts that the basic human nature is beautiful, profound and clear. This is how you exist; it's simply a matter of recognizing your own profound qualities and seeing that you have the potential for limitless development. Meditation on the four immeasurables—limitless love, limitless compassion, limitless joy and limitless equilibrium—indicate this.

The reason that these four attitudes are called limitless is that, fundamentally, we do have love, compassion, joy and equilibrium, but they are limited. We have love but it is limited love; we have compassion, but it is limited compassion; we have joyful appreciation of each other's lives, but that joy is limited; we have a certain degree of equilibrium, but it too is limited. What prevents us from realizing the four immeasurables is our ego, the ego mind. The view perceived by the ego mind is wrong, partial.

<sup>5</sup>After an intensive lamrim meditation course taught by Lama Zopa Rinpoche at Chenrezig Institute there was a one-day festival, where the students picnicked, sang, danced in the gumpa, played music and hung around eating. Lama Yeshe also gave this talk.

Therefore, our loving kindness is very narrow. First, we have to recognize this in order to expand it.

Look at how we limit our enjoyment. Intellectually, our minds create the fabrication, “*This* object is my object of joy; I cannot enjoy any other object.” Such preconceptions cement our minds into fixed positions and are the result of our ego mind making mistaken judgments and placing limitations on our thought: “Only *this* object can bring me joy.”

The purpose of practicing meditation on the four limitless qualities is to free ourselves from extreme, neurotic ego games. But don’t think, “Oh, now I understand that this is just an ego game—tomorrow I am going to give up ego games forever,” under the illusion that you can change radically overnight and that the next day your entire perspective on life will be completely different. That sort of change is impossible. Powered by your ego mind, you have constantly been generating deluded energy since beginningless time. You can’t suddenly transform overnight simply by changing your intellectual ideas. The way to overcome negative energy is to act with understanding and awareness day by day, every day. That’s what makes it possible to change and transform your life.

The reason we need meditation is that our ego’s games are extremely subtle and function at the unconscious level. Detecting the activity of our ego’s games at the unconscious level is very difficult. We need great energy and strong penetrative insight to counteract the accumulated ego energy that has come from eons of repeated ego games. To reverse this energy force, we have to balance it. Therefore, it is not enough to merely think, “Now I understand that the ego is the problem; now I have understood,” as a brief flash of insight. “Now I am liberated. Today I have discovered my problem. This Buddhist philosopher monk has told me all about my ego. Now I’m liberated.” You can’t do that; you’re dreaming. What you have to do every day is to develop comprehension of your own attitude, your own mental activity, as much as you possibly can. This is a very important point.

Today, for example, you’ve been playing and dancing. If you have inner awareness, you’ll see that your ego has been reacting in a certain way. One song is a favorite, another song you dislike; I am sure each of you has had this experience. When you dance, there are certain moves you like. You think they’re good; they make you happy. There are other dance moves that you feel are stupid, no good. That’s the way you feel, and every time



you dance, your mind is reacting. What Buddhist meditation allows you to do is to see that good dancing has value but so does bad. There's nothing to react to emotionally. Also, the main reason I agreed to this festival, with its dancing, fun and games, was that I thought you could learn something, test and examine yourselves after doing the meditation course.

Each of you should check up: you've done many things today—have any of them really made you happy? Ask yourself this question, right now: do you feel that what you've done today constitutes a really happy life? Exhausting yourself through singing and dancing—is the exhausted life a happy one? This is very simple: your mind interprets, “Today is festival day; we're happy. Today we're going to get cake. We can give up morning meditation; nobody's pushing us to meditate.” So you simply hang about, wandering aimlessly here and there, looking around. Do you think that's happy?

Some people will learn, “Dancing and cake are good, but they're not the purpose of life.” In other words, you should not feel that being allowed to dance and do whatever you like is the definition of a really happy life. That's a wrong attitude. However, you don't have to be miserable, either. If you interpret dancing as misery, similarly, you'll think that sitting in meditation must also be miserable.

Buddhist philosophy teaches you to think logically; the Buddhist religion is a philosophical religion, a logical religion. Let's say that you've been dancing for a while and suddenly stop. Your ego reacts, “Oh, now my pleasure has gone.” Many people's ego will react like this, casting them into the same old darkness. They're up, full of energy; suddenly the party finishes and they come back down. This up and down comes from ego, not understanding what real happiness is, not understanding the reality of life.

All such activity has to change; nothing lasts. Somehow you have to learn to let your pleasures go without grasping at them neurotically. This is very important. That's why Buddhist philosophy teaches that the whole world is like an illusion—you cannot hold an illusion permanently; there is no solidity. What you enjoy from moment to moment cannot be held permanently. Its nature is impermanent, transitory; it passes, passes, goes, goes, finishes, finishes. That's the whole reality of life.

Therefore, it is very important to be aware of and accept that kind of reality, as it is. You can do it. The Western ego suffers greatly because of the quickly changing nature of society. When you find you cannot function

because society is moving so quickly, you blame society. The nature of society is such that it is going to change; it is your own nature to change; it's the nature of weather to change. Therefore, it is very important that your attitude is such that you follow the middle path and avoid extremes. But doing that is not an easy job; you need penetrative wisdom.

That's why we say meditation is worthwhile. Meditation does not mean going into a cave. Just contemplate the movement of your own actions—your breath, thoughts and everything else. That's enough. Also, don't think that you are irreversibly confused and unclear. That, too, is wrong. Your mind has clarity; clarity is your mind's ability to receive reflections of good and bad. Everybody has that, even children. When children play, they have some kind of discrimination. That is the beauty of their consciousness. You can contemplate on your ability to discriminate; that is the clarity of your mind. Contemplate on that. If you believe that you are confused all the time, of course, you'll be confused.

Now, instead of my going on any longer, are there any questions?

*Q.* Lama, today we were dancing in the gompa and I had a good experience. It combined what you talked about in meditation. There was the action but there was stillness as well. I was exhausted, but I also got energy from it. I think organized dancing is a good check-up meditation, and I was wondering if that sort of thing could be continued here?

*Lama.* Well, that's beautiful; I'm very happy. That was my idea in having a festival, for people to relax and enjoy themselves. We should not think that we are meditators, exclusive, special people, and that the rest of society is dirty, sinful and negative. That's wrong, isn't it? We are down to earth and understand and can relate to people. That's good. Anyway, the purpose of Chenrezig Institute is to serve the people in society. We all come from society and therefore we need to help the society.

*Q.* I'm still not sure what you are suggesting is the most suitable social life for the Western mind. You seem to be suggesting that dancing and such activities are bad.

*Lama.* No, I'm not saying that they are bad. Dancing is normal; it is good. But I want you to understand. My point is that if in dancing today your

ego identifies that now, after suffering for ten or fifteen days in the prison of a meditation course, today is the happy life, if your ego interprets it in that way, that is a wrong conception. The reason I am using this example is that it is fresh from our experience today. So our experiences are our resource from which we see what is reality. Normally I use whatever is close as an example. If I see a flower somewhere, I hold that flower up to make a point. So, we were dancing today, and I use that energy as an example to demonstrate reality.

*Q.* I think you mean the mental attitude, Lama—the way you approach meditation as two weeks in prison; the attitude you dance with.

*Lama.* That's right, if the attitude is the ego game, it produces the reaction of dissatisfaction and confusion.

*Q.* I was wondering how to acquire self-discipline?

*Lama.* If you recognize how your mad elephant mind functions, you'll automatically become disciplined. When you finally recognize your own mad elephant, undisciplined mind, you feel that you cannot go on like this any longer, always leading yourself on the wrong path and always finishing up miserable. So you question and examine your own mind, and then put some limits on the wrong attitude. When you find the right attitude coming, let go. From the point of view of Buddhist philosophy, discipline comes from wisdom; it is not something imposed upon you by lamas or priests. For example, I have to make my own discipline; nobody can force me to stay here. If I want to go to Brisbane tonight and enjoy myself in a nightclub I can choose to do so. So, we need to discipline the mad elephant mind; everybody has to. But once you reach beyond the mad elephant ego, you don't need discipline; you are already disciplined.

*Q.* Lama, I've found that dancing complements meditation and is not necessarily a temporal pleasure; that dancing can have lasting benefit.

*Lama.* I'm very happy that you've had that good experience. I am not saying that dancing itself is simply a fleeting pleasure; it depends on mental attitude. Your experience of dancing has value. If you contemplate on and

remember your experiences continuously, that continued memory can keep you from depression. The thing is that if we cannot recollect good experiences, cannot maintain their value, later we can get depressed. Just as you have had that experience, so too has everybody else had some level of clear, blissful experience. The thing is that we can't maintain the continuity of the memory of that good experience, the clarity. Therefore, one minute we are clear, the next, polluted. That's why we need some kind of balance—so that we can hold the memory of the good experience instead of thinking garbage all the time. That's what makes us up and down. However, every human being has such clear, happy, blissful experiences. The problem is that we haven't contemplated on them in a penetrative way or remembered those experiences continuously.

*Q.* Lama, how can Westerners approach sex in a more positive, unattached way?

*Lama.* Well, the simple way is to have a giving attitude instead of a grasping one; to be more concerned with giving or sharing pleasure with another than with “I want pleasure.”

*Q.* But often that is interpreted as feeding the other person's ego.

*Lama.* No, not necessarily. Anyway, your responsibility is to develop a giving attitude. The other person may be self-cherishing, but that is his or her responsibility. Your responsibility is to abandon your uptight, grasping game. To do that, you need to develop giving. Most of the time, I tell you, the ego game between Western couples is that neither of them is satisfied by sense pleasure and then they say, “Oh, you're no good; I don't like you.” They blame each other. If you are not concerned with fulfilling your own sense-gravitation attachment, it's okay. Are we communicating or not?

*Q.* It's a difficult one, though.

*Lama.* Yes, of course! That's why you came to the meditation course. It is difficult, but you can definitely learn. The thing is that Mahayana Buddhism teaches that you can touch this flower without having the neurotic, grasping mind. If you can see the possibility with this flower, ask yourself

why. Then, slowly, slowly you can relate this experience to other relationships as well. First of all, the Western mind strongly believes, “I should derive satisfaction from this.” Let’s say that I’m a Westerner and you are my girlfriend. I have the attitude that you should make me satisfied, otherwise you are the failure. Can you imagine that? Completely egotistical mind. From the Buddhist point of view, that is completely wrong. That is a completely wrong attitude: you are my girlfriend, so you should give me complete satisfaction; if you don’t, you are a bad person. It’s the same thing in reverse with women, too. Basically, this is wrong.

First of all, I should recognize that my satisfaction comes from me myself, not from you, my girlfriend. If I believe that basically my happiness depends on my girlfriend, “As long as she exists, I’ll be happy; if she no longer exists, my happiness will be lost,” that is a very dangerous, deluded thought. There are many things in the Western attitude that need to be changed. The Western attitude is so concrete. Scientific education teaches you wrong conceptions and beliefs: “This should make me happy. If this doesn’t make me happy, I’m lost.”

*Q.* Could you please give me some advice on how to relate to people who have not had Dharma teachings when I get home?

*Lama.* First of all, when you get back home, I think it is better if you relax and be natural, simple and spontaneous. Act according to Dharma as much as you can, but do not talk philosophically as we have been doing here. If you push the intellectual side too much, people will treat you as some kind of outcast; it will be strange for them. But if you are happy, relaxed, logical and reasonable, they will feel, “I don’t know this man now. How come? Something is going on in his mind; he’s changed so much for the better.” Perhaps one day they will ask, “What are you doing? Tell me what you’re into.” At that time you have to be ready with sharp wisdom and give just the right reply. Until then, relax; be simple.

I also understand that you can’t do the things we do here. Here we do early morning meditation, prostrations, prayer and these things. You can’t do those things too much socially. But still, you can meditate without involving the ritual aspects. You can do internal rituals; external ones are not necessary. I think that’s simple. You have to learn how to use each environment, how to actualize, how to utilize that energy in the path to

enlightenment. I think that is necessary. Otherwise, you might feel, “Now I cannot meditate because I have no temple.” Perhaps you thought that for meditation you needed a temple or some kind of material Buddha. “Now there is no Buddha, no lama, no temple, I cannot meditate.” That’s not realistic, but I understand.

Many people, after they have learned meditation and philosophy, go back home with the ambition of planting this small baby buddha into their family and friends, which they really resent. That’s not so good. I think first we need to grow our baby buddha bigger and bigger. He should be at least middle-aged in order for us to push that energy onto others. The first important thing is that we get ourselves together. After that, we can teach.

I think that’s all. Excuse me, I would like to talk more, but time is running. What to do? Thank you very much.

## 9. Anxiety in the Nuclear Age (1)

*University of California, Berkeley, 13 July 1983<sup>6</sup>*



I'VE BEEN ASKED to say a few words on the topic of anxiety in the nuclear age. The first thing to observe is that it is the people who created nuclear energy who are now afraid that it will destroy them. Is this realistic or not? First we create a situation, then we're scared of it. We know that nuclear energy exists and is destructive by nature but that it can also be beneficial and enhance human pleasure. Nevertheless, we're still anxious and afraid of the harm it might do to us and the following generations.

However, there's no need for fear, worry or anxiety because, first of all, nuclear energy is a reality, and secondly, our opinion of what's going to happen is just that—an opinion. It's not yet a reality; it's simply a presumption.

Perhaps you'll argue that even though it's only a presumption, we should still worry. If that's the case, we should worry about everything. We should be anxious today about what might happen tomorrow. Every day since the world began, somewhere on earth, there has been some kind of natural disaster—flood, electrical storm, forest fire, earthquake, volcanic eruption and death and destruction in general. It's natural. Nature itself is destructive by nature and has the capacity to do violence. Still, I don't think you should lose sleep over it; there's no need for fear, worry or anxiety.

I'm not saying that people who are against nuclear energy are bad guys. I, too, feel it is dangerous. But we have to educate the world about its dangers in a peaceful way—one that doesn't produce emotional reaction and hatred. I've seen many people demonstrating peacefully on TV. Even though they felt strongly about the issues, they were very easygoing. I thought that was wonderful; they understood the importance of getting

<sup>6</sup>*This public lecture is available as a DVD and on the LYWA YouTube channel.*

their message about nuclear danger across peacefully. I was very impressed. But I'm still concerned.

My concern is that if we allow ourselves to be anxious and afraid, emotionally disturbed, we'll only produce more confusion within ourselves. When we're confused, we spread confused energy to others and the environment. Bringing peace to the world is no small task. We have to take upon ourselves universal responsibility. As individuals, our first responsibility is to guarantee that we ourselves will never harm anybody else's life; to generate the indestructible resolve that irrespective of the circumstances, "I'm never going to touch weapons or kill other human beings." We must have that kind of determination. If you don't feel that way yourself, how can you make a big show of telling others to be like that. It's not realistic. In order to educate others about how harmful and cruel nuclear energy can be, we first have to educate ourselves.

So, we shouldn't worry about the nuclear age because it's already here. We're human beings; we created this situation. We lit this fire a long time ago. Of course, the earth has contained nuclear energy since it began, but it has taken human intelligence to make it as dangerous as it has become. In Buddhism, we call this karma. Once a situation has manifested, the best thing to do is to accept the fact and deal with it.

Now, there's no reason for us to hate each other, but anxiety breeds hatred. Therefore, we have to check our motivation for demonstrating for disarmament and against nuclear energy. Why are we doing this? Perhaps our reasons are selfish—what we're really anxious about is our own destruction. Instead, we should have concern for the whole of humanity. That's the right motivation. Then there's no emotion. Even though you're concerned, occasionally fearful, your fear does not come from an underlying, ever-present, emotional disturbance.

What's the good of worrying about things twenty-four hours a day, disturbing your mind and preventing yourself from having a peaceful and joyful life? It's a waste of time. Nothing's going to change just because you're worrying about it. If something's already broken, it's broken. Worrying won't fix it. This earth has always been inherently destructive, nuclear age or not. There's always blood flowing someplace or another. Look at world history. It's always been like this. Buddhism calls this interdependent origination, and that's how the human mind works.

Take America's war in Vietnam, for example. That brought people



together in a movement for peace. That's also interdependent. Some people saw the horrible suffering, confusion, misery and destruction wrought by others, so they went the other way, thinking, "That's not right," and despite the difficulties, created a movement of peace and love.

But the right way to eliminate harm from this earth is to first free your mind from the emotional disturbances that cause irrational fear of destruction, and then educate yourself and others in how to bring peace to the world. The first thing you must do is control your own mind and commit yourself: "From now on, no matter what happens, I'm never going to use weapons to kill any human being." That's where world peace begins.

Human beings *can* control their minds and actions such that they will never kill others; people *can* learn to see that harming others destroys not only others' pleasure and happiness but their own as well. Through this kind of education, we can prevent nuclear energy from destroying the world.

We can't just campaign for the complete abolition of nuclear energy. Like electricity, nuclear energy is useful if employed the right way. If you're careless with electricity, it can kill you too, can't it? With right knowledge and method, we should campaign to ensure that everybody on earth determines, "I will never use nuclear weapons to kill human beings." If that happened, a nuclear conflagration could never occur.

Not that it matters, but personally, I don't believe that nuclear energy is going to destroy the earth. I do believe, however, that human beings are capable of making a program to ensure that people everywhere, irrespective of whether they live in communist or capitalist societies, determine not to use nuclear weapons to kill other human beings. If we were to undertake such an effort to educate people, I think we could achieve our aim within ten years.

Here, I'm not talking from the Buddhist point of view; I'm not talking from any religion's point of view. I'm talking from a humanist point of view, a realistic point of view. If people's minds are out of control, they're going to use nuclear weapons. But irrespective of whether people are religious or nonreligious, communist or noncommunist, believers or non-believers, I believe every human being is capable of understanding the difference between harmful and non-harmful actions and the benefit of everybody's being peaceful and happy. Since it's a universal reality, we can educate people to see it.

With respect to fear and worry, the Buddha's solution is to analyze the *object* of fear and worry. If you do this correctly, you'll be able to recognize that you're seeing the object as fundamentally permanent, which has nothing to do with its reality. Look at it and ask yourself, "Is this really worth worrying about? Is worry a solution or not?" Analyze the object: is it permanent or changeable? As the great saints have said, "If it's changeable, why worry? If it's not, what's the use of worrying?" When you're afraid, analyze the object of your fears.

Particularly when you're emotionally disturbed and anxious, you'll find that there's a concept of concreteness in your mind, which causes you to project a concrete object externally. Neither concept has anything to do with reality. Buddhism asserts that the mind of fear and worry always either overestimates or underestimates its object and never sees its reality. If you can perceive the fundamental, universal reality of your object of fear and worry, it will become like a cloud—it comes; it goes. When you are overcome with worry, you sometimes say, "It's *always* like this." That's not true. Things never stay the same; they always come and go—that's the reality.

Also, when you're occupied by anxiety and fear, you might mean well, but you automatically have a tendency to generate hatred. Hatred has nothing to do with peace and happiness, does it? Buddhist psychology teaches that fear and anxiety tend to produce anger, aversion and hatred. You say you want peace and happiness but your very mental state causes hatred. It's contradictory. People who demonstrate for peace and other causes have to watch out for this, but you have to judge for yourself how far you can go without generating hatred. Everybody's different.

Let's say we're out there campaigning for peace but then the president says something with which we disagree. Should we get angry? Should we hate the president? I don't believe so; that would be a mistake. If our concern for peace and happiness makes us angry, there's something wrong. The president is a human being. He, too, wants peace and happiness. At the bottom of his heart, he wants to be happy; he doesn't want to be miserable. This is the universal reality. Therefore, all of us in the peace movement should make sure that we don't hate any human being. This is the most important thing. When we demonstrate, we should be true to our word.

Being a politician is not easy. Even being a wife or a husband is not easy.

Most situations come with responsibilities and obligations. We can look outside and blindly criticize people who work as administrators and so forth, but realistically, their positions can be very difficult.

To be successful, the peace movement should be selfless. If we who campaign for peace are coming from a place of selfishness, a basic concern for, “me, me, me,” we have little chance of success. If, instead, we have a broad view based on concern for all human beings—understanding that everybody wants happiness and nobody wants to be miserable—and can educate others to see this, if we work toward this goal continuously, ultimately we’ll achieve it.

There are many meditations you can do to eliminate anxiety. But meditation doesn’t mean going off to the mountains. You have the key to change your mind at any time, wherever you are. You can learn to switch your mind from emotion to peace and, each time you get distracted, gently bring it back to peace again. Practice this over and over again. You can do it; it’s human nature. You have to realize what you’re capable of.

Check your own life, from the time you were born up to now—how many times have you changed your mind? Who changed it for you? Buddha didn’t change it. Jesus didn’t change it. Who changed your mind? Analyze this for yourself.

That is the beauty of being human. We have the capacity for liberation within us; we *come* with that ability. If we utilize our energy and intelligence correctly, we can discover that liberation and happiness are already there, within us.

The fundamental principle of Buddhism is not to kill. As Buddhists, this is our main obligation. I think most of you could promise never to kill another human being. That makes me very happy. We all have the same aim; we think alike. Even though I’m a Tibetan monk, an uneducated mountain man, and you’re educated people from industrialized, capitalist societies, we have the same understanding. We don’t know each other, but we can still work together. That’s the most beautiful thing about being human. We can communicate with others.

We should try to educate people all over the world to the point where everybody says, “For the rest of my life, I will never kill another human being.” If every human being on earth could agree to that, what would there be to worry about? Who could possibly be paranoid?

In one way, the peace movement is beautiful, and if we act according to

its ideas, there'll be no more racism, no more nationalism. We'll be equally concerned for *all* people. There'll be no more fanatical religious concerns; we won't even care if people are religious or not. Our only concern will be peace. All that will matter will be that people everywhere love and take care of each other. Who cares who's communist or noncommunist? What's in the human heart is what's important, not whether people are communist or capitalist. If we talk to each other, we can change the human heart.

At present we might live in a noncommunist country, but we shouldn't project that communists want to kill people who aren't. That's not true. People in communist countries are ladies and gentlemen, too. Like us, they want to be happy and don't want to be miserable. Therefore, together we can reach conclusions without involving the dogma of philosophy, the dogma of religion, the dogma of nationality, the dogma of racism; we can come together without any kind of dogma. That is beautiful. That is the beauty of the human being—to bring human unity and understanding without being blinded by categories.

If you go to Russia and ask people, "Do you want to be killed by nuclear missiles?" they're going to say "No!" For sure, they don't want that to happen. Therefore, we have to educate people to understand the difference between what is beneficial for humanity and what is destructive—for the individual and for all. It's simply a matter of education.

Lord Buddha stressed the importance of generating loving kindness for all people irrespective of race, nationality, creed or anything else; he taught that all human beings and even animals were the object of loving kindness. This is the best guarantee against nuclear war, because each individual has to maintain control and take personal responsibility for the welfare of all beings in the universe. Taking universal responsibility is the guarantee. If each individual doesn't take personal responsibility for the welfare of all, it won't work.

To bring happiness and peace to earth, we have to eliminate every situation leading to hatred and anger. That means totally eradicating our own hatred and anger. We have to make our own lives peaceful and happy. This is the way to work for peace twenty-four hours a day. If our minds harbor destructive, angry thoughts, any talk of peace is just a joke. It's merely artificial; there's no guarantee. The only guarantee is to fertilize our minds with peace and loving kindness toward all; that's the way we should do it.

The question remains, is it possible to spread these ideas throughout

the whole world? Can we get everybody in the world to agree to abandon the use of nuclear arms and not to kill any human being? Can you make that determination yourself? Can we spread this philosophy or not? What do you think? We're not using religion in this; we're not using Buddha, we're not using Christ, we're not using religion or non-religion—we're just concerned for the welfare of all human beings. What do you think? Do you think it's possible to make this kind of program and reach that point or not? I'm not talking nationalistically or making any philosophic argument; I'm just talking about feeling secure, taking care of each other, loving each other, bringing peace and happiness to each other. It's a very simple thing.

Therefore, in our daily lives, each of us should dedicate ourselves to bringing peace and happiness to all beings, and this determination itself is a powerful way of bringing peace and success into our own lives. But this doesn't mean not to act, either; to just think good thoughts but be passive. But when you do act, act with wisdom and without selfishness, hatred or emotional fear. In that way, you will educate yourself and others.

Don't worry. Any talk of nuclear destruction of the earth is still speculation. It's just a mental projection; it's not yet reality. Therefore, relax and enjoy the rest of your life as much as possible. Be happy and peaceful, and don't waste your time with pessimistic thoughts, fear or worry. Thank you so much.

Now, before we finish, maybe I can answer some questions, if you have any.

*Q.* If people don't want misery and unhappiness, like Ronald Reagan, for example, where does their unhappiness come from and how does it resolve? What's the best way to resolve unhappiness, the unhappy mind?

*Lama.* Even though people don't want to be miserable, they're constantly creating the cause of their own misery through their attitude toward society and the environment. Basically, however, it's the human ego, the artificial ego, that's the problem. The ego projects an artificial appearance of themselves and others that doesn't come close to touching the fundamental nature of the human being, the human heart. In Buddhist terms we can say we don't touch the fundamental reality of the human mind, the

human consciousness. The superficial ego builds up a thick blanket of ignorance that obscures the reality of our society and our life. That is the cause of misery. People want happiness but do things that create the cause of suffering.

*Q.* But is peaceful thinking enough? What about compassionate action and political change?

*Lama.* I say yes, you can act skillfully, with loving kindness and wisdom, to change politics, to manipulate politics and to change the human mind. But trying to do these things with unskillful emotions, through fear and destruction, is extremely unwise.

*Q.* But when is anger appropriate? When is it correct to display anger or to be angry?

*Lama.* Well, with my Buddhist way of thinking, I'm not sure I'm oriented to this kind of question. It sounds as if you're asking when it is a good time to be angry, but there's no good time to be angry. Anger is your worst enemy. It destroys your good qualities, your relationships, your peace of mind, your loving kindness. It pollutes whatever wisdom you possess. It creates darkness in your mind. According to Buddhism, getting angry is the worst thing you can do in life. This is not my interpretation; it's what Buddhism teaches. Therefore, you should not get angry.

In fact, you should generate the determination not to get angry as much as you possibly can: "I am never going to get angry, even though I might have to demonstrate anger." Sometimes you have to manifest an angry aspect, "Grr, I'm going to beat you," but that doesn't mean that you're angry. There's no time or space in which you can allow yourself to get angry. It's a mistake to get angry.

In Buddhism, there's no exception to that rule. With desire, there are exceptions. Desire can be utilized in a positive way; it can be positive or negative. Anger is always negative. So, I give you permission to generate attachment and desire. But anger? Never!

*Q.* What is the way we change our mind from anxiety to peace?

*Lama.* There are many different ways. One is by explaining to yourself with skillful wisdom what reality is in the context of the situation and how it can be changed. This is an intellectual, analytical approach where you talk to your own mind and explain to yourself how to change it. Another is through meditation. Switch your mind to a different dimension and contemplate within that. Put your mind into a different atmosphere and reverse your way of thinking. Those are two ways. Don't think, don't worry, become a great meditator!

*Q.* Can you give us a small example of a method for relieving anxiety?

*Lama.* Well, in Buddhism there are many meditations for releasing anxiety. A simple thing you can do is to just leave your mind in its natural state and watch your breath come and go. Don't concern yourself with bad, good, beautiful, ugly. Don't obsess, thinking, "She did this, he did that. . . ." Instead of criticizing and winding yourself up, just let go and listen to the rhythm of your breath. Just be aware of the movement of your breath; just be aware of the nature of your own body, speech and mind. Don't get preoccupied by thoughts like, "Am I good? Am I bad?" Sometimes that's not productive. You get too intense. The moment you think, "Am I good enough?" all kinds of negative thoughts will arise and create conflict within you. Don't think about those things. It's not a big deal. Anyway, whether you're good or bad has already manifested.

Also, from a higher point of view, bad and good are only opinions; other people's opinions. Beauty and ugliness are merely people's opinions. They are such conventional views. There's no everlasting, unchangeable beauty; there's no everlasting, unchangeable ugliness. According to Buddhism, such things are totally nonexistent.

You see, every day of our lives, we think about, we repeat like a mantra, "Good, bad, good, bad, good, bad . . . pleasant, unpleasant, pleasant, unpleasant, pleasant, unpleasant. . . ." We're so oriented to this kind of intellectualization that, since the time of our birth up until the present, we've built up the tremendous energy to keep thinking like this—rolling, rolling, rolling twenty-four hours a day. We have to find a way to stop it, but it's not as easy as putting your foot on the brake and stopping a rolling car. We have to develop the skill to put an end to this torrent of thought.

*Q.* Would you talk more about what our obligations are to each other?

*Lama.* The realistic point of view is that we need to take care of each other as much as we can according to our physical and mental capacity. That's all. As much as we can without exceeding our capacity to do so. Otherwise, we burn out. We run out of fuel. Some people are very ambitious: "From now on I want to spend all my time helping others." Then they put in a huge amount of effort and after two or three days run out of energy: "I'm burnt out."

So we need to help others in a skillful way. Remember what the Buddha taught? The middle way. Avoid extremes. To help others, we need to survive, so the first thing we need to do is to take care of ourselves. Then, when we reach the point where we have enough physical and mental energy to share with others, we do so. With wisdom; with love. So always take the middle way; don't try to push too much.

Normally, in our attachment relationships, we don't take the middle way. We try to help each other too much and then we crash. It's not realistic. So even though you love your human object of affection so much, take care as to how much energy you put into the relationship.

*Q.* How can we deal with feelings of isolation from other human beings, such as husbands, wives, friends, family, co-workers and so forth?

*Lama.* In this American community we seem to be so isolated from each other. We are so individualistic; so scared of being taken advantage of by others. Unfortunately. In order for us to take care of each other, this paranoia has to be eliminated.

But I don't necessarily agree with the premise. In this country, husbands and wives are always together. They can't separate from each other until they do! Then they want to be completely separate. I think husbands should give their wives more space and vice versa. Then they'd have time to think about and appreciate each other. If they are stuck together twenty-four hours a day, the wife can't see how her husband is helping her; the husband can't see how his wife is helping him.

We do need to be together, but at the same time we need to give each other the space to let the other do what he or she finds interesting as an



individual. This is quite a big subject. It would take a lot of time and space to address it properly. But as you know, it's a big problem in this country.

Generally speaking, Americans have built up a highly intellectual life, and this intellectual life has, somehow, become rather concrete. In that way it seems so indivisible; impossible to change. And we've built up an individual, self-existent, permanent view of each other. That makes it difficult to humanize each other; to contact each other as human beings. The minute we meet someone, it's "When are you coming to see me? What business are you going to give me? How are you going to do that? What do you expect of me?" It's so intense, so intellectual, that it's difficult to relax with each other; to be together without either of us trying to feel important. When people in this country are together, they have to feel important. They have to talk about important issues. It becomes unnatural. Human relationships become tense and unnatural. That results in our feeling lonely and disconnected from each other. Unfortunately, we do have such feelings. What to do? I think you people can answer that question better than I can, so I'm not going to try!

*Q.* This is a kind of a Berkeley question, here. (*A Berkeley question! Wow!*) What do you think about using drugs to relieve anxiety, especially if a chemical imbalance has caused the anxiety?

*Lama.* Well, I think it's a good idea. Look, here I am, eating raisins to eliminate my anxiety! But first I have to say that I have neither the experience nor the education to really assess the issue of medication with drugs. Personally, I don't know. Nevertheless, I can offer my opinion.

First of all, I'm going to say that it depends on your state of mind. If your mind is already disturbed, then it might be a good idea to use medication to bring it back to a softer, more gentle state and to diminish its concrete conceptions. We have psychiatric hospitals in this country and they employ drug treatment all the time, so it's not that big of a deal. Of course, if patients get habituated or addicted to any of the drugs with which they're being treated and lose control of their mind, that's very dangerous. I'd disagree with the use of any drug that might result in that.

Now, we always talk about peace and control of the mind. If your mind is uncontrolled, how can you bring peace to others? You're not acting

responsibly. It's foolish to take drugs that destabilize your mind. You're just destroying yourself. You should be able to judge what is good for you and what is bad. Human beings are capable as individuals of making that kind of discrimination.

Maybe you could repeat the question. I'm not sure whether I've answered it or not!

Q. What do you feel about using drugs to relieve anxiety, especially if a chemical imbalance has caused the anxiety?

*Lama.* Well, as I said, doctors and hospitals are already using prescription drugs to treat that kind of thing, so don't worry. It's legal.

Q. Many people make bombs and weapons because it's their job and it's all they know how to do, to work and make money to support their families. So how do we change this?

*Lama.* I think they should be allowed to manufacture bombs in order to make money. Let go; let go. Making bombs and other weapons has a long history. What's the big deal? If a manufacturer has already produced a thousand bombs, what's the use of telling them not to produce say ten more. It's useless. Just let go. It's not worth making a fuss: "OK, this year you should only produce ten." What's the use? What's the big deal? They've already made a hundred, so ten means what? Let go. I don't care. They're going to do it anyway, I tell you.

Honestly, my own experience is that if you stop it here, they will move there. Weapons manufacturers are like mushrooms. They can pop up anywhere. There's no point in trying to totally stop the production of weapons on this earth. There's no way that will happen. If one country stops, another will start in order to get an advantage. That's all. It's just the grasping, egotistic mind, the unbelievably political mind that's behind all this. They're playing games; they're going to do it anyway. It's a waste of time trying to stop it. We should let go, relax and enjoy ourselves.

Q. I understand the notion of individual responsibility, but the means to end hostility has to be a cooperative act. How does one commit oneself to nonviolence against surprise hostility such as a personal attack?

*Lama.* If someone is trying to beat you, you can raise your fists to defend yourself. That's all right. But you should never have the thought of killing that person. You should protect yourself without killing.

*Q.* It seems that oppression in politics and therefore economics does kill. How can we change that?

*Lama.* Then vote for me to become president of America! Unfortunately, this Himalayan monk is so ambitious!

I think you can manipulate political people to some extent and change their mind. It's possible. But you have to roll with them, act with them, play along with them. If you're alone way up in some Himalayan cave railing against politicians, "You are wrong, blah, blah, blah," that's ineffective. You have to play along with them, act with them with compassion. In that way I think it's possible to change and manipulate their mind. I mean, politicians are people. They have spouses and children. They want happiness and comfort, so it's possible for them to change.

And especially this: if the majority of the world community were to decide not to touch weapons, if we determined and vowed never to touch weapons to kill human beings, politicians could not do too much. That's why in my lectures I try to promote educating people in a reasonable way, without invoking nationality or any other kind of organization. I think it's possible.

*Q.* What are your feelings toward the system and the people that forced you to leave Tibet and to this day keep you from returning?

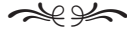
*Lama.* My feeling toward the people who kicked me out of my country is one of gratitude. I'm very happy. I have no criticism of Chairman Mao, who is already dead, and I have great sympathy for his life and his wife. The Chinese politicians mean well, but they have to go through . . . look, I tell you, personally, I was kicked out of my country . . . well, not kicked out, exactly; I just left. We weren't kicked out; we just went. I myself left, escaped from that situation. But when you look at the Chinese population, they're experiencing great suffering. Mine was nothing compared to that. But that huge Chinese population suffered incredible misery for many years.

So concerning all that, I have nothing to say against anything. I have great sympathy for the entire Chinese nation. They suffered; their lives were destroyed; their parents were killed. There was incredible destruction. When you compare the size of the Tibetan population with that of the Chinese—now I'm just talking from the scientific point of view—Tibetans are very few, compared to the huge number of Chinese. So the amount of Tibetan suffering is very small compared to that of the Chinese. So I have nothing to say. They were very kind, they kicked me out and I came to America, where I met all of you. I consider it a success that I could see all of you.

And I think that's all, thank you, thank you. I'm very happy, thank you.

## 10. Anxiety in the Nuclear Age (2)

*University of California, Santa Cruz, 23 July 1983<sup>7</sup>*



GOOD EVENING, EVERYBODY. Tonight, I'm supposed to talk on the subject of anxiety in the nuclear age. And, of course, there are indeed reasons to feel anxious about the prospect of nuclear war. Most of you know this already.

Now, when we talk about nuclear war, we're not just talking about bloodshed, the killing of people. I heard that in America tens of thousands of people die on the roads every year. That looks like a tremendous number of people, and it is, but when it comes to nuclear war, that's much more dangerous; it's very serious. A nuclear explosion can release millions of tons of energy. For example, if the Soviet Union were to fire a nuclear missile into the center of San Francisco, the effect would be felt for hundreds of miles in every direction and millions of people could be killed or seriously injured. Medically it would be an almost impossible situation to deal with, and a vast area would be left uninhabitable for a very long time. It would be an environmental catastrophe. The after-effects on just the human population are too terrible to even contemplate. So, people have good reason to be concerned, fearful and anxious. I understand that. The potential for all this to happen does exist.

However, from the Buddhist point of view, nuclear war has an evolution and we have explanations as to how and why it exists. Simply put, we can talk about internal nuclear war and external nuclear war. The internal aspect addresses why such weapons have been made—people's motivation for making them. Before nuclear missiles existed, the human mind speculated and projected in that direction. People were serious; these kinds

<sup>7</sup>This public lecture is available as a DVD and on the LYWA YouTube channel.

of weapon were not a joke. People wondered, “How can we protect ourselves? What sort of equipment do we need in order to win a war?”

According to the Buddhist point of view, or my point of view at least, when people started speculating like that, creating nuclear weapons in their imagination, nuclear war had already started; consciously or unconsciously, internal nuclear war had already begun.

Then military experts began pushing for the creation of such weapons, explaining to politicians why there was a defensive need for them, and thus the arms race began. In America, people tend to blame the president for escalating the arms race but in my superficial view, I don't think he's primarily responsible. There are people behind him, those who feel responsible for the country's peace and freedom, such as the army generals, pushing the president, saying things like, “If we don't have these weapons, we can't guarantee that we can do our jobs.” I'm sure you know all this already, but be careful who you blame for what. You have to analyze things carefully and truthfully.

We all say that we dislike harming others and try to protest the development of nuclear and other weapons, but it's already reached beyond our control. Even though we mean well when we protest and do many other things to try to stop the production of nuclear energy, it's too late. It's not worthwhile. It doesn't matter. They're going to produce nuclear power and weapons anyway. All these things will keep popping up like mushrooms.

What we can do, however, is try to educate people not to use nuclear energy in a harmful way. That is something we can do. Undertaking unreasonable actions will not produce the desired result. It's difficult. The fact is that nuclear energy is here to stay; it's a reality. So the best we can do now is to understand the dangers of nuclear war and try to educate people as to those and turn them against the use of nuclear weapons. That, I think, is our responsibility.

Just being anxious and fearful is not going to help. That cannot stop the problem. Furthermore, the anxious, emotional, disturbed mind within you is also highly destructive. What it produces is hatred, and that itself is an internal nuclear war. So that's what I'm saying. When you harbor hatred, you're waging an internal nuclear war, whether you're aware of it or not, and in that way, nuclear war has already begun to manifest in the world.

From there, it then appears in your speech, when you start to discuss

fighting. Just listen to the radio; you can see. You don't need any higher education. Of course, this is just my observation. I've listened to Russian radio; I've listened to American radio. That's been enough. You can feel the vibration. So war is there, in thought and speech. What hasn't manifested yet is physical war, the expression of that thought and speech. So how do we control the physical use of nuclear weapons?

From the Buddhist point of view, it's the mind that has to be controlled. Therefore, we have to educate people as to how to control their mind. People have to guarantee not to touch weapons or harm others. Otherwise, how can these things be stopped?

We all have knives. There are knives in every home, every kitchen. Potentially, we could already be killing each other. We're all armed. What stops us from using those knives to kill other people is control; control of the mind. Since hatred is the real, internal nuclear weapon and manifests externally as physical war, we need to eliminate hatred as much as we can.

If we check up honestly where our anxiety comes from, we'll find that "I'm scared of this, I'm scared of that" boils down to "*I'm* scared; *I'm* scared." We're projecting ourselves as something very concrete: the self-notion; the self-concrete self-entity. The *me* is afraid; the *me* is the most important thing; the *me* should not be harmed by nuclear arms. Buddhism would call this basic thinking the selfish attitude, self-cherishing, and the result of following it is always restlessness and misery.

So basically, anxiety manifests from the ego and the notion we have of ourselves as something concrete; an unrealistic projection of what we are. That is the cause of anxiety. There is no such thing as the concrete concept we have of ourselves. Inwardly, externally, it is totally nonexistent. It's only a projection. If we could only recognize that, we'd be able to relax and all our anxiety would be eliminated.

The Buddhist point of view is that human beings should be as peaceful and happy as possible, and we ourselves are responsible for making that happen. We can't blame God for the problem of nuclear war; we can't blame Buddha either. We human beings are responsible for both our happiness and our misery.

The cause of anxiety, therefore, is the selfish attitude, the egotistic mind, and we have to recognize that within ourselves there is no concretely existent I; the subject, I, does not exist. Anywhere. It's only a projection, a hallucination. If we recognize that, we'll relax. Anxiety derives from the

overestimated projection of oneself. It's not realistic. It doesn't even touch reality.

Let's say I cry. You're watching me crying, "I'm scared of nuclear war." I'm crying with anxiety; what can you do? You're going to say, "Please don't worry. Nothing's going to happen for at least two weeks. At least enjoy yourself for that time." It's true; worrying is a waste of time. They're producing nuclear energy twenty-four hours a day. So you should enjoy your life; relax. The selfish attitude produces anxiety, fear and aggression. It's not a relaxed mind; it doesn't produce peace.

The point is, now, bringing peace to the world is an individual responsibility. If, as individuals, we were all to develop such a responsible attitude and behave accordingly, that would bring about world peace. So what we can do is to educate people through our actions. We have the capacity to control our hatred and the actions that ensue from that negative mind. Each of us has the universal responsibility of bringing peace to our own mind and to those of others.

That way of thinking is not anxiety. It comes from having a broad view, broad universal concepts, so that our heart is opened. Negative emotions make us tight, twisted and nervous, and that produces hatred. If we can trust ourselves never to touch nuclear weapons, never to touch any weapons to kill other people, from the Buddhist point of view, that's an incredible achievement. But this has to be a conscious, verbalized determination and not just an easygoing, "Yeah, I won't be touching lethal weapons; I have no desire to." Because when the actual situation arises, we're going to be thinking, "Me, me, me, me, me. I'm the most important one. I'm the self-existent, concrete one. I'm going to kill him before he can kill me." If you have that kind of attitude, your musing that you won't touch lethal weapons is a joke. It's just hypocritical.

There once was a monk who was threatened by another man. The monk said, "I'm not going to kill you. Your killing me is your choice. That's your business." That's the kind of brave mind we need. But we're so superficial. We're like, "La, la, la, la, la. I shouldn't kill. I don't want to harm others. I'm peaceful." But when it comes to the crunch, you're going to reach for a weapon. I've seen this happen myself. People live peacefully and exhibit compassion, but when a life-threatening situation arises, they're the first to reach for a weapon.



Therefore, it's important to give yourself an injection of determination every day: "I'm never going to touch weapons to kill other human beings." If you then take responsibility to act accordingly, I think that's really great. And if you then pass that peaceful action on to the next generation, and they to the next, I think we can have hope for the future.

So now we know that emotional fear basically comes from the selfish attitude that arises from projecting one's self as an unrealistic entity. That's where fear comes from. If we did not harbor a selfish attitude, there'd be no reason for us to experience emotional fear. We also know how nuclear weapons function and how individual people guaranteeing not to use them can stop their deployment.

However, these days many nuclear weapons are controlled by machines. If the machine makes a mistake, the weapon is launched. Therefore, we have to take control of nuclear weapons away from machines and, in addition, put an end to the arms race. And the best way to reach those goals is through education.

That doesn't mean asking people to become religious or indoctrinating them or getting them to become some kind of philosopher. It just means getting people to simply be human beings. Just being human is enough. Whether you're a capitalist, a communist or neither, anybody who deeply understands the dangers of a nuclear confrontation is going to say, "I'm never going to touch such weapons." Enough people saying that is the way to guarantee there will not be a nuclear war. To educate others, to get them to commit to abandoning the use of nuclear weapons, we have to be certain that we ourselves are not going to use them. That's the most important thing.

Buddhism's main concern is that human problems are created by the human mind. Evil actions come from evil thought, evil thinking, wrong thinking. That is the source of all misery. However, we have the capacity and power to extinguish wrong thinking. We call that liberation. All of us can do it.

Therefore, worry is illogical. It never stops problems; it doesn't change anything. We worry about nuclear missiles. They're always there: on the land; in the ocean. Even if we were to pray to God or Buddha for them not to be, they're there. They already exist.

But still, I'm optimistic. We're human, and, speaking for myself, we like

living, we're attached to ourselves and we're afraid of death. Therefore, as educated people, we understand that bringing death and destruction to other people is not good. Of course, we all have to die, but we should all have the chance to die peacefully, and we should leave a suitable environment for the next generation to live in.

Buddhism always talks about loving kindness. That means not only not killing others but also not harming them in any other way as well. We should ask ourselves, do we have the attitude of loving kindness, which is the guarantee not to harm, not to use nuclear weapons? Loving kindness is the universal understanding that all beings on earth are suffering—with anxiety over nuclear weapons and, in general, with fear about losing their life in so many other ways. There are so many ways in which we are scared of destructive forces and by the lack of fulfillment in finding happiness.

And we are all equal in this. All humans are equal in desiring happiness and freedom from suffering, yet they always end up in miserable situations with fear and anxiety. Therefore, we should generate compassion for all of humanity, although politicians might find this difficult since they already feel, "These people are the enemy. We have to kill them." As long as someone designates someone else as an enemy, they're already committed to harming that person. Thus it's important to understand that there is no external enemy. The real enemy is wrong thinking, which leads to anxiety and dissatisfaction. That is the true enemy. The good thing is that we have the power to change our mind, to go beyond dissatisfaction and anxiety.

How many of you here today think you want control and are prepared to make the determination, "From now on, for the rest of my life, I'm never going to touch any weapon with the intention of killing another human being"? I would like to know. Then we will see. [*Most people raise their hand.*] Oh! Grateful! Thank you so much. We're telling the truth. We're not hypocritical. We are concerned; we act. That's wonderful. The people of this country are amazing. So sincere, so honest, so prepared to act. That's great; it makes me very happy.

Even in Buddhist countries some people find it difficult to say, "I'll never kill anybody," because they still have the attitude, "I'm not sure. Maybe a thief will enter my house and try to kill me, so perhaps I'll have to kill him in self-defense." Others may be thinking, "Perhaps foreign invaders will take over my country and I might have to kill in order to

defend it.” Even in Buddhist countries it can be difficult for some people to make the kind of determination you have just made: “I’m not going to touch weapons to kill any human being.” It’s absolutely rare that people can make that promise; it’s very rare, I tell you.

This is not a pledge made out of some kind of religious conviction, either. It involves something else—thinking in another dimension. “I’m not going to touch weapons to kill people” is not a religious vow. Nonreligious people can make this determination too, out of sympathy for other human beings. I think it’s a very reasonable thing to ask. We’re not fanatically asking others to become Buddhists or Christians. We don’t care. Personally, I don’t care. What’s amazing is that whether you are religious or nonreligious, you understand the basic human qualities and have the dedicated attitude to serve humankind. What more can Buddhism add to that? I don’t think we have anything else.

We call people who have that attitude bodhisattvas. That’s the term we could use, but we don’t need terminology. Just dwelling in that attitude is enough. Really. In Buddhism we say that we prostrate to those who are dedicated to not harming others but serving them instead. Such people are representatives of the universal being. We believe that. Such people are great. Even if you are small, from the Buddhist point of view, you are a universal entity taking universal responsibility. That’s tremendous.

Thank you so much, and I congratulate you. I’m grateful that in this culture, people can think this way. It amazes me. I truly believe that in this world, as long as we are human, we can understand each other, what our needs are, what should be avoided, and what should be abandoned for the sake of others. I am really confident that we understand each other.

I don’t need to tell you anything else because we are communicating well, heart to heart. And we are taking responsibility for controlling the actions of our body and mind. What more can we ask? Even if Buddha or Jesus were to come here, they couldn’t ask for more than that. Thank you so much. I don’t have anything to add. But if you have any questions, you’re welcome to ask.

*Q.* I certainly have a concerned attitude, but I also have much fear when I think of the great suffering that would come to all others, animal and human, in a nuclear war and the end of this rare and beautiful planet for future beings. What thought counteracts this second fear?

*Lama.* Well, when we use the word “fear,” we have to remember its different dimensions. There’s emotional fear, when we understand that some kind of situation has arisen or may arise. But then there’s fear based on concern for others and the harm they may experience through the use of, say, nuclear weapons. In my opinion, that’s not emotional fear. That’s fear derived from comprehending wisdom—wisdom that comprehends the universal reality of all human beings and human need. From a Buddhist perspective, perhaps you can call it fear, but it’s not negative fear; it’s not destructive fear. It’s an understanding that produces peace and love.

*Q.* When we feel anger what should we do? Repress it, show it if it’s not harmful to others, or ignore it?

*Lama.* If somebody makes you angry, the simple thing is to analyze the situation. First analyze what caused the situation to arise and what effect it’s having. When you analyze the way in which anger projects its object, you can see that it’s exaggerated; it’s too big. Anger sees something concrete there, but when you investigate the object in detail—what it is, how it appears, what happened—you can’t find a concrete object of anger anywhere. That’s one way of eliminating anger.

You can also think about whether hanging on to this object of anger is worthwhile or not. The moment you conclude that it’s not, that it’s destructive to both yourself and others, you can change your mind. By thinking that it’s not worth keeping, you can let it go. If you keep the conversation going, constantly thinking, “He did this; she did that; he did that; she did this,” you’re just perpetuating conflict and restlessness in your mind. It’s not worthwhile.

You can also damage or eliminate anger intellectually by analyzing its evolution. You can discover how ridiculous it is. Take a family argument, for example. You put a vase of flowers here. Then someone comes in and says, “Why did you put those there? They go here.” You respond, “No! I want them here!” And so it goes, back and forth, fighting each other over something so unimportant and small. There’s no big reason. It’s simply not accepting transitory change. That’s what’s making you angry. When you analyze, you see that change is the nature of things. Someone wants to move the flowers from here to there? Let go. Wherever they are, you can still survive.

We often get angry because we think unimportant things are important and we strongly resist change, as in the example. That's wrong. As you know, Buddhism always emphasizes impermanence. Change is natural. It has nothing to do with concepts. You plant seeds; flowers grow. You put them in a vase; they perish and die. Changing, manifesting in different ways is what inevitably happens. It's natural.

Once we were babies. Then we got bigger and bigger and bigger and now we're going gray and getting ready to die. Change is natural. Wives change; husbands change; girlfriends change; boyfriends change. It's all natural.

So it's very important that we accept change as natural. We should respect the nature of things. Getting angry with others means we don't respect them. Someone wants to move something from here to there, we want it left where it is and get angry at that person. That means we're disrespecting the other person's will and the process of change.

And especially, anger is the worst negativity. Lord Buddha explained that anger is the most concrete negativity. It's always negative; there's no exception. Why is that? The minute anger enters your mind, you become dark, like a thundercloud, and manifest to others in that way. There's no exception.

Buddhism does make an exception for desire. Desire, attachment, is usually negative, but it can be positive. There's a way you can use it to bring peace and positive results. Anger can never be used that way, so anger is our worst enemy. We should abandon anger as much as we possibly can. At least we should try to do so. Trying is good enough. We need to understand, "Anger is destructive. It destroys my peace; it destroys my pleasure. It destroys my companions and other people as well. The most important thing I can do in my life is control my anger."

Before I was talking about the point of view of the object of anger. We can also analyze the subject, the angry person. This morning, when everything was OK, he appeared so handsome and nice. But this afternoon, now that he's angry, he looks like a monster: angry; ugly. That's how anger can change a person's appearance. This morning he was so holy and dear. Now he's become completely evil. Of course, that's not really possible, but in my perception, to my exaggerated projection, it seems to have happened. From the side of the object, change is natural, but not radical change. But to my radical mind, such profound change in appearance is

possible. And I think that Western science now agrees that the way we see things is according to our projection, which is similar to how Buddhism explains reality.

*Q.* What about killing to preserve the lives of other beings? Is it ever acceptable to kill in order to save others?

*Lama.* That's a very dangerous question. I want you to listen very carefully to my reply so that you don't misunderstand what I say. Let's say I have a nuclear weapon and am planning to blow up New York City and kill millions of people and you know clean clear that this is my intention. I think it would be all right if, out of great love, great compassion and great wisdom, you were to kill me. Why? Because you'd be doing it for the sake of all those people whose lives I'd have destroyed.

This question is similar to what several of my medical doctor students have asked me. Some of them have been disturbed because they have had to kill rats and monkeys in medical experiments; they know Buddhists aren't supposed to kill any living being. I have to answer, don't I? I can't ignore them. So I say, "Well, as long as your research will benefit humankind and even animals as well, I guess experimenting on and killing one monkey might be OK."

The point is, if you have great compassion and a clear understanding of what benefits the majority, perhaps there can be exceptions. But still, I have some doubt. If our understanding is limited, we can easily make mistakes. Therefore, exceptions to the Buddha's injunction not to kill would be extremely rare.

*Q.* How should we deal with people who consider us as their enemies or those who don't trust us?

*Lama.* With compassion—according to the way I was educated, people who hate you are objects of love and compassion. Why? Because they are not enemies forever; tomorrow they can become friends. There's no such thing as a permanent, self-existent, concrete enemy.

We should know from our own experience that things always change. Today somebody can be a dear friend, tomorrow an enemy. Who knows?

It's all so relative, but so common—look at how many marriages break up, with people who were once loving partners regarding each other as mortal enemies. Before, they couldn't bear to be apart; now they can't stand the sight of each other.

Therefore, I think it's important to deeply imprint your mind with the knowledge that there's no external enemy, so that if one appears to manifest today you don't get caught up in hatred and just let go, thinking, "By hating me he's hurting himself; he's suffering. What is it in me that upsets him so much?" Do you see Buddhism's reverse thinking? We think there's some kind of destructive vibration in me that makes him hate me. I'm actually responsible for others not liking me. This is opposite to what we normally think; we think the hurt inflicted on us by our enemy is his fault.

Lord Buddha's psychology is that we have some kind of negative magnetic energy within us that stimulates anger to manifest in another person, who we then label "enemy." Controlling that energy within us is the best way to eliminate enemies. From the Buddhist point of view, seeing others as enemies and wanting to destroy them is completely wrong.

The great bodhisattva Shantideva said that if the entire ground is covered in thorns, it's easier to avoid getting stuck by putting on shoes than by covering the ground with leather. Wearing shoes has the same effect as covering the whole earth with leather. Similarly, if we control our anger with patience, no external enemy can be found. Our main enemy is within; that's the one we have to conquer. If you try to destroy external enemies, how far can you get? Maybe you can kill one or two people, but more enemies will arise. You can't get rid of enemies that way. But if you get rid of the mind that sees enemies, no further enemies will ever be seen.

*Q.* You have spoken about overcoming the fear of death. My brother, who is 72 years old, has just learned that he has only a few months to live. How can I help him overcome his fear of death?

*Lama.* My way is sort of simple. You can tell him, "You've been successful. For more than seventy years you've had a good, enjoyable life. Now, remembering that, you can die happily and peacefully. You don't have to worry about me or your other family members. Accept what is happening and relax." Teach him relaxation meditation. Also teach him that death

has been part of the natural evolution of life for as long as humans have existed. Therefore, he should not worry. Furthermore, if he is relaxed at the time of death, it can be a blissful experience rather than a fearful one.

So, you can explain all this to him. Even if he's a nonbeliever, nonreligious, you can explain that peace is within him and that it can guide him. If he's a Christian, explain in the Christian way that God will take care of him and liberate him into eternal peace. Use the right psychology according to his background. This is the way to help him. What you should not do is tell him something that he doesn't believe. What you say should be oriented to his way of thinking, something that he can understand.

The important thing to convey is that death is not something horrible and painful. It's not. Sometimes we look at it as painful, but it can be completely blissful. Therefore, he shouldn't worry.

Anyway, we've been destined to die ever since we were born, so worry won't help. And as long as his mind can still understand things, you can tell him that it's tricky—many of the things that manifest to the mind at this time are simply hallucinations, not a true picture of either inner or outer reality. They're a result of wrong thinking, wrong projections. Knowing that can allay all fear. Believing the concrete vision of what we see to be real can be a source of confusion and misery. Death is not something to fear. It is something we can understand, comprehend, work with and control. That's possible.

*Q.* How can nonviolence bring peace to the people of El Salvador?

*Lama.* That's a good question. Now I have to study politics again! Well, that's a good, practical question. First, we have to analyze what the problem in El Salvador is. Once we determine that, we should ask, is adding war to that a solution or something else? Analyze the situation. All conventional phenomena are relative and changeable, so we should analyze how we can change it for the better. If we find there's a way, we should act upon it. War is not necessarily the answer. All problems have a root—that's what we have to determine and try to change, rather than fight. However, I don't know what the root of the conflict in El Salvador is. I can give a theoretical answer but that may not apply in this case. I mean, theoretically I can say that war results from self-cherishing. People fight because they're afraid of losing their material possessions, their power and so forth, so they keep



fighting each other. That is universally understandable. But how to implement this understanding, how to call a truce? That I don't know. I'd have to do more analysis in order to find a real answer, an answer to the situation that does not involve bloodshed and killing. But it should be possible.

*Q.* What is the best way to benefit others most effectively?

*Lama.* That's simple. First, instead of being a disaster, get yourself together. What I mean by getting yourself together is taking care of your own moral conduct, your own psychology and your own material situation. Show yourself in a good light. That's the way to help others. Live right. Just your living right helps others. That's all. It's very simple. But maybe some people don't know, so I have to tell you.

Often, we're too ambitious: "I want to help others. Can you give me something to do? I want to help you." I'm a bit doubtful about that approach. Wherever you are, just be. If a situation arises where you can be of help, do what you can for others. Just by being available, you're serving others. There are, of course, many ways in which we can help others. You get the general idea, but there can be many detailed explanations.

Take, for example, a couple living together. How do they help one another? By getting their own life together. They share a house and each person takes responsibility for helping the other by being strong. If one is always crying, "Blah, blah, blah, you were not nice to me yesterday," over some tiny issue, like the example before of moving a flower vase, that person is not together. And part of that is a lack of awareness of their own disorderly thinking and wrong actions. Like, say I'm the husband and I put the flowers here. My wife can't deal with that: "What a slob. He has no concept of beauty. Anyway, he's ugly, so his actions are always ugly."

In that case, neither person is together. "Together" means acting reasonably, sensibly, and not being a baby: "If I act like a baby, my wife can't take it." That means I'm not together, not reasonable. So just be sensible and together so that your partner can be proud of you. That's the way to help your spouse; just giving them chocolate doesn't really help.

Well, I think that's all we have time for. Thank you so much, everybody, especially the Oakes College people who worked so hard to put this evening together.

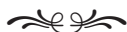


DIETER KRATZER

Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa, 1982

## 11. Christmas Dharma

*Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa, Pomaia, Italy, 25 December 1982<sup>8</sup>*



SOMEHOW, we're still alive and aware enough to remember how long it is since Jesus was born. It was one thousand, nine hundred and eighty-two years ago, right? And I myself am fortunate enough to have been born in the Shangri-La of Tibet, to have come into contact with the world of Western *dakas* and *dakinis*, and to have this chance to acknowledge the history of the holy guru, Jesus.

I've found that having a little understanding of Jesus's life helps me develop my own path, but it's not easy to fully understand the profound events in Jesus's life. It's quite difficult. Of course, the superficial events of his life are fairly easy to understand, but there's not enough room in our mind to comprehend his high bodhisattva actions. Even when Lord Jesus and Lord Buddha were here on earth it was very difficult for ordinary people to understand who they really were. At that time, very few people understood.

Today I was looking at the Bible, at the Gospel of John in particular, and he was talking about the miracles Jesus performed and how few people understood the profundity of his liberated mind that allowed him to perform those miracles.

Anyway, whenever I'm at a meditation course such as this at Christmas time, I like to talk about this kind of thing. But you need to understand that when I do, I'm not trying to be diplomatic. I don't need to negotiate my relationship with you in that way. It's just that from the bottom of my heart, I sincerely feel and believe that simply to remember Jesus's life is an incredible opportunity.

<sup>8</sup>This teaching is available on the LYWA YouTube channel.

In a way, of course, it doesn't matter where people come from—East or West—or what color they are, those who eliminate their self-cherishing thought and give their life for others are exceptional human beings. For that reason, I'm happy just to bring Jesus to mind and reflect on what he did.

Also, to some extent I'm responsible for my Western students' psychological wellbeing, so if we're going to bring Buddhism to the West, we need to do it in a healthy way rather than introduce it as some exotic new trip. We don't need new trips—we need to do something constructive, something worthwhile. Anything truly worthwhile does not diminish any light; it only enhances it.

And with respect to psychological health, we're part of the environment and the environment is part of us. Therefore, those of us who were born in the West should not reject the Christian environment into which we were born. We should consider ourselves lucky to have been born into a Christian society and to have the wisdom to understand what that means for our mind. Such understanding is very useful if we're to remain healthy. Especially these days, when there's dangerous revolutionary technology everywhere and the world is overwhelmed with fighting and war, we really need to actively remember the lives of our unselfish historical predecessors.

So, John was explaining how God sent Jesus to us as a witness to the truth, but most unfortunately, some ignorant people failed to recognize who he was or understand what he was teaching and killed him.

In my opinion, the Buddhist point of view is that Jesus was a bodhisattva, not only in the sense that he had realized bodhicitta and overcome selfishness, but in the sense that, as a performer of miracles, he was a saint, like Tilopa and Naropa or, to name a living example, His Holiness Zong Rinpoche—somebody completely free of superstition who sometimes instinctively does strange things that the rest of us don't understand.

For example, John says that one day Jesus was near the water when a woman came by to fill her pot. Jesus said to her, "How can you satisfy your thirst with water? It's water that makes you thirsty in the first place." He told her that since it's water that makes her thirsty, how can water be the solution to her thirst. It's some kind of reverse thinking. Who can understand that? It sounds crazy, doesn't it?

What he meant was that only spiritual water can truly slake your thirst. So you can see, the actual meaning is somehow beyond words. The wom-

an's taking water; he says, "Why are you doing that? It's not going to solve your problem of being thirsty." It's crazy talk. Nowadays we'd probably hit somebody who spoke to us like that. But luckily, back then Jesus didn't get beaten up for talking in that way.

John also said that since Jesus was born from God, his disciples were also derived from God's energy. That's similar to what the Buddhist teachings say when they explain that all *shravakas* and *prateyakabuddhas* are born from Shakyamuni Buddha. The sense here is that such followers are born from the teacher's wisdom truth speech. Through internalizing that, they discover the truth for themselves and become such realized beings.

Philosophically, of course, we can say that Buddhism doesn't accept that God is the source of all human beings and other things. But from another point of view, we can say that Buddhism doesn't contradict that statement either.

For example, where does the human realm come from? The Buddha said that the human realm is caused by good karma. That's true. If the upper realms do not come from good karma, then where do they come from? Then, from the Buddhist point of view, all good karma comes from the Buddha . . . or, you can say, God. Therefore, the human realm comes from God, from Buddha. Because of the Buddha's holy speech, sentient beings create good karma. I want you to be clean clear about this.

Still, philosophically you can argue this point one way or the other. It depends on how you interpret it. You can interpret the statement negatively or positively. Actually, you can do anything with philosophy.

Now, concerning God, what is the difference between Buddha and God? Today, I'm going to say that according to Buddhism and Christianity, the qualities of the Buddha and the qualities of God are the same. People always worry about creation. "God is the creator of everything; Buddha is the creator of everything." Does that mean the Buddha created negativity? Well, the Buddha said that ultimately, there's no positive, there's no negative.

Tibetans address this issue with the example of a river. When you're standing on one bank of the river you call the opposite bank "the other side." When you're on that bank you call this one "the other side." There's this side and that side, that side and this side. It's interdependent. Without each other, this side and that side wouldn't exist. In the same way, if

positive doesn't exist, negative can't exist either. In other words, negative comes from positive, positive comes from negative.

Then maybe you're going to argue, "Well, if God is the creator, if God is the cause of everything, such as organic things like plants, then how can God be permanent?" People say God is permanent—then how can something that's permanent produce something impermanent, like a plant? The principal cause of an impermanent phenomenon has to also be impermanent.

That sort of argument comes from Buddhists, so I'm going to debate with them: "Then how can you say shravakas and pratyekabuddhas are born from Buddha? Buddha is permanent." The answer to that is that such statements are not meant to be taken literally. In response to that, I'm going to say, "Well, God can be the same as Buddha, in the sense of a personal being. God can be a person in the same way Shakyamuni Buddha was." It's not as if a permanent God is sitting up there somewhere. God can be something organic, a personal being with whom you can personally relate.

I tell you, philosophers always try to make everything very special. "God. Buddha. God is this; Buddha is that." They put God and Buddha up on some kind of untouchable pedestal, so ordinary people can't relate to them. They make it impossible to understand the nature of God, the nature of Buddha. That's stupid. They just create more obstacles for people.

Then human beings, with their limited minds, try to put cream on God, chocolate on God, like with a knife. They put their own garbage on God. That's all wrong; definitely wrong. I truly believe that sometimes philosophy can become an obstacle to people really understanding the nature of God or Buddha. Maybe I'm a revolutionary, but I reject many of the philosophical positions on these matters.

However, personifying God or Buddha doesn't contradict their omnipresent nature. We can talk about the personal qualities of Heruka, for example, but at the same time, he is universal and omnipresent. We need to understand that.

One of the problems we find in the Western environment is the low opinion people generally have of human beings. They consider them to be on the same level as fish and chickens; they're a hassle; they're too com-

plicated. We have no respect for human dignity. People can have transcendent qualities while at the same time being human, but we don't understand this. Therefore, people who try to explain the Bible and God have to separate human beings and God: "The humans down here are the worst. They're like hungry ghosts, negative and sinful, while God is up there, perfect and pure." That is wrong. If you want to touch God with the human mind, you have to make a relationship between God and human beings. You cannot say God is perfect, humans are dirty. No way. Also, the Bible uses the term personal God or something like that.

When His Holiness the Dalai Lama visited Spain earlier this year we stayed in a Christian monastery. There were about thirty elderly monks there; some were very old. We were all sitting together having a fantastically good time, communicating really well, sort of totally unified, having a long conversation about religion, and one monk, he must have been about fifty, described God in exactly the same way as I was thinking. I was in shock. I said, "Is the way you're describing God explained in the Bible?" He said it was. Somehow, we were thinking about God in the same way.

Then we had a discussion about emptiness. His Holiness asked the monk, "What do you think emptiness is?" The monk replied, "Nonattachment is emptiness."

For me, that was a completely satisfactory answer. I prostrate to anybody who replies in that way. I have no question for anybody who thinks nonattachment is emptiness. That's super. I was greatly impressed.

Well, what's the difference? If you ask intelligent Buddhists what emptiness is, they're going to say non-self-existence, but for me, the answer nonattachment is much weightier. I'm talking about my experience. If somebody tells me nonattachment is emptiness, it touches my heart. Philosophically, the answer non-self-existence is perfect, but it's totally dry. It doesn't have any feeling. From the philosophical point of view, saying nonattachment is emptiness may even be wrong. Tibetan philosophers are going to look askance and say, "Wow, what kind of answer is that?"

There's that story of an intellectual geshe asking the great yogi Milarepa, "What is the Vinaya?" Milarepa replied, "I don't know Vinaya from non-Vinaya. All I know is that if my mind is subdued, that is Vinaya." That was an incredible answer, wasn't it? An unbelievable answer. Again, philosophically, Milarepa's answer was wrong, but in truth, it was really the perfect answer. If you look back into the real Vinaya, that was

absolutely a Vinaya answer. But if you're just playing with words, it was a disaster!

Then the geshe asked another question, trying to control the situation: "What is dichotomy?" Milarepa said, "Well, I don't know." Here I don't remember exactly how it went. My memory is not so good. Anyway, Milarepa said, "Well, I don't know, my dear friend, but I think if your mind is opposite to Dharma, that is dichotomy." That was a good answer, too, wasn't it? You probably remember that story.

The Vinaya is not only for monks and nuns. It's for everybody, to integrate their mind with the Dharma; to subdue it with the Dharma. So when a Christian monk says that nonattachment is emptiness, to me that is an answer that gets to the essence. The mind of attachment holds a conception that is the opposite of the wisdom of emptiness because attachment overestimates the quality of its object and projects that onto its reality. Attachment exists because we don't understand the nature of the object. If we understand true Christian thinking, that attachment is a human problem but we can go beyond it, we have a profound answer.

From my point of view, those Christian monks were living a more ascetic life than most Tibetan monks do. That's just my opinion. I'm not putting Tibetans down. I'm Tibetan. There's no reason for me to put myself down. I'm not stupid. Or maybe I am. . . .

And the monastery where those monks lived is so isolated. Each monk has his own cell, which has a small opening through which food can be passed. They are totally self-contained. There's a small garden in back, which can't be seen from the outside. It was unbelievable. I was very impressed with and have great respect for Western Christianity. I'm not joking. I'm too old to joke! And I'm not saying "Christianity is great" for some political purpose. I'm too old for politics as well. Those people just touched my heart. I'd never seen this before; I'd never seen such a Western monastery with monks living such pure, ascetic lives in strong practice. That was the first time I'd seen it for myself. I was so happy.

Well, I guess my time has run out. Now I have to finish my performance. But I'm not sure how to finish it. I can't integrate. Nevertheless, my conclusion is I would like you all to try to unify your attitude toward Buddhism and Christianity; to see how Buddhism can somehow help your own country's religion. Help Christians understand Buddhism better and



help Buddhists understand Christianity better so that we respect each other, have devotion toward each other, touch each other. That's the healthiest way to be.

Since I'm outside of Western society I just observe it objectively. You watch it subjectively; you roll with it; you can't really see it that much yourself. But I just sit back and watch. From my perspective, Western people have been greatly influenced by Jesus and the Christian religion. That's so valuable, so valuable. Your goodness, your peacefulness, your loving kindness—all that actually comes from the Christian religion. You don't get any of that from politics, do you? What your country's politics brings is bloodshed.

So from my point of view, I hereby give you permission to become Christians tomorrow. I rejoice. I'll tell you something: I'm not attached to these things. I truly believe this. If you were to come to me tomorrow and say, "Lama, I've discovered that my traditional religion has so much value that I've decided to become a Christian," I'd say, "Thank you so much." It wouldn't hurt my ego. "I rejoice! Great, go to church."

All right. So, at this time we are very fortunate just to be able to remember the profound lives of the Christian saints and the hard work they did. It is so worthwhile to rejoice at what they accomplished. Not only the past saints but the present ones as well, those who are leading ascetic lives, giving their lives to help and work for others in their society. We should pray for their success in their spiritual growth, that they will soon realize and unify with Godhood.

Historically, we can also see other unselfish people who have come to earth, such as Gandhi-ji. While some did not appreciate him, he was a great man who helped the Indian people free themselves from the English nose! And while he was a very skillful politician, his basic philosophy was *ahimsa* and compassion, and with that he freed the Indian people from British oppression. In return, he was assassinated, but he accepted that, too.

You can see how many billions of people there are on earth, and that number keeps increasing, yet how many are prepared to sacrifice themselves for others? It's very rare that anybody does that, like when in one of his previous lives as a prince, Shakyamuni Buddha sacrificed his body to the starving mother tiger and her cubs. Jesus gave of himself and so did Gandhi-ji. Who else was able to do what they did? Publicly offering your

life to save that of another is very rare, isn't it? I haven't studied much history, but I don't think there are many like that.

Now, we don't have to give our life or our body, but we can decrease our selfishness, we can develop more concern for others' happiness than our own. So motivate strongly, like this: "Those people were incredible. They had not a selfish bone in their body and totally gave themselves to others. I just can't imagine myself doing that. They were so great. Their bodhicitta must have been so amazingly well-developed; they must have had such enormous loving kindness and compassion for others; they must have transcended all pain.

"So as much as I can, for the rest of my life I will dedicate my body, speech and mind and whatever wealth I have to benefiting others. From now on, I belong to others and they can use me as they wish. May I and all mother sentient beings never be separated from the bodhisattva teacher in this and all future lives."

## 12. On Educating Children

*Kedron Park Teachers College, Brisbane, Australia, 29 April 1975<sup>9</sup>*



THE PURPOSE of education is to benefit people. We all know this. However, different countries have their own ideas of what constitutes benefit according to their individual inclinations. What some countries consider to be bad education, other countries consider good. In other words, what makes education good or bad depends on how one interprets good and bad.

These days, people live in so many different environments, societies and communities—rural, urban, industrial, intellectual and so forth—that education itself has become confused. For a start, no one person can learn every existent technology; that’s obviously impossible.

Therefore, the decision as to what constitutes a good education depends very much upon personal interest, but ultimately, we have to decide whether what we’re learning benefits us and helps us benefit others. If we’re not clear about this from the beginning, we can embark on one course of study but finish up thinking, “Oh, this doesn’t help,” and drop it. Then try something else but that doesn’t work either; then something else again . . . we go on so many educational trips but eventually finish up empty.

I think everybody—especially people in the West—should at least receive a basic, general education in things such as writing, mathematics, cooking, gardening and housekeeping. Those things are essential. If we simply focus on theory and technical education and ignore the practicalities, we won’t even be able to make ourselves breakfast. That’s not realistic.

Life in the modern world demands we know the fundamentals—how

<sup>9</sup>One of Lama’s students, a trainee teacher, had invited Lama to the college to talk to some of the other student teachers.

to prepare food and how things work. The benefit is security. What use is abstruse technology if we suddenly find ourselves alone? We could die of hunger. Don't think it couldn't happen; in this world we can never be sure. And don't think it's easy to survive because we have money. Money isn't everything. Therefore, an education in the basics of human necessity is essential. Studying technology without knowing the fundamentals of survival can be very dangerous.

When it comes to teaching others, we have to take into account and foster our students' abilities and interests and try to develop those qualities in the classroom; if we don't, the students just get bored or upset. Especially at this time, it's not wise to teach in an authoritarian, dogmatic way: "Sit there! Learn this!" Children nowadays are very intellectually free and don't respond well to coercion. So we have to arouse their interest. Skillful teachers know how to make their students interested in the subject being taught, whatever it is; that's a uniquely human ability. Simply pushing students isn't just unwise. It doesn't work.

In Tibet, we taught students language, philosophy, science and so forth from the beginning, but we always made sure that they were interested first. We never pushed. As a result, they'd feel that education was their responsibility, not something that only the teacher wanted, and thus they learned easily. You can't teach students through force.

Being a teacher is a big responsibility. But learning alone doesn't make a teacher; we have to know how to interest our students in what we want them to learn. If we don't, it's impossible to teach. A good teacher should know each student's individual character and temperament and how to work with that. If the teacher's attitude is "My way is the only way" and the student's is different, it becomes a problem.

Another quality that a good teacher should have is equanimity. Good teachers don't favor those students who make them happy and forget about or reject those who are slow, temperamental or difficult to communicate with. That's not right. If the teacher gives off a good vibration, has a good relationship with all of his or her students, makes them interested in the subject and benefits their life, that's wonderful.

However, there are unskillful teachers who put students down and focus on their bad side: "He is this and that; she didn't learn anything; his character is bad" and so forth. If you put people down, they'll feel insecure, but it's natural for people to have shortcomings—we all do; it's not

just this one child. Don't think that some people are unaffected by criticism; it's not true.

Also, we all have different aptitudes. We learn some things quickly and others slowly; we understand some things the instant we hear them but find others incredibly difficult to grasp and to integrate with our own experience. Therefore, we have to expect that because everybody's mind is different, some students will find certain subjects difficult and others easy. But, given time, most students can learn most things and we shouldn't give up on or denigrate those who don't get something the first or second time.

Therefore, teachers should have the skill to treat students as individuals and not generalize that they're all the same. No two personalities are identical; each person's ability to learn is different. Also, some people have a tendency to judge others on superficialities without knowing what they're like inside, but others' inner abilities can be very difficult to comprehend. Most of the time we don't even know our own abilities.

Check your own educational experiences. You probably found some subjects unbelievably easy to understand while others were still incomprehensible even after repeated study. Why was that? Your own experience should help you have patience when you teach.

Sometimes educational systems are fixed, but standardized systems don't always work, so be careful when deciding which approach is best for your students. Methods and curricula have to change with the times.

It's also important to encourage your students and make them feel that they're capable of success. When you do so, they make progress and see their own development for themselves. That's very important. If, instead, you always emphasize your own ability and learning and tell students, "This is the way I teach and this is the way you learn," you disempower them, which is clearly the wrong thing to do. That's just your own power trip.

With education, students gain their own power, and with that you can teach them more. It's hard to teach people who are completely dull and foolish. Therefore, try to show your students how great their own abilities are. When they understand that, they're so happy and continuously progress. If you put them down—"You're stupid, hopeless,"—they just get nervous and insecure and feel that they will never learn. Then further education becomes impossible. When people believe it's impossible for them to learn, it becomes impossible for them to learn. Confident students are

the ones who make the best progress. When students think, “Yes, I can do this,” they advance. Even when set complicated tasks they feel that in time they can gradually accomplish them.

If students have special needs and can’t be taught intellectually, you can teach them nonverbally through art or physical movement. Their IQ might be low but their sense perception allows them to easily understand what they see.

It’s especially important to explain to children why they should get an education; as I mentioned before, you can’t force them to learn. If they understand the reasons, they’ll take more of an interest in their studies and be much easier to teach. They don’t necessarily have to understand all the logic for and benefits of learning, just some. Anyway, if you simply tell them they have to study “because it’s the law” or “because I want you to,” they’ll just ask “Why?”

That’s true. Kids today aren’t easy. They always want to know why. It’s not like it used to be in the old days. Think of the traditional English methods of education. Children had no choice; they had to do as they were told. Teachers didn’t have to explain anything; they had all the power and used it. But that was in the past. These days, children are more intelligent and skeptical and teachers seem to have lost the power they used to have—it has moved a little more to the students’ side. Perhaps they’ve unionized! Anyway, the conclusion is to give students logical reasons for why they should get educated.

It’s not easy to be a teacher. Good teachers take responsibility for their students’ lives. Perhaps this doesn’t happen so much in the West, but that’s how it was in Tibet. Our teachers felt very responsible for the way their students thought and behaved, and in general tried to ensure that their lives were constructive and uncomplicated. But even though Western teachers today have less influence over students than they used to, they still have some.

Therefore, as much as you can, give off good vibrations and come from a place of sound philosophy rather than misconception. Many teachers’ ideas are total misconceptions and when this is reflected in their unconscious behavior, it adversely affects their students: they adopt their teachers’ erroneous ideas and copy their bad behavior. I’m not just being negative; it happens. So be careful how you think and act. A teacher’s influence extends well beyond what you teach; your character is also very

important. I don't mean that you should just be superficially diplomatic. I mean that you should feel deeply responsible to communicate well with your students and really understand them.

It can be quite difficult to choose the kind of life you want to lead. Before deciding upon the subjects you want to study, you have to look ahead and choose a career that will give you the money you'll need to live the way you want. For many people this means a life of luxury, so you have to see what kind of education will lead to that. That's not always easy.

For example, I've seen many people choose their education, get their degree, be successful but still finish up unhappy with their job. Therefore, if you're going to be a teacher, you need to be very wise and skillful in your approach so that the education you give others is beneficial for them and yourself as well. And as I said before, the way to give the best education to others is to approach them as individuals and make them interested in what you teach. You can't teach everybody the same subject. There's no one best thing.

I know that in some places the syllabus is fixed and that's what you're expected to teach, rather than things that accord with your students' interests. But if you're wise you can still loosen it up rather than teach it in a concrete way; you can spice up the set topics with things that your students will find interesting. That's possible. The bottom line is that if your students are happy with what you teach, they'll learn.

And now, if there are any questions, I'd be happy to try to answer them.

*Q.* Lama, here we're training to teach children aged five to thirteen. At the beginning you suggested teaching the basic necessities for life; could you tell us briefly what those basic necessities are?

*Lama.* What I meant was that you should have the sincere wish to help your students and when you teach you should do so peacefully, not aggressively. That will rub off on your students and they'll remember you for the rest of their lives as somebody who taught beautifully, with patience. Furthermore, your kindness will be reflected in the way they act; they will pass the warm feeling they got from you on to others. Children always copy their teachers so you have to impress them the right way.

Of course, you can explain the purpose of the actual education, but you can also tell your students that that's not all there is; that there's something

else. You can tell them that they should have warm feelings for and dedicate their lives to others; that selfishness brings only unhappiness. You can definitely explain that kind of thing.

The human mind is really beautiful. If you act positively your students will automatically absorb that. They may not have the conscious thought “He’s good,” but that’s the effect you’ll have on their subconscious. So you don’t have to say, “Studying math is the only way to be happy.” That’s completely silly; they’ll laugh at you. Instead, you can say something like, “Math isn’t that important but you might need to know some when you go shopping.” Explain the need in a simple way; then they won’t be confused. Explain things in a very down-to-earth way. Some teachers exaggerate the importance of what they’re teaching and that just confuses their students’ minds. Of course, sometimes teachers themselves are confused and pass their confusion on to their students. Then the students go home and confuse their parents, their parents confuse the rest of the community, and confusion is generated all round.

*Q.* Lama, does the practice of meditation give you the peace and stability to remain calm in spite of confusion?

*Lama.* Yes, it does. Meditation shows you what’s happening within your mind. It shows how your past experiences influence the present and how your present experiences will affect you in the future.

*Q.* Who controlled children’s education in Tibet? Here, the government is in charge.

*Lama.* We had different kinds of school. Some children went to medical college; others were trained in monasteries. In general, most Tibetan children were educated in monasteries.

*Q.* Western children watch much TV and have many more distractions than Tibetan children, but can we still start teaching them meditation at such early ages as five or six?

*Lama.* It depends. If a child has a violent, uncontrolled mind and finds it impossible to keep still in class, even at the age of ten or twelve, perhaps



you can teach them to relax their body, their physical nervous system, with some kind of simple meditation technique. It can be very natural. You don't have to believe something to meditate; it's more to do with mind and feeling. You can simply teach children to concentrate on some part of their body: their stomach, heart or head, for example. And you can make it a game; just let them see what they experience for an hour or so. You don't have to push them: "Meditate!" You can also teach such children to recite mantras. That can also help a lot.

But for students who don't have that kind of problem and are studying well, you don't need to teach meditation or mantra. It's only for those who are complicated and with whom it's hard to communicate.

*Q.* I've tried teaching mantras to children, but once they master the mantra they seem to get bored very quickly, like in five or ten minutes.

*Lama.* Yes, that can happen, but don't make them do it all the time, just occasionally, and never for a long period. If children concentrate strongly for even a short time it can be very powerful because they don't intellectualize as much as we do.

Well, I think that's all. Thank you; thank you very much.

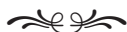


TOM SZYMANSKI

Marjon van Kempen and Ken Klein marriage, Kopan, 1979

## 13. On Marriage

*Various locations and dates between 1975 and 1981*<sup>10</sup>



THESE DAYS, one of the main reasons that a man and a woman become friends is sexual. They get together for sexual pleasure. In earlier times, marriage had a divine quality—a couple came together out of respect, with the aim of creating a kind of totality. That gave meaning to getting married, and marriages made with that purpose became good ones.

Many of today's marriages become disastrous because they lack purpose; there's no worthwhile goal for coming together. A couple should not come together out of grasping at each other; there should be more meaning to it than that. But our craving desire and lack of wisdom work together to create an extreme situation that finishes up causing conflict: the woman agitates her man; the man agitates his woman—in either case, it ends in “goodbye.”

These days, I travel the entire world and many young people come to see me to discuss their relationship problems, but they all boil down to people's coming together out of the wrong motivation. Whether you're a man or a woman, it's important that there's not too much grasping in your relationship, that you don't agitate your partner. Extreme grasping at sexual pleasure is a problem; sexual pleasure is an irritant. You can see.

However, many couples aren't together for the sex. Their relationship is deeper than that, so their attitude is different. They are very comfortable, free, somehow, with no tremendous expectations of each other. Therefore, they have a good relationship. I'm sure you've seen examples of such couples, where there's not much grasping.

<sup>10</sup> Lama Yeshe answers questions about marriage and relationships. Collated by Nicholas Ribush from talks in various locations from 1975 to 1981. The first two excerpts in this chapter are from a course on mind and mental factors at Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa in 1978.

In my limited experience of the Western world, many Christians, who believe in God, have very respectful marriages. They believe in something deeper than themselves and are not living for sense pleasure alone. I would say that such couples have been blessed by God or Jesus.

Of course, many people these days believe that Coca-Cola is better than God. “What’s the point of religion?” they ask. “Coca-Cola is more refreshing than God or the Bible.” This is their problem. What to do? I’m joking!

### THE NEXT DAY

Thousands of people the world over get married every day out of craving for sexual pleasure. Others get married principally for reputation: “He’s world famous; he’s great.” Still others marry for wealth or power. Those are all wrong motivations for marriage. The purpose of marriage should be to avoid extremes and gain balance in your life. However, it often turns out the complete opposite.

These days, perhaps as many people get divorced as get married. Don’t think divorce is easy. Psychologically, divorce can be hell. It’s not as simple as “OK, bye-bye,” and it’s over. It’s not like that. First there’s a huge build-up of psychological pressure and when it releases it’s like falling into hell. So, sentient beings are suffering like this.

We criticize modern society for such ills, but it’s not society’s fault. There’s nothing wrong with society—it’s our mental attitude that’s mistaken. We create all kinds of fantasies, grasp at sense pleasure and everything finishes in disaster.

Buddhism explains that we circle from one life to another because of craving desire and that we can put an end to cyclic existence, to rebirth in samsara, by abandoning desire. Craving is what makes the wheel of life go round and it’s our own clinging that binds us to it; nobody else makes us cycle from one suffering life to another.

The twentieth century example of this is those ladies and gentlemen who get married, experience problems, grasp at another person, then at another, and another . . . maybe they cycle through four or five marriages in a single lifetime. Some people have hundreds of lovers in their life. Why can’t they stop? Why do they keep on grasping? There’s nobody driving them to do this; they drive themselves. They hang on continuously; non-stop. Desire is fickle in nature. Freud tried to explain sex as the basis of

most human problems. Buddhism disagrees. The main human problem lies much deeper than that.

FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH A CATHOLIC THEOLOGIAN,  
KOPAN MONASTERY, 1977

*Q.* Lama, is it possible to teach married people on the spiritual path some form of modified tantric practice to help deepen their spiritual and sexual relationship?

*Lama.* Yes, it's possible. But as the texts explain, you have to approach these things gradually. Still, if married people study properly, they can learn the great significance of tantric practice, have a good relationship and, in a simple way, experience some kind of unity.

However, I can't be specific about this because it depends greatly on the level of development of the individuals involved. It's similar with people who want to be celibate: just because you're intellectually ready for a certain type of practice, the scientific reality—what Buddhists call the interdependent origination of it—may be against it; the physical nervous system, which comes from the mind, may not be ready. In such cases, the nervous system can crack under the strain.

Therefore, whatever practice you're trying to achieve, you need to go slowly, slowly and develop yourself organically. It's not something that depends only on ideas. If you take it gradually, any practice can become easy. You should not push or squeeze yourself. If you pump yourself too hard, you run out of space, freak out and go crazy.

*Q.* Some people take teachings and then decide to live in the world and practice Dharma without becoming a monk or nun. Is it easy to integrate worldly responsibilities with spiritual practice?

*Lama.* That, too, depends on the individual. For some people it's a beautiful experience. They get married, the marriage is good, they try to help and share with each other. I think that's beautiful; such couples are also a good example to others.

Many of my married students were experiencing unbelievable suffering and conflict when I met them. All I could do was try to help them be

happy and have as good a relationship as possible. But sometimes circumstances are against it. Basically, both people are unhappy; they have much conflict and many problems within their marriage. I think this is common. It's not just confined to my students. Many Western people experience this. I think the grasping, sexual relationship is one of the greatest problems Western people face, whether they are religious practitioners or not.

However, some people understand each other and try to live with loving kindness, but that's really up to the individual. Some people can lead a beautiful married life; others can't. It really depends on the individual's needs at the time.

#### AT A PUBLIC TALK IN LOS ANGELES, 1975

Q. Lama, many people have problems with their marriage. Do you have anything to say about this?

*Lama.* Do I have anything to say? Yes! They don't understand each other. They lack good communication. That creates many problems. Many people, especially young ones, marry for very superficial reasons: "I like him, let's get married; I like her, let's get married." There's not much thought given to how they're going to spend their life together or much analysis of each other's personality. People are too influenced by external appearance. True beauty lies within. People's faces and behavior are constantly changing; you can't rely on them.

Because we lack the knowledge-wisdom to understand each other's inner, human qualities, we easily disrespect our partner. When things don't work out as planned, when our partner no longer appears attractive, our marriage fails. That's because it was built one hundred percent on ego; it was totally an ego-based relationship. No wonder it didn't work.

A marriage built on mutual understanding, good communication and sincere efforts to help each other has a much better chance of lasting. Mental communication is much better than physical. That is very important. Superficial relationships, those based on mainly external factors, never last.

Let's say a couple buys a new piece of furniture. The husband says, "Put it here," the wife says, "No, put it there," and a huge fight ensues. Here, there, what difference does it make? It's foolish and narrow-minded, but that's how things go.

## AT A COURSE ON DEATH AND REBIRTH, LONDON, 1981

*Q.* Lama, what do you think about marriage?

*Lama.* Marriage is good. Because of marriage, you and I exist on earth. Without marriage most of us wouldn't exist. I have some Christian friends I like and respect very much. Many Christian couples have a good relationship because they keep the love of God in their heart. I've also heard that they have the attitude that sex is for reproduction, not for pleasure. I think that's a very good idea.

*Q.* What about contraception?

*Lama.* I'm not going to talk about the Buddhist point of view; I'm going to talk about this monk's point of view. I have to be careful. However, my observation of the Western world is that contraception is a very good thing because many young people are not ready to have children and if they do, instead of growing, they go crazy. I have students like this. They are young, super-intelligent and well educated, but as soon as they have babies they become unbelievably miserable. I've seen intelligent, worldly-wise girls suddenly become terrible, with no capability, no happiness, and no love for their man; they hate everything. It's incredible. If those girls hadn't had babies, over time, they could have become incredibly spiritually developed.

Parenthood brings with it many societal obligations; having a baby is a big responsibility. So, for those who cannot control their desire for sexual pleasure, contraception is essential. Also, if you can prevent an unwanted pregnancy from occurring, you eliminate the possibility of having to consider killing the fetus by abortion. Buddhism explains that for a sentient being to come from the intermediate state into a human rebirth the mother's womb should be healthy and unobstructed. In other words, the conditions should be perfect. If you interrupt the conditions through contraception, it's OK. It's certainly better than madness. This is my own observation; I hope it doesn't upset anybody.

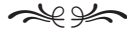
*Q.* Well, Lama, what about abortion?

*Lama.* For Buddhists, abortion is difficult. It's a question of morality, or ethics. But still, it's a relative question. Let's say that you don't have an abortion and that the next twenty years of your life are miserable. And even more misery comes from that. Yet you think nothing of killing fish and small animals. Relatively, which is worse? Good and bad are relative; good karma and bad karma are relative. I'm not making any statement here; it's just something for you to think about.



## 14. How We Started Teaching Dharma to Westerners: An Interview

*Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa, 17 October 1982<sup>11</sup>*



*Geoff Jukes: Lama, how did you first get involved in teaching Dharma to Western people? How did this come to be?*

I BEGAN TEACHING WESTERNERS in the late 1960s. At that time I was based at the Tibetan refugee camp of Buxa Duar, West Bengal, India, where I'd lived since 1959, following the Chinese invasion of Tibet. Lama Zopa Rinpoche was one of my students there and from his time in Tibet had a connection with the monks of Samten Chöling Monastery at Ghoom, near Darjeeling. They invited us to come there for a holiday, which was the first one I'd had since arriving at the Buxa "concentration camp."

So there we were at the monastery, and one morning a monk knocked at our door and said, "Lama Zopa's friend has come to see him." It was Zina Rachevsky, a Russian American woman, who was supposed to be a princess or something.

She said that she'd come to the East seeking peace and liberation, and asked me how they could be found. I was kind of shocked because I'd never expected Westerners to be interested in liberation or enlightenment. For me, that was a first. I thought, "This is something strange but very special." Of course, I did have some idea of what Westerners were, but obviously it was a Tibetan projection! So, despite my surprise I thought I should check to see if she was really sincere or not.

<sup>11</sup> An interview with Geoff Jukes, filmed by the Meridian Trust. Available on the DVD *Bringing Dharma to the West*, on the LYWA YouTube channel and from the Meridian Trust as *Extracting the Essence*.

I started to answer her questions as best I could, according to my ability, but after an hour she said she had to go back to where she was staying in Darjeeling, about thirty minutes away by jeep. However, as she was leaving she asked, "Can I come back tomorrow?" I said, "All right."

So she came back at the same time the next day and again asked various questions, which I tried to answer. Somehow she got some kind of message from the teachings I gave her. She became very enthusiastic and again asked if she could come back the following day.

In this way she came for teachings every day for a week or more. Finally, she said, "It's very expensive for me to come here every day by jeep. Could you please come to stay at my place and give me teachings there?"

At first I was a little bit scared; I didn't quite know what to make of this Western lady. But her sincerity made me believe in her and encouraged me to go, so I said OK, and Lama Zopa and I moved to her house. She lived in the main cottage and we stayed in a small hut outside, in the garden, quite separate from where she lived.

We gave her lessons every morning, from about nine or ten o'clock until midday, which she liked very much, and finished up spending about nine months there; quite a long time. Then she had visa problems and got into trouble with the Indian police.

She was a very strong character, an unusually strong woman, and told the police that they were pigs and should stay away from her place. This rather annoyed them and they tried to hassle her but there wasn't much they could do until they decided to label her a Russian spy. Then they put a lot of pressure on her and kicked her out of Darjeeling.

She finished up having to leave India and went to Ceylon [Sri Lanka]. She wanted Lama Zopa and me to go with her to continue teaching her Dharma and meditation, but we needed His Holiness the Dalai Lama's permission to travel and some kind of refugee document from the Indian government. It took about a year to organize all that, but we finally got His Holiness's permission and an Identity Certificate through the Tibetan Bureau in New Delhi, and we were ready to go.

Zina came up from Ceylon to meet us in New Delhi, having in the meantime decided to become a nun. I thought that was a good idea but since, according to the Vinaya, novice ordination requires the participation of at least four monks in addition to the preceptor, Lama Zopa and I couldn't do it ourselves, so we went to Dharamsala to ask His Holiness the

Dalai Lama. He couldn't do it either but arranged for some other lamas to ordain her, and in that way Zina became a nun.

For some reason I felt uneasy about going to Ceylon so I suggested to Zina that we go to Nepal instead. It was close to Tibet and beautiful, peaceful and quiet. Environment is very important and I thought that since Zina was now a nun she needed to be where she could lead a simple life. Taking ordination alone is not enough. After leaving life in the big samsara you need time to adjust to life as a monk or nun, and your surroundings are very important in this.

Zina agreed, so the three of us went to Nepal. After a while her friends started coming to us for teachings and after we'd been in Nepal for a couple of years, we moved to Kopan. She kept requesting that we give a group meditation course, so in March 1971 Lama Zopa finally gave the first Kopan course, and that was really the beginning of our involvement in the Western world.

So you can see that we started off slowly. We thought teaching Dharma to Westerners would be beneficial but we didn't hurriedly push; it was a gradual evolution. We took our time observing and checking intensively whether Buddhism worked for the Western mind or not. When we were confident that it did, we offered our first course. About twenty people attended the first couple of courses and then the numbers kept doubling until about two hundred and fifty people came to the sixth. After that it leveled out at around two hundred.

So that's how we started teaching Dharma to Westerners.

*Did you find, Lama, any particular difficulties in the approach you had to make to teach Western people? Did you find anything, any specific problems there that were not usual in Tibet?*

Yes, well, the first thing I had to understand was how to present Buddhism to Westerners who were new to it; how to approach the Western mind with these new ideas. You can't teach Westerners the way we teach Tibetans. We have to start slowly; it's a gradual process. Also, Westerners are going to expect something concrete, something solid; something they can easily get their minds around.

Also, traditional teachings use lots of examples, like from India perhaps two thousand years ago; certain things that don't work for the Western

mind. We have to update these so that the examples we use mean something to their mind and accord with their experience. And the statements we make should be concrete and given in a clean-clear manner.

Additionally, the Tibetan system of teaching relies on the use of many scriptural quotations: “In this particular text, Nagarjuna said this, this, this and this.” It’s similar to the way Christians might quote the name of the book, chapter and verse from the Bible: “See John, chapter this, verse that.” Those historical quotations are not necessarily concrete statements, not something straight and structured, so they don’t always work for the Western mind.

Therefore, we have to try different ways of approach. Of course, we don’t change the characteristics of the pure Dharma, but what we have to think about is the way we teach it, how to put it into the Western mind, how to open the Western mind into that space. We have to give all this a lot of thought before teaching; how to get the true Dharma into the Western brain. For me, it takes quite a bit of energy and a lot of sympathetic thinking to decide how to present the various Dharma subjects to Western students.

At first, we had to kind of experiment. For example, when teaching Westerners refuge in the Buddhadharmā, we have to explain it more scientifically than we do when teaching it Tibetan style. And it’s the same with karma, which is an incredible subject, a huge subject. Karma can be taught a hundred different ways, but when teaching it to Westerners, it also has to be presented scientifically and explained with reference to everyday life rather than philosophically. They will comprehend it more easily when it’s taught that way.

There are many aspects of Buddhist philosophy that contradict Western philosophy. Certain things in Buddhism have nothing to do with Western philosophy. It becomes a new dream philosophy for them. So until Western students have oriented themselves to Buddhist philosophy, you can’t put the reality of karma into that frame. Therefore, for me to teach karma to Westerners, I have to go beyond the Buddhist philosophical frame myself, extract the nuclear essence from traditional teachings on karma and put that into the Western mind.

So it’s not all that easy to bring Dharma to Western people, especially when it comes to teaching the philosophical way, because they’re not oriented to philosophical understanding. They know nothing about Bud-

dhist philosophy, so if I start using philosophical logic, they're going to say, "What?" They think Eastern philosophy is the opposite of Western. Instead of being helpful for them, they say, "No. We think this way; you think that way. Your logic asserts that something is existent because of *this*. We say it's nonexistent because of *that*." So that poses quite a challenge for me!

Furthermore, I should never hang on to any kind of fixed idea. Every time I teach I have to ask myself what kind of people are here? What's their background? Is it religious or nonreligious, philosophical, scientific or non-scientific? I try to get as much information on those attending as I can and then try to relate to them accordingly. It takes quite a bit of effort.

Fortunately, however, Buddhism does contain the kind of skillful means that allows us to deal with all kinds of human beings. The Buddha taught us how to go beyond limited concepts and philosophies as long as we understand the essential aspects of the teachings and don't lose them. In that case, I don't care what the philosophical structure is. It's more important that those who teach Tibetan Buddhism in the West are more concerned with the essence of the teachings, not only the philosophy.

It's also good that people teaching Westerners relate more to Western philosophy, psychology and ways of thinking. That way, the teachings they present become very acceptable, and students can understand and comprehend them easily. Otherwise there's going to be a disconnect between the teacher's and the students' minds and no way for the teachings to transform, or help, the students' minds.

Anyway, it's very important that we convey the essential aspects of Buddhism rather than just always follow the system. Following the system is good once the students have been established on the path but not if they are just beginners. Since the teachings don't yet exist in their mind, you're just talking about some Shangri-La with which they're not familiar.

*What then would you say is the essence of Buddhism? What would you describe as the essence of Buddhism?*

I consider things like the four noble truths, the noble eightfold path, the three principal aspects of the path to enlightenment—renunciation, bodhicitta and the right view of emptiness—the four immeasurables and so forth to be the essence of Buddhism. Those topics are so scientific, so

understandable, so logical. Nobody can deny their truth. Those teachings are very practical.

But we should not only explain them. We should also teach the students how to practice them. In order to solve modern Western problems they have to meditate on the teachings. If we only present them as some kind of miracle or magic, they won't be helpful; they won't solve the students' problems.

So therefore, teaching the essence of Buddhism is such a clean-clear way of presenting the Buddhadharma to everybody, irrespective of culture, religious philosophy and so forth, without hurting their feelings. The essence of Buddhism is just right for everybody, religious or nonreligious. That is the beauty of Buddhism. There's no contradiction.

*Do you see, Lama, a form of Western Buddhism evolving in the way that Indian Buddhism changed when it moved into other cultures such as Tibet, China, Japan, Thailand and so forth? Do you see Tibetan Buddhism being readily absorbed into a Western environment in the way that Indian Buddhism was absorbed into Tibetan culture?*

Well, I tell you, one of my great pleasures in life is first teaching the essence of Buddhism and then seeing how we can put it into a Western cultural environment. Why is that? I truly believe if somebody understands the essence of the universal teaching and practices that, it is much more powerful than another person interpreting the teaching as merely cultural and then taking that as part of their own culture. That's a sloppy mind. Then that person's practice becomes a routine, simply a custom.

I find it is most beneficial if both student and teacher come together without expectation, although when new people contact Buddhadharma for the first time, I expect them not to accept it. Then I have to fight their wrong conceptions, their wrong ways of thinking about life, success and pleasure. I have to bring all these things into the conversation and say, "That's how you think? That's wrong. You need to think this way. . . ." So that's the challenge.

Nevertheless, I think many Westerners become Buddhists the right way: through understanding rather than blind faith. Those who do are very fortunate. They might already have the intention of accepting Buddhism, but first they check out what these Buddhist monks are saying,

what Buddhism offers them. They examine the teachings first and don't just expect to gain something that they assume is already acceptable. So that's the beauty of how Westerners become Buddhists. They take it seriously and base their decision on a comprehensible wisdom experience rather than some kind of cultural habit. For me, that's a much better way of becoming a Buddhist than the way people who are born into Buddhist societies and just accept their culture with a sloppy mind: "Buddhism is my home, so I can just sit back here very comfortably."

However, I don't believe Buddhism should be comfortable. Buddhism likes to shake up people's darkness of ignorance, darkness of craving desire, people's attachment. As far as life is concerned, Buddhism is not comfortable!

So I think many Westerners become Buddhists because they find it helps them. They experience benefit. They don't become Buddhists because they like the ideas of Buddhist philosophy. They don't do that, and I don't like it, either. People try Buddhist meditation and find that it helps them eliminate their confusion and dissatisfaction. That's the way they decide to become Buddhists and I truly believe that that is a wonderful way to make that decision.

Even in Shakyamuni Buddha's time, that was the way people became Buddhists. In those days people were already spiritually oriented, and the first thing he taught was the four noble truths. People actualized those truths for themselves and therefore began to follow the Buddha's path. I think it's very good that, in the same way, skeptical Westerners try out the teachings for themselves to see if, in their experience, they are helpful or not. When they get a taste of the benefit, they become Buddhist. That impresses me a lot. That's a very good way to become Buddhist.

With respect to those people who have experienced Tibetan Buddhism for a long time, who've received teachings for perhaps ten or twelve years and found them very helpful, they remain Buddhist as a result of their experience, not because it has become a sort of custom for them. Customs are not important. If you try to transplant Tibetan customs into the Western world, it's not going to work. Anyway, Tibetan customs don't offer a true picture of Buddhism.

Looking at the big picture, we see how Buddhism went from India to China, Japan, Tibet and so forth and took different forms as it adapted to the local culture, but Tibetan culture, for example, can never become,

say, Italian culture. Similarly, I've seen some students who've had a taste of Buddhism try to become Tibetan. How can that be possible? It isn't. They're just joking. It's better that they become Buddha or Dharma. That's more realistic; that's possible.

In the long run, when Tibetan teachers come to the West and the Dharma is established there, we're going to see like Italian Buddha, Italian Dharma, Italian Sangha. We're going to see European-style Buddhism. We're not going to see Tibetan-style Buddhism take root in the West. And in terms of practice, there are certain Tibetan rituals that we do not need to bring to the West. Our emphasis should not be on ritual. That's the same as trying to bring Tibetan culture to the West.

I truly believe that the most important thing is to understand Buddhist philosophy: understand the mind, understand how to approach enlightenment, understand how to attain liberation from misery. Those things are the essence of Buddhism and have to be actualized in daily life.

However, things like Buddhist ordination, such as the five precepts, are not local customs. Precepts have nothing to do with Tibetan culture. Wherever you go in the world, negative is negative, positive is positive, and protecting the mind from negativity is the essential thing.

But while the true essence of Buddhism doesn't emphasize ritual, there are times where ritual can come into play, such as when we need to identify ourselves as certain transcendental archetypes in tantric practice. But at other times, no. That's rubbish. The human mind is relative and conditioned; here in the West our lives are materialistically oriented. Even in the West we have different environments where people think differently, so Tibetan rituals are, for the most part, not going to work.

Take Europe, for example. If you were to describe today's Europe to the Europeans of a hundred years ago, they'd think you were crazy. Even Europe has changed so much during that time. It's similar with Tibetan culture. Tibetan culture is incredibly old and there's no way you can import it to the West. So, when Tibetan teachers like myself come to the West, they should not expect Dharma students here to behave like Tibetan ones. That doesn't mean Eastern students are better than Western ones. It just means that they behave differently. If a Tibetan teacher expects Western students to behave like Tibetan ones, he's in for a shock! But while the teacher-student relationship is different, in essence it's the same thing.

So while Western people are not oriented to Eastern philosophy and do



not have a Buddhist frame of reference, the essence of the teachings can still touch their heart, and as a result they become Buddhist in a very correct way. If you see Buddhism as a cultural thing or as a local custom, it won't give you any answers because you don't get the essence.

Nevertheless, Buddhism coming to the West is very much the right thing. It is sorely needed as there is so much suffering here. People are materially well-off, but in a way that makes their mental anguish greater. Their monkey mind sees the physical comfort and gets restless, seeking better or more. In order to calm this boiling water mind down, we need powerful understanding and the nuclear energy of meditation.

The Western environment is really full-on. Everything is too strong, people are very sensitive, and Western life becomes sensitive, strong and concrete. Western ego conflict is so serious, so powerful. In other words, to generalize, desire in the Western environment is much more powerful than it is in the East. Anyway, in the East there aren't that many desirable objects . . . I'm joking! Maybe. No, it's not true.

What I mean is that the Western environment is set up in such a way that objects of desire are prominently displayed, and as a result the ego is so strong. In order to eliminate ego and desire, we need a powerful antidote to counteract our problems. Cultural rituals are not enough; playing cymbals is not enough. We need powerful meditation, powerful thinking in order to solve our problems.

Therefore, if your only orientation is toward Tibetan ritual, you just can't solve your problems. It's not a powerful enough instrument to play in the Western world. That's my point. A Western environment demands strong meditation. That's why I think Buddhism is so helpful for Western people. Delusion has really exploded in this twentieth century, so when you explain the meditational antidotes, problems get solved. This, I think, is Western people's experience.

*So, Lama, from the early beginnings you described, there are now more than thirty centers around the world that your teachings have inspired.<sup>12</sup> Recently His Holiness the Dalai Lama visited three of your European centers. Does this have a special significance as far as you're concerned?*

<sup>12</sup> In 2022 the FPMT comprised some 145 centers, study groups, projects and services in 36 countries.

Well, in the West there are many followers of Buddhism and our students have established many centers, and I feel that we have been somewhat successful in helping Western people with Buddhism. And Buddhism is not only for people who meditate. I think it has something for all of society, for the entire Western world. The ancient Tibetan religious culture is somehow a powerful reinforcement of all that, and His Holiness is its spiritual and political head. We believe that he is a great leader in the world, and someone who is very rare.

His Holiness coming to the West has cultural significance as far as society in general is concerned, but more than that, it ensures that Buddhism will be established in the various countries and that Dharma centers are not considered to be just some kind of trip. It does have cultural aspects, but it also involves sincere, serious work so that the Dharma will continuously benefit the Western world.

So that's basically my understanding, but I really feel that His Holiness coming to Europe at this time is like a second Shakyamuni Buddha appearing on earth to stabilize the light of Dharma wisdom and show the path to liberation to all the people of Europe. With his blessing, all the Dharma teachers and students who have dedicated their lives to benefiting Western people will be successful and their wishes will be quickly fulfilled. That's the meaning I take from it.

Bringing Dharma to the West is not an easy job. There are many misconceptions about Tibetan Buddhism in the West that need to be purified by offering a true picture of Buddhism instead. His Holiness is the light to purify all wrong views and also the sectarianism that exists within Buddhism itself. He represents not only all the Tibetan Buddhist traditions equally; he's sort of the universal representative of all the world's religions. Therefore, at this critical time, His Holiness's presence is important for not only religious people but also nonreligious ones as well. He can make the entire world community harmonious.

When I listen to His Holiness's lectures, his message of universal love and universal compassion, I hear him encouraging each of us to take universal responsibility to bring happiness to everybody on earth. Everybody can understand that message. And I hope the result will be that there is no more room for sectarianism: "My religion is better than other religions." Buddhism teaches that every religion, every philosophy, contains good

things for human development, for each individual's needs. And that's good enough.

In short, His Holiness the Dalai Lama coming to Europe at this time is an incredible blessing. I really feel it was something very unusual. And I think that Western people also felt there was some kind of incredible harmony and mutual understanding among the world community. This is the way to engender world peace, world harmony, world liberation. His Holiness teaches the best way to develop harmony both individually and universally. So bringing him to the West has been very important.

*Thank you, Lama. Is there anything else that you would like to say, especially relating to the attitude of Western students?*

Well, one thing is that, since our Western students have been lucky enough to encounter Mahayana Buddhism, the Great Vehicle, I would like them to have universal comprehension, a universal attitude. That is very important.

I feel that all of us have the problem of a narrow mind: "I'm Tibetan; you're English." English people identify their way; Tibetans identify theirs. We don't have a global vision; we don't have world community feeling. I feel that I'm part of the Tibetan community and don't belong to the English one. That is not true. That kind of attitude is wrong. What I want is for all our centers to be sort of international in style; to have a feeling of universal brotherhood, universal sisterhood, rather than just "Lama Tzong Khapa Institute is an Italian center."

This center is not only for Italians. Anybody can come here to use this facility, receive teachings and meditate. This building does not belong to Italy, does not belong to Lama Yeshe, does not belong to any particular person. It belongs to the world community. That's the kind of attitude I'd like our students to have.

Also, for me, even though I have a small mind, I don't have the idea that, "This is my home; this is my center." No. This is not my possession. This center belongs to the world community, not me. I am just one monk. Why would I need such a big house for me?

Therefore, I would like the student community at all our centers to have the attitude that their center, including all the tables, chairs and everything

else, belongs to the world community, not to them alone. I mean, in our prayers, we always say “all mother sentient beings,” but then our narrow mind makes divisions between them. That’s not good. We should have a broad view. Our centers are world centers, international centers, open to the world community. Students should not be sitting in their own little world, thinking, “This is our center, we’re good here. The rest of the world stinks.” Anybody should be able to come here.

By being open like this, we are practicing bodhicitta. Otherwise what? Otherwise it’s like you’re part of a married couple; you’re married to your center. Then you experience the same problems that a couple has. That attitude is wrong. We should think that the center belongs to anybody who comes here and present it that way. And it’s especially important that the center director be open in this way. If you’re open enough, there’s room for everybody.

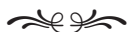
Our problem is that we grasp at our own culture and our goals are quite narrow, and in today’s world that just doesn’t work. The world is changing rapidly and far from being negative, that’s a positive thing. It gives us the opportunity to put bodhisattva philosophy into action. That’s great, incredible. I mean, look at us sitting here. You, a London boy, and me, a Tibetan monk, now have the opportunity to communicate, to exchange ideas. It’s only relatively recently that we’ve been able to do this kind of thing.

Therefore, since the twentieth century has developed this way, it’s the right time, the right atmosphere, to put Buddhism into action. That means developing universal responsibility, taking responsibility for all universal living beings, for everybody on earth, and working for their benefit. We create a universal community, we identify ourselves as universal, and in that way we *become* universal. I think so.

Of course, sometimes this might make our ego feel uncomfortable, but then again, even when living in our own society we feel uncomfortable. So it’s very useful for Western Dharma students to feel that they are part of a world community.

## 15. How the FPMT Centers Began: A Conversation

*Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa, 25 October 1982<sup>13</sup>*



*Brian Beresford: Lama, how did the very first center outside of Nepal develop? How did it begin?*

FIRST OF ALL, more than twelve years ago, many students came to India and Nepal from all over the world seeking satisfaction that they could not find at home. Having discovered the Dharma at Kopan, they started inviting me to the West so that they and their family and friends wouldn't have to go all the way to Nepal to receive more teachings. At the beginning, I was a bit uneasy at the thought of such a simple monk as me venturing into the super-samsaric world, but I finished up accepting their invitation.

In 1974 [Lama Zopa Rinpoche and] I went to America on a lecture tour and after that we went to Australia to give a one-month lamrim course in Queensland. That became the cooperative cause for the students to ask me if they could start a center to facilitate the teaching of Buddhadharma. Since their dedication was strong, I said, "OK, if you want one, you're welcome, but it's your baby." Then four of our students—Dr. Nick [Ribush], Yeshe Khadro [Marie Obst], and Tom and Kathy [Vichta]—donated about 160 acres of land nearby.

*So it was only these four people who were mainly responsible for the first center beginning or was it a larger group?*

<sup>13</sup> This conversation with Brian Beresford, filmed by the Meridian Trust, is available on the DVD *Bringing Dharma to the West*, on the LYWA YouTube channel and from the Meridian Trust as *Extracting the Essence*.

Well, it was a larger group that expressed the wish for a center, but these four were the ones actively involved. They were completely dedicated and offered their body, speech and mind to develop the center, so I thought, I mean . . . [how can I refuse?]

*At this time, had most of the Australian students already been to Nepal?*

Yes, many of them had. Anyway, it was just an empty piece of land, but the students built a meditation gumpa, geshe quarters and student accommodation, and in that way it has developed naturally up to the present.

*So that was the very first center that actually developed practically. Did you, for the other centers that came afterwards, follow the example of that, as an experience to draw from?*

I think so. Somehow it all came naturally. Each time I went to the different countries there were already groups of former Kopan students there, and they also expressed the wish for a place where they could gather and put their energy into the Dharma. Personally, I thought this was very reasonable, since they were so sincere. In the Western world there is such an orientation toward the heavy samsara that if the students go straight into it after returning from Nepal, they're going to lose their heads. I completely understand that. The Western environment is exploding with the pollution of mental superstition, so I can understand that their baby refuge and lamrim knowledge can disappear under the weight of all that. I thought they were asking something essential: a place where they can gather as a group and practice continuously. I thought it's so natural, so I let them go ahead. I didn't say, "No, I don't want a center." I just told them, "The center is your baby, what I can do is blah, blah, blah [give teachings], and then I say goodbye!"

*So you thought one of the main reasons for the centers in the West was to continue the practice of the Dharma in a good environment.*

Exactly, yes, because the way the Western environment is set up is anti-Dharma practice, anti the practice of religion. Even though we do have religion in the West, I understand why nowadays it has degenerated. It's

because of the orientation of the environment, in which the explosion of dualistic delusion is overwhelming. Therefore, I not only accepted the establishment of the center they wanted, I also told them that it is essential that we create there the correct environment for developing concentration and intensive awareness so that when they venture from there into the polluted city they are prepared not to be affected by it.

*So, did you see then one of the main purposes of the centers was to be an actual physical place of refuge?*

That's exactly right. Because I felt from my own experience, my own refuge, that I needed to do some strict retreat every year in order for me to cope with my life and for my blah, blah, blah [teachings] to be useful. I felt it would be the same thing for Western students who worked in that city environment. Every year they should make the time and space to go into intensive meditation. That would be very, very useful. Otherwise, we put so much energy into taking a one- or two-month course, and when we get back to our regular environment, whatever we gained completely vanishes. That is not worthwhile.

Bringing Dharma into the Western world is something that will require continuous development if we want it to carry over from generation to generation. It's not just some kind of trip. To be able to incorporate Mahayana universal concepts into daily life, it's very important to develop shared, community-style living situations. The problem in the West is our capitalistic attitude, which emphasizes materialistic, selfish individualism; an attitude of not sharing with others. We can't avoid that; it's the foundation of our society, built into it. So we need some way of breaking down these concepts and transforming that energy into a transcendent, peaceful experience.

*So then do you consider that there are basically two purposes that a center serves: it should be a place where communities can develop and also a place for people from outside to come on a regular basis to strengthen their practice?*

Yes, there could be those two divisions, and so far, that's what we've been doing. But we've seen some problems, too. When the center serves as a community where there are families—wives, husbands, children, that sort

of lifestyle—sometimes the environment can be somewhat shaky and disorderly. So when outside people come into that, expecting intensive training and serious meditation, sometimes they can be disturbed by what they find. Therefore, I think we have to reconsider the community-living situation, by perhaps having the families living separately so that the center itself is the peaceful environment people who come for serious training should have.

*Does this understanding come out of practical experience of centers with mixed communities facing problems when people come from outside expecting discipline but don't find the environment conducive? Should there now be a division within the communities between laypeople and people following monastic discipline?*

Not necessarily. It's natural for couples to want to have children, even those living at centers. I myself feel that if we're establishing a community, it should include husbands, wives, children, everything. Practically speaking, that's what's happening now, but my vision of community development is different. My vision of a Dharma community means universal totality. We have spaces for monks and nuns, spaces for families, spaces for children, space from the very beginning up to the end of human growth. That's my projection, but of course, we're dealing with the materialistic life. Making this vision a reality will take a tremendous amount of money and energy. So at the beginning we just have to try to utilize the energy we have, and hopefully in the future it will develop by itself as students see the need for this kind of center. So that's my hope, that eventually every need will be fulfilled and instead of everything happening in one place, with the resultant uneasiness and confusion that that brings, there'll be enough space for all these different aspects of the center to be spread out.

*So, Lama, do you think the different areas you mentioned should be clearly defined? The monastic site, the family site, the children's site, a college site, a meditation site and so forth? And if so, should that happen now, or later, as the centers develop the way you described?*

There could also be a school for the arts and a place for music, singing and dancing, activities that are part of our nature. If we really want to cre-



ate some kind of peaceful Mahayana society, we have to accept all these things. Whatever exists in samsaric society should be transformed into this Dharma society and then utilized in the path to liberation.

*Do you think there's any contradiction for a community to celebrate its feeling of togetherness by having a party or a dance or something like that?*

No, that's all right. It's part of our life, we have to accept it. Of course, when you're talking about a community you're going to be dealing with all different kinds of people. And even though we have a completely common universal sense of actualizing the Mahayana attitude, different people choose different lives. But still, we can play. Some people like to touch red flowers, some prefer white flowers, others enjoy yellow flowers. People like different things. That's acceptable. It's still conventional life.

The most important thing, however, is how we interpret these things. A red flower can be interpreted as divine red light. A white flower can be interpreted as pure white light that purifies our own negativities and transforms our energy into blissful kundalini energy. So we need that kind of interpretation to signify the transformation of deluded energy into divine energy.

*For that to happen, Lama, we obviously need to have received teachings—clear instructions from qualified teachers. One of the great fortunate things you have been able to do is provide nearly all the centers with very highly qualified teachers. Would you like to say something about the teachers you have chosen and how you feel the communities should look to those teachers in their centers?*

Well, we're involved in something that has a vast scope, so if I think I can do everything that's just an ego trip. I can't do everything. Therefore I choose geshes or tulkus that I trust to lead the centers and my students; teachers who can bring extensive benefit on an international or even universal level. Lamas who can teach Mahayana thought and the universal attitude. And the students at the center should regard those teachers as their spiritual leader and make sure they communicate with them well.

*What has been the basis for your selection of the teachers for the centers?*

I try as best I can to choose teachers who have been well-trained: intellectually, psychologically, philosophically and practically. And most of the ones I have chosen have been disciples of my own gurus. Some of them have the same qualities that I do; some are better than me. But we are all from the same tradition. So all in all, I think we have similar things to offer to the students.

*Did you approach them to go to centers or did some of them come to you?*

Some of those teachers were not really keen to go to the West, but I asked, "Please go to teach them." Sometimes I had to push them a little bit, but there were some who also pushed me to go. I'm not sure what that means!

*How should the community members look to the teachers for responsibility of the general program and the general activities of the centers?*

It's very important that everybody has a broad view and a strong commitment to sharing ideas: the Tibetan teacher and the Western director and spiritual program coordinator. Without a strong connection and mutual understanding, it's difficult to make beneficial programs. Without good communication the vibrations aren't that good. Then we can't really impart the Mahayana attitude. Conflict between the teacher and the director, a breakdown of communication, damages the root of the center.

Bringing Dharma to the West is really special. Some part of your Western personality has to die and then you and the teacher have to put your energies together very strongly. That's the way to become successful.

*So you think it's very important for whoever has a position of responsibility in the community to always keep the broader aims of the community in mind and not be limited by their individual wishes?*

I do. Individualism is a problem all over the world, isn't it? Sometimes students say to me, "Lama, you are my blah, blah, blah [one and only, perfect guru]," something like that. I think that's rubbish. I send geshees to the centers and they are the ones who are responsible for the students' education. Our students should take teachings from them, take advantage of the opportunity and grow in that environment. That's very important.

*Lama, there have been problems in some of the communities where people aren't sure how much the resident teachers should give advice on the development of the community. How do you feel about this?*

I understand. There are many stages of development. First of all, most of the time the teachers come from India and are in the West for the first time, so they experience a certain degree of culture shock. Then, the way the center is set up is very strange for them. It's nothing like the Tibetan monastery they came from. So maybe at the beginning they feel a little disturbed: "What kind of Dharma is this?" I just let them go. Anyway, at this point it would be very hard for them to give advice. But what I tell them is that they are responsible for the development or decline of the center; that their job is to spiritually direct the students' minds.

However, I also tell them that if they want to, they can attend all the committee meetings. The teachers and translators are part of the management committee and have an equal right to make whatever verbal contribution they like to the development of the center. My experience is that some geshes may not want to get involved in what they might consider samsaric affairs. They're only interested in liberation. I say let go. How can you push them? OK, let go. Other geshes want to talk and be involved in community business. I'm very happy if they are. If they have the wisdom and method to help grow the center in a beneficial way, to help the human mind develop, then it's very worthwhile for them to get involved. So my style is to give them the freedom, the option, to do whatever they want.

*So, Lama, this would seem to suggest that the students themselves, especially those in positions of responsibility, would also have to exercise quite a degree of wisdom to judge whether or not the geshe is ready to give advice.*

To some extent, yes, but I don't know about the word "judge." If the geshe makes a decision, OK. If he doesn't, the director has to make the decision. If nobody makes decisions the place just descends into chaos.

*To what extent should community members themselves be involved, not in the day-to-day running of the center, but in general decisions about the future of the community? This has sometimes created problems.*

Yes, I know, but we do have a system, which is to have regular community meetings that everybody can attend. That's where we can discuss any problems that might have arisen, the teaching program, anything, really. We investigate, we talk openly. I believe everybody has wisdom. Then after the meeting, when the whole center family has discussed everything, the management committee takes up the action items at their next meeting and agrees which ideas to implement when. Then it's the director's responsibility to see that what the committee has decided to do gets done. That's our setup.

So, in a way, our centers are democracies. Everybody can have their say. We are open to the best ideas, either worldly or spiritual, that the community contributes.

*Do you think, then, it's important that in the communities themselves there are regular meetings and that people are encouraged to participate in them? Sometimes community meetings have actually just broken down. I think one of the most valuable things is to keep a really good spirit amongst everybody so there's always a feeling of participation.*

Yes, I definitely do. It's very important that the community work and share together. The connotation of "community" is people working together for a common purpose rather than it being a collection of individualists working for themselves. Even though each individual should have time and space for themselves, the overriding principle should be the common good. On that basis, community members can then lead their individual lifestyle.

*Now, basically, I hear from what you are saying that the real concept of the centers is that they are to be communities. Is this correct?*

Yes, if the center is set up as a community. But not all of our centers are like that. City centers, for example, have a different kind of community than country centers do.

*OK, we'll talk about that in just a minute, but in the sense that the centers are communities, they are groups of people together, participating in developing the Mahayana Dharma. Sometimes I've felt that some country centers become*

*more like a college or a school and the community side is pushed aside a bit, and this creates conflict among the people living there. How do you think the problem between it being a college or a community should be balanced? Do you think they can exist together?*

Yes, of course they should be balanced. First, if I tell you the characteristics of a Buddhist college—normally it involves a tremendous amount of intellectual material and years of study. People who choose to undertake that kind of lifestyle have to live very differently from those who choose to live in a community, where the emphasis is more on daily meditation, teachings dealing with integrating the Dharma with daily life and so forth. People who live in this sort of lay community can't be on an intellectual trip because their lifestyle doesn't allow it. They need practical teachings on how to solve the problems of daily life.

My understanding is that the spiritual leaders of the center have to be sympathetic to each community member's feelings and need to investigate anything that might be disturbing them. Then they need to figure out how to solve any problems. That is something that is almost beyond intellectual philosophy. It's practical, but needs to be done very sensitively. You can't say, roughly, "You sit down and listen while I tell you what to do." You have to work specifically with this delicate flower's specific issue and meet them at their particular level.

Of course, sometimes Tibetan Buddhist scholars and teachers don't like to deal with individual students' personal problems. They are not keen to do that. But in this super-samsaric, materialistic environment, this is one of the most important things we need. We desperately need it. Daily life's complications and the symptoms of them are so sensitive, so strong: stronger than people's general, normal problems. Therefore, I've felt from my side, since I've been trying to cure Western students' pain and dissatisfaction, that somehow, I have to deal directly with them. Even though it takes a tremendous amount of energy, it's very worthwhile. If the symptoms of people's personal problems aren't stopped, the whole community can get sick. Dealing with Western and Eastern students' problems is quite different.

*Would you say that this really is Mahayana in practice?*

Yes, definitely. I feel that in a community setting we need teachers who can go beyond the theoretical, understand the psychological history of their students and deal with that situation.

*When you say teacher, do you mean a Westerner with some experience in the Dharma or only a Tibetan teacher?*

I don't care who it is, just somebody who's involved in that center. It can be a Western teacher or an Eastern one. When you're the teacher in a community you should have that kind of helping attitude and not just sit on the throne going blah, blah, blah. That doesn't really help students. There's a gap between you and them and you don't touch their heart problem.

*Do you think it's worthwhile, then, if people in the communities take a more active role in individual or small group meetings?*

I think that's a very good idea. You can create a system where at least once a month people get together to help heal each other. That's another desperate need. Because I feel that in our centers, people sometimes pretend they are so busy. They feel that it's their job to stay in their rooms studying Buddhist philosophy, so they always show a busy aspect doing that and have minimal personal contact with other students in the community. If you behave like that, how can you share with others and how can they share with you? I think all students living in the community should connect with each other.

*How do you think we should balance teaching activities and community work? Most residential centers require considerable physical maintenance and administration.*

I think everybody in the community—the teachers, the administrators, everybody—needs to be clear about this. Now I'm just giving you my own opinion. We need to be clean clear that community life means normal life, doing what is necessary: taking care of the physical environment, taking care of our own and our family's health, cleaning, food, clothing; managing all aspects of normal family life. At the same time, we should

be practicing Mahayana Buddhism. That's the emphasis. Students in the community should know clean clear that that is their job, and if they are not intellectually inclined, they should not be intellectually ambitious. If they have a family, they should not be obsessed with studying philosophy. If that's your aim, that's when conflict arises.

Let me give you an example. Say you're in a family situation—wife, children, babies; you're intensively involved with your own lifestyle—and your teacher says, “I'm teaching Madhyamaka philosophy. Why aren't you coming? You're missing a great opportunity. Mahayana philosophy is so important for your liberation.”

Then you think, “Oh, my lama is telling me to study. That's true. My life is very short. I don't care about my wife. She's secondary, transitory. My babies are transitory, conventional. I need to achieve absolute realizations. That's true. I need to give up my family and go study Madhyamaka.” Well, in the Tibetan system, it takes four years to study Madhyamaka. So you neglect your wife and children for four years. That's totally wrong. I tell you, if you do that you will get sick; you will manifest symptoms of illness.

I mean, it would be good if you could do both—family and study—but you can't. You split yourself. Then too many family problems arise. In the face of family problems, you can't do anything. You can't learn anything because your mind is turbulent and disturbed by so many family complications and arguments with your spouse. Your mind is split in half.

In my opinion, Dharma families should develop in a down-to-earth way. The husband should keep his job, make money and create a comfortable life for his wife and children. Just lead a normal life. Of course, you are practicing Dharma at the same time, but you're not involved in intellectual activity twenty-four hours a day. Otherwise you just create enormous problems and your marriage breaks down.

That's why I say everybody in the community should be clean clear about this. We should not put the family people down: “You do this, you do that. . . .” We should have reasonable expectations of everybody, whatever their area, and then there'll be no conflict.

*In other words, each individual should be very precise in understanding their own responsibilities in the community, to both themselves and their families or*

*the people that they're with? And then that would determine how much time the individual could then put into their own studies? So then their studies in the college sense should come second in the practical sense?*

Yes, I think so, because study involves a tremendous amount of time and space, so if you cannot follow it, you should not push yourself to do so. [*It's really a matter of being realistic.*] Yes, it's important to be realistic. That's my point. Sometimes, center students are confused and they become unrealistic. Somebody says this, somebody says that, and they try to do it all. Sometimes I think that they rely on their lama or teacher too much. Personally, in my opinion, they should not expect that all the community's activities should be according to what the teacher says. They should not expect to have to do that; I don't believe it myself.

*So the teacher answers all their questions about everything they do?*

That's wrong, definitely wrong. The result of that would be too much confusion, too much conflict. It would destroy students' devotion, which is like destroying everything. I truly believe that to some extent they can make their own decisions. For instance, when the time came for me to leave Tibet, I left. Nobody had to tell me, "You should leave Tibet." In fact, everybody was telling me not to go. But my intuition was telling me I must. I wanted to be where there was no communist ideology controlling me; I wanted to remain a monk for the rest of my life. That's the reason I left. None of my teachers told me, "You have to go; get out of Tibet." I made my own decision, and that's the truth. I don't like people saying, "My guru said this, my guru said that. . . ." You don't need somebody telling you precisely what to do and what not to do. Make your own life. You have to trust your own buddha nature to some extent.

Of course, you should listen to your guru's advice. Actually, when your guru is giving teachings, he's telling you everything; he's explaining how life is throughout the entire universe, life in all six realms. He's already advised you what to do from the beginning of your practice, renunciation, all the way up to enlightenment. In other words, you already know all this. So why do you have to ask him what to do every day? The members of the community themselves have to make the day-to-day decisions. That's the way to avoid confusion.



*In what areas, then, do you feel the teachers themselves should be limited to in terms of advice?*

Well, the teachers themselves have to know their own limitations. If they are not clear about that, it's difficult for them to advise their students. I don't know New Zealanders' lifestyles, so I can't tell you out of the blue, "Brian, you're from New Zealand, therefore you should stay in a cave for twenty years." That'd be talking nonsense, so I'm not going to tell you that.

*But perhaps I'd like you to tell me! I think it would be helpful for people to have a general idea of what subjects they should go to their teachers for.*

In general, then, I'd say the lamrim is absolutely practical. If you want my interpretation, my wish is that all our centers' students should start with the lamrim. The lamrim teachings contain the answers to everything, to all of life's problems. Then, after some time, they should study the *lojong* teachings. And in terms of practical, daily life issues, again, the answers are in the lamrim. So the lamrim is the essential thing and is sorely needed by Western people in a Western environment. People who follow those teachings can become good Buddhists, good Mahayanists, and at that point they can integrate whatever they're taught into the path to liberation.

*So the questions or advice that students should approach the teachers for should be about lamrim practice, how to bring the teachings into daily life and questions about Buddhist theory and the paramitas?*

My personal take is that there's something beautiful, something unique, about Western students coming into the Dharma. They do so completely differently from the way Eastern people do. I like that. Most Westerners coming into the Dharma are fed up with their lifestyle, fed up with the systems into which they were born, fed up with the materialistic life, fed up with political games and fully in conflict with their societies. That's why they come into the Dharma.

*So already there's some renunciation?*

Yes, I truly believe that. And they are truly ready for it. That kind of student is really seeking ice to put into the boiling water, and the ice that they seek is the lamrim. It allows them to understand their own conflicted life situations and how to cope with them. How to observe their problems and how to solve them. The lamrim talks directly about them. Then there's no argument.

If we start off by talking philosophy, they're going to say, "No, you're wrong. This Eastern philosophy is bananas. You say this, but we have our own philosophy, which says that." They're going to argue like that. But when we talk strictly about their own problems, their own conflict, and how to deal with all that, how can they deny what we say? They can't. And they're also surprised: "How come this man knows my problems?" It's not that this man knows their problems; it's because this man has studied Buddhist psychology. That's why we have something to offer Western people.

This has been my experience. I don't try to talk sophisticated Buddhist philosophy to the Western mind. I don't care, because that doesn't help them. What I try to convey is the essential aspect of Buddhism, something that is over 2,500 years old, by putting a new color and new clothes on it and linking it with their own culture. When I do that, there's no way they can reject it.

*Will our practice lead to the development of a Western Buddhism?*

I think so. I truly believe that Buddhism should be something related to the Western mind, Western things, Western spirits, Western consciousness. I don't emphasize any of the aspects of Tibetan culture: rituals, *torma* cakes and so forth. Anyway, during the Buddha's time, there was no making of Tibetan-style ritual cakes. Tibetans did the same as what Westerners do in that we offered what we ate. In the West it can be food, fruit and so forth; whatever you eat, you offer. That's the right thing to do.

Sometimes I wonder if we lay too much emphasis on external ritual and not enough on the internal ritual of meditation. That's an example of losing the principal point and emphasizing secondary things. Western students should not try to copy exactly the superficial color of Tibetan rituals and bring them to the West. Instead, try to bring the essence of Buddha, the essence of Dharma, the essence of Sangha into the Western environment.

What I'm saying is that in bringing Buddhadharma to the West, we have to bring the essential, nuclear part of Buddhadharma and not emphasize its ritual aspects. Ritual seems to be archetypical of Tibetan Buddhism, but I remember His Holiness the Dalai Lama saying in a talk not long ago that some of these rituals came about as part of the assimilation of Buddhism into Tibetan culture and were developed in order to sort of manipulate Tibetan society into accepting the Dharma as their own. That's not exactly what he said but I hope I've caught the essence.

Therefore, I think it's important that you decide not just to imitate Tibetan culture but, as a Westerner living as a Westerner, to have no doubt that Buddhism is your path to liberation and to take its essence as such.

When I first met Westerners I did a scientific experiment in which I emphasized their copying Tibetans exactly: wearing Tibetan robes, making traditional tormas in retreat, using the dorje and bell and so forth. As a result of this scientific experience and observing my "patients" for some time I changed my approach. Because, for example, once when I went into a Western city with a Western monk, people spat on him. I'm not really blaming them, I understand, but emotionally, in my heart, I had compassion for my monk. He was a good man trying his best to live an honest life, renouncing worldly pleasures, but just because of his behavior—shaving his head, wearing robes—he became an object of disgust to some of the people there. I thought that was so unfair. I'd put such a wonderful human being into a situation where people thought he was garbage and something to be spat upon. I thought that was so incredible and that I'm not fair; *I'm* not fair. I told him to wear those robes, he listened to me, and that's what happened. I thought I was stupid; that I shouldn't force people to do that.

But it's not only my experience. In his Vinaya teachings, the Buddha himself said that as the times change, so can the Vinaya rules, in accordance with the way the majority of people's minds have changed. There's a clean-clear explanation of all this. So I discussed this issue in public with some of my Western students. I didn't share my experience; I just asked them how they felt about Westerners wearing Tibetan-style robes. This was during one of my courses in Amsterdam. Most people thought it was no good.

Buddhism is democracy. Buddhism is for the people. So if most people say ordained Westerners shouldn't wear robes, that's evidence that they

shouldn't. A good example is what happened when Buddhism went from India to China, Korea, Tibet, Japan and so many other countries. Everybody wore different robes according to the particular environment and the proclivities of the population's minds. My opinion is, therefore, that Western people should develop their own cultural heritage with respect to the archetypical behavior of their own monks and nuns.

*That brings me to a good subject, Lama, which is how do you feel that monks and nuns in FPMT communities should live within those communities if they are mixed ones?*

In mixed communities it's easier if the monks and nuns live separately from the laypeople. The Sangha need an environment that supports their philosophy, psychology and ethics. So it's essential that they live separately. Ideally, though, the Sangha should have their own separate communities. At the moment, however, we're just beginning to create a new society, and for our monks and nuns to have separate facilities would be tremendously expensive. So we have to accept the reality of our limited resources. It's taken many years, and we're lucky now, just to establish Nalanda Monastery in France so that our monks have somewhere to go. Monks and nuns are responsible for maintaining their ethics according to the Vinaya and for them to have to live in a Western laypeople's environment would be very difficult. Even though we're an entire universal community, monks and nuns should have their own space. Then after some time, after they have become strong, they can come into the broader community. First you have to strengthen yourself before you can effectively benefit others.

*Wasn't that why the Buddha established the Sangha in the first place? So that they could be strong holders of the pure tradition?*

That's right. And I hope that in future, Nalanda Monastery will produce monks like that.

*How do you see the relationship between the lay and monastic communities, their responsibilities toward each other?*

First of all, we're all linked as one community. First, we should understand that. Secondly, we need to support each other. Whatever we have—spiritually and materially—we should share with each other. That's the attitude we should have. Laypeople should feel, "The monks and nuns have chosen the ordained way of life, which is so worthwhile, and their needs help me, even though I'm a layperson." At the same time, monks and nuns should feel that the laypeople need their own kind of lifestyle and environment, which are right for them, and accept their choice rather than put it down. In other words, there should be mutual respect by understanding that each person has their own individual needs with respect to spiritual growth.

Of course, you cannot judge such laypeople as Dromtönpa and Milarepa. They were far better than the ordinary monk and nun. Nevertheless, relatively speaking, we're working on the level of individual need, so we should accept and support each other ideologically, materially or in any other way.

*Speaking of support, how should the communities support themselves and become self-sufficient?*

As I see it, people in any community in the world should be able to live according to the prevailing economic standards of their society in general. People in our communities should work to support themselves and the community, and benefit others as well.

*Should the communities support themselves by offering courses, for example? Should that be one of the ways in which they support themselves?*

No, no way. In our experience there's no community that supports itself by giving Dharma to others, and there's no historical precedent for that either. That's not possible. People can't support themselves without working, especially in Western materialistic countries. People in the communities have to work in the same way that people in the general society do, to support themselves and live a comfortable life. And if you make extra money, you can contribute it to the development of the community. When individuals take responsibility for their own health, the community becomes stronger too.

*Sometimes the motivation and energy of people who have been sponsored by the community weaken because they lose enthusiasm for what they're doing. How can that problem be fixed?*

Well, I'll tell you something. Some of our centers try to sponsor students to work in the administration and, as you say, for some people that situation can become a problem. But at this stage of the FPMT's development, there's no center that can sponsor twenty or thirty people. Honestly, that's just not realistic. At present we have to build and maintain our facilities, and we're dreaming if we think we can sponsor many people on top of that.

Dharma is not a commercial enterprise. We're not doing business. So to try to sponsor thirty people on our limited income would be very difficult. What we can do is set up some kind of workshop at the center and give people creative jobs. Something like that could be essential in order to bring some kind of stability. If the community isn't stable, it's like a butterfly, coming and going, coming and going. That's no good.

*So, your vision of the community is that it should be stable in terms of the people living there and they should be thinking long term, and therefore they should be encouraged to develop some professional skills or business, something that's going to allow them to support themselves while living there?*

Yes, and I've told the directors that. Being a center director is not an easy job. What *is* the job? The director has to keep the community together by making sure they get whatever they need to fulfill their spiritual needs and their material needs as well. But not by handing out money. We don't have enough. The director has to utilize or facilitate the skills within the community by directing them in a way that steadies their life; by showing them what to do and how to do it. I believe that people who come to live in a center community are quite intelligent. But some of them might be a bit lazy, so the director has to become a skillful psychologist and give shape to their lives. Job creation is very important.

*At this stage and in the future?*

Yes, all the time. Many people come to a center with a lot of problems, anxiety and an inability to cope with society. They're looking for a situa-

tion in which they can cope and live their life. We're making it possible for people to have a better life. We're taking responsibility for that. If someone can't take responsibility for the creative growth of the community, they shouldn't join it. It's a mistake if we allow that; we're cheating people.

*Do you think there should be more discrimination in terms of allowing people to join the community who are not going to be able to support themselves in the sense of either one or two things: either they have the fortune to have some financial backing from their own side or they have a creative skill that they can bring into the community and develop it so that the community can continue to be self-sufficient?*

Yes, it can be that, or we can offer training as well. Perhaps in carpentry or candle-making. Some skill with which they can support themselves. People often don't know that they can support themselves, but they have so much potential. If they can make themselves a buddha, why can't they do business? They can work with wood, with clay, with many things.

For example, at Manjushri Institute we have the equipment for making pottery. Good pottery is expensive. You can get three, four, five pounds for a well-made porcelain vase, so it's worthwhile. What kind of person can't do that? It's better not to have such people in the community.

*Lama, since the long-term success of the community depends upon the self-sufficiency of the individuals in it, what relationship should a business in the community have to the community itself? If someone in the community sets up a business and they're living and working in the community, who owns the business? There has to be some incentive.*

That has to be scientifically researched. It's practical, not merely theoretical. Let's take pottery, for example. I'm a student living in the community and the center sets up a pottery studio for me. We need to look at the numbers. How much would that cost? Then I start making pots. How many can I produce? What I need to cover is the rent of the studio, the cost of materials, the cost of my living in the community—room, board, etc.—and a contribution to the development of the center itself. If I'm skilled enough to make more than that, that's my money to use as I see fit: I can give some to the community, to my friends, to my children, to the Buddha, to the third world. That's my freedom. But from the beginning,

the director has to have enough sense to make a clear agreement between the center and me so that later on there's no conflict or problems.

*So in other words, Lama, when somebody is approaching the establishing of a business, they should just look at it in a traditional, businesslike way. [Exactly.] You have a facility; you're going to use the facility. [It's normal.] You pay rent on the facility. [Exactly.] You take responsibility, obviously, for the materials and so forth. [Absolutely.] You pay for those, you produce a product, make profit, from the profit you pay your rent . . . like that?*

I agree. It's normal. We are normal. Even though we have become Buddhists, we still buy bread and butter. You've renounced this life but you still eat bread and butter. You cannot renounce eating, in the sense of bread and butter. That would lead you to death.

Therefore, I think it's very important that, even though we are Buddhists and are supposedly renounced, we still lead a normal life. Buying and selling things is normal. In the West, if you don't buy and sell you basically don't exist! That's how the entire universal modern world is. That's the universal modern law: if you work, you have money and can go anywhere; if you don't work, you have no money and you can hardly breathe. Unfortunately. What can I say? That's why it's so difficult.

Still, perhaps it's not so difficult. There's a positive side to it, too. Since the West is oriented toward materialism, it has advantages. Amazingly, you can easily support yourself. In the Third World, making money, earning a living, really is difficult. Here it seems to be much easier, but it can also cause people to become a bit crazy. Since they don't have to worry about food and clothing, their minds create fantasies of misery. So that is their problem, which is opposite to the problems people in the East have. East and West both have problems. They're just different.

*But we can certainly take advantage of what we have in the West for the development of the centers.*

Definitely. I really feel that to some extent Western people understand the nuclear essence of Buddhadharma better than people in the Third World. Those countries are preoccupied by their lack of material development. Here in the West we have everything, so what do we gain? We discover



that material gain doesn't really bring us anything. If you're impoverished, when you say material things mean nothing, people don't believe you. But they do mean something. For that reason, people in the West are hungry and ready for Dharma—not for the intellectual knowledge it contains but for the spiritual satisfaction it brings.

*Lama, could we talk just briefly about your concept of city centers. We have spoken about the larger communities and their overall situation, but as we have seen, many of us in the West are from cities. We live in cities, which is a very intense environment, and now you have many city centers. In London we're fortunate to have a very good geshe [Geshe Namgyal Wangchen] as do many of the other city centers. How do you think those centers should develop? What is their purpose?*

Well, first of all, city centers are different from country or community centers. Of course, all centers' purpose is for people to develop and bring peace to themselves, but the orientation of city centers is different. First of all, in my opinion, city centers should emphasize strong meditation and be less involved in prayers and rituals, because the city situation is so strong. Rituals and so forth don't have enough power to calm sensitive delusions. Strong meditation, however, can quickly cut such delusions, and therefore it's very appropriate for city people, who usually don't have much time. And for them, silent meditation is often best. Ideally, a city center should be open twenty-four hours a day so that people can come and sit and meditate at any time.

*How big should a city center be?*

That depends on how developed the community is. But say I'm working near the center. At lunchtime or after work I can just go there and relax and meditate. I can go any time and take refuge in that tranquil, peaceful environment. For that reason we should try to make the gompa sound-proof. We bliss out just being in that quiet environment. So we should emphasize meditation over the intellectual trip, since city people don't have time.

Another thing, which I have expressed to city center directors many times, is to put on social events for the center community. Meetings, tea

parties, dinner parties, that sort of thing. Light, relaxed, Dharma-oriented. Dharma brothers and sisters come together and share. We can eat, sing, dance. First, we can do a short meditation, maybe ten minutes, then we can dance. Then again, sit down, talk, relax, drink, and then, before we split, meditate for a couple of minutes again, dedicate and then go home to sleep.

In Western cities, people live very close to each other but often don't even know their neighbors. We try to break that down by bringing people together; the human touch. In that way we can stimulate the Dharma in Western cities. Businessmen can't do deep meditation but are often lonely and desperately need relaxation. So we can give our businessmen friends an opportunity to relax within themselves, to sing and dance, or to just transform their mind in a tranquil, peaceful environment; to turn the worldly objects of the five senses into the Dharma, into the path to liberation. That we should develop.

The way to bring Dharma into the Western world is to present it in many skillful ways. We should not have fixed ideas of how to do this.

*Is flexibility the key?*

Yes, yes, flexibility. Otherwise you can't practice the Dharma the situation demands because you're caught up in and bound by the culture of Dharma and can't respond appropriately. You should be able to transform any situation into Dharma: eating, drinking, walking, dancing, sleeping. That is Buddhist skill in means.

*Is this true for both city centers and country centers and monasteries as well?*

Yes. Also, Dharma center communities contain many artistic people who can create some kind of psychological reality. Musicians, for example, have the powerful means to manipulate any reality into sound. So we're involved in transforming all energy in a positive way. We should encourage that kind of thing. Singing can express universal love, equanimity, the universal reality of nonduality. Then what's the problem? What's the problem in dancing? If somebody can express *shunyata*, nonduality, in song, why not? If we know how, we can transform the entire lamrim path, from

beginning to end, all sutra and tantra, in song and dance. What a perfect way to transform Western culture into positive!

For example, for the offering of sound in pujas like *Lama Chöpa*, Tara and so forth, we can use Western musical instruments instead of the traditional Tibetan ones.

*So anything that actually encourages a joyous energy for the offering should be brought in?*

Yes, exactly. Absolutely, that's all.

*Thank you, Lama.*

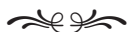


CPMT meeting, Pomaia, 1983

JACIE KEELEY

## 16. Why We Established the FPMT

*Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa, January 1983<sup>14</sup>*



WHY HAVE WE established the FPMT? Why are we establishing these facilities all over the world? I think we are clean clear as to our aim—we want to lead all sentient beings to higher education. We are an organization that gives people the chance to receive higher education. We offer people what we have—the combined knowledge of Buddha’s teachings and the modern way of life. Our purpose is to share our experience of this.

We know that people are dissatisfied with worldly life, with the education system and everything else. It is in the nature of our dualistic mind to be dissatisfied. So what we are trying to do is to help people discover their own totality and thus perfect satisfaction.

Now, the way we have evolved is not through you or me having said we want to do these things but through a natural process of development. Our organization has grown naturally, organically. It is not “Lama Yeshe wanted to do it.” I’ve never said that I want centers all over the world. Rather, I came into contact with students who then wanted to do something, who expressed the wish to share their experience with others and put together groups in various countries to share and grow with others.

Personally, I think that’s fine. We should work for that. We are human beings; Buddhism helps us grow; therefore it is logical that we should work together to facilitate this kind of education. And it is not only we lamas who are working for this. The centers’ resident geshe and the students are working too. Actually, it is you students who are instrumental in creating the facilities for Dharma to exist in the Western world. True. Of

<sup>14</sup>Lama Yeshe gave this talk to FPMT center and project directors at the 1983 CPMT (Council for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition) meeting.

course, teachers help, but the most important thing is for the students to be well educated. That is why we exist.

When we started establishing centers there was no overall plan—they just popped up randomly all over the world like mushrooms because of the evolutionary process I've just mentioned and the cooperative conditions. Now that all these centers do exist, we have to facilitate their development in a constructive, clean-clear way; otherwise everything will just get confused. We have to develop properly both internally and in accordance with our twentieth century environment. That's why I've already put forward guidelines for how our centers should be—residential country communities, city centers, monasteries and so forth.

The foundation for a center's existence is the five precepts—no killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, telling lies or intoxicants. We base our other activities—education, administration, accounting, kitchen, housekeeping, grounds and so forth—on those. All this unified energy also depends on the kindness of our benefactors, the devoted people who give us donations. Thus we are responsible for utilizing their donations in the wisest possible way, the way that brings maximum benefit to others. For this reason, in a place where hundreds of people are involved, we have to organize—to ensure that we use their energy in the most worthwhile way and not waste their time. Therefore, each of our centers and activities needs a general director—to direct and manage all the human and material resources at our disposal.

What does it mean to be a director? Take, for example, the job of director of one of our rural centers. They are responsible for everything that happens in the center: education, legal matters, finance, business, community, kitchen and so forth. Computer-like, the directors have to watch everything to make sure that it's all going in the right direction. And if they see something wrong, it is their responsibility to correct it.

Of course, one person, the director, cannot do everything themselves, but under their umbrella all the center's activities function. To control these we need a good management committee and a good place for the committee to meet and discuss things. The director alone should not decide how things should be done. In committee meetings we decide upon projects for the forthcoming year and give various responsibilities to different people. It is then the director's job to make sure that these people follow the committee's instructions exactly. If they don't, the director has

the power and authority to correct them. They can even ask people who are disrupting the center's harmony and proper functioning to leave.

Thus a center director takes incredible responsibility—for the center's educational success, for its financial success. The director has to think like a computer. The directorship is one of the most important aspects of the center. This doesn't mean that other people do not have responsibility; that's not true. They are responsible for the areas they have been given; they have their individual responsibilities. And it is not only the people who have been given jobs who have responsibility. Even students who come to a ten-day course, for example, have a certain degree of responsibility. They are working; they are expending energy for Dharma; they are giving—to some extent they do have responsibility. As their hearts are touched they slowly, slowly take on more and more. We can see how we too have evolved in the same way.

Now, the way to bring Dharma to the Western world is to bring the nuclear, essential aspect of Dharma. Of course, you cannot separate the essence from the Eastern cultural trappings immediately: "This is culture; that isn't." However, what you should do is take the practical points of Dharma and shape them according to your own culture. In my opinion, you should be making a new kind of Dharma dependent on each different place and its social customs. Since we are Mahayanists, we have a broad view and don't mind if Dharma takes different shapes. To bring Dharma to the West we should have a broad view.

Because we have so many centers, I can no longer direct them. Of course, at the beginning I had to direct the centers because the students were always asking, "Lama, what to do?" and we were small enough for me to always be in direct communication with them. But eventually we reached a point where I had to ask myself the question, "Am I a businessman, a Dharma teacher or what?" Hundreds of letters were coming in from all over the world; I had to say, "What is this? Should I spend my life answering letters and running centers?" I thought it was wrong for me to spend my life in business because this was not the best way to serve my students. I thought that the most realistic thing to do to benefit them and make my life worthwhile was to go the middle way instead.

So I began to cut down on administrative work. I even wrote to all the centers telling them that they were responsible for making certain decisions; that I could not decide everything and that it is too complicated and

far too slow to have all the correspondence coming through Nepal. Therefore, I said we should have a central office as the center's business point. Of course, I could still be consulted on important matters and could still make decisions on anything. I'm part of the Central Office; I can give my opinion. But it was not necessary to rely on me for everything. That's why I established the Central Office [now the FPMT International Office, based in Portland, Oregon, USA].

However, to some extent, I am still responsible for whatever happens in our centers. I have not let go of all responsibility, saying, "Let whatever happens happen." Therefore, I have to know something of what's going on in the centers: what problems have arisen, how serious they are, what benefits the centers are offering and so forth. The point is that I am not going to let the centers go completely so that they become totally nonsensical, non-beneficial to others and just some kind of ego trip. I don't believe that should happen. So I don't want to close myself off. I like to look at and reflect upon what's happening, but at the same time I don't want to spend my whole life writing letters. Thus, taking the middle way meant setting up the Central Office, which has reduced my administrative workload and given me more time to spend teaching Dharma. I haven't done it because I am lazy . . . well, perhaps I *am* lazy, but at least I have to pretend that I'm not!

Quite apart from the fact that I do not have time to do all this administrative work, there are many things to do with running a center that you can do far better than I. You can communicate with people from your own cultural background much better than a simple Himalayan monk can. All the legal and financial work—I can't do that either. Also, there are many positions to be filled in a center; the right people have to be selected for the right job. You students should do these things yourselves.

So, because all this administrative work was taking me so long, I passed many things on to the Central Office. There is a huge amount of this kind of work to do, that's why the Central Office is important. It facilitates communication both between the centers and me and among the centers themselves. You see, we do have the human tendency to shut off from each other: "I don't want you looking at me; I can see my own point of view, I don't want to share it with you." Each center has its own egocentric orientation: "We're good enough; we don't need to take the best of other cultures." That is wrong. We have reached our present state of development



through a process of evolution. Some older centers have had good experiences and have learned how to do things well. Doing things well is not simply an intellectual exercise but something that comes from acting every day and learning how to do things until you can do them automatically. Thus it is good that the Central Office has a pool of collective experience so that all our centers can share in it and help reinforce each other.

We have to be able to focus and integrate our energy and store information in a clean-clear way so that it can be readily accessed. We should make a structure so that we all know what information is there and how to get it. Without a proper structure, we'd go bananas! Even a couple living together needs to be organized so that their house is clean, they have food and so forth. In the centers, we are involved in hundreds of people's lives; for some reason Dharma has brought all these people together. We are responsible for ensuring that we do not waste people's energy; therefore we have to get ourselves together. This is why organization is very important.

Let's say, for example, that one of the older students and I have started a center. We are impermanent; we are going to die. What happens when we are dead? We established the center; it has never been organized properly; should it die too? No, of course not. Even though our very bones have disappeared, the center should continue to function. But for people to be able to carry on in its work there should be clean-clear directions as to what it was established for. If things are set up right, religious philosophies can carry on for generations and generations. We know this to be an historical fact.

If you think about it, from the point of view of culture, Buddhism is completely culture-oriented; it is a complete culture, or way of life, from birth to death. Therefore we are dealing with a very serious thing; we are giving people something that they should take very seriously in their lives. It is not just a one-week or one-month trip. We are offering something that utilizes Buddha's method and wisdom in the achievement of everlasting satisfaction. That everlasting peace and happiness is what we are working for.

So, we have a very important job; it is not just one person's thing. For that reason, I have to say openly to all our center directors that they should not feel they are working for Lama Yeshe—that's too small. I am just a simple monk; you are working for me? One atom? No—you are working for something much bigger than just one man. You are working for

all mother sentient beings. That is important. You should think, “Even if I die, I am doing all of these things for the sake and benefit of all other mother sentient beings.” That is why it is so important to us to have a clean-clear structure and direction.

For me, this is very important. I don’t believe I am the principal worker and doing everything. No. I believe what Lama Je Tsongkhapa says in his lamrim: all your success comes from other sentient beings. Thus, other sentient beings are capable of continuing our work, and what will enable them to do so will be having a clean-clear direction—not a temporary, Mickey Mouse direction, but a clean-clear one. Our aim then is to have a perfectly delineated structure so that even when we are all dead, still, as we wished, our Dharma centers will be able to carry on their work. I believe that human beings are very special. They are intelligent. If we write an intelligent constitution, record an intelligent system of direction, other human beings will be able to keep it going. That is why we have to have a structure.

Now, as far as our structure is concerned, it is simple and natural; a structure that could have been designed by primitive people, not sophisticated twentieth century ones. I am not sophisticated; I have never been educated in organizational structure or learned about it. I am very simple. Our organization has grown naturally. Because we have been giving teachings continuously, the number of students has grown. Then, from Nepal, those interested students have returned to their homes all over the world and started centers in various places. Some of those have become directors and given different job responsibilities to others interested in helping them.

How is the Central Office constituted? Each of our centers is a part of the foundation of the main office; the office manifests from that base. Do you see the evolution? We give teachings; all the original directors manifest from there; from the directors, energy for new centers builds up; more and more new centers come. Like that, there has been a logical evolution, development from an existing foundation. The directors have built up the entity of the foundation and the Central Office, we communicate, and this is the way the structure develops. To my mind, it is not a sophisticated, egotistical structure but one that has arisen and grown naturally. Now all these directors—administrative, spiritual, business—are the principal nuclear resource, and they make up the Central Office; they are the

directorate. They meet; they put forward ideas. But who keeps the Central Office going? These twenty or more people do not remain in the one location, meeting and working together all the time, all their lives. They have to go back to their own places; they have their own business to attend to. So who does all these things? The director of the Central Office.

Say that a CPMT meeting has decided that all centers should undertake a certain project because of its obvious benefit to the centers, the FPMT or whatever. It is then the Central Office's responsibility to ensure that all the centers have all the information and everything else they need to carry out the project. On the other hand, some good ideas may not be practicable. If I have to go to each center to explain why something should not be done it's an incredible hassle. I can save time, life and energy simply by telling the Central Office my ideas, which can then be circulated to all the relevant places. This is simple and useful, and it's the Central Office director's job to see that all this gets done. We need a clean-clear system with which everybody is comfortable.

Therefore, when you, the FPMT directors, come to a final decision that is solid, to be implemented, or actualized, in our centers, the Central Office has the authority to make sure it happens. The Office director cannot direct a center to do something that was not generally agreed upon, "Because I say so." "I say so" is not authority enough. The thing is, we get an idea, a meeting of the FPMT directors (CPMT) agrees, and the Central Office ensures that it can be and is implemented. I think that this is the correct way to go about things.

Anyway, our aim is clear; it is to educate people. Each center should have strong emphasis on education. The education system and program are essential for us to be successful. Why are we building communities? Because we have no home? No! We are not refugees; we have not started centers to house refugees. Thus it is important for each center to have a strong educational program and a spiritual director to conduct it. This is an essential part of our structure and must be there.

But I am not going to keep telling you things that you already know. Still, it is important that I clarify the reason for our existence and what we are doing. It is important work; we are not joking. We are real. Also, we are confident. I have great confidence in my involvement with Western people; I believe in it. I think that there are things that we can understand in common. We understand each other; therefore, we can work together.

Also, it is important for directors to have a great vision; they should not neglect their center's growth. They should have a very broad view in order to be open to people. In many of our centers we find that already the facilities are too small. Of course, to build adequate facilities takes time and energy; but we should have a broad open view: "We would like to have things this way, without limitations." Having a broad view is not forcing any issue but simply saying that if we have the opportunity to do various things, we'll do them. You never know when somebody might come up to you and say, "I'd like to do something beneficial with my money." At that time, you can reply, "Well, we have this project ready to develop," and show that person your plans. If, however, you feel suffocated with what you already have and don't have any vision of how to expand, you can't show potential benefactors anything. Therefore you should plan ahead with great vision and have everything ready to show people how you want to expand and improve your facilities.

For example, we have always said that our centers should be living communities. But through experience we have discovered that we cannot yet be self-sufficient. To be a self-sufficient community in the Western sense requires an immense input of energy. Let's say that the twenty of us here are a community. Can you imagine what we need in order to live according to this society's standards? We have to live in reasonable comfort. That means we have to have cars, a certain amount of regular income for living expenses and so forth. So how do we do it? From the realistic point of view, it is an incredible job to make each center into a self-sufficient community. You know how much energy you have to take from the outside world.

My observation is that our centers are not run really professionally as self-sufficient communities. Even though we call ourselves communities, from the point of view of the Western standard of living, other communities are much more comfortable than our Buddhist ones. One of the problems that we are beginning to experience is that of overcrowding. This is not right—we must create the right conditions for people who live in or visit our centers, be they monks or nuns, single laypeople or parents and their children. We are in trouble because we are not doing things according to the Western way of life. Therefore we should take a look at where we are and where we should go from here.

Community life should be normal. Parents and children should be accommodated in our centers so that they can live as normally as possible.

Our experience is that they are not; we should learn from that. Of course, our students have big hearts and try their best. It is all a part of our evolution, not something that we have done wrong. But now we have reached a certain point and learned something. Our Dharma family has grown and we need to improve the living conditions at our centers to accommodate everybody. There should be a section where families can live normal family lives; there should be part of the center where strict retreat-type courses can be conducted; there should be monastic conditions for the monks and nuns. Everybody should be normal and comfortable in his or her way of life and everybody should have something constructive to do.

So, not only do we need a clear structure for our international organization; there should be one within each center too. As I said before, each center needs a director and a management committee. The committee consists of heads of the important sections of the center: the resident geshe, the spiritual program director, the business manager etc., and, of course, the director. Thus, the management committee is not elected but made up of those who hold responsible positions in the center. These people meet regularly and discuss how things should be done on a day-to-day basis. When they have agreed, they call the residents together and inform them of what they have decided. If the residents agree, well and good, but the committee does have to check with them. In this way, all the center's members are consulted and have a say in decisions that affect them.

In general, this is the way we do it, but sometimes it might be hard for everyone to understand which way a director is going. If they don't understand, perhaps the director can just let go. But most of the time this is the way we work: there is a committee, it makes decisions, we see how the residents feel about them, and if they don't like the decisions, we can change them. If they agree, then whatever it is, it can be done. In this case, it is the director's responsibility to see that it happens; he or she has to make sure that the committee's decisions are implemented, in much the same way that the Central Office director has to see that the CPMT's decisions are carried out.

However, with respect to major decisions within a center, even the director and committee cannot decide alone. For example, say all the center's buildings need to be torn down and rebuilt. I don't think they should make a decision of that magnitude without consulting the other FPMT directors. It is too risky to have just a few people deciding whether or not

to demolish an entire center. Similarly, say a center receives a donation of a million dollars. We should definitely call a meeting of all the other directors to decide on how that money should be spent. The director and the committee alone cannot make their own immediate decision, even though they know the local situation much better than all the other directors do. The director of that center should put forward their proposals for the others to comment on.

In the same way, there is a limit to the decisions that the Central Office director can make. Above a certain level the other directors should be consulted. Then the Central Office makes sure that what has been agreed to gets done. Also, the Central Office helps me get information about the centers and passes my messages on to the centers. My mail comes through the Central Office, too. The Office is a tool that helps me implement ideas I might have for ways to improve the centers. In this way and the ways already mentioned, the centers benefit from the Central Office. Thus it is important for them to support the Office through annual contributions.

Because we are doing constructive things with long-term plans, we should not expect to be able to judge the benefits of the contributions made to the Central Office on any short-term effects: “This year we gave  $x$  dollars to the Central Office but received only  $y$  amount of benefit.” The benefit you receive may not necessarily become apparent in this material life. We are planting seeds and it takes time for them to grow. Therefore, as long as you can understand why your center puts money into the Central Office, you can analyze what is going on in the present situation and what are the short- and long-term benefits for the entire FPMT mandala, and check all that against the needs of our growing organization. Only then can you judge whether or not your contribution has been worthwhile. Remember—to bring Dharma to the West we have to have a broad view.

PART 2



Lama Yeshe's Last Teachings  
Given at the Sixteenth Kopan Meditation Course

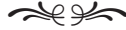


UNKNOWN

With Uldis, Tushita, Dharamsala, 1981



## Editor's Preface



THE TRANSCRIPTS of Lama Yeshe's final three teachings offered here were extensively edited to eliminate repetitions and to present the teachings in reasonably fluid English according to Lama Zopa Rinpoche's instructions. However, I have attempted not to lose the characteristic qualities of Lama Yeshe's method of presentation entirely.

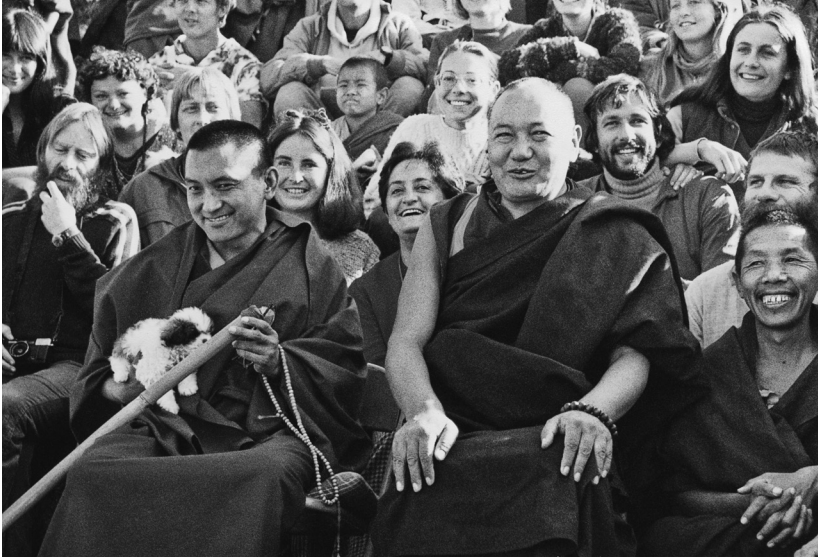
Due to incorrect hearing and interpretation, there may be errors of meaning and the responsibility for these is borne solely by the editor. It is hoped that this book will bring inspiration and a deeper understanding of the Dharma to those who were unable to attend the course and those of us fortunate enough to share that month on Kopan Hill.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, I wish to thank the many kind people, too numerous to mention, for their dedicated work of transcribing the manuscripts and for their suggestions and encouragement.

The merits created through the effort that has gone into this publication are dedicated for the long lives of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Lama Zopa Rinpoche, Tenzin Ösel Hita and all Dharma gurus and their students and for the flourishing of all centers of study and practice. May every living being rapidly attain the sorrowless state.

Uldis Balodis  
Den Nyi Ling retreat centre  
Drusti, Latvia  
July 2020

<sup>15</sup>An edited transcript of the entire sixteenth Kopan course (and many others) may be found at [LamaYeshe.com](http://LamaYeshe.com).



JEFF NYE

Kopan, sixteenth course, 1983

## 17. Practicing Dharma in the West: Q&A with Lama Yeshe

*Sixteenth Kopan meditation course, 8 December 1983*



**I**F YOU HAVE any questions—and you should have—you are welcome to ask. We will try, OK. Thank you.

### DHARMA IN DAILY LIFE

**Q.** How do we practice Dharma in the West while working full-time and living in the city with many personal and professional commitments? How can we adapt the teachings of the Buddha and integrate them fully into daily life? In what can we take sincere refuge?

*Lama.* How to answer that? Now, first of all, what is Dharma? What is Buddhism all about? It looks like there are so many subjects, so many philosophies, so many meditations, so much psychology. You feel there are so many things going on in Buddhism.

Being really practical, do whatever you can according to your level. I think it's a gradual path to enlightenment, isn't it? I cannot say, "This is the way to do it." If I say, "This is the way it should be," it's a joke, it's not true. It is according to your life, according to your consciousness, your way of developing, your existence.

In Buddhism we say we are not suddenly born from our mama like a mushroom; we have a long history of many, many, many previous lifetimes. Each of us is different and we have different realizations according to our life experiences, our own consciousness or the way we have developed. Do you understand? We are all on different levels.

When we reach enlightenment, buddhahood, we will be at the same level—one universal consciousness—then there is no distinction between

you and me, him and her. But at this moment, as long as we are tied up in dualistic, superficial concepts, worldly concepts, we cannot break out of where we are. We are suffocated, full of concepts, full of relative interpretations, full of relative mind. This is our suffocation. There are different degrees of suffocation; that's why each person should do what they can according to their own level.

In practical terms, what Buddhism really teaches us is to have sympathetic loving kindness toward others and ourselves as well. The second thing Buddhism teaches us is about our ignorance: that we are repeatedly mistaken, repeatedly uncontrolled. It doesn't matter that we are intelligent, we are repeatedly mistaken, again and again. Sometimes we know something intellectually, but our intellectual understanding is not sufficient; it is just some kind of weak mind and weak life. That doesn't bring indestructible protection. It takes time.

Buddhism teaches two things: loving kindness for others, which eliminates self-cherishing concepts, and wisdom eliminating ignorant wrong conceptions in order to realize universal reality. I'm sure you've heard of shunyata, or the wisdom of emptiness. This is the most important thing for human beings, for all of us. Without wisdom we are already mistaken; we can't see. Check out how our lifestyle has been. When we choose certain things for our life, sometimes they bring satisfaction, but most of the time they bring us misery and dissatisfaction. So, from all these things, we can see how we make too many mistakes. We have made many mistakes up to now, we are making mistakes at the moment, and we will continuously make mistakes into the foreseeable future. We will, we will; there's no choice. It's not something intellectual. It's just what we are, unfortunately.

We know intellectually that loving kindness and dedication for others is the only way to really bring satisfaction. We have no doubt; we know that. Maybe we have had some experience through the intellect. We can see that without having kindness for others, without dedication for others, there is no way to have satisfaction. It's the same thing for wisdom.

Wisdom also has many levels, which I'm sure you have heard about. We say "shunyata" but that is just a word. If I ask you people, if I interview each person, asking, "What is shunyata?"—if I pick one person each hour and ask this, everybody will have a different idea. Sometimes shunyata is something to do with experience; sometimes there are no words. Buddha said it is not words. It's true, the experience of real shunyata is

without concepts, without interpretation—we totally lose dualistic concepts. Describing that experience without words is not possible, but when we use words, we are not open, we are full of concepts. That's typical; I'm sure all of you have also had some experience of shunyata, but when you describe it in words, somehow it doesn't come out exactly. I think it never, ever comes. No way.<sup>16</sup>

The essence of Buddhism is true compassion, loving kindness for others and intensive awareness and wisdom—our totality nature. That is Buddhism's business. So, to do this business, to integrate this into society, you don't need anything—you don't need to wear this robe, you don't need to speak Tibetan words, you can do it in your own language. You don't need to do Tibetan-style prostrations; you can do Western prostrations. You can transform Tibetan prostrations into a Western way. What I mean is you don't need to do all these Tibetan rituals—prostrations, prayers, those things. In my opinion you don't need to do any of these at all.

What you should do is the essence: really learn what true love is and how to practice the techniques for developing it, and how to practice true wisdom. Wisdom is awareness, or comprehension, and knowing what's going on in your mind. That's the only business you need to be concerned with. Don't worry about what's going on in other peoples' minds, in your friends' minds. That's difficult. First concern yourself with what's going on in your own mind and try to understand the condition of your own consciousness; how to operate daily and how to go into the universal reality of your own consciousness. That's the way to integrate.

Also, don't worry about rituals. Buddhism went to many different cultures—Indian, Tibetan, Chinese, Korean, Thai, Burmese and so forth. Everybody does it differently. Everybody makes different prostrations. Anyway, Buddha himself taught different prostrations to different disciples. It's never the same. So, as Buddhism goes to the West, it is taking another shape, a Western shape. It's the only thing to do, so I don't think you should worry.

If you are thinking, “Only the words, prayers and rituals of Tibetan Buddhism are true; sticking to Tibetan Buddhism is the only way I can practice,” then for sure you won't be able to integrate it. Your business is to

<sup>16</sup> Once when Lama was asked to explain the essence of shunyata, he replied, “Don't believe what your senses tell you.” (Kopan, 1974.)

take the real, nuclear essence of Buddhism, not something that you cannot understand, thinking, “The Himalayan mountain way is best.” We’re dealing at sea level.

Buddhism teaches us how to develop loving kindness, but not by merely saying, “You should love everyone.” We explain why we should have love and how to generate it. That is the meditation we should do, but to develop loving kindness there are many other things besides meditation we can do, like helping the poor or the sick. In the West, we have everything and our lives are complicated. We should use our life to serve others and not just space out in meditation. Act physically to help others as much as you can—that is your *sadhana*. I think that’s all. I can’t see any complication.

Meditation is part of the international language now but I don’t think that you’re bad if you don’t meditate. Meditation is not only sitting; it is also thinking about something. For example, let’s say you have to work until four or five o’clock and when you come back you are already tired, exhausted. So, you get home and maybe lie down and think back on your day—your work, how people reacted, how your mind worked, how many times you became angry, how many times disturbances happened. That’s a kind of meditation, thinking, “Was it worthwhile or not?” I think that’s good enough.

That’s why I say Buddhism is really simple and you don’t need rituals. Maybe lying down is a ritual. I think so. It’s really so simple. It’s a very, very simple way, without involving rituals or any kind of trip. Be yourself. Who can tell you, “Don’t think!” Maybe your friend doesn’t like you to lie down; maybe they want attention. Then, what to do? You can say, “Please give me a little time.” That’s what you have to do. You have to be open in that way. I think that’s all; what else can I say? I think that’s good enough.

For example, visualization may be the biggest problem for you—going back to the West and trying to visualize an Eastern Buddha. When you visualize Buddha, your visualization becomes a Western visualization, don’t you think? Yes! I tell you, it’s my observation. Many Western students are now studying Tibetan *thangka* painting, but when they draw the Buddha, he looks Western; they can never make an Eastern face. It shows what is here, inside. Visualization is very important. Anyway, in the West we do have visualization. Look at television—that is visualization.

In the West, everything is directed toward sensory pleasure. Normally,

visualization is grasping at objects, grasping upright images. We identify with something about which we fantasize. We work on our self-image, showing our face this way, putting our hair that way. The face should be shown this way, not that old face. We fantasize. We can see how it works in the incredible Western fashions and those things. We can see how deluded people are. They're all doing something different, being happy or proud of their life, showing "I'm wonderful, beautiful, good." All right, all right—but all this energy! The motivation, the energy, is unbelievable. I'm scared of all this energy. They have so much suffering. They don't really suffer physically, but mentally they're suffering so much.

So yes, we do have visualization. I'm sure you've heard that in Buddhism we have archetypal images of the enlightened state of realization—compassion, wisdom and power. Avalokiteshvara is the archetypal image of universal compassion; Manjushri is the archetypal image of universal wisdom; Vajrapani, universal power. These are the archetypes represented by those deities. In Tibet this was commonly understood. We have descriptions of what Avalokiteshvara is, what Manjushri is and what Vajrapani is, and we already have these three qualities now. We have Avalokiteshvara quality; we all have loving kindness to some extent. If somebody loves us, we try to love them, don't we? We do have love and we do have some wisdom—knowing how to take care of ourselves and how to be happy. We have this now. And we have some power as well. We have the power to move, to resist our miserable situation and to bring pleasurable things close to us. We build nice houses, we eat nutritious food, we seek out good friends. That is our own power.

But our compassion is limited; it's very, very narrow. For example, English people love the English and they like only English customs. They think the English are respectable and other nations are disasters. Anyway, to really love—to love our nation, to love other nations, to love African people—is so complicated. The problem is we can't see. We only see our image; we can't see that black people, African people, are the same as us. It's a problem. We have the distinctions of nation, color and religion.

When we become Buddhist, I'm sure it's the same—we look down a little bit on Muslims or Hindus. I tell you, it's almost impossible not to. That's why I say it's completely to do with individual development, individual understanding. We all try, but whatever we try to do just becomes some kind of ego trip. Not totally an ego trip—we mean well—but there's

always something coming sneakily into our mind. We try to meditate, thinking, “Buddhism is good,” then suddenly we discriminate, thinking non-Buddhists are second class. It’s unbelievable. Then, because we are so judgmental, we have no love for Muslim people. Terrible, isn’t it? Then we don’t have love for Hindu people or we don’t have love for Christian people. That’s the way it is. It’s so complicated. Our minds are so narrow.

We should definitely admit our false conceptions, our true experience, our discrimination, but we don’t. We think, “I’m all right, I’m good enough.” That’s complete garbage. We do have compassion, but it’s always limited. That’s why having some kind of being, an archetypal image, is very powerful. We need some way to enhance our loving kindness into universal love. We’re not ready for this totality; we need some kind of sublimation, some kind of archetypal divine quality that does not bring the miserable reaction of discrimination.

Avalokiteshvara is not like a human being—he is our pure energy of loving kindness manifesting as radiant light. This method is so powerful. Instead of going to have a haircut and paying—how much do you have to pay for a haircut? In the West, it must cost at least twenty dollars in order to gain that image. If you emanate yourself as Avalokiteshvara every day, you’ll save money. You are beautiful. Beauty is always there.

We normally identify ourselves in a dualistic, deluded way, a wrong conception way. We make a bubble image of ourselves and believe that we *are* that bubble image, but it is false. In order to eliminate this false image, we emanate as a deity. So, visualization is extremely powerful. You can see how Western visualization is so powerful. When you see something on television, you have no choice: you have to go out and buy it. That is the power of visualization. So, visualization is very important. That’s why, when you go back to the West you should put the Buddha’s image in your room instead of a disaster image, instead of—what is it that young Eastern people like? [*Bruce Lee, kung fu.*] Yes, that one. Pictures everywhere. Even my young Kopan monks keep this one. Instead of putting up the kind of thing that gives us anger energy and nonsense, put up a Buddha image. It is so peaceful; always looking very peaceful and compassionate. When we look at the Buddha, we feel something. It’s useful, because we are not yet beyond form and color. We are dependent on form and color; that’s why visualization is very useful. All right, I don’t want to talk too much.



## RESPECT FOR OTHER RELIGIONS

*Q.* I was brought up Christian but have unfortunately forgotten most of what I was taught. I would like to take refuge again in wisdom and compassion, take the Chenrezig and Vajrasattva initiations, do the retreats to purify and tame my mind and be able to go back to Christianity if I eventually feel like it. Is that possible? [*Possible, yes.*] Could I just add a bit more, because my other question is similar—about taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Does that imply one can't practice other religions?

*Lama.* No, that's wrong. You can. First, you take refuge in loving kindness and wisdom. Anyway, if you're a Christian, you have to do that: when you become a Christian you don't take refuge in the sun and the moon, do you? Love is emphasized as a quality of God, isn't it? If you're a Christian, you're taking refuge in love and wisdom. In Buddhism, you're also taking refuge in that, so it's no problem. Then, after that, when you see that the value of Christianity is great, you can go back to Christianity. You don't need Buddhism again. That's right. Definitely, absolutely.

Buddhism—I'll tell you our history. Many of our students come here with no religion. They have a bad feeling for Christianity, but many times, after they have practiced Buddhism, they go back to it. They feel that Christianity has much to offer, so they go back to their own religion. That's our own history. It's very worthwhile, so if you feel that, do it.

Christianity also has meditation; don't think that it doesn't. But for you, perhaps certain technical methods of Buddhism, such as the way to approach loving kindness, are suitable. You can go into the church and meditate instead of just singing songs. That is very good, very worthwhile. Then, concerning wisdom—it's very important. My observation is—and maybe I'm wrong—that normally Christians do not emphasize wisdom, but there is much emphasis on loving kindness. This is only my superficial observation of Christianity. Therefore, the wisdom aspect of Buddhism is very useful. For some reason Buddhism places a lot of emphasis on intensive awareness of the reality of our own consciousness, and I think this is unique. I think you can still keep those aspects while being a Christian. That doesn't break any vow.

Unfortunately, when we talk about religion or religious faith, we have to use concepts again—Christian concepts, Buddhist concepts. When we're dealing with concepts of philosophy, they sound very strange, don't they? It's a very strange way of thinking and the structure or framework of philosophy and religion confuses people. If I explain the confusion, maybe you people will get angry. We and most religious people are confused. It's not that we want to be confused, but because we have limits, we can't see beyond the system or structure of religion. We don't see beyond that and this is our problem.

When religious people learn their own philosophy and their own system, they feel comfortable, superficially comfortable, but I think this comfort is a wrong conception. This comfort is like a Nepalese family living in a comfortable house in Kathmandu and thinking, "There's no more comfortable house in the world." That's not true, actually. They haven't seen American luxury houses, Western-style houses, therefore, they think they are right. They think that is the right way to live. Anyway, they're lucky if they think that way, aren't they? But even so, it's a wrong conception, isn't it? Even though it is purely a wrong conception, maybe it's right for them. This is only my observation, that religious people make some kind of comfortable house and feel, "God is there, Jesus is there, the Holy Spirit is there," whereas Buddhists believe, "Buddha is there; this is my Buddha. This is the Tibetan buddha and the Tibetan buddha is the only buddha."

We make some kind of comfortable house—our spiritual house—and then we live inside that. When we leave our religious house and look at other things, we find them very strange. We feel scared or paranoid, don't understand, and then it is too much; we have no tolerance. We are completely bound by our relative, limited concept of our own religious orientation, our own religious philosophical bondage, and can't see beyond that. So, that's a good example for us.

When Tibetan Buddhism talks about Tibetan buddhas or Tibetan thangkas, for us it is very strange, isn't it? Don't you think it's strange? We almost cannot accept that there is a Tibetan buddha. There is no room for this idea. I think for us it is not possible that there is a Tibetan bodhisattva, and we think there is no Buddha, no Dharma. Or, when we accept Tibetan Buddhism, we think, "This is the only thing."

These are extreme concepts. First, there is difficulty in accepting it. Then, having accepted it, we think it is the only way. It is very difficult

when we are so ignorant, because when we are only a little bit open, we have terrible misconceptions. What can I say? It's so complicated. It's silly and I can see some problems with that. So, when we accept any religion or any trip, we accept it somehow in a narrow way and then have no room for other things.

For example: for Tibetan Buddhist people, is there any Inji refuge object? They never draw Injis. And in the refuge tree, is there an Inji, a Westerner? There is no Westerner, unfortunately. Are there Japanese men? There are no Japanese men. Is there a Chinese buddha? Actually, there is no Chinese buddha, is there? There is no Korean buddha, there is no Ceylonese buddha. Now we're not sure. How can we say there is no Chinese buddha, no Japanese buddha? How can we say there is no English buddha or bodhisattva? Can we say that? How can we say there is no bodhisattva in the Christian religion? Can we say it? I cannot say it—maybe you can say it! Sure, in the Christian religion there must be bodhisattvas. In the Muslim religion there must be bodhisattvas. I truly believe this. In the Hindu religion there must be bodhisattvas, there must be buddhas. There must be. Can you see that or not?

Tibetan intellectuals have a precise answer, but Christians are going to say that the first stage bodhisattva is not possible because their philosophy holds that there is a self-existent soul. As long as someone keeps the philosophy of a self-existent soul, they have no room for realization of the universal understanding of shunyata. Have you heard this philosophy? Intellectual people are going to say "*pam!*" They have an intellectual answer. Yes, but we cannot say that all Christians are philosophers. Can we say all Christians are philosophers? No, it's not true. All Buddhist people are not philosophers anyway, are they? I mean, generally speaking, for example, the Tibetan saint Milarepa was not an intellectual philosopher; he just meditated and passed completely through, cut through all delusion. So, it can be that a Christian has no Christian philosophy. In the beginning they hold or learn it, but then they give it up, thinking, "This philosophy is too narrow." Maybe they give it up and are not concerned with philosophy and just go completely into some kind of universal love and compassion, or something like a Christian way of shunyata.

I've told this story before, but when we were in Spain with His Holiness the Dalai Lama last year, we went to a Christian monastery where there were many monks. His Holiness asked somebody, "What is shunyata?" or

“What is your point of view of shunyata?” A Christian monk answered, “Not having attachment is shunyata.” I was very impressed. From the Eastern philosophical point of view, it is the wrong answer. What is shunyata? It is nonattachment! Eastern philosophical people would think, “Oh, how foolish!” That’s from a philosophical point of view or framework, but if we look beyond that, he did answer. If we are not concerned with words, he did answer. If somebody does not have attachment, that’s incredible.

Without understanding shunyata, there is no way to release attachment. Attachment is the concept that holds as dear our concrete concept of “I,” isn’t it? This is the fundamental thing, and then come grasping and attachment. I was very happy with the Christian monk’s answer, that non-attachment is the Christian view of shunyata. I think that is wonderful; I was very happy. I’m sure you people don’t think Christian people develop nonattachment. Do you people think that way? I think Christianity has unbelievable teachings, but very few are practicing it nowadays. Not so many people are practicing true Christianity.

So, what am I talking about? Now I have to make my point. I have talked about so many things and still haven’t made my point. My point is that when we accept one religious framework it can block us from seeing goodness in people of other religions. I think that is terrible; we destroy humanity. I think that is very bad, I tell you. At least Buddhism teaches respect for all human beings and all religions. All religions contain good things. I think that is true.

Now I will give you my opinion: in Buddhism’s framework we have Christianity and Hinduism and so on. This is my thinking, my observation. In Buddhism’s framework, in the Buddha’s teaching, there is Christianity, there is Hinduism, there is Islam, there are all religions. I feel that way—it is true. Sometimes the Buddha teaches exactly in a Christian way and sometimes the Buddha teaches exactly in an Islamic way. That’s why Buddhism has so many views. The Buddha himself said, “I taught that the self-existent soul exists.” He taught something like a Christian point of view. Then at a certain point he taught that the self-existence of the soul is a completely wrong conception, that it is not possible and so on. He taught everything. We have the words in the sutras; we have everything to show you. Before the Buddha died, he said, “I kept so many things—wrong views, right views. I taught wrong views to lead these people to pure morality.”

For example, suppose I give you people a meditation course and the first thing I say is, “Western philosophy and the way you people think is all wrong.” If I tell you this at the very beginning of the meditation course, you are going to tell me “Goodbye,” aren’t you? You’re going to say, “That’s not your business.” You’re going to say, “You teach this way, but I thought you were going to teach loving kindness. You’re going to teach us anger, so goodbye, we’re leaving.”

Well, the Buddha knows; it doesn’t matter if people have a completely wrong philosophy or wrong view, he teaches them. He makes their philosophy better and does not say that anything is wrong. He teaches other things that are beneficial for them, in order for them to grow. When they grow, they can see that their own view is wrong, can’t they? Like us; sometimes we hold wrong conceptions for a long time, but suddenly we get a realization, “Ah, incredible! What kind of person am I to hold such terrible concepts?” We do have that kind of experience. I’m sure all of you have experienced that kind of thing and have grown as a result. So, the Buddha gave many different kinds of teachings. He said, “Whatever I say is not necessarily true.” He made an announcement. He doesn’t want us to have devotion based on thinking, “Buddha said this, so I accept it,” or to completely reject it because it is too dangerous. He said, “From whatever I told you, be aware of things that are suitable for you. If they are not suitable, give them up. My teachings are completely personal and unique. I teach each person in a different way, showing them a method for growth.”

So, without making your own observation and taking responsibility, never accept anything. Buddha’s announcement was completely clean clear. I’m sure that sometimes you think it is just like Christianity, don’t you? Some people say lamrim is just like Christianity, whereas some people say Buddhism is not a religion. There are a lot of interpretations: Buddhism is this, Buddhism is that. The reason is that Buddhism has a religious aspect—like Christianity—and a philosophical aspect. Buddhism encompasses many, many subjects. It’s like a meal that contains fish, chicken and everything! Buddhism contains everything.

When we look at Buddhism and it talks about heavy, negative subjects, it’s almost similar to Christianity, isn’t it? Heavy this way and that way. Except that Buddhism says we can get out. We can change our situation. That’s the lucky thing, isn’t it? Christianity says if we do something evil, we are finished—we go to hell forever. That is different. So, that’s why we

shouldn't worry. Buddhism contains satisfaction—religious aspects, philosophical aspects and many different psychological aspects. We cannot say Buddhism is that or this.

Therefore, when we take refuge, we take refuge in the ten directions' buddhas and bodhisattvas. You've heard this? When we take refuge in the ten directions' buddhas and bodhisattvas, it means nothing is left out. A bodhisattva can be anywhere in the world. Therefore, in my opinion, a bodhisattva can be Muslim; a bodhisattva can be Christian; a bodhisattva can be Hindu; a bodhisattva can be Jewish. Really, I believe all these people can be bodhisattvas. If we have enough room, if we open our hearts, those are refuge objects.

However, from the practical point of view, until we have some kind of loving kindness, we cannot be a bodhisattva. It's not possible. Have you heard in Buddhism that the appearance of pure or impure objects is a reflection of our own mind? In order to see something as pure, to see the selflessness of things outside, we must have something in our consciousness to project. Then we can see the outside as pure. This Buddhist way of thinking is very important. I think Western people should know this.

Western people expect to have a concrete bodhisattva outside. If they cannot prove that there are bodhisattvas, too bad. In the West there is so much materialistic expectation and they want to see a bodhisattva as something outside, something solid, but that's not possible. Buddhism believes that when we have developed certain qualities, we can see bodhisattvas everywhere. When we don't have those qualities, we can't see bodhisattvas. When we don't have love, we can't see love in others. It is not possible. Therefore, it is important that first we try to generate the qualities ourselves, then taking refuge in the ten directions' bodhisattvas becomes meaningful.

Normally, taking refuge is quite difficult, isn't it? We can see how misconceptions start. It's the same thing in Christianity. Christians take refuge in Jesus; Catholics take refuge in Jesus. But the level of Jesus can be found in the Hindu religion, in the Muslim religion and in the Buddhist religion. But for Christians, if you are Hindu or Muslim it is the wrong path to God or whatever it is. So, what can I say? Maybe not all Christians think that way but the human mind works that way, unfortunately.

I think that's enough. Am I communicating? I want you to watch, to rethink, to free your limited mind. As religious people, we should be open.

We should respect all humanity; we should rejoice in the Christian priests' teachings. I rejoice. Definitely I rejoice if a Christian priest teaches us. But instead of rejoicing, we have hatred. It's so sad.

If Buddhism helps us become more respectful, more free from our own narrow mind, then I agree it is helpful for us. If Buddhism closes us more tightly, if it makes us more uptight, then it's better that we give it up.

## RELATIONSHIPS AND THE SPIRITUAL PATH

*Q.* How do we turn a worldly male-female relationship that inevitably involves attachment and self-cherishing into a spiritual one? How can we use this in the path?

*Lama.* That also depends on understanding. Again, it's the same thing; my answer is always the same: it depends on their level of consciousness. It's true; it's always like that. When a man and a woman come together, if one of them has some kind of higher level of consciousness, if he has some kind of power to bring her to his level or she has some higher level to bring him to her level, then it's a good thing. But if they come together and it's only a fantasy of physical sensation, that's the wrong motivation from the beginning and will likely end up in disaster. That's its nature, unless some transformation happens. However, it's possible that in the beginning the relationship is only physical and the motivation is simply attachment, but later they are able to transform themselves. That can happen.

That's why, according to Tibetan tantra, both men and women—yogis and yoginis—can find themselves on the same level of consciousness and then work together spiritually and be helpful to each other. Then, if one of them is down, they don't bring the other person down. In Tibetan Buddhism there is a lot of conversation about that. However, try somehow, whatever you can do—then a couple coming together is worthwhile. We all need to help each other in many different ways—psychologically, spiritually, materially. We all need each other, so being together as a couple should come from a sincere wish to help the other person rather than to take advantage of them. I think that is the best way, a simple way, to transform a couple's life.

Men and women coming together need not only be for beauty or sensation; it can be deeper than that; it can be to help each other grow. That

kind of relationship is very good. Anyway, it's nature, isn't it? Man helps woman; woman helps man—it's a natural thing. It's a kind of understandable, universal law. It's nothing to worry about; it's not unusual. But in some way destructiveness is usual too. So, what can I say? Tibetan Buddhism never said that men and women being together is necessarily negative; it depends, doesn't it? At a certain point, a man and a woman coming together can result in complete, total realization; it can open their chakras. Tibetan Buddhism has an explanation. We cannot say; we cannot judge. It's a completely individual thing.

It is important that we do not look at men and women coming together as bad. It's not necessarily true. Men and women coming together is a natural thing; whether it's beneficial or not is completely individual. So, we cannot project that it's good or bad. Just leave them alone, let them go and do whatever they want to do.

#### BODHICITTA IS THE REAL ESSENTIAL

*Q.* Sometimes, in especially difficult situations, I feel that the Dharma is outside of me, more as a good concept that I agree with intellectually, but it doesn't come from my heart. Especially, all these merit-collecting practices seem very foreign to me. How do I handle these feelings? Is it good to go on with the practice, to get used to it, or should I leave it if there's no feeling in the heart? And if I leave it, how do I collect merit?

*Lama.* This is a very common problem; all religious people experience this. I'm sure all Christians have this difficulty; all Muslims have this experience; all Buddhists as well. It depends: if our mind is a psychological tornado, completely up and down, shaking the entire mandala of our conscious realm, it is very difficult. At such moments, it is very difficult to generate love and wisdom. It takes time. Give yourself time and space; don't push. We all have this experience, so don't think it is only your problem.

And regarding the feeling "Dharma is not in my heart," sometimes it's true. How can Dharma be in our heart? Dharma is wisdom and intensive awareness of the nature of our mind. We are polluted and full of fantasy, so it's very difficult to have Dharma in our heart. Dharma concerns reality and intensive awareness of our own fundamental nature. If we are full of fantasy, it is very difficult. Again, this problem is not only yours;



everybody has that kind of problem. I think what you have to investigate is whether Dharma really is in your heart or not. What kind of Dharma? When you feel you have Dharma in your heart; what is the Dharma in your heart? What kind of Dharma? Maybe red color Dharma or yellow color Dharma or chocolate color Dharma? We're not sure. Firstly, we're not sure about that question. Maybe Tibetan ritual Dharma, but ritual is not really Dharma, is it? A Dharma heart is understanding or comprehending something.

Then, regarding your question, "If Dharma is not in my heart, do I give up?" Well, what are you gaining? You are gaining being full of attachment, full of misconceptions. I'll tell you again, that is not understanding the real Dharma. In my opinion, if people say, "If I give up Dharma, then I'll be happy," it means their Dharma must be something artificial, a suffocating structure. Dharma is an open heart. It makes you peaceful; it makes you happy.

What is Dharma? Come on! That is the question. "Dharma in your heart"—what do you mean by "Dharma"? When you give up Dharma, what do you gain? Do you mean you give up the philosophy of Dharma? Maybe you mean that. When you give up Dharma, it means you give up the philosophy of Dharma. If you have true Dharma, what do you give up? I'm telling you, Dharma is part of your realization, part of your consciousness. Do you give up your consciousness? Do you cut your throat? My goodness!

I'll tell you a story. I have an American student who wanted to see some other guru. I'm not going to mention his name. During an interview, the student told me, "I wanted to see this guru and I requested an interview." Then he was asked, "Where do you come from?" He replied, "I'm Lama Yeshe's student," or something like that. He was told, "Ah, you are Gelugpa. If you want to see our guru, you must give up refuge in your guru." My student was shocked and said, "If I give up refuge in my guru, I don't exist. I don't want to see your guru." It's a good answer, isn't it? Actually, it is part of his existence, so if he gives up his existence, he doesn't need to see the other guru, does he?

So, the thing is, I want to know what you mean by giving up Dharma. I'm surprised! There's no such thing as giving up Dharma. You can give up philosophy, you can give up ritual customs, but the concept of giving up Dharma is very strange, foreign.

*Course leader.* I think she meant the merit-collecting practices. She says, “Is it good to go on with the practices, the merit-collecting practices?”

*Lama.* Yes, yes, I’m coming to that. You’re right. So, what I mean is that giving up Dharma is very strange, very foreign. The Dharma is in your heart, so it is truly difficult to give it up, and therefore it is better to practice collecting merit. Definitely, yes.

You should not worry, because merit is a kind of energy, a building up of energy in your consciousness. Let’s say you want to get into the Olympic Games—you want to go, you want to go, you want to go, you want to go, you want to go. You think, “I will train; I want to train,” and then you train for one month, two months, three months, four months, for years and years. You train every month. This is energy, and so is merit. Similarly, you collect merit when you generate loving kindness for others, when you see the false conception of attachment. You generate merit with the pure thought having a dedicated attitude for others. You increase the energy; when collecting merit, you increase, increase, increase, increase. That’s all.

However, whether we are being positive or negative, each thought has a build-up of energy, either positive energy—merit—or negative energy. It’s so simple. What do you mean by “merit”? What kind of merit? I want to know. Some concept of merit, or what?

*Student.* Positive energy.

*Lama.* Positive energy, that’s very good! You know, there’s no way you can give up positive energy. Now you’re stuck! Bodhicitta itself makes us so completely peaceful, so happy. The self-cherishing thought is like a knife in the heart; our heart is really hurt, relatively and absolutely. But bodhicitta is something that makes us completely relaxed. I think bodhicitta is unbelievable; it’s the most important thing we can practice in our entire life. It makes us really happy and there’s no room for others to disturb us. Otherwise, everybody is our enemy. The opposite of bodhicitta is feeling that everybody is an enemy.

In the West, people sometimes think, “She is taking advantage of me; he is taking advantage of me; you are taking advantage of me.” People think that everybody is taking advantage of them, but it’s not true. I know many people who think human beings take advantage of each other. Do you feel

that way? I don't know. It's not true. Human beings have always been kind to each other, helped each other. Always. It's our fundamental nature. So, bodhicitta helps us relax, even when we're not meditating. Really, bodhicitta makes us content, satisfied. If somebody hits us, if somebody beats us, it's OK. If somebody criticizes us, it's still OK. If somebody steals our money, it's OK. If somebody does bad things to us, it's still OK. The mind makes it OK; that's all it is. And it's the mind that makes it not OK as well.

So, I think bodhicitta is the best. In my opinion, we all need bodhicitta, especially in Western society. If we have to integrate our practice into Western society's working life, bodhicitta is the best way. Bodhicitta is definitely the best way to integrate our practice. In Western society, people have very strong, concrete relationships with each other. For example, "I'm working for you" or "You and me" becomes so concrete. You say, "I want you to do this," and I say, "Yes, I can do this much." Do you know what I mean? In the beginning we have to talk to make such an incredible relationship, therefore bodhicitta is really, really important.

For me, it seems like bodhicitta is the real essential. Western people can easily help others, but when we try to teach them indestructible samadhi meditation it is very difficult because Western life is not made for that. Of course, we still have time. But we can practice bodhicitta so easily; we can see other people suffering, we can see our boss suffering, we can see the workers suffering, we can see so much suffering. Western people have so much suffering, so much conflict. I really have compassion when I go to America. Californian people are sweet. They're hardworking and physically comfortable, but they go on incredible mental trips. The more I stay, the more I have compassion for them. Really, they have so much mental suffering. I don't know, maybe it's my projection, but I'm simply relating my experience. I feel that those people have so much mental suffering.

So, in my opinion, bodhicitta is the best way to go. Bodhicitta completely relaxes our heart. We often have to deal with other peoples' difficulties; bodhicitta helps so much with this. Even while others are giving us problems, we can be satisfied and help them—this comes from bodhicitta. We should have bodhicitta; it is the best.

Even in a male-female relationship, bodhicitta is so useful. The man can see the woman is suffering; the woman can see her partner is suffering: how can they add more suffering? Normally in relationships people hurt each other, don't they? "I'm dissatisfied with him so I will hurt him." Or

he hurts her because he's dissatisfied. Can you imagine? That's the way it is. All such relationships are disastrous because they are not getting enough. You definitely decide, "I'm not getting enough from him (or her)." That is selfish, completely selfish. I think that is clean clear. You hurt your partner because you are dissatisfied, because you are not getting pleasure. "I'm not getting pleasure, so I'm leaving." That's California style! It's easy, isn't it? It's very easy. "I'm dissatisfied, I'm leaving; I'm not happy, therefore I'm leaving." I think it's completely selfish; it's unbelievable. How can we always be happy with each other? We have so much garbage, so many trips inside.

How can I expect to be happy with you at all times? I cannot. I cannot guarantee that you people will be happy. Therefore, you should accept it: "How can my selfish mind think it's unfair this way? It's not true. I should be reasonable. It's natural that sometimes I get pleasure and sometimes I do not. I'm not happy but still I'll try. I'll analyze what is wrong and why."

#### THE POWER OF HOLY OBJECTS

*Q.* Do deities and holy objects possess an external power from their side or is their power derived solely from the working of our mind? Is there an outside buddha?

*Lama.* Yes, there is also outside power. When I sit this way and you look at me, you can see outside power, can't you? Then, when I wear nice hair like that, you can see some kind of power, can't you? The image itself has some kind of power. Definitely, yes. When I sit this way there's different power; when I sit that way, again there's different power. The different images in different positions make a different impact on your mind. In particular, the way the Buddha is sitting always gives you a feeling of a middle way. You can see that the Buddha's and Lama Tsongkhapa's eyes are always like this [*narrow and peaceful-looking*]. My eyes are always like this [*open wide*]. The Buddha's face and eyes looking like this are symbolic of his having reached beyond dualistic thought.

One way of looking is a symptom of dualistic conception. If you are a psychologist, you can see what sickness people have and what is going on in their mind by looking into their eyes; you can see a vibration. In one way our twentieth century world is good and in one way it's bad. We are so

sensitive; we can see people's faces and vibrations and what's going on in their mind. Don't you think that we check vibrations nowadays? Maybe in ancient times they didn't check vibrations. I definitely believe that the way we sit, the way we set up an image and the image itself all have vibration and power. That's why I say that if we put up our buddha image and look at his way of sitting and his body control, it's unbelievable.

In most Western cultures, number one is that we do not control our body energy. Our mind forgets our body. We cannot control our body because in the West we are so involved with sensations or feelings and we just let go with whatever feeling or sensation comes. All of life's decisions come from the sensations of the body. Do you agree? I'm sure you disagree. The body is so delicate, it is the most important thing in our life. In the West, it is everything. When we get up in the morning, everything we do is done for the body. To my wrong conception, my feeling, it seems like that, and I think the body is very much out of control.

The Buddha controls his body. I definitely think that this way of sitting, this position of control, automatically brings some change in us, to our hormones and the structure of our nervous system; that it makes us a little more controlled. Our out-of-control sensations and feelings become more controlled and this helps us control our mind. Therefore, I think the Buddha's image itself has external power and a positive vibration.

Of course, you have to understand that the Buddha's qualities are not external; they are selfless and universal—loving kindness and bodhicitta. So, if somebody cuts the Buddha with a knife, piece by piece, and somebody else anoints him with perfumed oil, the Buddha does not discriminate between them. Remember, when he was becoming enlightened in Bodhgaya and somebody tried to harm him, he never paid any attention. If somebody gives him perfume, nice things and love, he doesn't pay any attention. Buddha has that kind of understanding and inner realization and does not pay attention to any sensation, good or bad. Whether somebody does something good or somebody does something bad, he doesn't care. Buddha has overcome all such discrimination. For him it is the same, because he has equanimity.

So, understanding the effect of a Buddha image and putting it somewhere is very powerful. It is a reminder of his qualities and restores us when we degenerate. When that happened in Tibet, we would go to a temple

to see our favorite buddha; it gave us so much strength and energy. It's the same thing in a Western church—many people go to see Jesus Christ and get powerful energy from that. Or they see an image of Mary and get much energy from her. So, images have power, and when we understand the qualities of the Buddha, we get more power ourselves.

*Q.* I understand how I can develop equanimity, love and compassion when someone is torturing me, but how should we train our mind to develop equanimity, love and compassion when we see someone torturing somebody else and cannot stop it?

*Lama.* First of all, congratulations to anyone who can have a feeling of equilibrium when somebody tortures them. We rejoice and collect merit. In Buddhism, the accumulation of merit is very important. We can just watch people doing positive things, enjoy, rejoice and collect much merit, without having to do anything else. It's very powerful. But usually we cannot stop other people doing things. All we can do is send our loving kindness energy to them. There's so much bloodshed in the world. For example, the Saudi princess who in 1977 was executed by her grandfather. He claimed that she had committed adultery, brought shame to the family and should be put to death. Many people in the world knew about this and they made a film about it.<sup>17</sup> What can we say? We cannot stop the Saudi Arabian government. Do you remember the movie? It was so sad, incredible; it broke my heart. She was a very beautiful girl and very kind-looking in the movie. Anyway, what can we say? That is a good example, isn't it?

So there's not much we can do. It's other people's karma, that's all. We can stop certain karmic things coming; sometimes we can change our own karma if it hasn't already ripened. But karma that has already ripened, what to do—it just comes. If I become a monkey in my next life, you people will say, "Oh, my lama has become a monkey! Oh, how awful; I wish I could help you." Maybe you can give me nice food and say OM MANI PADME HUM, OM MANI PADME HUM, but you cannot suddenly change my body into a human body. Impossible, isn't it? That is the karma. You

<sup>17</sup> *Death of a Princess*, the controversial 1980 British docudrama based on the true story of Princess Mishaal.

cannot change certain karmas that have manifested, but it is possible to change karmas before they bring their result.

Maybe we'll stop now. Thank you so much. Now we can dedicate.



J E F F N Y E

Kopan, sixteenth course, 1983



## 18. The Peaceful Path to Liberation

*Sixteenth Kopan meditation course, 9 December 1983*



TODAY I'm supposed to give an introduction to refuge, the five precepts, bodhicitta and tantra. It's difficult to do this completely and in a clean-clear way, and most of you probably already know the basics of all this, so I'll just try to briefly explain a little bit about each of these topics.

### EXTERNAL REFUGE AND INNER REFUGE

Taking refuge is actually very important. Anyway, we already take refuge—in food, clothes, friends and security. We try to be secure, to make life comfortable—this is taking refuge. Even mosquitoes and chicken take refuge. Refuge is not something new. I want you to know this clean clear. Even when we are babies, we cry, “*Ehh!* I want milk; I want milk, Mama!” The baby doesn't say “milk,” but the *ehh* cry is itself the asking for milk and saying, “I'm thirsty.” Everything that we try to do physically or mentally is an expression of trying to take refuge. That's why taking refuge is not a new thing. It's important to know that taking refuge is not something new; it's our trip. We do everything to try to make ourselves happy.

In industrialized countries we take everything—the minerals of the earth, everything—don't we? This is taking refuge. Those big companies digging for oil are taking refuge. You know what I mean—to make the world a better place, they say. Maybe it's true to some extent. All of you appeared here like mushrooms, coming by plane. Maybe those companies worked hard and did research. Anyway, we mean well; everybody means well. We take refuge to make life better, more comfortable, richer or whatever.

I agree we human beings need comfort; I agree we need a healthy body. There's no disagreement with the Western philosophy of having a healthy

body; I agree. However, if we take refuge only in a healthy body and forget about a healthy mind, that is unfortunate, because we're forgetting the principal thing, the essential meaning of life, and are just trying to do something unimportant, secondary. We should put most of our effort into the important things. The Buddhist point of view is that the mind is the most important thing, so that whether we are physically healthy or sick, our mind will be healthy and happy. The mind is the most important thing in order to have clarity and satisfaction, because the mind is what experiences misery and happiness. That's why taking refuge in a temporary object is all right; taking the right food and right medicine for our body is important.

We call some things an "ultimate refuge." This means taking refuge without depending on material objects, on substances or external energy—oil and petrol or whatever, or our friends, our wife or husband, our girlfriend or boyfriend. There's something inside us that somehow can deal with things and create mental satisfaction within ourselves. That is important. For example, you people come to Kopan and your standard of living here is sort of third world. It's uncomfortable, cold, no hot showers and so forth. I mean, it is something unusual for you; it's not your style. But you are trying something, checking up what's going on in Tibetan Buddhism, so your mind has decided, "I'm all right; I'm uncomfortable but that's OK. I am trying to check out what they're thinking, what they're doing." So you're still existent here, aren't you? That comes from the mind, not from the body. If your parents were to come for one day, they couldn't stay here, I tell you.

So you see, taking refuge is something we can do in any situation. Sometimes we are so tired, sometimes angry; you never know. In life we can never predict what will happen next. Life is something unpredictable: who knows whether we will be alive tomorrow or dead? We all have to go through sickness. Most people on this earth die from illness, so sometimes we do have to get sick. If, when we experience physical illness, our mind is tranquil, peaceful and blissful, we're satisfied and there's no disaster, but if our mind doesn't have any refuge, any kind of technique to keep it clean clear and satisfied, if our body goes bananas, so does our mind.

Buddhism teaches that if our physical circumstances are poor, such as being a prisoner in a concentration camp or in any other kind of bad conditions, if our mind has refuge, strength and some way to utilize that

moment, we can use that time and energy to make life useful, satisfied, controlled and clean clear. We can definitely do that. That's important, isn't it: not having good physical conditions—some sort of disaster—but being mentally content and satisfied. That is the difference between taking refuge inside and taking refuge only in external things. The difference is that when disasters or miserable conditions come, we can cope with the situation and still be clean clear. We can hold a clean-clear, satisfied and happy life inside our mind. That is the benefit of taking inner refuge.

This was my own experience. I was a young monk, a young boy, who was taken care of by all the family—Tibetan families are very strong. In general, my mother and father took care of me and protected me until I was twenty-five years old. In the monastery, which I entered when I was six, one old monk, my uncle—my father's brother—took care of me, but when I was twenty-five, the Chinese came and I had to leave that life, that protected situation. I had never been educated about the world; I didn't know about the Western world. I only presumed that there must be some place where there's no China and they have some freedom, where my own spiritual growth could continue. That's all I knew. So I said, "OK, I'm just going—at least there's spiritual freedom there. I'm going—I don't care where I'm going." Actually, I didn't know where I was going to.

So, they put us in some concentration camp, but we could somehow cope with that. The only thing left that could help was Dharma. That was the only thing that helped me. The rest—my comfort, my home, my Mama, my Papa, my uncle who had taken care of me up—all disappeared. I never thought I needed clothes up until then because they had given me clothes—they were just there. Suddenly, when I was alone, I realized, "I need clothes." Then I thought, "My parents were very kind."

However, what I'm saying is that we were alone, with nothing; we didn't even have prayer books. Normally monks used to have a lot of prayer books but I didn't have anything; I had one woolen blanket on which I slept on the concentration camp floor. Otherwise, all that was left was whatever Dharma I had learned. That was helpful, really helpful. That explained why I had to leave my home and family. That was the only reason I adjusted to the concentration camp. This was my experience—there was no comfort when the *dal* and rice came; it was unbelievable. The dal that came was like kaka because it was not our style. When dal and rice came it was incredibly painful. When we ate the dal we got dysentery. I

had dysentery for months and months. Sometimes I realized I would have to stop eating dal. Anyway, you understand. I don't want to spend time now talking about my trip.

I'm not talking about higher realizations; I'm simply talking about a difficult time. What was really helpful was first of all thinking, "It must be my karma." Secondly, the Tibetan people, all of us, have some common karmic connection and everybody has some kind of way in which we are contributing to each other, a reflection of karma. So, we have to experience some suffering. However, to adjust to this situation, Dharma was the only thing left that was helpful for me. I didn't cry at that time; I was just in a completely new situation. Nobody explained the new situation because I didn't know the language. The only explanation came from my little understanding of Dharma, and this preserved me. At least I didn't become crazy at that time. It's possible, isn't it? At that time many people became crazy and killed themselves because they couldn't understand what had happened. India was like a hot hell, completely, and they had lost everything—their wife, their husband—it was unbelievable. They couldn't cope and some people killed themselves. However, taking refuge in Dharma helps bring us up and adjust our life to any kind of circumstance, any miserable situation. That is the way of taking refuge.

So, taking refuge is very useful. Why taking inner refuge is useful is that we do not then depend with such intensity on this or that comfort, on this or that beautiful flower. We clearly understand that this flower is an impermanent, transitory relationship. It's all right—it has some kind of energy, it's giving us help; but if we take refuge only in the flower, my goodness, it's crazy, isn't it? Completely crazy. Oh, what a crazy mind we have. I am just talking about a flower now, but we do have this crazy mind: we choose one object and think, "Wonderful! Fantastic! This is my life. This is my refuge. This is my god. This is my Jesus. This is my everything." Something like that. When we have an exaggerating mind, that is the beginning of trouble. When I say, "You are the Buddha, the Dharma, you are Jesus, you are God," you people think I'm crazy: "This monk is crazy." So, we all have this similar crazy attitude. We do—check it out. This is what makes us miserable.

This kind of attitude of projecting and then starting a relationship with the external world always brings trouble because it's misguided. Even if we have this kind of relationship with the external guru, the external environ-

ment or the external church or temple, it is completely wrong. It is not possible to have these with us all the time. Then we say, “This is my life.” This is the beginning of trouble and more trouble. So that is when we should take refuge clean-clearly and deliberately: “My relationship to the external world, well, it comes, it goes; it is not absolute. My destination, taking refuge, is something I need, that I can keep. But in the true sense, when taking refuge, I’m never sure when and where I’m going in my life. Who knows?” Even though we say we control our life, we do not control it. I never expected that in my life I would be talking to you people. I just happen to be talking to you people and I just happened to come to India. I never planned, “I’m going because Tibet is going to be taken by China.” It just happened. I don’t even know why I have to talk to you; I’m just doing it. It’s true. I have to be honest, don’t I? I’m joking!

Life is never certain; even one night is never certain. You’re healthy and sleeping comfortably when suddenly in the middle of the night you get an asthma attack. That’s been my experience: sleeping comfortably and suddenly I have to deal with an asthma attack. Check your life: these are the kinds of thing we all have to deal with.

### WITHOUT INNER REFUGE, WESTERN LIFE IS PAINFUL

What I’m saying is not only about dying, but in every situation of our life we have circumstances where we are up and down, up and down, and to really remain happy and healthy we definitely need something inside—some understanding. Without inner understanding, life is very difficult, so miserable, especially in the West. We have so much external comfort, yet it seems like our mind is more difficult, more sensitive, more dualistic, more superstitious, more deluded, than, for example, the minds of the simple country people of Nepal. Simple country people don’t even know good chocolate, do they? They don’t know the thirty-one flavors of ice cream—we have so much that we’re conflicted just choosing what flavor ice cream to eat. Such conflicts come from the mind, not the body. There’s no question—Western people definitely need to take refuge. They need it desperately, I tell you.

Westerners suffer from loneliness, and relationships within Western society are often without much connection. The connection is very artificial, a very—I don’t know—shunyata relationship. I think in one way

I can maybe call them shunyata relationships because there is no relative connection with each other, is there? It's very complicated. So that's why we feel so lonely. There are a lot of people who, even though they are working together, are still incredibly lonely—they work together but the relationship is shunyata, so there is no warm communication to touch each other's human heart. There's nothing. It's not that one is a bad person; it's something in society's structure, that's all. It's just the structure of karma, not that Western people are bad guys.

So, we have to deal with the Western situation. My point of view is that Western life without some kind of inner comfort, some inner refuge, is very painful; extremely painful. Maybe I'm deluded; this is only my opinion that it's so painful. But from morning till night, Western life is so dedicated to working hard just for bread and butter, just for the existence of the body. We work hard to make money to buy more bread and butter, eat, make kaka and sleep. Then we go do it again. Maybe I'm exaggerating, but you have to check all this out for yourselves. From the Buddhist point of view, I can say anything. It's my opinion, but you have to check it out; you have to analyze.

We are born, we get old—sixty, seventy, eighty—then what? What is left? Our life is spent this way, that way, this way, that way, with no inner strength, no confidence and no satisfaction from what we did. If we didn't serve other people, the result is that when we're old we say, "Wow! It's incredible—I came to this earth and worked so hard to make money. Of course, I helped my wife, I helped my husband, I gave them money and then I ate, I slept, I made kaka, but really, I didn't do much in this world." The result is that we feel guilty.

Guilt is not something that comes from religion. Guilt is the feeling that "I should have done better; I could have done more, but I didn't. I had the opportunity but I didn't take it. I didn't contribute much for others." When we retire, we just wait for death, thinking, "Young people never look at me because I'm too ugly." In the West, young people never like to look at old men or women; they think they are terrifying. They think, "I'm going to become like that. Who wants it? I hope I die before I get old." And then, when we're dying, we feel unhappy and regretful. It's natural. I think that is so sad.

Buddhism talks about reality: what is happening in reality; what is happening in life. Buddhism's only business is in what is happening in life—

what is happening in my life, in my body and my mind. If we are really clever, if our mind is clean clear, we can see what will go on for the rest of our life; we can see something. It's not something we have to have mental telepathic powers for—we can see it with our present level of mind. “My mind is going this way and that way, so I can see my life going this way and that way.” We can predict it because of the karma of our existence. Don't you think it's painful, that kind of thing? It's very painful. Especially now, Western people are so sad; many are nonreligious people, so when they're old they don't have any sort of strength, they don't get resources from relatives or from anything. They're just so scared. It's very sad.

In the West, when you're old it's as if you're almost dead. Let's say I'm your father: I'm old and useless; I cannot do anything. You are busy; you have no time. Do you have time? If you are my son or daughter, do you have time for me? You don't. Some say they have time, but it's very difficult: you have obligations to your friends, you take care of your friends—how can you have time for an old man? It's just difficult, very difficult. So, for the old man who is just waiting to die, the reality is that he has no confidence that dying can be happy; no confidence, no mental exercise—just misery, meditation on misery. All right, I'm not going to talk too much. I'm not putting anyone down, but you check. Maybe I exaggerate sometimes, but this is my experience. I want to show you some reality, that's why I express things in this way. My reality is that without happiness or without having the inner strength from taking refuge or something, I think we are very miserable. So, taking refuge is very important.

### WHY TAKE REFUGE IN BUDDHADHARMA?

Then, the business of taking refuge—why take refuge in Buddhадharma? Buddha means “opened” in Sanskrit; totally opened. A mind that is totally opened, having universal understanding, embracing universal reality. You can say “opened”—you can call that buddha. Maybe you are already a buddha. It is only a word. Of course, we have a philosophical, scientific explanation of the meaning of buddha, but I'm talking about it in a simple way. Buddha means a mind that is opened rather than closed tight or wrapped up in a confused way. That's why the Buddhist point of view is that all of us have problems; we have small thoughts, wrong conceptions, tightness, bondage, superstition. But we also have the capability to cut

all these things and be totally open, to become a buddha. To unify with buddha is within our capacity; we do have buddha potential. That's why you shouldn't think buddha is something foreign; don't think that way. Buddha is completely developed method—great love and bodhicitta—and great wisdom. Then you become a buddha. That's all; it's very simple. Don't think in terms of language; don't think of buddha in Sanskrit. You can call buddha something in your own language.

Language can be a problem. We are so oriented to dualistic concepts. Whenever I say an Eastern word, you make a face. Language is terrible; language makes a double wall for you. Buddha means a completely developed human being; that is buddha, that's all.

Dharma is the wisdom, the way to become a buddha, the way to liberation. Liberation from what? From human problems, human conflict, ego problems, attachment problems, hatred problems, desire problems, ignorance problems—liberation from these. So, Dharma is the way to liberate yourself from the difficulty of the three poisons.

Sangha are those who help each other. Maybe you can say we are all Sangha. We try—when I talk to you, I mean well; I hope I can help you. Maybe I'm your Sangha. So, Sangha is us helping each other, acting together on the graduated path to enlightenment. We try to help each other; we mean well. Anyone who through wisdom and pure love helps you to become more clean clear, more realized, more satisfied—not satisfied in a superficial, worldly way but more deeply, more solidly, more stably, more lastingly—is Sangha. That kind of human being can be a woman or a man; any kind of person. Sangha does not mean only those who have taken monks' or nuns' vows—all of us are Sangha. Most of you Western people are couples; a couple can be Sangha. A wife and husband can be Sangha, can really help each other—they can help each other temporarily; they can help each other ultimately. We all need help for temporary adjustment in life. We need help emotionally and we also need to give ultimate help to each other. We are emotional beings, so we need to somehow take care to be emotionally stable, and we need to develop true great loving kindness and great wisdom.

Anyone around you who can do that is Sangha—that is your Sangha. It does not necessarily have to be a Buddhist. If you go back to a Christian priest and he helps your development of loving kindness and wisdom, he is also Sangha, even though he has a philosophically different religion. But



as long as he helps you practically, he's your Sangha. It's true. Why do we need a helper? It depends—we don't always need the person who helps us to be right in front of us and we don't always need relative Sangha—but while we are beginners, we need somebody's support, somebody's help. When we are developed and have total confidence, we don't need external Sangha or helpers; we don't need an external guru. We can go completely inside, totally inside, like Milarepa. That's a good example—Milarepa went alone into the mountains; he didn't have any friends. Similarly, you can stay in your society and have good friends, but you don't need “blah, blah” friends.

Many of us Westerners desperately need a friend but the friends we have bring us down. What is happening? Instead of being helpful, by being a friend they bring us down, make us irritated, increase our hatred and agitation. That is not Sangha. “Sorry, I'm not helping you, you're not helping me; when I helped you, you hurt me.” That's not right. You can say, “I have compassion for you but I can't help you; I'm sad, so goodbye.” That's a little better. If you hurt other people, it's no good. So now you understand clean clear that taking refuge in Buddhadharma is quite simple. To take refuge in Buddhadharma you don't need to say one word of an Eastern language or one word of a Western language—it's just a way of understanding and an experience, that's all. In Eastern countries, like Thailand or Tibet, people take refuge as their custom. Buddhism entered Tibetan culture, so now people come together and recite the refuge formula, *Lama la kyab su chi wo*, *Sangye la kyab su chi wo*, *Chö la kyab su chi wo*, *Gendün la kyab su chi wo*.

But taking refuge is definitely not just words. In my opinion—and maybe this is a wrong conception—refuge isn't saying words; it's just locking the mouth shut. First, shut your mouth; second, shut your eyes; then close off all your other senses. Lock your five sense perceptions and dwell in intensive awareness, that's all. I believe that's the best way to take refuge. In Buddhist countries, taking refuge is again sensation: *Lama la kyab su chi wo*. . . . It's the same thing as in a church. Church sometimes becomes a merely sensory experience, like a dance hall or an opera. Puja becomes like an opera, unfortunately. Some Western people like Tibetan rituals but observe pujas like they would an opera, as if they were watching performing gorillas or monkeys—Tibetan monks as monkeys! So, when we take refuge it might be better to simply close off our physical senses.

Of course, sometimes strong words can help mental contemplation. We can do both; there are many different ways we can take refuge, but just reciting the words is not one of them. We need to make our mind deeply confident in our refuge, and we do that by utilizing our skill to put it into a clean-clear state, a state of intensive awareness. You have the ability to develop this; you have the mental skill to bring your mind to such a tranquil, peaceful level. That's the way to be liberated. So simple, isn't it? You have method, you have wisdom, you are capable. That's all.

If you think, "I cannot, I cannot. Buddha can do it, somebody else can do it," that's garbage. That sort of thinking is weak; there's no strength. You can do it; I can do it. It's true. Then you have confidence in the external Buddha and the internal Buddha, the outer Dharma and the inner Dharma and in the inner Sangha and the outer Sangha. That is the way to take refuge. In my opinion, taking refuge is a kind of realization. It is not something like, "I'm hopeless, so Buddha help me, Dharma help me, Sangha help me!" That doesn't work. "I'm miserable, so Buddha help me, Dharma help me." I don't think so. Somehow, for me, that is difficult. I won't accept that.

That's why I say taking refuge is some experience, some kind of realization. Many people misunderstand. They say, "I'm hopeless, so this is my protection. I have so many problems, I'm so out of control, therefore I take refuge." Maybe it's OK, I don't know. Maybe it's all right, but taking refuge should be something within you; it should be your experience, something very worthwhile, your realization, something pure: "Because I've already had certain experiences, I can go on in this way continuously. Keeping clean-clear conditions within my consciousness is the only way to liberate myself." This is the way to take refuge.

It's very simple: no rituals, no dorje and bell. For example, you can take refuge while flying in a plane—you do take refuge there, don't you? Perhaps the pilot suddenly announces, "Ladies and gentlemen, we're having engine trouble." So, you take refuge. As long as the engines keep working, as long as our mind is clean clear, who cares? What you can do is keep your inner mandala clean clear, OK? It's so simple. I'm not going to talk much more about taking refuge; that's enough. Time is running. Buddha, Dharma, Sangha—then, what else? Is that enough?

Of course, there are many other topics we could discuss when talking about taking refuge—how and why we do it; the qualities of a buddha:

great compassion and limitless love, limitless wisdom and limitless power. You know these things from Lama Zopa Rinpoche's lamrim teachings; if I try to explain all this it will become too much for now.

We also have explanations about true Sangha, remember? The ultimate Sangha are those who have attained the cessation of all samsaric suffering. We call them *arya* beings to distinguish them from ordinary beings. The absolute Sangha have clean-clear understanding of shunyata. Practical Sangha is anyone who really brings you up and makes you clean clear, who brings you satisfaction and happiness. That is why we have so much explanation in a scientific or philosophical way about how they have cut this and that, but that also takes much time.

## THE FIVE LAY PRECEPTS

### *Abstaining from killing*

Precepts are very important actually. The first one is to abstain from killing. You do not kill people but you may ask, "Why should I take a vow not to?" It's different when you understand the situation and decide, "I don't want to kill anybody. I will never kill any sentient being, any human being." When you make that decision about any human being, about universal human beings, you get some kind of growth, some sort of energy. For example, if you say, "I will never kill my relatives or friends, but those who are not my friends, I'm not sure," you make it limited. But when you say, "I will never kill; it doesn't matter what nation—East, West, African or any people, without discrimination color-wise—I will never kill any human being," you get merit according to the number of people in the world. So, in your mind, the object of not killing that you embrace is all international, universal people.

Also, if a situation arises, there is no hesitation. Let's say we have made a strong determination but then someone tries to harm us. We have no hesitation about whether we should kill this person or not. We have already decided that we should never kill this person, haven't we? We have already made the determination, "I shall not kill anybody." So when the situation arises, there's no hesitation. That's why it's very useful to take a vow to not kill any human being. It creates great merit. When we make this determination, not only does our merit increase greatly in every moment, so does our loving kindness for others. Not killing is not something we're joking

about; we're putting ourselves into the others' place: "I don't want to be killed, so why should I kill others?" That is very useful for developing love and compassion.

You people should be the number one example for peacekeeping, shouldn't you? Don't you think you should be a good example, the number one example, for keeping peace in the world? Yes, I think definitely, definitely. You should decide. We are not simply going "blah, blah, blah, blah." We will definitely be a good example by not killing anybody on this earth. We have enough understanding, so we should make that determination.

I was surprised when earlier this year I gave lectures in Berkeley and Santa Cruz, California. There were a hundred people there and my lectures were entitled "Anxiety in the Nuclear Age."<sup>18</sup> I explained how many miles of damage there would be physically and then how much damage from the vibration if they bombed San Francisco. After this we were talking and I asked, "How many of you people will make the determination to not kill anybody?" I asked them to raise their hands. Most of the people did. They were just people who came, university-style people, not all meditators, and they all said that. I was so emotional: wonderful, isn't it? American life is not an easy life; American life is a distracted life, so these people asserting "I will never kill" was incredible. I was just so happy.

Even if we ask Eastern people directly, "Will you ever kill anybody in your life?" they are going to say, "Well, something. . . ." They'll make some kind of rationalization. It's not easy. I was very happy that all these Berkeley and Santa Cruz people said, "I will never kill anyone in my life." I couldn't imagine those people saying that—American life is not easy. Is it easy or not? In some ways easy, yes, but in some ways not killing is not easy. It's very difficult, that's why we should as much as possible be determined to keep peace by living in the vow to not kill other human beings. Otherwise we are worthless. I think that's the main point.

On this earth now so many people are killing with selfish motivation. To kill a human being is not a big deal now. You don't need—what is it? A gun without sound; you can shoot bullets without sound, have you heard? Guns without sound—my goodness! [*A silencer.*] How do they make it? It's too much! It was in the newspaper—some embassy person or someone

<sup>18</sup> See chapters 9 and 10.

was killed by a bullet without sound. It's too much. We don't even need a gun—we just need a tiny drop of poison or some kind of lethal gas. There are so many ways to kill people now.

This is my advice about what you should do: number one, be a good example for peacekeeping. Don't think you are not capable—you are capable. Not killing is practicing loving kindness. Even if we rejoice when somebody else kills, that is terrible. Again, that is negative. For example, maybe a woman criticizes some guy and he kills her. We hear about it and think, "Oh really, he killed her—good!" Then we also get the negative karma of killing.

Killing is not only done directly, but also indirectly—I can order someone else to do it. That is very dangerous. So, taking a vow not to kill is extremely important. Presidents of big countries send out armies—they just sit there and do nothing, but they're killing because they gave the order to kill. Then, of course, some Western people are very sensitive: "I'm taking a vow to not kill any sentient beings, so how can I walk?" When walking we kill—we kill ants. Even if I wave my arm like this I can kill because in space there are so many animals, sentient beings. And when we drink water, we kill. Anyway, there is no choice, so what to do? Without killing, drinking tea is not possible.

You might think that in Buddhism we don't have science: we have the science that Lord Buddha taught about 2,600 years ago. We talk about the science of water; what is in the water. What we have to do is analyze as much as we can and then use it—that's all we can do. But certain animals, insects, in the water are invisible. Then we just have to give up, don't we? In the monasteries monks have to use cloth strainers before drinking the water. But still there are insects—I saw them. So what to do? In those instances, we're not killing deliberately, so there's no breaking of the vow. If we kill deliberately with motivation, that is breaking the vow. Some things are not possible without killing. What can I say?

Now you can decide your way of not killing, "I will never kill any human being," or "I will never kill a woman," or "I will never kill a man," it's still good enough! Even that kind of understanding is good enough. Or you can decide, "I will never again deliberately kill any living being." This is the condition, "I will never kill deliberately, with intensive awareness." That's good enough.

When we travel along a highway in the summertime many insects are

killed. When I came from Europe to Delhi, I was completely shocked at Delhi airport—it was incredible, full of these big insects. What is their name? I don't know the name [perhaps cockroaches]. Beginning from customs, the entire area was completely, totally filled. You could not walk without killing so many. Really! What to do? I mean, international people were arriving at the airport and they had to pick up their luggage and there was no choice—there was no place to walk because it was so full of insects. That was their karma. So, we shouldn't worry about those kinds of things. When we're driving a car, we are not thinking to kill—they are just there.

### *Abstaining from false speech*

Then, not lying. Lying is by motivation—all these negativities are largely defined by motivation. In Buddhism, the characteristic of lying is to change other people's reality—to show a false reality. Lying is creating a double delusion for other people. It is not just joking about things; lying is done with a seriously selfish purpose. What can it be? The selfish purpose of getting materials, getting clothes, getting food, getting money, getting reputation, gaining something for ourselves and wanting to change other people's minds.

Lying is not just words; it needs the negative motivation to change other people's understanding. There should be a selfish purpose behind it. If the purpose is to benefit mother sentient beings—other people—we don't call it lying. Westerners call it lying. From Western society's point of view, if we say something untrue, it's a lie. But from the point of view of ethics, Vinaya, Buddhist psychology, if, let's say, New York is going to be destroyed by a nuclear missile or something and we lie in order to protect the New York people, that is not a lie. It doesn't have the negative connotation of lying. That's positive; that's compassion; that's love.

Western people think, "Oh, you lied! Look, you did know!" It's not bad; it's a good lie, isn't it? It's positive—it's Dharma, it's wisdom. Lying has incredibly detailed explanations because our mind is so sneaky. Especially in the Vinaya we have explanations for monks and nuns: lying is dangerous, like, if we don't have any kind of knowledge yet we try to show that we do have that kind of knowledge by projecting a false appearance. We show "I'm highly realized" by false appearance. This is the most dangerous lie—cheating other people; the worst kind of lie, an unsurpassed lie. If

we don't have higher realizations but pretend that we do, that is cheating. That kind of thing is a lie.

Maybe that's enough about lying. My main point here is that lying has to do with a bad motivation—wanting to change other people's reality. To give a false, wrong conception is very dangerous. Other people are confused enough already; they have enough ignorance as it is, so we should not add to it. Lying is not just a joke; it's a very serious thing. We should be aware.

### *Abstaining from stealing*

Stealing can be direct or indirect. Again, it has to do with motivation. The most important thing in Buddhism is motivation. For example, maybe I take your pen from you—normally we take pens from each other just unconsciously, don't we? I think I do, and other people take my pens as well. I don't say they're stealing from me, like when we're working together. Stealing has to be deliberate. Mostly the motivation is selfishness, attachment or hatred. Many young people hate rich people, feeling that they don't really need their money or whatever. Young people also say, "These rich people have too much; I will take it and give it to the poor." There's some jealousy there as well. If their motivation is pure, it may be OK—I cannot say it's not OK. Rich people don't even know how much they have. But if the person taking from the rich is motivated by hatred, it is wrong. We should never have hatred for rich people.

Similarly, we should never have hatred for Ronald Reagan. Come on—never! As long as we have hatred for Reagan, that's our problem, not his. We're making ourselves unhappy by being angry with him. It's not worth it. It's better that we just pray for him: "Poor man, so much obligation. Some are pulling him this way, some are pulling him that way, and he is just caught in the middle, confused." That's my feeling—he has no choice. In many of Reagan's decisions, he has no choice. He's just an object of compassion. Most politicians have no choice, but American people think they do, and blame the president, saying, "He had a choice. He made this decision and it's wrong." They don't understand the notion of interdependence. Somebody else often controls his power, so it's a waste of our time if we're angry with him. Why? What are we gaining? We're not gaining anything. So just love him and say, "Poor man."

What am I talking about? Stealing. Then, any problems with stealing? What I'm saying is, the way we take something belonging to another has to be deliberate. Taking unconsciously is not wrong. Unconsciously, we can do anything. I will give you an example: what about a mad monk—a mad monk who kills, who has no control; a mad monk who breaks everything due to some mental disorder? Sometimes in the monastery monks become mentally disordered, completely disordered, crazy. According to the Vinaya, we consider them not to be breaking vows. They aren't conscious, they don't have control, they don't know what they're doing.

Also, dreaming that we are stealing is OK; we are not breaking the vow. If the wish to steal suddenly arises, we are not breaking the vow because it is mental speculation; it has to be physical in order to break the vow.

Stealing also has technical aspects. Suppose last year I borrowed something from another person: "Please lend me your cup; it's so nice for drinking my jasmine tea." Then I become so happy with this cup, develop attachment to it and think, "I hope she forgets about her cup. I hope she never comes back to Kopan, so I don't have to return it." That is stealing. When I reach the point of thinking, "Oh, she has completely forgotten, so now the cup belongs to me," it is completely stealing. So, stealing has very much to do with the sneaky mind. Anyway, the mind can be very sneaky, so stealing can also be very subtle. Or, for example, the Vinaya explains that if you ride on a bus or train without paying the fare, you are stealing. It is explained very clearly. Of course, if you don't have any money, that could be something else.

### *Abstaining from sexual misconduct*

We already have some understanding of sexual misconduct. Misconduct means, for example, if you are married to somebody and have verbally said, "We are together; we will live together; we are partners and will never ever take any other partner,"—if that's understood with clean-clear determination inside and then you go with another lady or gentleman, you have broken your agreement. This is sexual misconduct. In marriage, a couple make a vow to each other, they understand it to be that way. So, when you break the vow, that is dangerous. Many couples make their relationship a disaster because they do that, don't they? Then they distrust each other and much conflict ensues. It's terrible if you don't trust your



partner. You live together and don't trust each other: "I'm very uncomfortable; I'm not going to live another hour with this kind of person." It's difficult. You make a disaster out of your situation, that's why it's no good.

The Vinaya rule is that you can change. Buddha said that when the country's customs change, the conditions change, the delusions change or the motivation changes, then the rule changes too. If the culture changes, the mind changes, delusions change, motivation changes, behavior changes. Maybe one thousand years ago some behaviors were considered negative but then the mind changed and the culture changed and now maybe it's positive. Buddha said to then change. What was considered to be a negative mind before can now become positive.

Let me give you an example: earlier, the British sent their criminals to Australia. Do you know that history? Back then Australia was considered to be an empty place,<sup>19</sup> so the British sent their criminals there. Last year in Australia they found some documents about a woman who stole one piece of bread, such a small thing, and they sent her to Australia. It's documented there; the paper is there. Can you imagine? At that time the British people were incredible; they were conservative and very ethical people—some lady stole a piece of bread and they called her a criminal. But now the British don't consider someone who steals a piece of bread to be a criminal. It's a different culture now.

Have you heard something like that or not? It's a completely new culture, isn't it? It almost seems that something like that is coming into the world now. So, what's the big deal? If the couple say, "OK, whatever you want to do you can do, as long as you come home," or if the man says, "Whatever you want to do, you can do. It's OK, it's fine," then what is wrong? It's completely clean clear, isn't it? It's the mind that's the problem, not the body. If you have said it and it's clean clear, then what is the problem? That is not sexual misconduct. The situation has changed. It's possible; who can say? The human mind is incredible and is always changing. Now men know what women are going to do; men are not stupid. And women also know what men are going to do. The culture is changing, so the connotation of sexual misconduct can change along with it.

<sup>19</sup>There were an estimated 300,000 to a million indigenous people in Australia when British settlement began in 1788. Over the 65,000 years prior to that, a cumulative population of 1.6 billion people has been estimated to have lived there.

We also have different interpretations of this vow in the Vinaya. For example, have you heard that at new or full moon times it is considered that merits are multiplied one hundred times? So, if you do a negative action, it also gets multiplied a hundred times. Therefore, according to the interpretation of the Vinaya, even if you have sex with your spouse on the full moon, it becomes sexual misconduct. That's one interpretation, but I don't want you to get confused. You shouldn't worry about it. Whatever you feel is a problem is good enough. If you feel something is a problem, "I shouldn't do it because I get out of control," it's clean clear. Anyway, don't create a disastrous situation. If you want a happy home with your husband or wife, a warm home, a comfortable, peaceful home, a satisfied home, don't create problems, that's all. The conclusion is: don't create any kind of situation where you distrust each other; that's no good. It depends; only you know, I don't know.

### *Abstaining from intoxicants*

Intoxicants can be anything—wine, beer or spirits, or heavy drugs. I don't know what kinds of drugs make you unconscious. You should not take any kind of drug that makes you unconscious unless it's for medical purposes. For medical purposes it's all right. Also, if taking the drug does not damage intensive awareness, it's OK; take as much as possible! I think you know hashish, yes? Does hashish damage your consciousness or not? [*It depends on how much you take.*] That's right, isn't it? Taking a little bit is OK; it can bring some kind of waking up, some intensive awareness. Possible! Maybe! Some drugs can help intensive awareness.

For example, Tibetan monks who studied very hard would drink very heavy, strong Tibetan tea. I did it myself when I was in Tibet. If I drink strong Tibetan tea, really strong butter tea, I can stay awake all night and I can study, I can read. I believe that is kind of being intoxicated, isn't it? You are very much awake and don't want to sleep, so you read and you think very clearly. So that's why I cannot criticize or say taking drugs is bad. How can you say that? Very strong tea is like a drug, isn't it? When you drink strong Tibetan tea and you don't eat well, you shake, because there is too much of a wind explosion in the blood—you are almost walking in space! It's our experience.

I'm sure most Tibetans who were doing very heavy studies in Tibet all

liked heavy, heavy, strong tea. Some monks were addicted to tea, I'm sure. Yes, I saw it. I could not believe it—they didn't really care about food but they had to have their tea. That's very bad. Their faces became dark and like pig skin. They didn't eat; all they did was drink their tea. We Tibetans have got our problems, too. Even though those people were extremely learned, extremely knowledgeable, they became like that.

When I was at Santa Cruz University in 1978, I went down to the beach and there were two young couples and their parents there. They came together and smoked hashish—the children and their parents smoked hashish together and were very happy with each other. Very nice, isn't it? Very open—young son and old father taking hashish together by the ocean. They laughed with each other—it was very nice. Maybe that was California style.

The emphasis in Buddhism is to not become intoxicated because being intoxicated is very dangerous. For example, when you get drunk you can break every vow. Many monks break their vows because they drink. When you drink, your good knowledge-wisdom disappears but desire is there, hatred is there, everything is there; the body is there. That's why intoxicants make it easy to break vows: first, you can have sexual contact unconsciously; maybe you steal someone from their partner. Then you come home and lie. So, the one action of drinking can lead to your doing the five negative actions together. It's dangerous because you get out of control, with no awareness. That's what the precepts are there to protect you from.

The way of taking precepts is that you can take all five, you can take one, you can take two, you can take three; you can take them for one day or one month, one year or your lifetime, whatever you want; it's up to you completely. But it should be understood clean clear that there is no pressure. If you're not clean clear, there's no need to take them—there's no pressure. I'm not pushing you. My responsibility is to make sure you're clean clear about what taking precepts entails, so that when you take them, it's not because we've hypnotized you. We are not pushing you—you are clean clear to make your own decision. In Buddhism, we believe that your own decision is the best. We don't say anything; we just make it clean clear. That is our duty, if we can.

Next, I'll talk briefly about the bodhisattva vows.

## THE BODHISATTVA VOWS

There are two ways of taking the bodhisattva vows. I'll talk more about this below, but the first is the wishful way [effortful bodhicitta]. Here we are completely sure, without the slightest doubt, that the only way to live is with bodhicitta; that the selfish way we have lived so far is only painful and dominated by the paranoia that others are always trying to take advantage of us. This is not true. Everything we have has come to us through the kindness of others. We were born with nothing; all our food, clothes and other possessions have been given to us by other people. At least, this is what we Buddhists believe. We were born naked; we weren't wearing clothes when we came out from our mother's womb. All our happiness has come from others. Is this a difficult concept for Western minds to grasp? That all our happiness comes from others? It's not difficult to understand—it's true, definitely true—we can prove it scientifically. Think about it—everything we have has come from others.

In my opinion, bodhicitta is the essence of all religions, the essence of all good philosophies, the essence of all humanity, even the essence of all animals. I mean, wild animals die for their young, don't they? Even if they have no hope, they'll try to protect them. So, bodhicitta is the most worthwhile thing there is.

For Westerners, bodhicitta is the best and easiest thing to practice, much better than sitting meditation. Sitting meditation is often very difficult—it's not your style. But loving kindness, bodhicitta, is something that Westerners can easily relate to, probably because of your Christian background. Christianity greatly emphasizes love, so that philosophy is already deeply rooted in you. I feel that Western people have a lot of love in them, and for that reason they find the practice of bodhicitta very simple and very logical, and it makes them very happy.

It seems that many Western people think that others are always trying to take advantage of them. They feel it's a feature of their society: "People are always trying to take advantage of me, me, me; I have to protect myself." Now you're probably thinking, "He's exaggerating; Lama Yeshe doesn't understand Western society." However, I'm not talking about an individual point of view, I'm generalizing. Perhaps I shouldn't do that, but sometimes generalizations help. And even if people do take advantage of

you, they've benefited you far more often. Even people who spend all their lives working hard and collecting possessions with selfish motivation don't take those things with them when they die. They leave them for the benefit of others.

Bodhicitta is very important. When we have bodhicitta we're relaxed, we have space. Even if someone tries to take advantage of us, we're relaxed. If we don't have bodhicitta, it's very painful for us; very, very painful. For example, in poor countries there are always beggars coming up to us asking for something, knocking at our door, "Hello, I'm a beggar; please give me something." If we don't have bodhicitta we'll really hate that beggar: "He's disturbing me, asking me for money." If we have bodhicitta, we'll think, "Oh, I'm so lucky; now I have the chance to share something with someone," and we will give happily.

It's the same when we're at home: our friends always ask us for so much—money, things and especially our time and attention. If we have bodhicitta, we give our friends whatever they want with much happiness and satisfaction. If we don't have bodhicitta, we'll feel pain whenever they ask us for anything—unless we have something to gain. Usually when someone asks us for something we think, "If I give it to them maybe they'll do this for me, so I'll give." This sort of generosity is a joke; it's just bartering. It doesn't give us any satisfaction—not the inner satisfaction that I'm talking about.

Bodhicitta is extremely practical. Just the philosophy itself helps us a great deal, without having to meditate. If we simply understand the philosophy and psychology of bodhicitta and try to act according to it all the time, experimenting in all our actions, that's good enough. That, for Western people, is very practical. Of course, actual bodhicitta is some kind of realization. For us to have the realization of bodhicitta, there's a long way to go, baby! There's a long training to undergo, such as the seven-point thought transformation. We have to change our self-cherishing attitude into cherishing of others.

So that's what Buddhism offers you—training. We don't tell you that bodhicitta is fantastic because Buddha said so. We tell you how to actualize, how to practice bodhicitta; we give you the method. This is the most important thing for you. Thus, gradually, you are led to bodhicitta. You should appreciate this quality of the Buddha's teaching of the graduated path.

## EQUILIBRIUM MEDITATION

Now, the first thing we have to develop is equilibrium, space in our mind. This is the foundation of bodhicitta, just as level ground is the basis on which we build a house. Past meditators' experience is that when we have developed equilibrium, we can realize bodhicitta quickly and easily. But equilibrium, or equanimity, is one of the most difficult things to develop. Our habit of discriminating between friends, enemies and strangers is deeply rooted. With our tremendous grasping desire, we become attached and cling to our dear friends, and with aversion and hatred, we reject those we don't like as enemies. As long as we have these kinds of minds, we can never realize bodhicitta. Therefore, equilibrium—one of the four immeasurables<sup>20</sup>—is extremely important.

Equilibrium is not an intellectual thing. We have to make our mind equal. For example, when I teach a group of people at a meditation course, I feel the same toward each of them. I haven't met them before; all of a sudden, they have just gathered together—popped up like mushrooms. I haven't had time to develop attachment or aversion to any of them, so my feeling is neutral, equal. If I take the experience of this ordinary feeling of equality and apply it to my dear friends to whom I am attached and to my enemies and critics, I can start to develop equilibrium.

Actually, there is a meditation technique for this. You imagine three people—your dearest friend, your worst enemy and a total stranger. Visualize your friend behind you, your enemy and the stranger in front of you, and all other sentient beings in human form surrounding you. Then examine your feelings toward each of the three people you have visualized and analyze why you have labeled each of them as you have. You will find that the reasons for having done so are because of events of only this life. When you reflect that each sentient being has, over beginningless past lives, done just the same kind and unkind things to you as have the friend and enemy of this life, you will see that all beings are equal in having been friend, enemy and stranger. Thus, your feelings of attachment and aversion to your friend and enemy will subside and you will start to experience some equilibrium. So, you hold that feeling and meditate upon it.

Meditating on equilibrium is one of the best ways of producing mental

<sup>20</sup> These are immeasurable loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity.

health. Instead of going to a psychiatrist and paying one hundred dollars an hour, meditate on equilibrium. Shut your mouth, eyes, ears and nose and ignore all physical sensations; abandon the five sense perceptions and go deeply into the intensive awareness of your mind's experience of equilibrium—it is so good for you. After just ten minutes of this kind of meditation you come out into a different world.

Now, getting back to the bodhisattva vows, the wishful, or effortful, way of taking these vows is very important. You determine that this is the only way to live; that no matter what happens, whether you are rich or poor, you will dedicate yourself to others; that this is the only way to be satisfied; that this is the only way to make your life worthwhile. It's true: you've been born human, you're considered intelligent, however, if you live with the same selfish attitude that animals have, you render your human life meaningless. Thus, even if you cannot actualize bodhicitta, taking the vows with the wishing attitude is most worthwhile.

The second way of taking the bodhisattva vows [engaging bodhicitta] is with the intention of actualizing bodhicitta in your daily life. Here you actually have to keep the eighteen root and forty-six branch vows. Hence, you should understand them. They are not some arbitrary set of rules that you have to obey for fear of punishment but a psychological method for transforming your mind. When you understand how they work, why you follow them and what is going on in your consciousness, taking and keeping these vows to actualize bodhicitta is highly meaningful.

Once you have taken them in this way, what is your responsibility? What should you do? You have to practice the six perfections: generosity, morality, patience, enthusiastic perseverance, concentration and wisdom. From the practical point of view, this means sharing your body, wealth and everything else with others. Anyway, you already have to do this, don't you? There's no choice. Do you really think you have a choice about sharing your time and energy with others? I believe that everybody does share their things with others. Perhaps I'm deluded, but all of us share things with others. If you understand that, it's a kind of realization. The difference is whether you share with bodhicitta or not. If you don't have bodhicitta it can be very painful when you have to share things; you can feel very badly toward those who ask you for help. I mean, you do help them, but reluctantly.

When we have bodhicitta it is so easy to share with others. First, we might find it difficult to share even small things, but slowly, slowly we can learn. It's simply a matter of mind, of conscious energy. We have more than enough, so why not share? Human energy is inexhaustible; we humans have unbelievable resources of energy within us and we have so much energy to share with others. All of us have. So, with bodhicitta, we can share with great happiness, and when we do, it's just like meditation—bodhicitta meditation. This is extremely worthwhile.

When you practice bodhicitta you shouldn't worry that your practice is only an Eastern trip or that you are merely following some religious belief. It has nothing to do with blind faith. You don't have to believe in anything, even Buddha. All you have to think is, "My religion, my meditation, is sharing with others, having concern for others." This is highly beneficial and not at all dangerous.

You see, there is a danger that if you are an extreme believer, a religious fanatic, bloodshed can result. You might fight with followers of other religions. If you have bodhicitta, you will never, ever fight with or kill others. Sometimes disciples of one guru kill disciples of another; dangerous things like that happen, but not if you have bodhicitta—it is totally pure, a perfect medicine, totally safe.

Other meditations, such as shunyata meditation, can be dangerous; they can cause *lung* [wind disease]. Bodhicitta will never cause lung; it always makes you peaceful. Equilibrium and bodhicitta are the essence of the Mahayana teaching and completely perfect. You will never want to hurt anybody; you will want only to serve others as much as possible. It is the only way you will want to spend your life, and I think this is the best kind of life there is. There's no doubt about that—bodhicitta is very, very worthwhile. With bodhicitta, there's no pressure. According to your level, you dedicate yourself to others as much as you can. There's nobody telling you, "You should do this; you should do that." Just do what you comfortably can, that's all. When you dedicate yourself to others with concern for their happiness, your heart opens and the tightness disappears. That makes you really healthy.

When you meditate on equilibrium, you think, "It's silly; such small things upset me. What a waste of time! Many, many times this person has helped me—in beginningless past lives they have been everything to me: my mother, my father, my wife, my husband. For life after life, for hun-



dreds and hundreds of years, they have been so kind to me, but just at this moment, this short moment, they are criticizing me. Why should I be upset? It's so transient. In fact, by doing this they are helping me. They are reflecting the hatred within me, showing me my weaknesses. So even now they are kind." I truly believe this myself—that those who give us a bad time are actually helping us.

When the Chinese took over Tibet, from the point of view of my personal development I was very happy. They really helped me. They gave me a much better understanding of Buddhadharma and my refuge. So, in my experience, the Chinese were very kind and I'm grateful to Mao Zedong. If I'd stayed in Tibet, I'd have gotten caught up in family obligations; my family was very strong and I was on the way to becoming a geshe. If I'd received that title and the reputation that goes with it, I'd have had to get involved in an incredible trip, taking care of my family and that sort of thing. This is not a monk's business, but it's what would have happened. True monks don't have to look after their families.

So, I'm glad Mao and the soldiers threw me out of Tibet and showed me my reality. I really had to ask myself, "Now, what's your reality?" I'd been a monk from the age of six and from then until I was twenty-five, I'd spent each year receiving teachings and studying. When I was chased out by the Chinese army with machine guns pointing at me, I had to ask myself, "OK, now you're close to death. OK, Thubten Yeshe,"—I'm not lying about this—"Now you're dead. Here come the soldiers with their guns, and what have you achieved? Are you ready to die? Can you die peacefully?" All these questions came because of Mao Zedong. This was my own experience. So the enemy is a great help. Those who kicked me out of my home improved the quality of my Dharma and my refuge. Even our enemies are very, very kind.

When we have bodhicitta we are warm, peaceful and satisfied; we can relax. Without bodhicitta we cannot relax. Even though we might think we're relaxed, we're not—the selfish attitude is deeply rooted in our nervous system; it twists us, it shakes us. You see, even though in Buddhism we have many meditation techniques, clean-clear wisdom and method, it is still very hard to actualize the teachings so that, for example, we can help the poor and sick without flinching. Personally, I find it very difficult to work with people suffering from cancer or to go to dirty places like leprosy colonies. Why? Because of the selfish attitude.

For us, Christians are a very good example; they are so dedicated to helping others. Without worrying about getting the disease themselves, they touch lepers and dress their wounds, working voluntarily to help. They put us Buddhists to shame. We talk about our great methods, but we don't put them into action; they remain intellectual. We should observe Christians very carefully to see what hardships they undergo to work with devotion and humanity to take care of the old and sick and to live under difficult conditions, like in Africa, in order to spread Christianity. We don't want to live in Africa, where there is trouble finding food and water and much discomfort, because we are selfish.

So, I have much respect for Christians; they really have bodhicitta. We just say the word "bodhicitta" and don't do anything about it; they don't say "bodhicitta" but they act the way we should. Christians talk about having loving kindness for others. That is incredibly worthwhile—it is the essence of bodhicitta. Even if we never thought of anything else, I'm sure that would be enough.

#### THE ESSENCE OF TANTRA

Tantra is such a simple thing; tantra is a method to quickly transform oneself into having divine qualities. Technically, our body is transformed into a rainbow radiating light body; our speech is transformed into the purity of the divine, pure mantra, instead of consisting of blah, blah nonsense words; and our thought into dharmakaya—right now. Tantra is very Western style: in the West the attitude is, "I want to be happy right now; I want everything right now." So, tantra is like that. In tantra we never believe, "I'm selfish, I've got a long way to go—I will become a buddha at some time when these garbage thoughts have finished." We generate the recognition, "Right now my body is a buddha's body, my speech is a buddha's speech and my mind is the enlightened stage of wisdom." That's the kind of technique we experience when we practice tantra. Tantra is a method to manipulate every uncontrolled situation and transform it into the peaceful path to liberation.

Tantra is very powerful because normally we consider every situation of worldly involvement bad and distort every situation and everything we think about. In the lamrim, in the ordinary sense, it is negative, but the mind can transform every situation into medicine, into intensive aware-

ness and loving kindness. That's why it's so quick—everything is turned upside down, turned positive. Normally we consider these situations as poison, but here we transform them into medicine, and that's why it's powerful. Normally we consider that enjoying pleasure is being out of control, but in tantra we should have as much pleasure as possible because that is the method to utilize the intensive awareness of nonduality, the intensive awareness of shunyata. Then every situation in which we find ourselves becomes a resource to free us from the uncontrolled mind. Tantra is like an industrialized country that uses everything for human benefit and for money—digging up the earth for minerals; using air, space, the sun's rays. In tantra it's the same thing; we use everything. Every human being has to do things, so we just do those things and use the experience to develop blissful intensive awareness.

That's why tantra is very powerful. Normally only skillful people, very intelligent people, very fortunate people, can practice tantra. I think the essence of tantra is taking desire objects, normally considered as negative, as the path to liberation. Only tantra can do that. There is no method in the Paramitayana to do that.

## QUESTION TIME

Now, do you have questions? We can do the refuge ceremony easily, in a couple of minutes. Are there any questions about taking refuge? The reason why I'm taking time and asking for questions is that I want you people to be comfortable—I don't want to cheat anybody. I don't want to say, "Buddhism is special, you should do this." That's not my style, not my business. My statement is, "I want you to be free, I want you to be responsible." My style, my statement is, "You are free to go wherever you want"—that's my style. If you want to become Christian, I give you permission; if you want to be a Hindu or a Muslim or a follower of Rajneesh, you are free, completely. I'm happy—that's my style. I don't say, "You do this, you do that." I believe you have buddha nature; you decide everything. That's my style.

Q. I come from a rich Western country where people kill, steal and lie. Why should I take precepts in this situation?

*Lama.* Western people also do good things; that's why they're rich.

*Q.* But the West is rich because people kill, steal, lie and exploit third world countries.

*Lama.* The Buddhist way of thinking is that the West is rich not because they have taken advantage of underdeveloped countries. We think differently. From the Buddhist point of view, Western people are rich because they created their internal richness within themselves, so they can create wealth now. They have projections of how to make the outside rich, whereas people in underdeveloped countries have no such imagination. It takes visualization to make wealth; it takes appropriate energy and karma. You are thinking in the wrong way; we think positively, you're thinking negatively.

I have some evidence, too. Like the history of American life: if you look at it superficially, it seems that in order to sustain their economy they have to make war, but from another way of thinking, it's not true. Besides that, they have some karma, so they have the mind to create wealth. I don't think only about the negative side. If you think about it, Western wealth has both positive and negative aspects.

Millions of American people live a comfortable life—they are good, they are lucky and they deserve it. I believe they should have a comfortable life, because American people are very hard-working. In other parts of the world, people do not work hard—they just gamble. I know, and everybody knows, what he's saying; he's right in one way, but we shouldn't think only in that way. We think that Western people are rich not only because of this life. For millions of lives you have created the karma to live comfortably and be intelligent. Perhaps the lamrim teachings make it sound as if your entire life is negative, but of course, it's not.

*Q.* How can I stay clean if people are killing and stealing? If people don't kill and lie for me then I can't sit here and I can't take precepts.

*Lama.* What are you saying? You're confusing me!

*Q.* An example would be that about six weeks ago the United States invaded a small island in the Caribbean.<sup>21</sup> [*Yes, I know, dear.*] With that example, as a US citizen and with my government supposedly working to represent me, did I not participate in some way in the killing of the people during that invasion? And what's happening in Central America—am I not accumulating karma by that activity? That's one example. A history of those types of activities has given me the freedom to be here to know the Dharma in some way.

*Lama.* I see, yes. I don't know how to answer your question. I can only answer that there is a good side and a bad side at the same time. American people's living a comfortable life and having pleasure is good karma; we cannot say it is because they killed. It looks like that, but that's not the case. It sounds like you are saying America is like it is because they killed other people. I understand what you mean, but I don't think so.

I agree that you have some karmic involvement if America goes to war with other countries like Russia or Vietnam. Definitely, because you paid your taxes. There's no choice and that's why, due to universal karma, you are included with your own nation. There is collective, or group, karma and on top of that, there's individual karma. So, there is definitely some karma. But if you yourself are clean clear all the time, that cannot harm you. You came here on a ticket, but it's not true to say, "My ticket is due to Americans killing in Vietnam." That's not true; you worked hard so that you could fly here on that ticket. Did you get your ticket without working?

*Q.* I got it by lying.

*Lama.* You are not lying, come on! I don't believe you! You worked hard.

*Q.* When I am working, I am lying.

*Lama.* When you work, you have to lie? Everybody? All these people here are working class people, but they do not lie. I don't think you are lying

<sup>21</sup> The United States invaded Grenada on 25 October 1983.

when you work. Let's say you are my boss. I say, "I would like to do this," and you agree and give me a job, then I just do it as well as I can. If you are not satisfied, you say, "Go." That's the way it is. Do you have to lie?

*Q.* Of course, everyone is lying.

*Lama.* Oh, I don't think so.

*Q.* People have to do it; you can't stay clean. People will do it. If you don't kill and lie, it's easy because you stay clean. But you mustn't forget that all the people are working in the shit. Where is bodhicitta?

*Lama.* Where is bodhicitta? That is your question?

*Q.* That's my question—where is bodhicitta? Isn't bodhicitta working in the shit to enable all the people to stay here and listen to the Dharma?

*Lama.* You mean you have to lie?

*Q.* Even to kill. There are soldiers in my country, in every country, like in Jack's example. I know some soldiers who are disgusted by killing but they do it because they have to do it, and that allows us to sit here and listen. Where is bodhicitta?

*Lama.* We cannot say bodhicitta is here or there. Bodhicitta is conscious energy. We cannot say, "This is bodhicitta." To show it physically is difficult. I think we all understand what you mean. I think that's good enough, isn't it? Really, you are explaining the lamrim: talking about life and how to do it. I am successful. All right dear, we are communicating. Any other questions? That question is clear; what he says is clear.

*Q.* If good people had not killed during World War II, then Hitler may have been the ruler of the world today.

*Lama.* Not clear—repeat your question please.

*Q.* If I take a vow not to kill . . .

*Lama.* Yes, are you in the American army?

*Q.* No. Then tomorrow there is a crazy guy who wants to be the king of the world.

*Lama.* They will do it, yes. Definitely, they will. They haven't been able to do it, that's why they are waiting for the opportunity. If somebody feels as you said and they get the opportunity, they will do it. I tell you, that's the character of the selfish mind. Then, do you have to go with a gun to kill this person or not?

*Q.* That's my question—to protect the Dharma.

*Lama.* Then do it, yes. If you have great love and want to protect human beings of the entire world, forget about creating a disaster if you kill. I give you permission; Buddha gives you permission; we all give you permission. If you kill for the sake of us, you don't break a vow. As I told you, breaking a vow is acting with selfish motivation—the condition is killing with a selfish motivation, without caring for other people. It's very clean clear—that's not negative killing, it's positive killing. That action is positive. He's scared now! Sometimes killing can be positive too.<sup>22</sup>

*Q.* [Inaudible]

*Lama.* I agree with what you say. Every nation fights with negative, selfish motivation if their territory is attacked. What he said about killing a guy who wants to destroy, to get power over the world . . .

*Q.* But that's an individual . . .

<sup>22</sup>We have to be very careful in interpreting this point. As Lama explains, one needs great compassion and clairvoyance to be able to do this kind of thing, like the compassionate ship's captain in the *Sutra on Skill in Means* or Lhalung Pelgyi Dorje, who assassinated Langdarma, the anti-Buddhist Tibetan king.

*Lama.* It's an individual, and he knows exactly what he's doing. I agree, it's difficult. If you don't know, you shouldn't kill; if you kill without knowing, it's negative.

Q. [Inaudible]

*Lama.* Tibetan people are attached to their own territory, so whoever was fighting the Chinese, it was negative. I agree.

Q. [Inaudible]

*Lama.* That's what we call ignorance.

Q. [Inaudible question about killing fleas and lice.]

*Lama.* Try without killing. It's possible. Put something there and they will go away. For example, what I do is spray the area before the fleas arrive; then they never come. They know the horrible smell. Make protection before they come. The same thing with lice; apply some bad smell and they will go away. The same with worms—take worm medicine that just paralyzes the worms; it's not necessary to kill. There is a method, come on. There are many drugs you can use that do not kill.

Q. I'm studying to be a plant pathologist and we have to deal with insects that are destroying crops and causing starvation for thousands of people or wiping out entire areas. My job would be either to go in and spray directly and kill these insects or give the order to someone else.

*Lama.* Yes, that can also be done with compassion. Think with compassion of all the people starving and then the killing is part of compassion. You are not in the least selfish, so it's all right.

Q. Why should you care more about the people than about the insects?

*Lama.* I think it's a matter of value; a human being has more value—a human being can do more to help, can do more powerful actions than an



animal. If you have strong compassion to preserve human beings, then maybe it's not negative; it depends on what kind of motivation you have and how strong it is. It depends on what you look at and how your motivation is.

*Q.* I don't understand initiations and how they work, for example, Vajrasattva initiation. We visualize one of these images, recite a mantra, and that purifies one of our past negative karmas? It doesn't seem to deal with the root delusions inside me that caused that negative karma.

*Lama.* Think, when you emanate yourself as Vajrasattva, the pure energy within you is now revealed. When that is developed strongly, you produce a better understanding of yourself. Normally we hold some kind of self-pity image of ourselves, and that's why we manifest anger, hatred and desire. When we emanate as a pure aspect of our archetypal image, the self-pity image concepts disappear and in that way we eliminate the root of desire, anger and ignorance.

For most of us, the problem is that we have a strong ego that holds a self-pity image of ourselves, and this basic mistake brings tremendous problems into our life. Tantra deals with this self-pity image, causing it to vanish. Then we can identify ourselves with the pure, divine quality of an archetypal self-image. In that way we can eliminate all kinds of worldly problems. Is that some sort of help for you?

*Q.* I want to say something about the insecticide or pesticide question because I think we are experiencing quite a lot of negative karma right now and will experience much more. I think most of it is done with greed, because it is ordered by people who are greedy. A lot of farmers have greed—they want to plant more, to have more crops, more grain. Lots of countries are greedy and just want to have grain for exchanging or whatever, and even if these people who are using it at the very moment are not governed by greed, then those who have ordered it in the long run are greedy. We will experience negative karma in the long run, and even in the short run we are experiencing a lot of negative karma for that. You can look around, especially in the United States or Europe, and see dying woods and dying animals and a dying world, so that's negative karma.

*Lama.* That's true, it's a very good explanation. As you know, industrialized countries produce more than they need. Here in Nepal, we never spray, but at least this year, there is enough for everybody. In Tibet, we never sprayed—we didn't have any chemicals to spray. Often countries cannot sell everything they have produced and throw tons of unsold crops into the sea. In the East, people are starving; in Africa, people are starving; yet those unsold crops are not given to help those people. Industrialized countries are facing many problems now—they have almost destroyed their environment and their health; they have contaminated their water, which is now toxic. In America, many cities have poisoned water. Children are dying, people are getting cancer, trees are dying.

It's so dangerous, I tell you. Here in Nepal you can eat dal-rice without worry because it's not laced with chemicals. In America, much of what you eat is always contaminated. Sometimes you can eat an apple that looks nice on the outside but inside is completely rotten and smells of pesticide. The environment and the people are becoming unhealthy, so what can we say? That's karma—good things happen; bad things happen.

I absolutely agree—the way industrialized countries produce food is completely greedy. Those who work there don't even know that's going on, especially in America. When I was there this year they reported that some poor black people had been captured and kept as prisoners and made to work on a farm. They were given two dollars for one day's work—can you imagine? That is unbelievable, in America! I'm not talking about some small thing—it was on the television. This man beat black men and also white men, like in history. It's heartbreaking. In America we don't need slavery, but there is slavery. In America, what can you do with two dollars? One cup of coffee costs more than that.

Now, at this time, anyone who wants to take refuge, just meditate. If you don't want to, it doesn't matter—you can stay but you don't need to participate; just sit down and meditate on bodhicitta. Anyone who wants to take refuge, sit down and meditate.

## REFUGE AND PRECEPTS CEREMONY

As I've already mentioned, the way we often set up a meditation session is to visualize our father to our right, our mother to our left, an enemy

directly in front, the person to whom we are most attached behind us, a stranger to whom we feel indifferent to the side and all sentient beings surrounding us. Then generate much equilibrium, much compassion and much love, wishing to liberate them all and determining to develop intensive awareness and the nondual wisdom of shunyata for the sake of your father and mother and all other sentient beings.

Here, Lord Buddha's liberated consciousness manifests externally as a golden radiant light rainbow body. White radiating light energy emanates from his crown; red radiating light energy emanates from his throat; blue radiating light energy emanates from his heart. These three beams of light enter your crown, throat and heart respectively, purifying your impure body, impure speech and impure wrong conception mind and develop within you the intensive awareness of reality.

Think, "The totally open state of my consciousness is my Buddha; the total intensive awareness of reality is my Dharma. Those who help me to develop these two are the Sangha. I take inner refuge to liberate myself from misery and awaken my Buddha, awaken my Dharma, awaken my own Sangha. Other people's totally open buddha quality can also help me; other people's intensive awareness of universal reality can help me; and other people, Sangha, can help both externally and internally. My own Buddha, Dharma and Sangha are the most important thing in order to liberate myself. From now until my death I take refuge in my inner qualities, my inner wisdom, my inner loving kindness and my own conscious energy. In particular, I take refuge in order to develop my loving kindness and wisdom in order to help others as best I can."

To help others completely is very difficult. We don't know how to help, so we need to develop ourselves a lot. For that reason, think, "I take refuge in order to elevate myself."

Generate the strong determination: "Without having inner refuge, taking refuge in the external world is foolish, painful and lonely because I have not discovered my internal richness. So, any time I have a problem, I will take absolute refuge in my inner qualities in order to solve it and bring satisfaction within me. My limited mind is so lonely; normally when I have problems I take refuge externally, but ice cream and all such things are ridiculous; so superficial. I have the solution right now, and it does not depend on any external matter or energy. My own consciousness is a limitless fount of energy." Well, that's good enough.

For the people who want to take precepts, you can take them for one month, two months, one year, or you can take them for your lifetime. You can take one, two, three, four or five, but with the understanding that I mentioned: “I am never going to deliberately cheat other people by lying and I will not steal deliberately. I will work, eat, make business, sell and in my country make profits as honestly as I can.” Everybody makes profits—it is allowed. That’s not lying; that’s right livelihood. So, there is no need to always be lying; there’s no need to always be stealing, taking whatever you want, whatever you feel is worthwhile, even for one or two days.

In my opinion, not lying for even one day takes unbelievable awareness. Normally, we’re sort of asleep. We have no mental discipline; we’re like wild animals. No rules. Going here, going there, up and down—our mind is like that of a monkey. Keeping precepts allows us to gauge whether we are going in the right or wrong direction. It is psychologically freeing. Honestly, my experience is that precepts help me realize when I’m veering to extremes.

Without mental rules, without an understanding of psychological freedom, we’re completely open to any negative inclination. When we’re sinking into an ocean of negativity, we don’t know we’re negative; we don’t know we’re uncontrolled because we’re sinking into an ocean of uncontrol. Knowing what kind of negative mind leads to what kind of action and what kind of miserable result has a clean-clear scientific explanation. Therefore, whatever precepts you feel are worthwhile, you should take. Also, you don’t need to feel now that you have to make a lifelong commitment—you can just say, “I’ll take them and check them out for one month to see if I can handle them and if they help me. If not, I will give them up.” Giving them up in a gentle way is OK.

Buddha’s teaching and Buddha’s ordination are very clear. Ordination is like a bridge. In order to cross a river, we need a bridge; after we have crossed the bridge we don’t need it anymore, so we can say, “Thank you, bridge” and forget about it. It’s the same thing with ordination. It’s not something absolutely necessary; it just guides us temporarily in order to develop intensive awareness and to judge our actions for ourselves. If we are capable, if we totally understand our mind—absolutely and relatively—we don’t need precepts. The person who takes precepts is one who has an uncontrolled mind and habitual behaviors of repeatedly making mistakes, even though knowing intellectually that such actions are wrong.

Controlled people like Milarepa don't need precepts. Buddha didn't have vows. People who are uncontrolled and undisciplined, like a mad elephant, need direction.

So, we know what we need. "For countless lives I have been sort of hypocritical—blah, blah, blah, blah—not doing any action, but saying, 'I want to be a great meditator, I want deep samadhi,' while my three doors of body, speech and mind are a disaster. I did terrible actions through being distracted by desire, hatred and ignorance, while saying, 'I want good meditation.' I blamed others for my bad meditation, saying, 'You are disturbing me.'"

Good meditation comes from a harmonious body, speech and mind, and harmony comes from not being associated with bodily disasters or verbal disasters. If we keep our body, speech and mind clean clear, our mind will become intensively aware. So, ordination is helpful, supportive, for creating an environment conducive to good meditation and intensive awareness. People who talk "blah, blah, blah" but do not keep any ordination, any purity, are hypocrites. I tell you, it's impossible: if we don't act, if we don't try to control our body, speech and mind even for one day, yet expect that suddenly our meditation will become indestructible, we're foolish. The mind and body are related, they work together very closely, and having a body not linked to negative actions is extremely important. If we have emotionally strong desire or are physically disturbed, how can we have good meditation? It's not possible. Ordination makes space for tranquil, peaceful, intensive awareness. We should not expect deep samadhi or intensive awareness without harmonious body and speech.

Suppose your spouse goes on for twenty-four hours, "Blah, blah, blah, blah—you are bad, you didn't give me a Christmas present last year," do you think you can have good meditation? It's not possible. But that's your karma, isn't it? If somebody makes us physically agitated, mentally agitated, it's not possible to have indestructible meditation. That's why keeping the precepts is action. As long as we have an uncontrolled, mad elephant mind, we need discipline, but once our mind has completely attained total intensive awareness, we no longer need rules—we have gone beyond ordination. Lord Buddha didn't take five precepts because he didn't need them. It's completely up to the individual.

Also, if you don't want to fully take the precepts but just as much as possible, you can also do that, thinking, "Whatever I see that's negative,

disturbs me and brings difficulties, I will try as much as possible to avoid.” This is honest, so you don’t have to take the precepts completely, just saying, “I will do whatever I can.” Basically, it’s up to your mind. Ordination is also a condition—it comes from the mind; it’s a projection of the mind. With strong determination and renunciation of old negative habits, you will be happy, you will feel pleasure—but it’s not the kind of pleasure that leads to misery. Normally we feel many things to be pleasurable but they lead to misery.

Therefore, generate strong renunciation: “For countless lives, and from birth up until now, I have done many, many things repeatedly, with an uncontrolled mind. I have never felt satisfied and am so tired of the cycle of samsara. Therefore, I should take a break from the cycle of samsara. At least, I should sever the gross mind.” Ordination, especially these five precepts, deals with the gross mind. The way to correct our behavior and our mind is to first control our old gross negative habits and then control the subtle ones. If we first try to control the subtle, complicated things, it won’t work. We have to control the easy things first.

With strong motivation, think, “I especially want to help others: my wife, my husband, my boyfriend, my girlfriend, my mama, my father. But with my disaster-making mind, my mad elephant mind, how can I help? It’s a joke. I’m ashamed. I try to help my mama but my mind is worse than hers, so how can I help? I should correct my own mind, my own behavior, then I can help my mama, my father, my wife, my husband. With my disaster mind I cannot help. So, I will try as much as possible to control and transform my gross negative mind and make myself satisfied and happy. If I am satisfied and happy, that’s the way for me to start helping all of humanity.

“If I’m hypocritical, talking ‘blah, blah, blah’ but never actually doing any solid Dharma actions or purifying my mind, saying other people are bad and impure while I myself am impure, I will never correct myself. Keeping precepts purely for one day is so worthwhile; at least I will reach beyond hypocrisy. It’s completely personal. My need has nothing to do with my nation, nothing to do with other people—it is my personal need for development. With strong motivation, I will meditate on and actualize the Dharma; I will develop intensive awareness of my inner world; and I will keep these vows as well as possible until I am completely free from my uncontrolled mind.”

The essence of ordination is peaceful energy, a peaceful consciousness, without expectation. When you make the determination that you are never going to kill, there is no hesitation; when you have decided, totally, to never engage in sexual misconduct, there's no hesitation, there's no alternative—otherwise when the time comes you are just out of control. But the strong motivation helps you, protects you from getting out of control.

With ordination you can trust yourself; when you trust yourself, your mind and your actions are controlled, and you trust other people. When you are uncontrolled, you don't trust yourself and therefore you never trust anybody else. If you develop confidence, control and a feeling of trust within yourself, then you can trust others. Ordination is peaceful energy—peaceful, light, blissful energy throughout your entire body and consciousness. That peaceful energy experience is the essence of ordination. The essence of ordination is compassion, love, peace and bliss because you don't harm other people.

Perhaps the most important characteristic of Buddhism is compassion, whereby you never harm others. If you cannot help others, at least don't harm them. The basic reason for taking ordination is to never harm anybody, to completely abstain from harmful actions. The worst thing we can do is to harm others. I think that's all. So, we have finished taking precepts.

Today, we didn't do any ritual, we just made a strong determination. That's good enough. We do have ritual prayers, but we don't need to do them.

At this point, we traditionally give those who would like one a Dharma name. This is to remind you that on such and such a day, at such and such a time, you took ordination. It is to remind you of your newborn life. So, if you want a name, you can have one. If you don't want one—it is still superstition and delusion, and you don't need any more of that—you don't need to take one. It's not important but is a tradition.

In Buddhism, we are responsible for our own actions. As I told you, we should be responsible for keeping peace in the world, so at least we should have the determination to never kill any human being. We should be a good example; we cannot only talk blah, blah. You shouldn't care what other people do—you must show that you are a peacekeeper. Trust yourself. What can I say? If I have not made it clear, I have cheated you and that would be terrible.

Finally, we dedicate with bodhicitta: because of the merit we have created, may the supreme jewel that has not arisen arise and grow, and may that which has arisen not diminish but increase more and more.



## 19. Bodhicitta: The Perfection of Dharma

*Sixteenth Kopan meditation course, 10 December 1983*



THE BEST Dharma practice, the most perfect, the most substantial, is without doubt the practice of bodhicitta.

I think it is absolutely essential for us to have loving kindness toward others. There is no doubt about this. Loving kindness is the essence of bodhicitta, the attitude of the bodhisattva. It is the most comfortable path, the most comfortable meditation. There can be no philosophical, scientific or psychological disagreement with this. With bodhicitta, there's no East-West conflict. This path is the most comfortable, most perfect, one hundred percent uncomplicated one, free of any danger of leading people to extremes. Without bodhicitta, nothing works. And most of all, your meditation doesn't work, and realizations don't come.

Why is bodhicitta necessary for success in meditation? Because of selfish grasping. If you have a good meditation but don't have bodhicitta, you will grasp at any little experience of bliss: "Me, me; I want more, I want more." Then the good experience disappears completely. Grasping is the greatest distraction to experiencing single-pointed intensive awareness in meditation. And with it, we are always dedicated to our own happiness: "Me, me, I'm miserable, I want to be happy. Therefore I'll meditate." It doesn't work that way. For some reason good meditation and its results—peacefulness, satisfaction and bliss—just don't come.

Also, without bodhicitta it is very difficult to accumulate merit. You create merit then immediately destroy it; by afternoon, the morning's merit has gone. It's like cleaning a room and an hour later making it dirty again. You make your mind clean, then right away you mess it up—not a very profitable business. If you want to succeed in the business of accumulating merit, you must have bodhicitta. With bodhicitta you become so

precious—like gold, like diamonds; you become the most perfect object in the world, beyond compare with any material thing.

From the Western materialistic point of view, we'd think it was great if a rich person said, "I want to make charity. I'm going to offer one hundred dollars to everybody in the entire world." Even if that person gave with great sincerity, his or her merit would be nothing compared with just the thought, "I wish to actualize bodhicitta for the sake of sentient beings, and I'll practice the six perfections as much as I can." That's why I always say, actualization of bodhicitta is the most perfect path you can take.

Remember the story of the Kadampa geshe who saw a man circumambulating a stupa? He said, "What are you doing?" and the man answered, "Circumambulating." So the geshe said, "Wouldn't it be better if you practiced Dharma?" Next time the geshe saw the man he was prostrating, and when he again asked what he was doing, the man replied, "One hundred thousand prostrations." "Wouldn't it be better if you practiced Dharma?" asked the geshe. Anyway, the story goes on, but the point is that just doing religious-looking actions like circumambulation and prostration isn't necessarily practicing Dharma.<sup>23</sup> What we have to do is transform our attachment and self-cherishing, and if we don't change our mind in this way, none of the other practices will work; doing them will just be a joke.

Even if you try to practice tantric meditations, unless you've changed within, you won't succeed. Dharma means a complete change of attitude—that's what really brings you inner happiness. That is the true Dharma, not the words you say. Bodhicitta is not the culture of ego, not the culture of attachment, not the culture of samsara. It is an unbelievable transformation, the most comfortable path, the most substantial path—definite, not wishy-washy. Sometimes your meditation is not solid; you just space out. Bodhicitta meditation means you really want to change your mind and actions and transform your whole life.

We are all involved in human relationships with each other. Why do we sometimes say, "I love you" and sometimes "I hate you"? Where does this up-and-down mind come from? From the self-cherishing thought—a complete lack of bodhicitta. What we are saying is, "I hate you because I'm not getting any satisfaction from you. You hurt me; you don't give me

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, Lama Zopa Rinpoche's *How to Practice Dharma* (LYWA, 2012), p. 106.

pleasure.” That’s the whole thing: “I—my ego, my attachment—am not getting satisfaction from you, therefore I hate you.” What a joke! All the difficulties in interpersonal relationships come from not having bodhicitta, from not having changed our minds.

So, you see, just meditating is not enough. If that Kadampa geshe saw you sitting in meditation he’d say, “What are you doing? Wouldn’t it be better if you practiced Dharma?” Circumambulating isn’t Dharma, prostrating isn’t Dharma, meditating isn’t Dharma. My goodness, what is Dharma, then? This is what happened to the man in the story. He couldn’t think of anything else to do. Well, the best Dharma practice, the most perfect, most substantial, is without doubt the practice of bodhicitta.

You can prove scientifically that bodhicitta is the best practice to do. Our self-cherishing thought is the root of all human problems. It makes our lives difficult and miserable. The solution to self-cherishing, its antidote, is the mind that is its complete opposite—bodhicitta. The self-cherishing mind is worried about only me, me—the self-existent I. Bodhicitta substitutes others for self.

It creates space in your mind. Then even if your dearest friend forgets to give you a Christmas present, you don’t mind. “Ah, well. This year she didn’t give me my chocolate. It doesn’t matter.” Anyway, your human relationships are not for chocolate, not for sensory pleasures. Something much deeper can come from our being together, working together.

If you want to be really, really happy, it isn’t enough just to space out in meditation. Many people who have spent years alone in meditation have finished up the worse for it. Coming back into society, they have freaked out. They haven’t been able to handle contact with other people again because the peaceful environment they created was an artificial condition, a relative phenomenon without solidity. With bodhicitta, no matter where you go, you will never freak out. The more you are involved with people, the more pleasure you get. People become the resource of your pleasure. You are living for people. Even though some still try to take advantage of you, you understand: “Well, in the past I took advantage of them many times, too.” So it doesn’t bother you.

Thus bodhicitta is the most perfect way to practice Dharma, especially in our twentieth-century Western society. It is very, very worthwhile. With the foundation of bodhicitta you will definitely grow.

If you take a proper look deep into your heart you will see that one of

the main causes of your dissatisfaction is the fact that you are not helping others as best you can. When you realize this, you'll be able to say to yourself, "I must develop myself so that I can help others satisfactorily. By improving myself I can definitely help." Thus you have more strength and energy to meditate, to keep pure morality and do other good things. You have energy, "Because I want to help others." That is why Lama Tsongkhapa said that bodhicitta is the foundation of all enlightened realizations.

Also, bodhicitta energy is alchemical. It transforms all your ordinary actions of body, speech and mind—your entire life—into positivity and benefit for others, like iron transmuted into gold. I think this is definitely true. You can see, it's not difficult. For example, look at other people's faces. Some people, no matter what problems and suffering they are enduring, when they go out they always try to appear happy and show a positive aspect to others. Have you noticed this or not? But other people always go about miserable and angry. What do you think about that? I honestly think that it indicates a fundamental difference in the way these two kinds of people think. Human beings are actually very simple. Some are a disaster within and it shows on their faces and makes those whom they meet feel sick. Others, even though they are suffering intensely, always put on a brave face because they are considerate of the way others feel.

I believe this is very important. What's the use of putting out a miserable vibration? Just because you feel miserable, why make others unhappy too? It doesn't help. You should try to control your emotions, speak evenly and so forth. Sometimes when people are suffering they close off from others, but you can still feel their miserable vibration. This doesn't help others with even momentary happiness; forget about leading them to enlightenment. To help the people around you, you have to maintain a happy, peaceful vibration. This is very practical, very worthwhile. Sometimes we talk too much about enlightenment and things like that. We have a long way to go to attain such realizations. Forget about enlightenment, I don't care about buddhahood—just be practical. If you can't help others, at least don't give them any harm; stay neutral.

Anyway, what I'm supposed to be telling you here is that bodhicitta is like atomic energy to transform your mind. This is absolutely, scientifically true, and not something that you have to believe with blind religious faith. Everybody nowadays is afraid of nuclear war, but if we all had bodhi-

citta, wouldn't we all be completely secure? Of course we would. With bodhicitta you control all desire to defeat or kill others. And, as Lama Je Tsongkhapa said, when you have bodhicitta all the good things in life are magnetically attracted to you and pour down upon you like rain. At present all we attract is misfortune because all we have is the self-cherishing thought. But with bodhicitta we'll attract good friends, good food, good everything.

Remember what His Holiness the Dalai Lama said recently? If you're going to be selfish, do it on a grand scale; wide selfishness is better than narrow! What did His Holiness mean? He was saying that, in a way, bodhicitta is like a huge selfish attitude because when you dedicate yourself to others with loving kindness you get a lot more pleasure than you would otherwise. With our present, usual selfish attitude we experience very little pleasure, and what we have is easily lost. With "great selfishness" you help others and you help yourself; with small it's always "me, me, me," and it is easy to lose everything.<sup>24</sup>

As you may recall, Atisha had over 150 teachers. He respected them all, but when he heard the name of one—Lama Serlingpa—he would come out in goosebumps. He explained this by saying, "I have received many teachings from many, many great gurus, but for me, Lama Serlingpa, who gave me the bodhisattva vows and teachings on the method and wisdom of bodhicitta and the six paramitas, was the most helpful for my life." This is very true. Sometimes techniques of deity meditation are extremely difficult, but bodhicitta meditation is so simple, so incredibly profound and real. That's why Atisha would shake when he heard the name of his main teacher of bodhicitta.

The main point, then, is that when you contact Buddhadharma you should conquer the mad elephant of your self-cherishing mind. If the Dharma you hear helps you diminish your self-cherishing even a little, it has been worthwhile. But if the teachings you have taken have had no effect on your selfishness, then from the Mahayana point of view, even if you can talk intellectually on the entire lamrim, they have not been much use at all.

<sup>24</sup> This may be Lama's interpretation of what His Holiness usually calls "wise selfishness," for similar reasons to those above. Wise selfishness is better than ignorant, or foolish, selfishness.

Do you recall the story of Shantideva and how people used to put him down? They used to call him *Busuku*, which means one who knows how to do only three things: eating, sleeping and excreting. This was a very bad thing to call someone, especially a monk. But that's all that people could see him doing. However, he had bodhicitta, so whatever he did, even ordinary things, was of greatest benefit to others. Lying down, peacefully, he would meditate with great concern for the welfare of all living beings, and many times, out of compassion, he would cry for them.

Westerners need that kind of practice. Fundamentally, we are lazy. Well, maybe not lazy, but when we finish work we are tired and don't have much energy left. So, when you come home from work, lie down comfortably and meditate on bodhicitta. This is most worthwhile. Much better than rushing in speedily, throwing down a coffee and dropping onto your meditation cushion to try to meditate. It doesn't work that way; your nervous system needs time and space. You can't be rushing through traffic one minute and sitting quietly meditating the next. Everything takes time and space. It is much better to have a quiet, blissful cup of coffee and not to pressure yourself either; that too is very bad. Don't punish yourself when you are too tired to meditate: "I should be meditating; I am very bad." You destroy yourself like this. Be wise. Treat yourself, your mind, sympathetically, with loving kindness. If you are gentle with yourself, you will become gentle with others so don't push. Pushing doesn't work for me, that's why I tell others not to force themselves. We are dealing with the mind, not rocks and concrete; it is something organic.

The Western environment offers lots of suffering conditions that act as causes for our actualizing bodhicitta, so life in the West can be very worthwhile. For example, it is much better to subdue an adversary with bodhicitta than with a knife or gun. When attacked, you can practice loving kindness. We could also do this in the monasteries of Tibet, where there were often horrible monks. Don't think that Tibet was full of only holy people—we had unbelievably wild monks there that nobody in authority could subdue. If you would try to control them wrathfully, they would only get more aggressive. But *arya bodhisattva* monks, people who had completely given themselves up for others, would treat them with loving kindness, and the wild monks would calm down completely. They would feel, "This man loves me; he has great compassion. He has given up everything for others and has nothing to lose." In that way aggressive

people would be subdued, without authority but with bodhicitta. There are many stories about this kind of thing, but I'm not going to tell them now. Perhaps you think they're funny, but it's true—you can conquer your enemies, both internal and external, with loving kindness and bodhicitta. It is most worthwhile and there's no contradiction. Bodhicitta is the totally comfortable path to liberation and enlightenment.

In his text, *Lama Chöpa*, the Panchen Lama says, "Self-cherishing is the cause of all misery and dissatisfaction, while holding all mother sentient beings dearer than oneself is the foundation of all realizations and knowledge. Therefore, bless me to change self-cherishing into concern for all others."<sup>25</sup> This is not some deep philosophical theory but a very simple statement. You know from your own life experiences without needing a Tibetan text's explanations that your self-cherishing thought is the cause of all your confusion and frustration. This evolution of suffering is found not only in Tibetan culture but in yours as well.

The Panchen Lama goes on to say that we should look at what the Buddha did. He gave up his self-attachment and attained all the sublime realizations. But look at us—we are obsessed with "me, me, me" and have realized nothing but unending misery. This is very clear, isn't it? Therefore, you should know clean clear how this works. Get rid of the false concept of self-cherishing and you'll be free of all misery and dissatisfaction. Concern yourself for the welfare of all others and wish for them to attain the highest realizations such as bodhicitta and you'll find all happiness and satisfaction.

You people are young, intelligent and not satisfied with what you have in your own countries. That's why you are seeking further afield. And now you have found that most worthwhile of all things, bodhicitta.

But it is not an easy thing. Easy things bore you quickly. It is quite difficult, but there's no way you'll get bored practicing it. People need to be most intelligent to actualize bodhicitta. Some, though, have no room for it. "Forget about yourself and have a little concern for others?" they'll ask. "That's not my culture." It is very difficult to change holding yourself dear into holding others dear instead—the most difficult task you can undertake. But it is the most worthwhile and brings the greatest satisfaction.

After practicing some meditations, such as impermanence and death,

<sup>25</sup> *Lama Chöpa*, v. 94.

for a month you'll say, "I'm tired of that meditation." But you'll never get tired of meditating on bodhicitta. It is so deep; a universal meditation. You'll never get tired of bodhicitta.

You have heard of many deities that you can meditate on, many deities to be initiated into—Chenrezig and the rest. What are they all for? I'll tell you—for gaining bodhicitta. As a matter of fact, all tantric meditations are for the development of strong bodhicitta. That is the purpose of your consciousness manifesting as a being with one thousand arms so that you can lend a hand to a thousand suffering beings. If you don't like to manifest yourself this way you can relate the meditation to your own culture and see yourself as Jesus. Avalokiteshvara and Jesus are the same: completely selfless and completely devoted to serving others.

Remember what happened the first time that Avalokiteshvara took the bodhisattva ordination? He vowed to guide all universal living beings to enlightenment from behind, like a shepherd. "I do not want to realize enlightenment until I have led all mother sentient beings there first. That will be my satisfaction." He worked for years and years, leading thousands of beings to enlightenment, but when he checked to see what was happening, he found there were still countless more. So again, he worked for years and years, and again when he checked, still so many remained. This cycle was repeated until finally he was fed up and thought to himself, "For eons and eons I have struggled to lead all sentient beings to enlightenment but there are still so many left. I think it is impossible to fulfill my vow." And because of the intensity of his emotion his head split into eleven pieces. Then Amitabha Buddha came and offered to help, and blessed him to be successful.

So I'm sure some of you people can be like Chenrezig. The main thing is to have strong motivation. Even if it comes strongly only once, it is extremely powerful. It is very rare to have this kind of thought. A mere flash is so worthwhile; to have it for a minute or for a day.

## THE BODHISATTVA VOWS

I mentioned the two ways of taking the bodhisattva vows above. The first is the wishful way, wanting to develop the mind that wishes to help other sentient beings as much as possible, realizing that to help others in the best way, you have to develop toward liberation as quickly as possible yourself,



and you need to maintain this motivation continuously in this, the next and all future lives. You have no doubt that this is the best way to go, but you may feel, with respect to actually practicing the bodhisattva path, that you cannot keep the sixty-four vows or engage in the extensive deeds right now. Think, “I shall do as much as I can, but I cannot take the full commitment at the moment.” This way there is no heavy vow and you do what you can.

If you take the vows the second, engaging way, you think, “I shall keep the root and branch vows and actualize the six perfections as much as I possibly can from now until my death, forever.” This is the sort of strong determination you need to have.

Thus, there are two ways to take the bodhisattva vows and both are acceptable. The first way is not a kind of lie. There is no doubt in your mind that the altruistic mind of loving kindness is really your path; that bodhicitta is your deity, your Buddha, your Dharma, your Sangha, your bible—your Buddhist bible, your Hindu bible, your Muslim bible, your all world religions’ bible. This is the way you should think. When you take the vows, you don’t have to be nervous about breaking them because you have said, “I’ll do as much as I possibly can,” and you have not promised something that you can’t do. You shouldn’t feel that by taking the vows this way you are somehow cheating.

Many people have a commitment from having taken certain initiations to practice daily the six-session guru yoga, in which they renew or make their bodhisattva vows clean clear. Those who don’t have this particular practice can still do the same thing. Six times a day, for just a minute, you can simply remember your commitment to the development of bodhicitta. You don’t have to do anything dramatic, like Muslims bowing to Mecca. Wherever you are—standing, sitting or going to bed—just remember bodhicitta. That’s good enough. Actually, there is a traditional way of doing this six times a day, with a visualization of the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions in front of you and a prayer to be recited, but there is no necessary requirement to do this. If you want to do this, it’s good for reminding yourself about bodhicitta, but the other way is easier when you’re among ordinary people.

When you get up in the morning, sit on your bed for a minute or two and think, “Today I shall actualize bodhicitta and make my life meaningful for others.” That’s all. Then take a shower, have breakfast and go off

to work. You get a lunchbreak, so after you've finished your sandwiches and coffee, just sit for a minute or two and renew your motivation. The same thing before you go to bed. So, according to your daily life, you can find six times to do this short practice. It is simple, isn't it, and it doesn't conflict with your culture. It's no big deal. But formal meditation, sitting cross-legged, is a big deal, isn't it? You can't just drop into the full lotus wherever you are. And you can't mix sleep with formal meditation, but you can mix bodhicitta with ordinary sleep.

Thus, bodhicitta is the most worthwhile path. No argument, no worry about this. It is completely the right thing, something you can practice for the rest of your life. Really the best. Forget about tantra. Of course, if your tantric practice helps you grow bodhicitta, do it, but if you don't forget your bodhicitta from now until the time you die, you are totally guaranteed freedom from a bad rebirth. I can promise you that you'll not be reborn in an African desert! The mind that has bodhicitta is incredibly rich, an unbelievably rich mind. There is no way a person with bodhicitta has to go without water—a rich mind makes us rich. That's why I say the bodhisattva path is the most comfortable path to enlightenment. It's very comfortable and very scientific. You don't have to worry that you're not understanding it or wonder whether it's working or not. It's clean clear; it's perfect.

For us it can be difficult when someone asks us for even a cup of tea. If the situation is right, it's OK, but when we are busy or something and someone says, "I'm thirsty, can I have some tea?" we get uptight, uncomfortable and unhappy.

When we have bodhicitta and someone asks us for a drink, no matter what we are doing we are delighted to be useful, to have a chance to help someone. In the old days, bodhisattvas used to be so happy when a beggar came to their door asking for money. They would think "He's so kind, helping me along the graduated path to enlightenment, helping me eliminate my self-cherishing," and they would give with respect. This is a good example for us. We live among people who are always demanding our attention, our time and our energy. Young people's parents, for example, ask, "Why don't you come home tonight?" or "Why don't you stay with us for Christmas?"

There is so much happening in our life; everybody wants something from us. It's true, isn't it? Definitely. Maybe good things, maybe bad

things; our wealth, our body, our speech, our mind. It's complicated. Also, sometimes we are obliged to give our time or our body, even though inside we don't want to, so we give with an unhappy mind. But when we have bodhicitta and someone asks us to give our body, we do so happily. This is true; at a certain point it's true. This is a scientific situation; I'm not just joking. Sometimes we are obliged to give our body or our speech, so it is much better to give with happiness than with anger. It is no good at all to give anything with anger. When we have bodhicitta, where giving once used to cause us pain, it now makes us blissful. This is scientifically true.

Remember the story of one of the previous lives of Shakyamuni Buddha? It happened in Nepal: he was a prince, and one day went into the jungle to the place that is now called Namu Buddha. He saw a tigress who was dying and too weak to feed her cubs, so he took off his clothes and offered his body to the tigress. She was too weak even to notice him, so he broke a branch off a tree, cut himself and let the blood flow into her mouth. Thus, she gradually regained her strength until she finally ate the prince. Then the king and the queen came along, saying, "What has happened to our gorgeous son?" Well, the gorgeous son had gone into the tiger's mouth, but he felt no pain because he had offered his body with great compassion. And this also caused his mind to develop much further along the path to enlightenment.

Similarly, Chandrakirti explained how a first level bodhisattva can offer his flesh to others, piece by piece, without pain. Each time he cuts off a piece, all he feels is bliss. Such happiness comes from the power of the mind; it's not something physical. It is the result of bodhicitta, loving kindness. Of course, although these are good examples of the power of bodhicitta, we should forget about trying to make these kinds of offering. Neither can we nor should we think of cutting our body like this—we'd cry; we'd die. We have to be careful when we hear this sort of teaching. It is always emphasized that bodhisattvas should engage in such practices only when they are ready to do so. Until the mind is ready, we shouldn't offer our body like that.<sup>26</sup>

Bodhisattvas even have a vow against giving away certain things that they need for their practice—certain texts, for example. When we're in trouble, we need to have our Dharma book to refer to, so we should never

<sup>26</sup> See Shantideva, *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, 7:25–26.

give it away; it is a reflection of the information a bodhisattva needs to follow the graduated path to method and wisdom. It is wrong to think that a bodhisattva should give everything. There are rules for giving: at this level we give so much, at the next so much, and so on. There are complete explanations, so we don't make mistakes. A bodhisattva should follow the middle way and avoid extremes.

Now, the reason I'm telling you all this is that we are living amongst the problems of human life and we have to deal with them. This means that sometimes we do have to give a little of our time and energy to others. If we can give with bodhicitta, our ability to give develops gradually and makes us blissful instead of uptight and uncomfortable. Wrong giving is not worthwhile; I want you to have right understanding. Until you are on the first bodhisattva level you should never give your body: you are not ready for that. Don't give your eyes; don't give your heart!

So far, I have met three students who have offered me their heart: "Lama, I want to give you my heart; please take my heart." I said, "Yes, whenever I'm ready I'll write to you." What else can I say? I was a bit shocked. I mean, I talk about bodhicitta, "Blah, blah, blah," but actually my students are the true bodhisattvas, saying, "Please take my heart." They make me lose my concepts. It's true—I have met three students who made this offer. They are very good, they mean well. I couldn't give my heart. Anyway, who'd want it? It's a broken one with three holes and doesn't work properly.

The reason I have explained all this is for you to see that through the power of bodhicitta, loving kindness, even things that are very difficult to give can be given easily and with great happiness. That's a function of bodhicitta.

The bodhisattva's mind is very broad. When we adopt a religion, sometimes we become very dangerous, fanatical, closed. "I'm a Buddhist; I hate Muslims." This is very, very bad. With bodhicitta, we are completely open. The bodhisattva has space for all religions—Hinduism, Christianity, Islam. That's one of the most beautiful things about it. In fact, one of the bodhisattva vows is that we must never put down any other religion or religious philosophy. It even says that we should not put down the lower levels of Buddhist philosophy, like the Hinayana. What other religion says that you shouldn't put down other religions or other divisions of your own

religion? That's why we say that Buddhism has universal understanding of the entire universal human consciousness. We should understand that the bodhisattva path is completely open, embracing all mother sentient beings, all humanity, everything. There is no sectarianism, no discrimination against any other religion. This is the most beautiful thing to make us grow happy and healthy. I think it is wonderful.

Where this attitude is absent, life on earth is terrible. Some people accept one religious group but hate all others. They criticize and put down other people. This is the most dangerous thing, the worst example they can set. Observing this sort of behavior, nonreligious people have no hope: "Look at how the followers of that religion act. They fight amongst and kill themselves and others. Who needs religion? It only makes more problems." I agree with people who say this; I can't blame them for feeling that way. Who wants to be like those religious fanatics? Inside they are most painful, most dangerous, and they damage others. It's so unhealthy. But if we follow the bodhisattva path, we embrace, we have space in our heart for, all universal living beings.

Now, as you take the ordination in one of the two ways, think as follows: visualize before you the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions of the universe. What are buddhas and bodhisattvas? Those who have attained high realizations in their consciousness, who have actualized bodhicitta, who have crossed the ocean of confusion and dissatisfaction in order to be of the highest benefit to limitless sentient beings. Consider them in this way and think:

"Today I am so fortunate. I have come to the conclusion that I must change my attitude of self-cherishing into that of holding others dearer than myself. I want to serve others, therefore my entire meditation and my practice of charity, morality, patience, effort, concentration and wisdom will be for the benefit of others, for me to grow better and better in order to serve them as best I can. This is my attitude today, my strong determination. I am so lucky, so fortunate to feel like this. It is the most precious thing in my life. This attitude is far more valuable than any material possession. I am so lucky to have it. And I am especially lucky to have discovered the real antidote to my unhappiness, my life of self-pity. There is no question that the solution is to follow the bodhisattva's path, to actualize bodhicitta. Without doubt, this is the most comfortable path. From now

on, may I never separate from this wish, this determination, this pure enlightened thought. I shall actualize this thought and hold it in my heart twenty-four hours a day, as much as I possibly can.

“In front of the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions, in front of my lama, I make this request: please give me the inspiration and strength to increase this determination continuously for the rest of my life, to make my life meaningful for the benefit of others. For countless lives I have held fanatical concepts, the selfish attitude concerned for ‘me, me, me’ alone, continuously reinforcing the cause of all misery and sickness. All suffering comes from this kind of mind, but now I have changed this thought into openness for others. I have created space in my heart for all universal living beings. I shall never forget this new experience and actualize it every day to the best of my ability.

“Buddhas and bodhisattva of the ten directions, please listen and pay attention to me: just as you have all actualized bodhicitta and gained happiness, today I too dedicate myself to the bodhisattva path. I shall actualize bodhicitta as much as I can and make the rest of my life meaningful and happy, truly happy and truly satisfied.”

With this kind of motivation, take the bodhisattva ordination.

## LAMA YESHE WISDOM ARCHIVE

The LAMA YESHE WISDOM ARCHIVE (LYWA) is the collected works of Lama Thubten Yeshe and Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche. Lama Zopa Rinpoche, its spiritual director, founded the Archive in 1996.

Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche began teaching at Kopan Monastery, Nepal, in 1970. Since then, their teachings have been recorded and transcribed. At present we have well over 12,000 hours of digital audio and some 90,000 pages of raw transcript. Many recordings, mostly teachings by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, remain to be transcribed, and as Rinpoche continues to teach, the number of recordings in the ARCHIVE increases accordingly. Most of our transcripts have been neither checked nor edited.

Here at the LYWA we are making every effort to organize the transcription of that which has not yet been transcribed, edit that which has not yet been edited, and generally do the many other tasks detailed below.

The work of the LAMA YESHE WISDOM ARCHIVE falls into two categories: archiving and dissemination.

*Archiving* requires managing the recordings of teachings by Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche that have already been collected, collecting recordings of teachings given but not yet sent to the ARCHIVE, and collecting recordings of Rinpoche's ongoing teachings, talks, advice and so forth as he travels the world for the benefit of all. Incoming media are then catalogued and stored safely while being kept accessible for further work.

We organize the transcription of audio, add the transcripts to the already existent database of teachings, manage this database, have transcripts checked, and make transcripts available to editors or others doing research on or practicing these teachings.

Other archiving activities include working with video and photographs of the Lamas and digitizing ARCHIVE materials.

*Dissemination* involves keeping up with evolving technology and making the Lamas' teachings available through various avenues including books for free distribution and sale, ebooks on a wide range of readers, lightly edited transcripts, a monthly e-letter (see below), social media, audiobooks, DVDs and online video, articles in *Mandala* and other magazines and on our website. Irrespective of the medium we choose, the teachings require a significant amount of work to prepare them for distribution.

This is just a summary of what we do. The ARCHIVE was established with virtually no seed funding and has developed solely through the kindness of many people, most of whom we mention and thank sincerely on our website. We are indebted to you all.

Our further development similarly depends upon the generosity of those who see the benefit and necessity of this work, and we would be extremely grateful for your help. Thus, we hereby appeal to you for your kind support. If you would like to contribute to help us with any of the above tasks or to sponsor books for free distribution, please contact us:

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## THE FOUNDATION FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE MAHAYANA TRADITION

The Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT) is an international organization of Buddhist meditation, study and retreat centers, both urban and rural, monasteries, publishing houses, healing centers and other related activities founded in 1975 by Lama Thubten Yeshe and Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche. At present, there are 145 FPMT centers, projects and services in 36 countries worldwide.

The FPMT has been established to facilitate the study and practice of Mahayana Buddhism in general and the Tibetan Gelug tradition, founded in the fifteenth century by the great scholar, yogi and saint, Lama Je Tsongkhapa, in particular.

The FPMT website also offers teachings by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Lama Yeshe, Lama Zopa Rinpoche and many other highly respected teachers in the tradition, details about the FPMT's educational programs, an online learning center, a link to the excellent FPMT Shop, and links to other interesting Buddhist and Tibetan pages. You can also find links to FPMT centers all over the world, especially those in your area, where you will find details of their programs offered.

FPMT  
1632 SE 11th Avenue, Portland, OR 97214  
Telephone (503) 808-1588  
[info@fpmt.org](mailto:info@fpmt.org)  
[www.fpmt.org](http://www.fpmt.org)



OTHER TEACHINGS OF LAMA YESHE AND  
LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE CURRENTLY AVAILABLE

BOOKS FROM WISDOM PUBLICATIONS

*Wisdom Energy*, by Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*Introduction to Tantra*, by Lama Yeshe  
*Transforming Problems*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*The Door to Satisfaction*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*Becoming Vajrasattva: The Tantric Path of Purification*, by Lama Yeshe  
*The Bliss of Inner Fire*, by Lama Yeshe  
*Becoming the Compassion Buddha*, by Lama Yeshe  
*Ultimate Healing*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*Dear Lama Zopa*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*How to Be Happy*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*Wholesome Fear*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche with Kathleen McDonald  
*When the Chocolate Runs Out*, by Lama Yeshe  
*Mahamudra*, by Lama Yeshe  
*The Four Noble Truths*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*How to Face Death Without Fear*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*Bodhichitta*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*The Six Perfections*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*Patience*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*The Power of Mantra*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*The Power of Meditation*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche

About Lama Yeshe: *Reincarnation: The Boy Lama*, by Vicki Mackenzie  
About Lama Zopa Rinpoche: *The Lawudo Lama*, by Jamyang Wangmo

For more information go to [wisdomexperience.org](http://wisdomexperience.org).

TRANSCRIPTS, PRACTICES AND OTHER MATERIALS

Go to [LamaYeshe.com](http://LamaYeshe.com) and [fpmt.org](http://fpmt.org).

VIDEO OF LAMA YESHE AND LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE

Go to [youtube.com/user/LamaYeshe](http://youtube.com/user/LamaYeshe) or [youtube.com/user/fpmtinc](http://youtube.com/user/fpmtinc).

## WHAT TO DO WITH DHARMA TEACHINGS

The Buddhadharmā is the true source of happiness for all sentient beings. Books like this show you how to put the teachings into practice and integrate them into your life, whereby you get the happiness you seek. Therefore, anything containing Dharma teachings, the names of your teachers or holy images is more precious than other material objects and should be treated with respect. To avoid creating the karma of not meeting the Dharma again in future lives, please do not put books (or other holy objects) on the floor or underneath other stuff, step over or sit upon them, or use them for mundane purposes such as propping up wobbly chairs or tables. They should be kept in a clean, high place, separate from worldly writings, and wrapped in cloth when being carried around. These are but a few considerations.

Should you need to get rid of Dharma materials, they should not be thrown in the rubbish but burned in a special way. Briefly: do not incinerate such materials with other trash, but alone, and as they burn, recite the mantra OM AH HUM. As the smoke rises, visualize that it pervades all of space, carrying the essence of the Dharma to all sentient beings in the six saṃsāric realms, purifying their minds, alleviating their suffering, and bringing them all happiness, up to and including enlightenment. Some people might find this practice a bit unusual, but it is given according to tradition. Thank you very much.

### DEDICATION

Through the merit created by preparing, reading, thinking about and sharing this book with others, may all teachers of the Dharma live long and healthy lives, may the Dharma spread throughout the infinite reaches of space, and may all sentient beings quickly attain enlightenment.

In whichever realm, country, area or place this book may be, may there be no war, drought, famine, disease, injury, disharmony or unhappiness, may there be only great prosperity, may everything needed be easily obtained, and may all be guided by only perfectly qualified Dharma teachers, enjoy the happiness of Dharma, have love and compassion for all sentient beings, and only benefit and never harm each other.

LAMA THUBTEN YESHE was born in Tibet in 1935. At the age of six, he entered the great Sera Monastic University, Lhasa, where he studied until 1959, when the Chinese invasion of Tibet forced him into exile in India. Lama Yeshe continued to study and meditate in India until 1967, when, with his chief disciple, Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche, he went to Nepal. Two years later he established Kopan Monastery, near Kathmandu, in order to teach Buddhism to Westerners. In 1974, the Lamas began making annual teaching tours to the West, and as a result of these travels a worldwide network of Buddhist teaching and meditation centers—the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT)—began to develop. In 1984, after an intense decade of imparting a wide variety of incredible teachings and establishing one FPMT activity after another, at the age of forty-nine, Lama Yeshe passed away. He was reborn as Ösel Hita Torres in Spain in 1985 and recognized as the incarnation of Lama Yeshe by His Holiness the Dalai Lama in 1986. Lama's remarkable story is told in Vicki Mackenzie's book, *Reincarnation: The Boy Lama* (Wisdom Publications, 1996) and Adele Hulse's official biography, *Big Love*.

DR. NICHOLAS RIBUSH, MB, BS, is a graduate of Melbourne University Medical School (1964) who first encountered Buddhism at Kopan Monastery, Nepal, in 1972. Since then he has been a student of Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche and a full time worker for their international organization, the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT). He was a monk from 1974 to 1986. He established FPMT archiving and publishing activities at Kopan in 1973 and with Lama Yeshe founded Wisdom Publications in 1975. Between 1981 and 1996 he served variously as Wisdom's director, editorial director and director of development. Over the years he has edited and published many teachings by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Lama Yeshe, Lama Zopa Rinpoche and many other teachers and established and/or directed several other FPMT activities, including the International Mahayana Institute, Tushita Mahayana Meditation Centre, the Enlightened Experience Celebration, Mahayana Publications, Kurukulla Center for Tibetan Buddhist Studies and now the Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive. He was a member of the FPMT board of directors from its inception in 1983 until 2002 and currently serves on the boards of LYWA and Maitripa College.

SANDRA SMITH, BCOMN, first met Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche in New Zealand in 1975. Later that year she joined the community at Chenrezig Institute in Queensland, Australia, where she has offered service in various roles for many years. Sandra was director of Chenrezig Institute from 2004–06 and FPMT Australia's national coordinator and tour coordinator in 2007–08. She compiled and edited children's booklets for FPMT Education Services, including *Meditations for Children*, and has written numerous feature articles for Australian publications. Sandra commenced work as a web and general editor for Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive in 2009 and manages Lama Zopa Rinpoche's Online Advice Book at [LamaYeshe.com](http://LamaYeshe.com).

ULDIS BALODIS was born in Melbourne, Australia, in 1949 to Latvian refugee parents. His father, Jānis, had an interest in Theosophy and practiced hatha yoga and concentration meditation, so Uldis was brought up within an environment of Eastern philosophy. In 1975 he met Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche and attended several courses and decided to practice the Tibetan tradition of Buddhism. In 1976, Uldis established Tara Institute in Melbourne, one of the first FPMT centers. In the early 1980s Uldis settled in Nepal and started a family. For some years he was director of the Himalayan Buddhist Meditation Center (formerly Himalayan Yogic Institute) in Kathmandu. In 1999 he was invited to Latvia to teach, and, following that, in 2000 Lama Zopa Rinpoche instructed him to go to Latvia and continue teaching there. Along with teaching and leading retreats, Uldis established Ganden Center in Riga and Den Nyi Ling retreat center in rural Latvia. He organized His Holiness the Dalai Lama's 2001 visit to Latvia. Uldis has done several longer retreats and has done all nine *ngon dro* preparatory practices. He has received initiations from high lamas of all four schools of Tibetan Buddhism, as well as His Holiness the Dalai Lama. In 2011 he ordained as a bhikshu in Bodhgaya, India, for five years. He later remarried and continued to live in Latvia while maintaining a home in Kathmandu.











