

Karmapa Wangchuk Dorje

Mahamudra – Ocean of True Meaning

Explanations given over Seven Years, in Greece

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Year Four, 2016

DAY 1 (160701-0152-0157)

G 2016 (2) Morning Meditation

In the beginning of the meditations I will recite the same prayers as my Guru Gendun Rinpoche did.

The first one is opening up to the blessings of the lineage and, in a way, it is also expressing one's gratitude. It is also asking for the blessing not to meditate out of the "I", the big me. It is not me who is doing the meditation, but we pray that the Buddhas come and stimulate our inner awareness so that our buddha-nature takes over.

The second one is directed at what we call refuge, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha., moving towards awakening, towards the truth to be realised and friendship as it expresses itself in the Sangha. And it also includes the decision, the wish to dedicate our practice for the benefit of everyone.

And then there are four wishes, they are called the expression of the four immeasurable qualities. In short, these four wishes say: May all beings be happy, may they be free from suffering, may they live in true joy and may they live in this deep equanimity which is the expression of wisdom. May we live in this equanimity free from grasping at what is agreeable and aversion to what is disagreeable. And this is also the essence of meditation. These wishes describe exactly what we are going to do now.

We let the buddha meditate, we don't meditate from the big ego, or self, or me. We direct our mind to be more and more awake, more and more present to the reality and we practice in a spirit of friendship. We practice with an open heart,

feeling connected not only to those in the room, but going far beyond the walls of this room. And we know that good signs of practice are if we feel love, compassion, joy and equanimity.

Meditation:

(Recitation)

And with this, we allow the awareness of buddha-nature to be installed in the centre of our being. And we let the buddha meditate.

We are naturally aware of the various sensations in the body. There is breathing, all happening by itself.

And in all areas of the so-called body, there are sensations, lots of experiences.

When we open up to these manifold sensations, there comes a feeling of not being able to define exactly where the body starts and where it ends.

We also open up to the experiences of hearing. To just how it is to have our hearing sense completely open.

We also open up to seeing. Seeing without grasping, without hooking on to anything.

If there are smells or odours, we practice the same attitude. Being completely open to them without holding on.

Feeling, hearing, seeing, tasting, smelling - all of this in the same attitude of just letting it flow on.

And the same with thinking and emotional feeling.

Whatever arises in awareness, it is as if there were a big space, allowing it to appear and disappear on its own.

And like this we meditate for about ten minutes.

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(Bell for a break in meditation)

Make yourself really comfortable. Any position is fine. Standing is excellent if you still feel a little bit drowsy or you need to stimulate your energies. Sitting is fine if you feel that your energies are well-balanced in this way. And if you feel that lying

would be good for you, lying down, then please do that. So not resisting, but just keeping awareness, as you lie down, don't fall asleep.

The meditation we have been doing is called "the opening of the six senses." This is the basis. With this we start, we sit down, we invite this presence, we let the buddha meditate. Then as we were sitting under a tree like a buddha, we let everything just be.

And, of course, we open up our senses. For example now to hearing: We open up. This will be the same every morning. There is no disturbance in the mind which is not clinging. The undisturbed mind comes from not grasping, not clinging, not holding on.

And with this basic meditation we know how our state of mind is. We might have noticed: Oh, today I am very calm or this morning I am very agitated, you most certainly have felt this.

And now, for the next part of the meditation, I want to show you a little technique with which you can settle more, not concentrating so much, but letting the awareness gather naturally. This is called "Barlung", the awareness of the sensations in this part of the body from the basin up to the diaphragm, this big belly part. You can do it sitting, standing and even walking and talking, you can practice "Barlung".

Put yourself in a good position. First of all, let's again open all six senses.

Then, in the middle of all these many experiences, we go with our awareness to the lower belly. We notice how the movements of breathing go down even to the pelvis, all through the body. See how far you can perceive these tiny changes produced by breathing. You might feel it down the back, into the area where you sit. If you want to connect more strongly, you can also place one hand or two hands on the belly. Feel the warmth of the hands, feel the movements. And you allow your belly to drop out completely, no tension in the belly any more.

It is actually like a completely satisfied baby. There is an open, soft belly. And then from inside with your awareness. Somewhere in the middle of the lower belly you will find an area that is not very precise, but very responsive, like the centre of this is balloon which you call your belly. It is more in the lower part, quite a bit below the navel. Some traditions call it "hara", some traditions call it where there is the Qi. Some say it is the place from which the kundalini arises, in Tibetan tradition the tummo. It is an area, when you find it, you just feel at home.

You cannot be wrong. Just follow your sense of where you are most at home. And relax into it.

Just relax, no work to be done.

Right now we are completely safe, so we can allow this area to relax. And we feel this slight movement of breathing going through this area.

Like this, stabilise your attention in your being and we meditate like this for ten or fifteen minutes.

(Dedication)

2016 (3) Discussion of the Morning Meditation

(Recitation)

This morning we did two meditations: Opening the six senses and the barlung meditation. Both are wonderful meditations to open the path to mahamudra.

Mahamudra is completely natural being without subject-object duality. This is how you can define it. 'Natural' means to give up clinging to the separation between self and others. This is what is meant by natural. No more tension, no more stress. So it is being without any artificial extra work, extra things to do, nothing to do. Just natural. That's why we say: Just like a buddha. A buddha does not struggle with sense impressions. No struggle. That's why the first meditation is to open all senses to stop clinging and struggling.

The second meditation is to take away the over emphasis on the head and the senses localised in the head to the lower belly. Some of you might find this barlung meditation in the lower belly a little bit difficult because you cannot find an exact point to focus on. Sometimes you feel something happening there, you feel some heat, you feel like something more precise, but basically it is meditating on a very vivid alive space in your own body. So this barlung combines several elements which are central to the mahamudra practice. The letting go of the belly is a symbol of trust. Letting go of fears, not wanting to go anywhere. Like a baby, completely satisfied, does not want to go anywhere else, just being. Then there is a lot happening, it is dynamic, it is vivid, just like everything else in life. It is not empty space, it is full, it is dynamic. There are many sense impressions of which very often the slight movements of breathing are the most prominent. And we can use this as an anchor for our mindfulness without clinging to anything. It is anchor, but you cannot really grasp. It is moving, it is process, it reminds us of the process nature of all life.

It can be that you find that this is not enough to stabilise your mind and you need a more precise object. Then, for example, you can take the sensations of breathing at your nostrils.

Question: The translation of barlung?

Answer: “bar” means in between, i.e. in between diaphragm and pelvis, and “lung” (tib. rlung) means prana, breath. Barlung is “the in-between breath”.

These are the two meditations you can remember when you don't know what to do when meditating, you can always come back to those two.

LESSON 14: GURU YOGA

G 2016 (3)

“The source of all meditative experiences and realizations is the guru yoga.”

Someone who comes from Vipassana will say: How come? There are so many meditative experiences and realizations without guru yoga. For example in Zen. What is the meaning here, how can this be true?

The Sanskrit “yoga” means to bring two together to form one. Like the English word “yoke” or the German word “Joch”: To bring two together to form a piece of wood for the horses to be guided.

“Guru” means someone who is weighty. It means someone who leaves a weighty impression. The words are heavy with meaning, and the presence is heavy with blessings. So when you have the guru on top of your head, the guru is heavy and your ego is getting small. It is good to understand that.

So guru yoga means ‘to connect with that which is meaningful’, which is full of blessings and which has the power to diminish our ego-clinging. So we have a practice that connects us with the real guru. It is not the outer guru.

It started at the time of the Buddha where his disciples were encouraged by the Buddha: Just meditate like me. You are not different from me. Let your mind become like my mind.

They were called the arhats, those who had found the inner guru. Their mind was no longer any different from the Buddha's mind. (? Cornelia: Please check if LT really wants to maintain this.) I don't see a problem ☺ - Vijayamala)

The basic idea is: Yes, you have an outer teacher. And the outer teacher gives you confidence in your own mind and says: Just do like I do. You are not different.

The experience of the disciples was that when they came close to the Buddha or when they simply sat silently in the presence of the Buddha, their mind opened so easily. They said that it was so much easier to meditate in the presence of the Buddha or even just to remember one word of the Buddha, that it immediately

opens the mind, it connects with truth, with reality and that experiences and realizations arise so quickly, so easily.

And then some of them had the experience that they just had to think of the Buddha and imagine sitting next to him, and it would also work. To just have the feeling: Now I sit next to the Buddha, my kalyanamitra, my spiritual friend. It fills me with the presence as if he were really there.

And this is what later on became the guru yoga. It uses our capacity to imagine we were meditating in front of the Buddha, together with the Buddha. This is especially important when you cannot go and sit with the Buddha. It is the only possibility we have now. And because our mind is not different from the Buddha's mind, we actually have the capacity to sense, to feel how it could be.

You know that we all relax completely when we fall asleep. We cannot fall asleep when ego-clinging is still continuing. We have to stop clinging to our thoughts, to our self-importance in order to fall asleep. Usually, we only let go when we are tired. Otherwise we continue with our activity of fixing on all kinds of things. But each one of us knows the experience that yes, in order to fall asleep, we have to let go, and I can let go! But it is not the "I" that lets go. It is that we have to let go of the "I" in order to fall asleep.

From this daily experience comes the capacity to know how it is to be completely free. The difference is that we relax into a wide, open state of mind. Mahamudra or awakening is the same letting go as when we fall asleep, but we fall into a completely awake state of mind, no cloudiness, no haziness, just clarity, wide awake. That's why it is not so surprising that when you talk about it, so many people have an intuitive understanding of what is meant. And actually it is what we all wish: To be as open and relaxed as when falling asleep, but not fall asleep; instead be in this world and be able to act and interact from within this state.

Guru yoga is a method to speed up this process. It is built on the experience that one's own questions, thoughts and so on calm down and loosen up in the presence of an awakened teacher. When we don't have an awakened teacher we can visit every day, it is good to take the guru yoga home, if can't take the Guru home!

"If a receptive student prays sincerely and one-pointedly to a qualified teacher, offering his irreversible devotion, he will in one life and in one body actualize the primordial awareness of mahamudra. This is unfailing."

A qualified teacher is someone like the Buddha. But for some people it does not work to meditate with the Buddha because they have never met him and don't know much about his life. So Tibetans meditated very much on Milarepa or Machig Labdrön or Yeshe Tsogyäl. Because they lived in Tibet, (people) knew their lives, there were so many recordings of it, chants were transmitted and so

on. So there was a direct, very inspiring contact. It is like in Greece, you have so many saints. The saint was there, and the village has lived with the saint and when thinking of the saint, the blessing comes very easily because there is a direct connection of inspiration. So as students, we are most receptive to a guru yoga with a holy person, an awakened person that we have confidence in, who we can relate to. It has to somehow speak to us.

We should understand what it means to pray. Here, prayer means opening up. Letting go of one's self-importance. The prayer is not a prayer to receive something; we actually continue praying until our vision of the world changes. This is the point we want to reach in prayer in the Buddhist tradition. We repeat the prayer until our vision changes. That's why the prayer in Tibetan is called Mönlam (tib. smon-lam), a path of aspiration. So we continue to pray and develop, strengthen, deepen our aspiration of opening up, letting go and so on until we begin to see the world with the eyes of the teacher.

It is a very interesting experience. We start praying with the feeling that our personal world is full of problems. The way to pray is to see beyond, to see through the problems and: 'Wow! Where has the previous problem gone?' This is when the vision changes. We still know our difficulties, our challenges, but we don't feel the stress anymore, we live in a stress-free dimension of mind. What has happened is that our grasping mind has become fluid, flexible, supple. And then we stop praying. Then we just rest in this open, dynamic, flexible mind. That's all we need to do. It is a method to enter into that way of being in the world which is characteristic of our awakened teachers and then we simply stay in that.

When they hear the word guru yoga, most people think that it is always about a person, about some guru. In the next chapter (lesson 17), we will see that there are four kinds of guru: (1) the personal guru, a teacher with a lineage; (2) the guru of the texts, the dharma transmission, so all dharma books and dharma instructions as a guru; (3) the world, the different situations we encounter as a guru, we call that the guru of the elements because the world is made up of the five elements; (4) the nature of our own mind, the dharmakaya as a guru.

To be able to enter the nature of our own mind, to be in that, is the whole point of practice. It's complete understanding, no more clinging, openness, being able to interact in the world without grasping to an imaginary self.

So the role of the guru, the role of the dharma teaching is to bring us into contact with the inner guru, the nature of our own mind. That's the purpose.

And even traditions that do not talk about guru yoga use this principle of guru yoga. You will, for example, hear practitioners of the Pali tradition, Theravada practitioners saying: we don't have a guru yoga. But they have: they use the second guru, the guru of the texts, of the transmissions. And even within the Pali canon there are references to guru yoga in "Pingya's praises".

But the idea is that you found your life, you inspire your life with the teachings until your investigating mind, exploring mind comes from within to this experience: ah yes, that's what is meant. From within arises the direct seeing of what is meant by the teaching. This is the moment when the guru yoga has taken full effect.

The Zen tradition used to have a lot of texts and worked with that but in recent centuries they do most of their work without studying so many texts. Their guru yoga is very much with the third guru, the guru of the situations, the world itself being your teacher. They have a very strong connection with the first guru, the presence of a human being in this world, plus beginning to read from the situations, taking the instructions from what happens. Thanks to instructions they receive from the outer teacher, they begin to get a feeling for deep dharma in the situations that they live through.

So you see, talking about these four gurus makes a lot of sense. The real guru is the nature of reality. There is no other guru actually. And awakening is to be completely in tune with the nature of reality. No more separation, no more wrong ideas. This is guru yoga, uniting with the guru.

No guru in the world can establish a disciple in awakening. If someone could lift another person from lack of awareness into a state of complete awareness, then the awakened masters of the past would do nothing else but lift one after the other into complete awareness. Unfortunately, it is not possible. But they have skillful means of how to stimulate that awareness. Let's learn about one more (method).

“Since our lineage (the mahamudra lineage of the Kagyupas) is a blessing lineage it is impossible for meditative experiences and realizations to arise, without having received the blessing of the teachers.”

In the Kagyü lineage, we specialise in direct contact with students, oral transmission continues. And each one of these contacts with authentic teaching is blessing. It is from this that our meditation is nourished. So we don't focus so much on texts. We use texts, but the oral explanations are more important. When we meditate, we remember what we have understood in the presence of the teachers and this is the new view which guides us in our meditation. This remembering, being in the trust, opening up to the mind of the teachers is called entering the blessing.

“When you have received the blessing all the realizations of true empowerment will instantly arise in your mind stream.”

Empowerment is the correct translation here for what really happens. It is like in the time of the Buddha, when the Buddha says to his disciple: You can do it just like I can. You are empowered, you have all the power to become a fully awakened being. This is what happens in empowerment. So I hope this happens

to you when we are together. That you feel empowered, that you feel like your inner strength is being nourished and the confidence arises: 'Yes, why not? Of course, there is the possibility to awaken, yes, it's there'.

Imagine this very clearly, historically. Outcasts in India would want to approach the Buddha, throw themselves into the dust, not daring to come close to him. And the Buddha would call them and say: you are like me. There is no difference. You can awaken. Just practice and you will sit then next to me. This is like empowerment, very strong. Women can do it just like men. No difference. Empowerment is the spirit of passing on the confidence in one's own true nature from one generation to the next.

Let's take the noise of the delivery lorries as a blessing of the guru. What would that mean? It means: It arises and disappears by itself. I hope you understand that. No struggle, no stress. You see, in this way the Tibetans say: 'oh, the guru is visiting. When a challenge like this arises, it is the guru of the situations, the third one'.

In order to have blessing arising in your mind stream,

"For this to happen, it needs a karmic connection between teacher and student, and certain qualifications on both sides."

Karmic connection means that something must make you feel confident, that you have trust. For some reason, maybe from previous lives, maybe from this life, maybe from your experience, then you have trust in this teacher.

"According to the vinaya, there are two kinds of preceptor," for novices and for fully ordained monks," and five kinds of teacher: the teacher for the ritual, the teacher of discipline, the reading teacher, the teacher for private matters, and the teacher of novices. Sutramula: "There are novices and fully ordained monks, some monks are preceptors." And: "These are the teachers: for private matters, for the ritual, for the rules, and for reading.""

Vinaya are the teachings for the monastic community on wholesome conduct.

A preceptor is someone who is the head of the ritual where you become a monk or a novice. It is the guiding teacher here, and it is the preceptor also after the ritual when you have questions about how to behave in the sangha, you can come and ask this person. This person is responsible.

Preceptors are particular monks in the monastic sangha, they have a higher level of competence, they can pass on the dharma to others.

"Preceptors must have four qualities: they must have the four factors of discipline, stability, competence, and usefulness. The factors of usefulness means: "He has compassion,

patience, a pure inner retinue, diligence in the twofold usefulness and is in accord with the title and the view; he can speak clearly and understand the meaning; he has a stable mind

and a normal body and is holding his usual rank." Furthermore: "He has compassion, a pure inner retinue, is diligent in the twofold usefulness, in the spiritual and the material sense, and teaches at the right time; this is the description of a teacher."

Concerning the teachers, the teacher of novices has the six qualities of a fully ordained monk, and as the seventh the competence to give the novice vows. The six qualities are: he possesses the vows of a fully ordained monk completely pure, he is in accord with his title and the view, he has the three requisites," he has a normal human body and a stable motivation.

The teacher for private matters has the six qualities and in addition is competent in inquiring about hindrances to the ordination.

The teacher of ritual has the additional qualities for his task, which is to recite the ordination ritual by heart without mistaking even half a syllable.

The teacher of the rules, in addition to possessing the four characteristics of a preceptor, is able to confer the vinaya precepts of what to abandon and what to adopt and to accomplish the purification of the student's mind stream.

The reading teacher possesses the respective ordination vows completely pure, he holds his usual rank and is in accord with the title and the view, he knows the Dharma well, which he has to teach, and he is capable of developing the treasure of the threefold training in the mind stream of the students by means of intelligent expositions, debate and compositions concerning the Tripitaka."

Discipline (tib. tshul-khrims, Sanskrit shila) actually means wholesome conduct. Stability means mental, emotional stability.

Question: What is retinue?

Answer: Retinue is modest, naturally self-restrained, not excessive. ????(I know this word Retinue is in the text, but this is not a definition we have come across, it means 'an entourage', I wonder if the Tibetan means something like 'composure' – if this cannot be resolved maybe we just leave out this question? - Vijayamala}

'Compassion' means naturally turned towards others, always wishing to help.

'Patience' means not getting upset with difficult circumstances.

'Pure inner retinue' means that the inner state of mind, even when not speaking, is a pure inner state, not with self-concern.

'Diligence' (tib. brtson-'grus) is also translated as joyful perseverance, the Sanskrit word viriya which means energy. So there is a joyful energy in accomplishing the two kinds of benefits, benefit for oneself and benefit for all others.

Title - preceptor, monk or lama - inner state of mind and behaviour fit (together). And also the view, how the dharma is explained, how the world is seen, this fits, is in complete concordance.

Normal body, this comes from the vinaya, means it is not a transsexual. So it is clearly a man or clearly a woman.

Usual rank means that in the sangha there is a ranking of when you were ordained. Just because you think you are more qualified, you don't take the place of an elder or senior disciple. Just to give you an example: the Buddha ordained two or three princes from his own family. But he purposely ordained their barber just before them. He made a special ordination ceremony for the barber. So for the rest of their lives, the princes always had to sit below the barber. In this way, the barber was a constant reminder of practising humility for the top caste royal monks.

Since the sangha respected this chronological order, there was no quarrelling over ranks, no rivalry. Everything was clear. It was settled. If someone had a problem with this, it could just act as a mirror for one's emotional tendencies.

The teacher for private matters would inquire about the age of a person because you cannot ordain minors. He also has to inquire whether this person is running away from being pursued by the authorities for some criminal offences or from debts, from financial responsibilities and so on. There is a whole list of such obstacles to ordination.

Tripitaka are the three baskets of the Buddha's teaching: The teachings on meditation are the sutra teaching, the vinaya teachings about wholesome conduct and the abhidharma teachings which are the structured overview of the Buddhist teaching.

Do you remember the three trainings? Shila, Samadhi, Prajna. Wholesome conduct, training in meditative absorption and wisdom, developing understanding of reality.

G 2016 (4)

“Within the Mahayana there are the teachers of the Parami-tayana tradition, and the teachers of the secret mantra tradition, and many others. Concerning the teacher of the Paramitayana the Bodhicharyavatara says:

Never, even at the cost of your life, forsake your spiritual friend, who is well versed in the sense of the Mahayana and excellent in the discipline of the bodhisattvas.”

Hold onto someone with authentic qualities. We asked Lama Gendun: But is this not a form of clinging? He said: It's the best form of clinging you can have. You can let go when you have had enough.

“Sutralamkara:

You should rely on a spiritual friend who is calm, controlled, and appeased, who has superior qualities, is diligent, and rich with scriptural transmission, who has completely realised suchness and is eloquent, who has a loving nature, and is free of weariness”

The Mahayana-Sutralamkara was written by Asanga-Maitreya (LT says 8th century - rather 4th century?) and gives us some qualities which we should look for when we want to decide: Can I rely on this teacher or not. Does he or she have the necessary qualities?

‘Calm’ means a peaceful state of mind.

‘Controlled’ means control of the mind. So natural mind, not a wild mind, not subject to all kinds of emotional tendencies which will suddenly take over. It is not controlled in the sense of being controlled by external forces or controlled by desires. It is the opposite. Being in complete possession of one’s mind.

‘Appeased’ means that the fire of the emotions has calmed down. True peace has been installed.

‘Superior qualities’ means to really have understood the dharma, to have true meditation experiences. And most of all to have the sincere motivation to help everyone, bodhicitta.

‘Diligent’ means this joy at doing, at accomplishing what is beneficial.

‘Rich with scriptural transmissions’ means really knowing the dharma, it is not an invented dharma. It is really authentic, really based in the tradition.

‘Completely realised suchness’ means the nondual state of mind. Suchness (Sanskrit: tathata) is the way things are, just as they are. Suchness is nondual realization, nondual subject and object. It means being able to perceive, being able to interact without the artificial thoughts of “I”, me, mine, self.

‘Eloquent’ means being able to explain the dharma well, in such a way that it is really understood. It does not mean using many words. It means to use essential words that will open up the understanding.

‘Loving nature’ means an open heart, being a friend of people, of animals, of nature.

‘Free from weariness’ means the weariness of bodhisattvas who say: ‘It is getting too much to always be helping others’. Being free of that weariness means to say: ‘Let’s continue with the dharma, let’s continue with practice, let’s continue with whatever needs to be done.’

“According to another explanation, he needs four particular qualities and nine attributes: He has a vast learning, is free from doubts, is worthy of appreciation, and teaches the two meanings;” this is what is called an excellent teacher of bodhisattvas.”

Vast learning is based on an attitude of never stopping learning. A bodhisattva never stops learning as long as he or she lives. The learning is not based on a personal quest for knowing more. It is the kind of learning to always learn what could be more beneficial to those that need guidance. You probably know about this very curious state of mind of the Dalai Lama. He is always learning from scientists, psychologists, psychotherapists, still studying the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, wanting to know everything that could be helpful. And when you live a life like that, then of course your learning becomes vast. Another example would be Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche. He was someone of extremely vast

learning. He knew all areas of the dharma and could reply to all dharma questions. Just to give two examples.

'Free from doubts' has a special meaning. Such a person can open any dharma book anywhere, read, contemplate and know exactly what is meant. Free from doubts about the meaning of the dharma. The key to that is to have completely understood the meaning of non-self, emptiness, the union of wisdom and compassion. You know, these absolute key points of the dharma, by personal realization. Then the rest clarifies itself.

'Worthy of appreciation', 'worthy of respect', is someone who really merits our respect, veneration, even offerings. Everything is in good hands with this person, we can direct our devotion and make offerings, and there is no abuse or misuse of our open-heartedness.

'Teaching the two meanings' is what is usually called the relative and the absolute truth, but if we look closer, it is more like a conventional way of explaining and a more definite or precise way of explaining. It is the capacity to explain with common language with examples from ordinary life, and, at the same time go very precisely into a description of how reality really is.

I'll give you an example: The conventional way of explaining things would be: If you want to practice mahamudra, you need to know where to go. It is like going from here to India. You have to prepare yourself and you need to know the path. You need to know about awakening, the qualities of awakening and the methods of how to get there. Everyone understands.

The more precise way of explanation is the following: Actually, there is no-one going on any journey. The so-called 'goal' of awakening is nowhere else but in your own mind. It is this very state of confusion now which is awakening if you understand its true nature. And if you look precisely, no-one has ever realised awakening because you cannot find a self that could realise something else. It is just being in the awareness of how it is.

Do you understand? I have just changed levels of explanation. There was the easy-to-communicate outer level, which everyone can understand. And then I was going through various levels of inner meaning until you really touch the point of how it actually is. And then even the last level of explanation, one goes still further and I must tell you that even the last words I said are wrong. No words can teach awakening. Words are only conventions which point to some experience which needs to arise in your own mind.

So when it says capable of teaching the two meanings, it means that the teachers need to have the capacity to speak the language of the disciples, the relative level, and bring the understanding into being always more precise and then go beyond even the last definition.

"The supreme qualities of a bodhisattva are: he is gentle, not haughty, untiring, he can clearly explain many different topics; he is understanding, disinterested and omnipresent."

He is disinterested, he has no personal aims and goals. Very interested in the benefit of all, no selfish interest. Actually, there is no calculation of interests. There is just a mind that is seeing: This is necessary, it needs to be done. Not me and others, just: The situation needs this. Then it is being done.

Omnipresent is not such a good translation It would be better to say: The awareness is all-pervading. This means that there are no areas of mind and of life and of the world where the awareness would not go. All so-called shadows or dark parts, whatever the experience, all of this is welcome in awareness.

“Acharya Candrakirti:

When the teacher has understood the student's aspirations, he will guide him accordingly. A skillful teacher will gather disciples, a foolish one will never have disciples.”

I made a mistake when I was a young lama. I thought too quickly that I understood the students' aspirations. But I didn't really. And I learnt to listen more closely: What do the people that come to me, individually, really want. What is their heart aspiration.

I remember one situation with a student who came and I had first contact then, he was part of the general teaching in the monastery and the three-year-retreat. And ten years later, after having gone, so to speak, through the bodhisattva machine, he said: But I only came here because I wanted to learn how to love! And I said: Oh my God. Of course, love means bodhicitta, but then one doesn't need all the technical explanations. He just wants to learn how to love. So let's start again. So first you want to learn how to love, so let's start with loving oneself and receiving love yourself. Loving your thumb, loving your index finger, loving all parts of your body, all parts of yourself. How to do that? How to receive love. And then he said: Oh, this becomes more difficult. And then I said: loving doesn't go without receiving love. You need to learn both. And so on and so on. How to love someone you like, how to open and begin loving people who are pretty much neutral and what is an authentic love towards people who are a challenge to us. What does it really mean. And of course it is dharma to teach all this. But it is aligned directly with the student's aspirations and not all these many additional things. He didn't come for meditation. He didn't want to learn meditation.

This is why, in the past I have done so many exercises with you: What do you really want, what are the qualities in your life that you really aspire to, what is central? And this is what we need to know and stay close to it so as not to lose time on our spiritual path.

This is what we need to teach in school. When you are about twelve years old, you really start thinking: What do I want, what is important in life? How do I feel that I'll be really happy? What is it really that matters in life? And when these primary aspirations are taken care of, others will most certainly appear. The whole thing will become more rounded, there is more which will appear and everything else will come with it. This is what we as teachers have to take care of first, otherwise we miss the point.

When Gendun Rinpoche named me retreat guide and gave me responsibility of guiding three- or six-year retreats, I asked him: "What is most important? Can you give me some direction? What shall I keep in mind as a Drubpon (tib. sgrub-dpon)?" One sentence answer only: "When you go into retreat, you are the servant of the situation." Other people call us retreat masters. We don't master anything except that we serve retreatants. That's the point.

"The teacher of the secret mantra is: "A practitioner who is inseparable from his deity and who has complete realization of the Mantrayana."

Kalachakra Tantra:

In the first place you should rely on teachers who have the vajra commitments and are completely established in the Vajrayana. Having practiced it, they have no attachment, and are free from distortions, pursuing the path with patience. For students they transmit the path, rob them of the fear of the hells, and have a pure behavior towards them. This basis holding the vajra club against the maras, is highly renowned as Vajrasattva."

I just want to explain one sentence here:

"Holding the vajra club against the maras" means like holding up the scepter, the vajra, against all the enemies of awakening: No way in! This is the outer meaning. The real meaning is to stimulate the qualities of indestructible awareness in the student so that no clinging to self, no identification with the emotions, with the skandhas, no fear of birth and death will ever arise. So deeply rooted in the awareness of being just this that no attachment and aversion will ever arise.

The four maras are: (1) klesha mara, identification with emotions; (2) skandha mara, identification with the five skandhas, five aspects of our being; (3) mrtyu(pati) mara is the mara of death or the lord of death, which is a clinging to self without understanding the process of birth and death; (4) devaputra mara is "the son of God", which is actually clinging to heavenly sense impressions, wonderful sense impressions and especially meditative experiences. These are four classifications of what our problem is in samsara.

To hold up the sceptre means: No chance for these various forms of clinging!

"It is taught in the Paramarthasevan:

In the degenerate age the teachers have a combination of faults and qualities. Someone without any fault does not exist. Students should examine them well and rely on those in whom the qualities prevail."

Nowadays - and this nowadays is about a thousand years old and goes up to now - you don't find *the* pure and perfect teacher. Take one where there is a predominance of qualities.

"Abhisamayalankara:

A spiritual teacher in every respect is one whose mind does not get discouraged. He shows the nonexistence of entities and abandons everything not in accord with that. ””

Never giving up guiding beings towards awakening, never get discouraged by the only small progress or no progress they make.

The three upwards evolving vows are:

(1) A basis in the self-liberating vows not to harm others and to do everything wholesome that helps one's personal liberation.

(2) On the basis of that to keep the bodhisattva vows pure to always go and practice and work for the awakening of all sentient beings.

(3) And on top of that to have the samaya of the vajrayana, the tantric vows of which the key samaya is never to lose pure vision, so never to lose the vision of the Buddha which basically means never to enter dualistic projection of self and others. Which is, so to speak, impossible to live out. That's why it says: 'At best'.

'Defeats' are those behaviours which completely break the vows.

Definitely stay away from teachers who pursue personal interests and are profit oriented.

You should have this inner radar, antennas, so as not to fool yourself. When you see self-interest, you see self-interest. Don't fool yourself and say inwardly: Oh no, I must be wrong. It cannot be. If you perceive it, be careful. Take care to investigate more, to look.

Basically, you can follow the guideline how to discover a sect (cult) and the leader of a sect: Money, sex and power. There is abuse, something not clear on any of these three levels, stay away. Improper dealings with money, finances, riches, improper dealings with sexual relationships, improper dealings with power like manipulation, power concentration and so on. We have to watch out for these three. In order to be a teacher, one does not have to be poor, living in chastity and refraining from all involvement in the world, to be powerless. No, this is not the meaning. When there are a lot of students, there will be a lot of material possibilities coming together, how does a teacher deal with that? There will be possibilities to have sexual relationships, how does the teacher deal with that? There will be the power to decide things and to guide people, how is that being done? This is what we have to look at. We will need to have quality judgments.

LESSON 33: BINDING ABOVE

G 2016 (6)

Meditation:

(Recitation)

For this meditation I ask you to sit straight.

You visualise in the centre of your heart a four-petalled white lotus. In this white, brilliant lotus there is a white sphere of light, very dynamic, very alive. It is radiating like the sun and moon together. It is so bright and shining. It has so much energy that it is almost leaping up. It is like it's dancing inside the four-petalled lotus.

And then you will do, in a moment, just as I am doing now, holding the breath and then letting this light sphere shoot up high up into the sky. With the outbreath, the light sphere goes up.

Imagine that with the outbreath, the light sphere shoots up into the sky, like going up through where you had the fontanelle before, going up through the centre of your head (shouting HÄ). And keep the mind concentrated all the way up. And then relax that concentration as much as possible, with only minimum concentration directed up there. As if you were watching a star far above the centre of your head.

And now relax even more without maintaining the visualisation.

OK, what did you observe. What was the effect of doing this visualisation? What really happened to you?

Student: It was like a shock treatment; it was really clear and stable.

LT: That's exactly what it is supposed to do. It creates immediate clarity, it cuts through all the thought chains and it makes the mind clear, very bright. It is excellent for after lunch.

Student: It was like a letting go, like a relief from heaviness.

LT: Exactly. Actually, this meditation is called: Opening the mind in akanishta (Sanskrit), holding the mind above everything. And it creates this feeling that you lose this heaviness.

Student: The sound?

LT: It is like a light Phowa sound. I hold the breath, and then it helps you so that the visualisation goes together with the breath. You don't have to make the sound, you can do it without sound. The sound will help you to really cut with all thoughts and preoccupations.

And then, afterwards, we just stay up there. The important thing is to train in this a little bit, to connect with it. And you look a little bit forward, a little bit upwards.

The maximum effect will be gained if you sit as if the this point here (fontanelle) was already connected to the sky, completely upright and straight.

(Individual repetition of the meditation)

While keeping the awareness wide open and directed upwards, relax as much as you can so that it does not become tense.

And enjoy it being so wide awake, clear, fresh.

(Bell)

“This is called the concentration of mahabrahma’s crown ornament. It is an excellent application of the concentration holding the mind on Akanishta.”

‘Mahabrahma’ is the highest god of meditation. And (the fontanelle area) is actually called the brahmanic opening. So you can imagine that this light is like your crown ornament.

‘Akanishta’ is this sphere above which there is nothing.

If you sit crooked, it will not work well. You have to sit straight. And then with all your force, go into clarity. Your motivation counts, your visualisation counts, the upwards directionality. And then you can actually cut through dullness, you can cut through thinking processes and even the digestive energy - normally very active now (after lunch) - will not pull you down.

When you do it with a complete letting go, you can really be in akanishta (tib. ’og-min), the nondual sphere of mind. This means it can stop your dualistic clinging in that moment.

Question: Can you repeat this process or is it just a one off?

Answer: If you feel that it is incomplete, you can repeat the process.

The effect will be to really be able to connect, to feel the energy going up, connecting here and then you cannot grasp any more, but all your attention is directed upwards. Inwardly high up into the sky, outwardly the eyes wide open.

You can also do it without a sound.

(Individual repetition.)

So remember with your body memory how it is to feel so straight, how it is to be looking upwards, wide open eyes. Remember so well that you can get back into it.

As you might have noticed, this is using the connection between mind and subtle energies, mind and prana, prana-mind.

What are the elements that we are using to make the mind clearer? What can you identify? Typical ways of working with prana, the subtle energy? You want to clarify, to arouse your mind.

Listing: Upwards direction. Very light. White. Active, very vibrant, quick. Completely translucent, as bright as possible. Straight body posture. Sound. Eyes wide open and you can even look into the sky. Breath: This additional attention on the outer prana which is breath. A little breath control and then release.

These elements combined have a strong effect. If one of the elements is weak, the effect will get a little bit weaker. So if you are fully concentrated, the visualisation is very dynamic, and you are really doing the shooting up, with a little breath control, upright posture, then you are sure to arrive in a much clearer state of mind. You will be completely clear, normally.

This is a method. When would you apply this meditation? When you are sleepy and dull. This is the indication, the appropriate treatment. What is the contraindication? When you are agitated, you don't do it. You would have to be a real master to benefit from it when agitated. You could do it, but it is normally not advised. Definitely, you wouldn't do it when your energies are already all up, maybe you have a headache, lots of energy up here.

I asked you to keep the body memory. It is not that the body has a memory but how did it feel at the end of the exercise? Can you find your way back precisely into the posture and feel how it was at the end of the exercise? Just do it now. Thank you.

I wanted to show you that you don't need the visualisation, you don't need the whole process. When you know where you want to go, you can direct your body and mind into that exact experience. This is mind-body control, prana-control. You can do it, you have to know where you go. That's all.

What's the major obstacle for this to work?

Students: Not remembering. Having too many ideas about the process like conceptualising the process.

LT And one thing: Staying just the way I am. Maybe a little bit dull, maybe a little bit cozy, maybe a little bit sleepy. That's the major obstacle. Not wanting to be clear. Wanting to stay a little bit siesta-mood. This method only works if you want to be clear: Yeah, we go for it.

LESSON 34: BINDING BELOW AND ALTERNATING

G 2017 (6)

“Visualise in your heart centre a black lotus, which opens downwards. In its middle is a black sphere the size of a pea, or whatever size is suitable. Like attached to a spider's thread it descends through the secret centre, and little by little, slowly moves downward many miles and finally stays as heaviness. Place the mind one-pointedly on that. Close the anus firmly and direct the body posture and the gaze together downward. This is called ‘the concentration employed underground’.”

After many times doing the uplifting samadhi, you can try to do this one.

Question: Directing the body posture downwards?

Answer: What it means is that you sit straight and let yourself sink downwards. You sink into yourself, but you still sit straight.

Meditation:

Our eyes are open but downwards.

First we have the downwards-opening black lotus, then this blackness, the black light sphere. And then like a spider going down, like a ball going down, down, down. Slowly, slowly, let it go down millimetre by millimetre, let it go out your secret place, further and further down. Follow it with your attention like a black bowl going underground. And as it goes deeper, it becomes heavier and heavier. There is no force to hold it, but it becomes heavier and heavier.

Close your sphincter a little bit, or stronger, you decide yourself.

And relax into that relaxed heaviness.

And then come back into what you feel your middle, the best way of being present.

We use your understanding of prana and mind to balance yourself. If you still feel drowsy, uplift your energy. If you still feel agitated, calm your energy.

And relax completely to receive some more instructions.

(End)

This meditation has a strikingly different effect on us. Like before: What are the elements of working with prana, what are the various things that make it possible to calm and to settle down?

Listing: Downwards, slowness, heavy, black, anchor, staying there.

You'll have noticed that there was no sudden breath movement, so slow.

Which body parts were activated? Pelvis, the basin and the anus sphincter. So all our attention of the body goes to the lower part of it. Since we are sitting (in a cross-legged position), this is where we are actually touching the ground. We go to the place of contact with the ground.

So both exercises start from the heart. One goes up and stimulates the top of the head, the other goes down and stimulates the centre of the pelvis.

One is with sudden and quick expulsion of breath, the other one is not even mentioning the breath, just slow visualisations and the image of a spider.

Tibetans say black light: It is not just blackness, there is a light within the black. But when you do this exercise, please concentrate on going into the darkness. But in the darkness there is the light of awareness. Normally you would say that black light is a contradiction. But from the experience, it is not a contradiction. If you visualise black, at the same time your awareness is heightened, so there is a clarity within the blackness.

Question: Why is there this tensing of the anus?

Answer: It is to prevent too much energy going down. It is closing the lower orifices to prevent like a knock-out or a coma. It keeps you downwards, but within your normal consciousness, within your body and it prevents you from completely getting lost.

In retreat, we would practice for a full week with just this exercise. When you do this practice properly, it will not make you fall asleep because of this little tension in the anus and because of the relaxed concentration involved in visualising that. It stabilises you in a very relaxed presence.

You will have different experiences. Sometimes it will be like you see the lotus from outside and see this light bowl like descending, as if from outside. Then you can also go with your attention inside the black light sphere and descend together with it, be inside the experience of heaviness and blackness, not looking from above. And then you will have experiences like looking from below up, as if the body was kind of empty because there is no more identification, the attention is somewhere else.

G 2016 (7)

“ALTERNATING

By alternating between these two practices according to the situation, bringing the mind down when it is elated, and uplifting it when it is down, a one-pointed concentration arises and faults are cleared away.”

Meditation

You can use that method of alternating whenever you feel like it and you adapt your meditation to your own needs.

Meditate exactly in the way that is good for you. If you don't know directly, ask your inner lama what's good for you.

If you feel that you want to look out into the sky, you can turn and look out into the sky, no need to look towards the teacher, just do it the way you feel most comfortable.

Remember to be as natural as possible. Not following a program, just giving space to what is wholesome or to what is good for you.

Meditation needs to be completely free of stress. There is stress when we go into aversion against disagreeable sensations. There is stress when we cling to agreeable sensations. And there is stress due to not knowing how to completely relax.

Let your mind become as vast as the sky. No centre, no limits.

Find ways not to suffer which allow the mind to open more, to relax more, let the body be at ease.

Sometimes you might find out that you can relax into your experience. Whatever sensations there are, if you relax into them, then new ways of experiencing open up to you.

Trusting, trusting the natural clarity of your own mind. Nothing to do to be aware.

What happens if we create absolutely no tension in mind. And everything is loose, flowing. How is it?

Continue to follow your inner lama whether to sit, to lie down, to stand. How to use your mind. Follow your inner lama.

(Bell)

Look at what your body wishes and what you do with your mind as you hear the sound of the singing bowl. Are these perhaps movements which you should have made before?

Some of you seem to get into movements which seem to give some additional relaxation to the body. You could have done that before.

Mostly, what we were practising, is called “rang-babs”-meditation. Tib. “babs” means falling, letting fall. And tib. “rang” means by itself or naturally. Letting everything naturally fall into its place. This is something to come very quickly into something close to mahamudra. We let the four extremities fall. We let them go into their natural place. But we can also sit straight, that’s also natural. And we can stand. All of this is possible. It is basically being, being without effort, dropping all unnecessary effort. And how is your mind now?

Vast, happy? Let’s make it a practice all around the clock for twenty-four hours. It is the practice of minimum effort: Letting everything unnecessary drop away.

If we enjoy making effort, of course we do it, this is wonderful. So do it. Don’t stop yourself. You don’t have to become like a potato. Enjoy being alive, but avoid dukkha, no need to create dukkha, the famous word the Buddha used for suffering. We call it stress nowadays. Unnecessary tension, effort which tires us out, aversion against the disagreeable, attachment to the agreeable. Clinging to a self when there is no self to be found. Unnecessary and not very helpful. Let everything fall into its own place. Then the clarity of mind will show, then the mind will become vast and full of love and joy, all the qualities will naturally show. Where before there was mega-stress, we call it maha-dukkha, then there will be great joy, we call it maha-sukkha.

I find that that’s a good way to be. And we can learn to do big projects like this to lead our life of work, work on the computer like this, driving our cars like this, having our conversations like this - we can take decisions, we can do everything with minimum effort. We work and be so relaxed that we forget that we are working. Relaxed doesn’t mean slow, it doesn’t mean without anything. It is this relaxed, joyful energy. Do you know relaxed joyful running? How to walk up a mountain in a relaxed joyful way? Do you know relaxed, joyful dancing? Relaxed conversation, not tiring. Or like now, relaxed teaching, I am not tired. It is possible. We can discover a whole new world.

DAY 2 (160702-0158-0163)

G 2016 (8)

As we do the prayers, imagine that your refuge is in front of you. In order to qualify as a refuge, it needs to embody for you the qualities of awakening. That’s the necessary prerequisite to be a refuge. For some of us it is very easy: We just take the Buddha. Although we have never met him, the figure of the Buddha inspires us with the qualities of awakening.

But you see that in the old days, in the first centuries after the Buddha, they did not visualise the Buddha, they visualised the dharma wheel, or a lotus, or the footprints of the Buddha. They did not focus so much on the person, but more on the symbolic meaning. So you can also use symbols like this which inspire you as the qualities of refuge.

Also, the bodhi tree became a very important symbol and sometimes just a leaf of the bodhi tree, as a symbol of the place of awakening, the strength, the dedication, the unshakeable mind, all of this could be included there.

The important thing is: You must like it. You must feel inspired by it. You need to have a personal connection with it.

And then, at the end of the prayers, it dissolves into light and settles in our heart. And this is how we start meditating. The refuge settles in our heart. We have already the refuge here, in our mind.

Then there are some who cannot decide: Which is my symbol? They are allowed to visualise all of them at the same time. I think this is how the Tibetan refuge mandalas developed. They just didn't want to decide on any one. So they put everything in there.

So, for example, look at the Buddha. He has a dharma wheel at his heart, he sits on a lotus, you see the soles of his feet and above is the bodhi tree (laughing).

What is important is that you remember as we pray, as we direct our mind towards these qualities, what they stand for. This openness, this fluidity, the unity of compassion and wisdom and so on. Being completely authentic, being completely human, all of that.

So take a while to take that in, in your mind, and we will recite the prayers together.

All awakened ones and all sentient beings are invited to be present.

(Recitation)

And then the refuge dissolves into light of many colours and this light comes into us and we let the Buddha meditate.

The Buddha feels the physical sensations of just now. He hears the sounds of Kalamaki in the morning, sees the visual impressions of this place, smells and tastes the impressions of just now and is aware of mind, of all the movements, thoughts, feelings, and dwells in a deeply accepting, compassionate equanimity.

Wherever the awareness goes there is a deep understanding that there is nothing to do. Appearances are self-arising and self-liberating.

And then perhaps, if you like, come to the practice of barlung, this means centring your awareness in the lower belly as if you were feeling the world from the belly. We are feeling the world as a very relaxed belly, full of trust.

The fine movements of the breathing, as it affects the belly, the pelvis and the back help us to stabilise the mind.

Breathing in symbolizes opening up, breathing out symbolizes allowing the flow.

And we can go one step further: Opening up is a compassionate feeling of being willing to feel. Being open, to feel the world, to feel others, to feel ourselves, feeling completely connected, open, receptive. Breathing the same air as everyone else.

And with breathing out we let our warmth flow out, our support, our love.

Allowing ourselves to feel, allowing ourselves to flow.

And wisdom is what makes it possible to open up like this and to flow. It is a deep knowing that everything is process, that everything changes all by itself.

(Break)

Wisdom is that which knows that whatever we feel has no substance. It is appearing, and just the same way as it appeared, it will also disappear. It is not going to stay. You don't have to be afraid of it. We can feel more and more as we know the nature of what we feel. It comes very naturally thanks to deep understanding. We know what we call the ungraspable nature of all experiences. And because we know the ungraspable nature, there is no grasping so we can allow ourselves to feel more and more, for as long as we don't enter grasping. Grasping means attachment and aversion due to believing things to be real in the sense of graspable, real. Like: 'I cannot open up to the sadness because it will overwhelm me, so real'. Yes, we can open up. We can open up to our own sadness, to that of others, no problem. It has no substance.

And the same understanding makes it possible that we can let all qualities flow. Love, gratitude, compassion, whatever we feel, we can generously offer it to the world. We will never have less by sharing it with others, there will always be more. They are natural qualities of mind. Wisdom understands that there is no need to hold anything back because the more we let it flow, the more it can show itself.

Let's meditate for twenty minutes in silence, everyone in their own way.

(Dedication)

G 2016 (9) On the morning meditation

Again we will do the same prayers. They actually include the whole dharma. Everything is included in there. If you could just put them into practice, that's it. We take a clear direction towards awakening, towards realising the truth and towards friendship: Buddha, Dharma, Sangha.

And we say: for the benefit of all, I will practise the paramitas, the liberating or transcending qualities. They are also limitless, immeasurable. They all come from one trunk. The roots are in love and compassion and you have the other liberating qualities that arise from that.

And we say: I won't give up practising this until I've reached awakening.

And we call on the inherent blessing of the nature of mind represented by the awakened masters and then we contemplate once more these immeasurable qualities: Love, compassion, joy and equanimity. And that's all we need to practise: A loving, compassionate, joyful equanimity. This is this loving awareness which we always talk about. Equanimity means wisdom, the wisdom not to grasp. There is nothing more than that to practise. All the rest are elaborations on the same theme all the time, the same dharma, many different words, it is always about this. The intensity of our practice will depend on how much we are aware of just that and how much we can keep our mind in that. You don't need Tibetan, Sanskrit or Pali words, you don't need to be studying a lot. This is the essence. It is called bodhicitta, the heart mind of awakening.

As we recite, let's dissolve ourselves into the meaning.

(Recitation)

This morning, how did we relate to the refuge?

Student: In a very personal way.

LT: The refuge has to become an intimate experience.

In visualisation all the senses are included. Feeling the presence is all that counts actually.

Your refuge can have a slightly, different expression, when you think of it every day. Allow yourself to let it become free. We tend to fix it. We find something nice and then we fix it. And this is where dharma becomes religion. There is no need to fix it, like saying that it always needs to be the Buddha. It wasn't the Buddha for four or five hundred years in the beginning.

Only feeling the presence, that's it. Maybe some of you have heard about the caves in Ajanta. They have the oldest Buddhist paintings. And the throne on which the Buddha is teaching is empty. There is no-one teaching. That's how the old Buddhists imagined the Buddha. They didn't use a picture. They would feel the presence in these indescribable states.

And then, how did we continue from there on into our own meditation?

I just invited you to feel the Buddha's presence in you and then to feel the body like a buddha's, to hear, to see, to taste, to smell and be aware of mental processes just like a buddha. So opening the six senses together with the meditation.

This is a very important instruction. Whatever method you use, whatever book you are using etc., if you can, practise it with the refuge inside of you, practise it inside. Practise it from the point of view of a buddha doing it. It will become so much easier!

Student: The movement of the refuge out there coming into the heart, it is like coming home.

LT: Coming home, yes. Stop thinking that the refuge is outside. Bring it inside. it is anyhow in your mind, but we are more clear that it is in our mind when we bring it into our body awareness, into our heart, inside. It is still mind.

Then we continued with the barlung. What's the important thing about the barlung, how do we do that?

Breathing in is feeling, opening up becoming receptive to whatever is around us. And the outbreath is letting it flow, to offer tenderness, support, love. Today we did this while being connected with the barlung. So we were practising very much on a symbolic level. It was not so much about really breathing in and breathing out, it was about the attitude of opening and letting it flow. Receiving, feeling, not holding back anything. This attitude is so much easier when we are connected here, in the belly. And we do not grasp at some 'thing' that we are taking and some 'thing' that we are giving. It is just being open to what is and let flow what naturally is.

And I reminded you again: It will never diminish. The more you let it flow, the more these qualities will appear. This is the experience of everyone who opens up to these qualities and shares them generously: There is more and more. They never diminish.

So at this point in the practice, first I explained to you about this compassionate opening and then the loving flowing. And then I explained a third element to you. What was that?

The wisdom which knows that whatever we feel, nothing can overwhelm us, nothing has substance. We can open up and if there is no grasping, this is thanks to wisdom knowing the nature of what we feel. When this happens, feelings don't get too much.

What was the wisdom connected to the flowing out?

A never ending, limitless source of qualities being the nature of mind. This understanding.

So love, respect, compassion is the interactive aspect. Compassion-love, compassion-love. And here, there is a knowing, this is the wisdom. Wisdom is what allows this interactive communication with the world to be so fluid, to be so easy. Wisdom is what allows us to be at ease, not grasping at the ungraspable.

So you see, interaction with the world is compassion and love. And the wisdom that accompanies that interaction is knowing the nature of what happens. You can say: Breathing in is like listening and breathing out is like answering. And wisdom is the quality with which we listen and answer. Because we listen with compassionate wisdom, there is no grasping at what we feel, at what we receive, at what we hear. We remain fluid in this process of noticing, feeling what is going on. And loving wisdom is the aspect of responding to the needs of the situation, letting it flow freely, not holding back, knowing that the more it flows, the better it is.

So with these three - compassion, wisdom, love - you have the whole dharma. It is called the unity of compassion and wisdom. Let this always be present in your practice, then you are sure to be on the quickest path. And there is no "I" involved. There is not someone receiving, someone giving. No, it is just happening. The "I" is what wants to control the receiving and sharing. The "I" always says: No, no, not so much. I don't want to feel so much. I don't want to give so much. It stops the natural process. What I describe to you is actually the natural process, being completely receptive and being completely responsive. Answering to what is needed. This is the natural state.

(Applying nongrasping to everyday life)

You get up in the morning, you see yourself, you see your partner. This means: Accepting myself, opening up to all of what I feel in my body and with my senses, tired, fresh, whatever it is. And to know that this is all process. Sometimes it feels like this, sometimes it feels different, so complete openness to how it is. Your partner is like this or that, welcome to whatever it is, deep loving acceptance. Some of the things are not so nice, some are nice, the coffee is like this or that, the dog is stealing bottles... Wisdom knows that, basically, there is nothing substantial, everything is in a process. But wisdom also knows that we have to teach the dog not to steal bottles, so we need to act, we interact. Lovingly, compassionately, we interact. We put limits without clinging, but very clearly. So wisdom interacts with the world, takes care of the situation, lovingly, compassionately, open without grasping. It does what is necessary. You can handle everything so well.

Not grasping means that there is no emotional grasping. There is no identification, holding onto something. But it does mean to be on the spot and to do things, to concentrate and to hold and to fix. All the normal ways of focusing and a strong hold and so on, you can do all of that without the stress of emotional grasping because of wisdom. You interact with a fluid mind, no identification.

This non-grasping is about not grasping at what creates dukkha, stress, suffering. Everything that stops our mind remaining flexible, whatever blocks the mind. This is what we call grasping. the rest we just call attention. Attention is not grasping, it is just being

attentive. You can stay focused. Focusing does not imply grasping, emotional identification.

There is also a lack of awareness involved in grasping, but it shows as attachment and aversion.

Dukkha arises from identifying with some idea, some belief, something solid.

A practical example: the dog is barking. You might like it or not like it. This is the emotional reaction. This is where dukkha comes from. The only important thing is whether he is barking so much that we can still understand each other's words? It is a practical thing. If he is barking briefly, no problem. Make a short pause, continue the sentence afterwards. No dukkha. If he is barking for a long time, ask someone to take care of him so that we can continue. For as long as I don't interact with attachment and aversion, there is no dukkha. But if the owner of the dog says: 'No, it is my dog, he has a right to bark here!' You know, attachment. Then the teacher says: 'No, this is my course, I have come to this place to have a peaceful course.' That's attachment. You see this is where dukkha arises.

Two people identifying, the conflict is programmed. Compassionate wise interaction: the dog is happy; the owner is happy; and the teacher is happy. You can do that with any practical example in the world. You can see the situation, you can see the difference between reacting with identification, which means attachment and aversion, or with compassionate wisdom. And this is the lama of the situations, the third kind of guru: (1) the oral instructions of the teacher and (2) the written instructions of the dharma texts help us (3) to learn from the situations.

Question: I find it difficult to find the right time to act.

Answer: This is called differentiating wisdom. When does our wisdom disappear? When our emotional tendencies are stimulated so strongly that wisdom, right now, cannot handle it anymore. Then the wisdom is to know: Now I need space. The wisdom is to know how much you can take, how much you can dissolve and when it is getting too much, maybe you need to retire a little bit. It can be different every day and from one situation to the next. And this is the fluidity of mind. Nothing stays the same.

So the meditation is to prepare like we did this morning, and then, in the meditation, to invite the most difficult situation of the day that you could expect or that you had the past few days and to work from that situation which you bring back to mind. You bring it in and you prepare yourself for the challenge. Maybe we will do that together tomorrow morning.

LESSON 14: GURU YOGA CONTINUED

G 2016 (10) The Qualifications of a Student

“THE QUALIFICATIONS OF A STUDENT are said to be numerous, but in brief they are as follows: a student needs unshakable faith in and intense devotion to the teacher, and the conviction that he is the embodiment of the buddhas of the three times.”

When we asked Gendun Rinpoche about this passage, he said: Well, you didn't meet Buddha Shakyamuni, Gotama Buddha. No one knows when you will meet the next buddha. Here, you have a dharma teacher and s/he is doing his/her best and is giving you the same teachings as the buddhas. So all the buddhas of the three times are present at this very moment, because this is where you receive the dharma teachings.

Then we would say: 'Oh thank you so much, without you I wouldn't have been able to receive the dharma', so all our love and gratitude goes towards the person who makes the effort to share the dharma with us.

Devotion is very, very important. It's aspiration and respect, if you define the word (tib. mos-gis). It is wanting to become like that and deep respect for all of that is connected with it.

Then, the next quality is compassion:

“He needs a mind saturated with irresistible compassion for the six types of beings, knowing them to have been his parents, without the least ambition for this present life.”

Well, it is difficult to find such students (laughter). I haven't been one like that and still it works! This refers to people like Milarepa, Gampopa, Yeshe Tsogyäl, Machig Labdrön, you know, students like this. What we can say is that the more authentic compassion there is, the more receptive the student is to the dharma, that's for sure.

Regarding everyone we meet as someone who has been our mother or father in a previous life is very, very helpful. And to be free of ambitions for this life is also extremely helpful because then you can concentrate on what is essential.

“He needs the wish to obtain buddhahood in this life and in this body, and he needs to have his aspiration directed on future lives.”

We need to understand what they mean when they say no ambition for this life, 'mind directed to future lives'. No worldly ambition for this life means it is not important to become famous, rich, always being praised, being a big winner in the game of rivalry. All of this is not important. The aim for this life is to develop those qualities that help us to be happy now and when we die, and that will continue even after death into future lives. This is what is most important. That which stays with us when we go through the process of entering the next life. This is what is most important, it makes most sense. We call this differentiating between temporary benefit and long-lasting benefit for future lives.

To give you an easy example from this life: We can be rich, we can have so many things, but what counts when we become sick or when financial crisis strikes? What counts really? Inwardly what counts is how we deal with difficulty, how we deal with our mind. and

outwardly what counts is friendship, the quality of our relationship with others. With money, you cannot buy life, you cannot buy health. Fame is no good for buying anything. The praises of the past are long gone. The victories I had in whatever, in business, in sports, in relationships, all the big victories don't count when illness comes, when crisis comes. And then, when the big change comes which we call death and which is actually like a big moving on into new situation, they don't count. So it is clear that the mind of students which is still directed towards worldly aims is not receptive to the dharma. Their interest goes in a different direction.

“Someone who does not have these characteristics, but who only relies on the teacher to get food and clothing, or to become famous in this life, or just as a way to pass his human life, is just a servant of the teacher receiving food and drink, but he is not in a real teacher student relationship”

This is not our situation. But the 9th Karmapa was surrounded by many people who helped with his activities. Some of them were really motivated by the dharma and had a true student-teacher relationship. They were serving the dharma and at the same time doing their own practice and learning, deepening their practice and so on. Others would just be there because it was a sure way to receive their food, attention and be the servants of the famous Karmapa, so to be a little bit famous themselves as well. Families had the habit of sending at least one son to the monastery to become a monk. So not all of them were motivated by the dharma, it was just a place to find a shelter, to get some food. Look at Burma, look at the Thailand: it is the same. You find so many who are sent to the monastery, but actually they just want to get an education and when they are twenty-five, they look for a wife and then marry. The motivation is not the same so there is no student-teacher relationship.

A student-teacher relationship is based on the common wish to work for the awakening of all beings. That's the foundation of the relationship.

“As Gonpo Yeshe said:

Servants of a teacher receiving food and drink and students of a teacher have in common that they belong to the entourage, but they differ in their aspiration, which they are working for.”

When some of you share how much of a difference it makes for you to come here once a year; that it is like a dharma food that you can take and it nourishes you throughout the year, this makes me happy. This is the kind of aspiration which is needed in order to receive such teachings. The fact that we are in such nice surroundings is just like the cherry on the cake. It is in addition. It is not the reason why we are here.

“The relationship of a receptive student to a qualified teacher must be based on pure confidence and devotion. From the vajra words of Jigten Sumgön:

*The only certain method to develop realization is devotion. And:
When on the snow mountain of the teacher's four kayas...”*

The teacher is like a snow mountain. Our devotion is like the sun which makes the snow melt and then the rivers of blessing descend.

I used to think that to devotion to a teacher meant that I would be devoted to the teacher and also to the person of the teacher.

Now I understand that it is not quite like that. Now I understand that because of our common compassion for all living beings, the student and the teacher unite in their devotion for the dharma which is like the medicine. Both of them are devoted in the same direction. They are devoted to sentient beings and to help sentient beings through the right kind of medicine which is the dharma. So actually, the devotion of the student joins with the devotion of the master and that's what makes their minds meet. And the reason for that devotion is compassion. It is to know that there is a need to practise it.

I am a small teacher, but some of you feel devotion towards me. But I don't need your devotion. If it flatters my ego, it is even poisonous to me. If you are devoted to a teacher like me, then you need a lot of wisdom to differentiate between their qualities and shortcomings. But if your devotion goes to the awakening of all beings, towards the dharma, we are on the safe side. together, our devotion goes into the same direction and you just use my capacities, my experience to find the best expression, the best form of practice.

What should I say if my own teacher, Gendun Rinpoche, said: "I am just a bag of emotions."? Devotion towards me is completely misplaced. But if through my poor example you find an entrance door to develop your devotion to the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, then I am happy.

So you see, devotion to the master is an entrance door for devotion to the real thing, the awakening of all beings. That's the dharma. And then we are on the side of safety, we don't concentrate on the person but on the meaning, on the qualities. And then there is no disappointment when you see that he watches a soccer game just like anyone else.

"Dagpo Rinpoche (Gampopa):

For the realization of mahamudra there is no other method besides devotion."

The kind of devotion that I have just explained to you is absolutely necessary for mahamudra. How will it ever arise if we are concerned with worldly aims, if there is no compassion, if we don't go in the same direction as the teacher, how will our minds meet and how will mahamudra arise? It is impossible.

"Uttaratantra (by Asanga-Maitreya):

The self-existing ultimate reality will be understood by those with confidence. The dazzling light of the sun cannot be seen by those who are blind."

Confidence, trust and aspiration go together. They make us see, we are not blind. If we concentrate on worldly aims, we are blind to the dharma, we cannot understand, we cannot see.

“A sutra:

Having developed confidence as preparation, it will protect and increase all your qualities like a mother.”

Confidence, trust (Skr. shraddha), sometimes translated as faith, is the opposite of fear. Confidence arises where there is knowing, where there is awareness. We are aware of the qualities. And this gives us the trust. And then we are not afraid to tread the path, to engage ourselves.

“Loräpa:

First you have to create devotion deliberately, then arises uncontrived devotion, and finally the teacher melts into you.”

This is what we will learn about in guru yoga. We will have to make some effort to develop the intensity of prayer. This is called deliberate development of devotion. And then, as we contemplate the qualities of the buddha, dharma, sangha, our devotion becomes more and more natural. We don't have to create it anymore. This is called uncontrived. And then we are so devoted to the dharma that we become the dharma. This is when the teacher melts into us. It is really like this.

I prayed so much to Milarepa and the other guru yogas, so much, really, I had tears in my eyes, I was chanting in the forest; there was a lot of devotional practice for months and months. I don't do this anymore. I know my mind to be inseparable from my teacher's mind, from the dharma. There is no need to practise that artificial devotion. But it was very beneficial to do that.

Be careful when your intellect tells you that you don't want to engage with this intense praying, that you can go directly into being one with the teacher. I don't know if you can jump those stages. I think that maybe there is a little laziness and pride involved if we think like this.

The prouder I am, the more I need to pray. And the prouder I am, the more difficult it is to pray. We can take the measure of your difficulty to pray as a measure for your pride.

We know from everyday life that a proud person cannot ask for help. For a proud person, it is even difficult to ask the way when driving. To ask a dharma teacher for help or the blessing of the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha is just like asking for information of how to find the way, the path.

“Kalachakra Tantra:

Even if you have made offerings to the Three Jewels during all the kalpas of the three times and protected the lives of millions of living beings, you will not attain buddhahood in this life. But if you please the teacher, who is an ocean of qualities, with your confidence, the supreme and the ordinary siddhis will certainly be yours in this very life.”

The message of this is: well, you might have made many offerings, you might have saved many people, but that's no guarantee that your pride has decreased. But if you entrust yourself to guidance, this is sure to have an effect on your pride and this opens your heart-mind to blessings.

“Shikshasamuccaya (by Shantideva):

Having stabilized the foundation of confidence, you should make enlightenment your stable aspiration.”

To say this with other words: Trust in an authentic source of the dharma and then go towards awakening. Like this you have stable aspiration.

“A sutra:

Confidence makes you pass beyond mara's activities and bestows the supreme way of liberation on you. Confidence is the cause of all qualities. It is like an unspoiled seed, from which the tree of enlightenment will grow.”

It must be a sutra about developing confidence and trust, probably the same one as before.

Trust, confidence, makes us fearless. Entrusting ourselves lets us overcome the clinging to self. Like this the path of liberation opens. Someone who trusts with confidence has access to all qualities. The qualities will naturally show.

And when there is fear, all qualities disappear. I am not only talking about the fear in specific situations, I am talking about basic fear, existential fear. We are talking about basic, existential trust. This trust grows in us the more we know, the more we understand, the more we understand how life works. This awareness, this understanding lets the natural trust grow.

Somehow, dharma practice always comes down to very simple issues. Do I put dharma first or second? If I put it first, will I have enough to eat? Who takes care of me? OK, and right here we are with the fear of hunger, the fear of dying, the fear of illness. All these real fears of life. If I put dharma first, will I still have success in this life? Will I be rich enough? Will I be protected enough? All these questions, immediately. If one really has the question and one has the aspiration to practise the dharma, one will come to the point where one has to say: And I'll give it the first place, no matter what food I'll need to eat, what my situation will be later. If I have to die, I will die practising the dharma. It will very quickly come to this point.

The problem is that we lack this trust, this confidence. And when we have this confidence, actually dharma practice becomes very easy. If we don't have it, we want to make sure. Let's be on the safe side, a little bit of dharma, and a little bit of worldliness. Actually, we won't make much progress like this because our energy is divided.

“From the Sutra of the Salty River:

In the last five-hundred-year era I will appear in the form of teachers. Keep in mind that it is me and show them respect at that time.”

The Buddha is saying here. You will not be able to meet me, to see me personally. But you should know that my presence in the world carries on through the various dharma teachers. So when you meet them, behave as if you were meeting the Buddha personally. Like this you can still receive the blessings.

“In many sutras, tantras, and pith instructions it is set forth that realizations will arise quickly, if you have confidence and devotion. If you practice the guru yoga combined with confident devotion, the benefits will be immeasurable.”

It is really like this in my case I was surprised that a very little bit of devotion; little bit of trust and confidence worked miracles, in spite of a lot of pride and arrogance. So whatever we can do in that direction, let's do it. It will change our lives.

LESSON 14: GURU YOGA CONTINUED

G 2016 (11)

“Hevajra Tantra:

The coexistent cannot be described by others, it cannot be found anywhere. It can only be understood by relying on a teacher and his skillful means at the right time, and through one's own merit.”

What could be co-existent? Simultaneously arising, there needs to be two of them.

It is confusion and wisdom, samsara and nirvana. It is that in the confused experience, in the emotion, there is the nature of mind. So you can discover within the arising of an emotion, there is also the nature of mind present within the experience. This is very important.

Look, right now, our state of mind now, a little bit wandering, being a little bit tired, a little bit fresh, this experience of now has the nature of mind. We don't need to look anywhere else.

A sleepy state of mind. You lie down. You give up. I will not realise awakening now. I give up. No! That very nature of that sleepiness, of that drowsiness is the nature of mind. You can find it right there.

Ananda was the first student to find awakening when lying down. The famous student who spent the last twenty-five years as the closest of the Buddha's servants had not reached awakening when the Buddha died. And he was invited by Mahakasyapa to be the speaker in the assembly of arhats, but he needed to reach full awakening before going there, otherwise he wouldn't be admitted. And he was practising day and night, reminding himself of the instructions of the Buddha until he couldn't do it anymore. He became so tired and he said: "I will lie down." As he lay down and his head touched the cushion, because of the letting go, in the middle of this fatigue, his drowsiness, he realised the nature of mind. He had not understood this coexistence, co-emergence, before, the very nature of every state of mind is nirvana. Then he understood.

When you see that the so-called self cannot be found and that the so-called other is not a separate entity, then within the present experience, the experience of now, buddha appears, awakening is experienced. This is called co-existence. the co-existence of liberation with confusion. Co-emergence of rig-pa with ma-rig-pa, awareness and non-awareness.

It is not opposites. It is the very nature of confusion, not the opposite, that is open mind. Maybe you will say that earth is the opposite of water. But here, we are talking about the very nature of water which is wetness.

Question: Is it a nature which includes everything, awareness and ignorance?

Answer: No. It is the nature which is the nature of all experiences. It is not something separate, something bigger which includes everything.

Let's take strong desire for a person, for some experience, we really want it. We think that we are miles away from nirvana, miles away from liberation. Then, we look into the very nature of that experience: How is it? In the desire, we cannot find anyone, the "I" who desires, we look inside, we look inside our experience, where is this: "I want", where is it? Just open, dynamic awareness.

We look into the object of what we desire, say, the person we desire so much. Where is this object of desire? Ungraspable ideas, fluctuating. Again: Open, dynamic awareness.

We look into the experience of desire itself, this longing, this heat, this agitation, we look into it: We can only find process, awareness, dynamic, ungraspable, all the time.

That's the nature of mind: Open, i.e. spacious, dynamic, clear manifestation. Whatever manifests is ungraspable, you can't hold it, you can't stabilise the experience. And that's the nature of mind; as well as you can describe it in words.

So the emptiness is full, dynamic, present, but ungraspable. Empty of an essence, of a substance. This is the nature of mind. And it is not that there is some emptiness. Emptiness is the nature of whatever manifests.

The problem is that now you hear the word emptiness and you think you have understood. But you haven't understood. That's the problem because the concept, intellectually, we understood some time ago and now it is a familiar concept. So that's the danger with concepts, that we think we have understood, but that's not it. You don't see that the very nature of anger, desire and so on is liberation. We don't see that.

So what you can do is this: every time you have a challenge, you can tell yourself: let me come to a fresh understanding of emptiness. Then you can use your intellect, but it has to be fresh. A lived experience. And you have it when the lived experience, the emotional identification goes away. Then you know that you have hit the spot.

So this co-existence cannot be described by others. I am the other in this case. So even teachers cannot describe it, they cannot communicate this to you, it is beyond words. It cannot be found anywhere; it is something that is there.

It can be understood by relying on a teacher. You can follow the indications. You need a teacher for this. And through skilful means at the right time. The right time is when the student's mind is just about to open, and then the teacher uses the right words, the right symbol, the right way of being and then it can happen.

And it needs our own merit. It needs the positive force that is created through a long time of aspiration, wholesome conduct, all this positivity, Merit comes from every action that decreases ego-clinging, our self-importance. When we make an offering, being generous with a lot of self-importance, it does not create merit.

“Prajnaparamita samcayagatha:

“Good students with respect for their teachers should always rely on wise teachers. Why? Because the qualities of wisdom come from them.”

It is not that the qualities of wisdom would come from them like through a tube and we would be filled with it. It is not like this. They stimulate our innate wisdom. They know how to do that. If the teachings are good, then the people leaving the room afterwards are wiser. but not because they have learnt the words of the teacher. It is because the words of the teacher have stimulated their innate wisdom: 'ah, this is the point!' And this "ah" which we have understood from within, is what will stay with us when we leave. It will never leave us because we have really understood.

“A boat without oarsman will not reach the other shore. Without a teacher there will be no end to conditioned existence, even if you have completed all the qualities.”

Imagine a person with so many qualities, all imaginable qualities. It's just that this person has not yet understood the nature of mind, is not awakened yet. This person has only

to be taken by the hand a little bit, a few words, a few guidelines, and all the understanding will grow and liberation will be possible because the ground is very well prepared.

That's the task of the teacher, to be an oarsman, to be taking people in the boat, to row a little bit and to show them the scenery. "Come into the boat and have a look!"

"Trisamayavyuharaja:

To meditate on a deity with the attributes and marks for a hundred thousand kalpas, does not equal a hundred-thousandth part of thinking of the teacher for one instant. It is better to pray to the teacher once, than to recite a million yidam recitations."

This is the old way of saying things. It sounds a little bit like publicity. To put it in easier language: We can meditate on a yidam, i.e. meditating on ourselves as a buddha, meditating on a buddha in front of us, for as long as we wish, if there is no true opening up to the qualities of the teachers, of the masters, of the source of all these methods, they will not transform us. Basically, it is going to be a technical meditation, lacking the juice of devotion and compassion. Prayer is synonymous here with opening up to qualities. This is how you have to understand the word prayer here.

"Paramarthsevan:

The true way for excellent disciples comes from the mouth of excellent teachers."

The Karmapa probably also quotes this from his experience because these great masters have had excellent masters. They know how the words: fit and open up at the right time.

"Pancakrama:

Someone falling from the peak of a mighty mountain will continue to fall, even if he thinks, he should not fall. Someone who has found the beneficial way through the kindness of a teacher, will become free, even if he thinks, he will not become free"

This is a very powerful example. The image here is: I am falling into more and more suffering, more and more confusion and say: "No, no, I want a spiritual path so that I will not fall. Everything is fine." Simply saying this and believing this will not change anything. However, when there is a link of openness and confidence with an authentic teacher, even if I think: I can never do it, I will see myself transformed after a few years. The transformative power of a relationship filled with confidence, devotion, trust, is really very big in spite of all the doubts about ourselves.

"Naropa:

The teacher is the treasure trove of all the qualities. The teacher is the source of all Dharma."

Naropa was one of the most intelligent people of his times. He was one of the four head professors of Nalanda university with up to 100,000 monk students. He was the top of the top in academic rankings in India. But he hadn't really gotten the point of the dharma yet, he had not yet understood the nature of mind. And it was due to Tilopa, his teacher, when he abandoned university and just became a yogi and followed the teacher. And the teacher only spoke to him once a year, it was one teaching per year because Naropa didn't need teachings, he had them all. He needed the keys of understanding at the right moment, the right words. Just that. And then, from within, he understood: Ah, that's it, OK. And then the rest of the year was to integrate that understanding until there was the need for more. After twelve years he was ready and became the teacher of Marpa the translator, a Tibetan who came to northern India to study with Naropa. These are the origins of the Kagyu lineage: Tilopa, Naropa and Marpa.

And Marpa was treated completely differently. He had not had the teachings, so he received a lot from Naropa together with the key instructions. And this what we are doing now: I give you the teachings together with the key instructions. But when you practise intensively, you will need more. Then the moment will come when you have a block in your understanding, and sometimes it needs a little operation, it feels a little painful, but it needs to be done. Then it is unlocked and can go a little further.

Of course it's not true in the literal sense that the teacher is the source of all dharma. We can read the books and then we also have dharma. But who wrote the book? And then we have so many dharma books. So which dharma shall I practise now?

So Naropa is saying that the teacher is the source of all living dharma that unlocks and makes clear what I need to practise now. What is it, in all this big library of knowledge of dharma, that actually needs to be practised? In this way you can say that the teacher is the source of all dharma.

LESSON 35: NINE METHODS TO SETTLE THE MIND

G 2016 (12)

“What are the nine methods to settle the mind? The Buddha taught in the precious Sutra Pitaka these nine methods to settle the mind: (1) placing, (2) continual placing, (3) firmly placing, (4) fully placing, (5) taming, (6) calming, (7) fully calming, (8) continuity, (9) meditative balance.”

These nine methods or stages are also known in other traditions.

(1) **“Placing** means to direct one's mind one-pointedly on any suitable object.”

What is meant here is to develop the capacity to stay with one meditation object for a short time without distraction.

The object can be an outer object like a visual object, you can put a candle in front, a buddha, a stone or something like this. It can be something that is just there like a pillar or a spot on the wall. It can also be a sound.

It can be an inner object like a light sphere in our heart and it can be physical sensation like the various sensations of breathing in and breathing out as the air moves along the nostrils.

What is called an object of meditation is simply where we place our attention. That's called an object of meditation.

Meditation

Let's choose the breathing sensations at our nostrils, so that we can compare our experiences. The first exercise would be to breathe in and out ten times without any other thought, only this. If you feel more comfortable, you can use the sensations in the belly. You can feel the breathing sensations in the belly, putting your hand. This is the first step in meditation, just for a short time, but with full concentration.

See if you can stay with this without occupying the mind with anything else. Breathing in, breathing out count one, breathing in breathing out count two. When you have done ten, it's fine. If it's inconvenient for you, you can take another meditation object.

(Bell to end)

There are actually two exercises going on: Being aware of the breathing and being able to count.

Let's do the exercise again and let's do it with an attitude that for one and a half minutes - which is about the time it takes for ten breathing cycles - nothing else is important in the world, the only thing that I wish to perceive is the coming in and going out of the breath at the nostrils. The same exercise, but you don't have to count. I'll do the counting. See if you can become really interested into how it feels to be breathing, nothing else in the world is important.

(Bell - **Meditation** - Bell)

To observe the breathing, there is no need to think about it.

Student: There are more thoughts than in the first exercise.

LT: Very often this is the case, so back to counting.

Student: There are the breathing sensations and there is a sort of watchman, watching out for the thinking.

LT: This observation is taking us to the next step, which is to relax the watchman, to replace the watchman by more interest in the breathing.

Meditation

Become so interested in the breathing, how is the breathing in the beginning, how is it in the middle and how is it in the end, the turning point. How is the breathing out in the beginning, middle and end. We begin to follow the experience of breathing so thoroughly that we don't miss the slightest bit of the experience because we are completely interested in it. So there is a heightened interest, continuously following every little bit of the experience.

(Bell - Meditation - Bell)

(Student is not interested in focusing on something small.)

LT: Then change your meditation object to something vast. What would be vast for you?

Student: Something infinite.

LT: Then next time just stay without distraction on just how it feels to let the mind be vast. - Another instruction could have been given to you: discover how vast the breathing is. There is incredible vastness inside the breathing.

(Student needs to relax effort.)

How about if we try that: To stay with the breathing, let the mind stay on the breathing without effort, just being interested. Only that. How would that be? The meditation phase will be a little bit longer. If you need counting, count. Do everything to be interested, nothing else is important. It is really important to know how the mind functions. Stay with a meditation object like breathing that is interesting to you and no unnecessary effort.

(Bell - **meditation** - bell)

If you become drowsy or sleepy, it means that you haven't found the right meditation object yet. Your interest is not stimulated enough. A nice meditation is to lie down and take as a meditation object: 'How does it feel to be sleepy?' Also, at those times, walking or standing meditation could be very helpful.

We are now moving with your experience to number two: You are beginning to find a way of meditation where we come to continual placing which means prolonging the continuity and bringing the mind to rest for a long time. Has everybody found a comfortable way without too much thinking?

Student: If I relax the body, it is easier for me. Should that be my meditation object?

Answer: Relaxing the body is just the starting point, relax the body and stay just being interested in the breathing because tension in the body makes it more difficult to stay on the breathing. You sit so well that even if you relax the body, you'll stay straight.

Student: But it seems that there is no end to relaxing the body.

Answer: This is a very good discovery. Go to the never-ending end. Go as far as you can into relaxing the body. Body and mind will relax together and will become very clear because you are so relaxed. And let the breathing just be an anker, something you can go back to when you need to come back to something and then you let it be free again.

Student: I observed something like a nice melody. And it seems sounds get stronger with smells, is there a connection?

Answer: what you observed are phenomena of changes in the prana circulation. They produce these sounds that sometimes stay for quite a long time and one is convinced that there is a real sound outside, but they come from inside. And smells can trigger smells and smells can trigger sounds, they can trigger each other. This goes for all the senses. Also, when you enter Shine as you are doing now, there is a heightened acuity of all the senses. All the senses begin to be more subtle, more sensitive. When this happens, don't give much attention to it, relax into it. Just know that it is normal and continue with your meditation. Many such phenomena arise, sensations in the body, very strong, then going away. Visual sensations. Then of course thought forms, images.

(2) *“Continual placing means prolonging the continuity of this and bringing the mind to rest for a long time.”*

Let's do an exercise of continual placing. For continual placing, the balance between effort and relaxation has to be more on the relaxation side. So bringing back the mind to a meditation object like the breathing, but in a very relaxed way.

(Bell - **meditation** - bell)

What did you notice about your thinking activity?

Student: Throughout the exercises, I used less and less effort. At the end there were a few more thoughts, but they didn't refer to anything real. I even enjoyed the movements a little bit.

LT: So you are already entering the third step. The enjoyment was about the creativity of the mind. You are not indulging in the thinking process. This makes the difference. It is a very helpful inner attitude: Yes, the mind is creative, wow! So there is no aversion against thinking which is very helpful to be relaxed with processes.

Student: The awareness is placed and it stays there all the time.

LT: And who notices that the awareness is stable? Do you have two awarenesses, one that notices and one that is placed? Have a look. Maybe you'll notice that this placement is a thought that is arising. What seems that is happening is that you notice that your mind becomes calm. You call this that the awareness is placed. This is a concept, this is a thought. Just everything becomes calm - this is the experience.

Student: There is a kind of togetherness.

LT: Yes, there is a cohesion in that, because it becomes so calm. Then there is the "I" who is noticing: oh, it is like this. This is another process, another experience. So your practice would need to continue in noticing the commenting thoughts of the observing attitude. You can also relax that. That would be the next step.

Did you notice thought chains? Yes? Mindfulness is remembering what I actually want to do. This coming back is the capacity of mindfulness. Remembering the task.

So actually, when we stay on the task, we are just there. When a thought arises and we remember, this is the actual sati, the mindfulness.

Student: it was like falling in love with the practice.

LT: What you experience is a heightened form of interest and if you follow this, you can enter samadhi. Anything else just loses its interest and you can just enter absorption. It is not attachment, it is heightened interest, it is getting absorbed, like just before. This is what we mean by saying that you should like your meditation object, this would be something you are really interested in.

As I told someone: Why don't you just silently chant the Tara mantra inside? Because you like it so much, it will absorb so much of your awareness, of your mental capacity, it will be easy to stay with that. Like an offering to the world. So you go with qualities that you already have in mind and this is how you find the right meditation object.

We are in a process of mind training. This is really mind training what we are doing. What we need is a trained mind, a flexible mind that we can put on any task we like. It has to be so clear and flexible that we can use it to explore various aspects of life.

The next step will be to completely step out of thought chains:

(3) *“Firmly placing means keeping a meditative balance by recognizing any arising thoughts instantly with mindfulness.”*

This means to recognise any arising thoughts instantly with mindfulness, with coming back to the meditation object, together with remembering what I actually want to do. For example, somebody would notice: ‘Oh, thinking about a football game’, and immediately come back, they would not pursue it even for three or four thoughts.

So choose a meditation object that you would really like to meditate on now. And we will do an exercise, where you stay with that, you relax into it, you enjoy it and you notice where thought chains want to form. They knock on the door, but you immediately relax back into your meditation object.

Some of you might not be so sure what to meditate on. You can for example meditate on having your mind being as vast as the sky and just feeling the little movements of wind passing through. Something very agreeable and refreshing for you right now (as it is very hot in Greece). But take only one meditation object, don’t shift all the time. So choose one, stay with that and relax all thoughts about past, present, future.

(Bell - **meditation** - bell)

When a thought arises, the coming back to the object is very smooth, it is easy. Mind has gained flexibility, it is not hard to come back to the meditation object. There is no more struggle. There is no need to resist the instruction. You see that you don’t even have to do anything to turn the mind away from the thought. The thought will dissolve by itself if you don’t follow it.

That would be the next instruction where there is even less movement in mind. A thought arises, gone. There is no movement really of going back from thinking to the object. There is the object, a thought comes, the object is there.

Student: There is a flickering.

LT: What you discover is the difference between the gross thinking processes and the subtle processes. Now that the gross thoughts have calmed down, you notice, from time to time, this underground activity. Before it was underground, now it becomes noticeable.

The instruction for you would be: Move towards where this activity comes from. Find the tension that produces it and relax into that. You don't have to pay attention to the thoughts, relax into the source of tension, which is behind them, you can find it.

Student: I do feel the tension.

LT: Now you need to relax the tension and that's not going to be so easy because it is connected to subtle fears and hopes, wishes, needs which are part of our survival energy. It is a restless energy that needs to be relaxed in order to go deeper with mental calm.

If you continue with this, you'd come to number four:

(4) *“Fully placing: your practice consists in always coming back to your meditative balance, mixing with the previous abiding and to remain in that.”*

Your practice would consist in always coming back to your meditative balance; equipoise, this relaxed mind.

So in these four steps already, one has shifted a lot from what one would call concentration to a very relaxed presence. The more we continue, the more we work with relaxing and being interested in just how it is.

How is it when the mind becomes calm, what comes next? How is it when there is no involvement in thinking? What then? And there is definitely an enjoyment that comes. One likes to become so calm; it is very relaxing; it is very refreshing. And this is a motor of the practice. It is not attachment. It is just enjoying the fact that all this distracted energy is calming down. Here, on the third and especially this fourth level, a kind of joy can be felt. You begin to really appreciate the qualities of practice.

G 2016 (13)

Maybe you have heard that the Buddha's teaching is summarized in these three points: Abandon the unwholesome, cultivate the wholesome and tame your mind.

And now look at point No. 5 here:

(5) *“Taming means recalling clearly the qualities of the abiding mind, developing joy about it, and staying in that state.”*

Abiding mind means the mind without thoughts and, of course, this is not the real definition in the quote of the Buddha. Taming (tib. 'dul-ba) is always connected with joy and it means a free mind. It is like the complete opposite of what we understand when we hear the translators say taming. It is a really strange way to translate. It is the same word as in vinaya (tib. dul-ba), the monastic discipline, code of conduct. So the Buddha's idea

of taming was that a tamed mind is not wild any more, is not a prisoner of tendencies, but is free and joyful. And here, the fifth step is to be so joyful in the experience of the calm, non-thinking mind that one becomes free of these obsessive thinking processes. This is what is called to have a tamed mind.

So we are going into slightly advanced mind training, still in the realm of calm abiding, and you see that mind training - when you hear that it sounds like something hard, something having to do with effort - actually, the further you go, the more joyful it becomes and it contributes to freeing the mind from all these obsessive tendencies.

You would really encourage yourself to see how great it is to be free of all this obsessive thinking. No need to think about past, present, future. Just being is enough, and the joy of that. So you would have a little contemplation recalling the qualities of this non-thinking and continue with your practice. Really enjoying the deeply calm mind and you will become more and more calm.

DAY 3 (160703-0164-169)

G 2016 (14) Morning meditation

Traditionally, a Tibetan practitioner waking up would say. Oh, still alive! Another wonderful opportunity to practise the dharma. All the conditions are there, now, today, to again cultivate awareness. I have everything I need, I have the instructions, I have this life, this body and I have the time. I have time today, but I don't know how much time I'll have in the future. No-one knows how long we will live. This opportunity now is very precious because others of our own age and even much younger have already died. So this precious time which could be quite short, how do I want to use it? So reflect personally. Today, now. How do I want to use this time? What is really most important today and in the long run if I think of the possibility of perhaps dying early? What would really count for future lives as well?

At this point, it is good to come up with one, two, three answers, to really know what I am directing myself towards. It is like asking my innermost being: 'What is important to me now?'

And if the answer is quite general: 'to be happy', then ask more precisely: How can I really be happy? What makes me really happy? And with this clarity, we then go into refuge, bodhicitta and the four immeasurables.

And if we visualise the refuge; it is the expression of exactly those qualities that we wish to live out now, today. It is like a guiding star for our day.

We take a little moment to feel, to experience, how this would be; how this is, this true refuge.

And we imagine that we are surrounded by all those who have a connection with us from this life or from past lives.

Meditation: Appearances are mind

(Recitation)

And then we let the refuge completely be ourselves. We let it dissolve into ourselves, we become it, we represent all the qualities of the lineage.

And with these qualities, we breathe in and out.

And we practise the way to settle, to calm and open the mind.

And we bring our awareness again and again into this very alive presence. If you like to think, think, but you think that the thinking is not necessary, just leave it.

We enter the day like a newly born buddha with fresh senses, bringing back our awareness to just now.

Breathing in with all our receptivity and breathing out in all our generosity.

Everything that appears to us as experience, is actually mind. Physical sensations, hearing, smelling, tasting. All of this happens in mind. Always new; all the time changing, nothing to hold onto, nothing to grasp at. An ungraspable, very vivid experience.

There is nothing we need to do to produce life experience and there is nothing we need to do to dissolve it. And there is nothing to do to be aware. Awareness is just there by itself. We call this effortless awareness. Effortless awareness of the self-arising and self-liberating nature of all experiences.

When you practise this, then even when you are sleepy, there is no need to fight. Just let the awareness know the sleepiness.

(Bell)

In this meditation, I guided you towards some observations of the nature of mind.

The first observation is that really all experiences happen in mind. Here, when I touch my body, it is mental experience. When I look at you, seeing is mental experience. When I look into these various sensations that arise, these various mental impressions, I find no substance.

Where is this physical impression of pinching myself now? It is already gone, I feel the sensations afterwards, i feel how it is now and now and now. Always something new. It is incredible. It is such a strong experience here, nothing solid about it. Just changing, changing, changing. Passing away, becoming something else. I bang my head and it is a

changing experience. I hit something solid, but in experience there is nothing solid. I touch, I see something solid, I hear sounds from materials, from seemingly solid things, but the experience of it? Constant change. Nothing that remains. We call this the mirror-like quality of experience. When we hold up a mirror, it is clear due to causes and conditions, images appear in the mirror, reflections of what is around. In the same way, in our mind, due to causes and conditions, experiences arise in the six senses.

All the causes and conditions are active now in the present. None of this is past. If they were in the past, they couldn't produce effects now. But they are connected to causes and conditions, whole processes bringing up from the past the conditions of now. For example, this colour was chosen to be painted a few months ago and now it appears to our eyes. There is change. But that it appears to our eyes is not from the past because it is here now.

If I have thoughts appearing in my meditation of which I think: 'ah, this is due to my past, to childhood', actually, yes and no. It is because there are causes and conditions now that produce this emotional view, this emotional experience. And just like the causes and conditions which produce images in the mirror, the causes and conditions for emotional experiences also change all the time. Constant process. Like when you turn a mirror, always something new appears. Or when in front of a mirror causes and conditions change, what the mirror reflects changes. In the same way, in the mind it is always new. We call this the spontaneous presence of experiences in our mind due to causes and conditions.

And the fact that they change with the slightest change of conditions and that nothing stays, this we call self-liberation. It changes by itself. Nothing can stay. No thought can stay.

These were the four steps of vipashana: Everything is mind, mind is empty, emptiness is spontaneous presence and spontaneous presence is self-liberating.

Let's **meditate** again.

Relax into that awareness that knows all these insubstantial experiences to be self-liberating.

(Bell and dedication)

In this break now I encourage you to use moments to completely let go. In the middle of everything. For example, you sit at the table and you just stop. Stop thinking, stop whatever. And you will see - immediately your mind is open. Nothing continues by itself.

Now the capacity we need to develop is to be able to leave any thought chain that is there whenever we want. To drop it. It dissolves by itself. You will see that life does not stop. Sensory experience continues. But the involvement with it, the grasping is gone, for a

moment. This is a crucial capacity of a dharma practitioner to be able to just let go at any moment, to open up. We don't need this at breakfast, usually, but we need this when we get entangled in emotions. We need it when we get entangled in problems. When we think we have worries, when we have constant obsessive thinking about something that is not going the way we want. Actually, what we stop is the useless activity. Useless activity is stopped, then we can go into useful activity with the mind. If I have a problem, how do I want to think about the problem. How do I really come to a solution? Constructive thinking, helpful thinking. Not being possessed by the thinking machine, but to be able to think clearly, put your mind on the task until you reach the limits and then let it dissolve. The limits of your constructiveness is when you notice that it becomes repetitive, then we stop. Like this, this wonderful thinking capacity of our mind becomes our friend, it becomes our servant.

To relax for a moment is quite easy. But in order to do that for longer we have to practise these five steps we described yesterday. We have to become friends with a calm mind. It is not so clear if we really want to have a calm mind, we are so identified with this thinking machine that we feel quite lost when our mind is just relaxed and open. Who am I when I don't think? Who am I when I don't identify, when I don't grasp? This is the big challenge.

LESSON 14 CONTINUED

G 2016 (15)

Atiköpa:

Someone who meditates on the kind teacher, be it on top of his head, in his heart, or on the palm of his hand, will possess the qualities of a thousand buddhas. ”

Meditating on the kind teacher means on the qualities of an awakened teacher. Again, this sounds like good publicity. If it is the qualities of one buddha or a thousand, actually, they don't become more because they are the same qualities of our inherent buddha-nature, the qualities of a completely open mind, neither more nor less. A thousand is like 'all', it is not to be taken literally.

If we meditate on the Buddha in our heart, this stimulates the qualities of our own true being, our own "true self" in inverted commas. And the more we let go into this inner experience of having our own qualities resonate, our own qualities will show more and more, and finally all the qualities will show.

The only quote in the texts that I know which says that refers to qualities of the Buddha in the palm of one's own hand is when the Buddha asks Kasyapa: "If I had one quality in the palm of my hand which leads to all the qualities of the buddhas in the palm of my hand, which one would that be?" The answer is that if I have compassion in the palm of my hand, then I'll have the Buddha in the palm of my hand. Compassion is this full resonance with the whole universe, it is that receptivity filled with open acceptance and a loving response. This is where all the other qualities come from.

“Götsangpa:

If you practice the guru yoga, your faults will become purified, and your qualities perfected. And: There are many meditations on the stage of development, but nothing surpasses the practice of the guru yoga. There are many mantra recitations, but nothing surpasses praying to the teacher. There are many meditations on the stage of completion, but nothing surpasses confident total surrender”

The word “faults” here means all the veils, all those tendencies of clinging to oneself as the only sole important person in the world. All this self-centred clinging will be purified.

The stage of development means that there are many visualisations of the meditation deities, but nothing surpasses the practice of the guru yoga. It means that doing the guru yoga is just as good as doing any of the yidam visualisations in meditation.

Always remember: What does it mean praying to the teacher? Always remember when they say lama or guru, the four kinds of teachers are meant. When we pray to the teacher, we also pray to the inner guru. We open up to that natural presence of the guru in us. The nature of the mind is the inner ultimate guru.

What is the task of the outer guru, what is s/he there for?

The outer guru is there to connect us with the inner guru. And when we have connected to the nature of mind as being our inner guru, then the outer guru can disappear. So it is interesting: the task of the outer guru is to make themselves superfluous. This is how the transmission goes from one generation to the next because the next generation always becomes autonomous, becomes self-reliant due to realising the true dimension of mind. They don't need the outer guru. The outer guru can die and the teaching continues.

The phase of completion is the dissolution phase where we let the visualisations dissolve into ourselves.

Confident means trusting. Trusting the way things are, trusting the nature of the mind. Total surrender is to give up completely all ego-centred endeavours, all this wanting to achieve something, “I want to be awakened”, “I want this and that”. Total surrender is actually forgetting; forgetting oneself. Completely opening up to the blessing of just how it is to be.

Critics of the Buddhist approach always say that Buddhists want to get enlightened by themselves, through their personal will, their personal power, and it is absolutely the opposite, to give up all this personal wanting and the will, and thinking “I can do it”. This is the essence of the path. So surrender actually is this letting go of self-importance and this is what connects all mystic traditions in the world. You will find it in all traditions of the world which bring about true realization, you will find the teaching on true surrender.

“From The songs of Yakde Panchen:

As stage of development, one's body as deity is excellent. As a crown, the victors of the five families are excellent. As stage of completion, Yakde Panchen is excellent. On top of the head, Rangjung Dorje is excellent.”

The stage of development is the phase of visualising. To visualise oneself as a body of light, like Tara for example, this is excellent because it reduces clinging to the self. In order not to become arrogant, proud with this practice, we always wear the crown of the Five Buddhas, that is like the presence of awakening to which we connect and from where the blessing comes. This is excellent as a crown ornament.

And as we let all these visualisations dissolve, then to enter the mind of the guru - which means buddha mind, Yakde Panchen, the mind of the guru - is excellent.

And then, as you reappear from meditation into normal activity, it is good to keep the guru on your head in order not to become arrogant and so on, to always connect to the blessing. This is why Rangjung Dorje, the third Karmapa, is named, one of the great mahamudra masters.

My teacher Gendun Rinpoche was always telling us: If you want to be sure, always have the guru with you. On the top of your head, on your shoulder, sitting next to you, always imagine whatever you do is in the presence of the Buddha. And then, naturally, your path will develop in that direction. You will abstain from unwholesome behaviour as if the guru were really there, you will always be in the stream of blessing and so on.

When I sit down, I always imagine that my guru is sitting next to me. When he was still alive, he came into the room when I was teaching. He sat down. He was there and I know the experience. And I continue to imagine this. Then I teach only in a way that finds his approval.

When I was a young meditator in the forest, I would really always imagine that he would sit in the same room with me when meditating. And I would meditate just like that as if the guru were there, watching me, being with me.

This is the real guru yoga. It is not a technique or method. It is inviting the Buddha into every aspect of our life, wherever you go. Of course, it is based on a relationship of complete trust. One needs to trust and I might say, even love each other in order for it to be beautiful, it wasn't uncomfortable for me. Of course, when thinking of the guru next to me, I would sometimes straighten up a little bit more and OK, give myself with a little bit more awareness, exactly as it is supposed to be

“Master Sakyapa:

The supreme accomplishment you will only attain by praying to your root teacher, not to anyone else. Ordinary accomplishments you can also attain by praying to other teachers.”

What is a root lama? The definition is that it is the one who shows you the nature of mind. So as long as we haven't realised the nature of mind, we don't know who our root lama actually is. First I had a teacher from Burma, then I considered Kalu Rinpoche as my root lama, then I considered Tenga Rinpoche as my root lama, then Tenga Rinpoche sent us to Gendun Rinpoche and then - I was confused (laughter). And then Gendun Rinpoche did something really wonderful. He said: This is exactly why, as a root lama in the centre of the refuge tree, we have the blue Buddha Vajradhara who has no human form. The root lama in the Kagyu and Nyingma lineages is the dharmakaya, the nature of mind. Your problem has been encountered already thousands of years ago. Everyone has confidence in various teachers, and then we don't know which one the main teacher is. Then we have a problem of loyalty. This is not necessary. You never need to have a problem of loyalty when you understand that the real lama, the real guru is the nature of mind, the dharmakaya, the body of truth. So the only thing I ask of you is to unite, to melt all the physical gurus you have met into the ultimate guru and to see them all as an expression of the ultimate in this relative world. If they have realised the ultimate nature, then their teaching is the expression of that realization. And this is the real guru. It is this realization. So then I started to visualise this blue Buddha Vajradhara instead of having inwardly like photos of my different lamas. just one. It is a little bit abstract because this Vajradhara is a symbol of the qualities of enlightenment. And first you need some time to get used to it. But then it protects you from all this clinging to the person of the lama, the personal interaction. It directs your mind to the real qualities of awakening.

So you see, the essence of enlightenment is the mind as vast and open as the sky, dynamic, self-liberating. That's the essence, that's what we are talking about, that's the real Buddha. This goes back to the Buddha himself who said: Don't take refuge in me. I am just a person. Take refuge in what I have realised, this is where this teaching starts. Take refuge in awakening, the Buddha is just the expression of that.

This would be the real God, the open, creative dimension of mind which produces worlds without end, constantly in a creative process. The completely free dimension of mind shows in many completely awakened masters, men and women. This is how it becomes a tangible experience in this world. And it communicates with the world through what the Christians would call the Holy Spirit, which is actually enlightened speech. Speech which does not come from clinging to self and which is inspired from being in the open dimension of mind-heart. And just as in the Christian tradition, you cannot separate the three. You cannot separate the nature of mind from its manifestation and from its communicative aspect.

Question: What does it mean: "Your faults will be purified (quote of Götsangpa above) in relation to Christianity?"

Answer: In the passage you quoted the word fault means that if you do not live in harmony with your own true nature, this is called transgression or fault. I do not know your understand of sin, but there is the understanding in Buddhism, that no fault, no veil, no shortcoming is lasting. It is temporary, everything can be dissolved. At first there seems to be a difference with Christianity because most of the time, we hear it in school and in

church, is as if we were eternal sinners, as if there were something in us which is basically sinful like at the moment when they were chased from paradise. The experience is that we are basically good, that we have basically a buddha-nature, something completely pure, not very pure, everyone. And that it is covered, that it is under like a big layer of mud or something that doesn't let the jewel shine. This is called faults or transgressions. You may call it sins, but sin in the sense of not living your own inner potential, the one inside. Not really living it, covering it up.

Question: Fault feels very light as compared to guilt.

Answer: You see, this is the difference. It is light. Buddhist practitioners also sometimes feel guilty, this is normal because we have done something really wrong. And then we feel guilty. And then the Buddhist teachers tell us: Yes, you may have a reason to feel guilty, but you can do something about it. You can free yourselves from that. You can regret, confess, you can take a new direction, you can work on your mind and you can become a Buddha. You can become completely free of that. So there is a message of encouragement which goes along with that.

“In Shrisambhava’s life story it is written: Child of the family. A bodhisattva who is taken care of by a spiritual friend will not fall into the lower realms. A bodhisattva who is protected by a spiritual friend will not fall into the hands of bad friends. A bodhisattva who is protected by a spiritual friend will not turn away from the Mahayanadharma. A bodhisattva who is supported by a spiritual friend will go well beyond the level of ordinary beings.”

When we start out on the path, we are want-to-be bodhisattvas. The aspiration may be strong; ‘by spiritual practice we lead ourselves to awakening and then this awakening will benefit others’. We have a very strong aspiration that this may be so. Then, we need a spiritual friend, a kalyanamitra, who knows how we can do that. This experience with a spiritual friend is experienced as someone to rely on, like sure guidance and we feel protected when we go off into confusion, there comes the teaching and our mind is straightened out, clarified again. This is what is meant by ‘protection’, it is protection for the mind. You can replace the word “protected” by “guided”, by “supported” or “inspired”, all of these are further connotations of the same word.

“There are infinite statements like this, in which the immeasurable benefits of practicing the guru yoga are explained: "The teacher is the embodiment of all the buddhas..." And: "The teacher is the glorious Vajradhara..." And: "The teacher is the Buddha, the teacher is the Dharma..." And: "Never consider the teacher and the holder of the vajra to be separate" and "the one who knows kindness bestows the ultimate ease" ”

Vajradhara is the name of the blue Buddha, the holder of the vajra. Never hold the blue buddha and the vajrayana teacher to be separate.

Ultimate ease is when you feel so easy in your mind because of no clinging to subject and object, no self-importance, no self-centredness.

This practice that we are sharing makes our mind more and more at ease, more and more flexible, fluid, less stressful, no more stress, really in harmony with ourselves. And this process continues until you reach ultimate ease which is another word for the nature of mind.

“In the past, when there were no teachers...”

There were no possibilities to access the dharma then, but now, in the present, there is a teacher, there is a possibility to attain awakening and so on. We can contemplate our own life: Before, we did not have access, and now there is access to something which opens the mind so much.

“If you pray to your root teacher, perceiving him as the embodiment of the Three Jewels and of all the objects of refuge, and as the actual Vajradhara, it is easy to receive blessings. If you make this your practice and rely on it, it is certain that all supreme and common accomplishments will appear instantly.”

To make it very clear. I have seen many Tibetan teachers. When they teach, they usually sit on thrones and they have a little table in front. When they sit down, they bring a picture of Vajradhara with them and they put it on the table just in front of them. When the students feel devotion and they want to prostrate, they make it clear that they don't prostrate to the person, they prostrate to the essence of enlightenment. They want to make sure: Don't confuse the person in this human body with the essence of awakening. This is your refuge, the dimension of mind, your mind is the refuge, not the outer person. So Tengpa Rinpoche, Khenpo Chodrak and others I have studied with, they always placed an image of awakening in front of them to communicate to the students: Please go towards true awakening, don't make yourself dependent on an outer guru.

G 2016 (16)

Question: In the quote of the Kalachakra tantra it says to 'please the teacher'. What does that mean?

Answer: There are three ways of pleasing the teacher. Pleasing here means how to make the teacher rejoice, that the teacher rejoices in the progress of your practice. The next passage is actually about this. It is also explained in Gampopa's Jewel Ornament.

The teacher rejoices when you practise according to the instructions, when you get the meaning and you put the instructions into practice. You also please the teacher by continuing to cultivate deep respect in the dharma. In India, it also meant to prostrate, to bow down three times in front of the shrine, to show all the signs of respect that make for a harmonious practice. And there is also the third aspect which is more personal: To take care of the food of the teacher, so to take care that they are not hungry or thirsty, that they have enough to dress themselves, and if they fall ill to take care to find medicine. This

goes back to the Buddha's time. It is part of serving the teacher to find the right medicine and treatment. The Jewel Ornament goes into deeper aspects of these three, and each has three sub-titles. Three times three ways of pleasing the teacher.

To summarize:

(1) There are the outer signs of respect, coming to the teaching, listening to them, bowing down, not interrupting the teacher, having the patience to wait until he has finished the instructions, all the outer signs of good behaviour and respect. Getting up when the teacher enters, standing up when the teacher stands up and so on, all of this was traditional in the Indian, Asian society. But since this has a tendency to become a little bit hypocritical, we don't insist on it.

(2) Concerning the taking care of the teachers living conditions, you should understand that the teachers were usually monks or nuns, and all were yogis and they had no personal belongings, no personal house, they lived from begging, from alms that they received, from donations. So since the teacher gives us the food of the dharma, the nectar of the dharma and we offer the food and the nectar of everyday necessities. This is not meant as indulgence, so that the teacher would become rich by donations. This is not all the meaning, it is just the basic necessities of life, including medicine.

(3) Practising the teaching as we receive them, means that we study, we listen to the teaching, we contemplate and we meditate exactly in the way that will go towards awakening. And this is what pleases the teacher most.

So here in our situation, there are enough donations coming in, my life is also based on donations, so there is no worry about that. Just to take away some of the additional burdens, like someone going shopping, someone putting some water here, these little things or the big things like collecting the money for the hotel are the things, these are the things that you would call serving and pleasing the lama. And when I am asked: "How can I show my gratitude towards you?", I can only give the same answer as my own teacher: The way to please the teacher is actually to realise the dharma and to pass on the dharma to others. This is the real way of pleasing the guru. To really free your own mind and to show others how to do it, that's what it is all about. So let the present continue to the next generation. That's the main thing.

Question: Can a teacher be displeased?

Answer: Yes, a teacher can become displeased if you misunderstand the teaching and you pass it on to the next generation in such a way that it completely becomes distorted. If the teacher gets angry about it, that's a problem for the teacher. This is not your problem because a free mind does not get personally upset, it is just: 'Wow. there is some damage being done here. One needs to help, do something about it'. When the teacher is not happy about the way we go about practising, then the teacher can tell the students and give suggestions about how to do it better. But this is quite rare. Usually, the student

needs to come and ask and be very receptive. It is not the task of teachers to go around and tell everyone how to make everything better.

Question: Disobedience?

Answer: I don't know if you have such a relationship. The relationship must be such that there is no question of disobedience, actually. For example, here in this room, there is no question of disobedience. The dharma is offered, and you take it or you leave it.

However, you look at my personal situation, there were two situations in my life when I had to be obedient to my teacher against my will. And that is a very special situation.

(1) I was in retreat with Gendun Rinpoche, in the sixth year already, and he asked me to translate *The Jewel Ornament* by Gampopa. And I didn't feel qualified. The longest book I had read in Tibetan was thirty pages long and he came with a book of 300 pages. I had never had a teacher in Tibetan, Tibetan grammar and so on, and he said: 'Here, please translate this. We need it.' And I said: 'no, I can't do it, I am not qualified.' And I said no a second time, and both times he insisted again, and even after the second time he said that he really wanted me to do it, that he thought that I was qualified and he even refused a request to go and ask a khenpo, a Tibetan scholar for help with the translation. He said: 'You know it, you do it.' Then I knew: When the vajra master says something three times, you better follow.

It would not have damaged our relationship, but he would have been disappointed because less benefit for others would have occurred. Actually, he gave such a strong blessing that when I woke up in the early mornings, when we come from deep sleep to light sleep, in the light sleep I would receive all the answers to the problems in Tibetan which I hadn't resolved the previous day. So day after day I received all the answers in the early mornings in half-sleep yoga. And in four and a half months the work was finished, it was published and Tibetans told me that they were amazed how I solved the problems in Tibetan grammar. But I wasn't aware of those questions (laughter).

So without following him, I would not have had the experience of this blessing of how it is to be connected to a lineage; that things can dissolve in completely unusual ways. He was wright on that point. Fortunately I followed him.

(2) Then, during that time, Gendun Rinpoche sat down and asked all of us in the retreat group what we wanted to do in the future. And I wanted to continue for many years in retreat, I was so intent and I was sure I was going to be allowed to be more in retreat. It was my seventh year and I thought I was going for ten more years or more, I didn't have a very specific idea. Then he asked the group: 'Who wants to do the next retreat?', and my hand went up. He said: 'No, not you.' It was like a knife in my heart. I started to cry so much, I couldn't understand a word any more. And then first he took care of all those who wanted to do retreat, and I wondered what was going on. And then he said to me: "I want you to be a retreat teacher. You should guide the retreats." And I said: "But I am not ready, I don't feel capable." I was just thirty-three or thirty-four years old. I said: "No way, not possible. And I remember trying to look at him, I had so many tears, I couldn't see

him, I could only just about see his presence. And then he said: "I am asking you to do it. Will you do it?" And I was choking, I couldn't speak. I just did like this (presumably nodding) which said: "Yes." And then he said: "You will see that your practice will develop just as well when teaching the retreats as if you were yourself in full retreat. You will be in half-retreat and you will teach retreat, and your practice will just go as well."

I didn't believe him until my best friend, Mingyur, came out from another nine years of retreat. For years I grieved not being able to do the retreat, but I did my job. But when he came out of retreat nine years later and we compared notes because we had been in retreat together. He came out of complete seclusion and I had been teaching in half-retreat. And we compared our experiences of how things went. And then I saw: Gendun Rinpoche was right on that point.

So these were the two times when obedience was asked from me. It didn't concern any personal project of my lama, it concerned something for the benefit of all, and due to my deep confidence in him, I didn't want to say no, I couldn't.

So maybe this teaches you a little bit about the relationship between student and teacher. Sometimes practical examples are more clear than general descriptions.

And I did this for seventeen years and my teachers at the time; Karmapa, Jigme Rinpoche, Shamar Rinpoche - wanted me to continue as retreat guide. But I said: 'No, I have done my fill of it and I left.' I disobeyed. they didn't ask me so clearly; they didn't ask me to stay. I know it was their unspoken wish. But I didn't have to obey, I had my connection with Gendun Rinpoche, I had signed up, so to speak, for a certain way of doing retreat. It was not the old way anymore and it was not fitting any more. But I still continue in whatever I do, to follow my guru's instructions, Gendun Rinpoche's instructions. The way I am teaching you is exactly the way he taught us, what we go through, how we practise. I feel this is completely fitting, I adapt it to your needs, but it is still the old way.

And now I go back to half-retreat, guiding retreatants, just the same way that Gendun Rinpoche had wished from me. Just that there was a gap of four and a half or five years where I was looking for a situation where this could continue. And it seems that Gendun Rinpoche is smiling.

Question: Does spiritual evolution need friction?

Answer: Spiritual evolution takes place through friction between the needs of all, the needs of the situation, and one's ego-clinging. There is constant friction. Call it the friction between compassion and selfishness. This is where the spiritual practice happens. But actually, this theory of friction is just the projection of a mind which is constantly in friction. It cannot imagine that evolution could take place by love, compassion and wisdom. Even now the theories of evolution are changing because one discovers empathy and compassion in animals, one discovers other motors for their behaviour than just the survival theory.

Question: If we have something from the past due to conditioning, how does that fit to the image of the mirror?

Answer: The forces of the past continue all the time in the present. Today, when you think of your mother giving you a kiss in childhood, it is the coming together of conditions today and again the experience of the kiss is different from the past, it is a new experience. It is not a past one.

Your belief or hypothesis might be based on a stable memory. Actually, memory is dynamic. I remember very well the yellow-red horizon this morning before the sun came up. But my memory of it is not what I actually saw. And even now, when I look at it inwardly, it is changing right now. Do you understand? The forces of recollection, comparing, bring this image into my mind together with emotional qualities, but it is dynamic, it is forming now. It is not like a photograph you take from storage and every time you remember it is the same. We are known to have a dynamic memory because our memory changes. We tell the story of the same story five times, and each time a little bit different.

Question: Every time it is a little bit different, but it has a common ground.

Answer: Yes, but the common ground doesn't help if it is a little bit different every time. So we have each the experience of this room now. There is a common ground. And each one has a personal impression; this will become memory and the memory will evolve. Each time it comes back to a present experience, it comes back a little bit different. For example, your values might have changed in the meantime.

I am not talking about you just hypothetically. Someone might say: 'Oh, why does Tilmann always talk from the texts, it is much more alive when he talks from personal experience.' Your value system might be such that you say: 'I appreciate much more the personal, direct teachings.' And then, twenty years from now you might remember the situation and say: 'Wow, I remember this! He really took pains to explain the commentary to us word for word. This was so great, no-one else took pains to do that with us.' Your memory changes and you think: 'Wow, this was great', in the same way, our evaluation of past situations changes constantly. Our preferences change and so on. So the same good old story appears in a different light. The ground is the same, but individual memories change. They are dynamic.

LESSON 35: NINE METHODS OF PLACING THE MIND CONTINUED

G 2016 (17)

(6) *Calming* means to settle the mind by identifying precisely the causes of mental wandering and reversing the attachment to them.

Meditation

Whichever position you choose, let it be stable like a mountain. Let the mind be open like the vast blue sky and clear like a completely calm lake on which the midday sun is reflected.

All the waves of the gross thoughts and the smaller waves of the subtle thoughts dissolve by themselves if we don't give them any further nourishment, any further input.

The practice is not grasping at any mental activity, letting it subside on its own.

A lot of our mental activity we just calm down by relaxing. Some activity, however, tends to come again and again. If this is the case, look into the cause of this mental activity. Find the cause and relax that.

Very kind and receptive, accepting all our experiences, all our mental states.

Wherever you feel agitation, look into the cause of the agitation and relax that. Wherever you feel struggle, look into the cause. Look into the causes of whatever stress you notice in your being.

Go always deeper with your perception of the real causes for agitation, for stress, for struggle and see how you can untie the knots of hope and fear.

(Bell)

We were practising stage six of the nine stages. We were also practising the second of the four noble truths, the investigation of the causes of suffering. Let's collect what causes for mental struggle etc. you identified:

First Student: Impatience.

LT: That's a symptom. What's the real cause for your impatience? You can come back to it later.

Second Student: There are many layers. The last one was the fear that my mind does not really understand the nature of mind.

LT: That's a very profound layer. Would you also share upper layers?

Student: The first layer was the desire to have a good meditation.

LT: Yes, this kind of desire creates agitation and stress.

Student: Then there was a kind of landscape of insecurity and comparison. The story you told about Lama Gendun and: Am I good enough?

LT: Am I good enough. This is a deep cause for agitation.

Student: Looking at this, I realised that this fear of not being good enough has the same nature of mind, the same as your mind, the same as Lama Gendun's mind. So I calmed down. And yet it didn't completely relax. I was with this fear which wasn't about you or even me. It was just fear. And that's OK, I can observe that it is changing all the time. - I was curious about: To have this experience of comparison, I have to have an identity which is not what I want. I can see that. Yet there is more.

LT: Yet there is more... You could see the wish to have an identity. That's the source of stress and agitation.

Student: The fear of being rejected and the hope to be accepted. And behind there was the hope to be and the fear not to be.

LT: Yes, a deep source of stress.

Third Student: Desire for sense impressions.

LT: Sure, that agitates.

Forth Student: Lack of trust, the fear of what will be if I let go of all of that.

LT: A very profound cause of stress. This is called the fear of the unknown. What will come when letting go of my reference points.

You see that this inquiry brings up very valuable insights. Up to the fifth step in the nine steps people can go on by relaxing, by some kind of meditation techniques. But from there on, you must inquire into the causes of your remaining agitation, stress and so on. It is not only knowing the causes, but accepting them, bringing awareness into them, relaxing into them. Then you can gradually go further. At least this is the case if you want your meditation to be liberating. You can have methods and you can go further without inquiry, but if you want your meditation to be really liberating, awakening, then inquiry is needed.

First, when we encounter these hopes and fears - also in impatience there is hope and fear, you have noticed now, there are deeper layers of what I want, what I don't want,

anxieties, not being able to accept the situation - this is why impatience comes in. As we go deeper, first of all it is a little bit difficult. It is a little bit difficult to accept ourselves with it. The normal first reaction is: 'Oh, I don't want this to be there, why?! I just want to trust my mind and be a buddha; end of story.'

And this journey of the meditator from then on is to really lovingly accept one's own condition and by listening to others, we understand that it is pretty much the same for everyone. Our compassion deepens, we understand what the reasons are for all this agitation in the world, why people cannot sit still, cannot be quiet, cannot just do nothing and then we need to find solutions. And we try to relax into it. It is not so easy to relax into something stressful.

You know, when I am impatient and someone else tells me: 'Relax!'; I get more impatient. So what we do is that we go to the edge of our uneasiness, of what we can bear, we relax into just the edge of the area which is accessible to us where we can still relax. We stay there. And then we become familiar with that. This would be a nice definition of meditation progress: To relax at the edge of discomfort. And as we relax there where we can still relax, we become familiar, and next times we can relax a little further. This is the progress. We discover more possibilities of opening up, to not identify, to not grasp. The edge is a wandering edge. It is displacing with our capacity to open up and so on, we find it in new areas over a period of practice.

What helps you to accept unbearable situations? When you have love, compassion, softness, kindness towards it. Samsara is unbearable. Samsara as a personal experience is unbearable. There is so much suffering. And it needs going slowly, kindly, no pressure, no pushing.

One bit of advice I can give to you when you are at the edge: continue breathing!

Question: When you gave the image of the lake, I connected with this image and felt a great peacefulness and joy, But then I did not connect to the rest of the instructions. Is this the correct way to practise or not?

Answer: It is the correct way. You just needed a rest. Sometimes meditation is like driving to a beauty spot, parking up and having a nice view. We stay there until we have enough energy and courage to continue. That's absolutely necessary. One also needs to know how to place one's mind without always being at the edge of discomfort.

G 2016 (18)

Relaxation is not actually a method. What we do is that we notice this clinging, grasping, uneasiness and the first thing is that we accept that it is there and we bring more awareness into it. This is already a big thing: we bring awareness into it, an accepting awareness and because of the awareness, something relaxes in us. Relaxation happens due to this accepting awareness. So what relaxes for us is the fear of that state of grasping, the fear of that fear, the fear of that uneasiness or pain, of that insecurity for

example. And this will naturally lead into the seventh step because you cannot relax everything. Somehow, we have to give a further direction to this awareness to dissolve the deeper cause of clinging.

So, let's hear the seventh step:

(7) *“Fully calming: Whatever the causes of distraction, like covetousness and so on, and the results of distraction, like feeling unhappy and so on may be, by recognizing the true nature of all of these mental states, they will dissolve by themselves.”*

This is the actual method to follow on the previous one: To recognise the true nature of all these things. Here, the method of settling deeper into mental calm is joining the insight meditation with the shamatha meditation.

When you touch this uneasiness, like this very deep wanting or feeling of a lack, lacking love and so on, then you need to apply this step of looking into the nature of this very experience.

When I say look or investigate, it is not conceptual. It is like feeling deeper. We let this mental state come completely into awareness. Completely. Not like from an observer who observes something different, like a subject observing an object, we allow ourselves to completely enter this feeling.

So we might feel this uneasiness there; it's unknown, risky, a little bit troublesome. Some descriptions go as far as talking about feeling like being on the edge of a cliff, like the risk of falling into a big nowhere.

Looking into the nature is like letting it completely come and then – ‘oh! There is nothing. It is gone’. In the moment of really letting it come, it is just surprise. it is gone, it is not substantial, something else opens, suddenly there is space. It is a discovery which happens because of the courage of letting go of the observing distance.

When we discover that there, where there was fear and uneasiness before, there is no fear anymore, there is no separation and there is not some ‘thing’ which would need any protection. Like those people who in their dreams, allow themselves to fall off the cliff, completely open up to that and they never reach the ground. There is no problem whatsoever. Nothing happens. Or if they allow themselves to crash, nothing ever happens. This is the scene: You see completely that this state of mind, whatever uneasy state it was: is not anything to be avoided. The stress also goes. The stress of avoiding some unknown state of mind. This also goes away. All unknown states of mind can be opened up into, as well as all known states of mind.

This is a deep way of explaining this. You will find other teachers who explain this in a more superficial way. But this is really what works.

Answer to question about how to bring about this deeper level of calm: It comes from the union with whatever you are inquiring into, not from an investigation. This was still from outside, but to unite with the experience. To give up the inquiring distance, this is what it really comes from. The complete calm will come from this deep understanding. Then you will be completely at ease.

(Advice to people with a very active mind)

Do some of you belong to the group of practitioners who, in spite of years of practice, cannot calm your mind, you always feel that you have an active thinking mind?

(Some say yes)

For this group of people which you belong to; they are the people who can probably only develop mental calm through insight. You have to focus on insight in order to reach mental calm. For people like you, when you receive those progressive instructions in shamatha practice and how to calm the mind, you constantly feel like losers: I can't do it. What are they talking about to calm the mind like that? Your approach will be different. Others can use this approach as well of course:

But there is no other way but saying: "Yes. yes, mind is thinking all the time, mind has emotional states, one after another, this is my life. It cannot be any different right now. As far as I know, it cannot be any different. Let's simply directly look at the nature of whatever arises." And this means as much as possible tuning in, feeling into the constantly changing nature of all phenomena, of mind, of life, constantly changing, changing, changing. To completely open up to that. And by opening up so much and completely and not wanting something else, you will discover that nothing of this has any substance. Nothing is solid, nothing is a problem. It all dissolves by itself. You don't need to struggle. Mind can be so active and you can find this openness and fluidity within the active mind.

The difference to other people is that when you know the movement, the mental state to be insubstantial, your mind is so creative and dynamic that although the thought chain doesn't continue, the next thought arises almost immediately after. And it also doesn't continue, but the next thought comes. For other people, there is a longer gap. One thought dissolves and there is some space before the next movement comes.

So as you continue being completely open, no resistance, just knowing the dynamic, insubstantial, empty nature of phenomena, then your mind first of all, in the movement, you will experience calm. You will be at peace within the active mind. First experience.

And then you will also notice, in the course of time, that there are periods when mind does not produce so much, when it is not so incredibly active. You begin to experience mental calm which seems to be similar to what others experience. But basically, because your system is a high energy system, you will most times have a very dynamic, active meditation. And you will then develop a joy at this dynamic mind, you will be able to enjoy how alive, how vivid your mind is. Before you were always complaining that your mind is

thinking so much and can never stop, never gives peace and so on. Now you will begin to enjoy, to like your own mind.

As a child, you might have been classified among hyperactive children. But you are just high energy people. Others also have high energy, but it is this mental production which is just very strong. As far as I know from my colleagues who also have, like me, thirty years or more of meditation, it stays like this one's whole life.

Basically, the mind of the other people is like blue sky in Greece with little wind. And your mind is like blue sky in Greece with more wind. That's the only difference. Insight gives the space, knows the nature of what's happening. And then there is no need for the mind to calm down. Why should the mind calm down, there is no need! Active mind is beautiful mind, just as beautiful, wonderful mind. It can do many things for everybody, for the whole world.

Question: My problem is just one thought which keeps coming back.

Answer: Then you go back to step five. Then you have to look for the causes of that agitation, of that fixation. Then you need to inquire with all the different possibilities you have into the causes and relax the causes for that.

(8) "Continuity: by the power of meditating like that, the mind will stay naturally with the object, and settle independently of any great effort."

The mind stays naturally with whatever task you give to it. You could say without any effort, but perhaps the author says without any great effort because there is a slight directing of the mind which is still used. Actually, it becomes effortless practice. Whatever you wish to meditate on, your mind will just do it. And this is the stability of a completely flexible mind.

We might think that a flexible mind goes here and there and is moving around all the time. No, this is the characteristic of a mind of clinging. The mind becomes flexible because it is not clinging, not grasping. When I grasp onto something, I am not flexible anymore, I am locked, I am chained. It is like my attention wants this, then this. All the time blocked. This is not flexible.

The way the mind stays with a task is like this: a very soft touch. Very soft. A slight change of attention - the mind stays here. Completely flexible. If you want to visualise a blue monkey - there he is, climbing the refuge tree. If you want to visualise a pink panther in the sky - there he is. If you want to meditate on the breath at your nostrils - you are just doing that immediately, no hesitation. Just direct the mind somewhere: It is done. No hanging on to what was before, no delay, immediately able to shift and to stay for as long as you want.

So effortless: If you want to reflect on something, you reflect, let the thoughts come, reflect, constructive thinking; finished; pause. No need to do anything. Mind is just so

flexible that you don't need to give it a task. When there is no task, it just relaxes, it opens, that's all.

(9) *“Meditative balance: finally, you will remain undistracted whether you meditate or not.”*

So then even in activity, even when you communicate, when you are in the middle of the challenges of everyday life, the mind remains calm and flexible.

“So these are the nine steps of settling the mind.”

They can be explained just in terms of mental calm or, as I did it now, in terms of the unity of mental calm and insight. A little bit later in the book, there are the eleven steps of insight meditation which we did last year (Lesson 43). So you should read these together with the nine steps explained now.

Student: What about meditating on a movement like the breath at the nostrils?

Answer: It is very true that the advantage of a movement is that it is easier to focus. Moving objects, meditating on something moving is generally easier. But it would be very interesting for you to explore more how it is at the turning point of the breathing moments, when there is no movement. That would be very interesting. Look further: How is mind then?

Student: I didn't have a sensory experience.

LT: Yes, how is it when there is no sensory experience? It is like listening to sounds and then there is silence. How is it to be hearing when there is silence? How is it to be feeling when there is no feeling in a place where there was before? This is very interesting for you. It also connects to: How is it to be, to be alive when there is no thinking? It is like a little gap opening there. There is just presence without some thing. Very interesting. So inquire more into that. You don't need to change any meditation object, but of course you can change and use many different meditation objects.

Basically, if we summarize everything that has been said so far, whatever experience we encounter, we open up to it and relax into it, and we will become more and more familiar with all these mental states. And there will be no more mental state that we don't know. Relaxing means opening up, becoming one.

Student: Is this the key to overcome fixation?

Answer: Definitely.

This is all the dharma, in simple words and in detail. And now you have to practise. This means apply it as often as possible. To apply what one has understood everywhere in

one's life, this is what is called practice. It shouldn't be so difficult. We apply only what we have understood, Then, why should we wait with that?

Student: My problem is distraction.

LT: It is very hard when one hears 'laziness', but it is laziness that makes us fall into distraction.

Student: What is underneath laziness?

LT: What is your guess?

Student: In my case it is usually fear.

LT: Yes, underneath laziness there is fear. Which fears do you find?

Let's all go with that inquiry. Let's all feel for a minute or two what other states of mind are underneath our laziness. What are the reasons that we are so lazy as not to apply what we have already understood? If it is fear, what kind of fear is it? If it is a wish or need, what kind of wish or need is it? If it is a belief, what kind of belief is it?

First student: To me it seems that fear should remove laziness.

LT: Well then, what kind of fear makes us remove laziness and what kind of fear makes us not apply what we have understood?

First student: It seems to me that feeling too at ease, like enjoying a nice environment, good food etc. Maybe we don't really see the suffering.

LT: We can talk about two things here: there is the belief that all is well. No need to do anything because the situation is nice. We can even find telling ourselves: all is well. This is a belief. Actually, below there is the fear to look, the fear to find some disagreeable discovery. Belief here is the defending principle. It defends the status quo. It is the belief, for example, that after death anyhow I will go to Dewacän or paradise. I don't need to do anything.

Second student: Laziness is more like a force of habit.

LT: What's the belief in following habits?

Second student: Stability.

LT: The belief is that habit gives me something good.

Second student: What has worked in the past will work in the future.

Fear of the unknown.

LT: Yes, habit is very much connected to the fear of the unknown. The belief is: the unknown is probably more dangerous than the known.

Third student: This belief: I have come a long way, it helped me so much, and I am enjoying it. Like I am satisfied.

LT: This sounds like a need or a wish.

Third student: The wish that it will stay good. There is a kind of satisfaction.

LT: Satisfaction definitely is a factor of not continuing to do more. When you see your satisfaction, is there anything wrong with that?

Third student: Part of it is wonderful because I can really see the result. But another part is laziness. Like: this is enough.

LT: This is the belief: this is enough. I am tired, I want to enjoy, I don't want to see that there is more to do.

Third student: At last I can sit down and enjoy.

LT: And don't talk to me about the next projects. Don't talk to me about the rest of the path. It was so hard to get up into the god realm. Please don't talk to me about the dangers (laughter).

Forth student: Ignorance like lack of trust and still maybe the hope: I might be the first one to not die. I am very afraid of dying. It must be ignorance because if I had really understood it I would definitely do it.

LT: The lack of trust is not trusting one's own understanding. This is a big problem and a big cause for not progressing further. This is called doubt, neurotic doubt, in the abhidharma. it is a special form of doubt. It is not trusting one's own experience and insight. We are clear about the question: What makes it that we don't put into practice our own understanding, not the understanding of someone else, not some outer dharma, but what we have understood that would be good for us.

Fifth student: The fear of the ego losing the power to decide what to do or not to do.

LT: Who is that actually, the ego? Are you talking about yourself? Can we say like: "I am afraid?" It is avoiding the sharpness of the insight. If you say I, the insight will be clearer.

Fifth: I am afraid of losing the power to do what I want.

LT: The belief is: 'When I become a buddha, I am not free anymore (laughter)'. You see, when we get to the point, some of these things get quite absurd, but nevertheless they work. We all know what she is talking about.

Sixth student: There are so many levels. When I was on retreat, I had so many tendencies and habits. I knew them so clearly. Everyday they would jump and dance and play. And I remember asking you: I know them so clearly, why can't I do anything with them? And you looked very compassionate and said: "Well, you really have to *know* the suffering in them. You really have to feel the suffering in them." And that is a real touchstone for me, because if I really feel the suffering, I don't do it.

LT: Great, that is part of the solution already. You are giving us the key to the solution.

Sixth student: But the fact is that I don't really know the suffering, I don't feel the suffering.

LT: Oh, you know that this is the path but you don't want to feel the suffering. This is it. You don't want to *feel* the suffering involved in all of that. And this is so true.

This is already coming to the things we can do to move ahead. Like if we are in a state where we feel well and good, we have finally arrived at some satisfaction, we still feel: Death is not so very far away, we don't to be put into contact with the deeper realities of stress in that state.

Seventh student: But isn't there also some pride involved: I know I have understood, I am not doing it because I know that any time I can do it if I want to.

LT: Very much so. There is an incredible connection between laziness and pride.

Eight student: And desire, too.

LT: Yes.

Ninth student: The pride can also be: Who am I to change the habits and my childhood things?

LT: It is especially the pride of thinking that I have to change something and I cannot do it. Very simple. I think I have to change something and I am not good enough to change it. There are two illusions in there.

Tenth student: A lack of compassion towards myself. I work all week and then I deserve to be lazy. If I had compassion towards myself, I could pace my time differently rather than over-indulging in helping and supporting others.

LT: How would you lead your life if you had true compassion towards yourself?

Tenth student: I would have the time for taking care of myself and to practise.

Thank you all very much. I think this is enough of an exploration of where that laziness to put into practice what we have understood to be beneficial comes from. As a summary we can say that it comes from certain fears, certain beliefs which are always an expression of ignorance, from some doubt in our own understanding, from pride and from a lack of compassion in two respects: Not caring enough for ourselves and not fully wanting to open up to compassion to really know the suffering in ourselves and in the world.

Basically, a good first answer is: Be kind to yourself and apply your understanding. And those who feel satisfied will feel more satisfied and your lives will be much more stable.

G 2016 (19, first part)

Meditation

Instal yourselves conveniently to meditate for a while and to investigate the mind, lying, sitting, standing.

First we usually begin with developing a clear awareness of just how it feels in the body, to be feeling the body. Take the body as a whole. The whole body at once. together with the space around. Relax wherever you feel some tension: Shoulders, cheeks, neck, belly, arms, legs.

Then relax all the useless tension in hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting. All the useless tension in the thinking processes, the reactions towards feelings. How is it to be without tension, effortless, just so, just like that. Please don't answer the question, just feel the answer: How is it? Feel the answer.

How is it to just be when all the identifications are relaxed, not being a man, not being a woman, not being a student, not being a teacher. Nothing of all of that.

How is it when even the thinking relaxes?

Yes, allow yourselves to become completely the flow, to be the flow of awareness.

Whatever experience arises, whatever state of mind, look into its nature or relax into it, let it open up completely.

Let every cell of your organism feel this complete opening up, this flowing, this letting go.

How is it to simply be, to simply be between two thoughts, in the space in between, how is it to be at the end of the outbreath?

How is it when one thought has finished before the next one starts?

How is mind now with the little outer agitation (dog barking)?

(Bell)

LESSON 46 INTUITIVE INSIGHT

G 2016 (19, second part)

Remember this book was written for dharma teachers in Tibet in the 16th century. In the last lesson the students were sent away with the question: How is mind, what is mind like? Look into your mind, inquire into your mind and bring me your experiences.

This is usually done in a one-to-one interview. When the students come on retreat, when they go deeper with their practice, then this kind of dialogue will happen and the teacher wants to know about the experiences.

So one student is asked: What can you tell me about your experience of mind, what do you discover?

“If the student says that when he is examining the nonconceptual state of mind, there is nothing besides just that abiding, he has not experienced intuitive insight and should be told to continue his inquiry for some more days.”

Do you have an experience of a nonconceptual state of mind? Do you know what it means? How would you describe it, what is meant?

First student: Is it like a deep ocean?

LT: It is defined as the mind between thoughts, when there is no thinking. So you experience it like a deep ocean. Is there anything more you can say about this ocean-like mind?

First student: It is clear and also like space.

LT: Is there any movement in there or how is it?

First student: It is vibrant.

LT: Yes, a tiny movement. Stay close to your experience. So it is deep, it is vast, it is clear and vibrating movement.

First student: I would say that there is a sound also, like an empty sound.

LT: Is it always there when you experience this nonconceptual state?

First student: Yes.

LT: For me, all sounds are empty. What do you mean by an empty sound?

First student: Like a shell.

LT: Like when you put a shell to the ear and you hear a sound in there. Is this a sensory experience coming from the ears or is this originating independently of the ear?

First student: It is not in the ear.

LT: If you look at the emotional side of mind, is there any emotion, how would you describe it?

First student: Joyful, light. Then of course there is the wish that it would stay.

LT: Is this a continuous wish or a sometimes arising wish?

First student: Sometimes.

LT: I will come back to you later. Let's hear someone else:

Second student: I think I have this some moments, and it lasts only for a very little time, and then another thought is arising. I think it is fear that doesn't allow me to stay more in it.

LT: Can you describe just this little moment, when it opens. How is it in those short times?

Second student: Even though I haven't done this, it is like falling from an aeroplane.

LT: This is how you would imagine a free fall.

Second student: Yes, like being in a void.

LT: Is it connected to some kind of fear or hesitation or what is the emotional side of the experience? Or is it peaceful?

Second student: Maybe there is nothing, but the time is too short.

LT: So you would need to relax more into this free fall, into this seeming nothingness to explore more.

Third student: The entry is usually a feeling of desire for something, moving from being me; being an object of mind. And then it stabilises. There is a sense of space and time... So things continue to occur, but there isn't this idea of them happening in time one after the other. The idea is gone and with that, there is a sense that things are happening. Presumably there is some confusion about where things are. I don't feel that there is a space that is limited by the walls or a country.

LT: So in your experience of the nonconceptual state: Yes, something is happening, but there is not this usual notion of time nor of space.

Third student: And the experience of my body changes. How to describe? I feel that there is a connection between me and (over there), but there is some space between the whole thing.

LT: You feel that there is a connection and there is space. More space than usual? Or why would you feel the space? Was it more dense before?

Third student: It is just a direct knowing of the energy. This one is looking up, that one is like looking down and they are not separate from each other. And with that there is relief, beauty. love.

LT: Did you notice thinking processes in this state?

Third student: sometimes.

LT: How do they feel?

Third student: There is a sense of curiosity and lightness. They just go their way.

LT: In between the thinking processes, is the mind any different when it is thinking or not thinking?

Third student: No.

LT: Does the energetic feeling in the body change when some light thinking processes arise?

Third student. Not necessarily. Sometimes, when they get bigger, when I get caught.

LT: So when there is a little grasping, then definitely the energetic experience changes.

Third student: Sometimes there are thoughts when it doesn't get caught, when there is a flow in my root centre going up and it feels as if it perceives the sameness.

Forth student: It is not possible for me to describe exactly what it is. The best thing I can say is that it is like open space, space without walls, there is no limit actually. It mostly connects with past experiences, like a chain.

LT: How does it connect with past experiences? Do they reappear?

Forth student: Yes, they reappear, or I remember something which connects to it.

LT: Are these past experiences that connect you to spacious awareness?

Forth student: Yes.

LT: Something that allows for the spacious experience to be there. And how is that space? Is there more to it than just being open?

Forth student: There is a feeling that there is no "I" involved, like I am sitting here and I am experiencing it.

LT: Is it possible to think in that space? Does thinking occur?

Forth student: My feeling is that there are no thoughts in that moment.

When listening to the first student, what seemed to be very strong is that it is not only spacious, calm and deep, but there is this vibrant energy in there. So in order to go further, it could be helpful to really become one with this vibration and to dissolve the observing distance, to let it be completely.

For the second student, it is like trusting more this courage to enter the unknown, like you say going from the plane. Let these moments come, let them be longer also, there is no need to rescue yourself somewhere to trust more. Nothing can happen to you. You are safe. Nothing can happen as long as you leave it as such. You let it come and allow it to be and then you can explore it a little bit more.

For the third student, it seems like you are in and out of the conceptual state. sometimes you kind of get lost in a good feeling, and there is only a very slight observation continuing in that openness. Then the observing with a little thinking, the observing of the physical sensations is sometimes a little bit more present. Then we wouldn't call it a nonconceptual state. But there is so little clinging that it doesn't really disturb the openness of your mind. So I would encourage you to cling even less to the body, to the physical phenomena. To just let it be one of the many sensations arising, not being at all concerned with it. It seems that sometimes you forget yourself completely, and this is actually the way to go, to allow yourself to completely be without any self-concern, just let it happen whatever unfolds then. And it could be very helpful for you to do a form of guru yoga where you let the refuge dissolve into yourself, completely entering the blessing as a help to forget this.

For the fourth student, it is very important not to work with past experiences, but to go for the experience of now. They are very fine, but they are gone (in German: Schnee von gestern). We need the fresh experience. So this is what would be your advice: To go into the freshness of the ungraspable experience. You were giving a taste of being able not to grasp which is fine. Go into it with "now", always just now. And forgetting yourself, just like the others, not comparing with the past.

You witnessed at the beginning of such a dialogue. The teacher helps the student to describe the experience as well as possible to come to a good understanding and then of course, there are many possibilities. Today I just chose one possibility, giving each one a little bit of advice of how to go further. But the exchange can go into more depths and can go into different aspects of the experience.

One important aspect of these exchanges would be - and this we won't do now -, how far do the experiences you describe transform you, what impact does it have on you, on your life? Impact on the way how you see yourself, how you see emotions, how you feel. From every experience there is an understanding arising.

And the task of the teacher is also to help this understanding to come fully into one's awareness. And sometimes the teacher also needs to help to the student to even be able to find some words for it, because there are some people who don't have so many words and who are not used to describing experiences and then the teacher has to help with how to become clearer in the expression of that experience.

And the direction to go is not to lead the student from an experience to the next experience, but from experience to realization. This means into a way of being that really liberates. That's the idea.

DAY 4 (160704-0170-0704)

G 2016 (20) **Meditation: Love**

Let us start with directing our mind to what is most important in our life.

Which qualities I would like to have realised before I die? How do I want to be in this life and perhaps in the next life, what is most important?

(Student sobbing heavily. LT remains silent for a while, then very calmly:)

When there is some sadness or pain about perhaps not having lived in these qualities, then let this pain come fully into your awareness as well, no need to push it away. There is still time, it is never too late.

With every breathing in and breathing out, we can, just now, live in those qualities that are so dear to us. The most important one is to love and to be loved.

Love then becomes friendship. Friendship with those who are close to us and friendship with strangers and especially friendship with oneself.

Friendship includes love, compassion, wisdom, generosity, all those wonderful qualities. Let us feel connected as friends with all those around us as we take refuge and contemplate the four immeasurables.

(Recitation)

Let all the qualities of awakening be alive in yourself. Breathe from within those qualities.

Breathing within those qualities, we are truly human. Our human potential shows and it is the same potential that we call buddha-nature. It is as if love, compassion, joy, equanimity and so on were breathing, were kind of present in us and were doing the job. We don't have to do anything. Just let them take over.

From time to time, look at the nature of the present experience.

How is mind in between thoughts?

And how is mind when thinking?

How is the experience when some emotions show and how is it when they are gone?

(long Pause)

And now, as we are breathing, again we can connect our in-breath with opening up with all of our receptivity. And we connect the out-breath to a sense of giving, to support, letting it flow. Breathing in and breathing out with compassion and love.

And first we take good care of ourselves. Compassionate care for ourselves with our difficulties.

And when we feel that we have deeply accepted ourselves, we feel that qualities of love and friendship have arrived in all cells of our body. And then the next step comes.

We can invite some challenge that we could face today and imagine the situation or the person and continue breathing as we let the situation become apparent in our mind. Any situation that might be a challenge for us, in our present life.

What is really the issue, what is really the challenge in this situation? What do I need to open to? And what kind of support is needed? What kind of understanding, what kind of attitude is needed?

As we breathe in, we open up and develop understanding. As we breathe out, from that understanding comes support. And we imagine how this situation gradually evolves and transforms with the understanding and support that it receives.

If there is a person in front, you can see them transforming. If it concerns ourselves, we can see ourselves transforming. We see how the person connects to their own qualities, how they brighten up, how the mind of awakening gradually installs itself in their own experience. The quality of trust.

And then to conclude we imagine that we meet this person, that we meet this challenging situation again. In this very body, maybe today, tomorrow, within the few next weeks. And we prepare ourselves by imagining how we could be, what attitude we could have in that situation.

(Bell and dedication)

LESSON 14: GURU YOGA CONTINUED

G 2016 (21)

“How to follow a spiritual teacher.”

This refers not to just any spiritual teacher, but to someone extremely qualified like the Karmapa or like Gendun Rinpoche.

“You should rely on a spiritual teacher by offering material things, honouring and serving him and by means of spiritual practice.”

The teacher takes care to have very few needs and desires so that the offering of material things is not actually meant for him personally, but so that something good can be done with these material offerings. Gendun Rinpoche once said: A spiritual teacher is like a dharma bank. So whatever offerings come in, they don't stay very long, but they are distributed for different purposes like for practice centres, to support practitioners, for translations, for helping sick people, whatever the master thinks is necessary, whatever dharma project seems to be the best. Nowadays we would call this a foundation. A teacher is a non-profit organisation walking on two feet.

“In particular do not give rise to wrong views, no matter what good or bad actions the teacher may display...”

To give you an example. I witnessed when a woman came to Gendun Rinpoche and said that although she was a nun, she could not stop drinking alcohol, she was dependent on alcohol, completely alcoholic. Then, Gendun Rinpoche went to his shrine and took out a bottle of rum which he used to fill the small kapalas of offerings on the shrine. And then he offered it to her and said: "Enjoy it! It has all my blessing." Someone witnessing this might have had all kinds of views and opinions about this. The fact is that she could never finish the bottle. She drank about a third or half of it, and then her desire for alcohol was gone. She didn't drink this all in one go, but every time she had desire, she drank a little bit and then she ended up by not having desire for alcohol any more, within a few days. And for all the time she remained in the monastery, she was free from the addiction to alcohol. Later, she had a relapse when she left the monastery and went back to her country.

This kind of wisdom in compassion sounds strange to us and you might quickly have opinions about this kind of behaviour. And it is not a good idea to imitate that ourselves. So let's not think too quickly with our own opinions about what a teacher with such quality is doing. There might be a benefit in that.

"rather increase your inspiration ever more."

Rather increase your wish to understand the functioning of an awakened mind ever more.

"You should see everything he does positively, thinking, the venerable teacher is acting like this in the interest of the character and the inclination of beings; his methods of guiding those to be tamed are inconceivable."

Such teachers can see the deep tendencies, the emotional patterns of those people they encounter. And they act not in accordance with what is the superficial outer situation, but with what the deeper needs of the situation are. Normally you cannot completely know and follow why exactly they behave like this.

For example, the attendant of the first three-year retreat in Le Bost came to Lama Gendun and said: "We have no more money. We only have the money to buy the food for this month and afterwards it will be finished. Soon we will have no more money to buy food for the retreatants, what shall we do?" Gendun Rinpoche said: "Use the rest of the money to start building a big stupa around which we can do walking meditation." It sounds like a crazy advice, right? But it worked. From then on, there was regular support coming in for the retreatants, people started developing more and more devotion for the dharma and the difficulty never came back for all the thirty years since then. This happened 1985-86 and the problems never came back since then. Always enough to eat.

Of course I cannot know all the motives involved, but Gendun Rinpoche could see that they were afraid of not having enough. So this fear had to be cured. This is one thing. Then he knew that the direction, the inspiration towards awakening had to be strengthened. And to create a place for walking meditation outside the retreat centre would allow people from outside the centre to also have a place of practice. And he knew that if practitioners take their very last money for a very positive action and dedicate it for

the benefit of all beings, this is a very positive force that will continue in the future. So all of this together already makes for good reasons why one would build a stupa instead of worrying. There is a basic Buddhist logic behind that: You don't have enough, so be more generous. This is very deep, if you consider this. But the kind of generosity asked for is not a self-interested generosity. It is not to be generous to those whom you love and not to be generous to those who are not your friends. It is not this kind of generosity. It is a generosity beneficial for the weak, for those who need to be protected, those who search for the dharma, search for deep healing insight. This kind of generosity that helps all.

When Trungpa Rinpoche was eighteen years old, he was still in Tibet when the Chinese invaded. He knew that the country was going to be overtaken. And he asked all his disciples to continue to build the walls of the new teaching hall until the last minute. Spend your energy on what is beneficial for the dharma until the last minute. He knew what was to stay with them was not the walls, but it was the positive energy created until the last possible minute to give all one's force and thoughts to dharma activity. It's crazy and it works. In a way, it is very wise, it is very deep wisdom.

It is like when you are going to leave a house, what are your plans up to the last day? Everything else is given up, and then if we give up our own strength, we are lost.

You will see masters or hear about masters giving such advice that we don't understand immediately, we will see them acting in ways we don't understand immediately. Give them a little space, don't judge too quickly.

“Take everything he says to be the truth, whatever order he gives, and even advise, which is given jokingly or while laughing.”

My experience with those teachers is that nothing they do, whatever joke they make is meaningless, because they have complete presence of mind. Even their jokes are the expression of great wisdom and compassion. But you can also ask. You don't have to just believe the joke, you can ask: Did you really mean it like this? And then you will hear the answer.

Some disciples fall into the opposite and they think they always have to do what the lama says jokingly. And this is completely wrong, because sometimes it is just joke.

Here the Karmapa tells us: remain flexible and open, try to understand. Perhaps ask if you don't understand. In this way, try to learn a maximum from a truly awakened teacher.

“ In brief, if he says about fire that it is water, or about a hat that it is a boot, you should think that it is unfailingly just like that.”

It is not that a teacher would not see that fire is fire. If he calls it water, it is for a special reason. When Gampopa put his boot on the head, it became a hat. From that moment on he referred to his felt boot as his hat because he had cold ears, that's all. Try to understand why a teacher calls that thing by this name. The teacher has a complete

presence of names, so it is not by accident, by mistake that this would happen. So remember that we are talking about a fully awakened teacher.

I have heard great teachers say: “Oh, don’t think I am perfect. I also make mistakes”. And we can ask. We are not obliged to have blind faith if we don’t know.

“ You should dedicate your life to carrying out whatever the teacher desires, if you have the possibility to do so with your body, speech, and mind.”

In translations you have a lot of “you should, you must” of what we thought was the Tibetan imperative. Actually, as I have recently learnt from a Tibetan scholar, it is more like a suggestion, not an order. So think that it is a suggestion of a teacher. What we read here are awakened suggestions: “You might fare well dedicating your life...”

Here, the possibility is explicitly mentioned. If you don’t have the possibility, then do what you can and don’t get stressed if you cannot do it. The rule of the game is: we always do our best.

“If you really are not capable of doing it, make sincere wishes to be able to accomplish it.”

This is a wonderful way of actually going in that direction. I can’t do it now, but I make sincere wishes that in the future, whenever the possibility comes up, I will be really able to do this and that, like go into retreat or translate the dharma or share the dharma with others or take care of the dying people, whatever the issue is. This transforms the energy into something really positive. Instead of having to say: No I can’t do it, you’ll say: Sorry, I can’t do it now, but I really wish to do it in the future. And here you are with a very positive energy directed towards a possibility in the future.

I remember that we had the first meeting of twelve dharma teachers and twelve psychotherapists in France. And I was walking with Jigme Rinpoche through the garden in the monastery and he said: ‘You should found an institute for Buddhist psychotherapy.’ And I said: ‘But Rinpoche, we are just beginning discussions; this is the first meeting’. And seven years later, we had the institute for Buddhist psychotherapy. You understand: Not blocking completely, not saying it is impossible even though you feel it is impossible, because right now it *is* impossible. If you say: well, if this is a good thing to do, maybe in the future it can happen. Then I even didn’t have to do it. My friend did it and I just had to say: ‘yes, OK, I’ll teach the dharma for the psychotherapists’. That’s all I needed to say.

“In the end you need to develop such natural devotion, that the teacher's mind and your mind mingle inseparably,”

Devotion means opening up so much in your aspiration and love for the teacher that you begin to feel the world in the same way.

And there is also a certain training involved. I have lived it with Lama Gendun. When I was a young teacher he was still alive and I had to take decisions about how to how to guide a student, how to teach and so on. And he really gave us confidence. But sometimes I really didn't know. So I went to see him with those questions I didn't know. And you come into the small room and already the mind opens and it begins to mingle a little bit with the teacher's presence. You don't feel so separate any more, there is an atmosphere of blessing and confidence. I will tell him for example: This and this is the situation in the retreat centre, and I'd ask him: What shall we do? And practically every time he would return the question to me and say: What would you do? What do you think is the best? then, in this atmosphere of having the teacher next to me, I would reflect and say: 'Well, maybe this and that would be helpful.' And then he would usually say: 'Yes, that's good, but did you also think of that and that?' And then he would add a dimension which I hadn't seen. So I would gradually learn to enlarge my vision and to tune in more and more with the teacher's vision of the situation and then I would go off and do what "we" (in inverted commas) had decided. And there were more and more situations when I felt completely in tune with him. He would come in and sit down a little bit when I was teaching. He would come into the situation, walk out of the situation, and it was completely easy; there was no tension. I would not hesitate the least bit or be shy, or short when he came in, I was just natural, the minds were together, working together.

What happens is that the teacher and the students both act in their devotion towards the benefit of all. Their devotion is directed towards the dharma and benefitting the situation. It is not a "I and you" situation, but we together for all sentient beings. It is like this and then it is very easy that their minds meet.

The teacher is the one who really knows and the student is the one who is learning, but who has the same potential. And this is very important for such a relationship.

Natural devotion can probably go much further than this, but this is how much I can tell about it from personal experience.

Then comes a very important sentence:

"Once a teacher has accepted you, you should not waste the instructions he has given you, but rather put them into practice energetically."

Energetically putting the advice into practice means: At once.

Basically, the sentence says: It would be a good idea to put the instructions into practice because otherwise the next time you meet your teacher, he or she will have to give the same instructions again. If we have practised in the meantime, there is no need to receive the same instructions, we can continue with the next step.

So we save the teacher's time by applying the instructions and coming back with how it worked on us and then we can continue.

“Seized by impermanence, you must make your essential endeavour to practice disgust with samsara, contentment, renunciation, pure vision, devotion, love, compassion, bodhichitta, and settling the question of the abiding nature.”

Seized by the understanding that life might be very short and that everything changes.

The Karmapa thinks that it is a good idea to give us now the common instructions of all teachers, this is what every teacher teaches: Reflect on change, impermanence and the impossibility of knowing the time of death. This reflection will give you a sense of urgency; that there is no time to lose.

Then, what’s the first thing to do? The first thing is to get out of the trap. This means disgust with samsara, to get out of the trap. What we call samsara is the world of clinging where we are imprisoned, where we are fettered or chained by our constant emotional reactions. We are completely predictable. You see the emotional tendencies of a person, maybe thirty or forty years old, and if that person doesn’t work on it, you know what kind of old person that will be, how sad, how alone, how much suffering there will be because the mechanisms repeat themselves. A good translation for samsara is vicious circle. Get out of the trap means: Get out of all the vicious circles that are repeating themselves. Actually “disgust” means to be completely fed up, I can’t stand it anymore. I am not seduced any more by my golden cage. I want to be free. Everything which is not freedom, I am just so fed up with.

And then there are some instructions on how to do that, just a few words:

“Contentment” is the opposite of always wanting more. Contentment cuts the chain of endless desires. To be content with what we already have. The body we have, the country we have, the possibilities, the mind we have. This is what I have, this is enough. This is what I’ll get enlightened with. If you see people with contentment, you’ll see they are happy. This is one of the major ingredients for happiness. People who are not content behave like hungry ghosts. Always needing something, always wanting more, never satisfied. Sometimes it’s too warm, sometimes it’s too cold, sometimes it’s too loud, sometimes it’s too silent, sometimes food is too salty, sometimes it is not enough salt, whatever. Try to go on a trekking tour with someone who is never content. Such a person can spoil the whole evening by complaining about the mosquitoes, whatever, there is always a reason. So contentment goes very deep. Can we be content with our lives just as it is, can we accept it?

“Renunciation”. A very unpopular word. To renounce everything that is harmful. That’s the definition. Am I willing to renounce what is harmful to myself? Am I willing to renounce what is harmful to others? This is the outer meaning. The inner meaning is: Am I willing to renounce my afflictive emotions? This means to give up clinging to my emotions, the emotions that create suffering for myself and others, not the joy and so on. Am I willing to give up my anger? And then the innermost meaning: Am I willing to give up useless thoughts, useless thinking? This is when realization comes really close to us. It is through dualistic thinking that we create the world of suffering. Renunciation means to give up the

foundation of what creates suffering. That is the way we think. Basically, the question is: Are we willing to change? Are we actually ready to be free? Renunciation of all those habits including the bad thinking habits. This is the foundation of dharma practice. It doesn't help to give up material wealth, it doesn't help to give up partnerships and relationships, the renunciation has to go on much more inner levels. In the partnership, in our relationship to money we have to give up harmful habits.

Student: How do you know which habits are harmful?

LT: It is important to you want to know, if you care about knowing what is harmful to yourself and others. We can always ask if we don't know. We can ask the person: Is it OK for you if I close the window? So first is the motivation: I want to know what is good for me and for others and what is harmful for me and others. If you behave like this, we come from 80% of not knowing to 2% of not knowing. we can reduce the area of not knowing incredibly by this interest of not wanting to harm and not wanting to unnecessarily upset others. We can reduce it so much. There still remains a little bit.

Secondly, we already know so much of what is not good for ourselves and others that we can do a lot already now if we let go of that which is not good for ourselves and not good for others. So there is a lot of practice already to be done. And once we have given up that, we see more clearly the rest of what we don't know now, because only when we give up the bad habits to be given up now, can we identify more clearly what comes afterwards. Wisdom is what knows what needs to be given up and compassion is what gives it up. If we have a problem with renunciation, we have a problem with wisdom and compassion.

So if you identify an area in your life where it is somehow difficult to follow your understanding, strengthen the wisdom and strengthen the compassion in that area. And then it will be possible.

And then look what the resistance is. Can it really be that I resist to giving up something that is harmful? It will only make my life more joyful. I am not losing anything except suffering! so look again: What is the misunderstanding? What is the lack of wisdom? Why do I think that it is a bad thing if I give up harmful ways of behaving, thinking, speaking? Where is the loss?

Maybe this is a residue of our education; from the church or from moral views that somehow it is not OK to be happy. We have to give up many things which make us happy and then, when we hear the word to renounce, we misunderstand. It is as if we were talking about giving up what makes us happy. No, no, enjoy life. enjoy music, enjoy dancing, enjoy sex, enjoy everything you like if there is no harm connected to it, it is fine, it is a path to awakening.

This has to be very, very clear. We are talking about a true renunciation, not this renunciation which is about things which are full of fun. But there is something in this. Otherwise it would not be difficult for you. You would just go with your wisdom and

compassion, and you would just enjoy. The more renunciation of harmful things there is, the happier we become.

Student: I think you have to accept that some of them are part of yourself, not be fighting all the time.

LT: They are not parts of ourselves. The misunderstanding is in the word "accept". We accept this as our working situation. Yes, I accept that I have this problem, I accept that I have this clinging, attachment, fear, whatever. But accepting doesn't mean it's good. It is like a person who accepts that she is sick. It doesn't mean that the sickness is good. I accept it as the working basis. Here, acceptance is the opposite of denial. So I admit, I accept: Yes, it is like this. And this is with which I will work. And I love myself as the sick person that I am. I have these problems and I work with them. They don't really belong to me. Like the illness is not really going to be there forever. Now it can be cured. I will do everything to get healthy. So emotionally speaking, we can describe the way to awakening as becoming more and more healthy or sane, like mental sanity.

To some degree we are identified with our bad habits and this is where the problem comes in. I just don't know who I will be when I don't watch football games anymore. I am OK with the games that are on in the time before I go to bed. But if they are so late, it is just not good for me and so on. So we have to find new ways of being with every habit which is not good for us. When we drop it, we have new opportunities and we can do it or we cannot do it, maybe, but we have to develop this other side. What do I do with myself, if I don't switch on TV? Most people in our civilisation would be lost if they were thrown back one hundred years and had to live without electricity, no telephone, no TV, no films, no photography, no light and all this entertainment we are now used to. Please think about it. There are many advantages, we agree to these developments, but the prison which they present is also very big. A lot of it is just imprisoning us, is not helping us anymore. So, for retreat practitioners, I am dedicated to turning back the clock and to living most of the time without these distractions. And we will use internet, life streaming or the telephone just for what it really serves, so that it is really at our service. It needs a lot of wisdom and compassion to put that into practice so that we are not servants of modern times or technology, but technology serves us.

Student: What about a partner who has different interests?

LT: Be true to yourself and find solutions, otherwise you will live with a lot of compromises, without ever being happy.

Do you see how we try not to confront the truth of what is actually true wisdom and compassion? We are twisting and trying to defend our habits. Basically, behind that is the fear of being alone, the fear of losing friends and partners, the fear of what others will think of us, whatever. Basically, that's behind it and makes it so difficult.

We all know that living together means compromise. We are all living a compromise in order to stay in this room. We compromise over the place where we sit, we compromise in

relation to the sun and the wind, we compromise over many things just to stay in one room together. But at some point, the compromise might go too far, it doesn't make sense anymore, especially when it becomes harmful. So, no compromise with what is harmful. That's the ground of dharma practice.

Then we can also make compromises with what is meaningless. Like football is meaningless. We can make it into something nice, being together. Sometimes it is boring, we can make it into a practice. Basically, the world could do fine without football. To put on lots of make-up, lipstick and so on is meaningless. But it's not harmful. You can do it; you can leave it. there is lots of space to play around with it.

But having pigs and cows in big slaughterhouses and being brought up under disrespectful conditions is harmful, it is not meaningless. So reflect on what is really harmful and give that up first. See what is not good for your own health, for your own path of liberation and awakening, and give up what is harmful to others, what creates suffering for them.

Then, with the meaningless things, see where you want to make compromises. Some of them just steal too much time. And then especially concentrate on what is beneficial. If you concentrate on what is beneficial, you don't have any more time for meaningless stuff. And if on one hand you take care of animals and on the other hand you eat them, it also doesn't make much sense. If someone is really intent on what is beneficial, then of course the basis of that is to abandon what is harmful. This is definitely the foundation. If we want to make this world better, we definitely first stop making it worse.

Gendun Rinpoche used to say: 'It is so easy to make a situation worse. Anyone can do it. And it is quite difficult to make a situation better. It needs a lot of wisdom and compassion.' But let's concentrate on at least not making it worse. And then our mind becomes clearer and then perhaps we can see how to make it better.

We will learn how to make it better with the next few words that are in the text.

G 2016 (22)

When Gendun Rinpoche talked about renunciation and contentment, he got away with it so easily! Somehow, when I talk about it, it always gives rise to a lot of discussion. It is probably because I am not so far in renunciation and contentment (laughing). The monastery of Gendun Rinpoche in Kham, in eastern Tibet, was called Kyodrak (tib. skyo-brag), the rock of disgust. Disgust with samsara.

"Pure vision" means to see the world with the eyes of the awakened masters. To see the world with deep wisdom and all-encompassing compassion.

"Devotion" (tib. mos-gus) is this complete openness towards bodhicitta, the mind of awakening. Mos(-pa) means aspiration and gus(-pa) means respect, so it is actually aspiration-respect. Deep aspiration for the dharma and respect for those who transmit the dharma.

“Love” is the attitude of mind which wishes for the happiness of all sentient beings. Nothing to do with sentimental love. Nothing to do with personal preferences. Love is the attitude of mind directed towards the utmost happiness of all sentient beings.

“Compassion” is the attitude of mind directed towards the liberation from suffering of all beings. They go together like the two sides of a coin. You cannot work for the benefit and happiness of beings without also working towards alleviating their suffering. actually, compassion and love are one. It is our own heart turned towards the well-being of all.

“Bodhicitta” is the heart-mind of awakening. It means that our practice of love, wisdom and compassion is not limited in time and number. However many sentient beings there are and however long it might take to guide them into awakening, it’s our aspiration to do exactly that. And to do that, we need to settle the question of the abiding nature, which can also be translated as:

“Developing certainty”. Developing absolute certainty in what the abiding nature of mind is, that nature which is always there (tib. gnas-lugs). This means to know the awakening experience, we need to know bodhi, the experience of awakening. When we know bodhi, we know how to help others; that is actually the whole point of it. We know the way out of samsara, and only when we know what is beyond samsara, then all the rest will be clear. When we know bodhi, the nature of mind, also called ground nature, abiding nature, then we know the very essence of dharma. We have the key to all dharma teachings. We know then why certain methods are helpful under certain circumstances. we know why the dharma is explained like this and not differently. Everything makes sense.

So this is the advice of the 9th Karmapa and is the principal teaching of all gurus, of all teachers.

“If a student does not put this into practice, he will only say, “Precious teacher, whatever you do and whatever you say is excellent,” as long as it corresponds to his own selfish wishes. But when the teacher gives an order in connection with the Dharma, which does not correspond to his ideas even slightly, he will make all kinds of resentful remarks.”

Basically he is saying: For as long as the dharma explanations are in harmony with my own opinions, I am happy. When the dharma teachings begin to conflict with my own opinions and wishes, then I will become angry.

As a teacher, I have to admit to you that I always need to have a kind of feeling for the group, of how much dharma they can take. The dharma is so radical that one has to find the right dose of what can be swallowed today.

We are part of society, so we have all of it inside us and we will have to deal with this. When we encounter the dharma, we have a lot of contradictory feelings., being attracted, being inspired, and then lots of doubts and rejection, and: “oh, this will never work”, there are beliefs. We need to work on it. This is part of the path.

When a student feels contradiction, then

“In the worst case he will leave because of his wrong views. In the intermediate case he will shirk from it, not really accepting it. The least serious would be asking to be excused and just becoming immersed in projects of this life.”

Here the advice is in accordance with the dharma. But If a teacher teaches something which is not in accord with the dharma, we should all leave the teacher.

For example, the nuns in Burma are not even allowed to go on the streets to beg. They have to wait for the offerings to be brought to them, which is a very difficult situation. Who thinks of someone whom they don't see? It is an incredible disadvantage as compared to the monks who can go out on the street and beg. The nunneries in Burma receive rice twice a week. They have to deal with that. The monks receive it every day. So there is big injustice. They don't receive the same teachings, they don't have access to meditation teachers, it is really a hard life to them.

We should encourage the nuns to walk out of the monasteries and to practise the dharma in a situation where they can receive everything and practise really the way they aspire to. That would be very wise and compassionate disobedience.

Let's come back to the subject here; that the suggestions, the wishes or orders of the teacher are in accordance with the dharma, completely in accordance. But with our emotional beliefs, opinions and so on, there is conflict. Then how do we react? If we come into such a situation, ask the teacher. Ask for a personal interview, verify your question, try to understand. You don't have to do what the teacher say, but give some space for inquiry and say: 'Maybe I don't understand that. Can you help me to maybe understand better?' That's the good way to do it.

If the person just sticks to his or her own views and keeps an angry attitude towards the teacher,

“If this person says that he is staying in solitary places (on retreat), he will end up having more desires than others, because his mind has not turned to the Dharma, and he has not abandoned the eight worldly concerns. Having many faults, he is not a suitable recipient for the Dharma teachings and cannot be considered to be a student”

This can happen even to retreatants. Your retreat teacher tells you something and inside you cannot accept. One continues one's practice, but one is not clear. One has one's own opinions and one is not investigating. One is in conflict and following one's own opinions. In this case, one's own opinions are connected with the eight worldly dharmas, the eight worldly concerns: (1) The wish for gain and (2) to avoid loss; (3) the wish for fame, to become renowned, and (4) to avoid infamy; (5) the wish for praise and (6) to avoid being criticised; (7) the wish for worldly forms of happiness and (8) the wish to avoid suffering, difficulties.

“ A teacher must have some of the characteristics mentioned earlier. He should not be involved in lying and deceit and never engage those connected to him in unwholesome actions, but rather guide them in the genuine practice of Dharma and sow the seed of liberation in them. ”

There are passages in the dharma instructions where you can read that if a teacher instructs you to do something unwholesome you should not obey, you should not follow. So always have a look whether the teaching and behaviour is encouraging liberation and awakening or not.

“A teacher who does not have these characteristics, but who is inflated with pride, boasting with his learning, discipline and goodness, having contempt for all others, who is self-opinionated and is quickly euphoric or despairing at the slightest up and down, is not beneficial for the teaching of the Buddha and should be treated with indifference. Sakya Pandita: "Stay indifferent toward someone, even if it is a teacher, who does not act in accord with the teaching of the Buddha: ”

Treat with indifference means that you don't even have to fight with this teacher, you just leave the teacher and don't waste your time with that. Simple. No attachment, no aversion.

“However, it is taught in the tradition of the precious Kagyu lineage, that even a teacher who is an ordinary person in bondage, can display the acts of a buddha, if a student offers the devotion to him as a real buddha. Because, in order to take care of this faithful student, all the buddhas will bestow on this teacher the blessing of their body, speech, and mind. ”

A teacher who is not realised, who is still bounded by emotional patterns, even with such an ordinary teacher there can be miracles. Because of the great openness and devotion of the students and the openness also of that not-yet realised teacher, something fantastic can happen which is just like the Buddha being in front of you.

Then, in the next sentence, the Karmapa shows us a way out because the living teachers - my God, we don't know how they really are. Actually, we say in the Tibetan tradition: You don't know how a master really was before he is dead. First one has to finish the story to see if really, from beginning to end, this was a good person and a good teacher. No scandals. The Karmapa writes:

“If you have devotion and confidence to any of the former Kagyu teachers he will become your root teacher, and you can certainly receive his blessing. ”

And I tell you, it really works. Take any of the fully awakened teachers as your personal guide - it works. You might hear the life story of one of these awakened saints and you feel so inspired - go with that inspiration, open your heart and develop a very alive relationship with that guru. Of course he is not (physically) alive any more, but he is still alive because he is in your mind.

And they give you an open secret of how you can understand dharma texts. If you have a dharma text of a completely awakened teacher like for example Wangchuk Dorje, the 9th Karmapa. Then, if you want to understand that text, pray to the author. If you want to

understand the Pali canon, pray to the Buddha. If you want to understand the songs of Milarepa, pray to Milarepa. If you want to understand the teachings of Chöd, pray to Machigma. If you want to understand the Yidam practice of Tara, pray to Tara. If you want to understand the practice of Chenresig, pray to Chenresig. It is so easy. Just go to the source, pray to the source directly and everything will open. You can understand everything. Always go to the source and everything will open up. There is nothing hidden. It is all there for us. We have everything in our hands and the key to unlock it is devotion, is prayer, is sincere openness to understanding deeper beyond our opinions, our prejudices and beyond our beliefs. Just open up to what is beyond. And you can certainly receive their blessings, all of them.

“The masters Gampopa, Dusum Khyenpa, Karma Pakshi, Shang Yudragpa, Götsangpa and others have said: “You do not need the word transmission, for the real transmission you can directly follow me.”

You do not need to be in front of the teacher to hear their words, for the real transmission you can relate directly to me. Several teachers have died saying this. Milarepa said: “If you pray to me, I will be there for you. You can rely on that. it is a promise.” He said this just before dying.

Question of the translator: What did Milarepa say exactly?

Answer: “Now when I die, if you have questions, just turn to me, I will be there for you. My blessings are sure to be with you.”

And I have experienced that.

“Considering the teacher in whom you have confidence your root teacher and praying to him, it is certain that through the force of blessing, the primordial awareness of mahamudra, which is like a clear, cloudless sky, will quickly arise in your mind stream. Therefore you should practice the guru yoga, fully aware of the benefits of practicing it, and the disadvantages of not practicing it.”

For me, the most difficult thing in the guru yoga was that I had to learn to pray again. I had stopped praying because I was so disappointed with what I had experienced in the earlier part of my life and I had to learn to pray again. This was the most difficult thing. And anyhow, for a proud person it is always difficult to pray. Still today, I am shy about praying. I am not the kind of person who takes a whole group and generates the energy of prayer. I used to do that in early years of my teaching. I am still a bit shy because I know you also very often have some difficult story with your upbringing. You might not be used to praying so much. But in secret, I pray a lot. And that’s why things go well.

Student: I ask questions and I get answers, but I don’t know who I am addressing and from whom the answer comes.

LT: Yes, you know it is like a big family up there, you never know who picks up the phone (laughter).

I'll tell you a story about Gendun Rinpoche when someone else picked up the phone. He lived in northern India for ten years in retreat in a town called Kalimpong. Kalimpong is the part of India just south of Sikkim, just below the border to Sikkim. And he was a retreatant in a house, not going out into the town. And there was a big drought for three years, there had been no rain whatsoever. And people had turned to the shamans to make rain, they had turned to the local masters to make rain and so on. Nothing helped. Then they said: Well, there is this Buddhist master in retreat, one doesn't see him, but one hears a lot of good because Gendun Rinpoche was healing people and so on. So they sent a delegation of three people to him to ask him: Can you help us with making rain? Gendun Rinpoche replied: "No, I cannot help you, but I can make prayers for you and I will make offerings to ask the buddhas to help." And he made a tormo and he made a ritual and he prayed intensely to Milarepa to help, because he had a strong connection to Milarepa. It was a kind of Milarepa guru yoga that he was practising. And he said: 'As I was getting up to throw out the tormo through the window, I saw in the distance that a cloud was forming, oh, that must be the blessing of Milarepa! And then the cloud was coming closer and closer, and then on the cloud there was a white lion and there was Marpa riding on the white lion. And then Gendun Rinpoche was so overwhelmed, he fell flat on his back and fainted. And when he came back to senses and looked out of the window, a fine rain had started, not stopping for three days. And then the draught had finished. But somehow it was Marpa who picked up the phone and not Milarepa.

Meditation

Just completely relax. Certainly no stress at all. There were a lot of words. I hope it was a rainfall of words, full of blessings, but if not, just let it pass (laughing).

No need to think about anything.

(Dedication)

LESSON 46 CONTINUED

G 2016 (23)

Meditation

Let your mind be wide open. the eyes as well: Wide open. Sit really straight so that your mind is as fresh as possible.

First, to start with, meditate like a samurai, entering a battle ground. Full awareness in all directions.

Completely open senses. Then you relax the belly. You ground yourself in the barlung practice, looking at the world from the belly. No thinking, only awareness.

How is the mind when not thinking?

(Bell)

When you look, you don't need time. Mind is always there. Now, look again? How is the mind when not thinking? Then think: How is the mind when thinking? Produce some conceptual thinking and compare: when there is some conceptual thinking and when there is not. What's the difference?

I'll continue with the book:

“If the student says that when he is examining the nonconceptual state of mind, there is nothing besides just that abiding, he has not experienced intuitive insight and should be told to continue his inquiry for some more days.”

The student here had said that there is just abiding. When you look at the mind when it is not involved in the thinking processes, is it just abiding, i.e. resting, staying? What more is there?

Student: There is a vibrating, there is space and the body is also like part of all the space. And then it is very clear, there is also some kind of lights of sorts.

LT: What kind of light?

Student: It is difficult to describe.

LT: We take it like this: There is some light difficult to describe. Look again next time, how is it with the light of the mind?

“If the student states that there is an utter nothingness, which cannot be grasped in the least, he has only seen a partial aspect but not all of it. Therefore he should inquire again without distraction in order to become certain whether it is really just an utter nothingness or what exactly the emptiness is like.”

If you just felt that nothing whatsoever is there, then check again.

“If the student explains that there is a vividly clear, bare consciousness that is ungraspable, but without a thought that this is the seeing of the invisible; that there is a certainty, even though he could not put his finger on it by saying that this is it; and if he says that the calm mind dwells in a state of emptiness, but that he experiences a pure clarity that is ungraspable and impossible to express in words—then, if it turns out on probing interrogation that it is only theoretical knowledge, he will not be able to progress. But if he speaks from personal experience, he will have an unshakable certainty, and he has experienced intuitive insight while in the state of mental calm.”

Our student above seems to talk from personal experience. (She affirms). But you don't have certainty yet. So you need to go more often into the state of mental calm so that you can speak from certainty and be really sure about how the mind is when nothing happens.

so, look again and again, how this is with this light and this clarity. You are on the right track, but don't repeat words you have heard somewhere. Look how it is really, personally.

“If the student comes up with nonsensical talk when he is supposed to investigate in order to find out where the mind arises and where it vanishes, it is a sign that he has not understood anything.”

Now, if you leave aside all you have learnt and so on, and when someone says: “the mind is empty”, is there something in your experience so that you would describe the mind as empty? Is there something like this in your experience? How would you describe that? Does someone want to try?

Student: I have observed two different cases. One is that the mind is so filled with thoughts that I perceived it as if it were empty, but in reality it was completely full, so I could not evaluate it in the situation. And when this is reversed and the mind is calming down, then I can get a sense of how the mind is when settled naturally, not empty.

LT: OK, in the first case when there were so many thinking processes going on, say, like when the mind is full, which aspect is it then that you say that the mind is empty? When the mind has so much thinking, in which way is the mind empty?

Student: It is a feeling.

LT: Feeling empty of what?

Student: Empty of a focus.

LT: Yes, this is like the mind goes all over, the thinking goes all over and there is no focus. In this way one could also say: ‘Yes, no focus is like empty of direction and no meaning, like this.’

The definition in Buddhism of this word “empty” is empty of self. Did you perceive this in the active state? There is a possibility. If you have a very active mind like this, that you understand that nothing of what arises has any substance. Everything that happens is empty of substance, solidity. it is just coming, coming, coming, you don't even see the going. And yes, in a way, you can call that empty. Ungraspable. Nothing can be grasped. And this is something that one can see easily with a very active mind.

Now, when your mind calms down, the second case, could you then find there is a focus and that it is not empty or was it still empty?

Student: In the second case, the mind just was.

LT: Were you able to see the mind, to feel the mind?

Student: There was the sense of an endless potential.

LT: To go further, explore that. Explore the sense of an endless potential. How is it exactly? Actually, you are very close to it. So explore this open sphere of potentiality further, when mind is active and when mind is calm. How is that?

Answers to various students:

When you understand that in the active mind, it is all open potentiality and there is no grasping, then all confusion will go. There will be no confusion left.

When you have a slowly growing trust in that everything is self-liberating, that we don't need to do anything, when this trust grows more, until there is complete certainty, there will be no more grasping in that state of shamatha.

There can be fascination with the experience. In order to dissolve that, turn your attention to the one who is experiencing this. Who feels disgrace, who feels this coming and going, who feels the blessing? See if you can find something. There is a strong sense of: "I have had the experiences." This is a very typical sign of the experiences in the state of mental calm. There is no insight so far, there is a clinging to the experience. This you have to dissolve. So to go further, all these experiences of clarity, of bliss and also of ego-dissolution - this is part of the nonconceptual experience - they all will appear. So what you call cosmic sound is basically just an experience of the inner energies. For as long as there is clinging to it, it will not evolve. You are stuck with those beautiful experiences. The best is if you look into this no-one. Look into who is this one, turn away from the experience into looking into who is the one experiencing, who is the one who is clinging to this?

This is for everyone. When you listen to these experiences, you can very clearly perceive that they are described from the perspectives of a self. And this is the normal perspective of experiences in mental calm. There are different ways to dissolve that. But here, the best way is to look at the so-called self, this feeling of the one having an experience. That's the first learning of taking the mind away from the experience because that's where the greatest grasping is, the greatest attachment, identification.

In the shamatha experiences we are already so much freer than in the ordinary clinging world. It is an increasing realm of freedom, but it is not the complete freedom we are talking about. Some experiences of shamatha are so strong that people think, when they have them, that they are completely free, that this is enlightenment. So the sense of being free is in itself not a sure sign. It is relative to what one has experienced before.

"If the student declares that the mind is not at all something that is arising and vanishing, the teacher should ask him whether he is thinking at that moment that it is like this. If the student affirms, he should be told to examine the thinking itself. If he replies that there is no thinking that it is like this, but that there is a consciousness which is without arising and vanishing, he has experienced intuitive insight while in a nonconceptual state. This is pointed out to him to be the meaning of dharmakaya, the unity of awareness and emptiness."

This can be applied to any time when the student says that the mind is like this or is not like this. As teachers we need to have the capacity to distinguish if an answer comes from a direct nonconceptual experience or a conceptual thinking about anything. In case it comes from a direct nonconceptual experience it is good to point out to the student that this is the dharmakaya.

“If at the time the student is told to examine thoughts, he utters the well-sounding phrase that thoughts are empty, neither arising nor vanishing, he is telling lies. If he says that by examining them, the thoughts are vanishing not leaving a trace, he has had a little experience.”

How is it with thoughts? Do they arise?

Student: When I had gone into the state of deep peace and there was no thoughts, then I was aware that there had been a thought, but I had not seen a content of the thought. I just was aware that this thought was no longer there. So I wondered if I was just not being careful enough in not noticing or was I lacking interest? My mind said that it was just a movement. Should I go back and see what that thought was or should I just relax? Was I sleepy, was I really there?

LT: Very good, I know the experience. So what happened is that you went into really deep peace, like really sitting at the banks of a really quiet lake. And then you noticed that there was a movement, like you had not been looking and there was a fish jumping up and down and disappearing under the surface of the water, but your attention was not there. This comes from enjoying the peace so much that you are not fully aware of all the movements. Of course you don't go and search for the fish afterwards. But your peaceful awareness can become a little bit more open and more receptive to take in the little movements, tiny movements from time to time. But take your time because now you are enjoying it so much and you find big relief in this peaceful state. So it is like resting for a while until you find more freshness and you will open up more to explore this state. Just relax more into that state and it will become even more clear. Now the peaceful experience is dominating, there is a little lack of clarity and fluidity.

Student: Thoughts are like interruptions. I can't feel the formation, I don't know where they come from, just suddenly something is there and then it passes and then something else will come.

LT: Look really closely. Do you see the passing of the thoughts? What happens when you don't pay attention anymore?

Student: It is not there.

LT: There is no going away. And if you have several so-called thoughts, how is that?

Student: If one leads into another, if I focus a bit longer...

LT: As you focus on it a little bit longer, are you focusing on one and the same thought or is it changing while you focus on it?

Student: It is kind of evolving, it is not the same thing.

LT: Right, so what we call one thought is actually an evolving process. we cannot have one thought. It is always process.

Think now of anything you like, whatever, say ice-cream (laughter). It is a dynamic process. It is not a stable thought. We are maintaining a process of thinking about ice-cream and as we are thinking about it, it changes a little bit.

Actually, we always say: I had many thoughts, but what's a thought? actually, when you really look, there is only a process of thinking. I had a thought of my grandmother. It was not a single thought that I could identify, but there is a short process of thinking about my grandmother in a very particular context, with certain feelings attached to it and so on. So it is not a well-defined thought, it is a process of thinking with images, with feelings, with names, all kinds of them. There were so many thinking processes involved in what you call one thought.

Question: Am I not just triggered when I see a red car?

Answer: Before you see a red car, how many thought processes have taken place? Do you understand? To compare red with other colours, to define the shape and compare with other shapes. There are so many thinking processes and we think: I had the thought of a red car. No, I didn't see a red car. I saw some colours, configurating them into shapes, compared that with other experiences and, and, and... at the end of that, in a very quick succession, there was a red car.

There is no vanishing, you don't see the thinking going away. Thinking changes into something else. There is no going away and the next coming. It just that the present thinking evolves, evolves and evolves all the time. There is no static moment where thinking doesn't evolve. When we say that thoughts are arising and vanishing, it is just bullshit. When thoughts are arising and vanishing, there is no arising of a thought. It is not like the sun rising in the morning, coming out of the sea and clearing arising - oh, then I have the thought. And before that, this thought is slowly forming.

Question: Isn't the thinking of a thought and the arising of a thought the same thing?

Answer: There is not the thinking of a thought, there is only thinking. There is only continuous thinking and if you want to put it like that; there is continuous arising, but not of a thought. The point I'd like to make is that there are no thoughts. There is not the birth of

a thought and the death of a thought, the arising and the vanishing. It is just processes. Investigate into that, look into that until you become sure.

Question: When the mind is calm?

Answer: Then there is less thinking and sometimes there is no thinking. And when there is like this little movement, there was a not completely perceived process taking place.

It is just like I can't talk about a sound: There is not a sound. When you look what people call a sound, it's a process of hearing, many waves over time. They call it a sound, but actually there is the experience of hearing and there is a continuous evolution of sounds.

Look at the sound of a singing bowl. We call it a sound but there are so many sounds: Higher, lower, in between. So many layers of hearing experiences, getting stronger, getting less. This is 'sound-ing', not the sound. It is the same with thinking. There is not the thought, there is thinking. Investigate, you don't have to believe me, look into your meditation!

Question: If there is no beginning, middle and end to a thought, then how can we meditate in between thoughts?

Answer: Yes. when the thinking stops. There is process, and there are other processes. Some processes come to an end and others start. You can see the beginning of a process of thinking and the end of a process of thinking, but in between you cannot tell me how many thoughts there are. They are not separate one from the other, just like in the continuing sound of a singing bowl, there is no separation in between them. There is just the sounding of the bowl.

Now, let's see why this is so important: Because this describes all of our life. We say: I had such an anger; my pride; my desire. It would be correct to say: 'My desiring, my process of being angry'. There is not one anger. Hatred is not one hatred, there is a whole process, continuously changing shapes of being full of hatred; differently. Because of the whole way our language is structured, we believe that there are things. But there are only processes. And this is very important because everything can change, everything is changing. It doesn't exist as something that you can grasp.

Where is the mind? There is only 'mind-ing'. And there is no thought, there is no emotion, there is no mind. There are only processes. There is no "I", no 'self', no 'awareness', no 'buddha-hood'. There is 'self-ing', there is 'aware-ing', there is this being completely free and awakened. Do you understand that this is not only playing with words? It is a completely different world of vision of what we are experiencing. We are ourselves an interactive process, interacting constantly in a moving universe. Everything, everything is in movement. All is process, process all the time.

Question: What does time mean?

Answer: Time is a very abstract word. It is like if you were telling me that there is 'love'. Time is just change, process. Look for yourself. Now you are just trying to semantically explore reality. Look how it is. Do not play with words.

Question: Can anybody live without thinking?

Answer: Why should we? Yes, there can be lapses of time without these thinking processes. Yes of course, you can spend long times in that. Just because thinking stops, the breathing doesn't stop, the heartbeat doesn't stop, it continues. In addition, we haven't explored all the processes of thinking enough to make a good answer because there are also nonconceptual thinking processes. Before the conceptual thinking processes appear, there is so much nonconceptual thinking! Like the example of the red car. The red car is the concept. And there are hundreds of nonconceptual processes which lead up to the name; which is the concept. And of course you can function without the naming.

When we come up with an idea, there is a nonconceptual process which perceives the idea, the final conceptual thinking process.

Investigate. This is very important because it takes away the solidity from all our projections, this world of emotions, nothing is solid, nothing has substance. This is really about emptiness, the so-called emptiness, the absence of solidity that we are talking about now.

Question: Are dreams part of the thinking process?

Answer: Dreaming is a form of thinking, yes. In dreaming, there is hearing, feeling and so on, all the sensory activities are involved in dreaming. Sometimes there is conceptual activity in dreams. It is not only conceptual thinking, there is a lot of nonconceptual movements. Actually this word of thinking is difficult because we are talking about a whole lot of various movements in the mind. Like now, when we are looking at each other and understand each other, there are a lot of nonconceptual mental movements going on. Some of it becomes concepts.

The dynamic aspect of mind never stops, but for example in the clear light experience of deep sleep, when it is dwelling in clarity, it doesn't produce any content. There is no sensory experience produced, no concepts, there is nothing, but there is a dynamic of mind. But you wouldn't call this thinking, this is completely free from any form of thinking.

G 2016 (25) **Meditation: Joy at Being Aware and Inviting Challenges**

Let's again connect to our refuge, the qualities of awakening, with the inner decision: 'Yes, today I will put my energy in that direction. And I know it does not come so much from the "I", the 'me'. So I open up to the blessing, for the spontaneous unfolding of these qualities.

(Recitation)

And the refuge dissolves into us and we let the Buddha, the awakened qualities meditate.

If you wish, take the breathing as your central point of attention. Breathing in and breathing out as the symbols of compassion and love.

Breathing in, there is deep acceptance, opening up. And breathing out we let it flow, we offer our support to ourselves and others.

As you practise this, find ways to relax everything that creates tension and stress. Opening up, accepting, flowing, is not something that needs effort. You can even imagine that a buddha in your heart is doing it, so to speak.

And if you can relax into more and more awareness. opening up to the very fresh and alive quality of your mind.

If you feel a little bit of joy at being aware, give energy to that joy, it will lead you into more and more awareness.

A vivid awareness, clear, receptive, is the greatest gift, the greatest present we can have.

(Bell)

Now in the next fifteen minutes, we can do the same as yesterday and connect our practice with a particular challenge in our life. We choose a person or a situation which is particularly challenging to us. We let this situation, or this person, appear very clearly in our mind, in our imagination. We let it arise in our mind, and first of all we just completely feel it. We feel what is so difficult and we look for the causes of what is so difficult. And we continue breathing just like before, opening up and letting it flow, not trying to change anything.

(Bell)

Inwardly it is like saying: Yes, I am willing to face this challenge. Yes, I am willing to work with that. I will take it as my dharma practice.

Then I ask myself: What do I need in this situation? what are the qualities needed from my own side? And breathing in and breathing out, I imagine that these qualities are stimulated in my being. I feel the courage, the openness that is needed, perhaps the sensitivity, the compassion, perhaps the wisdom.

And if needed, I feel the presence of the buddha in myself. It can be a light sphere in the heart where a buddha is sitting.

And then I ask the person in front or the situation: What do you need? And I listen very carefully to the person or to the situation as a whole.

And I connect with the qualities in my own being and see what it is possible to offer in that situation and to that person. I imagine that I say the words, that I behave in such a way that the needs of the person and the situation are met. And I find ways of doing this while remaining completely authentic. I am completely human, I don't need to be a special person, but I am open and sensitive and I am willing to support.

I imagine how the person can receive the support, how the person feels understood and how the situation develops in a good way. And I imagine that I continue until the situation is really resolved, until the end, until the person really feels accepted, understood, supported and that the tension is gone. The importance here is not to go halfway; to go all the way with this exchange or with this challenge.

In the old texts it says: I dare to imagine that everything turns out perfect. So much so that I see the Buddha in myself and in all other people involved.

Imagine that the situation or the exchange comes to a good point of closure.

And when you have reached that point of closure, look back again into which qualities are needed in our own being to come to such a good conclusion.

And trust yourself that you will be able to stimulate them again and again. And then let everything dissolve.

(Bell and dedication)

G 2016 (26) Discussing the Meditation on Meeting Challenges

First we let a challenging situation come to our mind, the best would be the most challenging of the day we are just starting.

And often it is connected with people. It can be a partner, it can be someone at work, maybe someone we need to fire or someone who wants to fire us - whatever the situation is.

But it can also be a situation. like I have 150 emails waiting and I have so much resistance, I don't know how to deal with that.

The second step is not to do anything, just breathing. And this is where you need the training in breathing, with opening up, being receptive and breathing out giving support to the situation without any intention right now. During that time you are actually feeling into the challenge. That's what is happening. There is a contact and the situation becomes felt, you get the emotional challenge of it, you begin to really be in contact with it.

And then the next step is turning to ourselves: What do I need in order to face the challenge? Here then comes an answer: Maybe I need courage? Maybe I need patience? or I need more understanding. There come inner answers to this.

So this challenging situation is still there and I am taking care of myself and I feel: What kind of patience would I need? What kind of courage would I need? You make it more precise. What kind of understanding would I need? It is the inner lama who is doing the work. It is the wise and compassionate side of ourselves who is doing this work. In psychotherapy we can also call it our true self that is doing the work.

If we feel weak in this, if we feel that we don't have enough strength in this, then the Tibetan tradition suggests visualising a uddha in our heart: A light sphere as big as your hand and inside sits a buddha. it is the buddha who is opening up to the challenge and sending the support into all the cells of our body, into all of our organism. So if you feel that it is not happening out of your own natural force, then enhance this by visualising the presence of a buddha in your heart.

So you see the intelligent way here is that we don't go directly into the challenge, but we really take care of ourselves, we properly root ourselves in the qualities. And only when we feel that the qualities have become active in us, then we meet the challenge.

The next step is to ask the person(s) in front: What do you need, what does each of the persons involved need, how would they feel best understood, and what kind of attitude do they need, where do they need to be supported?

Here is a point where some of the practitioners go wrong because they then change into something like a superman or superwoman. they imagine themselves being able to do everything. And this is where one has to be realistic and authentic. so go step by step and see what feels realistic and authentic, what you can give truly, connected with your qualities.

For example with a person, what happens usually is that a kind of dialogue comes about. I imagine there is a kind of dialogue that comes about, I imagine what kind of sentences, what kind of attitude is good, what kind of questions are necessary to ask. And I also imagine the difficulties that will arise. Maybe the person will become angry, maybe the person will become sad, etc.... I imagine the possible reactions of the person.

And how will I react then? I imagine from within the qualities how it will be to take care of that situation. If I have, for example, my 150 emails in front of me, realistically I imagine that after the ten first emails I get tired. How will I deal with that? And how much time will I realistically need for that? I cannot plan to do it all-in-once, so I have to maybe face some difficult issues in the things I need to do, so how will I deal with that when the difficult points arise. Like this I go through the situation, really imagining what are the concrete points. And each time when I don't know, I breathe. Breathing in, breathing out in the same good old way that we have been practising up to now, until I get a clearer feeling of what would be helpful, of how I could deal with the situation.

And then the Tibetan tradition insists as the next step, that we see a change. We have to visualise success. We have to visualise and imagine that our new way of dealing with the situation brings about a change and we visualise the change in ourselves and in the other person. The person is becoming brighter, is connecting with his own buddha quality, as we ourselves remain open and loving and we find ways to relax so we can see the transformation.

So the buddha in our heart stimulates our own bodhicitta, our bodhicitta stimulates the buddha potential in the other person and we see the person coming into his full potential as if the person were becoming a buddha.

And it is the same with my challenging situation. I visualise the diminishing number of emails, I remain relaxed as I am doing it and maybe I am taking joy in doing a good job. I imagine how every email is for me a moment of satisfaction and joy as a good work being done. It is like going really into the details of doing it well, whatever the challenge is.

Here, you will touch some limits of your own doubts. You might touch limits where it says inside of you: 'No, it can never happen.' Actually, stay there and be careful to continue breathing and open the door for the almost impossible. This is something that one knows nowadays to be extremely helpful. It is the curative power of a healing vision. It is good if you can use that to even stimulate your own potential more. If you stay with the doubts, you are actually diminishing your own capacity to change the situation. But it does not mean becoming unrealistic. It is difficult, there is a challenge. However, there is a possibility.

An example: if we are struck by cancer and we have already had our three chemotherapies and nothing has finally worked, there are metastases all over, then in our inner vision we would develop a vision of how it is to die happily and how it is to live happily. If there is still a miraculous cure, it is possible, it happens, you should not exclude the possibility. But both visions are without grasping. You don't grasp to a personal idea of how it must be. You open up the field of possibilities and this is what deeply relaxes the organism and see free the healing powers and the powers of bodhicitta. This attitude is expressed in this famous prayer quoted in the Lojong mind training:

"If it is good for me and for all sentient beings that I die, please grant the blessing that I die.

If it is good for me and for all sentient beings that I live, please grant the blessing that I live.

If it is good for me and for all sentient beings that I become completely healthy, please grant the blessing that I become completely healthy.

If it is good for me and for all sentient beings that I be sick, please grant the blessing that I be sick.”

There is a deep wisdom in that. Only if we open up to all the possibilities, we prepare for all of them and we happily live all of them, then the tension goes out of our system.

This was a little additional teaching on why we visualise that things go well. And we prepare ourselves.

If I am going to be fired from my job today, then I prepare myself how I can be fired happily. And make it the best moment of my life. Do you understand? It is a very helpful way to prepare ourselves for challenges.

Then at the end we visualise that we come to a point of conclusion, that the situation is finished, it is done and it is well-done. This coming to a point of closure is a very important discipline in these kinds of imaginative workings because some of us have a tendency to never finish. We have to finish the story.

The next step was to go back to the beginning and say: And which qualities did I need in order to finish the story like that? And I now I'll do everything to remember stimulating those qualities as I will enter the challenge in real life. I will have to remember that. Whenever I don't know what to do, I breathe in and I breathe out, connecting to the qualities.

And then dissolve everything and we rest normally.

Question: How do I learn to pray?

Answer: Do it like making a telephone call. Make a call to the buddhas. Talk with them. That's all. Yes, everyone can do it. Call to a person with all the qualities of a buddha, completely benevolent, just like that, from your heart.

Please, this is not a simplistic answer, it is really how it is. I have seen great masters praying like this, very simply. Putting their hands together, directing their minds to the Buddhas and saying: Listen Buddhas, I need your help here. Something is needed, please open my mind, please with this and that. Just talking like this.

And then, for the more elaborate prayers, you have many examples which you can read. Many examples of prayers in the different texts, you can inspire yourself from this. But

there is no need for any form of ritual. You should know that prayer works better when you commit yourself to do everything necessary for this to happen.

So when we pray, say, for our own awakening, then along with this prayer the commitment goes to do everything necessary to realise the nature of mind. Buddhist prayer always goes together with commitment. We commit ourselves to the necessary action. It is not just receptive, or you can even say passive, but it is a path of action, a path of aspiration (tib. smon-lam).

You connect to that dimension which is not 'self', which is not the "I". Sometimes it takes me a day or two of breathing with a problem, a challenge, and waiting until everything becomes clear. I am not doing it continuously, but come back again and again, I breathe with the question, with the challenge, with the thing to resolve. And I let the answer come from the other dimension. And when it comes, I know it and I act. Maybe it is important to mention that it is not in one session that big challenges are resolved even in the inner vision. You might have to come back to it again and again. Especially if it is partnership problems, you will have to come back to it again and again, always anew and developing.

The idea is not that the situation has to evolve according to our wishes. It is that it becomes good, satisfactory. But maybe not according to our wishes. We always give ourselves, as the Tibetans would say, into the hands of the Buddhas, into some higher wisdom. This is the basic assumption: I don't really know what is best. If this is really for the benefit of all, then may it happen. We open up. I am willing to learn from any other development just as well. If it develops differently, I go along with that.

So we don't have a fixed idea of how it has to become and then we are compassionate bulldozers going into that direction. No. we have an open idea of how it could be and we remain receptive the whole way and see what is really needed and adapt ourselves to the situation. No clinging to how it must be. Leave it open, always in the process.

LESSON 15: THE PRACTICE OF GURU YOGA

G 2016 (27)

“Arouse the bodhichitta, thinking, "I shall obtain the state of unsurpassable buddhahood for the sake of all living beings, my former mothers. For this purpose I meditate and practice the guru yoga: 'With Om svabhava... everything is purified.'”

With the OM SVABHAVA-Mantra everything is purified from the clinging to true existence. The mantra means: “The essential nature of all phenomena is pure, and so is my own essential nature.” Pure means that, in essence, it is the nature of mind, there is no substance, it is empty. With this mantra at the beginning of the practice we remind ourselves to letting go all clinging to substantial reality.

“In the state of emptiness Arouse the bodhichitta, thinking, “I shall obtain the state of unsurpassable buddhahood for the sake of all living beings, my former mothers. For this purpose I meditate and practice the guru yoga:’ With Om svabhava... everything is purified.” -

This means in the state of complete letting go of substantial reality.

“In the state of emptiness visualize yourself in the form of any yidam you wish, complete with its palace and seat, like a cloud appearing in the sky, or visualize it complete in an instant.”

The classical yidam here is to visualise oneself in the form of Vajrayogini, Dorje Phagmo. We can let Vajrayogini appear step by step, from the seed syllable, emanation of lights and offerings to the Buddhas and so on until the full body is there, ourselves as being Vajrayogini. Or we can appear in an instant completely as Vajrayogini. The important thing is to visualise ourselves completely transparent without any bones, without any organs, just a body of light.

“If this form does not appear clearly, stay in your ordinary form.”

We can also do the practice in our ordinary form. Visualising ourselves as a yidam is meant to make it easier for the blessing to enter into us.

“Visualize either above your head or in front of you in the sky your kind root teacher, in whom you have confidence and from whom you have requested instructions, seated on a precious throne, supported by lions, with a lotus, sun and moon disc. He is in the form of the bhagavan Vajradhara. His radiating pale blue form is blazing with splendor. He has one face and two arms. His legs are in the vajra posture. In his two crossed hands he holds a vajra and a bell. He is smiling joyfully. He is adorned with the thirty-two excellent attributes and eighty excellent signs and with many kinds of silk and jewelry. He appears without having an inherent existence.”

If the teacher is above our head, he looks in the same direction as ourselves, is seated facing in the same direction. If he is in front, he is looking at us. You can choose whichever one is more convenient to you.

You visualise the teacher in the form of Dorjechang, Vajradhara, the blue Buddha form, seated on a throne made of precious substances like jewels and so on, supported by lions. This means the throne is carried by eight snow lions, two in each direction, facing outwards. They represent the eight bodhisattvas who carry the teachings of the Buddha. On top of the throne is an open lotus in the centre of which is a flat sun disc. You visualise this like a golden light, and then a flat moon disc which you visualise like a white light.

On top of the moon disc is the sky-blue Buddha Vajradhara. His form is blazing with splendour. The precise description is the blue of the Indian sky after a monsoon rain. There are no particles of dust any more in the sky. Radiating means radiating with the five colours of the five families. Transparent, as if you had an object passing behind the Buddha, you would be able to see through, you would see the object passing behind, so there is no substance to the Buddha.

He has one face symbolising the dharmakaya and two arms, symbolising compassion and wisdom; skilful means and wisdom, which are in union, in complete unity. This means that the openness of mind always expresses itself in the most skilful way for the situation. This response is called compassion.

His legs are in the vajra posture which symbolises the vajra samadhi, the samadhi of a buddha. His two hands are crossed at the wrists, he holds a vajra, symbol of skilful means, and the bell, symbol of wisdom. Wisdom represents the complete understanding of emptiness and skilful means represents the way of entering the world, the skilful ways to awaken sentient beings.

“He is smiling joyfully”, with the deep joy of complete realisation.

The thirty-two major and eighty minor signs of a ‘mahapurusha’ - this is the name of an excellent being - were known in the Indian way of reading marks on the body of a human being. And they were noticed when the child Buddha was born and so it was predicted due to these signs that he would become either a universal monarch or a completely awakened human being. The more of these marks are present in a child, one can predict the future of the child. And since all of them were completely present, he would have been either the top of the top in worldly things, which is a universal monarch, or the top of the top in spiritual things which is a completely awakened being.

The many silks and jewels have nothing to do with the wish to be beautiful, they are the expression of the innumerable wonderful qualities of a buddha.

He appears without having an inherent existence. So actually the Buddha appears to our imagination, to our inner eyes, very clearly and precisely, but there is no existence as such. As soon as we stop visualising, it disappears.

“All the buddha fields are complete in his form.”

This means that this buddha form is the perfect expression of the qualities of all buddha fields. It also says that if you look into the different parts of the body, looking into each single pore of the light body of the buddha, each time a new buddha field opens to you.

“His form pervades all Buddha fields.”

This is to indicate that the presence of this dharmakaya mind which is like the mind of all buddhas, pervades all manifestations of all buddhas everywhere.

“Above his head the Kagyu teachers are lined up one above the other until Vajradhara is reached, and the teachers of the practice lineages are assembled like clouds.”

(If you have chosen to visualise above your head), I would visualise the blue Vajradhara as the essence of enlightenment, this is a big form just above my head, then I would visualise Gendun Rinpoche, then the sixteenth Karmapa, the master of the sixteenth

Karmapa and so on, going up 43 masters until I reach Tilopa, the origin of the Kagyü lineage. Tilopa had many direct visions of Vajradhara and received many instructions from him, so above Tilopa there is another Vajradhara because he was the master of Tilopa.

And in each generation, around the central master, there are all the other masters, contemporary female and male masters of the lineage of that time. So you have the central lineage, the one who was the teacher of the next, and contemporary masters and disciples who were at the same time, who are also masters of the lineage. This is the complete lineage tree. These other masters, teachers of the practice lineages are assembled like clouds. So in Tibet they would have the various Kagyü lineages, they would have the Nyingma lineage, the Sakya lineage, the Gelug lineage and so on. Imagine that all the masters that have ever appeared in Tibet are present as an influence of blessing above them. Since we have been inspired by so many masters of the Chinese and Japanese traditions, Burmese, Thai, Christians, Sufis, all the awakened ones, whoever is awakened in the world, we can include them.

At the time when we were in retreat in Dagpo, my wife Irene asked Lama Gendun: “Can I also put Christ on the shrine, Jesus Christ is so inspiring for me?” And he replied: “Yes, just put him up there next to the Buddha, part of the refuge tree, it is fine.” And then she asked: “But do we know whether Jesus Christ was enlightened or not?” Gendun Rinpoche said: “No, I have never met him. But if he represents awakening for you, he can have a place up there.”

So what we take care of is that we know about the qualities of awakening and whatever represents these qualities of awakening for us, that is possible to visualise.

All of those mentioned so far:

“are surrounded by an immeasurable assembly of yidams, buddhas, bodhisattvas, viras, dakinis, Dharma protectors, and guardians.”

So the whole lot of awakened forces are invited. And then of course we also asked: “But that is impossible to visualise!” And Gendun Rinpoche answered: “But that’s exactly the point., it is impossible to visualise. You should get an idea that it is impossible to grasp the extent of awakening in this world. It is just beyond measure.”

Then how did we do to find a practical solution to this? We started out by visualising one of each. So we would visualise Vajradhara and then one lama master in which we had confidence, for example Milarepa. We would have one buddha like Buddha Shakyamuni or Buddha Amitabha or maybe Medicine Buddha, one buddha in whom you have real confidence. One yidam, maybe Tara, maybe Chenresig. Then behind there are all the texts of the dharma and you imagine that you hear the sound of the dharma coming from the wonderful texts. So the idea of listening to the dharma above you as part of the refuges, is like a modern google research machine. Whatever teaching you need, you tune into it and you can hear it. So the sound of the dharma is not confusing, but we tune into exactly what we need. It is like a big library where we have free access. And then we have all the bodhisattvas and we take one of them, like Manjushri or Chenresig, and he

represents all the others. We can also have one of the old sangha that was in the entourage of the Buddha like Ananda, Kashyapa, Maudgalyana, Shariputra, one of them. So it is enough to have just the blue Buddha. Then if you want to elaborate, you take one of each and if you want to elaborate more, you have more. The idea is to have an endless ocean of refuge above and an endless number of sentient beings around us going for refuge together with us.

“Then recite a long or short version of the seven branch practice, or the following one, which the master Düsüm Khyenpa offered to Dagpo Rinpoche:

“I bow down to the glorious, sublime master, in his palace of the dharmadhatu, the realm, which has nothing above. You are the quintessence of all the buddhas of the three times and clearly show to me that my mind is the dharmakaya. I offer actual possessions and mentally created offerings and do praises. I confess all harmful actions done in the past without exception and will, from now on, never again commit any harmful actions. I rejoice in the wholesome actions of all living beings and dedicate them to the cause of supreme enlightenment. I pray you to remain and not to pass into nirvana, and request you to turn the wheel of the unsurpassable supreme vehicle.”

The prayer mentioned here is the one that the first Karmapa Düsüm Khyenpa offered to Dagpo Rinpoche, Gampopa, when they first met.

So we visualise, we connect to the central Buddha Vajradhara and we pray with the following lines. Let's identify the seven branches together:

1. Bowing down and paying homage.
2. I offer possessions and mentally created offerings. This is the branch of veneration and it includes doing praises.
3. Confession of all harmful actions and this includes the decision, the promise not to act like this again in the future.
4. Rejoicing in the positive actions of all living beings.
5. Dedication here is the fifth point. Usually it is the seventh point.
6. The prayer to the buddhas to remain close to us and not to go away into nirvana.
7. The request to turn the wheel of the teachings.

These seven branches have received a lot of attention, a lot of commentaries and were practised a lot and are still today an essential part of a sadhana practice, a practice with a written text. They are connected to actual practices that we are doing. They can be done very briefly, just reciting these sentences or we can stop and do many of them at each step.

1. The practice of bowing down and doing praises is very good to develop humility and a deep appreciation of the qualities of the Buddhas.
2. The offering is to develop more and more generosity.
3. The confession and the decision to act differently is to purify feelings of guilt and to develop a completely pure state of mind.
4. Rejoicing in the wholesome actions of all living beings is incredibly enhancing the positive force in our mind and frees us from all jealousy.
5. To dedicate ourselves to the enlightenment of all sentient beings is training in complete non-identification. it is a training in wisdom.
6. When we train in asking the buddhas to remain and not to pass into nirvana, we make a wish for their compassion to be active and we express actually: "Yes, I need you to be here." So actually it reduces our pride.
7. And this continues with the request that they teach, which is admitting our own ignorance, that we need teaching and it prepares the ground for the enlightenment of all. The unsurpassable supreme vehicle which we ask the buddhas to teach is the vehicle of the vajrayana-mahamudra teachings.

At each of these steps we can stop and make it more intensively and repeat it in many different ways. Like we can do many prostrations, many confessions and purification mantras, mandala offerings, prayers.

G 2016 (28)

"Please grant your blessing, that I become perfected in impartial love and compassion, and that I directly realize the ultimate, coexistent primordial awareness, just like the victorious ones and their spiritual heirs have realized it."

Impartial means free from attachment and aversion, free from having more beloved ones and less beloved ones, really a spirit of compassionate equanimity. It is very difficult to realize that, to become free from all preferences. It is a long journey, I think maybe in a few lives.

Then the next wish is for wisdom. The spiritual heirs are the male and female bodhisattvas. What is this ultimate coexistent primordial awareness? Why does the awareness need three adjectives?

Ultimate means that it has no reference points. It is beyond the clinging to reference points, no subject, no object. It is an awareness from within the experience, not with a distance to the experience.

Coexistent is the co-arising of confusion and wisdom. This awareness is co-arising because you can rely on it in every instant. It is always co-arising. It is now. With all the confusion I am in now, it is there. It is the very nature of the confusion. This means that in every state of mind, there is always this nondual awareness to be found as the very nature of this experience.

Primordial, Yeshe (tib. ye-shes, ye-nas shes-pa). “she” is the awareness and “ye” is the primordial. It means a knowing that is there from time without beginning. This means that it does not depend on conditions. It is always there, it has never not been there. But you don't say it is eternal. It is not an eternal awareness because it is not existing as such. It just means: Whenever you enter the nature of phenomena, you find this dynamic, vivid, open awareness. It is not something, you cannot grasp it. So it is not an eternal thing. You cannot find it. It is not possible as a subject to find it and to see it. You can only be it yourself. Different translators have used different terms: primordial awareness, pristine awareness, timeless awareness. I like the term “timeless” because it is very close to the experience that when you are in it, there is no reference to time, there is no past, present, future. I love the way Saraha explains it: “Forget all the terms, it is just that.” When you realise it, it is that. It is that which all the buddhas have realised. A nice word is also suchness, but from the point of view of being aware, to be alive in it as it is.

“Grant your blessing, so I realize that this illusory body is the nirmanakaya.”

May I realise this body which is illusory as the emanation body. To call this an illusory body is quite daring. This can easily be misunderstood. My pains are not illusory, I have these pains. When I am hungry, it is not illusory, I am hungry, I am thirsty, I am tired. So this body is not illusory in the sense that it is completely imaginary. This is not the meaning of it. What it is pointing to is that my perception of what I call body can change any moment. Actually, it is a mental body with which I am identified. The phenomenon body, my body, is what I make up mentally, the image of myself. A beautiful person can think of himself or herself as ugly or beautiful or nothing whatsoever. One can think of oneself as being heavy or light, to be this and that, it is mental construction. Actually, illusory body points to the fact that body is process, and there is not ‘a body’. My body as such, as a stable phenomenon does not exist. Only as an instable process. And when this illusory body becomes the expression of awakening, it is an awakened body which is like the emanation of wisdom into this world. Like that it becomes a tool, a servant to liberate sentient beings. It is adapting to situations. You can say it is like an emanation of awakening into this world. This is what is called an emanation body, a tulku (tib. sprul-sku), a nirmanakaya. It is the same concept like the Christians call Jesus an emanation appearing in this world. So we consider all the awakened masters in their physical presence to be a manifestation of completely free awareness. So we make a wish to become a buddha in a physical form. This is the wish here.

“Grant your blessing, so I realize that the life force is the sambhogakaya.”

The sambhogakaya is the body of enjoyment. When I say this, it is just putting things in shorthand. Actually, it is the aspect of our being which is the great bliss of the inherent

dynamic of mind. when we connect to that in our experience, it is complete vitality. Mind is always dynamic, active. Awareness is always active, always moving. This is called the sambhogakaya. And this dynamic is not concerned with self because there is no clinging to a self. So this dynamic of mind, of awareness, is completely at the disposition of the situation in which it finds itself. It is an awareness available to whatever needs are to be served. And the way to interact with the situation is by communication, we can communicate by thoughts, by words, by gestures, by acts. All of this is the expression of the sambhogakaya activity. So from the basic vitality of mind there comes the enlightened expression of that vitality as enlightened communication.

One classical way of communicating with practitioners is through visions, that in the meditation of practitioners buddhas appear as a vision and they give teachings. You can receive teachings from such a vision. Seemingly, after the Buddha's death (called parinirvana), the Buddha continued to appear many, many times to different disciples and continued to give teachings. This is the source of the mahayana sutras. This is how they appeared.

And then you also have other masters who have reached that same stage of awakening and they also continue to appear. Like also some Christian saints and Sufi saints and so on, there are appearances and visions and so on. And this is a way of communicating the truth in the world. And it can be so strong that this energy takes over the disciples and makes them communicate the message of awakening. So in the Christian tradition, this is what happened at Pentecost. There was this vision and speaking in tongues and inspiration of the teaching going through the disciples, this is one of those manifestations.

But it is not limited to one situation. In Buddhism, we know many, many situations where this had happened. For example, I mentioned Tilopa who received many such teachings from Vajradhara. So it is a very reliable source for those who have some realisation, they can have this as a source of on-going teaching. On the very simple level of our practice, we can say: 'May I realise the vitality of my own mind as enlightened mental activity.' This is how I can formulate the wish for myself. This is the level at which blessing enters. Blessing enters through opening to this vitality and all the surprises it brings along. There is no ego, no "I", no self in this dimension. It is all by surprise, you could say, it's really a surprise when you know how it works. It follows inner laws, but there is a surprise to my usual way of thinking.

"Grant your blessing, so I realize that my mind is the dharmakaya."

The dharmakaya is the body of truth. Body means the aspect of our life which is called truth. It is the complete opening of mind without reference points. It is the basic ground nature of mind before it even interacts with any situation. There can be short moments of entering just the dharmakaya without so much of sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya. But it never stays like this. Dharmakaya mind automatically shows its vitality and expresses itself. That's why the next wish comes:

"Grant your blessing, so that the three kayas appear in their inseparability."

You cannot have one without the other. It is always together. And this Buddhist trinity has become a very famous way of describing the nature of mind. It is open, dynamic and expresses itself for the benefit of all beings. And it is continuously going on. When this open, dynamic expression is obscured by clinging, grasping, views, opinions, then it produces our personal world of suffering. When it is less obscured, it produces our personal world of happiness. And when it is not at all obscured, it is the source of a personal experience of complete freedom and awakening.

The word “kaya”, body, is a difficult word. The whole story started with the word dharmakaya. The first trace we have of the usage of the word dharmakaya is the body of the teachings which are called dharma. In our Latin language we have the “corpus of teachings”, this means the complete teachings on a certain subject. Or the corpus of teachings of a certain teacher, this means their complete teachings. In the same way, in Sanskrit or Pali terms, they were saying the complete teachings of the Buddha, this is the corpus of the dharma, the dharmakaya. So “kaya” means something like complete. Like the corpus of teachers in a school means the whole body of schoolteachers which means: All the teachers in one school. So first, then, all the teachings of the Buddha were referred to as the dharmakaya.

Then some students said to the Buddha: “Yes, there is the dharmakaya, but you are actually the dharmakaya! You embody the dharma, you are the body of dharma. You, the Buddha, you are the dharmakaya. The dharma is complete in you. Your presence is the complete presence of the dharma. From you all the other dharma, the teachings, come.” So it makes sense to talk like this.

Then are different sources where it says: ‘Not I am the refuge, but bodhi, awakening is the refuge. Not I am the dharmakaya, but the dharmakaya is awakening itself.’ It is the mind which I have been realising, which you have been realising, this awakened mind is the actual body of truth. So due to that, dharmakaya. in our tradition is used for the dimension of awakening, completely free, without reference points. You can say the basis, the ground dimension of awakened mind. And we say that the dharmakaya is the source of all dharmas, of all teachings which makes sense: it is from this realization that all the teachings come.

And then the dynamics of communicating this, is called the body of enjoyment. This means the supreme joy or bliss of liberated vitality. You can imagine it like this; that we go through the world normally with the handbrakes on our compassion. We don’t allow our compassionate vitality to flow freely. If we were to take off the brakes and release everything that impedes the free expression of compassion then we give freedom to our compassion and vitality. So sambhogakaya is unhindered compassion springing from wisdom, from understanding the nature of mind.

And the concrete expression of that, as a word, as a thought, as a deed, this is then called emanation body.

For those who know the Christian mystic teachings about the trinity a little; God, Holy Spirit and Christ, or Father, Spirit and Son, they will easily recognise the principle of the

three in the three kayas. When Jesus lived in Israel, the Buddhist teachings had already reached the Greek empire a long time before, nowadays Afghanistan, you know these big images and so on. There was the Greek regent Menandros who was living in this far away district and who became a Buddhist disciple. And all these teachings were already recorded. The Milindapada Sutta actually became a part of the Buddhist Pali canon, of the canonical teachings. It is the discussion of this king Menandros with the arhat Nagarsena. It is a very long sutta where the whole dharma is explained. And this is an early meeting of Greek Buddhist culture. This sutta makes so much sense, why not see that there is actually the same teaching? We don't know how they have cross-communicated, but it is sure that by the time of the activity of Jesus, this was already known in those areas. We don't have to separate religions, we don't have to separate these traditions. The best is that we go to the deepest possible meaning and then we see if it fits together. For me, dharma is the essence of all religions and all spiritual traditions. And this is not a belief actually, because whenever I encounter a practitioner of a different tradition, due to my practice of dharma I can understand what they experience, how they interpret it and so on. It is so easy to understand all of that. It is like you have a key in your hand, and it is very easy to understand. So when you practice guru yoga, you can make prayers like: 'Please grant your blessing that I understand the essence of all religions.' You can pray just like this, you are free to do so. Always go towards the highest awakening, nothing should stop you, nothing, no belief should stop us. We can rephrase this prayer and say: "Please, buddhas, grant your blessing that I understand the trinity and the inseparability of all three." This is what I call ekayana, the one path, awareness. It is this complete awareness of just how life is, of just how things are. That's the real meaning of guru yoga.

"Then offer mandalas and other suitable offerings, and supplicate him with limitless devotion:"

And then comes the prayer which we repeat at least 111,000 times. To repeat this prayer means not just like a parrot, but to follow the deep meaning.

"To you precious teacher I address my supplication. Grant your blessing, that my intellect lets go of ego-clinging. Grant your blessing, that renunciation arises in my mind stream.

It doesn't say: Let go of ego. It says: Let go of ego-clinging. That means the grasping at an imagined self. There is no poor self which will be left alone in the rain. It is just an illusion that dissolves. And this wish is the general wish, it is the overall wish for all dharma practice.

Renunciation is the ground of all practice: Give up the harmful, stay clear of afflictive emotions, work on your thinking, work on whatever is not wholesome.

One sentence is missing here: "Grant your blessing that all non-dharmic thoughts are pacified." This is how, on the basis of renunciation, mental calm, 'shine', shamatha arises. It is that all thinking that is not in accord with the dharma is relaxed, is stopping. And in this way, a new harmony comes into our being. Everything that is not in accordance with reality, with the dharma, ceases.

Question: Generosity?

Answer: Generosity and all other qualities give rise to a peaceful mind. This sentence points to the fact that in the practice of mental calm, all the afflicting emotions are pacified; not yet dissolved completely, that would be realisation, but they stop being active.

The next wish is the wish for lhagthong, vipashyana:

“Grant your blessing so that I realise that my mind is unborn.”

This is the insight that mind and all mental phenomena have no substance at all, that they are not things, that there is no thought. There is no such a thing as mind, that everything is process. Not being born, then existing and then dying. These concepts don't apply to the reality that we encounter now. So this is realisation: Direct understanding that such a thing as mind cannot be grasped. That such a thing as a thought cannot be grasped. That such a thing as a thinker cannot be found.

“Grant your blessing that delusion is naturally purified”

or purifies itself by itself, this would also be a correct translation. You could also say: It is purified in its own ground, in its own very nature. This is mahamudra. At this stage of understanding we realise that confusion is not something that we have to purify, but that by opening up into the nature of confused states of mind, emotions and so on, they purify themselves by seeing their very nature. It is the discovery of the self-liberation of all mental states.

And then the last one is for buddhahood, for complete awakening.

“Grant your blessing that I perceive all that appears and seems to exist as dharmakaya.”

This is the all-encompassing understanding of a buddha; that all mental states, everything appearing day and night, whatever sensory perception it is, whatever appearance in the mind, all of that is the dharmakaya. There is no exception to that. It is all around the clock, all situations.

So you see that the prayer takes us through the whole dharma, the whole path is inside this prayer. We open up to the blessing and then to the general meaning of dharma, to purify clinging to an imaginary self. Then we go through the whole path: The basis is renunciation. Then, on that basis, mental calm. Developing from that there comes insight, realization. Developing from that there comes the practice of mahamudra, and developing from that there comes buddhahood, complete awakening.

LESSON 46 CONTINUED

G 2016 (29)

“If the student says that he experiences all arising thoughts as ungraspable, he should be asked whether he thinks at that time that they are ungraspable or not. If so, it is theoretical knowledge. If he maintains that no such thought arises, but that in the state of nongrasping the simultaneous arising and dissolution of thoughts is ungraspable, he has experienced intuitive insight through thoughts. This is pointed out to him to be the dharmakaya, the unity of luminosity and emptiness.”

If there is thinking that the thoughts are ungraspable, it means that there is a distance and that the observer is saying that thoughts are ungraspable and naming this as ‘ungraspable’. Then this is called theoretical knowledge. It is something one has heard and there is a little glimpse of it, but there is a strong conceptual labelling.

And then some students say: No, no, I am just trying to describe how it is. It is not thinking about labelling. Really, the thoughts; I cannot grasp them for any moment because it is like they are coming and going at the same time, not even for a moment I can stabilise them, I can see them as such. Then the student comes close to the understanding that there is no thought that could be grasped as such. There is thinking and the individual contents of thinking is changing. As it arises, already the next comes, it is always, always, always in the process of changing.

The basic attitude of a meditator is a nongrasping attitude. And this allows for this experience. Movements happen in mind. These movements are called thoughts by other people, but actually it is just movement that is going on in mind. I don’t see it coming, I don’t see it going. It is just on-going movement. And experiencing that, I am just so astonished that there is no substance, that there is no solidity at all to these movements.

If from deep insight this understanding arises, then the student has experienced insight through thoughts or through intimate awareness while thinking.

So before there was the intuitive insight while not in a thinking process, now we are describing intuitive insight while in a thinking process. Then this can be pointed out to the student as the dharmakaya, the dimension of truth. Actually, it is the dharmakaya with its dynamic aspect. The dynamic aspect and the openness are together. We also call this the unity of luminosity and emptiness. It is the unity of the dynamic aspect of mind and the open, ungrasping aspect of “mind-ing”, of thinking, of whatever experiences are going on.

This is extremely helpful when it concerns emotional movements. Imagine you have angry thoughts, jealous movements in mind, proud movements, desirous movements. All of these are called thoughts, but some of them are really strong emotions. So emotional movements. And you see that - wow, already gone. The basis for this experience is this a nongrasping attitude. This is the ground in which these insights can happen. And then the movement will just be experienced as the natural luminosity of mind, the natural vitality of mind. There is nothing to fight with, there is nothing to dissolve. All these moving experiences are known, are experienced as self-liberating. This is liberation in the arising (tib. shar-grol), arising and liberation simultaneously. This is dharmakaya insight.

“If at the time the student is told to investigate visual forms and the other objects of the five sense doors, he says that the object is clearly over there, the teacher will inquire whether he has a thought that it is clearly over there or not.

This refers to a previous exercise elsewhere in the book. Take a visual object, I have this pillar in front of me, take anything you have as a visual impression. So how is the feeling: Is the object over there, is it in here, how is it?

There is a thought that it is there. And how come that you perceive it in your mind? Does it come into your mind? Is the pillar creating an idea in your mind? Is your mind going over to the pillar? How is the seeing process actually happening? How is it possible that a pillar is appearing in your mind? How is it actually?

We can all look at the pillar. At the same time that the pillar seems to be over there, it is also in my mind. It is also part of the visual experience. I cannot say that the pillar came into my mind or that my mind went into the pillar. somehow it is like arising in this visual experience and it seems to be inseparable: The seeing and the pillar, I cannot separate them from each other. Pillar seeing happens, when pillar, eye and eye consciousness meet and together this is the experience of pillar-seeing., colour-seeing. In the seeing, there is no eye, no pillar, these are additional concepts which come in, which interpret. Look wherever you wish to look all around the room, the naming of the objects comes much later. You can look all around the room and even remember the room, and there has been no naming. You remember differently, without naming. Also, for any seeing, there is no-one having to go over there and there are no objects which have to come over here. The seeing clearly appears, a clear experience of seeing, and is there in this seeing a separation between subject and object? Have a look at it.

“If the student affirms, he is told to investigate the nature of that thought.”

So whatever thought comes in, for example: “I see the pillar”, then the student would be told: Investigate the “I”. Where is the “I” in the seeing. Where is the pillar in the seeing, where can you find that? Then he would come to the conclusion that actually it is true: Seeing happens long before the thought of “I” appears. Seeing happens long before the thought of “pillar”, “bush”, “cup” and so on appears.

And then, perhaps he comes back after a while - I am talking about a few days of investigation and really putting your heart into this investigation - and explains: There is no such thought; actually seeing and so on just happen without additional thinking:

“The student explains that there is no such thought, that the object is unobstructed and utterly clear, and the inquiring mind is utterly loose, without conceptual grasping, as if the two were not separate and there is no thinking of that fact either”

Then you see that the student is coming closer. It is very bizarre, very strange. Here I am, looking at the pillar and if I enter the experience, there is just seeing, somehow pillar and self don't feel separate any more, but I cannot explain to myself how is that possible? So the student is coming closer to the actual nature of the experience.

And when the student says that the mind is completely open with that and completely at ease, it is just like this and there is no thinking about it, then the Karmapa writes that

“he has experienced intuitive insight through (sensory) appearances. This unity of appearances and emptiness is pointed out to him to be the dharmakaya of “appearances.”

This means that the subject-object illusion has dissolved into the direct sensory experience. It has become clear that the idea of a self, the idea of the object, is something which is imputed later on. It comes after the immediate sensory experience.

At that time the student understands that in the seeing, in the hearing, in the feeling and so on, there is only process. There is no such thing as a pillar. There is only the continuously changing experience of something that by the identifying, fixing mind is named: “This is a pillar.” But actually the experiencing of what we call pillar is an on-going, ungraspable process.

This is the unity of appearances and emptiness. It is pointed out to him and this is also the dharmakaya. Completely vast and open mind in the sensory experience, free from any grasping. Fully experiencing in all sense fields without blocking the on-going flow of experience for the slightest moment.

Hearing.

Hearing just happens. No inside, no outside.

Then, if we say: “I hear this sound”, you’ll notice how the experience changes. How a distance is created.

Feeling the body sensations somewhere where you touch the floor, the seat now.

Is it a very distinct sensation as a thing, as an object? Is there a distinct self in the process of feeling?

When you allow yourself to enter experiencing like that, you will feel as if you are getting lost. You will have the feeling of getting lost in complete experience. As ungraspable as it seems, the experience becomes full, it is all, it is complete. There is no more separation, it fills all awareness.

This would be a subject of investigation for you, for further meditation in the next years to come.

“All those methods of seeking intuitive insight into primordial awareness on the base of calm abiding are called inquiry into the essence of meditation. Self-knowing means that through this inquiry the mind sees its own nature and thus is self-knowing.”

Self-knowing (tib. rang-rig) means that through this inquiry mind sees its own nature and thus is aware on its own of itself (tib. rang rang-gis rig-pa). The language is getting tricky here because one tries to describe a nondual experience with a language built on dualistic terms.

“The great ease of a self-knowing primordial awareness itself is mahamudra.”

The great ease here is that complete absence of any stress. When one knows this great ease, then the coming back of the subject-object dichotomy, this split-up of reality into subject-object, is experienced as immediate stress. One feels that in the flowing experiencing where there is no tension, then there is no dukkha, no stress, no suffering. And as the “I” and other come back, stress, dukkha, enters back into one’s experience and on this basis all the afflictive emotions develop.

“Thus if one does not inquire into the nature of meditation, the nature of mind is not seen.”

This is a very important sentence. This is the problem if one stays only with shamatha meditation, with calm mind. Calm mind is fine, but it is like parking your mind in a parking lot. You can also call it a dead end. What I do with you is quite disturbing. Many of you don’t like to twist your minds in all directions just to find out how the nature of the experience is. Because it is disturbing the quiet, it is stirring up, it is uncomfortable. What is more uncomfortable is the not doing it; but that it goes against the habits of perception.

It is like we are used to walking, and someone tells us to walk backwards now. It is going against our habits. It feels awkward. And you feel awkward when I tell you to look at the subject, to look at the object, and how is it really? And something in you tells you: ‘Come on, it used to be easy before, and now you are making everything complicated’. (laughter) When I teach lhagthong, I sometimes feel as if I almost became the enemy of the meditator. So what the teacher has to do is to accept the bad role of disturbing the quietness of: “Ah, just relax!”

“If that is not seen the self-knowing primordial awareness is not recognized. Not recognizing that, it is impossible to realize the great ease of intuitive insight into primordial awareness.”

Without doing this, you will never get free of suffering, because the greatest ease comes from opening up into this timeless awareness.

“Therefore it is essential to inquire into the nature of mind.”

The nature of mind, the nature of “mind-ing”, of being aware of all of this being aware functions, how it works.

The student thinks that there is no suffering. This is why the student becomes a little bit angry when the teacher says: No, this is not yet liberation. I know this very well. I went through the phases of shamatha, the deep absorptions, and for a very long time I was thinking that there was no suffering. Only when I looked back after I was able to relax

more, I saw that what I called no suffering before, actually was suffering because I had discovered even more open states of mind.

And twice it happened to me that I thought: This now is the awakening experience, and fortunately my teachers were there and told me: This is not yet it. I didn't see that there was still tension involved in the experience.

And when the real seeing of the nature of mind happened, then the difference to those previous states was so big! Difficult to describe. In the texts it is said that for the ordinary person, to have a hair on the hand, this is no suffering. This refers to the subject-object dichotomy which is like the hair. But for someone who knows the nature of mind, it is like the hair is in the eye. Very disturbing, you'd do everything to get it out. I don't find this example very exaggerated. I think it is very true like this. From then, when the nature of mind has become very clear, for the rest of your life there will be no more relaxed experience. This is the completely relaxed, the completely open experience. It does not get deeper or wider, it is completely stress-free, no tension. From then on it is only a question of allowing this experience to happen more and more often, in all different situations in life. It is only a question of allowing this experience to spread. It doesn't get deeper. This is why they say that the dharmakaya doesn't change. The first seeing of the dharmakaya and the final seeing of the dharmakaya are not different. It is the same dimension of truth.

G 2016 (30)

"Then the student is sent to meditate with the words, "How do you see the mind? Bring me your definite personal experience of it and not just theories."

Then imagine the student comes back, a few days later, a few weeks later, and on being questioned, replies:

"The mind is something blissful and clear, or transparent and clear, or a clarity in which there is a deep confidence that I cannot express in words; examining it, it is nothing graspable at all", he has recognized the nature of mind."

Then the teacher will say: Yes, my mind is the same. That's how it is. The mind is happy, joyful, blissful. All the experiencing is very clear, very lucid, very light. and if I look at what is going on, it is like I can see through, there is no substance, it is like transparent. And when experiencing it like this, there is such a deep peace, such a confidence, difficult to say, but deeply confident that everything is fine like that. Nothing to do. Yes, that's really how mind is.

So the student has had an experience of how mind is, what we call the nature of mind. We have to be very careful in this section. From this description, one cannot know whether it is a nondual experience of mind or a dual experience of mind. But what is said about mind is true. And it comes from personal experience.

Some of us think that the experience of the nature of mind starts only when we enter the nondual state of mind. But it already starts now. Already now we have glimpses, we have feelings about the nature of mind. It is going on all the time. The more we become aware, the more the nature of mind becomes familiar to us. This is very important to know. Every one of us has an intuition or a feeling, a sense of how mind is. The difference is how confident one is, how sure one is about this.

“If he replies that he cannot bring it to one point, he is theorizing. In this case he should be told, “You must come to a personal experiential recognition of it, which is not mere theoretical knowledge. So just practice in the way I have explained to you, without involving yourself in a lot of other analyzing.” He is sent to practice until the experiences and understanding arise in the way shown previously. Once they have arisen, he should get the pointing-out instructions.”

Theorising means here that it is caught in conceptual thinking. You can really observe this here when a student is talking about mind and it is like going from one concept to the next and is only connecting to the concepts, not connecting to personal experience. You can feel it immediately to be different.

“It is certainly not necessary to give all the enumerated pointing-out instructions. The nature of mind should be pointed out in any one of the ways shown previously, which corresponds to the student's experience and his signs of recognition.”

(Silent meditation and dedication)

DAY 6 (160706-0181-0185)

G 2016 (31) Meditation

We begin the day by contemplating just how many good conditions come together at this moment. We have a mind which we can use, that means we have access to clear awareness. Awareness is there and we have time to work with it. And we have good instructions that will help us to use it properly. We have a situation in which we can develop this awareness more and more.

Part of these conditions are the various factors that make it possible for us to encounter the dharma. Before we knew the various spiritual teachings we call dharma, we did not really know how to use this potential of our mind.

And then we also have social, political, material conditions that give us just enough time to practise. In comparison with billions of people on this planet, we are quite fortunate.

But this situation will not stay like this forever. It is subject to process, it is subject to change like everything else. One thing is sure in this process, that one day we have to leave this body.

So how do we want to use this precious time before that happens? If it were to happen in only a few years, what would be the most important way to practise now? What is for me, now, the most important? Which awakened qualities do I wish to put in the centre of my mind training? Or to say it in mahamudra language: Which qualities do I wish to give space so that they can show and unfold more and more?

Let us connect with exactly those qualities. If you visualise a refuge, it should have exactly those qualities. If you visualise a buddha, a master, a meditation deity, it should be the expression of exactly that. And to this we direct our whole aspiration as we do a traditional practice. A very alive refuge. mirroring our own awakened qualities.

(Recitation)

And then let the refuge dissolve into yourself and we become the embodiment of exactly those qualities. Feel them with every part of your being. Breathe with them. Breathe the freedom of being just like that.

Imagine how every pore of your body becomes the expression of those qualities. And even allow for light to emanate from your body, which carries those qualities, which is the expression of those qualities. Let this light go into the whole universe, everywhere, to all beings, to all plants, to all rocks, to the oceans, to space, wherever it can go. Allow these qualities to spread inside, outside; in all directions. And wherever they go, everything is transformed into a pure land with buddha-like beings. And the light comes back with these same qualities, mirrored by everything and everyone.

And in this way, we breathe in constant resonance with our whole world. The beauty we carry inside is the beauty we see outside. It is the beauty that is reflected back on us. In this way you transform into a meditation deity.

And now let us just allow this to be, without forcing, without effort. Wide awake to those qualities, without any need to label them.

No need to hold on to those qualities. Let them flow. They are your own heritage, they are always there. The more we relax and the more open we are, the more they will be present.

(Bell, open meditation, dedication)

ON BODHICITTA

G 2016 (32, first part)

What is bodhicitta, the heart-mind of awakening? It is the driving force; it is the motor for the activity of bodhisattvas and buddhas. And if you express it in normal words, one would say that it is the love and compassion that feels completely ready to do whatever is necessary for any sentient being.

But if one tries to describe it how it really is, then it is a little bit different. In the real bodhicitta, there is no-one who says: 'I will do something for someone else.' This idea of self has dropped away. There is not someone rescuing others. It is just the spontaneous activity of those qualities we were talking about, those naturally present awakened qualities. They are natural activity. This is what happens. There is no personal aim involved, not an aim to do something special. And we call this spontaneous activity because it is just a natural resonance with the situation, with what is needed, there is no thinking: 'Shall I do it, shall I not do it?'

And then those in front, the so-called sentient beings, also there is no grasping to the existence of truly existent sentient beings. And when one says that this activity goes life after life until samsara is emptied, then actually the concept of life and death is not at all the same as ours.

In this perspective of a realised bodhisattva, death is just like moving from one town to another. From one country to another, continuing in another body.

And sentient beings are mind streams, processes, which unfortunately do not realise their own basic nature. The whole activity is to show how simple life could actually be. How simple, how much love and joy there could be, to bring things back to the natural state. This is what we call bodhisattva activity. So in this activity, there is no separation between the bodhisattva and living beings.

When we begin with bodhicitta, we enter by diminishing the separation between self and others, saying that everyone is like our family, like our mother and father, like our sister and brother, like our son and daughter, so we begin to diminish this distance with unknown people by saying: 'Well, these are all family!'

But you see, when you are really together, you don't even have to think that anymore. It is just because our hearts are open that we take care of each other that is all. It is so simple.

You see all this that we call relative bodhicitta, these thoughts which motivate us, which reduce the distance to others, which generate the motivation, all these are just ways of helping ourselves to enter a natural feeling of connection.

If we were able to go into a situation without stress, say, if we were born into a life without stress where also the parents are not stressed, we would find out that bodhicitta is just what we are born with. It is natural. It is the natural disposition of an open mind.

So developing bodhicitta is actually going towards being more natural again. People may call us crazy if we are full of love and compassion towards everyone, but actually this is the natural state. They are crazy!

We are not stupid. There is also wisdom in bodhicitta, we see that people are clouded in their minds, that they are not in touch with their true selves and that they do all kinds of harmful things. We know this, we see this very clearly. But our wisdom goes deeper. We can see that behind all the craziness of the world and the people, below all that, there is this buddha-nature, we can see their awakened potential. And that's the special view.

Like when the Little Prince says: "Only with the heart can you see well", we look with the heart and we can see the buddha-nature even in the worst criminal. Sometimes there are mountains of pain around the buddha-nature which make it almost impossible to contact that because the pain and the fear is too strong in the person in front of us. But it is possible. Sometimes there are little openings. So the bodhisattva always goes with the openings, he goes with the little light that comes through, the little sign of the buddha-nature coming through. This is what is encouraged. We don't fight with the veils and the difficulties, we encourage the light to come through. It is very powerful.

If children could be encouraged to always notice the light in each other, the goodness, to go with this - wow, it would be such a joy to grow up!

Question: How far can you go with this? For example, if you give antibiotics to a person, you kill the germs which are sentient beings.

Answer: Yes, this is life. No way to be in this world without creating some suffering around us. Just by walking we squash beings, and then, when you try to find out how to behave, if somebody has already reached a precious human existence, it is very helpful to support this and to say: Take antibiotics to live longer and to practise the dharma. We don't really know where sentient beings start, if bacteria already have this feeling capacity. But one knows for example that amoeba have some reactions of living beings. So when we have to kill amoeba in order to save a human being, we make wishes for these sentient beings that have to leave their lives, we open our heart also to them. But we still do the treatment.

The way a living being is defined in the abhidharma is the capacity to take a decision and to change one's behaviour. For example the decision to go right instead of going left. The capacity to avoid pain and to go somewhere else. And this basic capacity to take decisions and to change the course of one's actions or one's life, this is the needed requisite to go the path of awakening.

When you see ants walking along and they come to a pond of water, they touch the water and they go the other way. This capacity, not to go straight because there is a danger for their life, but to go somewhere else.

So some people ask: How about flowers and trees? Well, according to this definition, a flower would have to have the capacity to say: No, today I keep my flower closed. Let the

sun shine, now I do something else. So it is not saying that they don't feel or that they don't have a mind, but can they take decisions? We need to have the capacity to change ways of perceiving, of acting and so on in order to evolve towards awakening. This is the question behind of what we think is a sentient being.

LESSON 15 THE PRACTICE OF GURU YOGA CONTINUED

G 2016 (32, second part)

“Having supplicated, all the teachers surrounding your root teacher melt into light and dissolve into him.”

So all the other ones around Vajradhara in the centre, they all dissolve into Vajradhara. It is in forms of light, so Vajradhara becomes even more radiant.

“Regarding your root teacher as being the embodiment of all the teachers, yidams, buddhas and bodhisattvas, supplicate him:

“Sublime teacher, please completely bestow the four empowerments on me.” Having supplicated him, visualize while reciting meditatively the following:”

The four empowerments refer to four aspects of being empowered, this means being given the self-confidence that: Yes, I am also a potential buddha.

We read the lines and visualise at the same time:

“From the centre of the forehead of the sublime teacher emanates a boundless stream of nectar in the form of white light rays. They dissolve into my forehead and purify the veils of my body. I am empowered to practice the path of the development stage, making me apt to attain the fruit of the nirmanakaya.”

Light is just thinking. It is not talking about physical light coming from a light source. Light symbolizes connection. Wherever you want to connect things, you can send light.

The white light rays purify all the erroneous ideas about my body. The clinging to it as being mine. Perceiving it in a solid way instead of noticing that it is a body of energy. And all the impressions that are in the body of previous harmful acts which have been done with the body or harmful experiences which were experienced by the body. So our body becomes completely free of any possessiveness, the idea that I possess, that I own my body, it becomes free of all the pains experienced in the past, all the trauma and all the traces of my own afflictive emotions that were left in the body when I was in clinging states

of mind. It becomes a new, fresh, completely open body. All illnesses are purified and so on.

And I can relate to the body in a new way. I can relate to this body as the body of a buddha. And in this way, I am empowered to practise the path of the development stage. With this new vision of the body, I begin seeing the body as the body of a meditation deity. This is what is called the development stage, the visualisation stage of a yidam practice. Actually, I can see and feel it as a body of light.

And this is the foundation for being able to serve sentient beings with the body, this is the emanation body of a buddha.

With this deep understanding due to the purification of the veils connected with the body, I can see my body as the body of Tara or of Chenresig or anyone of those meditation deities.

“From the throat center of the teacher emanates a boundless stream of nectar in the form of red light rays. They dissolve into my throat and purify the veils of my speech. I am empowered to practice the path of the completion stage, with the channels, energies, and essences, making me apt to attain the fruit of the sambhogakaya...”

Imagine this stream of nectar-light that enters your throat, how wonderful it feels when it enters the centre of speech, like healing. And it purifies all the clinging to “my” speech, “my” way of communicating. All the possessiveness, the identification in connection with communication. It purifies all the remainders of impure speaking in the past, which was speaking with a lot of harmful emotions, wrong ideas, all of that. Untrue speech, harmful speech, divisive speech and useless speech.

And all of these traces being purified, we enter the possibility of speaking truthfully, friendly, in a gentle and useful way. The possibility to speak like a buddha. This is an additional aspect of self-confidence of being able to communicate like a buddha.

In this way we are empowered to practise the path of the completion stage with the channels, energies and essences. The speech centre is connected to the whole energy system. When we are tired, our voice changes because the energy is low in the body. When we are strong, we have a different voice, when we have an afflictive emotion we have a different voice. Voice changes all the time with the energies in the body. In the morning it is a different voice and in the evening and so on.

And this makes the connection with the empowerment of the completion stage where we work with subtle energies in our body and mind. Completion stage means that we stop visualising. All the visualisation dissolves and we rest with the energetic change produced by the visualisation and dissolution. We have changed energetically.

And there are techniques how we can work with these subtle energies so that they flow more freely. These techniques use just subtle changes in posture, very slight changes in

breathing, slight changes in the way you direct your mind so that you begin to be able to work with the inner energies.

This is a more subtle stage of practice which demands mostly being in retreat. It is very difficult to do at home because you need a very calm surrounding to be able to notice those subtle differences.

We unblock the blockages in our subtle energy channels and due to this, then more and more joy, happiness comes into our organism. This is the basis for realizing one's energy system as the body of enjoyment. Our vital energies now flow freely and this produces this fine underlying state of bliss. And there is also the capacity to communicate in many different ways with sentient beings, exactly as they need. So the communication is very finely in tune with the situation of others.

If I put it more precisely: The basis of communication is not words but is energy. Thoughts and words are expressions of energy. The world around us is energy, we ourselves are energy. The interaction of this, this is what we call communication. Sometimes we only need to change our energy a little bit and already it communicates to others. Others can feel it. Words are relatively clumsy ways of communication.

“From the heart center of the teacher emanates a boundless stream of nectar in the form of blue light rays. They dissolve into my heart and purify the veils of my mind.”

All the clinging, all the fixation, all erroneous ideas are purified. All traces of previous clinging, of previous emotional states, all of that is purified.

So our mind becomes free and pure, just like the Buddha's mind, vast, unlimited, natural, completely flexible, fluid. If you want, you can also call it radiant, clear and so on. All of those qualities. And due to these basic qualities of course, there is understanding, love, compassion - all those qualities form.

We think that we have so many different qualities in the mind. Actually, we don't. Either the mind is fluid, flexible, or it is blocked, grasping. A flexible mind has all the qualities and a grasping mind loses all the qualities. It is very simple.

I want to explain this to you. Look, when the mind is flexible, that means not grasping, not blocked, then of course the mind becomes clear. Of course an open, flexible mind will understand. Of course an open, flexible mind is loving and compassionate. Of course an open, flexible mind is generous. It is so simple. That's why there is only one criterion of progress in the dharma: A truly flexible mind (tib. shin-tu sbyangs-ba), a flexible, workable, fluid mind.

This is not the conventional flexibility in our society; a flexibility which is just changing our grasping very quickly. You see we have an appointment with someone at five o'clock in the afternoon. The person doesn't come. What has happened? “Oh, someone invited me to go to the beach! I am sorry, I couldn't come, just be flexible.” (laughter). The person himself is grasping to a new opportunity of sense pleasures and forgets to tell the friend

that he couldn't come to the appointment and even tells the friend: "Oh, I am flexible, I flow with the situation. I almost had to go, I used my flexibility, you know." This is grasping.

Someone who is not grasping and has a flexible mind becomes highly reliable. A person has an appointment at five o'clock. Going out of the house, there are little talks right and left, many invitations to do this and that, but there is no grasping. One goes and is able to keep the commitment because there is no grasping to all the other things which are there.

If you have a person grasping to all the many things that come along, this person becomes highly unreliable. Always grasping to new ideas, changing and so on. We have to make a distinction between what we call flexible in the normal world and what actually is flexible.

So investigate in your own life, into the true quality of a flexible mind. Flexible mind is so stable. It does not get shaken up by the circumstances because of not grasping to the circumstances. There is no identification. This is the one criterion for dharma practice. Less fixation and more flexibility, fluidity (in German: ein gelöster Geist). And from this all qualities come. But of course we need to understand properly what is meant by this. The Tibetan term Shintu Djangwa (tib. shin-tu sbyangs-ba) also means a completely workable mind. It is so flexible that you can put it on any task you want and it stays with that because it is not grasping to anything else. It is the best tool you can have. It is performing any task you ask of it because it is not clinging to anything else. Just available for what you need. It is one of the wholesome mental factors in the list of 51 mental factors of the abhidharma.

"I am empowered to practice the path of bliss of the four joys, making me apt to attain the fruit of the dharmakaya."

The various joys appear to decreasing grasping. If there is no grasping at all, the ultimate joy of nonduality appears. And the fruit is the dharmakaya, this completely open mind without centre, without circumference, open, fluid, dynamic and all the rest.

The first three joys are relative and the fourth one is the ultimate joy of nondual mind. Actually, they are just a progression of letting go. The Buddhists weren't lazy, they even subdivided them to make sixteen in all. But actually, when I am in a state of joy, that's the moment when I am least interested to look into dictionaries.

The fourth empowerment is the union of all three, that they are not separate:

"From the three centers of body, speech, and mind of the teacher emanate white, red, and blue light rays like rainbows. They dissolve into my body, speech, and mind, and purify all the veils of my three doors. I am empowered to practice mahamudra, the inseparability of awareness and emptiness, making me apt to attain the fruit of the svabhavikakaya."

Mahamudra is the natural being of body, speech and mind, also called the inseparability of awareness and emptiness. The unity of awareness and emptiness. Do you understand that immediately?

There is no "I", no self, involved in the awareness. There is no-one being aware. There is one more additional aspect, what could it be?

It refers to the fact that something that we call awareness is a concept, the idea of awareness is a concept. And what do we find if we look for what corresponds to the concept awareness? What do we actually find?

Awareness itself cannot be found, it is only being aware. There is no such thing as awareness. So awareness is empty of substance, solidity, some core existence. This is the emptiness of awareness. And awareness is always like this. So mind, awareness, is ungraspable process of being aware. And this is empty of self, the awareness itself has no self, it has no substance, no substantial reality.

Whenever you join emptiness to anything else, it means that this concept has no solidity, no reality. Even emptiness is empty because it is actually describing an absence of something. It is not something that you can find. Emptiness does not exist.

So, when you say mind is ungraspable, that means one cannot find mind as a thing, then you might start talking about the ungraspability of mind. But the ungraspability, even if you have a word for it, is not a thing that can be found. So forget about it. If it makes sense, OK, but otherwise don't put your mind in knots about it. By the way, if you put an ungraspable mind into knots, knots are also ungraspable.

The svabhavikakaya is the essence body. Svabhava means essential nature. And the essential nature is that all the three previous kayas; aspects of reality, are inseparable.

So we have four empowerments. Very simple: Lights, white light emanating into the forehead, purifying the body - pure body. Lights purifying speech - pure speech. Lights purifying mind - pure mind. All three lights together - pure everything.

And then we stay in that purity of everything.

With this,

"Then remain in meditation as long as you can. Again supplicate: "Glorious, precious root teacher..."

So when you appear from that, again supplicate the teacher to grant his final blessing.

"After this, the root teacher After this, your root teacher melts into light and dissolves into you. Thinking that the body, speech, and mind of your root teacher have become inseparable from your own body, speech, and mind, remain in mahamudra meditation. When thinking starts

again, dedicate the virtuous roots to great enlightenment and seal your practice with pure aspirations. Then enter your daily activities.”

So this is a second mahamudra meditation. We had one after the four empowerments and then one after the complete dissolution of the guru into us. And then of course, in between, when we did those visualisations, we did not visualise the guru any more on top of our head. It was forgotten, it was gone, there was no need to maintain that visualisation at that moment.

But as soon as we continue practising, the visualisation is back, immediately, in one go.

Then there is the final dissolution into mahamudra meditation, and when thinking comes again, we dedicate the roots of virtue and seal our practice with pure aspiration prayers.

And then, after that, we enter our daily activities.

G 2016 (33)

“Through the practice of the guru yoga, all the faults of the two veils will become purified, and the two accumulations will be completed. All the sixty four qualities of freedom and maturation will be completed, and the essence of the three kayas of perfect buddha-hood will be actualized on a single seat. Full of joy and inspiration about this, you should develop energetic perseverance”

What does it mean when the two veils are purified and the two accumulations completed? It is complete awakening, this is buddha-hood! It is the very definition of buddha-hood.

We have different possibilities of dealing with this statement. Either we say: ‘Oh, this is publicity and don’t think more about it’. Or we think: ‘If that’s true, then what does it mean for the practice of the guru yoga? How does one have to practise guru yoga for this to become true?’

Let’s start with the two veils, emotional veils and cognitive veils.

Emotional veils are all the emotions that make our mind tense. We are not talking about the emotions that open our mind, we are talking about the kleshas, those emotions that hinder our full potential to fully express itself. For example, joy is not a klesha. We only have to purify the grasping that is in the joy. So when we talk about the purification of emotional veils, we talk about emotions which make our minds narrow, that bring in tension into our mind. The closest word in English to klesha is probably affliction, something which creates like a handicap. Handicap means that we are not truly ourselves. Something hinders, something obstructs, the full expression of our awakened potential.

So to imagine that all of that is to be purified means that the practice of guru yoga has to enter into every emotional state. We need to bring in the practice of guru yoga, this awakened awareness into every afflictive emotional experience that we have and dissolve it.

If we want to have the practice purify the cognitive veils, we have to bring in the awareness into all our assumptions about reality until we truly see how it is. Into this idea of a 'self' separated from the rest of the world, thinking that objects really exist, and so on. All those ideas which we have about reality which cloud our perception.

So if guru yoga is to purify that, then what we call guru yoga has to affect our ways of perceiving reality.

Question: Are these two veils really separate?

Answer: No, because the lack of awareness which is the reason for the cognitive veils is also classified as a klesha, as ignorance. But for the normal practitioner, the cognitive veils are not easy to perceive and we first work with the emotional veils.

But from the first moment on, when we practise the dissolution, the guru dissolves into light, dissolves into us and we rest in natural awareness, we are already working on the cognitive veils because we work on this idea of separateness. It becomes less strong. we begin to feel that we are not so separate after all. And this is a diminishing of the cognitive veil.

Question: What is root of grasping?

Answer: If I were aware, I would not grasp. It is the lack of awareness that makes us grasp. If we were to know, to see, to understand, be aware that there is nothing to grasp at, we wouldn't grasp. It is like a child with smoke. A child might still want to catch the smoke. But as adults, we have learnt to know that you cannot grasp it. We have stopped trying to catch the smoke. A classic example is that a child might still try to catch the rainbow. But we know that if we go towards the rainbow, there is nothing we can grasp. This is the awareness that is needed to stop grasping.

The two accumulations are merit (tib. bsod-nams) and timeless awareness (tib. ye-shes). This is positive force which is also called merit and the special wisdom of timeless awareness. This is what is actually growing in the practice.

So guru yoga, if practised completely, will lead to the perfection of positive activity, complete all-encompassing positive activity and to complete awareness which is this nondual timeless awareness.

So the Karmapa is actually writing: The guru yoga leads you to buddha-hood. So the way of practising guru yoga should be an all-encompassing practice, it is not just a little method.

Basically, guru yoga is the practice of becoming like the Buddha. This is the point I really want you to take in. This is the way one practises guru yoga. This is why it is said that guru yoga is a practice for all one's life.

*“ As **OUTER SIGNS** immeasurable devotion and longing for the teacher will arise. Being near the teacher one utters his name. Coming into his presence, one is incapable of separating from him. The mind is captivated by the teacher, one cannot think about anything else, and this incites one to supplicate him continuously, day and night, insatiably.”*

So this is what happens first: When there is a strong connection, it feels like falling in love. This is actually true.

The attachment which is still in there gets less over time.

“When as inner signs experiences will blaze up just by thinking of the teacher, the outer appearances become insubstantial like mist, the inner awareness becomes bare luminosity, inseparable from emptiness, and the stream of thoughts becomes interrupted, it is all right to give the pointing-out instructions also during the preliminaries. Secret signs: one dreams of meeting the teacher, receiving empowerment and Dharma teachings and that he emanates and reabsorbs light rays.”

When someone has strong devotion, it is quite natural to dream about the teacher. It is a sign of that devotion.

“If these signs occur, meditation will certainly arise.”

These are all signs that one's mind is opening. And then it is very easy for experiences of blessings to occur.

“If during these preliminaries one does not begin to experience some meditation, experiences and realizations will not arise. Therefore it is important to continue with these practices. When those with prior training get the pointing-out instructions during the preliminaries, they will develop calm abiding. In this case the teacher should examine their experiences.

These practices are called preliminaries, but in fact they are the main practice, because it depends on them, whether meditation will develop or not.”

Students in our countries have a lot of hesitation over doing these preliminary practices. Incredible resistance. So they don't get the benefits of these practices. They all want to do mostly silent meditations and they try to work on their tendencies just with silent meditations. And for most of them, it takes much longer because of that. But what can you do, because they love to spend time in quiet but, actually, when sitting quietly, all one does is one turns in one's habitual tendencies, one instals oneself in one's habitual tendencies. One can do the preliminaries with silent meditation, but then one really has to do the practice of directing one's awareness into the difficult areas, there where is the dukkha, the challenge. One has to dissolve these blockages and enter the deep absorptions and from there, then, inquire into the nature of mind.

And you saw, when I asked you these insight questions, that some you felt disturbed in your quiet meditation. And all by yourself, even if you have heard these instructions, you wouldn't want to do it, you wouldn't want to disturb your peaceful meditation. Practicing

like this, you are always heating up a bit and then cooling down, never getting cooked. You remain in the beginning stages of shamatha and this can continue for one's whole life. Something more peaceful than the daily agitation, so quite nice, but not really liberating. Not enough power to see through and see the nature of reality.

So either you take these instructions about shamatha, vipashyana, mahamudra so seriously that you really apply them intensively, then you have chances to go into realization, or/and you practise the preliminary practices very intensively together with your silent meditation.

Maybe you have heard a little bit about the relationship with a zen teacher. Do you know how uncomfortable a real zen teacher is? Then silent meditation can also work because there is enough discomfort, always poking. So don't let the students sleep. 'Sleeping' doesn't mean sleeping, it means dwelling in their habitual tendencies.

Some students, as soon as they hear something, immediately their habitual tendency is to go off into intellectual thinking, thoughts, learning. This is escaping. This is an attempt to find security in an area when actually one doesn't know. So more learning will give me more security. Actually it is a protection device. One protects oneself by acquiring knowledge. One reads more and more books about the dharma instead of sitting down and facing not knowing and going step by step through the practices.

So we have to find a good balance. Some study is needed, a lot of meditation is needed, we need to be on the edge of discomfort. We need to have a challenging meditation.

“If these practices remain ineffective, the main practice you have pursued obsessively will be just as weak. Therefore you should continue with the practice of these preliminaries until you have reached stability and gained certainty, and until the signs have appeared. Then you should gradually get into the main practice..”

This is saying that you have practised with all your obsession the silent meditation, but it will be just as weak as your practice of the preliminaries which maybe you never even did. It is like the reflection of that.

Let's translate that into clearer words. It is not the fact of doing hundreds or million thousands of prostrations which will inherently change your meditation. That's not meant. It's that if we don't do that first preliminary of refuge and bodhicitta properly, our main practice, our silent meditation will reflect the lack of clear inner direction and bodhicitta. It will reflect this. Without it, it will be a dry meditation, lacking a clear orientation.

If we haven't done vajrasattva practice properly, our silent practice will reflect first of all feelings of lack of self-confidence, guilt and shame. It will show the lack of confidence in our pure true nature which is actually what is stimulated by vajrasattva practice.

If we haven't got into to the real practice of mandala offerings, our silent meditation will reflect this lack of generosity. There will still be clinging to what is agreeable in our meditation. The dedication to offer our meditation to all will be lacking. Also the feeling of connectedness to all sentient beings and all awakened beings will be lacking.

And when there is no true practice of guru yoga, we will still meditate with a feeling of "I have to do it". We will have difficulties arriving at the understanding that nothing needs to be done. I am not saying it is impossible to arrive there, but you will have difficulties. And we might meditate with a feeling of not having the same mind as the Buddha, thinking that I have not the same mind as the teacher. So we continue actually separating ourselves from awakening.

So it is good to understand these connections and of course it is all talking about an authentic practice of the preliminaries, when one is really into the qualities of the practices, not the quantity, not the numbers: They are not important.

Question: Is grasping not a vicious circle?

Answer: Why are we grasping? Because we think that there is something to grasp at. The reason is that we are not aware that there is nothing to grasp at. But if we grasp, we can find out that there is nothing to grasp at. Actually, the grasping is the solution. Try to grasp and look if you can hold onto anything. This will cure the grasping. This is why we always give this instruction: 'Look to see if you find anything to grasp at, if you can find mind, if you can find a self, if you can find something in the sensory experiences which you can hold'. So you are encouraged: Do it, and as you consciously do it, then you find that actually you cannot hold onto anything and this cures the grasping. So actually the advice is: grasp with more awareness. And then you will see that in spite of all the grasping, one cannot hold even one single moment of mind.

Question: Does one have to live with the guru?

Answer: No, as the text says, you can even take Milarepa, it doesn't need to be a living guru. If you meet an authentic teacher from time to time, this will be very helpful for your practice, but you needn't live with him or her. If there are difficulties with a teacher, direct your devotion more to the principle of awakening than towards the teacher. The teacher is most probably a human being. Sometimes students and teachers just sometimes they don't understand each other, they have different visions, and that is the human part of the relationship. To stay clear of that, it is better to direct one's devotion directly towards awakening and to see the human teacher as just one door which opens to awakening.

Teacher-student relationships are delicate because when we open up it is like a love affair. And we all know how difficult that is. There are all the hopes involved, all of what I wish for.

Question: How will devotion to the teacher help with the first accumulation?

Answer: By entering the mind of the guru, you will spontaneously accomplish more and more positive actions. This is how the first accumulation of merit comes about. You begin to see the world with the eyes of the guru, you are generous, you share the dharma, you give help.

Question: Can we practise guru yoga before the other practices?

Answer: Everything is possible. Actually, refuge and bodhicitta practice already is guru yoga, Vajrasattva practice is guru yoga, mandala offering is guru yoga. You cannot get away from guru yoga. Everything, just even reading a dharma text of the Buddha, the Pali canon, is a form of guru yoga. Especially if you understand the four kinds of guru (Lesson 17), then you will understand that with this vast understanding of what guru means, then everything becomes guru yoga. So you can of course start with that.

What is very good if, for example, if you love your silent meditation practice, to do a little guru yoga with it. That would be a good first thing. Gendun Rinpoche always taught shine-lhagthong together with a short Milarepa guru yoga or some guru yoga like that. Very short, also devotion, but of course one needs to be able to connect with it.

Do you know what is my preferred way of doing the guru yoga? I love to take the words of the teacher and read a sentence, and I go into the mind of the guru who taught or said these sentences. I allow my mind to open up to the understanding behind these words. When I don't understand, then I ask: Please show me. What is meant? That's a very nice way of doing guru yoga. It is very close to the original guru yoga where actually, while the teacher was teaching, the mind of the student opens to the dimension behind the words. That's how it all starts. Like this, over the years, I have read some of these dharma texts, and each one of these authors, although I have never met them, becomes so close. You have the feeling of knowing their mind and of becoming one with their mind. That's a very easy form of guru yoga for me.

This is the guru yoga the church proposes: read the bible and pray! Then you will understand. Meditate each word of the dharma and you will meet the guru, that's for sure. This is always a good solution when on the human level something doesn't work.

So let's dedicate this morning's practice together with all the beautiful things in the world, all the helpful actions that have ever occurred in this world. let's dedicate them all to enlightenment.

ON VIPASHYANA MEDITATION

G 2016 (34)

In order to enter insight meditation, we first need a grounding in shamatha practice which is actually a natural state of mind, not something special. A relaxed, open, clear state of mind.

The structure that you can do is to make the same prayers that we do at the beginning of each session. And you do this imagining the refuge in front of you. The refuge is the guru. And you can repeat the prayers more often, you can develop more devotion with this until you feel really connected to the refuge above and then you let the refuge dissolve into you.

With the dissolution, then first rest in natural mind, just not doing anything, just allow, so to speak, the guru inside of you to meditate. Allow the buddha inside to meditate.

This doesn't last for very long; the mind becomes active again, so then as the mind becomes active again, you start a little bit of shamatha practice. So you have to know: What is my main shamatha practice? This is the first thing you need to know. How do I calm my mind, what is the method I use most of the time to calm my mind? I have to have one principal method in which we train very often. Try to have something which you do almost every day so that you get really used to it, like coming home.

For example, if you had Vajradhara in front as your shamatha practice, then every day, to stabilise your attention, you would keep your attention on this blue Buddha, you would go through the different details, the radiance and the inner attitude, and you would know how to stabilise your attention. It becomes something very, very familiar, it becomes easy to do.

It is important to take one of the techniques to be your main technique which you use to calm your mind. And this is very importance. Sometimes, for example, at night, when you cannot fall asleep, you use that technique. Sometimes you have an afflictive emotion. Then you use that same method. You get so used to it that you can use it in difficult situations. And for this to work, you have to become very familiar with this. If you always swop your technique, you don't become so good at it, that it will work in difficult situations. That's the idea. When you become well-rooted in one technique, then you can start exploring others.

To sharpen your shamatha, you can also visualise (the meditation object) in your heart and make it smaller and smaller, but very vivid, very moving, and your attention becomes more and more fine and subtle, you can play with it.

To repeat: We take in the refuge in the form of a guru yoga, dissolving into us. You can also take the empowerments and you sit in natural meditation. When the mind starts moving, you use your shamatha meditation support.

And then, if you are a little bit stable like that and it does not need much effort any more, the vipashyana aspect can come in.

So from this calm state of mind where you feel clear and with only a very little tension, then vipashyana means to explore the mind and to become clearer about the nature of mind. There are various ways of doing it.

I want to be more precise, I just said: Explore the mind. Actually, you explore your experience. Forget about mind. You explore your experience. The big question behind all the other vipashyana questions is: How is it to be? How is life? This is the big one, the one we are clarifying over years of practice, we become very clear about how life works, how our experiences arise. I like this big question. It is very open. You can ask yourself: 'How is it to be now?' Not intellectually, not in general. 'How is it?'

Now the Buddha advised us to investigate change and impermanence. And this means to begin to get a feeling for the process-like nature of all experience. This is the beginning of vipashyana.

So the question is: Is this seeing or hearing, is it stable or not? How is it? How is the experience, is it stable or changing? How is it actually?

What I call a thought, an emotion, is it stable? How is it actually? How is the direct experience of being angry, of being afraid, of being happy - how is it if I look directly? How is the direct experience of what I call "I" or me? How is it when I turn the mind into the area, into the place, where I feel strongest that there is "I" or me, how is that?

Sometimes you can ask yourself the question: "Is there someone?" And of course, never answer with the intellect. Don't answer with a sentence, don't give yourself an answer. The questions are meant to help us look deeper.

You know, if you ask: "Is there someone there?" and then your habitual tendency answers. "Yes, of course, what do you want?", then you have missed the point. If I ask "Is there someone there?", what I want is actually to feel how does this sensation of me, of "I". really feel, how does it arise, how does it disappear. I have such a strong sense of self but if I look - wow, I had such a strong sense of "I" and now when I look I can't find it. And to investigate again and again like this - this is the meaning of lhag tong.

So those of you who really wish to go step by step, you would actually work through the different lessons here and you would go through the different questions. Maybe you cannot relate to all of them because it is a little bit old fashioned, but you would go and clarify over the months and years one chapter after the other.

Just do a little bit of vipashyana. Don't bombard yourselves with questions, just little turnings of the mind. How is it? Is it stable? I call this a light-handed vipashyana, a light-handed lhagthong. Just a little question, a littler turning of mind. No big deal. But it increases, it heightens your awareness of just how it is to be, That's the point.

You'll know that you are doing it in the right way when the effect of your question is that something relaxes in you. There is this turning of awareness inside and there is something which relaxes. You have been successful in turning the awareness into the centre of the tension, where there was some clinging in the mind. This is where you turn the awareness and when that relaxes, you don't do anything else, you stay in the open state.

And then, when mind becomes active again, you have the possibility of again asking a little question to open and relax the mind, or you use your shamatha object again, your shamatha meditation. So your meditation flows between just natural being, then working with a support and a little inquiry. These are the three elements of a meditation in the style of shamatha-vipashyana.

And then of course at the end you dedicate and this would be a session of silent meditation.

Then of course you might want to connect this with developing more love and compassion and this is very easy: You do this breathing from the heart, breathing in, breathing out, receptivity, compassion, flowing, support, love. Actually, when you do this, you are using love and compassion as a support for your meditation. They are perhaps the best support you can find.

So even in a short period of meditation when you have ten or fifteen minutes only, it is possible to do that.

ENHANCING THE PRACTICE

LESSON 59: DISPELLING MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE OBJECT

G 2016 (35)

“In fact it is not correct to cling to the idea that everything unwholesome, such as the three mind poisons, should be rejected, and everything wholesome, such as generosity, should be adopted and acquired. In this present approach, the five mind poisons must be brought on the path.”

If we talk about five mind poisons, it includes also jealousy and pride. Actually it means that all emotions must be brought on the path.

“Furthermore, from the point of view of the abiding nature of mahamudra, things to be rejected or adopted do not exist in the least. Those applying themselves earnestly to putting the profound meaning into practice must give up the idea that there are any phenomena to reject or adopt and that there is something concrete to be accomplished, because it is said: “What is the use of making tens of thousands of offerings to divinities, if I bind myself by it.”

As it is said in countless sources, it is inappropriate to cling to anything out of attachment. Yet this non-clinging must never lead you to despise the law of cause and effect of your actions.”

Understanding that there should be no clinging to anything, it doesn't mean that one can do whatever passes through the mind and harm others and so on.

“ In short, wrong conceptions about the object will be dispelled by letting all dualistic concepts, like samsara and nirvana, wholesome and unwholesome, rejecting and adopting become of equal taste in the nondual primordial awareness.”

Wrong ideas about the object of our practice, about the real purpose of our practice.

The chapter we are starting now is all about clarifying what our practice really is, what's the real point of the practice. These lessons are not exercises anymore. It is not something to practice now, but it is the underlying understanding that accompanies all practice.

The Karmapa is saying here: If you think that you have to abandon the afflictive emotions and to cultivate what is wholesome, to cultivate the qualities, you are missing the point. You need to know the nature of the kleshas. You don't have to fight with them. Just knowing how they truly are. This is the point. If you fight with your anger, your desire and so on, they constantly become stronger and your practice is caught in duality.

Look at the nature of anger, desire, jealousy, pride and also these dull states of mind. And you will see that there is no more problem because you see through them. They lose all their power; they have no power whatsoever.

Question: But isn't applying remedies tightening?

Answer: Yes, applying remedies is a lower level of practice. Now the remedy is not fighting, it is changing our attention to a wholesome state of mind that is more powerful than the present suffering state. So it is changing one's attention. It is not fighting, it is having a different focus.

Actually, the previous course we did on the five ways of working with emotions was not about remedies. The first one was to stop, to find space, not to follow the emotion. The second is to apply remedies. The third is to transform our attitude, our vision. The fourth is to know the nature of our emotion. And the fifth is to take emotions as the path.

Now we are talking about four and five. During the course (at the time), we spent most of our time on the remedies and transforming our vision. Now we go to the mahamudra way of working with emotions.

Emotions are not enemies. They are just intense states of mind. By knowing their nature, they free themselves.

Now the other part: Qualities do not need to be adopted and trained in, qualities just need to be liberated. They are also just the expression of the nature of mind.

You probably immediately have a feeling that what is being said is very true and at the same time you probably also know that it is quite a subtle, demanding practice to maintain. And it is important to know that the highest form of practice is just knowing the reality of what manifests, of what is there. There is no need to apply remedies, to fight, to cultivate anything. Just opening up to being is enough.

So here, the Karmapa explicitly mentions that this is the teaching about how to bring the five poisons onto the path, how to integrate them into the mahamudra practice.

Question: How do we liberate qualities?

Answer: By relaxing, by opening the mind, they all show. When you relax, there is so much love flowing from you, you become sensitive because you are not stressed, you become compassionate, it is all coming by itself. There is no need to cultivate that, to make it.

The key point here is that the kleshas; the emotions and the mental states do not exist in the least. The moment that we do not believe in an emotion anymore, the moment we do not identify, what happens? The emotion is gone! It has not the least existence, no power to stay. The way the term existence is used here is something which exists on its own. It doesn't exist on its own. An emotion depends on our belief and our identification. When this belief is gone, the emotion is gone.

So the object of the practice is not to fight with the emotions or to find a better remedy for the emotions. In Tibet and English, the object also means the point of the practice, like the aim, what is the focus of the practice. So the focus is to know the nature of every mental state. That's the real point of the practice.

And also, the point of the practice is not to attain or to accomplish anything concrete. We do not practise mahamudra in order to accomplish love or compassion or awakening. These do not have any existence as such, they are also just processes of being open. An open way of being in the world. There is no such thing as a static, stable, self-existing state of awakening. What we call awakening is actually that way of being which is there when there is no grasping. When there is no more lack of awareness, when there is complete awareness, we call it awakening, and you know already that awareness is not a thing, it is aware-ing, mind-ing, being aware all the time, it is process. So-called buddhahood is process. It is always freshly manifesting in every situation.

So becoming awakened is not constructing a house of cards. Like: kleshas, you stay away, and you stay away, and I build up my house of qualities: a little generosity, a little bit of love, a little bit of compassion, a little gratitude. and when the house is high, then I am awakened. And something comes like a little wind, and it all falls apart. No, it is not like this.

Awakening is being completely aware, open and saying: Come on, so-called enemies, maras, emotions, show! Where are you? And it is just knowing the nature of whatever is, nothing can disturb this, nothing has to be protected, there is no self to be protected, there is no awakening to be protected, it is just the knowing. That's all. Qualities flow, manifest. These qualities don't need protection, it is just that the awareness itself is awakening. Awareness is the protection. There is no protection of qualities, it is just that.

Question: I am OK with emotions, but how do we deal with instincts, like thoughts of strong desire?

Answer: Let it be, whatever it is, it is a mental state. It is forces in action, strong ones, habits. All of them are self-liberating. If you have one of those instincts coming, let it pass through.

Question: Will there be a time when we know all our mental states?

Answer: When awareness becomes continuous twenty-four hours and so subtle as not to block anything, then everything becomes conscious. We only need to know the present state of mind, always the present one, and this is possible.

I don't know how life is for a buddha. Really, I don't know. I don't have personal experience of it. But I can see what other people call 'unconscious', the unconscious forces in our mind. For advanced practitioners, for aware practitioners, they become conscious. And in my own mind, very subtle impulses that in previous years were completely unconscious, they are now part of what I am aware of.

And then there comes a second process. It is when awareness enters these previously unconscious, preconscious areas of our being, it relaxes and dissolves those tendencies. So there are less and less such impulses working in our mind. This is an interesting phenomenon. It is not continuing to be thousands and hundreds of thousands of impulses all the time. It simplifies. It becomes more and more lucid, clear and simple. And the remaining impulses become all the more clear. Because there are fewer of them, then those which are there become clearer and receive the attention of awareness. Awareness can see them and also bring in this possibility to relax, dissolve, not identify.

So we will see what it will be like when we are buddhas and we can have another discussion then. It is an old discussion. Do you know this psychoanalyst called C.G.Jung? He had contact with a zen master. It was in these early times, just after the second world

war. C.G. Jung said: "You cannot know all the unconscious." And the Zen master said: "No, you can know all the so-called unconscious. It can all become conscious and be liberated." They were having this on-going discussion about this. So my experience points more into the direction of the zen master.

In the beginning, I always discovered more. More and more of these little movements, strong forces and so on in my mind. And then it reached a point when it became really painful, so many impulses, so many little thoughts and big thoughts. Difficult to bear, to be aware of all of that. And then it began to simplify. Then it began to dissolve, at the surface others appeared, but on the whole then constantly simplifying, always less that moves about without clearly being aware. This is my personal experience.

In the recent years, I still discover new impulses and forces I was not aware of before. So the process is not all finished. I am not saying that this is already close to finishing, but it is that even those I have discovered in recent years, they are seemingly connected to very early childhood and even before birth, even those have much more awareness and they are already in the process of dissolving. Due to the awareness becoming really simple. I talk to you about it because I think that maybe it is helpful. Maybe it is good to know of how such a process could be and then we can only share experience. This much I can share from my experience.

My observation is that these so-called unconscious forces, these drives which often influence us, don't manifest themselves just by accident. They are always triggered by something in our contact with the world. There is always a little trigger.

And I also know a state of mind where there is absolutely no clinging to any triggers, where there is absence of any such activity of triggers and the resulting forces. It is what one calls clear light or this basic state of mind. And I can imagine that this basic non-grasping presence could be there more and more, something which we are and live in the world. So there is no more triggering of these subconscious forces because the awareness has been brought into each and every one of them and they are not operative any more.

This is what the teachings say, and I think that it is possible that the awareness of clear light spreads to all situations of life. That's personally, how I can imagine it. There is no need to be aware of all and everything because what one becomes aware of, there is not so much left because of this incredible purification of mind. There is such an incredible simplicity in the state of awakening. It is not a complicated mind that one has to be aware of.

I hope that helps you somehow.

Question: In our inquiry, do we also go back to the causes of emotions, not just the feelings of the emotions, that brings us back to our childhood that was the start of these emotions?

Answer: Yeah (some hesitation in the voice of LT), you also go back to the causes, but watch out that you don't get lost into too much intellectual inquiry. But if we go back to the causes of tension and suffering, we do go there.

(Dedication)

DAY 7 (160707-0186-0191)

2016 (36) Meditation: Dancing with Phenomena

(Recitation)

Again, let's receive blessings from the refuge and let the refuge dissolve into us.

Let the mind become as open as the sky now, opening up all the senses. Feeling with our whole body, hearing without any resistance or grasping, opening the eyes wide to let the light come in, smelling the fresh morning, maybe still tasting something. And being completely aware of all that is happening inside. There is some thinking, emotional tones. And then become aware also of the ground of our being, how it is to be aware.

Becoming completely, that ever-changing awareness, which always has the same taste.

Relaxing completely into the experience of change. Just open, flowing, nothing to do.

The stability comes from not grasping in this flowing experience.

Continuously evolving experience. Dissolving the resistance without any clinging. In full awareness,

There is no need for letting go, just open up to that.

All sensory experiences are a stimulation to awareness. And this is what we call the dakini principle. Opening up to complete experience, is like living the dance of the dakinis.

There is a simultaneous experience of what happens and its ungraspable nature. We can also say: Of its changing nature. Just like in a dance. One doesn't grasp at a single moment of the experience, but let it flow on.

Let this dance be a dance of freedom. And if you wish to guide the dance, let it be a dance of love and compassion.

(Bell)

And this dance is going on all the time. The various experiences of the five outer senses and the spontaneously arising mental movements. And we can dance along, we can influence this dance by the way we create, we let arise, mental movements, what kind of attitudes, there is an input from our side. We cannot influence the five outer senses, but we can dance with them in a certain way.

In the space of phenomena, we sometimes have to make space for big, truck-like dakinis passing through (there was a truck outside). We dance around, we let them come through and continue dancing. Just sensory experience.

Did you notice when there was this sound from upstairs? How it wakens up? This is the quality of all sensory experiences. They can wake us up. They can wake us up to the reality of it.

Strong experience and no substance, already gone. This is called the one-taste of emptiness, the one-taste of the ungraspable nature.

And like every dance, one usually starts out as someone dancing, like I am dancing with phenomena. And like in every good dance, we get lost and then there is no-one dancing. It is as if the forces of intuition, love and so on, take over. Not some "I" with its hopes and fears.

(Dedication)

2016 (37, first part)

Do you understand the symbol of the dakini?

Dakini is the principle of awareness. It is the female form of a buddha, usually dancing. They dance in the space of timeless awareness. It is symbolic language. The impressions of the six sense fields are called dakinis. The impressions of the six sense fields dance in the space of timeless awareness. They awaken us to the natures of reality. The six sense fields are called dakinis. the impressions of the six sense fields dance in the space of timeless awareness. They awaken us to the nature of reality.

A sense impression connected to hearing wakes us up. It makes us completely alert. The normal reaction is: Maybe a problem? Oh, no problem. In the ordinary process of perceiving, it is like something appears, a sound, a visual sight, a physical sensation whatever, and you look: Problem or no problem? Do I need to react or not? Do I want to grasp or do I want to defend myself? This is the basic survival question with sensory experience.

When you wake up to the message of the dakini, it is a little bit different. The dakini message is: Look, something happening! No substance. Clear appearance? Ungraspable. So the dakini message awakens us to the empty, ungraspable nature of phenomena.

This is just a different language to what we were talking about all these days. And then of course you can enter the dance, the “I”, the observer, gets lost in the process of dancing.

Loving, compassionate, generous awareness dancing the dance of phenomena. No self involved. Useless. Just disturbing the dance. It can be as simple as that.

LESSON 60: DISPELLING MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT TIME

G 2016 (37, second part)

“It is not correct to believe that you will traverse the path during three incalculable eons, with the idea that you will reach true enlightenment after a certain lapse of time. Practitioners, who apply the essential points of mahamudra, must realize the sameness of the three times. The division into three times—past, present and future—is merely a labeling of deluded immature persons. The past does not exist as past, because it has been the present and the future before, and the same holds true for the present and the future. Furthermore, according to this Dharma tradition, realization is obtained right now, on this very seat. Therefore it is necessary to realize that the three times are identical and do not exist separately. A practitioner who has realized this, can bless an eon into an instant and an instant into an eon. This is possible because of the sameness of the three times. If they were distinct from one another, such a thing would be unreasonable. It is said: “The one who realizes that the three times are timeless...” By recognizing this certainty of the abiding nature, you will be freed from the misconception of holding time to really exist as such, thinking that you will reach buddha-hood after a certain lapse of time.”

This is the reason why I use the term timeless awareness, thoughts beyond conceptions of time. Let’s look at our normal way of perceiving time. we think: “There is my future, here is my present and this is my past.” We kind of separate the three.

Actually, we have a sliding time frame. Whatever has been the future, will become the present, will become the past. They are not definitely separate, they are just like sliding time, all the time. The so-called future feeds into the present, goes into the past. All the time. It is not that the future is definitely future and always stays like this.

Then we have to ask ourselves: Can I experience something in the future? It is not possible. I cannot experience something in the future, the future must become the present. I can only experience something in the present.

Can I experience the past? Also not. When I remember the past, it is a present experience. Then we say: The past conditions the present, how I live now, how I see the world now, how I experience the world now, is conditioned by the past experiences. Does this mean that the past is present now? In a way, yes. Whatever remains of the past is present now. For the effects of the past, like the effects of my last sentence are still

present now. Your understanding of the last words are present now as the next words are being said. And where is the part of the past which has not produced effects? Where would it be? It does not exist any more. A past that has not produced effects does not exist any more.

So the past only exists as its effects in the present. It can exist as memories, images, sounds we remember, monuments that were built, ruins that are there, trees which are rotting in the forest. The past exists in the present as something active in the present.

That's incredible if you realise that! There is no past. For as far as past is remembered, the effects of it are experienced, it's all in the present.

Now where is the future? the future is in the forces of now which determine the next moment and the next moment. The forces of now are constantly creating the future.

Our thoughts about the future are not the future. They are present. We are thinking them now. So whatever we think of, conceive of, plan, is present experience, not the future. The future will be different.

The future of tomorrow exists in the forces active today. Now. The weather changes are already operating now, the thoughts we are having now, the interactions we have with people now - all of what will be in the future is in the now. It is nowhere else. There is no more place for the future than in the forces active in the now.

No past, no future. Now. And how is the now? The least we can say is that it is highly dynamic. The present is ungraspable, but extremely dynamic. Everything is present, everything is now, but it is impossible to even look at it and hold it still for a moment. Impossible to know all the forces active now.

How can you know the past? By properly understanding the present and being able to read in the present how the forces of the past have created this experience of now: What we can see now, what we can touch now, what we can think now, what we can hear now, what we have in our hands - if you understand the present with a wonderful analysis of cause and effect, then you know the past.

How can you know the future? Again, by knowing the present. If we know exactly what forces are active in the universe now, if we were able to have a proper analysis of all the forces going on, we could say what the future will be. Where would any new force arise from? Is there anything outside of now that a new force could arise from? Reflect.

We are talking about incalculable forces and energies, interactions. In all these galaxies and so on, the forces of now are incredible.

Question: Is the future determined?

Answer: All the forces are already active now. So, for us, since we don't know the future. There is surprise after surprise because we simply just don't know enough about the potential of the situation. Infinitely complex, so complex that none of us can predict the future even of the next minute.

If someone wants to make a prophecy about the future of a country, for example, then the person would have to know the workings of the country very intimately and the relationships with the surroundings. And the hidden assumption is that people will continue to behave as they behave now. But there is a possibility that some people behave differently than how they behaved before because these forces are also there: The potential to behave a little differently is also there in the present which you call the creativity, the spontaneity of mind. There is potential, there are forces active which can make for a different development of, for example, our group. We might behave differently after we leave this course than we behaved before. We are not so predictable any more.

Say, two people have become enemies. They don't understand each other. They have been hurting each other. Then the prediction would be that these two people are going to fight until the end of their lives. But there is a possibility that one of them, or even both of them, encounter a situation which makes them reflect, rethink the situation, and they touch on a deeper understanding and love that opens up a new attitude to this old situation. Something which is not very likely to happen, but it can happen. There is the potential for this in the situation. And when that happens, then the prophecy goes wrong, because things will go differently. So if one were to make a prophecy about humanity, one would not only have to take into account the mechanics of the workings of obsessive thinking and behaviour, but one also has to take into account the forces of love, compassion, wisdom, understanding and so on. All of that has to be taken into account.

And there are incredible forces. Unused most of the time, but there are incredible forces which are there. This where we can see how difficult true understanding of all the forces active in the present now because it is not only the mechanical workings of emotions; very predictable, but there are also the workings of what we call buddha-nature which are basic qualities of mind which are not used so often and which create a completely different course of events if they are put into practice. If they are followed up, if they have a chance to have an effect.

Question: Yes, I understand that there is no past. But isn't the past actually our karma?

Answer: The karma is also in the present. There is no karma in the past. The karma is only effective in as much as forces are stimulated, active now. A karma that is inactive is dead. There is no karma when it is inactive. Karma needs to be a force always active in the now. And this is how it continues. This is the real understanding of karma. In the same way, you could continue your question: 'But isn't karma what will be in the future?' Yes, indeed, in as much as there are forces active in the now that are creating the future. And we can change our karma. We can change it because now we can use forces, for example of confessing, to bring in love and compassion where there was anger. We have lots of means to purify negative effects to create positive effects or no effects whatsoever. We have many possibilities.

The word karma in Sanskrit comes from doing, creating. Whatever is producing effects. It is only by effects, effects creating more effects. There are chains of causes and effects that is how so-called karma works. In German, we have this wonderful word “wirken”, ‘das Gewirkte ist die Wirklichkeit;’ maybe the word creation is the closest we can get in English. Karma is constant production of further effects which follow one from the other. So it is like productive chains of causes and effects.

Have you intellectually understood that past and future do not exist as such, they are experienced, they are forces active in the now? Reality is experienced in the now and it is the forces active in the now that always create the unfolding of reality in the always unfolding now. This is what we call the process nature of reality. And in the process, there are countless forces which are interacting. We call these dynamics also sometimes interdependent or dependent origination, the interdependent processes.

On careful examination, none of the factors involved, none of the people involved, the animals, the plants, the weather - whatever you look at, none of this can be found to be solid. Everything is process itself. None of it is graspable. None of the causes and so-called effects in the universe have the characteristics of the so-called wheels in a clock-work where you would have something definite and precise. Each and every aspect of reality has this ungraspable, empty nature. And the unfolding of these interactions happens in an ungraspable now. No-one can catch the now. The now itself does not exist. It is an always changing now, if it is something that always changes, it does not exist as such, it does not have an identity that exists for even an instant without changing. Something which has a constantly changing identity, you cannot call it a something. It is constantly evolving. The term “now” refers to something that is always in the process of change.

This is the union of the so-called relative world of cause and effect and its ultimate reality which is the ungraspable. Reality is empty of solidity, empty of self.

So when I say: ‘I might get enlightened in the future after so many lifetimes’, what kind of nonsense we are thinking! One thing is for sure: We will get enlightened in the ungraspable now. In this timeless now, awakening, enlightenment is already there. It depends on the play of factors active in our mind when it will show or not show. And we can influence these factors.

When there is a deep understanding, confidence, blessing, opening up to just how it is, the that awakened now can be now. This is the mahamudra teaching. This is the teaching of Vajrayana. Awakening in the ungraspable now.

The major factor that prevents the nature of our true being manifesting is doubt and fixed ideas. We believe that it cannot be like this and we doubt, we do not trust, the very nature of our mind. When those two are gone, awakening is easy.

That’s why there is also this teaching about time. These teachings help us intellectually to take away some wrong ideas which block our conception: ‘I will get enlightened later, in

the future'. This is a fixed idea which is not in accordance with reality. To intellectually make it weaker already, to weaken this idea, to even maybe be able to dissolve it, is a big help for the meditative process.

Question: What does "to bless" mean?

Answer: This means to enter the aeon with one's enlightened awareness. To bless an aeon into an instant and an instant into an aeon. It means that for an awakened person, the aeon is comprised in the instant, and in the instant is the unfolding of the aeon. The blessing here, the Tibetans would understand it like this: The mind of a buddha is completely open and - well this limited language -, but if the whole of now is penetrated by the buddha's awareness and of course the 'now' contains all the forces active in all the future to come, then all the future to come is blessed.

I would like you to take this instruction just as an opening for your intuitive understanding. Don't put much of your intellect on it, intellectually, it stands up to reason, there is no problem. But that's not what is the meaning of that explanation. If something can touch you - wow, for a moment I am looking into the mystery of life - you can't grasp it with your intellect, but something opens for you, this is the reason for this teaching. When you get familiar with it, you can put words on it. But as it is very new and just a baby-like experience, don't come in with too much intellectual thinking. If the experience is still within the frame of fixed ideas, it will hinder the expression of this. There are some extremely intelligent people in the world who have come to this conclusion by deep reflection. Not so much by an awakening experience, but just by deep reflection. It is also possible to go that way. That would be the opposite to my approach.

G 2016 (38) **Guided Meditation on Guru yoga**

Of course first we take refuge and develop bodhicitta.

(Recitation of refuge and bodhicitta)

Through this prayer, let us develop deeply our inner direction towards awakening for the benefit of all. Take a moment to breathe in the refuge, in the quality of bodhicitta.

Then let all ideas dissolve and rest for a moment, as natural as possible.

And then, with the SVABHAVA-mantra we remind ourselves of the empty, pure nature of all phenomena as well as of ourselves.

OM SVABHAVA SHUDDAH SARVADHARMA SVABHAVA SHUDDHO HANG.

And from within that understanding we instantly appear as the noble Vajrayogini. The red body, one face, two arms, the right hand holding a vajra hooked knife and the left holding

a skull cup full of nectar, with in the crook of the left arm a khatvanga with all ornaments and decorations complete.

The khatvanga is a symbolic representation of our partner, the male aspect of enlightenment. We are in dancing posture, transparent and our red body emanates incredibly strong light of all five colours. We are surrounded by the fire of timeless awareness.

On top of our head is a lotus and on this lies a moon disc, on which is seated the blue Buddha Vajradhara as our root lama. He is embellished with all ornaments, holding vajra and bell in crossed mudra in front of his heart. And he is seated in vajra posture. Take a while to visualise the blue Vajradhara above your head.

Around him are countless lineage lamas together with an ocean-like assembly of awakened beings.

Then clearly holding Vajradhara in mind, we do the following supplication in seven branches (see prayer of Düsüm Khyenpa Lesson 15) and we imagine that countless emanations do exactly what we are saying; for example bowing down, offering and so on.

"I bow down to the glorious, sublime master in his palace of the dharmadhatu, the realm which has nothing above it. You are the quintessence of all the buddhas of the three times and you clearly show to me that my mind is the dharmakaya."

With this we imagine waves of prostrations performed hundreds of thousands of emanations of ourselves. We prostrate to awakening. We bow down with deep respect and intense longing to realise the dharmakaya.

Then we imagine that the same emanated deities offer actual possessions and mentally created offerings and do all kinds of praises.

Then I confess all harmful actions done in the past without exception. And I will from now on never again commit any harmful actions. It takes some time to reflect about the many times when I was caught in clinging to a self. Clinging to emotions as real and all the acts that have resulted from that. And then we prostrate to the hundreds of thousands of deities and ask for the blessing to find the understanding to not repeat such harmful behaviour again.

Then I rejoice in the wholesome actions of all living beings. And I dedicate them to become the basis for supreme awakening. Let's take time to reflect on all the wonderful beneficial actions in this universe and let's dedicate them all to awakening.

Then we imagine that the emanated deities appear in front of every single buddha, all of them, all the completely awakened beings. and we imagine saying: I pray to you to remain and not to pass beyond this world into nirvana.

Please stay here and turn the wheel of the unsurpassable supreme vehicle. And with this, we again bow down, we make offerings, multiplied by millions of emanations. And we imagine that the Buddhas accept to teach us more.

And we ask for blessing:

“Please grant your blessing that I become perfected in impartial love and compassion...”

We take time to feel our aspiration towards love, compassion and the deepest possible understanding.

“Grant your blessing so that I understand this illusory body...”

And as we pray, we feel already that Vajradhara and all the awakened ones around him are responding to us. Their light increases and we feel like bathed in light.

And then there is the prayer which is usually repeated many times:

“To you, precious teacher, ...”

Continue making your own wishes, in the style: “Grant your blessing that I...” and then continue with your wish.

Just talk to the Buddha and ask for blessing. Pray, if you can, from the depths of your heart with your own words and feel that the blessing is already coming.

And bring in the force of commitment in your prayer, the commitment that you will do everything for this to become true.

And then, although we could continue praying for a long time like this, we pass on to the four empowerments.

First we make the request:

“Sublime teacher, ...”

We make the prayer that we really get the meaning of the four empowerments, that our mind quickly matures and that we enter the four kinds of enlightened activity.

Through the intensity of our prayer then all the surrounding figures, the whole entourage melts into light. And this light merges with Vajradhara in the centre and he becomes even more shiny, radiating with light, as if we were looking into the sun.

The first empowerment is for the body:

“From his forehead emanates a boundless stream of nectar...”

I am empowered to see myself as a buddha and to manifest as an emanation body. Take time to visualise this first empowerment through white rays of light and feel how your awareness of your own physical body changes as if the body were drinking the nectar of blessing.

Then the second empowerment for the speech:

“From the throat of Vajradhara”

I am empowered to practise the energy body of the Buddha, with the channels, energies and essences. As we receive the red light into our throat, we can feel how our capacity to communicate and interact with the world is opening up.

Then the third empowerment for the mind:

“From the heart centre of the Buddha...”

I am empowered to practise the path of bliss of the four joys: Joy, special joy, supreme joy and innate or ultimate joy. As the blue light enters the heart, tune in into how the mind is changing, opening up into the mahamudra dimension of being in joy and emptiness.

Then, for the fourth initiation:

“From the three centres...”

Let’s feel for a while the effect of these four empowerments.

Again we pray to Vajradhara:

“Glorious, precious root teacher, please bestow your blessing.”

After this, our root teacher dissolves into light and dissolves into us. We become inseparable and remain in mahamudra meditation.

And from that state, from a meditation that can be as long as we wish, we reappear in the illusory body of daily activity.

And then we would do the dedication.

(Dedication)

So this was to give you a little taste of how it could be. This is the basic structure as it is explained by the 9th Karmapa.

In the Kagyü tradition, they also use a guru mantra inside the puja, inside the sadhana, which is Karmapa Chenno, the mantra of awakened activity. But the fitting mantra here of the original version would be “OM AH GURU VAJRADHARA HUM.” So actually, these are the three syllables of body, speech and mind OM AH HUM with GURU VAJRADHARA in the middle, who is the root buddha, the embodiment of dharmakaya mind. Actually, when we asked Lama Gendun how we could pray to him, he never said that we should pray to him. But once he was circumnubating the stupa and a student behind him was reciting loudly this mantra OM AH GURU VAJRADHARA HUM, thinking of him. And then Lama Gendun turned around and he made a sign: Yes, this is it. Because this is a mantra where you don't direct yourself to a person but to the essence of enlightenment.

Question: During the four empowerments, do we visualise ourselves as yidam?

Answer: You don't have to insist on that, but if you think of yourself, then it is better as a yidam. So you don't have to make a special effort, but instead of thinking as yourself as a normal body, it is helpful to think of yourself as a yidam.

Question: And the seven-branch prayer?

Answer: Also as Vajrayogini.

Question: Why do we have many emanations?

Answer: The meaning of these millions of emanations is that our thoughts simultaneously go into all directions, wherever there are awakened beings. And this makes it possible for us to make millions of offerings, millions of prostrations, millions of requests and prayers, something that in our normal form we would not be able to do.

They are not beings, they are just thoughts, mental activity. You are Buddha Vajrayogini and wherever your thoughts go, you have dakinis emanating.

It is as simple as when you look at a child and, as you look, you feel like your hand is stretching out to strike over her hair to caress her. It is the same thing when you have emanations going to the buddhas; the same principle.

Question: Does Vajrayogini dissolve?

Answer: Yes, our idea of being Vajrayogini also dissolves. Vajradhara dissolves into us. We have been Vajrayogini all through the practice, but then also our idea of ourselves as being someone or something also dissolves.

Question: What about the ones we emanated?

Answer: You can, if you want, dissolve them back into your heart from where they emanated. Otherwise you can just forget them.

If I summarise for you, the practice is very simple. We start with normal refuge and bodhicitta, we develop confidence in our own buddha-nature, symbolised by Vajrayogini, we open up to the qualities of awakening through prayer. There is an answer opening our mind through these light rays, stream of nectar, and we allow ourselves to open. Then we let the awakened dimension completely enter us, this is the dissolution of the Buddha into us and then we stay just like that without anyone meditating. It is a method to meditate just through blessing. Not doing anything oneself.

THE FOUR SPECIFIC CONDITIONS

LESSON 16: THE CAUSAL CONDITION

G 2016 (39)

“As causal condition you need to be a renunciate, free from taking things as real and without attachment to anything whatsoever.”

We should underline this sentence because this is what gives the cause of realisation: To be a renunciate, not to take things as real and not to have attachment to anything whatsoever. This is what opens up to the nondual experience, to the experience completely free from grasping.

“Through the previously taught common preliminaries you understand that this precious human body with the freedoms and riches is difficult to obtain. Contemplating impermanence, you should reflect, “My life is as impermanent as dew on tips of grass. It will quickly perish, and nothing whatsoever can prevent it. I do not know when I will die, and at the time of death nothing except the Dharma will be of any benefit. The possessions of this life, the defeating of enemies, the protection of friends are meaningless. I will look after the aims of future lives without getting distracted even for a moment.””

If the sun shines on the dew on the grass, it will perish very quickly and nothing can prevent it. When I think of dying and the on-going processes, going through this life, then another life, what is really important? It is our understanding of reality. So this puts

everything else into proper perspective. It is enough to just have enough to eat, it is fine to have friends, it is also fine not to have friends, really, just being authentic, following one's path of understanding, opening one's heart, this is what counts.

“By this, the wild mind becomes tamed and you recognise correctly the characteristics of samsaric phenomena. Feeling disenchanted and repulsed by them, and wishing to obtain liberation from them”

We understand properly that there is no happiness to be found in clinging. Samsaric phenomena are experiences are connected to clinging, to self-importance, to grasping, entanglement. It is not this world. this world is not samsara. It is the clinging, grasping, which makes samsara.

“You will not have the slightest desire and attachment for this life, not to mention ordinary worldly occupations.”

This is a way of saying that we have not the slightest attachment and desire for worldly occupations in this life. We could also say: we appreciate this life too much to waste it in samsaric preoccupations.

Actually, we don't care so much about this life. What we care about is to become free.

With this deep contemplation:

“Then you should abandon all dharmic study, reflection, analysis, recitations, and stay in a completely secluded place in the manner of a renunciate, giving up all outer and inner distractions.”

This is strong stuff. The Karmapa is writing about how to realise mahamudra. Then we even give up studying the dharma, also this is then a distraction. You give up the intellectual preoccupation with dharma, the reflection and the analysis.

And when he says that you give up recitation, don't think you have to give up the little bit of recitations that you are doing. This is not meant. He is talking about these monastic practices where there they spent whole days reciting texts, pujas. Those who wish to realise mahamudra are told to stay away from the monasteries. Just an occupation. Most rituals in the monasteries would be invented so that the monks are not so distracted all day long. So they had something good to do. If you do a ritual, a recitation, do them with your full heart, and sometimes you stop, you meditate and it is a meditation. It is not like repeating words just running through. So it is like really felt with the heart, then a ritual has real meaning.

So we go into a secluded place and do a retreat. Retreat means that we close ourselves in, we have no internet connection. We don't go into all the outer distractions. Even when there is the final in world championship in football, we don't watch it. No need. We also give up inner distractions. Inner distractions are all the plans we make, all the

speculations, all this world of thoughts. We get entangled with our own thinking, maybe writing: Now I will write poems, now I will write a book and so on, all this inner preoccupation.

I remember in my very first vipassana retreat of ten days, I had just moved and I needed to build a kitchen. So in the vipassana retreat, I planned the kitchen without any notes, I planned the kitchen through with every screw everywhere (laughter). Outwardly I was sitting still, I was sitting like a mountain, I did not move. Fortunately, inner distraction is my secret. So it is the inner lama that is needed to watch out not to get involved with inner distraction.

I have had musicians come into retreat that were spending hours inventing, composing new melodies, new tunes and so on. Everyone has his/her own ways of inwardly distracting himself or herself. What will I paint when I get home, the poems I will write, what I will I plant in the garden, how will I make presents for my family and so on. We find endless preoccupations in there.

I don't know if it has happened to you. But students in retreat begin studying the patterns of the floor and they make combinations of meanings of how the patterns combine in the carpet and so on. They just get so bored that they use anything for distraction.

Why do we give this up?

“The need for this is that mahamudra practice (understanding), means penetrating the crucial point of the mind.”

It is penetrating into the very nature of mind.

“If the mind is chasing after entertainment and distractions, concentration will not develop. Therefore you should practice in a secluded place.”

What is called here concentration, you can call samadhi, absorption, settling of the mind.

If you understand this instruction, your secluded place is your room at home. It can be your retreat room, but it depends on how you behave in that room, how you work with your mind.

LESSON 17: THE MAIN CONDITION

“The path leading to the realization of mahamudra depends entirely on the teacher. Therefore you need the support of a genuine spiritual friend. The teacher appears in four different forms: (1) the human teacher with a transmission, (2) the Buddha's words as teacher, (3) the appearances as teacher, (4) the ultimate reality as teacher.”

The guru or spiritual friend (tib. dge-ba'i bshes-gnyen, Skr. kalyanamaitra) is the main condition.

“1. The Human Teacher with a Transmission

“You should look for a spiritual friend with the following qualities and rely on him with one-pointed respectful confidence.”

So check out the teacher whether the following points come together.

“his (or her) meditative tradition of pith instructions has come from Vajradhara down to his root teacher without corruption,”

So you cannot check, of course, where the source of the instructions was, but you can check whether there is the authentic force of awakening behind the instructions that the teacher is giving. And you check. We have to have the definite feeling that a teacher is giving the instructions without corrupting them, without twisting them.

Also we check if the teacher

“Is able to bring about in the mind stream of the students special experiences and understanding.”

Is this teacher able to open the door of wisdom in others in accordance with his or her understanding of the view? If the teacher is not able to open up new understanding in us, then of course it is difficult to learn from them. There will be no learning because no doors of new understanding open. Up to here, these are general criteria.

Now there are more specific mahamudra criteria:

“Knowing thoughts to be beneficial, he fosters the transformation of everything arising into aids of wisdom. He is able to transform unfavorable conditions and difficulties into favorable conditions and qualities.”

Does this teacher know thoughts to be beneficial? So is there an attitude of mind in the teaching that thoughts are not enemies, but that thoughts show us the nature of mind? This is an important, very central key point of the teaching.

Does the teacher help us to transform everything that arises in our mind into aids to wisdom? So this means: Does the teacher use sense impressions in order to develop deeper understanding? Does the teacher help us to use, to understand emotions as a help to deeper understanding? Does the teacher help us to use the problems and challenges in our lives as a means to transform into deeper understanding?

If it is not like this, this teacher will not be able to teach us mahamudra.

“He is able to open the door of wisdom, the understanding that all delusions are delusions because of not recognizing the nature of thoughts.”

For a mahamudra teacher it is very important the point is clear that nothing needs to be abandoned. One only needs to see the nature of the confusion, the delusion, the problem, the emotion, whatever it is.

“Once it is understood that thoughts are mind and are used for the path, there will be no more delusion.”

Once one understands the nature of what arises in mind, there is no more delusion about it, there is no more delusion in the ungraspable.

“And recognizing the nature of thoughts (of all dualistic mental movements), it will be understood that all phenomena are unobstructed, like spears circling in the sky. This is in accordance with Naropa's statement: "A qualified teacher has a lineage of transmission:"”

The idea here is that a spear is something dangerous. You can be wounded by it. One can be wounded by emotions or thoughts, they can do a lot of harm. But when you understand the nature of the emotions and the nature of mind, then emotions are like spears circling in space, they cannot do any harm.

So now you know what it is really meant by a teacher with a transmission. It is this specific transmission of knowing awakening that comes along with this teaching. That has to be present. If it is not present, then this is not a teacher who fulfils the conditions of being a guru that can lead us into mahamudra.

G 2016 (40)

“2. The Buddha’s Words as a Teacher

Having received the pointing-out instructions from a teacher, you will gain certainty concerning the mind. If you then examine the teachings of the Victorious One respectfully, in order to find out whether they accord with our meditation instructions or not, you will experience that there is no contradiction to the instructions of the Mahayana and the Hinayana whatsoever.”

Let’s put it in simple words. The dharma reaches us through the pointing-out instructions, the key instructions given orally by our human teacher. This is one way.

The dharma reaches us through the various scriptures of the mahayana-tradition which can come from Sanskrit, from Tibetan, Chinese, Japanese. These are the major languages of the mahayana tradition. And the dharma reaches us through the scriptures of the Pali tradition including commentaries in Burmese, Thai and so on. The languages of southern Buddhism. these words of our teachers unlock our direct understanding of reality, of how life is, of how mind is.

And then we understand that there is no contradiction whatsoever between the teachings of the various vehicles, the various approaches in the dharma. It is wonderful to experience that. Some people think: this is the right dharma and only this, this school is

not teaching the right dharma, and then there these fights and so on, but if you have understood the point, then you understand: Oh, yes, you can also explain the dharma from this point of view. why not? For example, the famous teaching about the four immeasurable qualities, the four brahmaviharas which is a very famous teaching in the Pali tradition about love, compassion, joy and equanimity is actually already the teaching on bodhicitta. When you study the teaching on meditation which is called satipatthana sutta, then actually, it is already the mahamudra teaching. It is all in there. When you understand the teaching about non-self, then you understand the teachings about shunyata, about emptiness which are, for example, very important in the heart sutra in the Chinese and Japanese traditions. When you understand the meaning of guru yoga in the Tibetan tradition, you will see that guru yoga was already present in the very early tradition at the time of the Buddha. They were constantly practising guru yoga. These are just very important examples, but in order to show you that you can move from one dharma tradition to the next - if you have understood the key point you will understand all the explanations and you will see that they are in harmony with each other. So please take all the words of the Buddha as your teacher, not just a part of it.

“Experiencing in this way the Buddha's teachings as instructions, they are called teacher. Not possessing this key, and deciding what is and what is not, what is true and what is false, by just tightly clinging to the words and letters of the partial philosophies of the Mahayana and the Hinayana is incorrect and should be abstained from. This shows the correct way to rely on the words of the Buddha as teacher.”

If I take the words of my teacher serious, there is only one way, ekayana; to take the whole dharma as your practice. You cannot decide something is wrong and false based on philosophies. You have to go by experience, and experience shows that all these different ways of practice are fine. They lead to realisation, to liberation, to awakening.

Basically, the Karmapa is writing: If you become sectarian, you have not understood the dharma. It is a very polite way of putting that.

“3. The Appearances as Teacher

The earth is a spiritual friend because it illustrates the dharmadhatu, the ground of unchanging confidence bringing forth all qualities. Water is a spiritual friend because it illustrates the uninterrupted flow of diligence, or the mind stream being saturated with the water of compassion. Fire is a spiritual friend because it illustrates the fire of wisdom burning the firewood of the afflictions, and the flames of primordial awareness dispelling the darkness of unawareness. Wind is a spiritual friend because it illustrates the power of the wind of experiential understanding tearing up the veils. Space is a spiritual friend because it illustrates that which is without any limit and pervades everything. There is nothing in the outer and inner matter, the elements and what is composed of them, which is not a teacher....”

Wind is like blowing away the curtains of the two veils.

As European and Americans and so on, we are not so much familiar with this theory of the five elements, but last year I gave you quite a series of meditations with the five elements. And then it became clear that the five elements reflect aspects of our own mind.

Whatever manifests in this world is a combination of the elements. Earth represents solidity and reliability. Water represents what connects, coherence and of course fluidity. Fire represents an incredible dynamic, the capacity to burn and to dissolve and of course for warmth and heat. Wind represents of course movement, activity, power. And space is vastness, limitless, you can say the space in which everything happens. It also represents the ungraspable nature of everything. And when you begin to realise that everything we experience is a combination of these qualities, then the guru is everywhere.

And then situations become symbolic teachings. You look into the sky and you are reminded of the vastness of mind. You see clouds moving through and you are reminded of how I have an emotion moving through and dissolving. We hear a dog barking and we are reminded of the barking of a strong emotion like anger. We hear the sweet voice of the owner of the dog and we are reminded of how compassion heals anger. We walk barefoot and feel the harshness of the stones under our feet and we feel reminded of how difficult mind becomes when we are not protected by an understanding of emptiness and so on. Every situation can open us up to a deeper understanding.

And this one learns through the first two teachers, the human teacher and the word teacher, the book teacher. They open us up to the understanding that we use to read more and more in the situation. they teach us to read situations as a mirror for our own conflictual emotions and as a mirror for our own qualities.

“Therefore, to see appearances in this way—whether you analyze them or not—is the correct method to rely on appearances as teacher.”

‘Whether you analyse them or not’ means that you can also learn from situations if you don’t analyse them, you don’t have to think about them. The warmth of the ground opens our heart without needing to analyse. The wind takes away our thoughts without needing to analyse. There is an immediate connection with situations, and it is not necessarily by analysing that this helps us more. Sometimes analysing helps, but this is not usually the way that we understand situations as a teacher. It is more with the intuitive side of our being that we intuitively understand how this situation helps us to find our way back into mahamudra mind.

Question: Could the dakinis mentioned this morning be included here, it does not matter which situation, they show you the nature of how things are?

Answer: Definitely, please include this in your understanding.

Basically, this teaching could be elaborated so much more. It would be what the Tibetans call Tendrel (tib. rten-’brel), basis and connection. What is connected to this experience of now? And to become aware of all the implicit meanings of a situation is very vast.

When you come to a village like Kalamaki, wanting to know if this could be a possible retreat place, then you look at the tendrels, you look at the situations that appear naturally. This is how (name of a person) came to Kalamaki: the tendrel with the beach, the tendrel with the Spanish-speaking man, the feeling of the air and so on, reading the situation. He had gone through many countries and experienced many situations. When he first came to Kalamaki, the tendrel was fitting (tib. 'grigs), and then, coming back years later, again the tendrel was fitting. And then he said: That's it. For me, that is the place. The situation is telling me: here, everything is coming together.

So there are many layers of how situations are teachers. There is the ultimate, there is the more relative, there is the layer of how it reflects my karma, there is the layer of where it reflects what I need to learn, my qualities also.

"4. The Ultimate Reality as Teacher

When, with the help of the unmistakable pointing-out instructions of an authentic teacher, the nature of the mind has been really seen, understood and become unequivocal, this realization of the suchness of all phenomena is also a teacher"

So certainty about the mind, not just a little glimpse of it, not just a single experience, stable certainty about the mind, is the nature of mind or ultimate reality as a guru.

Here, some spiritual traditions and some individuals make mistakes because they think they can take ultimate reality, the nature of mind as a guru before having realised their mind, before having a stable understanding of the nature of the mind. This is not possible.

The problem is a problem of pride. We fall in love with ultimate reality as a teacher because it makes us independent of the outer teacher, independent of the words of the Buddha, independent of situations. the guru is in here. However, the guru is in here, no-one can say we are wrong, we are always right, sure the guru is in here, but the guru is not awakened yet. He is still asleep. He cannot be contacted, he is not a reliable source of giving clarity, understanding to one's daily life.

"Of all these teachers, the most important Of all these teachers, the most important is the human teacher with a transmission, because it is through his pointing-out instructions on the abiding nature that later generations will successively understand it, and because experiential understanding will arise by meditating on him. Thus to be taken care of by a true spiritual friend is the main condition, the second condition of practice. The way to practice this has been explained in the chapter on the guru yoga. If you wish to practice right now, visualise the teachers lined up one above the other. Visualise yourself as any suitable yidam, and on top of your head your root teacher, on top of him again his teacher, and so forth, up to Vajradhara. Recite a seven branch prayer, the four Manam,³¹ and supplications with a loud voice and for a long time, until you are certain that your perception has changed. If you wish to take the four empowerments from the teachers, supplicate him with intense yearning and confidence:"

We pray so long until we begin to see the world with different eyes. We begin to see the world with the eyes of devotion, we can even say: With the eyes of the guru.

“Venerable teachers, please bestow the four empowerments on me, purify the four veils, and complete the four joys. Having actualized the four kayas, grant me the accomplishment of the four activities.”

We are always talking about the two veils, the emotional and the cognitive veils. For the four veils, we have to include the karmic veils and the veils of meditation, but they are included in the other ones anyhow.

The four buddha activities are pacifying, increasing, controlling and violent. The last one is often translated as wrathful, but maybe we should translate it as radical activity. Pacifying emotions, increasing or enhancing qualities, controlling the wild mind by the power of mind and radical means no pity whatsoever with whatever is doing harm.

After this the teachers, beginning from the top, dissolve one by one into each other, and finally into your root teacher. Regarding him as the union of all the teachers, receive from him the four empowerments. From the forehead, the throat, the heart, and the navel of your root teacher emanate white, red, blue, and yellow light rays, which dissolve into your four centers and purify the three veils of body, speech, and mind, and the veil of latent tendencies. The wisdom of the four joys—joy, highest joy, special joy, and coexistent joy—arises in your mind stream and you receive the four empowerments. Consider that you have actualized the nirmanakaya being the vajra body, the sambhogakaya being the vajra speech, the dharmakaya being the vajra mind, and the mahasukhakaya. In the end the teacher melts into light and dissolves into you, and you think that you have become indistinguishable from him. This is the empowerment of the vajracharya. Conclude with the dedication of the roots of virtue. You should make this guru yoga the foundation of your spiritual practice.”

Here is another list of the four veils: The veils of body, speech and mind and latent tendencies (tib. bag-chags).

Here, the fourth kaya is called mahasukhakaya, great bliss body.

The Vajra-acarya is a holder of the vajra, awareness of the indestructible mind.

LESSON 18: THE OBJECTIVE CONDITION

G 2016 (41)

The objective condition means what to focus on, what is the object of the practice. So it is not objective as an opposite to subjective, but actually it is the condition which is the focus of practice, of attention.

“Clinging to the respective biased positions about what is and what is not of the various nonbuddhist and Buddhist philosophies—those of the Shravaka, the Chittamatra, the Madhyamika, the Kriya, Charya, Yoga, and Anuttarayoga Tantras—as solid truth, rather than considering them as mere conceptual imputations, will create veils preventing you from seeing the abiding nature.”

The Karmapa is saying: if you believe the words of any philosophical school to be the truth, this is an obstacle for your practice, for seeing the nature of mind. So you know that the teachings of all these schools which are listed here with these Sanskrit names, are part of the Kagyü teachings. So really the Karmapa means: If you take any of the words to be solid truth, then you miss the point. For example, if you think that just because we talk about mind all the time that mind truly exists, that's not the meaning. You'll create a veil in your practice. If you think that emptiness exists just because there are words describing this, you are creating a veil, you are creating an obstacle.

Question: Does it become a veil because we are fixating on it, should we be flexible with the words?

Answer: Yes, and because we confuse words with reality. Words are only imputations, they are a description of what they want to point to. They are not the thing itself. So you will find many practitioners in all these various spiritual traditions, who are not flexible with the words. We become so identified and attached with concepts. Sometimes one gets the feeling that they are practitioners of concepts. And true dharma means to go to the direct experience, just how it is. And then the words, the concepts that we use, we adapt to the situation. If I speak with a Christian practitioner, I use different words to describe my experience than when speaking with a Hindu practitioner or a Marxist philosopher. I use different words.

“This text is about the practice of the all-pervading mahamudra, which by nature is not only not in contradiction to all those views, but is superior to them. It is about the abiding nature, the nature of mind, in which everything is complete and everything is transcended, the space of phenomena, the natural state, abiding free from all limiting conceptual elaborations. This is what you should gain certainty about.”

Why is it superior? Because it goes beyond the concepts. Mahamudra is about leaving concepts behind, it is like all realisation.

In this basic nature everything is complete that means: Everything that we need to know is there. There is nothing missing.

And everything is transcended means that all the distinctions, all the separations, all the causes of suffering are left behind. It transcends the realm of dualistic perception, interpretation, clinging.

It is about the space of the phenomena,

I remind you of the original example of the Buddha. It is the teaching of the raft, these pieces of wood tied together, which helps us to cross the stream of suffering. In this teaching, he asks the person in front: “When you have reached the other side, will you carry the raft with you on the shoulder to continue the journey? And the person says: Of course not, when I reach the other side, I leave this heavy wood there on the shore and I continue easily by foot. Then the Buddha says: You see, this is exactly it. The words of the teaching, the concepts, help us to cross the stream of suffering. When we have

crossed, we leave the concepts behind. It would be a useless burden to carry the concepts any further. This is two and a half thousands years ago and very clear.

“In brief, the objective condition is to make no mistake about what has to be practiced. This means to understand that the mind has the nature of the three kayas. To be convinced that the intellect understanding this, is itself intangible, is itself not an object of cognition. To know that all the thoughts have the nature of the mind and are not to be rejected, but rather to be brought into the practice as the four kayas, and to consider also the one doing this to be nonexistent like a phantom.”

That is what we need to focus on, what we direct our practice to.

LESSON 19: THE IMMEDIATE CONDITION

“During the actual practice of meditation do not think, 'Now I meditate on this, I should meditate, I will meditate, I have meditated:' You should not create any hope or fear by thinking that it is good if your meditation is happening, or terrible if it is not happening. You should simply nurture the uncontrived normal awareness, unaffected by good thoughts or bad thoughts. Being free from hope and fear is the immediate condition.”

Unaffected by whatever comes as thinking. Being free from hope and fear, this is the immediate condition.

Immediate because it immediately precedes the moment of realisation. This is what comes just before, it is a state free from hope and fear, a complete letting go, a complete natural state of mind. It is interesting when you look at how realisation appears in practitioners: Before realisation appears there is always something which makes them forget all hopes and fears. They forget the idea of where they want to go, what they want to do there. Sometimes it happens by a little shock, sometimes by surprise or sometimes just by getting tired of all this effort. Somehow they drop out of all this hope and fear.

Just as like when we fall asleep. We can't fall asleep as long as we are in hope and fear, when we drop it all, then we can go into the natural state.

“The necessity of these four conditions as preliminaries (to realisation, to the understanding of the natural state of mind) can be illustrated by the arising of the eye consciousness. The eyes perceive a form if the following four conditions meet: the causal condition is the eye consciousness, the main condition is the organ of the eye, the objective condition is that among the different objects of the senses there is a visual object, and the immediate condition is that the immediately preceding sense impression has ceased...”

The causal condition is the eye consciousness. We have to have a visual consciousness. this means that our visual consciousness needs to be activated. If it is not activated, like when we are asleep, then we don't see the outer objects. And this is this deep renunciation which is this causal condition. There has to be a basic letting go, a basic state of non-clinging. This is what activates the possibility of seeing, of becoming aware of

how it really is. For as long as we are in fixation, we will not be able to really see. We are occupied by something else.

The main condition is the organ of the eye, of course, because if we had no eye, there would be no seeing. The four kinds of guru are just as important for the understanding of the nature of reality, as the eye is for seeing.

The objective condition, the condition on which we focus, is that among all the different objects of the senses we have to focus on a visual object. This is then that will arise seeing, only when the awareness is actually focused on seeing, only then seeing will arise. So what we focus on is the reality beyond concepts. We don't focus on concepts, we don't focus on appearances, we focus on the nature of experience., the nature of mind.

And the immediate condition in order to see is that the immediately preceding sense impression has ceased so that there is space for something new. If our mind is still preoccupied by something else, seeing will not be possible. In the same way, if we are preoccupied by hopes and fears, we will not be seeing the nature of reality. Immediately before realisation, the previous preoccupation has to have stopped. And then there is a gap, an openness which allows for the direct seeing to arise.

And then there is a wonderful summary:

“SUMMARY. The causal condition is to have a perfect attitude of renunciation, with no attachment and craving for any projects of this life and any worldly concerns whatsoever. The main condition are the four types of teacher explained previously and to be taken care of by genuine spiritual teachers. The objective condition is to have a faultless intellectual grasp of what meditation is about: "This is how I should meditate:" The immediate condition is to leave the mind naturally in the great nonconceptual primordial awareness, free from characteristics, such as hope and fear, a meditator and an object of meditation. The instant these four conditions meet, meditation and the special experiences and understanding of the main practice will arise. Therefore you should practice accordingly.

These are the specific preliminaries, called the four conditions for spiritual practice.”

True dharma practice, true spiritual practice for the Karmapa is to be in the nature of mind.

(Dedication)

DAY 8 (160708-0192-0197)

G 2016 (42) Morning Meditation

As we sit down, practice starts by itself. We feel our way into this new morning. Basically, we say hello to ourselves, to our body, to being alive, our mental state. we open up with all our senses to just how it is to be now.

We just reflect a little bit of just how precious it is to have another opportunity to cultivate awareness, all the conditions that need to come together.

We contemplate that these conditions are not at all permanent, they are changing and we don't even know how long we will live.

And so, now, what's most important? What's most important to me, in my own priorities? Which are the qualities I want to live now, today?

How do I find true happiness, true joy?

How can I open up to exactly this, to those qualities that represent the refuge?

Thus we do the prayers to enter the refuge, to be deeply connected, we wish even to become the refuge. Actually, there is nothing that separates us from the refuge that we visualise.

(Recitation)

And we let whatever representation of the refuge we have dissolve into us and let it meditate in us.

(Bell)

Maybe you would now like to investigate this impermanence more; change, process nature, ungraspable nature, emptiness - it is all the same. Have a look into the various sensory experiences which are changing, no substance, no solidity - we call this appearance and emptiness. When the mind becomes clear, whenever there is perception occurring, this basic clarity of mind is also ungraspable. Always new content, but the quality of being - ungraspable and clear, remains throughout all these various experiences.

Awareness, always changing content, but being all the time of the same taste. Some people call this taste emptiness, the ungraspable nature of awareness. There are feelings of "I" and me that arise. And they aren't an exception. This "I" and me, these feelings, this density we sometimes feel are also ungraspable, changing, dynamic, nothing solid. The thinking, the so-called thoughts, have the same taste. Appearing, yet ungraspable.

Drowsiness, sleepiness - empty of solid nature of true existence. Joy, vivacity - empty of true existence, process, changing. Whatever comes up, look into this process nature of experience. Be free, enjoy the freedom and enjoy the ungraspable nature of freedom and joy. This is the meaning of the dharma, the meaning of the heart sutra and similar teachings. This is why the Buddha always talked about things, experiences not being permanent. When we see how everything is process, then we stop fighting, we just intelligently deal with the process.

(Bell, silent meditation and dedication)

ON CHANGE AND QUALITIES

G 2016 (44, first part)

The dharma is very, very simple. It is really just about knowing reality. Just how it is, having a direct understanding of it. One should think that anyone can do it. In fact very few people actually take the time to really look at how it is. From generation to generation, ideas about this world and the mind and emotions and who we are, are transmitted which are just not in accordance with its reality. And then children are brought up with these beliefs and as adults have to meditate for a long time to correct those beliefs!

The little teaching I gave you in the break this morning actually includes everything necessary. We correct an erroneous idea about solidity, about permanence. We correct an idea of what we call existence when we have the feeling "I exist, emotions exist, things exist." We have some erroneous ideas about this. It is a small, yet important correction we are making through the practice of dharma. Yes, I exist, and you exist, and the world exists. No-one is denying this, this is fine. Yes, I have hopes and fears and difficulties in life, and there are also nice moments in life - yes, all of this is true. However, and this is the correction we make, nothing of that is solid. And when we find out that everything is process, our attitude to the world changes. There is immediately the opportunity to influence the process in an intelligent way, to deal with it in a very wise and intelligent way. Immediately we understand that we are not the center of the universe, that we are ourselves so completely interdependent that it would be really strange to say that we are the center of the universe. We are so completely interdependent on everyone and everything that we can only take our place, a place which is a kind of connecting knot in the network of interdependency.

When an experience arises and we know it to be process, we don't have to fight with it. We simply look at what in the process makes it painful and what in this process could make it an experience of freedom, of liberation. When we understand that unnecessary fixations create blockages, create tension and suffering, then of course this is the first thing we let go of, we stop creating unnecessary fixations. To hold onto something which would be solid would not be a problem because it would not stop any process. but if we hold onto and fix on something which is actually a flowing process, we go against the nature of things. We are not in accord with how life is. So actually what we do with the teachings of the Buddha is that we go the way of minimum effort and maximum efficiency. To resist the nature of phenomena is just wasting our energy. For example, I am getting older, I am getting more wrinkled, my organs are not functioning so well any more as when I was young. This is a natural process. To fight with that is really just a waste of energy. To surround myself with things like houses, cars, furniture, machines and so on and to think that everything will be fine and beautiful is just against the nature of how things are. To think that they will be stable and so on is not how it is going to be. They are

not so stable. These beautiful new things start ageing the moment they come into our house. The process of change is going on all the time. Even if you keep your car in the garage, you might take it out and it doesn't work. Change, change, change. You might think: "But I didn't do anything!" Yes, I didn't do anything to my car, but after a year in the garage it just didn't work any more, the battery has run out.

I am surprised that next time I meet my friend he or she is not in the same mood as yesterday. That's the nature of life. I should be prepared for it. All the time be prepared for change because that's the one and only thing that's true and determined. I am not stable, you are not stable, our friends are not stable, our enemies are not stable, our income is not stable - try to find something stable in this universe.

So we deal with processes like we deal with rivers. We try to give them a good bed and if there is danger, we try to influence so that it flows a little differently. And this we do with minimum effort and maximum efficiency. What we live, what we experience is always changing. In itself, it cannot be a reliable source of happiness. But how we live it, with what attitude of mind, this can accompany all these processes and this CAN be a reliable source of happiness. To take these changing phenomena with an open, accepting mind, in a very wise way accompanying these processes, being ourselves a process and interacting with the world, this will lead to happiness because there is no fighting with phenomena.

We cannot avoid the fact that we have pains, that we get old and that we lose our beloved friends and partners and family members, this is in the nature of things. But how we live this, this is the crucial point. The wall breaks down, this is in the nature of things. So I build it up again if I need the wall and I will build it up in such a way that it won't break down so quickly again. But I don't entertain the illusion that the wall is completely stable. There does not exist such a thing as a completely stable wall. I give all my love and my friendship in relationships, and I know at the same time that there doesn't exist such a thing as a completely stable relationship.

And with a little bit more acceptance and openness I discover that that is exactly the beauty of life, that it changes. We begin to appreciate change. Change is not at all an enemy (laughing). It is the source of all happiness. Change makes it possible that every moment is a fresh moment. No moment is like any other moment in life, how good. And then we are relaxed in this process world, we appreciate it, we don't overestimate our own importance. Then love, compassion and all these other beautiful qualities are naturally there, just because we are open to how it is.

We know because of this interdependence of all processes that happiness can only be found if others are also happy. When someone else is suffering near me, then it also affects me. There is in many ways an interdependence, but it doesn't mean that I have to be sad because of it. It just reaches my experience and is an opportunity to open the heart, not to resist the change. Much of our resistance to the suffering of others is that we don't want to have our own feelings change, we don't want to have our world change. We want others to stay stable so that we are not bothered by change. Resistance to suffering is resistance to change, whether it is in ourselves or in others, it doesn't matter.

You see: It is all about one single point. A little correction in our understanding of life. Life not being a succession of solid entities, like blocks of experience. All processes being interconnected and opening up to it. This incredible tendency of human beings to solidify everything, this is the only sickness that exists.

Our only existential problem is that we want to exist as something solid.

It is so difficult to accept, once we got used to the idea that we are so special (laughing), it is so difficult to get used to the idea that we are not special. We are just processes, very unique and in this way special processes, but the world can do well without us. Then these people come to teachings on Buddhism and they hear about Buddhahood and becoming free and becoming great bodhisattvas, and they think unconsciously, not really noticing it: 'Oh, this is a way to become more special!' What a bad surprise when they find out that it is just the contrary. It is only about becoming more natural and more one with phenomena, no-one special at all, perhaps just becoming a servant of the situation. It is normal that we get into existential crisis when we consider this.

The dharma is not a way to get better in the sense of getting more special, it means getting better in the sense of getting more normal, in the sense of being a nobody, part of everything. There is something completely free about that.

If we are truly process, then there is no-one who can stick their head up and say 'I am the one!' Gendün Rinpoche used to say: Whatever qualities manifest that you see in my person, then all these qualities are the qualities of the dharma. And I didn't really understand and thought: Is this like a religious statement? Is it that all the qualities come from the dharma as a teaching or the Buddha's teaching, or what does he really mean? Actually, he just meant that all the qualities that manifest come from the way things are. It is just natural that those qualities manifest from what is, the nature of phenomena, the nature of our mind. There is no-one producing those qualities. Wherever there is awareness, there is the nature of mind, there are all the qualities of an open, flowing awareness. And with our fixation, we obstruct the free manifestation of these qualities. I think that only today I've understood this, it has taken me about twenty years.

And then, around this simple insight, many additional explanations have arisen. They mostly have the function of giving small bits and pieces of understanding that as a whole, put together, give the correction that is needed, the correction of our view, our understanding of the world.

But some teachers in the mahamudra tradition, dzogchen tradition, zen tradition, chan tradition and certainly also in the theravada tradition, they just sit and look at reality. Everything comes from that, there is no need for more instructions. And that's fine. For some it works. They can understand that actually. But others have been looking for twenty years and they don't understand very much. So we offer these step-by-step teachings. But don't be surprised if I can't tell you anything new in the coming years.

LESSON 61: CLARIFYING MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE ESSENTIAL NATURE

G 2016 (44, second part)

“Other traditions maintain that, after having abandoned the present bad mind, one will attain the good primordial awareness.”

The idea is: You leave this and you go there. And when you arrive there, you will find the good mind. Leave behind the emotions and get into primordial awareness.

“ but, according to this Dharma tradition mind is the base of all phenomena. It cannot be abandoned nor is it correct to assume that there exists another primordial awareness apart from ones own mind...”

You cannot abandon the emotional mind. to think that there is some good, awakened awareness which is not our present awareness is an assumption that has no basis. How could there be a mind, not working right now, different from the mind that is working now?

“Because it is the undistorted certainty of the profound secret mantra that the five aspects of primordial awareness are naturally and spontaneously present in our mind from the beginning. Shang Rinpoche explains:”

So what are these five aspects of timeless awareness?

1. Our awareness is spacious. It has no limits and no center. This already true now. This very awareness which is writing down the notes now and listening to the teachings, is of a spacious nature. We don't know where it ends and it has no center.
2. This very awareness is also unobstructed. What you feel, see, think and so on just now, does not create a problem for what we see, feel, hear, think in the next moment. The experience of now does not stop or obstruct the experience of the next moment. From childhood to old age, this is true for everyone, for all human beings. And for as much as we can observe, it is also true for dogs, for cats and all the other animals. There is also the possibility of seeing more, of hearing more, of thinking more, - it is always possible to continue.
3. The empty, ungraspable, same taste of all experience. This same or equal taste of all experiences as being ungraspable holds true for everything that is being experienced. There is no exception to that.
4. All experiences are unique. They can be differentiated, and every experience is completely unique, never to be repeated again in exactly the same way. Our awareness is capable of knowing the difference. We call this the all-differentiating aspect of awareness, the capacity to know the difference.

5. Every moment of experience is perfect in itself. Nothing is lacking. To be an experience of awakening, nothing has to be taken away and nothing has to be added. And it is also an aspect of our awareness to know the complete perfect nature of just now.

“Shang Rinpoche explains... ‘The fire blazes, if there is firewood. The lotus grows in the mud. Rich harvest comes from well fertilized fields. Before, when the mind poisons were absent, not even the name of primordial awareness existed.’”

Do you get the idea? The so-called mental poisons that one might want to abandon are actually like the firewood for the fire of wisdom. They are like the mud from which the lotus of awakening grows. They are like the fertilizer from which a rich harvest comes.

So if we don't have a fire, then more firewood will just make everything heavier. If we don't want to extinguish the fire with too much wood, we give it just what it can burn. And when it is strong, it can also burn strong emotions.

“You must understand. You must understand that your mind has the essence or the nature of all aspects of primordial awareness of the victorious ones. The mirror-like aspect of primordial awareness manifests as the unhindered creative energy of the clear, aware and empty essence of mind. The equality aspect of primordial awareness is the equal taste of all phenomena in their empty essence. The differentiating aspect of primordial awareness is the multiplicity of phenomena, which do not really exist as such. The space of phenomena aspect of primordial awareness is the inexpressible suchness, which is inseparable from the primordial space of all phenomena in samsara and nirvana. The all-accomplishing activity aspect of primordial awareness is the accomplishment of all one's intended aims by understanding the mind and through that understanding the nature of all phenomena.”

In the middle of a strong movement in mind which you call emotion, there is space; there is the unobstructed nature; there is the one taste of ungraspable nature; it is unique, it can be differentiated; and it is a perfect moment of awakening, it is a perfect moment of being aware, nothing is lacking in order to be fully aware.

If we can apply this to our present situation, we will not be able to complain any more. We can't say that we have a bad life, that things are too difficult. This means that our fire is strong enough to see: Oh yes, this is just brilliant, radiant awareness, not a drama. Today, on my inner TV channel, I have a three-star tragedy. OK, I look into it, seeing the process, seeing the insubstantiality of it, where is the problem really? The problem is when we identify with it. I am not talking about irrelevant things. I got a short message yesterday evening. I was supposed to get married soon, but the marriage is not taking place. In fact, we separated. Ok. Quite a vivid film, quite a difficult thing going on. Difficult to experience because there was so much hope, so much wish for it to happen. But with a little bit of distance, one could say: 'How fortunate you are that it happened before the wedding.'

Question: How can we avoid becoming cold?

Answer: We must feel into the suffering involved. There is a lot of suffering. This is the first thing, we open up to how much disappointment there is. And then we don't know what it is good for. So this is where in our sharing we can open up the question: 'Well, I wonder what it is good for?' Just this. Not saying: 'It might be good', but: 'I wonder' because of

course we don't know. There are possible understandings, there are possible other avenues in life, so we just open the door for further progress in understanding and loving. Most of us have had similar stories, we have gone through separations, losses and so on, we know what we talk about. And sometimes we don't know when it is the right moment to cry: When people marry or when the divorce (laughter). Should we cry when there is full-blown illusion or should we cry when there is, to some extent, a disillusionment?

At the same time I got an email from another couple asking me marry them. I had just separated, and since then our relationship has been much better. Life, process. Let's take it all as steps in the process, of growing up, growing in understanding, growing in love. Let's just simply take it like that.

If we are friends with the person who is talking to you, then we can say: 'listen, I am together with you for the divorce, for the next marriage, for the next divorce, we are friends.' This is process.

We take away the blockages that prevent the interconnection of all our capacities.

"With this method impure clinging is uprooted and wrong conceptions regarding the essence are dispelled."

Method or understanding.

Basically, it is saying that what we try to avoid, these emotions that cause suffering, actually are timeless awareness in their essential nature. These mental states that we try to run away from are vast, unobstructed, empty, unique and perfect.

For as long as it doesn't concern us, we are willing to admit this. But when it concerns us, it is difficult to admit that it is like this. When we see others, it is like watching a film and we can easily notice that it is like this. But when we are in it, when it is our personal film, please no-one tell us that this is a film.

G 2016 (45) Meditation

Get yourselves into a comfortable position.

Let's be aware in this meditation of the tendency to take experiences as solid. And then relax again by looking deeper into the experience and discovering how it really is.

Let's be aware of our tendency to cling to certain sense impressions while others are completely flowing, not receiving the same attachment: this clinging tendency.

Have a look. Where do we easily find our way into the process-like nature of phenomena, agree to it, flow along with it, and where, on the contrary, do we experience some grasping?

How is it that we hook on to certain thoughts, certain experiences? What are the more profound causes for this clinging, for this built-up of tension? And is it possible to relax exactly at the point where we find the cause of our clinging?

Is it possible to relax so much that our mind becomes very fluid, flexible and clear? Also not clinging to drowsiness.

Not even clinging to ideas about meditation, about how it should be. Just being in the awareness of how it is.

Opening up to just how it is.

(Bell)

Question: Every day I seem to feel the body more. Can a process of meditation change the feeling of the body?

Answer: Definitely. Seemingly, during these days you have entered a way of being with yourself which is less anxious, there is less clinging in your mind. So the body says thank you. So, after the retreat, allow this relaxation of body and mind together to continue.

Question: What about the watchman?

Answer: How is the watchman, the observer? Is it stable, is it changing, is it always there, is it sometimes there? Look, how is it? Can you grasp something like a watchman?

So you go deeper and deeper with this question. Now you observe that there is an observing quality to your investigation. We tend to quickly call it "the observer", but perhaps, if we investigate who the observer is, we find out that it is not so stable, also process, we have to look. With the experience of "I", we get closer to what is actually going on. Probably it does not exist as something solid. You will find out that this observing is also just another experience which has the nature of mind. You will surely find that, but you have to find it yourself. As a consequence of that, we will know that there is no need to find, to fight against this observing experience. Just knowing its true nature is enough.

Question: What about distractions and accepting them?

Answer: Finally your meditation was going into where the real issue was today. Do like this also at home. Look into how it is when you are distracted. Don't have an idea how your meditation has to be. Just be with what arises.

Question: Pains?

Answer: When (physical) pains are very strong, it is usually very good to lie down and to take out the additional suffering. There is enough suffering in the body already, enough pain, yes? So all the reactions of not wanting it, fighting with it, all of this will be there. And what remains is that you feel it is an evolving process. And due to relaxing this process, it will evolve better, it will be smoother, you will get better because there is not this additional resistance.

As for the position, you have to try. All of us, we need to become comfortable in all positions.

Question: Mosquitoes?

Answer: Just try a little bit how far you can go, how far you can relax with it. When you cannot relax any more, stand up and do some walking meditation. But definitely, the most important is that we find ways to relax with what we cannot avoid. Sometimes it is just too much and where we can, we open up, we relax. We go to our limits and see.

LESSON 36: CLEARING FAULTS IN MEDITATION

G 2016 (46)

“Whenever you practice concentration, place the watcher of mindfulness and examine, whether dullness, sluggishness or other faults are present or not. If they are not present remain just like that”

Concentration is better translated as settling the mind.

We need to check what state of mind we are in. There is nothing wrong with that, we need to know. If dullness, sluggishness, agitation and so on are not present, remain just like that. Don't fool around with your meditation, nothing to do.

“But if they are present you must clear them away.”

Fault is an old term. It comes from the old Buddhist teachings, as if we had a mistake to clear away. Actually it means that our mind is not in its natural brightness and clarity. Somehow it is blocked. Even when it is agitated, it is also blocked. It is not in its open, fluid state. Maybe we could say in modern language: General signs of disharmony. This is the meaning of fault here.

Sluggishness is like sleepiness. It is like coming into a dark room and you cannot see. Somehow your mind is dark and everything is like closing down. there is no light and we cannot see clearly.

Dullness or foginess is like this: There is light in the room, but everything is like upside down. There is like some mist or fog in the room. You cannot see clearly although there is light, but everything is unclear. The inner vision is not sharp.

In agitation, you can see very precisely but there is so much going on that it is like complete chaos.

There can be combinations of these three great characteristics of disturbance. You will find out, for example, that this heaviness and this dullness are also forms of agitation. In the depths of our mind, when we are sluggish or dull, actually we are agitated. There is a lot of unconscious clinging going on. This is something you find out when you begin to know your mind better, that this whole so-called sleepiness is just a dull form of agitation.

“GENERAL FAULTS. If the mind does not settle and meditation does not arise, it is due to not remembering impermanence and death,”

Meditation here means calm meditation. When we are agitated, the first remedy is to remember impermanence and death, to use as a way out of clinging to so many different things.

“It is due to not being indifferent towards the eight worldly concerns, not giving rise to genuine devotion, and due to not having abandoned self-clinging out of laziness and indolence”

The eight worldly concerns are another big topic. We are concerned with ourselves, with gain and loss, pleasure and pain, praise and blame, fame and slander. This is another way to get out of our agitation: We look whether this is behind our agitation. For example, we might think that I have a very important material problem, something to do with money. Maybe behind that is the fear of being poor, the fear of loss. or maybe someone has been talking badly to us. maybe this is not even the issue, maybe we are afraid of what others will think when they hear about this. Then, another reason is that we probably haven't given rise to genuine devotion, otherwise the mind would calm down, become open, become natural. I ask myself in that case: Am I self-centered? Am I trying to do everything by myself? And then: Ah, yes, relax. Relax this attitude of doing it all by yourself, rather pray to the guru, pray to the refuge, let them take over. And perhaps, we have not abandoned self-clinging out of laziness and indolence. Maybe we are just lazy and letting the mind run and not wanting to take care and just kind of hanging out in meditation.

“As remedies for this it is essential to develop weariness with samsara, to energetically cut your preoccupation with this life, to overcome your addiction to samsaric existence, to be indifferent toward the eight worldly concerns, to pray with devotion to the teacher from the bottom of your heart”

To energetically cut your preoccupation with this life, all the projects, all what I want to improve with this life, instead go towards to what is helpful in the long run, even after this life.

To overcome my addiction to samsaric existence... Addiction: One part of us wants to give it up because it is suffering and another part just loves it. Can you find it in yourself? And with this you can really make money.

Then, of course develop indifference towards the eight worldly concerns. This is why this indifference to worldly concerns is so beautiful and so powerful. Not to care about praise and blame. Not to care whether you win or lose an argument or in business and so on. Not to care about comfort and discomfort, pleasure and pain. When that comes, meditation becomes so easy, so easy! So much disturbance in meditation or in normal being comes from not accepting of what is. To be in the search for pleasure, to be worried about what others said, to be thinking about what one needs to do in life to be better. It is like an endless source of all kinds of thoughts.

If we pray with devotion to the teacher from the bottom of our heart, I feel that this is one of the most powerful of all the remedies, so powerful. And it is good to always, at the end of the prayer, let the lama dissolve into us, not to remain separate. But first we pray with this strong devotion, in a very dualistic way, but from the bottom of our heart and then, at the end, we let it dissolve.

The way we do this transmission retreat, we have endurance, we have perseverance because of all of you have been here all of the time except when you were sick. But within the meditation, we allow ourselves to relax completely. But we don't stop the meditation, we just relax within the meditation. We do it and we have been practicing seven hours a day at least. we did a lot: Listening, studying, meditating, contemplating - and this is perseverance. Withing the perseverance, we relax.

And we

“cultivate bodhicitta which is to cherish others more than ourselves.”

What is meant is that we should cherish others seven and a half billion more than ourselves because we are only one of the human beings on this planet. And we are included: we also take care of ourselves. This sounds like a joke, but it is one of the old teachings. One of the reasons in the Lojong teachings for why we should cherish others more than ourselves is because they are more numerous than us. You can feel in this room how practical this is. If I have an impulse to do something, to change the situation, but forty other people don't feel like this, then forty other people dominate over the one person. So I will take care of what the great majority of people need, want and so on. It becomes very obvious. Of course I can find solutions for my personal needs, but with respect for all others.

I live in a village and I have enough to eat. But in all the other houses, there is famine, there is hunger. Then, do I sit back and say: Everything is fine? No. I take care of what happens in the village around me. Basically, this is the meaning of bodhicitta. And the world is a very big village.

These were the general remedies for the general difficulties in meditation. And they are very powerful. With this, you can solve almost everything.

“SPECIFIC METHODS to clear away the faults in the meditation: "There are three faults in meditation: dullness, sluggishness, and agitation. If there is dullness, you should revive your spirit on your seat, sprinkle yourself with sparkling water. visualize washing yourself. If the mind is sluggish breathe in cold air."

If the mind is dull, you should sit at a high place, that is very bright and spacious, stretch your body, straighten the spine, and with a sharp awareness look at the opposite mountain peak, and actually sprinkle yourself with sparkling water, or visualize doing so..”

Can you feel it? I have just moved my seat to the edge of the seat and I imagine looking at the peak of a mountain, a shower or a sprinkle of water. Wide open eyes, the space above, expose yourselves to freshness. this is where instead of putting so many blankets around oneself and keeping the room dark, this is where one has the courage to open the windows wide, to let the fresh air come in or to go out and to sit on the balcony or sit outside.

As a teacher I sometimes get desperate because I have given these instructions so many times. And then I see people drowsy in the morning, pulling the blanket tighter, closing the eyes (laughter as LT imitates them) and then they are fighting all the time instead of just standing up, shake a little and then: OK, here I am! Fine, fighting is finished.

“Especially visualise the teacher in the sky in front of you and pray fervently to him with a sharp awareness.”

This is so dangerous: If you visualise the teacher, he is always so alive, so sparkling and radiant that it is difficult to hold on to one’s sleepiness.

“Stay in a cool place, and wear light clothing. Meditate for short sessions. Develop disgust and renunciation. Do not eat and drink great quantities, do not sit in the sun or close to fire,”

because too much heat makes you more dull, more tired.

“make forceful yogic exercises. Make forceful yogic exercises. Sometimes take a walk or rest, but do not abandon your mindfulness. You should also practice the concentration of Brahma's crown ornament, that has been explained above. Doing this, dullness and sluggishness are cleared away, and the mind is brought to its natural state.”

Mindfulness of the whole body or at least as a breathing exercise. When you lie down and rest, do not abandon your mindfulness, keep your mindfulness all through the resting state.

So take an active attitude towards this. Don't let it just be. But do something about it, don't waste your time, staying in this dull state, half asleep. Do something about it, finish it in one or two minutes it is gone!

But I have to give you good advice nevertheless: Go to bed early. Nowadays, in many countries, people don't follow the rhythm of the sun anymore. And then, because we have electric light and so on, we go to bed far into the night and then we have our shutters closed and we get up late into the morning. This is not our biological rhythm. You can have so much less dullness and sleepiness in your meditation if your biorhythm follows the cycle of the sun more. The yogis in Tibet seem to have said: 'The hours before midnight are more relaxing than the hours after midnight'. Find out for yourselves. What is called midnight is the middle between the setting of the sun and the rising of the sun. That's the middle. Like now, the sun sets around ten o'clock and rises around five thirty. So midnight, for us, would be around one thirty to two o'clock right now. Try to have more of your sleep in the part before the actual midnight. My experience is: yes, it seems to be more relaxing than the part afterwards.

And the whole point is that if all of this is cleared away, the mind is brought to its natural state. We are clearing away what hinders us from being in the natural awareness, the natural clarity of mind.

"If the mind is agitated, you should relax, eat nourishing food, massage yourself, wear warm clothing, let the mind settle as best as you can on any suitable object and take a rest from time to time...."

Nourishing food means that you can add a little bit more fat and oil. But if you are already dull and sluggish, take away the oil, don't eat fat stuff, eat light food. Massage yourself to balance the energies.

"If the mind wanders uncontrollably, investigate whether it wanders off to worldly or dharmic topics. Having found out that the mind wanders to worldly topics, such as enemies, relatives or material possessions, you should cultivate this contemplation: "Whichever of these topics occupies the mind, all of them are meaningless."

So what am I preoccupied with? What's going on?

"because the subduing of outer enemies will never end, if I do not tame my mind inside."

It would be good to tell this to all those people who file laws because their neighbour is not behaving as he should, parking the car in front of my door and so on. All these many, many complaints and always angry at what the world is doing wrong. But the actual

enemy is the anger inside. It is this mind which is never satisfied, never content. This we should take care of.

Then sometimes we are agitated because we want to protect our children or our friends:

“It is meaningless to protect outer friends if I do not protect my own experiential understanding; and because wealth is completely impermanent and momentary like a rainbow in the sky, it is meaningless to think about it.”

This means to protect the calm of my mind, my understanding, the clarity of mind. This is what is most important. Then I can protect others.

What do we need? We just need to eat and have a roof above our heads. and this is something which should be possible for everyone in the world. But apart from that... like a rainbow in the sky.

“Our following the teachings of the Buddha is not just about changing our physical appearance, but necessitates not getting involved in any distractions and non-dharmic activities.”

Changing our physical appearance means to put on the robes.

It is all about how to protect our mind.

“If your mind wanders off to dharmic topics, such as thinking about study and reflection, or about becoming learned, disciplined and virtuous or about projects you have achieved or want to achieve—it is also meaningless.”

It is meaningless and useless because it is just another ego-centred activity. It is called dharma, but it is not. When these dharma projects I am involved in agitate my mind, then know: There is ego involved. There are ego-centred attitudes involved on my part. I am sure many of you are involved in social projects where you help others. Compassion does not agitate the mind. But when the social projects become infiltrated by ego-centred attitudes, then they begin to agitate the mind. So when you read this passage, you can put the social projects into the category of dharma projects. In Tibet, there were no such things as social projects. All social projects were dharma projects. We have more possibilities nowadays.

“Tilopa explained:

The teaching of the perfect Buddha will not be accomplished just by listening to it. And:

Through the particular scriptures and the philosophical systems of the Mantrayana, the Paramitayana, the Vinaya, the Sutra, or the Abhidharma, the luminosity of maha-mudra will not be realized. By hankering the luminosity is not seen, but veiled”

By hankering after intellectual understanding, i.e. hanging on to concepts, the luminosity is not seen. Luminosity means the clear light, the nonconceptual radiance of nondual mind.

“Through keeping our vows by means of concepts, tantric commitments will deteriorate.”

Our samayas, our tantric vows, are actually damaged if we hang on to concepts. All this clinging to pure, impure, shall I do, shall I not do, all of this is actually constantly reinforcing ego-centred attitudes. The way to keep the samaya of the tantric vows is to go as much as possible into the natural state of mind. Always go into timeless awareness, the buddha awareness, into what we call ‘pure vision’. This is how one keeps the samaya.

To give you an example: In those days, when Tilopa was talking, in the tenth century: “Did I damage my monk vows by looking at this woman or not?” and then thinking about it. The thinking about me and my vows and whether I damaged them or not is continuing the whole ego-centred way of dealing with reality which might perhaps already have been there in the looking at the attractive woman.

There is this famous Buddhist story from Zen, but actually known in all cultures: there are two Buddhist monks coming to a river and there is a beautiful woman standing there and not able to cross the river on her own because of high water. And of course Buddhist monks are not supposed to touch women. But one of them says: Come, sit on my shoulders, I’ll carry you over.” So they cross the river, he puts the woman down and they continue on their path. The one turns to the other who had been carrying the woman and says: ‘Do you think that was OK, to carry the woman over on your shoulders? The other one says: ‘Come on, you are still carrying her around. I have already put her down long ago!’

This is the spirit of the teaching here. The spirit is: Don’t hang on to concepts and so on. Be clear in your action, do it and don’t think twice about it if it comes from the heart, if it is a clear action. When there is no “I” and other, then the action can only be pure, if there is no dualistic separation.

G 2016 (47)

“Remind yourself: “If I am fettered by the eight worldly concerns without thinking about death and impermanence and without turning my mind away from samsara, I will not enter the circle of the learned, disciplined and virtuous. Therefore I should make efforts to abandon the conceptual occupation with this topic and follow the pith instructions of my teacher by leaving the mind in its natural state:’ You should exclusively practice one-pointed concentration, being convinced that all conceptual elaborations are meaningless. You also should practice the visualization of the concentration applied underground which has been explained above.”

I will not enter the circle of those who are really into the dharma.

“Dullness means that the mind is without clarity but not feeling sleepy. Sluggishness means to be clouded by a sleepy daze, so that one does not perceive the conceptual movements and one cannot distinguish between good and bad experiences. As remedies for these faults apply the above described visualizations and actions and open the window next to your sitting place so that the circulating air can touch your body.

Dullness and sluggishness are caused by having slandered the teachers and the Three Jewels in previous lives.”

It might not only have been dharma teachers. It might be anyone who has been doing good things, sharing the good, being active for the benefit of others. It is talking badly about someone helping and encouraging clarity, this seems to cause lack of clarity in one's mind in the future.

But you must differentiate between being normally tired, profound fatigue even, due to stress in your life and this special kind of dullness that starts as soon as you sit down to meditate or as soon as you start to listen to a teaching. I know this from some occasions that you have a person who is wide awake, and as soon as the dharma teaching starts, they start to sleep it's impossible to understand.

If you feel that you get immediately dull or very quickly dull as soon as you try to meditate, then look into this tendency of talking badly about others. Look into this. Examine this. it is really interesting to see the connection.

But make the difference between this and accumulated fatigue due to your work, due to traveling, due to many other causes.

The link here is that one has, with a very strong energy, harmed virtuous and clear activity and clear states of mind. And when one wants to develop this oneself, then, instead of a clear understanding, the obstacle comes in fully blown.

Now the remedy will be explained, and I have seen it work. There are certain kinds of people in dharma circles who, as soon as they are awake, have a loose tongue. They always have a snappy kind of attitude. They criticise teachers, criticise teachings, they always know better. And when it comes to meditation, (LT makes a gesture meaning probably: they can't do it). So you have this attitude from former lives which has probably been very ingrained, continue in this life. It is not completely absent. You can have an indication from the way one thinks and behaves now, even one's own thoughts, how critical they are, when they are not really supporting virtue, always criticising others who do good things. This creates heavy dull states of mind, really, it does.

So what Karmapa is probably actually thinking here is that if you have already applied all the other remedies and nothing works, and still you are dull and sluggish all the time, then apply what comes now. So this was not explicitly said, but in the order of the text, it doesn't make sense otherwise to start talking about this.

So this kind of dullness and sluggishness

“can be cleared away by confessing in front of a special representation, by exerting yourself in the meditation of Vajrasattva, the recitation of the hundred syllables, the confession of unwholesome actions, by cleaning stupas, and by making offerings and prostrations in front of a stupa.”

So basically, it is all about what purifies pride and you can also add onto it by requesting teachings, by admitting that one needs guidance and all that helps to lay open this unwholesome state of mind, to make it accessible to clarity and bodhicitta.

And now, (the Karmapa) makes a jump, he is going back into the general way of dealing with dullness and sluggishness:

“ Or else look at their essence, without seeking any separate remedy for dullness or agitation. By recognizing them to be your own mind, or understanding the mind to be a nonconceptual emptiness, the dull or agitated mind—without rejecting it—will appear itself as primordial awareness.. ”

This is actually the mahamudra way of dealing with dullness and agitation: Look at its very nature. then you don't have to fight with it, you will see how illusory it is.

“In this way, there is no way for the mind not to be concentrated,”

not become settled.

“When the three experiences of bliss, clarity and non-conceptuality arise you might think, that you experience meditation and that you have attained realisation. But it is said that, "If you do not pray to the teacher, and do not thoroughly turn away from attachment, even good meditation experiences are deceptions."

Bliss, clarity and non-conceptuality describe a whole range of three kinds of meditative experience, and here, what Karmapa is referring to is that we have a tendency to say: 'Oh, I have a clear meditation'. And one's pride takes these experiences as one's own achievement and this actually becomes a trap, pride and desire connected.

“In order to maintain your meditation practice it is important to pray with devotion, to renounce all attachment to worldly projects for this life, and to stay in mountain retreats. Meditation without devotion is without head. Meditation without detachment has no feet. A body without head and feet is good for nothing.”

Meditation without devotion is without head: You don't know where you are going.
Meditation without detachment, renunciation, has no feet: You cannot even walk.

The mountain retreat could also have a swimming pool, OK. We can negotiate with the Buddhas. But we will let the water out (laughter).

Let's do everything we can. Let's not wait until we have the chance to go into a retreat. Life might be over before that, we might die before that. So let's do it now, wherever we are. In the middle of big towns like Athens and Brasilia, wherever we are, we do it.

Question: Do you think it is easier in an isolated place?

Answer: It is easier. To practise in retreat is really the easiest of all. The practice in everyday life is more challenging. As soon as you get away from the busyness of the world, it becomes much easier.

Question: Don't we bring the busyness with you?

Answer: Yes, of course. You don't just leave it behind when you go to a secluded place. You need a lot of practice to let go of these habitual tendencies. But one is not stimulated all the time in the same direction as before, this is the big advantage.

There are many ideas about this. Try it out, see what is good for you. I prepare a very comfortable place in the mountains where a little bit this atmosphere of retreat can happen. Not like a cave in the Himalayas, but a quiet place for practice, without all this outer agitation. Some can only come after they have stopped working, others take vacations to come. It is just an additional possibility to practise. It is a very necessary one. But don't despair if you have to stay in the plains and are not able to take off into secluded retreat.

“By the force of the experiences of bliss, clarity and non-conceptuality the craving for sense pleasures recedes, there is not even the need to eat food, the movements of breathing are not felt, and a feeling of great joy arises at the thought, “This is the buddha mind.” There comes a deep certainty that the teacher is a buddha. Conditioned extrasensory perceptions and miraculous powers and so on may arise, but you should not be attached to them. If you cultivate these experiences of one-pointedness for one year and then attain realization it will be stable.”

because you know for sure how to relax the mind.

“The degrees of stability of calm abiding: the highest degree is, when you neither feel the coming and going of the breath nor the existence of your body. At the medium degree you can feel them, when you look for them. At the lesser degree you are not bothered by the weight of the body or by the coming and going of the breath”

Not bothered by the weight of the body or by the coming and going of the breath means that your body feels completely light and you can sit in the posture without feeling discomfort.

Question: How can I know if I have talked badly about the Buddha or other people in the life before?

Answer: We don't know. So when we feel that this our problem, what we do is that we say: “Listen Buddhas, Vajrasattva. My mind is immediately dull when I want to practise. Because of this I think that I may have talked badly about the dharma and the teachers in the past. I don't remember. But if this was the case, then I regret it deeply. And I praise the dharma and I am happy that I can receive it. I wish to confess all my ignorance that might have led to this kind of action.” We cannot be sure, but we do the prayer with the possibility.

Question: I have a lot of attachment. I used to have more, now I have a little less. I don't feel that I am a devoted person. Then my meditation has no feet and no head! Maybe I don't need to meditate because it doesn't (make sense).

Answer: I've known you for many years now. We have met almost every year for some dharma teachings. Since then you have built up a little practice. It seems, as you say, that attachments are getting a little bit less. So it must be that renunciation is increasing a little bit. And I don't know if it is attachment or devotion, but you do practise and remember the instructions every morning when you get up. I even saw you doing it when I was sleeping in your apartment. But it is true, the meditation is not very strong. So I would say that your meditation has a little head, it has small feet and then, in the middle, we have to look. Maybe the body is getting a little stronger over the years. Body means the capacity to let go into the present experience, to not be distracted. I think it is getting stronger. But you must have quite a bit of devotion to come to the teachings every year because you have so many nice offers of what you could do with your vacation otherwise. There must be quite a bit of renunciation also. You know, coming from (a sunny place) onto the mountains (in Germany), the rain, the mud, all the difficulties and then to another retreat in Greece. There must be devotion and renunciation.

And as for devotion, remember: It is not necessary that it is a devotion to a teacher. It could be devotion to the dharma, to the teaching. It could be devotion also to the qualities of the sangha.

DAY 9 (160709-0198-0203)

VAJRASATTVA MEDITATION

G 2016 (48)

Let us start the practice by reflecting on the four thoughts that turn the mind to the dharma.

First we reflect on just how precious this situation of right now is. How many conditions are now coming together to be able to practise the dharma? And we develop a deep feeling of gratitude.

Then we reflect that this precious situation depends on many conditions. and that there is no way to know how long it will last. We might even die much sooner than we normally think. In this way, we contemplate the unpredictable forces of change, impermanence. And this gives a sense of urgency to use the situation right now as long as we have these wonderful conditions.

And then we reflect on the purpose of our practice. What do I want to use this precious situation for?

How will I use this day to purify my habitual tendencies which lead to suffering and to encourage the qualities of my inherent nature to come about, to show themselves?

And as the fourth contemplation, I reflect on exactly those habitual tendencies which produce samsaric experiences again and again.

And I turn towards the source of true happiness, I turn towards awakening. And I let the refuge appear in front of me, the Buddha in the centre and all the other awakened ones around, I myself am surrounded by all sentient beings, my mothers and fathers. And together we chant the prayers as if I were leading the chant:

(Recitation)

With this, we imagine that the refuge becomes very strong and bright, the radiance increases like the sun, dissolves into light and this light blesses our stream of being. The refuge enters through the crown of our head and blesses our whole stream of being. We become one with the refuge and stay for a while in natural meditation.

And then from this natural state, then above our head, while we remain ourselves in ordinary form, from the syllable PAM, (there) arises a white lotus. In the very centre of this lotus, from the syllable AH, (there) arises a flat moon disc lying down. And on top of this moon disc, there is the syllable HUM standing up. It transforms into a white, five-spoked vajra. This vajra is also standing up and in its round centre, there is another white syllable HUM.

From this syllable HUM emanates incredible light, going in all directions. It goes to all the awakened ones and at the end of the light rays there appear countless offerings. These offerings are a request to the Buddhas to send their blessings. And the light rays come back with the blessing of the Buddhas into the syllable HUM, which is greatly activated and sends out light again to go to all sentient beings and to accomplish their benefit. When the light comes back from this compassionate activity, it transforms into the Buddha Vajrasattva on the top of our head.

On top of this lotus and moon mat now sits the white Buddha Vajrasattva who, in essence, is our teacher. He is white and has one face and two arms. His right hand holds a five-spoked vajra upright in front of his heart. In his left hand, he holds a bell with a vajra-handle against his hip. The inside of the bell is pointing upwards, symbol of spacious wisdom, the emptiness of all phenomena. And the vajra in front of his heart symbolises compassion and skilful means. Take some time to visualise the golden vajra and the silver bell.

Vajrasattva sits in the Bodhisattva posture with the right leg in front. His upper and lower garments are of multicoloured divine silk, symbolising the wealth of awakened qualities. His beautiful, radiant hair is tied up in a top-knot which symbolises complete awakening.

His hair is crowned by master Akshobhya, blue, the lord of his Buddha family. This small Buddha Akshobhya also holds a vajra in his two hands which are lying in meditation posture on this lap. This is a sign that everyone has a teacher, even Vajrasattva.

His is adorned with all the ornaments made from diverse precious substances, jewels of different colours and gold. He wears a crown with the five jewels of the five Buddha families, earrings, a short necklace, a longer necklace, armlets, bracelets, anklets, a belt and many other jewels. These represent the beauty of the transcendent qualities, the paramitas. Boundless rays of light emanate from his body, predominantly white but also with all the other colours of the Buddha families.

Vajrasattva can be seen so clearly, but is illusory like a reflection in a mirror, perceivable, yet not really existing. Take some time to get the feeling of the presence of Vajrasattva on top of the head. It is enough to feel that the Buddha is there and to have trust in this.

In the centre of this radiant presence, in the heart of Vajrasattva, there is a moon disc. On this stands a white HUM and around this, in an inner circle, the six syllables OM VA JRA SATT VA HUM are arranged. We can read them as if looking from the outside. And around these are the hundred syllables: OM VAJRASATTVA SAMAYA and so on, shining, brimming with light, completely alive, like strings of pearls.

The light rays emanating from them invite the whole assembly of teachers, Buddhas, bodhisattvas and so on, all the awakened ones of the ten directions and the three times. They all dissolve into Vajrasattva on top of our head. And we see him now as the very embodiment of all sources of refuge.

And we address a prayer to Vajrasattva. We say: "Guru Vajrasattva, please purify myself and all sentient beings of everything separates us from awakening."

Having prayed to him like this, Vajrasattva answers with an incredible increase of the light of the syllable HUM in his heart. The outer ring of the hundred syllables starts turning clockwise, faster and faster, and the strings of pearls of the two mantras together with the HUM begin to produce white nectar light that will flow down and fill the body of Vajrasattva.

We can now use the hundred-syllable mantra of Vajrasattva and visualise how the body of Vajrasattva becomes completely filled with bodhicitta nectar. Those who do not know the long mantra can use the short mantra OM VAJRASATTVA HUM.

Vajrasattva is so completely filled with this white bodhicitta nectar that now, by the force of his compassion and love for all sentient beings, flows down from the big toe of the right foot straight into the crown of the head of all sentient beings, each one has its own Vajrasattva. The nectar flows from the brahmanic opening at the top of the head through the whole body, cleansing out everything that separates us from awakening. Wherever there are blockages, wherever there are fixations, whatever negative fixations we have, all of this is cleansed and carried away with the stream of bodhicitta nectar.

The continuous flow makes us more and more white inside and all the burden from which we are liberated leaves from the lower orifices of the body. All illnesses, all mental problems, whatever we have done wrong, whatever we regret, all of this is pushed out with a great stream which is carrying it away.

At the same time, we open up to bodhicitta and let go of all these fixations. We regret and we vow to act in a beneficial way. We open up to the blessing of the Three Jewels, the blessing of bodhicitta and we practise the hundred syllables or the six syllables for another while, imagining that all these impurities dissolve and leave into the golden ground beneath us. They completely dissolve into this golden ground which is a symbol of the nature of mind. Let's continue with the mantra for a while.

We imagine that whatever clinging we become aware of, immediately the flow of nectar carries it away and we enter ourselves completely this experience of being in the flow, becoming the flow. We open up completely to bodhicitta with all our being, body and mind. And at that point, when we are so completely open to awakening, actually the bodhicitta nectar begins to stay in our system, it begins to stay in us. We have become completely purified and the nectar overflows from the top of our head. It comes out with such a force from the top of our head that it even touches the foot of Vajrasattva and then flows down again outside of our body as if we were taking a shower, inside and outside. Love, compassion, joy, equanimity, wisdom, all these qualities are now completely present. There is no more the slightest identification with a limited idea of a self. And with this visualisation, we recite for a while the six-syllable mantra OM VAJRASATTVA HUM.

We completely enjoy this blissful experience.

And then we make a concluding prayer to Vajrasattva and say: "I was so ignorant and clinging to my own opinions, completely identifying with my emotions. Please awaken compassion. Forgive me for all this ignorance. So many times I have harmed others and have harmed myself through my thinking, speaking and acting. So many times I have not followed my own understanding, I have not followed love and compassion. Please grant your blessing so that all is truly purified."

Then Vajrasattva above our head smiles and says: "Child of noble family, since you don't cling anymore, then everything is purified." And with this, Vajrasattva melts into light and dissolves into us. Our own body, speech and mind and the body, speech and mind of Vajrasattva become inseparable, like water poured into water. And we stay in that for a while.

And then, when thinking starts again, we seal our session with dedication prayers.

(Showing the Seven-Point Posture) and Breathing Exercises

G 2016 (50, first part)

(The holding of the breath) can be done up to seven times. There is no breathing. You relax, you relax and the mind opens as much as possible. It is not recommended to do when you are completely stressed and you are forcing yourself. You have to be completely relaxed. When you know how to do it, it is a quick way into mahamudra.

Then, after that you can continue with the barlung. It is this breathing in the belly, focussed on the lower part of the belly, inside. It is a wonderful practice which I advise you to practise all year around as much as you can.

Sit in a position so that your belly is really relaxed. Let your belly kind of fall out like baby's belly. Not pressing it out, just letting it hang out, completely relaxed, like a ball. And feel the breathing moving. Breathing all the way down into the pelvis, into the bones on which you sit. And relax into the very centre of that energy. Breathing from the belly. You begin to feel the world from the belly, from this place far down in the centre, our lower abdomen. Breathing in, we completely open up from the belly and breathing out we become completely soft and flowing. Breathing is very relaxed and natural with the awareness in the lower abdomen.

LESSON 62: DISPELLING MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE TRUE NATURE

G 2016 (50, second part)

In the tantric teachings, it says:

“The aggregates, the elements and the sense factors of beings have all from the beginning the true nature of awakened male and female buddhas and deities.”

It is the dance of the dakas and dakinis. The dance of sense impressions in mind, whatever arises in mind, all the movements in mind are stimulation for our understanding of the nature of mind.

“As it is taught in all sutras and tantras, they are themselves Buddha mind.”

They are themselves the nature of mind. So when we say aggregates or skandhas, it means perceiving visual, auditory forms and so on are this dance of phenomena, these perceptions have the nature of mind.

Feeling it to be agreeable, disagreeable and so on has the nature of mind. Or the various movements of distinguishing phenomena has the same nature. The mental formations, the notions, the wholesome states of mind, all states of consciousness have the same nature.

“If, on the contrary, we assume that there is another superior Buddha mind to be attained outside our mind” -

outside the aggregates, outside the elements, outside the sense fields -

“and believe that it is impossible that the extremely pure buddha mind exists within the mind stream of impure beings, that this is nothing but glossing things over and misinterpreting the vajra words of the secret mantra, you have distorted the meaning of the abiding nature and this is improper”

Some of you might think that you have studied the dharma well and that you know that the skandhas, the kleshas and so on are not Buddha mind. You have to find Buddha mind somewhere else. You might think this to be true, but it is absolutely untrue. All movements in mind have the same nature of mind. They are all ungraspable, empty of essence, anatta, shunyata. The impurity, the substance, arises from the clinging, from believing that these movements are solid realities. When there is no fighting with them and no clinging, then they all transform into Buddha wisdom.

Like when the Buddha was sitting under the Bodhi tree and symbolically all the Maras were attacking him, the skandha mara, the klesha mara and so on. Then, by understanding the nature of mara, it all transforms into flowers, so to speak, into the realization of the nature of mind.

So please don't *“misconceive the teaching of the Buddha, which is like pure nectar giving happiness or like a wish-fulfilling jewel, and to perceive it as poison or an abyss causing fear and anguish would be utterly absurd. This would resemble the conduct of a beggar who has a treasure in his house or the athlete who has his jewel with him and who search for it elsewhere, because they are not aware of it.”*

The easy-to-understand example of a beggar is like this: The beggar has a place to sleep in the slums somewhere in a little hut and goes out begging every day, not knowing that just under his bed where he sleeps, where he is at home, he has an inexhaustible treasure. He'd just have to scratch a little, dig a little, and it would all be there. And this is an example of how we search for happiness doing so many tiresome activities and don't know that we have a jewel of a wish-fulfilling mind. So let dharma practice be like a practice of coming home, not more and more effort, but trusting more and more and relaxing into the very nature of mind, the very nature of all phenomena.

The athlete with a jewel refers to a legendary figure in India. It is a jewel on the forehead of the athlete. For as long as he is wearing this, it makes him completely invincible. So when we know the nature of mind, we become invincible. We don't have to be afraid of life.

“Since it is an undistorted certainty of the secret mantra that all the attributes of a buddha, such as the sixty-four qualities of freedom and maturation of a buddha, are spontaneously present in your vajra body and mind, you should not search for buddhahood anywhere else than in the mind. It is said: “Outside the jewel-like mind there are neither buddhas nor ordinary beings.””

Buddhahood, i.e. awakening, and ordinariness, i.e. suffering, is all found inside the mind. When there is understanding of the nature of phenomena, it is awakening, and when there is no understanding, only grasping, hope and fear, - then there is samsara.

“Sambuti:

Buddhahood is in one's own body. Nowhere else does buddhahood exist. Those wrapped in the darkness of ignorance, believe buddhahood to be somewhere outside the body. And:

Nowhere in the outer world will you ever find buddhahood. The mind is the perfect buddha.”

The text is saying “body” because it makes it very clear: it is here with us now, in this body. It is not that the body is the one which is aware and thinking, but it means that here, in this very body, this is where Buddhahood is.

So when we pray to someone outside or when we go to teachers who we want to give us something - they cannot give us anything coming from the outside. They can only help us realise what we already have, like a beggar who is told to dig under his sleeping place.

“Atyayajnana Sutra.

When you understand the mind, you are a buddha. You should thoroughly cultivate the idea of not seeking buddhahood elsewhere.”

One famous Zen saying is: When you meet the Buddha outside, kill him. Kill this erroneous concept that the Buddha could be outside.

“There are countless teachings like this. The difference between buddhas and ordinary beings is not that the former are good and the latter are bad, but simply that the former have understood the mind and the latter have not.”

This a very important understanding that should guide us in Mahamudra practice.

Question: How did ignorance come about?

Answer: (Ignorance) doesn't have a beginning, it doesn't have an end. It has no existence in the middle. There is certainly a lack of awareness. It doesn't have an existence like this. You can't say when it started because it is not there in a continuous way. That's why they say that it is co-arising. It is a co-existing possibility of dealing with reality. The grasping which is the consequence of not knowing, of not being aware, is the co-arising, co-existent possibility with awareness and non-grasping which is there all the time.

I am not sure who it was, maybe Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, who was reported to answer this question. It is a simple answer but maybe the best one you can give: “it is like children who play around with phenomena. At the beginning there is awareness, there is no

clinging, they know it is a game, but then somehow they get fascinated by the game, they begin to identify more. Their awareness is reduced and the identification is increased.”

The hidden assumption is that ignorance is a thing, something that would have a beginning.

VAJRASATTVA QUESTIONS

G 2016 (50, latter part)

Question: How do I know when Vajrasattva practice is enough?

Answer: It is when you feel pure. You know when you have abandoned all the identifications and you stay in that. When you don't question any more and you stay in that purity and openness. So it will be enough every second. In between, because of our habitual tendencies, we will wake up some clinging to self and so on, so it is good to do another session until again that complete, natural openness, purity, shows. One moment of openness, and we do it again. We have this idea: I have created so much negativity! So I need to do so much practice! Even with so much negativity, in the moment of letting go it is all gone. We might learn to think in qualities, not quantities.

Question: Why the right toe?

Answer: Vajrasattva is sitting in the bodhisattva posture, so the right toe is just the ideal place to send the nectar down. Maybe there is a secret teaching in there because in India, to put the feet of the teacher on one's head is a very powerful sign. I have even seen my assistant in India, when he came home, he put the feet of his parents on his head as a sign of a son coming home. This is supposed to be impure. But when you see the person as pure, then this part becomes pure. So maybe there is an additional teaching in that. The message is that there is nothing which is impure.

(An experience)

Question: I want to share an experience I cannot handle. I felt I experienced an openness in my mind all these days, but this morning I felt an openness in my heart, as if it was compassion, but this had no joy inside. On the contrary, it was like a tremendous sorrow and pain. Also, this experience has had body symptoms: Quick heart beating and a feeling of weakness and as if I was experiencing the world from here, as if I was receiving all these vibrations. And this feeling was transferred to the mind, and I had to stop it because I felt a very big fear. Is this ignorance? I also feel a great agitation because this awareness is not stopping. I am experiencing the world in a different way. So what is your advice?

Answer: What you are experiencing is really due to the opening of the heart. When the heart opens, we become much softer, we become also more sensitive. It might have been a situation where you trust so much that you allow it to open where previously in your life you protected it. Now it has opened. When we are so sensitive and you are not used to it, we feel very vulnerable and we can feel it as the energy of compassion that is overwhelming, like too much. We are feeling so much more than before. So it is an increasing awareness. There is more awareness than before, especially you feel the antenna of our heart. But this is still lacking a special awareness that is knowing that all of what we feel has no substance and to be able to let it flow through. Right now, there is still the tendency of clinging to it a little bit and then, of course, we attach meaning to it, we give importance to it and then we feel overwhelmed by it. So what you might need now is to look for some outer protection so that you don't have to close inside, but just be surrounded by your friends and love, so there is no need to close inside so that you can allow this new experience to expand a little, to get used to it. So welcome to the sangha of open hearts. If you wish to be alone, you can just imagine that you put your head into the hands of the Buddha and you are just completely surrounded by the aura, just take the image of being protected from the outside. No need to close the heart to be protected. This was maybe necessary in childhood or in other parts of your life, but now you can dare to remain open.

LESSON 47: POINTING OUT INSTRUCTIONS ON THE ACTIVE MIND

G 2016 (51)

“It is good not to forget to practice the earlier meditations briefly: the preliminaries, the essential seven-point body posture and the exercises of calm abiding and intuitive insight. To start with, let the mind relax in its natural state. In that state observe its nature directly. Then allow the mind to be active by visualizing for example the Jowo statue in Lhasa or the Lhachen statue in Tsurphu, until you experience a completely clear visual image of them. Now examine again what difference there is between that active mind and the calm mind. Observe what difference there is between the active mind and the mind that examines it. Inquiring in this manner, the mental movements will become self-liberating.”

The active mind is the one visualising the statue and the calm mind is the one of calm abiding previously.

(Meditative exercise)

When in the exercise I say: visualise the Buddha, it could be anything else that you visualise. You can also visualise a flower. It doesn't matter what we visualise. We work with the example of a Buddha because this is given here, but the important will be that this image becomes completely clear.

So first begin by asking for blessing, regarding this exercise. Relax all this ego-cantered wanting.

And just let the mind become as relaxed and calm as is naturally possible.

Letting go of all thinking, no need to observe sense impressions.

(Noises in the room)

And then use the hearing faculty and see: Does it make a difference? If you don't hear this, then imagine the sounds until you can hear them clearly in your mind.

We are now making the sounds in the imagination. Make them really loud and intense.

What difference is there between the calm mind, not imagining sounds to be there, and the active mind?

From time to time, imagine the sound again. And check: What's the difference?

And how is it when you compare the active mind to the observing mind?

Then relax again, not doing anything. And we do the same exercise with a visualised object, but only after some time of relaxation.

Let the mind become completely calm and uninvolved.

Whenever your mind becomes active, look at the difference between the calm, non-thinking mind and the active mind.

Then let's visualise a Buddha statue or a Buddha, whatever. Go through all the details of his face, his hair, his posture.

Go back and forth. Visualising intensively and then letting the mind relax. Hearing intensively, letting the mind relax. Let the mind change between the calm state and the active state.

Create activity, then let go of the activity and compare.

And from time to time also compare with the observing mind, the activity of the observing mind.

Movement, less movement, no movement - what's the difference?

First visualise, and then stop visualising. What happens to the visualised image when you stop visualising?

Create some conceptual thinking and then see what happens to the thoughts as you stop thinking.

What happens to the calm mind when you hear me talking and you understand what I am saying?

Thank you very much.

First student: When the sound became really strong, I noticed more what I would call the observer, the "I", the self.

LT: Where was the observing when there were only slight movements?

First Student: I didn't feel much difference between the observer and what's happening in mind.

LT: Did you feel the "I" which didn't feel much difference?

First student: There was not much difference.

LT: Very little, yes...

Second student: When there was awareness, then there were very slight differences because there was not this grasping.

LT: You experienced that grasping comes with lack of awareness, lack of calm, of relaxation.

Third student: Sound was happening in the space of mind, like a little movement, a wave.

LT: What happened when you let go of the images, the sounds and the thoughts... what happened to them?

Third student: They disappeared.

LT: Just gone.

Forth student: When I let go, when the images disappeared, I felt something like a short glimpse and then I became afraid. And then I thought: Maybe I should try it again.

LT: What you experienced was the fear of being without reference points, nothing to hold onto, nothing to grasp at. That is a fear that is common to all human beings for as long as they don't know the state of mind. Then your search for some reference point was like: Give me some object, give me something to hold onto! And then something appears, always. And then you were even trying to think, you were back into normal thinking and everything was OK, you were safe there.

So preparing for death, for dying, means to get used to enter this nonreferential experience because that is what happens when we die. We lose reference points, we can't hold them together. And this is, then, for most, when they freak out, when it becomes difficult in the dying process. It is also this basic existential anxiety which people have, not knowing who they are when they don't think, when there is no form, nothing to grasp at.

Now, continue relaxing like this so that you get used to it and you will see: Wow, nothing dangerous, it is fine. I can go in and out of this state, nothing dangerous. So this is when you become really familiar with your mind, you don't have to produce forms. You will be relaxed and at peace even when there are no forms, no sensory input.

When you let everything dissolve, not only everything went away, but there was such a complete non-orientation that there was this thought, this fear: Give me something to focus on.

LT: It seems that when there is less grasping, the difference between the calm mind and the active mind is negligible. It is maybe just like the same mind and movements going through, waves. When we come into an emotional reaction with grasping, then you describe that you felt your mental state to be quite different. Would you say that it is still the same mind or is it then a different mind?

Student: It is still the same mind.

LT: Why?

Sixth student: It is still moving, ungraspable, process.

Seventh student: The mind is the same, but it shows itself differently.

LT: It is still the same mind, but it has lost some of its fluidity, it is filled with emotional, intense activity, but it is still the same mind.

(Question about after-effects)

LT: What seems important is that again, when there is this identification, this emotional reaction, this clinging, there is strong experience. When the experience is over, there seems to be this after-effect. We would have to investigate into this after-effect. Is it still the same experience or is it something else?

Actually, to make things short: The experience itself, the visualisation or the sound, the immediate experience is finished, but in the body and mind continue some after-effects due to still some clinging, still some holding on until there is a complete relaxation which comes back. So actually, experience is continuing. The one is gone, but another experience which was triggered by this, the various reactions to that continue for some

time. This is the sign that the letting go of the previous experience is not complete. It is not a nondual looking through and complete letting go, it a letting go with still holding on a little bit until we can also let go of that.

You should know that this is normal. This is typical in the dualistic state of mind that there is this after-effect. It just takes some time for all of it to dissolve.

With the nondual experience, if you were able to look into your fear, directly, then you would see that immediately your frame of mind changes, becomes completely free of that fear. Although the arousal of the body still continues a little bit, there is a completely different taste to this arousal in the body. The feeling of how the body feels is completely different although the heart beat, of course, takes a little bit, a few beats to calm down. But with the nondual perception, already the moment when you know the nature of the experience, the nature, the feeling tone of that arousal is completely different. There is no more feeling of threat connected to it, there is a feeling of relief and so on. It is not that fear is diminishing, but fear is completely gone and even the physical arousal which will only be very short afterwards is experienced like a relief experience.

Student: when a conceptual thought blocks you?

LT: It is the same. A change of perspective leads to immediately letting go of the previous emotion and a new way starts. This does not take time.

LESSON 47 CONTINUED

G 2016 (52)

“Now examine whether the statue of the Lhachen which is experienced as a mental image, and the mind in which it arises, are the same. If they are one, examine whether the mind has gone to the Lhachen statue, or whether the Lhachen statue has come to the mind. If they are not one, examine whether the Lhachen seen in the mind is the real Lhachen, or whether it is something else which is seen as Lhachen.”

Just have a quick look. We visualise something - it can be a Buddha, it can be a flower, it can be a car, whatever you like - are they the same? Is it happening in the mind, is the statue different from the mind, or is the visualisation different, how is it?

Student: In the mind.

LT: In the same mind or a different mind?

Student: The same mind.

LT: OK. You can say that the image arises and then also is gone. And it has all happened in mind. We can describe it like this.

Now, can you do this please with the beach. You just imagine the beach of Kalamaki as well as you can, the details are not important.

“If it is one mind, examine whether the mind has gone to Kalamaki beach or whether the Kalamaki beach has gone to mind.”

Did our mind now go down to the beach? No. Did the beach come up to the mind? No. How is it then?

Student: The image of the beach was reflected in the mind. It is like a mirror.

LT: We don't have to ask ourselves whether the real beach came up here because we didn't see the real beach. So the beach we see in the mind is actually, for everyone of us, a different beach. It all refers to an experience of the same beach out there, but how it arises in the mind depends on each one of us. So you see, it is not the same beach. That's why the Karmapa writes:

“Examine whether (the Kalamaki beach) seen in the mind is the real (Kalamaki beach) or whether it is something else that is seen as (Kalamaki beach).”

Actually, the beach that is seen in my mind is not the real beach that is seen down there. Actually, I have no idea of how the beach looks just now.

Maybe you think that this is unnecessary mind-joggling, but think of a beloved person, someone you really love. Try to see that person's figure or face, some visualisation of that person. Sometimes with people so close to us, it is difficult to see. But you see a little bit. Now, is this the real person? No, it is the same thing like for the beach. We think of a person, we visualise a person, but it is not the person. It is our personal image of the person that arises now in our own mind about the person.

Now think about a situation when you were fighting with the person. Maybe there was some disagreement. Remember just something of the situation, it is not important. Is this the real situation? No, it is the image of the real situation that appears now in our mind. Do you think that the other person would have the same image? No. It is incredible. Just with this little exercise it becomes so clear that what we see, what we remember of a situation, what we visualise: We think so clearly that it was like this, but no-one else except us would be seeing and remembering the same thing. There are influences of our feelings, our past experiences, our hopes and fears. It is our whole inner world which participates in this process.

The next paragraph is a little bit more subtle:

“Likewise examine whether all the visual forms seen by the eyes, and the eye-consciousness which is seeing them are the same or not. Inquire also into the sounds heard by the ears, the odors smelled by the nose, the flavors tasted by the tongue, and the physical sensations felt by the body in the same way as before. When you realize through such inquiry that they are free from all mental elaborations such as same or different and you understand that they are all the magical play of mind, and when

the movements have become self-liberating, the nature of mind has been recognized. Remain evenly in this state."

The eye consciousness means the mind. You can look around and see all kinds of visual forms. Now, where is the visual form? Is the thangka over there in your mind? For all we can say it is probably on the wall, but for you, the visual form is in your mind. And for your neighbour there is a thangka appearing in his mind as well.

Question: What about when I touch it?

LT: Do you touch it with your fingers or with your mind? Just go to the thangka, close your eyes and you just touch it. You can take your whole hand to feel it. What do you feel? - It feels a tissue. - If you had no mind, could you feel the tissue? No. The fingers alone could not do the touching so that it gives a feeling of touch. Without mind, you could not feel anything. That's interesting: There is a sense perception of touching, but all the conclusions of the touching, of all of what it forms into, the possibility to get a coherent picture of it, all of that is actually happening in mind. It is in the sensory consciousness called touching consciousness. And then you put it together: Now you can look at it, you can smell it, all of this together, the more senses you use, the more information you have. And this information is not in the fingers. It is probably in the brain, connected in the mind. So, you are touching the thangka and seeing the thangka with mind,

Question: if there was no sense consciousness, could we perceive the thangka on the wall?

Answer: No, no way. But we would not say that your mind has become the thangka. The thangka is there, and consciousness, awareness is our working. So for the time there was contact with the senses, there were inner images arising with the thangka, a representation was arising in our mind which has the capacity to integrate information even coming from different senses. For each one of us in the room, our representation of the thangka could be slightly different because of having a little bit different senses, a little bit different seeing, a little bit clearer, not so clear, different touch and odour interpretations: This one thangka becomes slightly different in each one's perception.

This becomes VERY different when it comes to meaning, what meaning we give to something, what emotional meaning, what symbolic meaning, what we know about it. Then the differences become very wide. But if we just stay even with the sensual impressions and how their work is done, even then we have some differences. And in your mind, you can let go of that sense impression and of that thangka any time, you can also bring back some memory, it is just coming and going as you like. In this way, we say that sense impressions are part of the play of mind, the play of inner representations. All the time we have inner representations arising, new ones arising, the old ones are gone. Constantly there is like a show going on, there is a show of sensory appearances. Just by the fact that we are all sitting in a different place in this room, the show for each one of us is different.

And it is not interesting really to say: are the visual objects, tactile objects which produce an odour, are they outside or inside my mind? Anyhow, we can only experience them through mind, it is a mental experience. In my mind, the table is not solid because it can dissolve any moment. When I look at someone here, I don't see the table any more. So there is no solidity to the image although the table itself (knocking audibly on it) is quite solid.

So you see, in your mind things are flexible. They come and go. They don't have that solidity of the outer world. This is very important to understand because then we can work on that. I can look at this glass which has normal size now in front of me. In my mind, I can make this ten times bigger, in my mental image. We can also make it ten times smaller. We can create a mental image, we can even see the hand (apparently holding the glass) if we want without a glass. Mentally. The visual impression is with the glass, but mentally, we are extremely flexible.

And now transfer that to emotional perception. Someone wants to go to the toilet, someone else has been using the toilet and has left very strong odours. What does very strong mean? We can make it so strong in our perception that we cannot enter any more. We can make it so small, so unimportant in our perception, that we can enter and do whatever we need without caring about it.

We can have an insult that someone yells after us. Maybe we have been driving a little bit quick over a pedestrian crossing and a pedestrian yells an insult after us. We can make it so big and stop the car and get out and - you know? We can make it so small and say: "Oh yes, I am sorry. You are right." No insult, no pride inside us. These are emotional dimensions of perception. Do you understand? This is what we talk about. From understanding the processes of perception and how interpretation of perception happens, we understand why we can say that the world is a personal cinema.

Question: what about the collective representations? How are these formed?

Answer: Similar. Like in a person. The collective representations are influenced by likings and dislikings, by collective memory like having lived a war and so on, and an occupation. And all these collective memories and interpretations form what people in a country feel and think. If you want to manipulate that you can do it like for a single person. You can do it in the same way.

When we are in the immediate understanding of how inner representations are forming and dissolving all the time, without thinking about it, just in that immediate understanding, we feel completely, we are in the insubstantiality of these perceptions of thoughts, of these movements, then we understand the nature of mind.

In this understanding, the relative and the ultimate completely come together. The ultimate is to see: Wow, all of this is completely ungraspable. It is forming, it is gone - this is the so-called ultimate aspect. The so-called relative aspect is that at the same time we notice that it all depends on causes and conditions. How things are forming and how it develops

in mind, it is all the various personal, social and other conditions that create these evolving worlds.

Question: Do you talk about the experience before it is worked on by various interpretations, like this is green, this blue and so on?

Answer: Actually, it goes for before and after, for all the processes. All of these arise and dissolve, none of this has substance. And when we understand this, then we know that there is no objective reality. We understand that reality is always what manifests as representations in mind. The so-called objective reality is not the one we experience. Even when some scientist was looking on some computer screens that give him some information about so-called objective reality, again it is a representation in his own mind.

We can nowadays measure the qualities of light, what light is absorbed in the surface, what light is emanated or reflected, we can measure many things about so-called objective reality. But how we experience it is an individual process. Even this body of mind which has the same weight morning and evening, I sometimes feel it lighter and sometimes heavier. This is something extremely important for the path of liberation, to understand: wow, so-called reality is subjective. And this is terrible for a human being who wants everyone to agree on one thing.

Question: Is nonduality only in my own mind?

Answer: Definitely, it is only in your mind. Nonduality is not shared with others. It is the end of the subject-object splitting up, dichotomy in your own mind. The Buddhist definition of nonduality is the end of the subject-object perception mode in our mind. It is good to know this definition because you will find others in the world. Many people use this term for different purposes. The nonduality is not about atman and brahman, it is not between two people that they become nondual. It has effects in those areas., but it is just to be clear about what is meant by nonduality.

LESSON 63: DISPELLING MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT KNOWLEDGE

G 2016 (53)

Dispelling misconceptions about how to understand the truth.

“The final ultimate meaning, the nature of mind, you will understand through the power of meditation, by concentrating only on the practice of the individual self-knowing primordial awareness, through the power of training in the pith instructions with the blessing of a true teacher, and through the power of altruism endowed with perseverance and trusting devotion. On the other hand you cannot understand this meaning by being a good teacher and an intellectual with great knowledge and analytical power who merely listens to the Dharma teachings, reflects on them, and explains them with great comprehension and talent.”

You can cross out the word “individual”, it is not a good translation (Text: so-sor rang rig-pa'i ye-shes). Here, it refers to the self-knowing timeless awareness that knows itself by itself.

We need direct practice.

“*Gandavyuha sutra.*

The true teaching of the buddhas is not realized by mere listening. One who does not practice the Dharma teachings resembles somebody dying of thirst, while powerlessly being carried away by a river. And:

One who does not practice the Dharma teachings resembles somebody who never reaches the crossroads of which everybody says that it is exceptional.”

Basically, what this quote is saying is: One who does not practise will find himself in a jungle of concepts and never comes to the meeting point where everything becomes clear.

“*Shang Rinpoche: The realization of primordial awareness you will not experience by strongly wishing for it to come. It will not appear through skillful analysis. Through extensive studies you will not understand it. It is not within the range of experience of intellectuals. And:*

You will experience the spontaneous realization of primordial awareness neither by strongly wishing nor by relaxing, neither being skilled nor unskilled in analysis, neither through extensive nor small studies, neither with intelligence nor stupidity, neither through good nor bad meditative experiences, neither through strong nor weak efforts. Only by relying on a teacher, his timely skillful means, and through your own merit can it be understood. "By relying on a teacher, his timely skillful means" means that you experience it through the power of blessing of a realized teacher whom you please. "Through your own merit" means that those experience it who have practiced continually.

Since the realization of primordial awareness is transmitted through the path of blessing, it is within the field of experience of the faithful, it is the devoted ones who experience it, it is the trained ones who understand it. Perseverance is the supportive element of all. Those favored with highest capacities realize it, while experts of words cannot accommodate it in their intellect. Individuals with such capacities experience the realization of nonduality. Through the blessing of a true teacher, the dharmakaya unfolds from the middle of realization, nonduality shines from the middle of mind's nature, primordial awareness shines from the middle of afflictions, realization shines from the middle of meditative experience.

This is expressed in all the sutras, tantras and in the Kagyu teachings..”

Pleasing the teacher means following his practice.

Just relaxing without knowing where to turn one's attention will not give us the insight. Just studying this book or other books will not do it. We need to be connected and there

are some moments when the instructions are timely for us, they hit the point. A few words, a few sentences unlock an understanding of how we can practise.

Merit is positive force. This is the power of the positive attitude of our own mind. Someone who practises for a long time with an attitude of very little self-concern, being turned towards the benefit of all - this power of such an attitude makes it easy to understand the mind.

It is the ones who are really open in their heart who experience it, those who practise continually. Joyful perseverance (Skr. viriya) is the supportive element of all.

Those with highest capacities are those who have a great force of merit.

Student: We may wonder if we have a realised teacher in front of us because in this book it is saying that you can only get it by a realised teacher. And we know that Lama Lhundrup is very humble so he might say that he is not a realised teacher. But it only depends on our perception. And for me, he is a realised teacher and it doesn't matter if he says that he is not. I encourage us all to see it like that because it makes it easier to realise the nature of mind.

LT: (keeps silent)

Question: What continues after this life into the next life?

LT: The forces that are now active in our mind continue into the next life.

Question: The defilements?

LT: I hope that there are more forces than defilements in our mind. Fortunately, (there are) also the forces of love, compassion, insight and so on. Look, you are not here only because of your defilements. You would be far away if you had only defilements active in your mind. So there is definitely something else active. And of course, superficial things will not continue into the next life, but it is the profound forces that continue. It is not something, not a thing that continues. It is the power, the impulses.

Question: These forces that continue, isn't it the consciousness?

LT: Where else could it be? It is something which is of the nature like mind and consciousness. I have never found a mind, you cannot pinpoint a consciousness, but maybe it is best to call it this. But it is not a consciousness that would be like some individual truck which drives from this life into the next life. It is a sum of many powers, many forces that are always creating the next experience, the next moment, continuously creating the next experience. This is why I talk about forces, not about something, not about one individual consciousness.

Question: Can they be divided to make two people in the next life or is there something which binds them?

LT: I don't know this.

Let's do the concluding dedication.

END OF TEACHING