

**Karmapa Wangchuk Dorje**

**Mahamudra – Ocean of True Meaning**

Explanations given over Seven Years, in Greece

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**Year Five, 2016**

DAY 1 (170630-0282)

G 2017 (1) Introductory Meditation

We will do a meditation to start with: Take a posture you feel comfortable in so that you can relax. And as we find into the situation here, let's feel our body, just how we feel right now.

We feel the breathing, the coming and going of the breath and we might remember our previous dharma encounters and what is our actual wish in coming here, what's our deeper motivation.

And as you touch into your deeper motivation, take it really deeply into your heart so that you will be able to remember it every day of the retreat. And promise to yourself that you will take care that your aspiration gets fulfilled, at least to some extent.

DAY 2 (170701-0283 to 0285)

G 2017 (2) Morning Meditation

(Recitation)

And with the first in-breath after the recitation, the meditation starts immediately. We feel our body in this place, how it feels just now. We

check our position one more time before settling deeply in that posture just as it is.

And then as in every morning meditation we let our mind contemplate the four thoughts that turn the mind to the dharma.

First, just how precious this situation is. This includes remembering all the many aspects of our lives for which we can be grateful.

Then, secondly, we think about change, impermanence, the possibility of death. This includes reflecting about just what will accompany me at the moment when I die. My life might be finished any day, I don't know when this will happen. What is important then?

And then the third part is about wise action. What can I do with body, speech and mind to be well prepared for life and for dying, and for the next life to come? How will I use today, the next hours to go in that most beneficial direction?

The fourth contemplation is about samsara. It includes the question: What do I wish to become free from? Let us also contemplate the question of now, today. What is it today that I wish to reduce, to become free from, which kind of mechanisms do I want to weaken? Where can I find true happiness?

After these four contemplations I know more precisely what my direction is, where I find refuge. And as a helpful meditation I invite the blessings of all the awakened ones to enter into my heart, into my mind, and to fill me with that blessing of bodhicitta, of the awakened mind, which is the same as mahamudra. The body is completely relaxed and open, the senses are open and very receptive. Hearing, seeing, tasting, smelling. Without any clinging whatsoever and no aversion whatsoever.

And also the mental sense is so wide open as if our mind were a vast, blue sky. A deep silence can be felt. It is the silence of being free of conceptual complications. No need for commentaries. See if you can open to that. Just being so. The way to do that is to always relax into the present experience. Whatever it is, relax, open up into that.

My teacher used to say: The body is stable as a mountain. The speech - that means all our potential for communication - is like a flute silently placed on the table. And the mind is as luminous and calm as a sea without waves in the sunlight.

So find the posture that helps to really relax and be stable as a mountain. Let all that inner dialogue, that inner communication just silence itself. And allow the mind to become like a calm ocean.

If you feel that there is a little difficulty with that, just patiently follow the sensations of the breathing. Breathing in and breathing out are like very fine waves in the sea. We become like the sea.

(Break)

If you are standing; stand like a tree. You feel that you are deeply rooted into the ground and wide open to the sky, as if your branches with all the many leaves were capturing the energy.

And for the others, we do the same thing while sitting. We let our awareness to some extent go into the ground as if we had roots. And the rest of the awareness opens up all around us, from the ground upwards, the head included, the shoulders, everything opens into all directions. Actually, we could well feel like earth and sky. Actually, it is being the universe, it is being open to all its aspects.

(Dedication)

## LESSON 37: Deepening our Stability in Mental Calm

G 2017 (3)

In the past years we have already delved into all the instructions on how to develop mental calm. So you are supposed to be advanced practitioners. So in this practice of developing mental calm, one goes through various exercises which introduce us to working with the various senses; the visual sense, the body and the others. Some of you who were there will remember that we did these exercises with outer objects, with the visual sense, using a stone or a cup of water or a pointed object. From the outer visual impressions, we moved to inner visual impressions, we visualised, for example, a buddha in front of us or a buddha in our heart, a lotus in our heart, different visualisations. We also worked with hearing, listening to sounds, relaxing around sounds, we relax with sounds instead of fighting because we can't change them.

The idea of this exercise with all the different senses is to be able to relax when we cannot change it. We do not want to change it. It is like a new possibility of remaining relaxed when we decide: 'I want to be relaxed now, I don't want to fight, I don't want to get up and change the situation.' For example, some of us feel so terribly hot now, that we already have sweat dripping down. We can't change it. It will continue like that if we don't leave the teaching. So what can we do? Not much. The best thing is to relax and stop fighting, then at least we don't have additional tension. In a normal situation we would not accept it, we would fight, we would try to defend ourselves and we would agitate our mind on top of the physical inconvenience. The physical inconvenience can be strong. I remember when I learnt deep meditation with Anagarika Munindra in Bodhgaya in India. No air conditioning, no mosquito nets. And he asked us to sit like a mountain for as long as we could. Whatever happened, just to sit and to watch the mind. I remember with the half opened eyes to see the mosquitoes swirling around us. It was hot. We learnt to sit and to sit and to sit. I remember sitting for seven hours without any movement. I was young, I was a student in those days. And this morning I was reminded of that. My mind was so quiet, and then just one mosquito came and I said to myself: "Tough luck." So I was already calm and relaxed and I decided just to remain relaxed. OK, end of the story! It is good to learn that, because we have a new choice. We have the choice to move and to get agitated or to accept. It is our choice. We are not obliged to do anything or not to do anything. But we have a choice. Before, we didn't have a choice.

This chapter which we are going to study is about doing that with all of our senses simultaneously. It is the chapter that gave rise to what I always call: "Opening the six senses." It is the central meditation instruction after all the preparation which we have gone through.

*"First, direct your attention one-pointedly to any—good or bad—clear visual object. When this has become clear, direct it to all visible forms."*

So let's do that! The object you direct your attention to does not have to be a thing. It just means a place where our eyes fall naturally as we open them. Wherever the regard is settling, it can also change, we stay there for a while very relaxed, not giving importance to where it goes. Stay there for a time before I give you the next instructions.

Then, as you still keep your eyes in that area, enlarge your area of awareness to take in all the rest of your visual field. That means we see all the other people, the walls, the ceiling, all that is within our visual

possibilities without moving the eyes. So what we are actually doing is that we open up to all the colour impressions, the light impressions that our eyes can perceive, but remaining very relaxed, always at ease. And the central area loses all importance, actually seeing everything at the same time. Seeing that you can do that gives you a sense of joy. You are so happy to be open and relaxed in the visual field. One could say that it is a sense of being nourished by all the colours and lights. Actually, what is happening is that all the various visual impressions stimulate our awareness.

And be aware of that stimulation of your awareness by the visual sense impressions.

This exercise can be used when one is tired. One can have a source of light in a dark room and one uses the outer source of light, or one visualises a light above oneself, imagining this light to be there and one stays wide awake while there is the stimulation of one's awareness with this intense light. Of course, most of you would prefer to sleep, so you switch the light off. But we are discovering a principle that sense impressions still reveal awareness, and that can become more and more present. If one of the senses is already wide awake, really open to this whole panoramic vision, panoramic visual perception, the visual perception and the rest of our connected mind becomes stimulated.

*“When this is stable, be one-pointedly with sound, perceived as the object of the ears”*

We start out with one kind of continuous sound which is easy to perceive, and we relax in the hearing of that sound. We relax and we open up, we relax into it.

And then we enlarge the field of hearing to hear more and more sounds, even very fine sounds that usually escape our attention. All sounds of all frequencies that we are able to hear, let's include them in the practice of awareness. In a way, you can say that we are listening to the concert of life. And we relax into it, we cannot change it, it is going on all the time. We can stop some sounds, but others we cannot. For those who have good hearing, even with all the loud sounds, we can still hear our breathing or the sounds we make with our own mouth, like with the teeth for example.

Some people find this experience so overwhelming that they are tempted to run away, it's difficult to bear having the hearing sense completely open. Some people have a constant sound in the ears,

difficult to bear, and in this practice it is extremely important to relax with that. And we can use this relaxation again to feel very alive.

You will perceive that sounds are always undulating, they are constantly changing from practically silent to very loud, and awareness is aware of all these changes. It is the same when you sit in nature, the eyes open, then usually because of the wind and some other factors, there is a little movement and you see that seeing is an on-going process of awareness, seeing is something continuously happening, the slightest move of the grass and the wind, the leaves and so on, insects crawling, there is always a continuous process of seeing.

From no movement to very stormy movement, all of them. To become open to this world, means to open to our senses. We are just with the first two. We will continue now. Let's take, as the text says,

*"Smell as the object of the nose, taste as the object of the tongue, touch as the object of the body, and mental objects of the mind, using whatever arises as support of meditation."*

So what whatever we can smell, what comes as odours through the nose. As I did that, I was very surprised, as I lifted my hand to the nose, to still smell the sea, the salty water. One can be so perceptive and see what one can smell now, all the various smells. And of course, I smell first of all my body, but maybe also yours. That's part of life. We smell. All the nice perfumes, shaving lotions and whatever we are using are good for nothing after one day. It is a practice of the Tibetan tradition, which we are not going to introduce in the West, to simply not wash, to be able to bear one's own smells or odours. The purpose is to live with all the odours of one's own body and to just deeply accept how we are when we don't wash. Gendun Rinpoche abandoned this advice already in retreat and Shamar Rinpoche even asked us to wash, if necessary, several times a day. But who cares? We have to bear ourselves and we have to bear others. We have to bear a dog, we have to bear a cat, whatever, we have to live together. Human beings, animals, plants which smell, walls which smell, everything has an odour. Everything. We all know. Even different kinds of matter have different odours.

So let's meditate a little bit and be attentive to all the different odours that might be floating in this room...

Can you sense the various soaps and shampoos that have been used?  
Can you smell the salt water of the sea? The odour of the carpets?

Can you identify the odour of your own body?

With the turning of the ventilator, what are the dominant odours that are perceptible? Even if we cannot put words to them, we can still smell them.

And then just imagine you smell something - a jasmine flower, some good fish you were eating, as I could smell the wood shop I visited yesterday, try to actually smell the odours that come into your memory.

And you probably also know how a broken toilet in a gas station smells and remain relaxed with that. The practice is not only to awaken our senses, but to remain relaxed with all of these sense impressions. Whatever odours arise, to see them as passing phenomena. To know that they are also like waves.

And in passing, I want to attract your attention to the fact that when we are smelling so intensively, we are hardly perceiving sounds except the words of the teacher talking, but the rest has almost disappeared. This shows you that part of what we are doing is selective attention. Where we place our attention; that becomes stronger.

Seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting (maybe you still have some after-taste in the mouth or you have that indescribable taste after a good brushing of the teeth).

What's the taste of just now?

Is the taste the same at the tip of the tongue as the taste on the palate? Taste the various areas of your mouth. Do they all taste the same or are there shapes of taste that you can perceive?

So this was the meditation of the object of the smell as the object of the nose and taste as the object of the tongue or mouth area. Develop your capacity and relax with it.

So the idea is to discover our world with the senses, to open up completely and simultaneously have that relaxation of mind, where mind becomes completely peaceful in the heightened awareness.

Sometimes, instead of doing that, we dull our awareness. We want to perceive less. And that's just the opposite of the path of liberation. To turn our senses away from the world, actually is just the mirror of our incapacity to deal with those sense impressions. So we have to heighten our capacity to be "durchlässig" (in German), to be permeable to all the sense impressions without fighting with them, no fighting, no clinging. So that they can flow through us. No one clinging, no one fighting, fully aware.

Our normal reaction in samsara is a reaction of what the Buddhist scriptures in their translation usually call 'ignorance'. But actually it is lack of awareness and it is the wish not to be aware, which I just called "dulling our senses", "dulling our awareness".

What would normally happen in (very hot) weather like this is that people would dose off, try to shut off their senses, go into a dosing state and try to do a maximum length of siesta. This is the normal reaction, instead of awakening our senses: Hey, my God, I am sweating. OK, transpiration everywhere, but that's a very alive feeling! Wow, yes, it is intense, it is good. Life is intense. Nothing to avoid. My trousers stick onto me, nothing to avoid, it is OK. Why should I run away from that? There is no need. This running away is due to our choices: we don't like this. So we want something else. So if we cannot run away any more, there is no cool place to be found, then we are in trouble. As long as we can run away, OK. That's fine.

But if we cannot run away anymore, we are in trouble. And you know there are situations in life where one cannot run away. Sickness, old age and death are the classical ones. But in between there are lots of others like relationship problems and so on. We cannot run away. Problems here, problems there, wherever we go, we take them with us. We cannot run away from our habitual tendencies. They will show. We plan the best vacations, and everything is fine, but unfortunately, we take ourselves with us. And that's enough to create lots of problems.

So we try to invert the tendency: Instead of running away, we do the opposite, we open up to it. Let's do this with our physical sensations



right now. When the text says “touch”, it is the object of the body, it means contact in the physical sense. It includes temperature, heaviness, lightness, tingling, buzzing, whatever, shooting, all the physical sensations including body posture, all of it. Everything that one can feel through the physical sense. Balance, imbalance, pulsations, all of that is called touch. It means that we are in touch with physical sensations. Not just outer touch, inner movement, inner perception.

So I suggest that we take the places where we can feel our sweat, our perspiration most. Where the clothes are already sticking to the body, wherever you feel like unpleasant now, take that and welcome it. It is a good reaction of the body. This is where we cool down. It is great. Feel into it and into whatever other physical sensations you have - of temperature, of freshness, of weight - that means of pressure -, the cushion for example, of lightness. Tingling sensations, itching.

And we open up to it. It is actually just intensity of life.

No fighting, no clinging. the famous equanimity with all the sense impressions. Equanimity with full awareness, heightened awareness.

Let us relax all the tensions that oppose life, that oppose those vivid sensations and all tensions that would cling to some agreeable sensation.

And now we come to the mental sense. So all mental movements as the object of mind are the sixth sense. The Tibetan term “rtog-pa” is translated as thoughts, but it means mental movements. Thoughts include images, emotions, conceptual thinking, all kinds of memories, sound impressions that come from memory - all of that.

*“Using whatever arises as support of meditation. In particular pay one-pointed attention to any thoughts that arise in the mind, whether they are thoughts implying the five mind poisons to be abandoned, like desire, aversion, and so on, or virtuous thoughts to be adopted such as generosity, or neutral thoughts.”*

Something becomes a support for meditation when it increases awareness, when it enhances the fluidity of our mind, the flexibility of our mind. Flexibility comes with the capacity to remain free of impulsive reactions.

When a sensory stimulus comes, a sound, a physical sensation, a visible impression or some kind of emotion or thought, blockage or fixation means that we are obliged to go into the reaction. Itching - we are obliged to scratch. Some perceived aggression - we are obliged to defend or counterattack. Our habitual mechanisms oblige us and that's blockage or fixation. Now to have the freedom to scratch or not to scratch, to react or not to react is called flexibility, that's fluidity, there is space and our natural intelligence, our wisdom and our compassion, all those inner forces can decide what's the best to do in that situation. Mind is flexible enough, it is not stuck.

We are now coming to the central point of meditation. The central point is not so much the five outer senses, it is important to be relaxed with them. But most important is to be relaxed with what stimulates our emotions.

Of course some of the emotional stimulation comes through sound, through how someone speaks to us or what we hear. Of course some of it comes through touch, how we are being touched, how we are being dealt with physically, some of it comes through sight which provokes desire or aversion. So some of it comes through the outer senses, but it can also simply come through thinking about something, remembering a difficult moment yesterday and all of our emotional reactions. Some of it can come from remembering consciously or subconsciously something far back, from our childhood, and an emotion comes.

Do you know how to irritate your close friends or partners? Do you know how to seduce them? How to make them have pleasant, attractive feelings? Do you know how to make them feel proud? Do you know how to make them feel jealous? Do you know how to make them agitated or dull? The whole "skill" of manipulating each other depends on the fixations of the people concerned. If they are fixated enough, if their habitual tendencies are predictable enough, they will react in a predictable way. We behave in one way and they behave in a corresponding way. That's what we call samsara.

Free people, who have love and compassion in their heart and lots of wisdom, cannot be manipulated.

In order for us to be manipulated, it is like the story with the hook and the ring. A lot of hooks can come, you know, people want us to feel proud, feel desire, feel anger - but there is no ring. You know, the hooks go into open space. There is no one reacting with "I want, I don't want, I like, I

don't like, I want to be, I want to show, I must, I can't", no. This whole business of I is finished and all the stimulations of the sensory experiences, all the manipulative attempts that we might undergo, they finish in so-called emptiness, empty of a self. We have this expression that "we get hooked on something." That's only possible if the hook finds the ring. It is always the me, the "I want", "I don't want" which gets hooked. That's how it works. It is difficult to manipulate a person when there is nothing he gets hooked on. You cannot even bribe a person who doesn't care for money. It is like impossible. If a person doesn't care to be powerful and important, you can't lure him into a higher position and so on, by proposing a nice salary and titles and so on. He doesn't care. He just wants to be happy and free.

People who have love in their heart are very difficult to manipulate into making war. But if you have fear in your heart, and need - fear and need always go together: Fear that something terrible will happen and need that something good will happen -, then it is very easy to manipulate us.

I talk as if we were talking about outer forces, but actually we are talking about our thinking patterns. We perceive them like thoughts coming in, emotions coming in, as if they were coming in from outside. And they kind of manipulate us: There is a ring and there is a thought. And because I need something and I am afraid of something, this thought becomes very important and carries me away. And another thought, and the emotions are getting bigger. So we are being carried away because of the ring of self-importance, with our hopes and fears.

Now on the emotional level, the more we love the more we open up, that's for sure. And we open up and we touch all these needs connected to loving, all those fears of disappointed love and rejection, which of course also show up as we open up, as we don't protect ourselves anymore.

That's why in relationships and in families, between parents and children, the strongest emotions show because there is love but also the strongest needs and also the strongest fears are triggered.

So the idea of the Buddhist teaching is to become flexible and fluid, no matter what mental processes arise, no matter what stimulation arises from the inside or from the outside. The training starts with the detail, not with the overall aspiration, it is the detail of working with every mental movement that arises. When I sit down for meditation, I know that my practice will consist in opening up to everything, all six senses. And I

know I will encounter unpleasant challenges. My practice will be to be completely with what arises, but not to form a ring into which a hook could enter and carry me away.

So something arises, say itching. Normally, I could be like the ring: Unpleasant sensation: Oh, I don't like this, and looking for a little relief. One forms the ring of "I don't like, I don't want", you know: "I". We let the sensation carry us away. And then we do something. And we have a little relief for a moment. Then it comes again. And it repeats all over and it gets worse. I hope you see the analogy with remembering: "Oh, she said this, he shouldn't have done that" and so on. And it is the same thing. Only it is happening on the inside, just with mental movements and we work ourselves up into aversion, anger until we are so tense that when we meet the person the next time, it is bound to be a fight, it is bound to be a difficult situation.

At the present point in our practice, we cannot avoid that the ring of self-centredness is forming. It is difficult. If we are completely open, it doesn't form. But if it forms and something arises, what do we do?

We will open. We will relax, we will not give it importance, we will open up, we notice and we relax into the experience. It is like the ring opens, it does not offer resistance. At that moment we are without identification. That's how we deal with that.

Concretely, in a practical situation, it could be like this: "You make me so furious. But I love you." You know it's like: "It is so itchy, but it is OK." It is loving acceptance of what you cannot change right now. OK, it is a means to work on fluidity, on flexibility.

But then again, you don't have to accept everything. Like the itching due to mosquitoes. You can get a fan, you can get two fans, you can get air conditioning. You can also try to ventilate your relationship, you can try to bring in some movement. It would be refreshing, it would be nice to have a good exchange. Sometimes it's possible.

Let's do it. So we do what is possible and what we think we would like to do, but still we continue not to form a ring. That's very important. We know that even if we bring in four fans we have to continue with the practice of fluidity, accepting whatever there is. We know that even if we bring in fantastic conversations, exchanges in our relationship, we have to continue accepting each other where we can't open up and change each other. We do have to continue that practice.

And most of all, we have to accept ourselves all the time. No way to get around ourselves. My restlessness, my agitation, my impatience... OK, at least I am patient with my impatience. Fear? Yes, I lose the hope to get out of the fear. OK, I accept that hope that somehow I get out of being who I am. Forget it! I will finish my life as myself. Yes, I accept myself. That's it. My God, let's not manipulate ourselves. Here I am, and basically I am sitting under the bodhi tree like a buddha and I simply open up to what is. My God, nothing difficult has ever happened. It's all drama. It's all in there (pointing to his chest?).

And with that I'd like to meditate with you fifteen minutes doing nothing.

(Silent Meditation)

To repeat the beginning of Lesson 37:

*"First direct your attention one-pointedly to any good or bad visual object."*

And good and bad is for all senses. We don't care whether it is attractive or unpleasant, we like or we don't like, we take whatever arises.

*"When this visual object has become clear, direct your attention to all visible forms."*

This is always the same principle; we go from one place where we stabilise our attention to the whole sense field. So everything is welcome. This is for people who are stable in their meditation for whom it is possible to enlarge their vision to the maximum without getting distracted.

*"When this is stable, be one-pointedly with sound, perceived as the object of the ears, smell as the object of the nose, taste as the object of the tongue, touch as the object of the body, and mental objects of the mind, using whatever arises as support of meditation. In particular pay one-pointed attention to any thoughts that arise in the mind, whether they are thoughts implying the five mind poisons to be abandoned, like desire, aversion, and so on, or virtuous thoughts to be adopted such as generosity, or neutral thoughts."*

Sometimes this meditation is called meditation without object. But actually it is that whatever arises stimulates our awareness. The objects are constantly changing and whatever arises is treated in the same way. The real meditation without object in mahamudra is a meditation where

one does not consider sense objects anymore, one goes completely with the knowledge of their ungraspable nature.

When you go deeper into the ungraspable nature, you don't engage any more with an observer or any sense object. The importance of the observer becomes less and less and remains just a knowing of how it is.

“Some people say one should absolutely stop those thoughts to be abandoned. But if you do so the thoughts will increase, and it will be difficult to develop concentration. Therefore, whatever thoughts arise, relax into them without regarding them as faults. *Allow all the conceptual movements to move without letting the rope of mindfulness be cut.*”

Relax *into* thoughts, don't relax *away* from them. Right into the centre of the experience, not trying to find happiness, spaciousness or whatever, away from the processes that are just going on. We have to relax *IN* what we are doing, *IN* what we are perceiving, *IN* what kind of thinking is going on, *IN* the emotional cinema, *IN* that opening, not away from them. Allow all the conceptual movements, all the dualistic movements of mind to move without letting the rope of mindfulness be cut. No distraction, no interruption of mindfulness.

“Recognize one thought after another without getting lost for a moment in carelessness. Then rest a little.”

This means: be really like a hot stone where snowflakes cannot accumulate. Be really aware of whatever arises, never forming a ring, not be getting caught, not being hooked, don't try to do this for too long. Then relax and allow the mind to wander. Just be without meditating.

*“By meditating repeatedly like this, thoughts will become the support for concentration, the stream of thoughts will be cut and the mind will settle.”*

You will notice that when you practise like this that sense impressions won't generate any comment anymore. There is no comment on the experience. All these complications and me, what shall I do with that and shall I react, all this self-concern will be dropped. It is not happening. We enter absorption, a very stable presence.

A sign of absorption is that we are fully present, we are not distracted, yet we don't notice the time passing. Absorption does not need effort.

Before, yes, to meet with all of these challenges, to maintain mindfulness and to get back into mindfulness - all of that needs effort, we are doing a practice. But when absorption starts, there is a self-propelling energy and there is no need to put in more effort.

*“If this is not happening, but the thoughts increase even more, remain undistracted without regarding them as a faults. There is no difference between looking at a visual object as described previously, and presently looking at thoughts, which is a supreme method for concentration.”*

So this is the end of the formal meditation objects. We work with whatever arises. There is no need to visualise, to focus on this or that, whatever comes is the support for a practice of open, flexible, undistracted awareness. Many people like this, but not many are able to practise it. If you practise this prematurely, you will see that you get distracted very often and you are actually carried often into daydreams, into thought chains and so on. Then you have to bring in more effort to really stay present, undistracted. You might need then a meditation object like breathing or a visualisation or whatever you like to choose. You need an anchor.

*“From the Sutralankara:*

*By properly going into attachment and so on, you will be liberated, and likewise you will have renounced them.”*

Whether it is desire or any other klesha, or any other emotionally disturbing mental state, entering it properly is exactly the same practise: we let it completely arise, but we are not forming a ring, we are not going into “I and what arises”, “I and I have to do something”, I have to get it or I want to kick it out. So we are not forming a ring, there is the full experience without going into a reaction. Then we will be liberated from those automatic reactions, no chain reaction. We have freedom of choice. We have remained free, we can move in any direction. Or: something really intense has just arisen in mind. Something arises, no clinging, no aversion, we are free. In the next moment, it can be something else. No reproduction, no comment, nothing. Just the full experience, we noticed it, we saw it, and it is liberated.

This can be really terrible stuff which is arising. I tell you honestly: After all these years of practice, I was taking care of my father who was a very difficult person, not only for me, but at the end of life I was the one to mainly take care of him together with my mother. One evening he behaved in such an unacceptable way towards my mother, that in my

mind the image of killing him arose, full hatred, like a full blown thought of killing my own father arose in my mind. I was an accomplished lama, it was only about six or seven years ago. It was only one instant. I fully experienced it, full awareness, but nothing followed. No feeling of guilt, no action, just feeling the shock of seeing it and then doing what was best in the situation. So don't be surprised. I want to communicate to you that even after years of practice, if someone presses your buttons, you might have weak points, very sensitive points, you see yourself have very strong reactions, but you don't form the ring if possible. Let it go through, keep your awareness.

You might have a wonderful dharma connection with someone so open, so true, and then suddenly you have this incredible flash of desire. Don't form the ring. Let it move through. It is just a moment. If you hook onto the story, it becomes a story.

So these are just examples. We could continue with any emotion. It would always be the same story. They can become very strong, for a moment we can feel all of our existence, but there is nothing else than that. Let it move through, nothing of it stays, it is completely insubstantial. The moment after, nothing is left.

And now you will understand the quote: "You will be liberated and likewise, you will have renounced (the emotions)." We do not get caught, we let go of these desires, this anger and so on, that's the renunciation: Not getting identified. it is not like will power and so on. It is like opening, not forming the ring. No hook, no ring, and it is gone. This is renouncing: We are not identifying with it.

This is the path of no remedy. Just leave it as it is. Self-liberation of whatever arises. No need to apply remedies. To see that there is no need to react. It is immediate.

This is a practice of shamatha, of mental calm without using remedies, which most of us usually know as an insight practice. This is a practice of calm by relaxing into the experience. You are not supposed to step out of duality, you are just relaxing into the experience because the ring needs tension to form. If you relax, the ring cannot form because you are too relaxed. You don't care, you don't worry, you don't fear, you don't hope. You are just too relaxed, then the emotion cannot take.

You start with the simple thoughts, where should I go? should I go to the taverna and so on - relax. Whatever thought comes - relax. That's the



daily training. That's an emotion already. Every thought is emotional. That's why you think it, because there is something behind, some hope, some fear, something to get out of it. That's why we think. Even a philosopher or mathematician gets something out of it. There is always an emotion involved. So we are working with the simple ones, the easiest ones, the small ones, that's our training.

## LESSON 37 CONTINUED

G 2017 (4)

*“From the Hevajra Tantra:*

*Because of desire you are bound to the world, and by that very desire you become liberated.”*

Desire or any other emotion is what binds us to the cycle of always repeating the same neurotic reaction patterns. This is what is called samsara. So constantly there is this ego-centredness which hooks on or which gets hooked, depending on how you see it, by all the various emotional attractions and aversions. By looking into it, by opening into the desire, then we understand the nature of desire, anger and so forth and that's how we become liberated. So it is not by cultivating desire that one becomes liberated from desire. It is including that understanding, and then the letting go, the non-identification, not forming the ring, that's how within the experience one is liberated.

*“Gyalwa Yangönpa:*

*Do not regard thoughts as something to be abandoned and do not deliberately create non-conceptuality. Place the watcher of mindfulness and you will arrive at the practice of calm abiding.”*

It might be that even after years of listening to my teachings where I am very clear about this point, that if you reflect on why you came to this course, maybe you came with an attitude that you have to abandon thoughts. Have a look if it is so; if you still feel that that's the problem. Perhaps you were secretly or consciously trying to create non-conceptuality (tib. mi-rtog-pa). This non-conceptuality is like the haven, we'd like to go to a place where there is no thinking, where we are finally free. Wrong. This is not the way to go. It is based on an aversion to thoughts, on an aversion to mind movements and will not lead to liberation.

So I say it again: Aversion or attachment do not lead to liberation. Aversion to thoughts, to thinking processes are not the basis of awakening. We need to open up to the experience of just now, whatever it is. Including of course all the play of mind, so-called thoughts, thinking, mind movements and so on. We need to completely open up and accept that it is so, not trying to change it. What will then happen is that in that experience, whatever movement it is, we will not form the ring. we will remain with it, we will remain flexible and then nothing hooks on. There is no chain, no commentary developing, no emotional reaction. What will happen then is that we become free from those reactions of further mind movements connected with one thought, one idea, one image that caught our attention and which we were attracted to, fascinated by or which we had some aversion to. And then it creates this whole cinema. That will not happen anymore.

We will have other mind movements. Yes, there will be movement. Mind is dynamic by nature, so there will be more experience continuing. There is no emptiness without mind moving, without mind being active. This does not exist. We will not produce artificially some kind of blank in our mind. Definitely not. Of course one can do that, it is possible, but it is a state of tension, of blocking our senses. So if we are relaxed and fluid, mind will continue having different experiences, very vivid, but without clinging, without identification.

A non-conceptual state which is deliberately produced has a tension in it. For example, a jnamic absorption which is based on aversion to thinking processes has a tension in it. Experiences of the god realm have a tension in them.

What is happening is that there is a natural non-conceptuality which is not deliberate, which appears by itself. It is the absence of ego-centred commentaries. It is the absence of additional thoughts, additional thinking upon thinking. So we are moving towards a non-conceptuality that has plenty of movement, but no complications. Our mind, our inner experience does get tied in knots any more by seeing something agreeable or disagreeable, our mind does not get into tension. And it is completely OK to call that non-conceptuality because actually we are not producing concepts about things, we are living them directly without complications.

And if we go a long way with that, then our wish, our tendency to always think about things really comes to rest. So there is openness much more often than usual.

We are now in an instruction on shamatha. This is an indication how you can get there. What we do is that we place the watcher of mindfulness. So we are watchful, we are mindful of just how we are interacting with phenomena, with experiences of the six senses.

And immediately, when we notice that we complicate things, that there is a commentary, an emotional reaction, then we relax. That's what we do. The watcher of mindfulness knows when we get hooked and helps us to do the necessary to relax. Like this we will arrive at the practice of calm abiding and natural calm by relaxing into the experience.

Becoming the experience is a more fluid way of saying that we don't grasp after the experience. We open up constantly. If we are not the experience, the watcher should know.

Let's do it for a short moment:

The attitude is that we sit, we open up and we say: Yes, thoughts, mind move! Yes, show yourself. As many thoughts or movements there are, come here. But there is no one interested. So full permission without fascination and without aversion. that's the interesting combination. Everything is allowed to happen in mind.

Watch what is happening in your mind if you give full permission for everything to move, to show itself.

Various sense impressions, no clinging.

Would you know if you were clinging? This capacity of knowing when you are clinging, this is called the watcher of mindfulness.

How do we know if we cling? Tension.

There is for example a physical sensation in your legs. And then suddenly you see yourself moving, stretching your leg for example. The watcher of mindfulness would notice the tension due to that physical sensation before you move the leg. There are no unconscious, automatic, impulsive movements or words coming out. You notice the

tension before it leads you into a samsaric reaction, and already there is the answer to relax that tension.

When the mind starts clinging, we lose the perception of the whole. We become focused. The attention goes there. But be careful, you cannot say it the opposite way. It doesn't mean that if our attention goes somewhere exclusively that we are clinging. We can become completely absorbed in one aspect of our experience, for example the experience of breathing to the exclusion of all the rest, but it is not necessarily a clinging, it is not necessarily involved with tension. We might be absorbed in a meditation of loving kindness, metta meditation. We might be completely absorbed in that, opening up, just that, forgetting the rest. We are not into clinging.

But when we are in clinging, for sure, our mind concentrates for that time on what we are clinging to, definitely. A broad perspective doesn't mean that we are not clinging either. We might be clinging to a broad perspective! The only sure sign is the tension. We have to develop very fine sensors for the tension in our mind, like a thermometer. You notice every slight increase or decrease in your inner tension.

In the beginning of my retreats, every time I relaxed more into these experiences of calm abiding, I felt: Wow, that's it! I have never been as relaxed as this and it felt like zero tension to me. And a few months later, there was another deepening of practice: Wow! I was never as relaxed as this. That's zero tension. And a few months later the same thing - oh, I have never dreamt of being as relaxed as this. This must be it. And a few months later, the same thing again. But of course, one begins to know the game.

Only when the experience of awakening opens, then there is zero tension in mind. That's why in all the texts you read that you cannot go deeper. Once you touch into that nondual awareness, there is no more dualistic tension, you cannot go deeper. From there on you can only go wider. You can go into all areas of your life. This is really the zero tension state. That's why it is called liberation, the end of dukkha. Dukkha is that famous word that the Buddha always used and it means tension, stress. It is usually translated as suffering. But there is very subtle dukkha. Even in the states of calm abiding where everything becomes very peaceful, there is still dukkha, there is still this residue of tension, this stress. So when that's completely gone and dukkha is finished, that's an experience of awakening.

Question: What is the difference between tension and effort? And what is the difference between effort that is necessary and effort is counterproductive?

Answer: Very good, that's actually the next sentence in the commentary:

*"It is important to continuously keep doing short sessions and to alternate between tightening and relaxation."*

The effort of being aware is like a sudden stress for the observer, we need a little bit stress to really know whether we are relaxed. And then we relax that effort, we don't tighten so much, we relax it and we notice that mind stays open even when there is not this effort of watching. And something interesting happens in time: You make this effort, like a little bit tightening one's body and becoming aware and not wanting to let any clinging come in, and it works and you relax in that. You kind of take a break. And you notice that the break is much more fun. the break is interesting. Before you get distracted, in that break of the mindfulness, is when we feel most natural.

What we are doing with our mind is something which is also being used in therapy for the body. If you work with someone who is tense in the body, for example some of you feel some neck tension right now, you can tell yourself: Relax. But nothing will happen. Very often, what is very good to do: Make it a little bit more tense, not too tense, just a little bit more, and then relax. Then this relaxation goes further than it could originally. There is a little tensing, and then the letting go. Something which is known for people who have a cramp in the hand. If you tell them to relax, it is not possible. Tighten more, and then relax.

But here, in a special form, it is not the usual cramp of samsara. We are enhancing our awareness of clinging; we are watching and then we relax that watching. And we learn how to relax that tensed observation. And we become an expert in these inward movements, increasing effort and relaxing effort. We become very much experts in that, we know how to do that!

And then we can begin to see how much effort is actually necessary. How much does it need? And we find out: It needs much less effort, always less effort than what we thought. It is so interesting. Like teaching now. You might think it is effort for me - no. One can learn to be completely relaxed in the doing. No effort in the activity. It is possible.

We learn to fully differentiate at least two types of effort: the ego-involved effort and the effort free of ego-centredness. You can have a very relaxed, non-ego-centred effort. It is an incredible discovery.

How much effort is needed to hold up an object, for example? It depends on how we hold it up. We can hold it up with a lot of tension! With a fear of it falling down. With the hope of hanging onto it. And we can simply hold it up. It is incredible: By just imitating how it is to hold up an object with samsaric effort, I could feel it was continuing even after I put it down. It is only when I say: "simply holding up", then everything unnecessary relaxes. It is the same with every activity.

Does it need effort to last through a three-hour teaching here? How much effort is needed? Find out? If there is aversion and attachment in play, it will need a lot of energy. There will be inner fighting and wanting to be somewhere else or whatever. Or wanting to get more of it, or fighting with my own incapacity to understand - I put my mind and body into knots because of wanting and not wanting, and it is a very tiresome thing.

How much effort is needed to climb a mountain? It depends on whether we are into a fluid rhythm, maybe with joy and letting it happen, not forcing ourselves, or if we are constantly forcing ourselves. It makes the experience very different. So our very fine sensors for effort, for tension, will let us know when we are doing just the necessary effort or whether there is additional tension coming in. It is that sensor for hope and fear, attachment and aversion that's the same as for that tension. We become experts in minimum effort. If you can, no effort. Just doing what's needed. Of course when teaching I have to move my tongue and think, but it is not really an effort. I am just using the natural creativity of mind. It is active anyhow. So I can also teach.

Karmapa now explains further tightening and relaxation so that we really know how to go into full attention and then to relax. So we need to know the extremes. How to give ourselves fully and then to relax.

*"Tightening means to completely concentrate the mind on any suitable object without getting absentminded even for an instant. The mouth, the eyes and the ears become alert and the muscles in the body become tense. This meditation with the proper tension is compared to the concentrated attention you need to identify a thief in the middle of a crowded marketplace, or when counting*

*horses and cows from a distance, or when walking on a one-trunk-bridge, or when moving a trough that is filled to the brim with molten butter.”*

Let us use all these examples to understand. Have you ever tried to find someone in a crowded place, to identify a person, like you go to a theatre or a big event and you try to find your friend somewhere there, it doesn't have to be a thief? You have to be very attentive. The thief here is that we want to find the clinging, that which steals our happiness. we want to find: Is there clinging now in the mind? Is it present or not? So look into that. Do it now. Try to find: Is there clinging there right now? Can you find it?

Do you see that alertness which arises? The senses are very alert.

Let's do it a little bit differently. Use your mindfulness to not let clinging enter your mind. It is like keeping the thief out of the house. Be sure that there is no clinging entering into your state of mind right now.

Do you notice that funny state of mind that is produced by that? There is no tension on the inside, you can say, but there is nevertheless a tension of not wanting something to happen. There is an alertness which is tension in itself. The idea of not letting tension arise creates a certain form of tension. That's called tightening the mind.

When one is counting horses or cows from a distance, that's quite a difficult job. You have to be sure that when you count to 58, they are really 58 and not 57. One missing is a lot, it is too much. You will have to search for it. Counting horses or cows in Tibet was of course a very important job and needed a precise mindfulness. So in the same way, when we look at our mind, we are not counting thoughts, but we want to know: Is there, in between our thoughts, a thought of ego-centredness? Try that. Be aware of thoughts arising and see if there is some thought of dukkha or ego-entredness.

Again, that creates a funny state of tension. It is as if we had to be sure: I couldn't really do the exercise because this is just a stupid tension, unnecessary. Actually, even the thoughts of ego-centredness dissolve by themselves if they are not nourished. We don't need to count them and watch on them. But in order to learn, yes, one needs to be able to identify them. And I remember when I was going through this phase in shamatha, I could tell after an hour or so of meditating that I had seven thoughts in one hour. I remember I was very calm and seven thoughts was exactly the number. It is not just imagined. So one kind of is very

aware, very mindful, and sees the movements appearing in mind. So that precision is there, but it is still tension. So be aware that we need to develop that concentration of really knowing what's going on in mind, but that's not all it. That would be just the aspect of complete presence.

Question: Is it about finding the right balance?

Answer: This would be the balance between tightening and relaxation, as if there was a balance. But the actual thing is to find out the minimum effort. Just how much effort is really needed? And there is no balance that would be the same from one situation to the next, it is always finding out just how much effort is really needed. The effort is the alertness with wanting. You will find out that there is alertness not dependent on wanting because it is a natural quality of mind. So much depends on relaxing everything that obstructs alertness. And then alertness shows as a natural quality of mind needing no effort. But that's already the result of a long path of meditation to have that all the time.

(Break, some doing the exercise of moving with a cup filled to the rim of water and then to exercise with just how much of effort and attention does it need to move around the room with the water in the hand, without spilling a drop.)

*“Relaxation means to act as if you were abandoning any endeavour to meditate without really abandoning it.”*

Maybe you saw that: When they arrived with the water, I took the water but I didn't focus on the water. I talked with them while holding the water and I could also move it. It is the best way to relax, not to care so much about it, let it take care of itself.

In France, we did courses where we combined hiking and meditation. We always alternated. Every hour we would meditate. We were all ages together, and for some of them it seemed impossible to go up to the top of that mountain. And we could regularly produce a surprise to arrive on top without feeling exhausted. How is that possible? We take an attitude that we don't want to reach the top of the mountain. We just lift the foot and the mountain slides under. Yes, and it works every time. And before we stress, we relax. It is so important: Make a pause, make a break before you even get into any felt effort. So the best meditation usually



happens before the effort or before you get into it, when you give up meditating. At the beginning of the pause.

*“Let go continuously into an unfabricated selflessness and just be undistracted and mindful for moments. Prolong your sessions slightly and relax body and mind. This relaxation feels like the ease after a finished work, it feels like the release after having recovered from illness, it is like a bundle of straw, whose rope has been cut, it feels like a baby with a full belly, it is like the sun and the moon without clouds, like a flame unmoved by wind. With these two methods of tightening and relaxation the faults of dullness and agitation are removed respectively.”*

Relaxation, as it is defined here, is to let go continuously into an unfabricated selflessness. Where there is self-involvement, there is always tension. And that selflessness has to be unfabricated. If it is fabricated, it is again tension.

So that’s the recipe for how to meditate: Sometimes effort when there is dullness, when we are not really there; then a little bit more effort. Then relax and don’t do anything which is not needed. Open up, relaxed selflessness.

When there is agitation, wild mind, only relax. If that doesn’t help immediately, then make short periods of effort, but much more relaxation than effort. Become attentive for a short moment, like ten cycles of breathing, twenty cycles of breathing, and then relax completely. That will help completely to go deeper into that relaxation, to have intermediate effort.

So the idea is to be meditating

*“like the ease after a finished work.”*

We hardly know this anymore. It is terrible. Modern people, people of our times, when we have finished one work, already ten others are waiting. Please cultivate moments in your life when there is really nothing more to do. We come to the end of the work and you can sit in your garden or balcony, or lie on your sofa, and really: nothing to think about. Don’t count the list of the to-does that are waiting for you.

The image is here of a farmer who has taken care of the work, comes home, the sun is setting, everything is done, nothing more to do, like this.

Like a baby with a full belly, a fully satisfied baby, just relaxed.

Question: The observer?

Answer: The observer is usually an ego-centred activity. I say “usually” because there can be other motivations for observing, but normally it is the hope-and-fear pattern that is active when there is this observing of ourselves. One can also observe with love, compassion and so on, there are other possibilities to observe than the ego-centred observation.

When we meditate with more tension, more awareness, more effort, the body remains stable. But it's the same when we relax, the body remains stable, there is no movement. Both these changes are done with a completely stable body, there is not really so much change outwardly. we can of course as we relax the mind also relax the body, but then again in the new posture, again we remain stable.

When you become sleepy, then definitely don't continue with the baby with the full belly image. Perhaps for a moment you switch to become so attentive as if you were looking for a thief in a marketplace, in a crowd.

So there is a need to know your own state of mind and then apply the kind of meditation that is good for you now to become more and more open and more and more clear. So everyone is doing personal meditation, adjusting periods of tightening, that means more effort, straightening up, with periods of relaxation, letting be, nothing to do, no one meditating.

Question: How much precision is enough?

Answer: You need to be able to identify single thought movements, that's absolutely needed. If you cannot do that, you will not be able to be able to know the nature of these movements. You need to know exactly at a given time what is going on in the mind. - There is no limit to the benefits of precision. You will always benefit from more precision. Because of observing the mind so precisely, one sees exactly how everything interweaves; interacts with everything else. So the more precisely one observes one's mind, the more one is able to help others to deal with theirs. And when one has this precision of observation one can understand the whole abhidharma. Every description of an aspect of mind, you can just go there and investigate. You can have the

experience. All of it is just how you direct your attention and now you investigate.

When you say, for example, that a thought is made of seven sub-thoughts (Theravada), this is still in a very horizontal or linear perspective in time. Actually, this is still like thinking in mathematical terms, on one level. Nowadays, I don't perceive that any more as such, because the perception has not stayed on one level of experience, but perception - this means our awareness - can perceive different levels of experience at the same time. Within myself, there are deeper strata of experience, more conceptual strata, emotional undertones, biographical inputs. But that's not all, there are the inputs of other beings which one can perceive at the same time, different realms you could say of living in that same world, and there is the possibility of a multidimensional, interwoven perception or activities which one can perceive in their interactions and it is not like one thing here and one thing there, but it is like a continuous flow and you can see that the flows of those energies happen on all levels of our being. That's a different way of perceiving the world, it is not that structured one-dimensional abhidharma. What I am talking about now is also abhidharma, but it is a multi-dimensional perception of reality that I am trying to describe.

There is incredible precision in that. If I try to imagine that this goes very very far, then I have a faint idea of how it could have been possible that the Third Karmapa felt the whole universe inside his own body with such a precision that he was able to establish a calendar with that, the astrophysics of planets moving. Up to the present day, the Kagyü calendar is calculated according to the Third Karmapa's vision of the universe from within his own body. That's an incredible precision and vastness and multidimensional level of being. That's so far beyond from what I experience, but I see it developing in that direction, that level of precision is incredible, of what we are able to know, feel, perceive and then communicate. Wonderful.

Question: Is it that the nine levels of shamatha (Lesson 35) are not to be practised one after the other but that they are more a description of subtlety of the calm mind and that we can practise them at any time?

Answer: Although most presentations go in an order, one after the other, actually we can practise any at any given time, depending on where our mind is, we go with that. So yes. We can go straight into it especially with guided meditation. When the teacher guides you and helps you to

stabilise, you can have experiences of seven, eight, nine, which normally you wouldn't reach in your own meditation. You can go there, it is accessible at all times. You don't have to go step by step until you reach that.

DAY 3 (170702-0286-0288)

2017 (5) Morning Meditation

(Recitation)

Taking a good breath, starting immediately with the meditation. Opening the senses. Feeling the entire body. Hearing as if we were new-born.

Seeing with wide eyes, a panoramic view without fixing at anything. The same for smelling and tasting, no fixation whatsoever.

Allowing the mind to be moving, no restrictions, simply never hooking onto it, never following and no fighting. Fully aware of just how it is in the experience of now.

Notice how everything is actually always on the move, constant process.

You might discover something like a space in which everything is happening. As if we had something like a limitless space in which the dance of the various sensations can happen.

That space has of course no form, no odour, nothing that would allow us to describe it.

First of all we think it is like a space around the phenomena.

Then, as we look into the experiences, as we relax into them, we discover the space inside the experience. Also that so-called experience of self, me, has the same space, the same nature.

Whatever experience of tension there might be, self or other, it always has this nature of spaciousness. It is the same for all experiences of joy and fluidity. It is also called dynamic space.

Allow yourself to open up into it. Not to remain an observer of space.

Remembering space will help you not to form the ring with the hook to go into it, not to get into reactions.

(Bell)

Keep your awareness in the break, move slowly, not creating so many reaction patterns. The pause is the main practice. That is where we can see if we have relaxed our attraction-aversion patterns towards sense impressions, a little bit - physical impressions, sounds, sights, thoughts.

Sometimes already in meditation we feel as if our mind was a monkey. And then, when the break comes, it is like the monkey going wild. Give it space, become the space. Let the monkey feel the spaciousness of its own mind. Where to go, where to run, what's so important?

Life in samsara is very hard because we are compelled to react to everything. Liking, disliking, always trying to find better solutions. We are searching for happiness, but basically we are fighting with life. There is a deep non-acceptance in our fight. Fighting with sensations in the body, fighting with sounds, fighting with sights, always fighting for the better against the worse. It is actually an expression of deep non-acceptance.

First we think that we have to accept the world. So we try to accept the world. That's heavy work in meditation. Then we realise we have to accept ourselves, that so-called self which is actually our mind. That's where it all happens. And that's the actual prison, the actual prison are our habitual tendencies. So we relax those compulsive patterns. We accept them, we look at their very nature, we see that they have no substance. Actually, the so-called compulsive patterns have no power to compel us to do anything.

Let's meditate again and look at that. Investigate.

If your mind is agitated, please do not force yourself. You can make extra effort when your mind is dull. But when your mind is already wild and agitated, please give it more space. Relax the body, relax the mind.

(Dedication)

## LESSON 6: DISADVANTAGES OF SAMBARA

G 2017 (6)

This is difficult to teach because it confronts us with all these invisible realms which we cannot see with our eyes.

The idea for contemplating this is to increase our gratitude for being born in this condition now, where we can actually practise the dharma - this is one reason.

And the second reason is to make it clear that there is no other place which is more propitious for the dharma practice. There is no other place where it is easier to attain awakening than in this human realm with all these conditions.

The third reason is to help us develop compassion and an awareness for beings who are in much greater suffering than ourselves.

When I first received these teachings, I said to myself: Come on, is this true? Can that be? Now, almost forty years later, I am convinced that it is exactly like that, but even worse. So they give us just a little bit of what is actually happening.

Let's go through the original text of the sixteenth century, and I will try to explain, but I cannot explain everything. You can take it as a tale from the medieval age, it is fine with me, you don't have to believe anything like I didn't in the beginning, but leave the door open for some possible truth in there.

After contemplating precious human existence, impermanence and action this is the fourth contemplation that turn the mind to the dharma.

*“Next you must contemplate the vicious circle of conditioned existence. Because of unawareness you have been attached since beginningless time to an I where there is no I, and to a self where there is no self. From this arises the illusory perception of samsara, and you are tormented by the three types of suffering: the suffering of conditioned existence, which is accompanied by a neutral sensation, the suffering of change, which is accompanied by a pleasant sensation, and the suffering of pain, which is accompanied by a painful sensation.”*

From this idea of clinging to the idea of a self like a core, a something unchanging which is me inside and the clinging to this arises the illusory perception of samsara, as a world separated from us.

I will quickly describe the three aspects of suffering:

(1) The obvious suffering, which we call suffering in our language, is due to unpleasant experiences. It is suffering of heat when it is too hot, the suffering of illness when the body is aching, the suffering of separation when we love someone and we didn't want the separation. So this kind of suffering.

So for example, in a relationship, we experience separation and our idea of that is: I don't want that. This is unpleasant. So on top of the separation, we create the suffering of sorrow. We will have the sorrow, the sadness of the separation, and this will be on top of what is actually happening. Maybe ten years later we say: It is the best thing that ever happened to me. But while we are in it, our image is that it is unpleasant, it is unwanted, so there is extra suffering due to that.

When we have fever or pains in an illness, the real suffering is not the pain, the discomfort of the fever, but the aversion that comes with it, the lack of acceptance, all the suffering on top of suffering. We don't need that extra tension. It is difficult enough to be sick, but we usually add with our aversion, we increase to our suffering due to judging that as unpleasant and unwanted.

(2) We have a pleasant sensation, agreeable, and then, as everything, it is over. It changes. And then there is the suffering of not being able to accept the change, which means the fading away, the going away of the pleasant sensation. So, basically, it is a longing for the pleasant sensation which was there before; not accepting that something new is happening. Longing when the sun is setting and we just can't just stop and enjoy the sunset longer as we would like, but it is changing. There was a nice conversation with someone, a nice heartfelt conversation, but now it is time to go to bed. Something changes, it finishes. So this is all the suffering due to change.

It is not the change which creates the suffering. It is our non-acceptance of the change which creates the suffering. When we experience something beautiful, a clinging arises and we want it to last. And that's

what creates the tension, the extra unnecessary tension in the beautiful experience and after the beautiful experience.

It is not the change that is creating the suffering, it is our relationship to it, not accepting it.

(3) And then there is this basic suffering connected to neutral feelings, we don't notice it. It is that dualistic split: me here, I, and the world outside, a little bit separated from me and this tension between self and others. This is the basic suffering of conditioned existence, but only in as so far as we cling to a self as really existent.

*"Examples for them are in order, the putting down of embers, a person falling asleep on the grass covering the embers, and the wind blowing on it and setting it on fire resulting in harm for the person."*

When we begin to separate into self and others, we have a problem. We don't notice it immediately, we can still go to sleep, it is like a thick layer of grass on the glowing ash, right now we don't get burnt. But that lack of awareness will show immediately when agreeable or disagreeable situations arise. An agreeable situation is like falling asleep, not noticing how we begin to grasp at the situations, the experiences we like. But that is already the beginning of suffering. Grasping to the agreeable is not felt as a problem yet.

But when change is unavoidable, we cannot stop it anymore, then it is like the wind is passing over the embers and now you are on fire, then you have very disagreeable sensations.

Basically, these examples are telling us: Watch out, you are playing with fire, you are going to get burnt. You think that you could engage with the world in a dualistic way without getting burnt. No way.

If there is a self, you will perceive agreeable sensations from the point of view of a self, hooking onto them, and that's the suffering of change which will occur inevitably.

And as soon as you judge an experience as disagreeable from the point of view of a self, you are fighting with it, aversion occurs and it creates all that tension due to unpleasant things happening in mind.



The text goes into explaining now the ground level of the problem, the suffering of conditioned existence, conditioned by the view of a self separated from others. This suffering:

*“pervades everyone, those living in all kinds of forms of existence, from the top of the universe down to the incessant hell.*

***THE SUFFERING OF CONDITIONED EXISTENCE*** *pervades all forms of existence, from the top of the world down to the incessant hell. Once the karmic force, which led to an existence as a formless god without conception, has been exhausted, it will cause them to fall. As soon as they have taken on the perpetuating aggregates, they will experience suffering again. Ordinary persons do not understand this, but spiritually developed persons perceive it as it is. For example: if you put a single hair on the palm of your hand, it is not unpleasant. But if the same hair gets into the eye, it is unpleasant.*”

Even if you are born as a god in the formless realm, you know, there is no even a conception there, but when that karma is exhausted, you will be reborn in lower realms. As soon as we then identify with the aggregates, with the skandhas, then of course we will experience suffering again and again. This is a reference to the teaching of the five skandhas which explains how the self gets into clinging to a self into all the aspects of our existence.

The first skandha is: I am what I perceive, all the forms in the six senses. I am what I see, what I smell, what I feel and so on, and what I think. All these forms that appear in the six senses.

The second skandha is called feeling tone, also sometimes called sensation, which means I am what I like and what I don't like. My taste, you could say. For me, heat is agreeable, swimming in the sea is agreeable, I don't like classical music and so on. You know, agreeable and disagreeable, this basic preference we have all the time; we feel that is me, this characterizes me.

Skandhas means the aggregates with which we closely take on (tib. nyer-len-pa'i phung-po), with which we identify. We had the first two skandhas. The first one was what I perceive, and the second one is what I feel, what I like and dislike.

The third one, you could say; I am what I know or what I can distinguish. It is called distinctions in the classical translations, it means to be able to differentiate, to label: That's a rose, that's a tulip; that's a wine from Bordeaux, that's a Rioja and so on, all the capacities of differentiation. So it pertains to our experience and from our experience the capacity to finally distinguish. It goes together with the previous one, right? They are not separated: I like that poet, I like that author, I like that musician because... And you can give reasons with all of that capacity of distinguishing.

The fourth one is: "I am the one who creates his own world", I am the creator of my world, this identification. It is the identification which starts from: I am the one who can concentrate so much; I am so virtuous, I can do so many good things. It is this whole identification with how I am in the world and what I can do for example in a positive way. But I am also my emotions. I get so angry, I am such a choleric person, I get so jealous, I am so attached to this and that. So I am my emotions, my kleshas. It is also that identification. I am wisdom, I am love, I am anger, I am desire - all of that, the way I create my world.

And then the fifth one is different states of consciousness. I am what I experience, overall, the whole thing. Whatever arises in the six sense fields, whatever experiences there are, I am that.

All of that, in an awakened person, is also functioning, but there is no more "I am that", there is no more identification. There is perceiving, there is feeling, there is activity, we are distinguishing. There are various experiences arising but no one identifies who clings to it as being me and mine.

And definitely we are not the love and the wisdom. Love and wisdom fortunately happen without ego. All these wonderful qualities of mind arise much more easily without ego-clinging. Ordinary people do not understand this. How could this be suffering to be identified with a self? But spiritually developed people perceive it as it is.

*"Abhidharmakoshaśāstra:*

*If a single hair on the palm of the hand gets into the eye, it creates unpleasant and painful sensations. Spiritually undeveloped persons are like the palm of the hand, they do not feel the hair, the suffering of conditioned existence. Spiritually developed persons are like the eye, they perceive the suffering of conditioned existence."*

Yesterday I explained to you about the sensitivity we need to notice tension. Ordinary people, caught in samsara, do not have enough sensitivity to feel the tension created by identifying with a self. If there is no other situation that provokes more suffering, that basic tension is so normal, so habitual that it is not perceived. Spiritual people here means awakened people. Awakened people know by contrast how it feels to be completely free of such ego-clinging, and then to cling to a self is perceived as strongly as when a hair comes into your eye, as strongly, which before wasn't even perceived. What do we do when we have a hair in the eye? We try everything to get it out. So once you know the difference, the process continues. You will do everything not to enter into that clinging again and again. So, automatically, one goes towards the state of freedom of suffering, no more clinging to a self, one knows the difference and one will automatically go towards that.

But what can we say to ordinary people when we try to tell them: Listen, this hair is a problem, this identification with a self. They will say: I can hardly feel it, where is it? And then they don't see a problem with that. And that's OK, just know that this is due to a lack of sensitivity, a lack of awareness.

When I experiment with this, it becomes increasingly more difficult to produce voluntarily the clinging to a self. It is possible for example in the act of seeing. When I am seeing now in this relaxed way, there is no idea that I am seeing, that I am looking at you. I don't produce this extra inner tension when looking at something. But when something special is happening, then I can feel that yes, there is the sense of I which is triggered, it becomes very obvious that now I am seeing as me here and you there. And then I can feel the difference. It is very obvious.

It is the same with hearing. Normally, it is fine, I can sleep with the ears open, not protecting myself against sounds. But when something special happens and triggers the sense of self, interacting with that - for example I woke up at 2.30 at night at Grüner Baum, where we live, and I thought the bells were ringing. But it is just the cows. But for a moment I took it personally. then you see the basic tension that is there, separating me from the experience, and it is very obvious that the sense of self is very active at that moment. When the sense of self is relaxed or not present at all, when a sudden sound comes, there is no shrieking, there is no shock. There is hearing, but no shock.

Some teachers of Zen, of Dzogchen and so on, use this by suddenly making loud sounds. Sogyäl Rinpoche was one of those who loved this. Let them all meditate and then suddenly (clapping hands) - you know. And then you can judge where you are with your awareness.

When they were making the sewage system through the rocks next to our retreat place in Dagpo, in France, the explosions of the granite being taken away came without warning. It was a very good sign of where we were in our meditation. When we were relaxed, going through, of course noticing, but there would be no jerking, no shrieking, no tension, no suffering because of the sound. It is a relaxed awareness. We notice, we can react - for example if there was a fire, we would get up and extinguish the fire, it is not that we are gone. The relaxed awareness does not immediately react with fear.

So this gives you some ideas. When in meditation, some unforeseen things happen, you can see by your reaction where you were with your relaxation.

*“THE SUFFERING OF CHANGE is experienced because of craving for the sense pleasures of forms, sounds, odors, tastes, and tactile sensations. Like the mara's arrow' or its messenger maid, like honey on a razor blade, like saltwater, and like scratching an itchy skin disease, the enjoyment ends in unbearable pain. Thus all samsaric pleasure finally changes into pain, it never goes beyond pain. Even if you were to attain the state of those most famous in the world, a universal monarch, or Indra or Brahma, it would still change into pain in the end.”*

The longing for something agreeable will never find satisfaction because of change. The more you get into sexual desire (“messenger maids”), the stronger it becomes, so you always need more. It is also like licking honey from a razor blade. If we engage with clinging and desire with the world, it is very dangerous. The risk of getting hurt is high. It is like drinking salt water - it doesn't really quench your thirst. And it is like scratching an itching skin - we are longing for a relief, but with every scratch we need to scratch more until it is all bloody.

So the wise men and women take just a little and they stop when it is still good. Before it turns into suffering, they let go of the clinging for more. That's the secret: To let go of the clinging for more early enough. If we don't let go of that desire early enough, then all samsaric pleasure finally changes into pain,

So the art of enjoying life is knowing change. We appreciate what life presents to us and we do not fight against change, but we are prepared

for the change, so that would be the wisdom coming in. When we enjoy with this wisdom, this understanding of change, we know that when the thought comes to want to prolong it, then it is high time to let go of it, not to cling further because that's when the tension will increase and increase in our mind.

Nagarjuna writes in the *Suhrillekha*:

*“Even if you have become a universal monarch, you will come back and become a slave again. Even if you have become Indra, who is worthy of offerings, you will fall back to earth by the force of your actions again. Even if you have attained the desireless bliss of Brahma, you will become firewood for the incessant hell again. Thus I want to show you that there is no end to suffering.”*

Even if we were to attain the status of those most famous in the world. Wherever there is clinging, it will change into suffering. You know, we are here because we already have quite some wisdom in that area. Otherwise we wouldn't be sitting in the heat, in a garage, somewhere in Greece listening to such teachings. And we know about all the powerful people in the world and their suffering. We are aware of it.

So change needs to be understood. We need to begin to appreciate change. Then life begins to be fine. Not only that change is not our enemy, change is actually what allows life to be such a wonderful adventure. It is a great thing to live. That's thanks to change. Without change, there would be no life. Change is happening all the time and we are not aware of it. As we become more aware, we see it happening all the time. Sunrise is different every day.

*“Because you do not see samsara as suffering, but are attached to it as pleasant, you do not give up attachment and aversion to the eight worldly concerns, and thus you are separated from the opportunity to practice the authentic dharma. Rather than being unable to bear any difficulty concerning food and clothing, or even a single unpleasant word, it is important to cut as best you can through samsaric attachment.”*

These eight worldly concerns or dharmas or practices within samsara are always to go for pleasures and to avoid pain, to want victory and try to avoid defeat, to want to be praised and avoid being criticised and try to be renowned, famous or important instead of being despised by others.

So that's what we are busy with. Going for pleasure, victory, praise and fame, and avoiding the opposites. To say it in other words: We are worried with how much we have and what others think about it.

To find freedom it is necessary to reduce that importance of what we have and how much we have and stop giving importance to what others think about it. This is completely useless when we die. During this life and after death what makes us happy is what kind of qualities there are in us, in this mind-stream.

Samsaric attachment means these eight worldly dharmas.

*“ **THE SUFFERING OF PAIN (suffering)** is abundant in each of the six realms of living beings. The suffering you have to endure once you have been born in the hells because of heavy harmful actions is as follows: twenty thousand yojanas below our continent, on an exceedingly hot, glowing iron base, many yojanas in size, which has been created by harmful actions and which is red like fresh meat, you will encounter the sufferings of the eight hot hells: the reviving hell, the black line hell, the rounding up and crushing hell, the howling hell, the great howling hell, the heating hell, the intense heating hell, and the incessant hell. In each of the four directions are the neighboring hells: the pit of embers, the swamp of putrescent corpses, the grove of razors, the forest of swords with the shalmali trees, and the river Rabme of hot ashes.”*

To contact those hell realms by clairvoyance is much more difficult than to contact beings in the bardo, or spirits in nature and so on because the difference in karma is very big. So it is difficult to reach areas which are karmically very different from what we experience. So it is very difficult for clairvoyant people to get there.

It is the same for the god realms. The more similar they are to the human realm, the easier it is to contact them. But when they get more and more different, very few clairvoyant people can reach them.

Gendun Rinpoche encouraged me to teach about the subject, but I will refrain from doing like some of my Tibetan colleagues who now would do two and a half days of teaching only on the hell realms. I had my first glimpse of the hell realms in the fifth year of retreat through some dream yoga travels. It was so shocking that for three days I was trembling. And although I had personally wished to go there and to be guided there, I didn't return for about twenty years, until last year.

The descriptions you will hear now and that you can read in the “Jewel Ornament” are very rough descriptions, very general. The actual situation is much worse than what is being described.

“Abhidharmakosha:

*Twenty thousand yojanas below the earth is the incessant hell. Above there are seven more hells. All eight have sixteen neighboring hells. On each of the four sides there are the pit of hot embers, the swamp of putrescent corpses, the road of swords, and so on, and the river. Furthermore there are eight cold hells, the blister hell and so on.*

*The eight cold hells are below our continent, on the shores of a huge ocean in pitch black caves of ice, where snow storms rage: the blister hell, the hell of burst blisters, the hell of shivering, the hell of lamentations, the hell of chattering teeth, the hell of utpala-like cracks, the hell of lotus-like cracks, and the hell of big lotus-like cracks.*

*In the ephemeral hells, which are not situated in definite places, many different sorts of suffering have to be endured. While staying in those hells, the only experience is that of suffering, without even an instant of well-being. If the body of a person here on earth would be tortured uninterruptedly with three hundred weapons, his suffering would not represent even a fraction of those suffering in the hells.*

*The life span of beings in the hot hells: one day in the life of the four great kings, which lasts five hundred of their years, corresponds to fifty human years. The beings in the reviving hell live five hundred of their own years, one of their days corresponding to the life span of the four great kings. One day in the life of the paranirmitavasavartin gods,<sup>9</sup> which lasts sixty million years, corresponds to six hundred thousand human years. The beings in the heating hell live sixty million of their own years, one of their days corresponding to the life span of the paranirmitavasavartin gods. The beings of the intense heating hell live half an intermediate kalpa,<sup>10</sup> the beings of the incessant hell endure unbearable suffering during a whole intermediate kalpa.*

*The life span of a being in the cold blister hell is complete, when a sesame granary with a capacity of eighty bushels filled to the brim will be emptied, removing one single sesame grain every hundred years. The life span in the other cold hells increases by multiples of twenty for each one. In the Abhidharma this is summarized in a clear way:*

*In the first six, the reviving hell and so on, one day corresponds to the life span of the desire gods, while their own life span is like that of the desire gods. In the intense heating hell the life span is half an intermediate kalpa, in the incessant hell it is one intermediate kalpa. And:*

*If every hundred years a single sesame seed is removed from a sesame granary, it will be emptied during the life span of a being in the blister hell. The life span of each of the others is multiplied by twenty.”*

This idea of a central hell and neighbouring hells is just a way of saying that there are many degrees of variations, and many ways of entering

and leaving that hell, and living similar experiences close to it. So actually, it means that there are many variations to that experience.

The problem in the hells is that one cannot faint, one cannot lose consciousness, one experiences that suffering continuously. Even if there are moments such as dying, one immediately comes back to the senses. there is no respite by fainting, by falling unconscious.

As for the life span, the principle is; the further we get away from the human condition, the further we go into the suffering and the further we go into the bliss of the god realms, the longer the existences become, the more stable the conditions are. Here in human life, between pleasure and pain, it changes constantly. and the further you get away, the more i patterns repeat, constant suffering with constant paranoia, constant aggression, always repeating itself in the hell realm, with hardly any possibility of getting out because it is just stimulated all the time, the aggression and paranoia just continue, or, in the god realms the clinging to that subtle presence of peace, trying to maintain that, that's constantly going on until it is exhausted. So those are very, you can say, stable existences. They are dynamic, but they are in themselves very strong, repetitive, habitual tendencies which are at work in there.

But it is possible to get out of the hell realms. It is possible that the compassion of a human being reaches the hell realm. Beings touched by that compassion can come out because it creates a break in that paranoid perception and it is that break that is needed to come out. If within the hell realm you feel compassion, the hell realm is finished, it cannot continue.

Question: Where do the hell beings go when they come out?

Answer: They go into higher realms. If they have that karma to come into the human realm, that's also possible, depending on what kind of forces are active in their mind then, when this break has happened. Depending on what kind of forces is dominant in their mind, then that will be their next existence. They will be in the hells as long as these mechanisms work. It is very clear once you experience it: OK, with this state of mind, that kind of rebirth will follow, because it is just the expression of states of mind. And when those states of mind are finished, then something else will come.

Question: What is the process and what kind of beings go to the hell realms?



Answer: Beings like us. Human beings who have developed a lot of aggression and paranoia in their mind, they can go there very quickly. It is the kind of state of mind that appears after body and mind have separated. In the mind, there will appear a mental state. If that is of that kind, that can be the next rebirth. Without hatred and paranoia, you cannot go there.

Question: Is it possible that schizophrenic people end up in the hell realm because they have paranoid thoughts?

Answer: If they only have paranoia, it is not enough. You have to have that incredible aggression, the wish to destroy. And also it has to be conscious, voluntary states which are much stronger than those that one experiences in that schizophrenic delusion. in psychosis. They don't have that same power.

I understand that this stimulates a lot of questions but take your time to explore for yourselves. You will not really understand this before you understand how the mind works. Then things become very obvious. One has to understand how certain tendencies keep on repeating themselves. They become like a vicious circle from which it is difficult to escape.

And please also don't cling too much to the existence of six realms. Actually there are as many worlds of existence as there are individual beings.

Question: But everyone has anger!

Answer: Yes, but this kind of anger which you have is not this kind that will throw you into difficult existences. It is part of the human existence, it is fine, there is no problem with that.

When body and mind separate, there is no death for mind. The mind stream continues. And in the first moments when mind comes back to consciousness, there is a very unstable state of mind because we have lost our identity. We have lost our body, we have lost our relationships, we find ourselves in a dreamlike state where everything is possible and where we have no orientation. In this volatile, unstable state our mind gets attracted by certain emotional situations. And we feel: That's where I want to go. Depending on our tendencies, we feel that attraction and that's where we will turn to go, it is difficult once you have started the

process to come back from that. It is possible, but after engaging more and more in that, it stabilises itself. Then it is even more difficult to come back until it solidifies into an existence.

Some mind streams do not take rebirth in another existence, they do not solidify in any kind of those existences, they stay close to the human realm and become spirits connected to the human realm. And most experiences of channelling are actually with those bardo beings who can stay hundreds of years in that intermediate state without taking a separate, a different existence and they are easy to reach for clairvoyant people here in the human condition. So this realm of beings, the bardo beings, are included as a seventh realm of existence in some descriptions. the typical example would be a mother or a father who dies prematurely, the work in the family is not finished, they are leaving behind children who are very dependent on them, not really being taken care of. So they feel so much connected to the human life they leave behind that they cannot go somewhere else. They feel so preoccupied to continue helping there, although they cannot do anything, they stay. This is the classical example for family spirits, ancestors who stay close to the place.

Question: What about people who killed without hatred like in wars?

Answer: Of course, there is a difference if you kill with hatred or without hatred. You cannot generalise. it is not the act of killing. You can also kill out of compassion. The habitual tendencies created, they will decide. I once worked with someone who had been a guerrilla and had killed more than one hundred people for a good cause, so to speak. But his nights were pure terror. Nightmare after nightmare. You know, he had flown in with a helicopter into settlements with a machine gun and had killed people and things like this. And it was already in his dreams persecuting him all the time. He was of course still hunted by the secret police of that country and the work with those emotional states, those tendencies and so on is still a very deep one. It is very demanding, but it can be done. You can get out of that state if you really want to do it. But his nights are already like hells, during the day it is better. You can imagine that if he would die now, what would be the experience arising in the bardo.

Question: Could you say something about spiritual practice to help beings?

Answer: The beings close to us, spirits in nature, beings in the bardo, can be reached very easily with our practice of Chöd, with our practice of OM MANI PEME HUNG, Chenresig, Avalokiteshvara. Even if we are not aware of it, we can reach them and do lots of benefit for them. The smoke offering, the water offering, the water tormas and so on are very powerful means to help the hungry spirits, to help the beings around us even without seeing them. Just by dedicating our practice to them. But the further you want to go into realms that are further away from our way of perceiving the world, the stronger your love and compassion has to be. It has to become really strong so that it almost makes your heart explode, so strong. Then you can reach them as well. And it is much better if you can see them because there are obstacles to reaching them. You might try to reach, but if you cannot see what kind of obstacles makes it right now impossible to reach them, you cannot undo that obstacle. So to be seeing that is an incredible help to reach further.

Question: What does this teaching of the six realms tell us about the nature of mind?

Answer: This teaching shows us what happens if we do not know the nature of mind. If we are clinging to ourselves and to our experiences and we enter into these reactions of desire and aversion, the consequences are the various realms of existence. When the nature of mind is understood, these realms are finished. So if you can contact any of those beings and help them to understand the nature of mind, they are liberated on the spot. There is no inertia in that existence because they don't even have to die, they can immediately switch into another state of consciousness. In my personal experience it is like this that when the power of compassion and love kind of reaches into those realms, you can sometimes experience like a rush of those beings. There is a little breach, and they rush into that and come towards you because they feel that this is their chance, their only chance before it closes again. And then one can show them the nature of mind through Phowa at that moment and that actually liberates them. It is incredibly easy when it happens, but it is very rare that that happens, to have that condition actually then. The practice is that through the practice of compassion and love, one unites one's own mind with the mind of those beings. And then one does a Phowa, and in that Phowa you open the so-called sky-door, you open that experience of mahamudra to them and you let go of them into that space. That's the connection with the nature of mind.

(Back to the lifespan). In the normal mathematical way of calculating one would now calculate human years and try to find out: How long do they live? But it is not meant like that. You know that a very intense experience can feel extremely long although it was short in duration. So take the length of time span right here as a description of the intensity of what is experienced.

Otherwise, to give you an idea in human years, then in those long-lasting hells you live something like ten to the power seventeen human years. Like a ten with seventeen zeroes added behind and more. But this is just because of the indescribable suffering that is there and time is only relative to experience. We calculate our time on our heart beat and the breathing rhythm - that's how people estimate time. Now, if there is no heart beat and no breathing because there is no body where the heart needs to beat and to breathe, it means the intensity of the experience which is there and it is just like eternal, that's the idea.

Let's go to the hungry ghosts. Actually, the world "hungry" does not appear in the Sanskrit (preta) or Tibetan (yi-dags), they are just tormented spirits.

***"THE PLACE OF THE HUNGRY GHOSTS** is the world of Yama fathoming five hundred yojanas below the earth, and spreading out from there, they pervade the human domain and space. Their specific sufferings are immeasurable. Those with the external obscuration cannot eat anything, because they perceive everything they see as weapons, or as pus and blood. Those with the inner obscuration cannot get any food or drink swallowed through their throats, and those with the food and drink obscuration get burnt by whatever they eat. Their life span is five hundred years of their own time, where one human month counts one of their days. "The hungry ghosts live five hundred years, one of our months being one of their days.""*

Yama, in the mythology, is the lord of death. This means that they are very close to the experience of death and very related to the bardo beings. The so-called hungry ghosts or tormented spirits are very close to the bardo beings, those who are still in the intermediate state, close to Yama.

They pervade the human space - so they are around us.

One year for them is 65 months in our experience.

We can do a lot for them because they are very close to us and they have very similar feelings to us. They are easy to reach. Some of them can live from smoke offerings which are done for them, they can really receive that as food, but it has to be dedicated with prayers. They can also live from water offerings and offering morsels of food offered to them, they don't have to be big - we multiply them in our visualisation. We also need to offer them a relaxed environment in which they feel invited and in which they don't feel persecuted any more. They are also very receptive to visualised offerings, because anyhow they don't have a body of solid matter. They live in an energy body and they can nourish themselves from the energy of our thoughts, of our heart movements.

Question: What means a relaxed environment?

Answer: It means to visualise and to create a peaceful environment in which regularly, every day, they receive mantras and fruit and dedicated offerings. Then they feel at home. They love regular schedules also. They'll come at the usual times when you do the offerings and so on.

So actually it is not so much the hungry ghosts where we have problems with possession, mostly it is the bardo spirits. Very close to them, related to them, but also like a different group of beings. You cannot be possessed by spirits if you always stay in the refuge, that means you always stay in the clarity of your purpose, that aspiration for awakening, that compassion. There is no way that you could get possessed.

When you have developed stability in refuge and bodhicitta, you can also change the perspective of yourself. Instead of being a solitary traveller trying to avoid possessions, you can become a communitive shuttle bus or a travelling hotel. A practitioner who develops bodhicitta is the favoured place for spirits to get some energy, to get some teaching and then to move on. So you could accept that task of always having beings with you all the time and practicing with them always until they have had enough and go their way.

Let's go on to the animals. We know animals quite well, so there is no need for a big teaching, but maybe just the need to take away any naive vision of what the animal life is like. What is new for us is that in the definition of animals, we also include animals that don't have a material body, but a body of light. For example the nagas. Nagas, dragons, phoenix-like birds and so on, like these beings we only know through the old sagas, the old fairy tales, but they are all included here.

*“ **THE ANIMALS** live in no specific place. The largest are as big as mount Meru, the smallest as small as the tip of a hair. Their sufferings consist of eating each other, being killed, being used as pack animals or for ploughing the earth and being beaten with clubs. The nagas suffer from rains of hot sand separating their flesh from the bones. The life span of animals is indefinite, some live an instant, and some nagas live for a kapla. “For animals the longest lifespan is a kalpa.” ”*

To take care of animals is relatively easy because we can see them. We must be aware that they are full of fear, normally, but they also wish to be happy. And for the animals which have a body of light or of energy, it is the same we already said about the spirits, the relationship is exactly the same: Visualised offerings, creating a certain environment, respecting them, taking care - all of that is included.

In order to develop compassion and wisdom, it is important to have a vision of all these different possibilities of existence so that it is easier to step out of our self-centredness.

This body is only a recycling object. It is simply made of particles that were already used by others and are now being used by us and will be used by others after us. Nothing special about this body.

In an article it said: “Every atom of carbon which is in our body, has already been used by four thousand living beings.” Now, carbon is one of the most common atoms in the world, but selenium, which is one of the rarest elements of the world, is used twenty thousand times by other living beings already.

So this body being eaten up by worms after our death is now continuing the chain. Everything is being used again, but we are just this recycled object as far as it concerns our body, there is nothing special about it. We get so identified with this recycled plastic bag that it is funny to see how we can get into such a craze about our body.

## LESSON 48: THE CREATIVE PLAY OF MIND

2017 (7)

Meditation

Make yourself comfortable that allows for good clarity in mind.

And now it is easy for you to feel the body and open as well as all the other senses.

In this meditation, we are especially interested in the mind and its movements.

And you leave the mind to itself. What is actually happening?

Do you notice movements?

Start with looking to see if you can notice changes in attention, if your attention changes its focus.

So there are the big changes in focus between the various senses. Sometimes we feel more the body. Now of course you are more into hearing, then you might be into seeing. And then there is this investigation going on. Even if there is no conceptual thinking, there are movements, searching to understand. What's happening? How is mind if I leave it up to itself?

Now you see the shifting contents of your awareness. Different experiences. Hearing, thinking, seeing, feeling, smelling, tasting - all of that constantly changes.

Are you aware of the changing contents of experience?

Normally, if we leave the mind to do what it likes, it shifts, it changes from one realm of experience to another, walking, so to speak, through the different sense fields.

But this is not all. There are commentaries in our mind, commenting on the sensory experience.

And there is thinking completely independent of the outer sensory experiences, just our own strains of thought.

Just to make this even more clear: Think of something you really like. Let it come into your mind. Let it become big in mind. It can be some past experience which you really loved or something you are anticipating in the future or something which is so beautiful and you would wish to experience it, but for some reason it is not possible to experience it. But

one can imagine it very clearly and it's lot of fun to imagine that. Really get into it so that you can feel it almost in your body.

And again feel this wonderful seeing in your mind, get into it, and see just how you can enjoy it in your mind.

And then let it be without nourishing it further. Sometimes, if it is needed in order to come back, to let it be, we focus on some experience of now like breathing or seeing or hearing.

And now, if you are ready, imagine something really awful, something terrible, something you really don't like. Make it appear in your mind so that it becomes very strong so that you can even feel it in your body.

Let it become strong as if it were a terrible dream. And of course, before it terrifies and overwhelms you, you let it be, know it to be a dream.

And now change between the two. Alternate. Bring the nice seeing, so some nice seeing, into your mind.

And then imagine something terrible. Maybe the same as before, maybe something else.

And be sure to finish with something agreeable. It is nicer, isn't it.

And come back to simple presence here in the room, breathing, seeing, being surrounded by pretty nice people.

(Bell)

So, what have we been doing? We used the creativity of mind, we could watch how flexible the mind is and we could feel all the changes in our body and in our experience.

This creative imagination was a little bit like conscious day-dreaming, we were consciously creating images, maybe whole scenes, maybe just one scene. maybe several scenes. In which way were the agreeable dream and the unpleasant dream different and in which way they were the same?

Imagine that you had forgotten that this was your own creation. What would have happened? Your reaction would have been much stronger.



Could you imagine maintaining that awareness of illusory manifestation during everyday life? To know how the mind works and that it produces quite a cinema on top of the sensory experiences? The cinema is different for each of us in the room from the same sensory basis. And strangely enough, everyone feels that the others should feel the same way, should perceive the same way.

Let's read the lesson about this:

*"Now imagine clearly something pleasant. Think of it until it becomes a boundless delight. Then imagine clearly something unpleasant and think of it until it becomes utter displeasure. What is the difference between the two with regard to their true nature? Examine how the displeased mind, the pleased mind, and the originally calm mind differ from each other."*

Before we started the exercise, we had just opened the senses, we were just present in a very simple way. Let's call that the calm mind before the exercise. Actually, the really calm mind would be not thinking anything in particular, no imagination. That would be the calm mind.

The mind would simply be more active in the imagination phase in comparison to the calm mind. Is it still the same mind?

LT (summarizing students' replies): Yes, the calm mind and the active mind with pleasant or unpleasant contents are all the same mind. Does it mean that all the three states of mind have the same nature? Yes.

Student: How do we know it is the same mind?

Another student: It is the same background, the same basis for these very different states of mind, something from which the various activities or expressions of the mind arise.

LT: We have to describe that background a little bit better. What do you mean by that? Is there a background from which something different arises, is the whole background changing together with what arises, how is it actually?

Student: The background does not change from my experience, it is something like a dynamic, vibrating source.

LT: When the mind is calm and we are not using the creativity, we feel the potential for that creativity. We feel this fluidity, this potential

creativity which could be stimulated any moment, but right now it is calm. And it is still dynamic. In that calm you can still feel that it dynamic.

So within the calm state of mind, you feel very well this dynamic, the potential creativity, that basic fluidity. How is it for the pleasant state of mind. How much do you feel the background at that time?

Student: The feeling of the background is a little bit less because I am focused on the contents of the experience. But it is still very present in contrast to the disagreeable.

LT: When there is more identification, you will see that one is less aware of the nature of the experience and of the background activity that is producing that experience. One glued, hooked, onto the experience.

So in order to say that it is probably a mind of the same nature, one would have to have a continuity of those same basic characteristics of the mind in every one of those experiences. But one would have to be sure that there is a continuity and not suddenly a new mind arising. So we would need a continual observation of something of what was called "background activity" above.

Before I put the next question, I want to tell you why this is important. If we can identify in the various experiences of mind; always the same nature of mind, that it is not a new mind which is appearing, then we can also relax about the future and be sure that no different, strange mind will suddenly arise. For example at the moment of death, that nothing completely new arises, or in the next moment of experience. So to find out if mind is really of the same nature in all experiences, is very important, in order to be able to relax, no matter what comes.

So is there something in your experience from which you can say that it could be a new mind arising in one moment, another new mind arising in the next moment, is there something like this and that artificially we connect this, saying: This is me?

Student: The experiences of mind are like the face which is changing all the time depending on what is going on in the experiences we have. Pleasant and unpleasant experiences come, it is like when the face is changing. In the same way, mind can also be changing. But it is the same face and the same mind.

Student: Mind is like an empty and luminous space where everything is taking place and where everything is connected and dissolved. The identification with each experience is what makes them seem different, but in a sense, all is wrong.

LT: So for you, when you think of the future, new experiences arise, but you would know it is always the same mind. The same luminous, creative mind. - There is a clear yes to that.

We are now in the Intuitive Insight, the lhag-mthong or vipashyana part of the teaching. And this is something you need to investigate yourself until you come to a very clear personal certainty about these questions. So the exercise here is to look into different states of mind and to investigate: Is it always of the same nature? If one thinks that new mind arises in a new moment, first one has to find the moment and then one can see if a new mind arises in that. So that would be a very practical question one has to investigate in our progress of developing insight into the nature of experience. You could also say: Look into the present mind, take that which is now and see when this moment ends and whether there is a new moment arising. See, investigate into just how that is.

A little bit further on in the book there is a very fine investigation about our concepts of time because we talk like that: One moment, another moment and so on, and we somehow believe that time exists. But I think we should challenge this belief.

*“Now activate the mind as much as you can, let it run in all eight cardinal and intermediate directions at once”*

This is an exercise where you stimulate your mind, in all directions so to speak, as if it were a horse, you allow it, let it run into all directions. Get up, be happy about that, some pleasant experience, have some analytical thought, whatever, go in all directions. You stimulate the mind as much as possible. Anything that comes to your mind, do it, let the mind run wild.

Do more, don't be tired so quickly, now that you are allowed to do it!

You can repeat that any time you like.

*“Now examine how that differs from the previously calm mind.”*

It is the same thing as we did before. What we did before was that we alternate very quickly between agreeable and disagreeable. Now we went into all directions, whatever came to the mind.

*“Through such inquiry you understand that there are never several activities happening at the same time in the mind, as it is said “two thoughts do not arise at the same time and that all of it is the play of one single mind, which is either calm or active. Recognizing transparency as the true nature of mental activity, you will come to understand that the manifoldness has one single taste, like water poured into water.”*

The quicker we go, the more the more the mind is active, the more it becomes obvious that it is all the same play. It doesn't really matter what contents there is. It matters if we get involved and if we were to create some action from that, some karma, some identification. Then it would matter a lot for the consequences. But in the way something arises and disappears, there is no difference between any kinds of those activities. Which activities of mind, which experiences do you find difficult to dissolve?

Student: The more we solidify, it is like a shadow over the experiences. The more we grasp at it, the transparency-lucidity disappears, like under a layer because we are so focused on that. The lucidity-transparency of the mind is still there, but we don't notice it. It becomes so solid. And these are the difficult ones to let go of.

LT: To summarise in my own words, the more grasping there is, the more difficult it is to let go, the more difficult it is for that experience to just dissolve because the grasping tries to maintain it.

Student: First there are the habitual tendencies, but then it stopped, maybe because there was no resistance to that.

LT: That's something we can actually use to discover a calm mind. What you experience, I use with people who are not able to find a calm mind. I tell them: Let the mind run in all directions. Think, let it be, don't try to control it. give it complete freedom. And then then fighting stops because there is complete permission, an encouragement even. And then it is like children who do naughty things. If you allow them, it is not interesting any more. So relaxation occurs.

When there is fascination, it is also a little bit more difficult to let go. It is a form of grasping of course. Also when you play around with your mind like this, and suddenly what you imagine triggers a past experience. That's also more difficult to let go.

Student: There was more space, more vitality.

LT: Yes, you can imagine giving more space to your creativity, you can even be more vital. You can have access to all the energies in your mind if you allow it to think anything without censorship.

According to Chöd, when you send your mind to your so-called gods, which means the pleasurable experiences to which one is highly attracted, then one thinks there is a lot of energy there. In the same way, when you direct your mind in the direction of the demons, that what we normally want to avoid, the heavy parts, the dark parts of mind and so on, then you think: Oh, this will probably overcome me. But as you direct your mind or awareness there, it shrinks! It is not that big as what we thought while we were still avoiding sending our mind there, allowing our mind to go there. All our gods and demons are experiences within that so-called mind, that something which is not a thing. It is an experience, yes, it is happening. And it is all of the same nature. Appearing without substance. It has no substance, it has no power to stay of its own. Only if we repeat it, if we give again some energy into it, it will continue appearing. But without that - gone.

These are key points of understanding mind and losing one's hesitation to allow various thoughts and emotions to appear in mind. Nothing can do any harm. This is very important to understand.

Did any those experiences arrive at the same time or, in other words, did you have two mind movements at the same time? How is that?

Student: There is like many thoughts appearing at the same time, but they are like on different levels. You can have a feeling about your body or an analytical thought or an emotion, they appear like on different levels.

LT: They are definitely belonging to different areas of experience. Feeling the body and an analytical thought is a very different areas of experience. When you have a feeling of the body, do you have the

analytical thought at the very same time? I think you have to test this out.

Of course, an emotion can continue for a very long time, for example there is sadness or happiness you can have for hours or even longer. And within that general field, you can have various thoughts and physical impressions. And then you think it is at the same time. But the question I ask now is if it is exactly at the same time. Can you think for example in Greek and Italian at the same time? Can you watch the road and the screen of your i-phone at the same time?

Student: No, because it is the same sense.

LT: When you see the screen of your telephone, do you feel your body at that moment, at that very same time? Yes? Then you have to improve your mindfulness because the mind is so quick. What is needed for this kind of investigation is to be able to see how swiftly mind is changing between the different levels and creating this impression of doing things at the same time. That's very important. This is part of where precision plays a great role. We talked about this yesterday.

The Theravadin teaching, if I remember properly, was that one blink of the eye, the eye lid, is quite quick. Now their analysis is that within a blink of the eye there are 32 mind moments. 32 different mind movements can happen within the blink of an eye. So our mindfulness has to come up to the speed of the mind movements to be able to see whether things are able to happen simultaneously or just one after the other.

So I won't go with the description of the experience here now, I think we have a certain inertia in our mind, fortunately, which connects experiences and we seem to be living on several levels, many levels at the same time. But the awareness scans all these levels continuously in a very rapid succession. You can experiment with this. You can see if you can love a person and hate a person at the same time, or like and dislike something at the same time. You can see that you can oscillate very, very quickly. But a simultaneity is not possible.

So we hear those birds for example and at the same time we can feel our body. When your mindfulness is really precise and quick, you see how quickly your mind is going forth and back between the two senses and creating an image of continuity of both. When you want to be completely aware of the chirping birds, you will tune in more and more

and you will lose all the rest of the perceptions because you have become interested in even the finest variations of their songs.

This is beginning to notice how shifts of attention can be more or less complete. When we have an incomplete attention to something, we can at the same time maintain attention to another process. For example, we can be counting our breath and easily think some other things, because there is lots of space in between. And we can become closer and closer and come to an almost complete absorption with being aware of the breath and still maintain some awareness of other things, but as it become 100%, then everything else disappears.

So I invite you to investigate that and to become more and more subtle in your perception. I must say for those who really become subtle in that, if you are free of ego-centred impulses, you will be able to discover more to it. I haven't been able to tell you now all, it would confuse you. But first, this general law that in mind there is one thing at a time, is something you should become sure about. Then we can talk about further discoveries. You can use this, because if you have the capacity to direct your mind 100 %, i.e. continuously without interruption, to one area, of course that's of a great help if you don't want it to wander into some other areas. But you have to be able to do that and to maintain that.

Do you know for producing a film how many images per second we need? 24. And with that the impression of continuity is given. With those 24 visual images, you can still think and feel a great deal of other stuff. It is just for the visual mind. Because in that second, you have much more capacity of the mind, you can do much more than just watch the film and the sequence of the visual images. So let that be a kind of stimulation to see to what kind of speed of mindfulness we have to come to really see how the mind is operating.

Question: Body and mind are of course connected, but there are unconsciously many things happening in the mind that are unconsciously affecting the body to a great extent. And this is happening continuously. How can I clarify these mind movements and their effect on the body?

Answer: We will not be able to keep one apart from the other. They are simultaneous. Every mind movement has an influence on the subtle energy in the body all the time. You cannot keep it separate. and the

opposite also: if we make a movement of the body, it has an influence on the mind all the time. You can't keep it separate.

I was doing an experiment while you were talking. You were talking in Greek, I did not understand, and I was experimenting with all my channels of perception. So I was seeing you, I was hearing you, trying to imagine what you were saying, at the same time I was feeling my body, trying to have my own thoughts independent of what you were saying and then I switched to working with focusing more on your lip movements, your hand movements... And as soon as I was focusing more on what was the perception, I wasn't able to think my own stuff anymore or feel my body! So I could really see how tuning in more closely would necessarily stop the other processes. With a vague perception of what was going on, just what was necessary to be in contact, I could have five or six other activities at the same time. But as I was zooming in and became really concentrated on what your movements were and so on: One thing at a time.

As a conclusion of that part of our discussion, I would say: Yes, normally we have the impression that we can do several mental activities simultaneously and, on top of that, also have various levels of feeling at the same time. Normally, we would call this the simultaneous experience of various areas of life now as the situation is going on.

But as we investigate more closely, we see that the attention, when it becomes complete, can only be with one thing at a time while the other functions are delegated to automatic functioning. So we don't fall down because there are automatic reflexes, there is training in walking while we think and so on. There is a lot of delegation happening there. That helps in having that experience of continuity. And there is body-mind together, all the time.

Both capacities – the ability to focus and the ability to have a panoramic vision are very valuable. We can use any one when we wish. And in general it is very helpful when we focus - except when we want to have complete focus -, not to forget the rest.

Question: Is concentrating creating more tension than opening?

Answer: Not necessarily. You can concentrate on one thing without creating tension. This you can learn. The capacity to concentrate is largely a question of interest so there is a high motivation and maybe a



joy connected with it, not much effort. So we can use that. We can learn to be concentrated without using so much will, but with the factors of interest, of joy. These are classical factors of samadhi.

Now just relax and forget about all we have been talking about. And the best way to relax the mind is to let it be free. If it wants to think, let it think. That's not important.

(Dedication)

DAY 4 (170703-289-291)

Morning meditation: Tonglen, Breathing like a Buddha

G 2017 (8)

With these last words of developing bodhicitta, we settle in exactly this attitude. It is from there that we start the meditation.

Breathing in becomes the expression of compassion, of opening up to all that is, and breathing out becomes the expression of love, of supporting all life, all sentient beings. All beings also include ourselves, so there is deep opening for ourselves as we are on the in-breath, and deep support for ourselves and all others on the out-breath.

Breathing in, I especially open up to my difficulties, especially there where I am not so happy with myself. All my shortcomings, all those areas which I find difficult to accept. Breathing in with compassion, and perhaps situations arise in my memory which show those areas that need exactly that compassion and acceptance.

Breathing in with deep acceptance and then, in my heart, there is no solidification of any problem. There is just acceptance and letting go into openness.

And again, from that openness which is wisdom, which is knowing, then love flows out and supports us, in this case, that being who sometimes has these difficulties. And we imagine that this love takes exactly the form needed to give us the support, encouragement, that we need to overcome those shortcomings.

Breathing in, breathing out. Acceptance and support.

Perhaps you even see yourself in front, that being who feels so limited sometimes, who feels incapable. Or you simply feel it in yourself. And as we breathe in and out, it is as if this being is receiving compassion and love from a Buddha, that Buddha being which we also are.

Let us continue this process of compassion and acceptance and loving support with ourselves until we feel that we can really accept that support and that we are changing, we are beginning to develop self-confidence.

Maybe sentences come to your mind that you offer to that being, with its ordinary identifications, who needs the support of a wise Buddha, a wise figure who is doing this tonglen practice. Offer these sentences of loving support and see if they can be accepted. When our support is accepted, you see the change. Not only you see it, of course we feel it because it is ourself.

Even when we feel that there is complete acceptance, we continue breathing in with compassion and breathing out with love. In the heart is wisdom. Wisdom and openness, the deep understanding with the guarantee that our compassion and love do not become a new form of clinging.

So let's continue with that, extending love and compassion wherever they want to flow.

(Break)

And then we continue another twenty minutes.

We can extend that compassion and love to anyone who comes to our mind. Maybe someone we love a lot and we want to deepen that openness of the heart.

So there seems to be someone who needs that loving compassion and support, but there are so many more to whom we can extend our love. However, as a practice it is good to concentrate on one person first. We do it in the same way as we did with us. We invite the person in front of us, if we like. In our imagination we see that person and we open up to

the presence of that person who is perhaps identified with some shortcomings, we open up to the suffering, we offer our receptivity, to feel just how it feels to be in that body, to be in that situation, to experience those emotions.

Breathing in, we try to feel with all of our heart just how it must be to be in that situation. And we do not solidify. There is this wisdom, that deep understanding of the nature of mind which leaves everything very open and fluid. And from there the love flows, encouraging the other person to become more herself or himself, to open up into those inherent buddha qualities. With our wisdom eye we can see those qualities in them and with compassion we open up to the obstacles, the limitations, and with love we support the unfolding of these qualities.

Continue in the same way as before. Always breathing in full of consideration and understanding, and with the outbreath breathing the exactly fitting support and encouragement.

Breathing in, we feel intuitively how the other person is seeing the world, experiencing the world, experiencing herself. And this understanding allows us to give the exactly fitting support. And we do that with a lot of joy. So this loving support is given with so much joy, without any self-interest. It is the joy of witnessing someone becoming a Buddha.

From time to time, we bring our mind back to the practice of tonglen, breathing in with compassion, breathing out with love. Even if the person we originally imagined seems to have received it, seems to have had enough, it can dissolve, we just continue breathing like this as the most natural thing in the world.

So you begin to enter the experience of breathing like a Buddha because there is no trace of any ego-centred attitude and every in-breath is complete receptivity. And every out-breath is complete sharing.

Take this as one of your on-going practices to remember to breathe like a Buddha. Any time we become aware of it, waking up at night, falling asleep, walking somewhere, seeing someone, talking with someone, all the time we can do it. Like this we can make every breath into a practice of bodhicitta.

(Dedication)

## Structuring Tonglen meditation

G 2017 (9, first part)

(The numbers were the result of a whole working process)

(1. Optional: Guruyoga, see below)

2. We start with settling into the situation. Basically, what you would call the practice of mental calm. Today, we jumped this point of the structure.

3. To connect with your breathing, opening up when you breathe in and opening up when you breathe out. We jumped this today as well. So you see, in the beginning we don't make a difference between in-breath and out-breath anyhow. All is about opening up.

You might be tempted to take this too literally, with the in-breath connected to compassion and the out-breath connected to love, we could even do the opposite. But the symbolism is easier with the in-breath and out-breath connected in such a way. With the in-breath then we start receiving and we accept ourselves.

4. Let a situation arise where you felt some personal shortcomings, where you had some difficult emotions, where somehow you were not so happy with yourself.

So usually for people to learn that, it is simpler to choose one situation, but today I left it a little bit open. You could also practise with the whole person, wherever you feel you are not so happy with yourself, where you feel blocked and so on, you take yourself completely, not just one situation.

Then after a while

5. **Positioning.** So in this phase we need to be clear on how we situate ourselves.

I left both of these possibilities open. You can visualise yourself in front, or we can contact this needy aspect, this samsaric aspect of yourself, within that same body of mind-consciousness. We can do the exchange within ourself without really separating the two. Both are practised in the Tibetan tradition: To have a second self in front of us and to be here in the enlightened self, the Buddha who completely understands, and

understanding is easy because it is ourselves. The best way to learn Tonglen, is to do Tonglen with oneself, because one really understands and can develop that compassion of deep understanding as one breathes in and one has a good feeling for what is really needed for the love that is needed, and one can send that out. Some people feel it is easier to do that inside oneself. So there is a need for clear positioning in order not to fluctuate in the rest of the exercise.

6. Accentuating the **breathing in**, to become very receptive, deeply accepting ourselves, really completely feeling what was going on in that situation, how it feels to behave like that, to be like that, to be feeling like that, to open up with all our sensitivity.

7. And then, after a while, by going through the heart, which is the seat of wisdom that does not solidify the experience, we accentuate the **breathing out**, the giving support.

8. We start **alternating**: Sometimes being with breathing in, and then as a response, being with breathing out. Breathing in compassion, breathing out with love, to begin to enter a flow while each of them deepens. So to go deeper, there is a deepening of our receptivity on the in-breath, and a deepening of giving our love and support on the outbreath.

9. You begin offering healing sentences, some kind of spoken encouragement, as if you were communicating with that aspect of yourself who needs support and you offer what you would have liked to hear in that situation, or what you would need as an on-going encouragement to become yourself, the true awakened self.

10. You begin to visualise, and you feel that the love and the support is taken in and that the qualities begin to emerge. They are really showing, more and more. You begin to see yourself growing up, maturing, developing that self-confidence, becoming free from the obstacles.

11. The completion of the exchange. The aspect of ourselves that we have been working with, has become completely awakened, the same as the one that is within that compassion, wisdom and love and the two can melt. They can become one, because anyhow, it is ourselves. If we are working with another person we would just let the visualisation dissolve.

12. At the end, we always extend to everyone, including every aspect of life continuing with this natural breathing, love and compassion go wherever they like to go in all directions even to those who don't have the same problem as ourselves.

Answers to some questions:

The wise aspect of yourself is the innermost aspect of your being. From there you could go to the needy part. You know exactly what you need. There is a deep wisdom of healing in each one of us.

This aspect tells your needy part: You are really like me. You can have confidence in yourself. Look how fluid you can be. You can allow yourself to relax more.

There is no need for much dialogue on the compassionate side, on the in-breath, because anyhow we understand ourselves, we can feel ourselves very deeply, we don't need an encouragement to talk so that the other person tells us what is really going on. We don't need that part that is more important when we are working with another person.

So as a general point, you understand the combination compassion - wisdom - love, compassion - wisdom -love. You understand the flow. This is very important. The wisdom here is the central working agency. This is where everything really happens, but we don't talk much about it. It is Buddha mind, awakened mind. There is no ego-centredness there, there is no clinging. And of course, it is completely receptive. Everything can be felt and everything is acknowledged and accepted. OK, that's the situation, that's the working basis. And whatever we feel, nothing is solidified, nothing becomes a problem. And from that completely open space in which all of what we feel dissolves without leaving a trace; from that open space comes the response. Out of a deep understanding of the situation comes a loving, supportive response. And we see whether it is accepted, whether it can be taken in, whether our loving support is received and digested. So we always look and even if we are working with ourselves, we check whether we can accept that. We don't offer steps which are too big, we offer the steps which are possible to take.

Question: Isn't it that generously offering our love in daily life can spoil others?

Answer: No, there is the wisdom. There is no danger of spoiling. You only offer what helps. You don't spoil people. It is not idiot compassion. It is wise compassion, really supporting others. So if it is necessary to draw a line and to let others do things themselves, that's exactly what we will offer to them.

Question: So in this practice, you position the wisdom deep inside. But sometimes I find it helpful to position the wisdom outside to give me more confidence. Is it not the same as positioning yourself outside?

Answer: Definitely not. This practice of Tonglen, all the transmissions I have received are without positioning wisdom outside. You can start with a guru yoga, but then you let the guru dissolve in your heart and it is inside of yourself. You don't do it from the position of a practitioner who needs to be encouraged by a guru or some Buddha outside, never.

You can start with a guru yoga and put that in in the beginning, so we would have twelve steps. Go intuitively. Today we jumped over it because I felt that after the prayers, just by mentioning bodhicitta, having talked about it, you were already there. No need to do that specifically, it was already included. The important point is to feel it in your heart, not to feel that an external agent is helping us. We connect with that confidence that by the true qualities in our heart we are able to do that practice. If we lose that confidence, we can put in a phase of guru yoga. We can do that any time. For example in our retreat that was Guru Chenresig connecting to bodhicitta, doing some OM MANI PEME HUNG and then coming back to Tonglen.

(At this point, the structure above was finalised). You see, this is abhidharma in the working. This is how these lists, these numbers have appeared. From a spontaneous process, then by analysing the process you end up with structured points.

Question: When working with someone else, is it better to stick to one person?

Answer: It is better to stick with one person except when you are very skilled already and comfortable with the Tonglen practice and you have the feeling that it is not avoiding, but actually extending your compassion. Then you can include others without forgetting the initial ones, just extending.

Question: Can it be a person who has already died?

Answer: Yes. You keep your awareness that this person has already died, and even after death you offer what in your feeling they might need now or what might have been needed in the past. That's especially important when you have the feeling that this person is still around, has not completely gone its way to somewhere else.

Question: What is the difference to the Chöd?

Answer: It is the same bodhicitta. Chöd has developed out from here, it is a further development. In the real Chöd, there is an element of yidam practice. We are Vajrayogini, we are the Buddha as we practise Chöd and we offer our own body as the basic means from which all the needs will be fulfilled. So there is an additional dimension in there. But the motivation is the same and the background of the prajnaparamita teachings is the same.

Did you find the Tonglen teachings helpful? The method is always at the service of the practitioner, not the other way around. It is not the practitioner serving the method. So there have to be good results. So it is not the practitioner serving the religion, but religion serving the practitioner, for example, to make the point very clear. It is not that we serve the dharma, but the dharma serves us. It is nice to say I am serving the dharma, but no, I am not serving the dharma. I am serving other beings, not the dharma. the dharma doesn't need our service.

When you hear people talking like this that everyone should serve the dharma, actually what they mean is that they should serve me. make donations to one centre and give their energy to the centre. This is upside down. The dharma centre serves the people and if we want to serve the people that is maybe one of the places where we can engage in. But the rest is upside down.

So whatever we learn, it has to be of help to us. If it is not of help, drop it or improve it. The rest would basically boil down to belief: Well, even if it doesn't help now, it should help in the future. So I continue doing it although I don't see any benefit. That's a belief system. it's not very helpful.



Our wisdom tells us: Yes, I have to give some effort before I can see results, so I will try it out several times, maybe over some period of time, but results should show! I insist on results. How will results show in the future if they don't show now? What we can do is that we can become more sensitive to where the results already begin showing, but there will be no good result in the future, if there is no positive effect in the present.

I personally believe that this is one of the most powerful methods or practices that exist in the world. Simple and very effective. This is my personal experience and also having seen that in others, very powerful. But practise it in such a way that it becomes part of yourself. Not an outer twelve-point-program that you try to impose on yourself. Practise it in such a way that it transforms you inwardly.

## LESSON 7: THE PLEASANT STATES OF EXISTENCE

G 2017 (9, second part)

***“THE PLEASANT STATES OF EXISTENCE. WE HUMANS** experience the suffering of birth, old age, illness, and death, being separated from pleasant things, encountering unpleasant things, being confronted with enemies who detest us, being separated from loving friends. We suffer from the difficulty protecting what we have, and from not getting what we are trying to get. We have experienced this in the past, and we will experience it again in the future.”*

Human beings, like all other beings, search for happiness. And one of the big sufferings is not to be able to find lasting happiness. One of the plagues of human beings is to be constantly busy, busyness. Even when they could relax, mind is so busy!

Even if they have everything outside, inside there is no peace. When there are short moments of peace and satisfaction, then unfortunately clinging to that arises very quickly. and that's the end of that happiness.

I don't think I need to go on to describe the human condition more. The truth is that it is a catastrophe. It is the only living being which destroys its own realm of existence. The lack of wisdom is outrageous.

The anti-gods are not much better:

*“The antigods suffer from being wounded and killed in their battles.”*

The Sanskrit term is “asura”; they are not gods in the full sense of the term. They are very rich, they have wonderful situations, but their problem is that they can look into the neighbour’s garden and they see that there is still more fun, more pleasure to have, so jealousy is their constant experience.

Their problem is like that of a super-millionaire who has the bad luck to live next to a billionaire. Tough luck. So they fight - and they always lose. It is like the battle between the younger brother and the bigger brother. the bigger brother always wins.

One has to accept it. And there is no acceptance here of the limitations, of the possibilities of their existence. So there is a kind of jealousy, strong rivalry, with a kind of megalomania. They always think they might be able to defeat the gods, but they are never able to.

So in their jealousy, there is a wrong estimation of their own capacities and powers and then, endless fighting instead of being happy with what they have.

You know this in the human realm as well: This endless struggle for always more, always more powerful, always more wealthy.

Then the next step are the gods of the desire realm:

*“ **THE GODS OF THE DESIRE REALM** are indulging in and intoxicating themselves with sense pleasures they do not notice that their lives run out. When their flower garlands wither, they dislike their seats, they are abandoned by the other gods and goddesses, and their bodies start to smell bad, they know that they will fall down to a lower existence and will feel fear, despair, panic, nauseated and helpless as to what to do. When the five signs of death arise, their mental agony is a hundred thousand times greater than the suffering of the hell beings.”*

They have been so happy on their seats and cushions and so on, but now, nothing fits any more. Everything becomes very uncomfortable. They are abandoned by the other gods and goddesses because their bodies start to smell bad. Unfortunately, they are clairvoyant and they can see where their remaining karma will take them. And that’s terrible.

They feel fear, despair, panic. They feel nauseated and helpless as to what to do.

You know that regularly when there are big economic crises, like for example the famous Wall Street crisis in 2008, then those rich bankers who lost all their fortune in a very short period of time committed suicided. They were known to jump out of the building, their agony was so strong.

This happens regularly and one asks oneself: Why? They could have still continued like every good normal person, they could have lived very simply. But for them the contrast was unbearable and the whole suffering that is described here is about the experience of contrast. The experience of contrast makes normal situations unbearable.

You see we might look into the situation of someone, a woman for example who has lost her beloved husband and is close to suicide because of that loss. And we look at that situation, being celibate: Come on, it is possible to live alone! But the contrast is so big that it feels unbearable.

So the teaching here is that the suffering is very great, if our happiness is built on circumstances that are bound to change. When they are gone, our suffering will be enormous because all of our happiness was built on that. Basically, it is a problem of dependency or addiction. The bankers have become addicted to success and money. The wife has become addicted to, dependent on, the husband and so on.

For example, someone who was highly sportive, very much into outdoor living with a strong body - if that person has a car accident and ends up handicapped for the rest of their life, it is much harder than for a person who hasn't been identified with sportive activity.

For my father who died of Alzheimer and previously was completely identified with his intellectual faculties, the waning of exactly those faculties was terrible because he had nothing else to rely on.

Do you understand this principle of contrast and of basing one's happiness on conditions which are bound to change? The risk which that kind of behaviour bears?

And then I would like to mention the power of habitual tendencies. Even if it is not excessive, we get so used, for example, to having a big house.

And then, if we have to live in a single room, just because of the habit of previously experiencing this all our life and now not having that any more... Or the habit of sleeping alone, at least to have a bed for oneself. And then suddenly, maybe for the rest of one's life, having to share room, maybe the bed. You see, habit, fixation, lack of flexibility, then being obliged to change, to live in a different way - difficult, and then: big suffering.

So please never laugh about a person who experiences suffering in a situation that for us is completely normal. We function by habit, our mind works with the experience of contrast, of some happiness we previously experienced, and which is then lost. This is what we need to understand, how desperate someone can feel in a situation that from our point of view should be quite easy to bear, to deal with.

Form and formless realms of the gods:

*“Even in the four realms of concentration and the four formless realms of infinite perception the suffering of conditioned existence has not been overcome. The veils of the afflictions remain dormantly present, and intoxicated by their state of concentration, they feel no wish to get liberated. Although they temporarily experience no suffering, not being free from birth and death, they will have to leave this state as soon as the effect of their wholesome actions from previous lives is exhausted. Once they have been born in lower realms, they will experience suffering again.”*

The first four dhyanas or meditative absorptions are the form realm. As human beings we can experience those meditative absorptions, and if we stay in them for a long time, like months and years, then we could be born as one of the gods in these form realms, in these meditative absorptions. Within the four of these meditative absorptions, we can go further into four kinds of infinite perception, of further absorptions. If we practised them for very long, they would lead to rebirth in the formless realms. Formless because here the gods don't even have a body of light anymore. not even an energetic body that could be perceived in any way.

Of course there exist descriptions of this, but they are not very helpful for you. When the experience arises, we can talk about it, but not before.

In those eight absorptions there is no suffering due to unpleasant experience, there is no suffering due to change. And the suffering due to dualistic perceptions is already reduced very much. Progressively, it

gets less, but it is still there, there is still a tension in the mind due to this dualistic grasping, up into the highest level of the formless realm. Therefore it says here that the suffering of conditioned existence has not yet been overcome. And the veils of the afflictions, the kleshas, the disturbing emotions remain dormant present. They are like underground, subconsciously present.

These gods think that they are already liberated, they are intoxicated, as the text says, completely drunk by this absorption. They stay in that and feel no wish to get liberated in the real sense to go any further. For them it is that they have achieved where they wanted to go and they have no perception of the fine suffering which is still there.

In my first retreat, I got very deeply into those experiences twice and I was convinced that this was enlightenment, liberation, what the dharma was all about, and I went to my teachers and said: That must be it! But it wasn't. Fortunately, they told me.

So from the point of a human being experiencing it, I think the word 'intoxication' is very well chosen because that's what it is about: You feel completely: that's it. There is fascination as you get hold of it, but also the kleshas, if you are honest with yourself, they get activated when you are out of these states. Although these gods temporarily experience no suffering, they are not yet free from birth and death and will have to leave this state as soon as the effects of the wholesome actions from previous lives is exhausted.

So there is an energy, a very positive force called merit, which produces this on-going experience of deep absorptions, but since there is no further production of these forces, they finish, they get exhausted and then that existence is over. It is a very long existence but it is over at some point. When they are born in one of the lower realms, they will experience suffering again. So it is not a permanent solution.

*“Therefore it is said:*

*The hell beings are hurt by the hell fires. The hungry ghosts are hurt by hunger and thirst. The animals are hurt from eating each other. The humans are hurt by a short life. The gods are hurt by their carelessness. In the cycle of conditioned existence there is never even the tiniest speck of happiness.”*

The point here is to discourage people, human beings, who hear these teachings to strive for rebirth as a god. It is a common practice still nowadays in India and which was very common in the days of the Buddha. So you can get there, but it is not a solution in the long run, please do the real work.

*“Pitaputrasamagamana Sutra:*

*When you see the vicious circle of conditioned existence, you will develop an acute sense of disgust. When you are horrified by the prison of the three worlds, you will strive to get out of it.”*

The whole point of the Buddhist teaching is to find a way to become truly liberated from all kinds of suffering, not just the outer suffering, but from the very depths of our being, from the root of suffering, which is in that schism which we produce between ourselves and the rest of the world.

*“Nagarjuna:*

*Since samsara is like this, there is no good existence as gods, humans, hell beings, hungry ghosts, or animals. You must understand that life is the receptacle of many sorrows.”*

Wherever we are born with this notion of being a self, of clinging to this illusion of I and other, there will be suffering. The very important contribution of the Buddha to this world was to have found out how one can live without constantly recreating that dualistic tension. That discovery is the core of the teaching.

*“Therefore it is imperative to develop a sense of futility regarding the vicious circle of conditioned existence, the frustrations of a household, entertainment and distractions, and the temporal projects of this life.”*

Whatever we do without wisdom, without the deep understanding of the nature of life, the nature of mind, will turn into suffering. So wishing to liberate ourselves from this lack of awareness, this ignorance and suffering, we should

*“Flee quickly, like deer alarmed by a forest fire. You have to overcome your longing.”*

We have to overcome our longing, our clinging to what we have right now in life and flee

*“Flee like waterfowls when their lake freezes. Overcoming your attachment, you should be frightened and flee like the captain from an island of ogresses. You should escape from samsara to the other shore, without tainting your three vows with any wrongdoing, like a swimmer getting out of a river through vigorous swimming.”*

And now comes a very nice sentence:

*“We should flee from samsara with delight, with joy, having as provisions the wealth of the two accumulations and wholesome actions, like a tradesman who has made his provisions for a journey.”*

So after all these injunctions based on fear due to the heavy consequences of staying in samsara, when we see that, then the Karmapa finishes with an encouragement: Well, you can do the same thing with joy! You can delight in leaving samsara behind you, it is great, every step in that direction is fun! It liberates us. Every step.

So in our club of anonymous samsara addicts, we can celebrate every day that we have been clean! It is great, and our club is growing and we help each other to stay clean. As we join the club, we still have some problems, but we are motivated.

*“If they do not do so, the deer will get burnt by the fire, the waterfowl will get stuck in the ice, the captain will get eaten by the ogresses, the swimmer will drown in the water, and the tradesman will waste his time. Likewise, if you do not escape, you will be consumed by the fire of samsara, you will get stuck in the frozen cavity of a household, you will be eaten up by the ogresses of this life, you will drown in the water of the bad forms of existence, and you will waste the freedoms and riches.*

*Abandon temporal projects of this life, give up the craving for sense pleasures, cast far away the eight worldly concerns, keep the certainty of death in your heart, and perceive the round of conditioned existence as painful. Since the peaceful existence as shravaka or pratyekabuddha will be of no benefit to all the living beings, your past mothers, you should develop a pure motivation, thinking, "For the benefit of all living beings, my former mothers, filling the whole universe, I must by all means accomplish the state of unsurpassable, genuine, complete buddhahood." Thinking that, if you possess bodhichitta, you will be able to actualize unsurpassable enlightenment before long, you should completely remember its benefits, and strive to always keep it, never letting it degenerate. This was a somewhat extensive presentation.”*

Now let's say this in a more straightforward way: If you wish to practise mahamudra, then go for it. Let's abandon all the useless projects of this life which only have temporary benefit. Let's give up our craving for

sense pleasures which is like the craving for honey from a razor blade. Let's cast away, far away the eight worldly concerns, the eight worldly dharmas: The wish for pleasure, for victory, for gain and for renown and trying to avoid their opposites. So let's keep the certainty of death in our hearts and also the uncertainty of when we will die. It could be quite soon and we have no time to lose. We keep that in our heart. Let's perceive the cycle of conditioned existence - samsara - as painful. Let's see the truth that there is this all-pervading tension, this all-pervading stress in samsara.

*"A SUMMARY OF THIS CONTEMPLATION. There is no place in this round of conditioned existence, from the top of the world on down to the incessant hell, which is beyond suffering."*

I really wish that you would abandon the belief that you can attain somewhere a life, an existence, free from suffering if you haven't realised the nature of mind, the nature of just how it is. When we have not dissolved that notion of "I", dualistic fixation, there is no place anywhere where we could be free from suffering.

Then, wherever this teaching is presented in the world, people will say: Come on, don't paint it so black! Let's have a party, drink a beer, have fun, have some sex. Karmapa says:

*"Having seen that everything in samsara—places, friends, possessions, fame, is like a banquet served by the executioner who will lead you to the place of your execution and perceiving this samsara to be like a fire pit or a dungeon, being aware of its futility, you should have a strong determination, thinking, 'I will by all means cut the attachment to samsara and achieve the state of liberation and omniscience.'"*

*These are called the practices of the four common preliminaries."*

I will not be led by the party-like atmosphere that we can live. Definitely. We can have banquets; we can have wonderful stretches in our lives. But that's not the end of the story.

If the teacher lacks the courage to confront the habitual patterns of the student, this is taught in the fifth year. There is no way to realise mahamudra without understanding that. There is really no way.



So let's take it from the positive angle with the joy, the delight of leaving samsara behind. We have no choice if we want to go towards an experience without suffering. But we can accept that experience of no choice with delight. We can make a party of that. Whenever that teaching strikes home, that is when it begins to make sense to us, we know we have no time to lose. We stop making projects about having children, building up bigger businesses, all these extra things that we can do when we have lots of time.

Question: Is it that the form and formless realms do not produce karma?

Answer: You will understand that when you know the nature of those samadhis. They are so inactive that you are not producing anything beneficial. They are just living it through. The mind is just so incredibly inactive so you are not creating any wholesome karma that would make something better possible.

When you are in those states, there is no activation of mind, there is no thinking. The conceptual thinking has completely stopped long ago. There is no appearance of memory, there are no emotional challenges. It has just completely stopped, it is completely silent, the mind becomes completely calm. Then slight impressions arise. A more simple one is this complete stability and this impression of being one with everything. It is the most simple one. This is a short thought, but then afterwards you enter that experience of what one might call unity, but there is no activity. In that experience of unity, there is no creative interaction with the world that could create any form of positive force, of merit. In the more subtle experiences, it is getting more and more subtle. One of the next ones is that you feel that your mind and space are inseparable. The experience would be one of simple spaciousness. And there is no activity in there. But it is very stable. You can stay a long time in it.

In my experience, the next one was that the experience became so subtle that I was not sure whether it really was an experience. "Neither perception nor non perception" is the technical term for that. The relaxation goes so far in that area that the clarity of mind itself is not differentiating between any aspects of existence anymore. There is no accumulation of positive karma or any positive form of interaction. There is no bodhicitta in that. You get lost, you can say.

In my case, these experiences were not stable, they lasted between one to three hours, but there is no point in cultivating them. They occur by themselves and Gendun Rinpoche guided me to come out of them into a

more active mind. And from there it was possible then to really let go of that final control. There is still a subtle control in those states.

## LESSON 38: DIFFICULTIES IN THE PRACTICE

G 2017 (10, first part)

### Meditation

Imagine you are close to the Buddha, somewhere probably in India. You have been out to the village in the morning, you have eaten your food on the alms round, and now it is time to sit in the shade of a tree and meditate. You know that you have the best conditions for practice. There is a light breeze moving through the forest where you are, you can relax and you settle in feeling your body, the physical sensations.

Basically, meditation means here to be myself, not trying to be anyone and also not trying to be no-one. Actually, not trying anything.

All our senses are open and all thoughts are welcome, all emotions are welcome.

And all of our senses are so completely open. It might feel as if you were sitting in great luminosity, great clarity, the play of mind unimpeded.

(Bell)

I don't know how it was for you, but meditation can be so easy! It is also easy to screw up one's meditation. Basically, if you want to know how to screw up the meditation, you have to try doing something. If you want to be sure to screw it up, try to meditate on emptiness. It is also good if you try to tell yourself: 'You should be compassionate'. Or another good way to screw it up would be: 'Keep quiet'. But you can of course also combine them. That works even better. And then sit straight! And what else works very well? For example: 'Don't close your eyes'. Very good. Any way of saying: 'Be like that'. Also, what is really fantastic, but this is very subtle: 'Don't have an observer!' This is wrong meditation. 'Don't think!' That's too obvious, but it is a good one, it is very effective. Or: 'Relax!' That's a heavy one. Of course, every comparison with the past will do. 'Do it like yesterday'. Also nice is: 'Look at him or her'. Or: 'You'll never get there.'

While receiving the teaching, let's be as open as if it were the first day. Another way, when you have already received a lot of teachings, is to try to feel the state of mind, the motivation, the intention behind the words, to go further than the words, to kind of practise a form of guru yoga while receiving the teaching and to open up for that which cannot be transmitted by words. Like this, you will always learn. In this way we become receptive instead of becoming unreceptive even if we have heard a lot of dharma.

Teacher and student must know each other, very important, otherwise the teaching does not meet the needs of the students, they never cross, they never get into contact. and sometimes it is too early, and sometimes it is too late to give a teaching. It is not so easy to know.

Some students, for example, for a long time are not ready to receive the preliminaries. But it is the right time to teach them the main practice of shamatha-vipashyana, calm abiding and intuitive insight. They have a capacity to understand even what mahamudra is all about, but they are not yet at the point of understanding the importance of the preliminaries. So there is a capacity of understanding, a sensitivity, even for deep points on the one hand, and a lack of flexibility and wisdom on the other hand in other areas. That happens quite often. So they like the so-called high teachings, but if one continues to give them only the profound teachings, they will continue their whole life without having a proper basis in their practice, like no deep reflection on impermanence, on karmic cause and effect, on the shortcomings of samsara with the necessary renunciation.

So we have the following list which are different ways of screwing up one's practice. And I will try to make you understand how to avoid those traps.

#### A. "Rainbow meditation"

*"Some people, out of their desire for particularly good experiences A. Some people, out of their desire for particularly good experiences in their meditation, will meditate on an especially sublime clear emptiness which they have fabricated with the intellect. This is called rainbow meditation."*

This rainbow meditation has many different forms.

The most gross level form is with visual impressions. The meditator will meditate with whatever comes as visual impressions to the eyes and then, for example, by looking at the pillar in front, he will then put a layer of transparency on the pillar, as if it were a rainbow. You know, it is empty, so it must be transparent, and I will meditate on it like a rainbow. And I will meditate that the walls of the room become like transparent. That is like a very gross level of that rainbow meditation.

They have heard in the mahamudra teachings that phenomena, experiences, are comparable to a rainbow. And they take this in a very literal way and that now, whatever they look at, is comparable to a rainbow.

They will do the same thing with hearing. They will hear sounds and then add the emptiness., like an illusory echo. And then they will try to hear the echo in the sound.

Then they have heard that our body is actually a body of light, so they will meditate on their body and visualise like a body of light and think they are getting closer to realising emptiness in that way.

And with their emotions and so on, they will do the same thing. They will tell themselves how empty they are.

And finally, because everything is empty now, they will finish with a luminous, rainbow-like emptiness which is like a picture on which they are meditating. So then they get completely stiff.

*“This will happen if the pointing-out instructions were given too early and it is useless for meditation Someone, who considers himself to be a teacher or an expert in the Dharma, will become displeased, as soon as anything is not in accordance with his own well-expressed explanations, and he will go on creating an artificial meditation. This is a big obstacle. Like this, he will not get anywhere, just like he will not reach the top of a ladder if he does not start from the bottom. In order to remove this hindrance he should be told, "Put aside your hankering. Do not meditate deliberately on anything. Do not mentally fabricate anything. Loosely maintain the normal mind. Going on like this you will only get worse, do not go on like this by any means.”*

First of all one will have to put aside the longing for this special experience called emptiness. Emptiness is not an experience. Emptiness is not something that one adds on to one's experience to make it better, nicer or something. It is already there before we discover

it. It is there in the normal mind. "Normal mind" means the mind of just now, our mind.

So to get interested in: How is this very normal mind? The mind without any fabrication, without any manipulation, how is this very normal, ordinary mind?

Student: Presumably these are mahamudra instructions because there are visualisations when you see everything as transparent where you could be trying to remind yourself that everything isn't as real and as solid as you take it to be.

LT: So what would you tell such a person?

Student: It seems to be like the difference between right view and actual insight. That kind of thing might be alright for starting just to help your mind getting an idea of just how things are, but that's not it. What we need to do is to stop fabricating and go into just how it is.

LT: Yes, definitely. For me, the key point in guiding people getting into that area is: Do not remind yourself. Do not work with memory. Discover how it is now. That's the key instruction. You might remind yourself in the beginning, but the actual reminder is that there is something to discover here. Discover this freshness now. How is it?

It is good to be guided personally because somehow you can't avoid the traps.

So in the previous case, there was something artificial, constructed, meditating on rainbow emptiness. Now we have almost the opposite, going into the other direction:

## B. Misunderstanding buddha mind

*"Some people who have prematurely received the pointing-out instructions that the mind is buddha and should be left uncontrived, think that their unrestrained conceptualizing mind is itself the enlightened state. They rely on their foolish thoughts, they rely on alcohol for experiences and become worse than before."*

That happens with those profound Dzogchen-Mahamudra instructions. I also sometimes talk like this: Relax, your mind is already buddha mind or buddha nature, so relax into that. So you could think: OK, nothing to do. This rambling mind, all the habitual thinking and so on, that's buddha

mind. One relies in this way on one's foolish thoughts, one relies maybe on alcohol or drugs for further experiences.

So here, the problem is that the person thinks that the mind as it is already the buddha mind and does not understand that this teaching about mind being buddha mind is about the nature of mind. So one kind of jumps over the teaching on grasping, clinging. There is so much grasping in this mind that there are constant thought chains, constant emotions. One is completely caught in one's habitual tendencies and there is no openness or letting go. So basically, yes, this mind is buddha mind, but actually, it is samsaric mind. That's how it manifests, that's also the consequence of living like that.

This is what we meet quite often in what was called in earlier years the hippie movement. The movement where you live a freely flowing spontaneity, following your intuitions, maybe living out in nature, not being bound by structures. You follow those intuitions and everything is flowing freely.

And if someone protests: 'We are together, we have a child, we have to take care of'. Then the person would even say: 'Be spontaneous, come on! Yesterday I just went out and I was with her, OK, let's take care of the child, but be like freely flowing'. You know it could be even coming across telling others: 'Be more spontaneous, get rid of your inhibitions, don't be so stuck, come on. Come on, don't be so bourgeois, life is a dance, let's dance!'

So what is happening? This spontaneity we are talking about here and that intuition is just the expression of the habitual tendencies. Likes and dislikes. There is 100% grasping in that process and since there are no restrictions to following that, one just follows one's desires and aversions. That's called spontaneity in that context, but it's not. It is an absolutely predictable behaviour which creates a lot of suffering because it is even lacking the respect for the feelings of others.

*"Someone like this should be told: "Meditate with diligence and perseverance without being distracted even for an instant. Do not talk high-flown Dharma language, exert yourself in the practice."*

What will happen if they try to follow this instruction? Before they start practising, they have to discover what a mess their mind is. And they will go through lots of moments of rebellion. It will be so difficult for them to put that advice into practice. They will come up against all their ego-centred tendencies. Not doing, not following what they like; not avoiding

what they don't like, to be there, to stay there, not to run away. It is really hard for them.

They may not feel the joy of practice. It will take a while. You have to give them very small pieces of practice so that they can have experiences of success, like: OK, start with counting ten breathing cycles, or shorter even. Just one. Just be disciplined for one inbreath and one outbreath.

You might have noticed that in both cases there was a heavy involvement of pride. Do you see that in the background energy? The first one has a good dose of ambition which is part of the emotional structure of jealousy and rivalry. There is also a good dose of that in it, the wanting to achieve. - And in the second one you also feel that background of desire, this longing to follow one's own desires.

## LESSON 64: LEARNING THREE SKILLS

G 2017 (10, second part)

*“FIRST BEGINNING THE MEDITATION SKILLFULLY. Place yourself faultlessly in the essential body posture described earlier and apply the methods for setting the mind as explained above.”*

The first skill is to begin the meditation skilfully. One has to know the right time to take that seven-point-posture. Sometimes it is good when one is tired, at other times it can add an additional stress. Usually it might be a good idea to use a method like settling on the breathing, at other times even that is too much. So you have to learn how to start A session skilfully. And that means not to always start it the same way. Skilfully means: as I start to meditate, I have a look at myself, trying to figure out how would it be good to start?

*“If the mind is active, look at the true nature of that. If it is settled, look at the true nature of that.”*

I don't know an exception to that. I think it is always good to look at the true nature. To look means: Be aware of the true nature. It doesn't mean to look, look somewhere and say: 'Ah... The true nature of the wild,

active mind is what?' When you look into your active mind, how is it?  
What is its true nature?

Student: Emptiness.

LT: That's a nice word. Come a little bit closer to your experience.

Students: Dynamic, constantly changing, ungraspable.

LT: When you hear ungraspable, is that would you mean by empty?

Student: When I think about something, I understand that there is still something below that being agitated, thinking, and that is what I would call empty.

LT: That's wrong. That emptiness that you have heard about is in those thinking processes. It is not below somewhere, but it is in there. Empty means empty of solidity, empty of something that could be grasped onto. So look to see if your thinking processes have substance. That's called looking at the nature of the active mind.

Looking at the nature of the settled mind, what do we find? How is the settled mind without thinking, calm mind?

Students: Peaceful, spacious, dynamic, a potential.

LT: Yes, it is dynamic or moving even without thinking. You still find that there is a subtle activity there. There is like an underlying, vibrating mode of activity. You could say: like a motor in stand-by. In the gap between the thoughts there is what you have called the potential.

Student: The nature of mind is unobstructed. Like in a desert, there is nobody, nothing to stand in the way.

LT: So unobstructed in the sense that everything could manifest there. When we say unobstructed, we mean that space is not occupied and that it is not resisting any manifestation.

So how the nature of the settled mind and of the active mind, if you compare? How would you explain the fact that they were using different words for describing that nature, we would think that they must different since they are using different descriptions? - On the level of



manifestation, there is a lot of variety, of difference. But on the level of nature, the active mind is dynamic and the settled mind is dynamic.

The activity of the mind, or these movements in mind, this thinking and so on, is ungraspable, but so is the quietness, the peace is also ungraspable. You cannot hold it, there is no solidity to it.

You said that the settled mind is peaceful. But is the active mind peaceful? If you look at its nature, in that activity, even if there are a billion thoughts, there is peace because it only becomes wild if there is clinging. If we look at its nature, no problem with all the activity there. Peace within activity.

Is the active mind as unobstructed as the settled mind? How is that? - Its activity shows that it is unobstructed. Otherwise there could not be any activity, it would be blocked, something would be there. You can see a house, but you cannot see the car because it is blocked. No! Of course it is unobstructed because nothing stays, nothing obstructs the next experience, that's how activity is possible.

Student: Settled mind, calm mind and active mind can fall together in a special moment.

LT: How is it when you experience that?

Student: It is like a wide space, insubstantial, no limitations.

LT: Yes, it is like that.

Student: As if I were to collapse for myself into that.

LT: Very fine. Yes. You are talking from experience. I will delicately try to describe with different words what you might be experiencing.

You can start out in two ways. You can start out with a very calm mind where no activity happens, and then activity arises. Usually it is the opposite: There is first the active mind and then we discover in that the incredible peace, the settled mind. In the active mind, usually there is a lot of grasping. There is a clinging to the contents of what is happening. When that clinging is experienced, one can feel how it is limiting the experience. There is always a feeling of limitation because of the clinging. When there is a letting go of the clinging, there is an incredible peace experienced as well as the experience becoming without limits.

There is no more limit of self and other experienced. And energetically it feels as if the energy of clinging, which is very high up, is like falling, collapsing, dissolving into something where one doesn't feel present like an "I", one is not there as someone. One kind of disappears into the experience. At that time, one does not see a difference in nature between active mind and calm mind.

*"From the oral instructions:*

*Yogi, let your mind be as loose as the thread spun by a Brahmin. Let it be clear, free from conceptual thinking, and undistracted, like a flame unmoved by wind. Do not hold back the mind which wanders to objects, like letting ravens fly from a ship. Leave whatever appears in mahamudra, like flames spreading in the forest. Leave what appears and exists in mahamudra, like stars reflected in a lake. Yogi, let your mind go wherever it wants, like an experienced cow herd tending his cows."*

The thread of a Brahmin is this really loose cotton thread around the chest.

'Like stars reflected in a lake.' -The idea here is: Look how real it appears, yet it is just a little drama in your mind. It is just something happening in mind.

'Like an experienced cowherd tending his cows.' Usually we have the example: Like a fool watching his cows, he let them wander without caring for them. In this example of the fool is the carefree attitude of mind, not worried. But here, of course the cows are actually Yaks, the example coming from Tibet. In Tibet, it is different from the cows we have here. They cannot disappear into a forest because there are no forests in Tibet. So an experienced yak herd lets them go, he does not take all this effort to keep them together because he knows that they will just wander and settle somewhere. He just has to keep an eye and see where they are going, he just has to be aware, he doesn't have to worry.

Basically, the meaning is: Let the mind think what it wants to think, just be aware.

*"Leave the nature of the mind always in the dharmakaya like the continuous flow of a waterfall."*

A waterfall is very active. This could be compared to our thinking to rushing water, a waterfall. To leave it in the dharmakaya means to

remember that it is only water. Basically, it is to always see: It is just mind. Mind movement, mind productions, nothing to worry about. All the manifestations of water, the very powerful manifestations of a waterfall, it is all just water. In the same way, the very powerful manifestations of mind are just mind. When I say: “just mind”, I mean they also have the nature of mind: Dynamic, spacious, unobstructed, peaceful and so on. They are just like the powerful manifestations of water, they all finish by themselves, they all return into the natural, we could say, ‘resting’ state if they are not nourished, not stimulated any more.

*“A yogi relies on sense pleasures as the fields rely on water and manure.”*

A yogi prospers on sense pleasures. When there is awareness, every sense impression stimulates that awareness even more. It brightens up the mind because it stimulates the mind. So there is more awareness of the nature of phenomena, the more there are phenomena that arise in that awareness.

Everybody feels that sensory stimulation in the six senses activating our mind. But then, what’s the yogi’s experience? As the yogi is stimulated in his sensory fields, there is at the same time arising, always fresh, the understanding of the nature of those experiences. And that’s the point here of what is stimulated.

The message here is: Yogi, if you are at this point, use your senses to realise the nature of mind again and again. In whatever you experience. You can thrive on your various sensory experiences including the thinking processes.

*“In this way keep your undistracted mind without reference point, in its uncontrived, untouched, loose, natural state. This is called first beginning the meditation skillfully.”*

DAY 5 (170704-0292 to 294)

G 2017 (11) Morning Meditation

(Recitation)

We just made a prayer that all beings be happy and free of suffering, experience great joy and equanimity. In order to realise that we all need

to become free from our emotional veils, the so-called kleshas. For this, the human existence is a very good opportunity. Our human life has enough challenges to stimulate those emotions. And we have the dharma to be able to work with that. And we have that wonderful possibility of relaxing in between the emotions, the emotions are not continuous. Actually they are impermanent phenomena like everything else. Let us contemplate for a moment the changing nature of emotional states.

Whatever arises in mind is process, is movement, is change.

Let us then contemplate the effect of getting involved with certain emotions. What kind of mental activity produces suffering, and what kind of mental activity produces happiness?

Which are the emotions that create most suffering, most tension in my mind?

And what do I need to do to find true happiness?

Let us see how we can apply the dharma to those emotions that are the most challenging for us.

First we need to be in contact with them, so that means that we need situations which stimulate them.

So what we can do in meditation is that we can at least remember one of those situations where such an emotion was strong.

Maybe it was so recent, today or yesterday that it is almost there as soon as we remember it. And as you begin to touch that emotional feeling, just be aware of how it is. Being aware means not getting involved but feeling it with that special attitude of not putting more oil on the fire.

As we are aware of it, sometimes it will just go away. So then we stimulate it a little bit more so that we can again feel it. So stay with that for some time, alternating being aware and, if it becomes too weak, stimulating it again.

Take your time to look at it from all angles without judgment, as if you were just a scientist, interested in knowing its true nature. How is it

really? How does it arise? How does it become strong? How does it disappear, how does it become weak?

Look at it, does it have a centre or core, something you could grasp and hold onto?

By looking at it in such a way, you will see that often it disappears. So what do we need to do to stimulate it again or to make a similar emotion arise again?

Which forces do I need to activate to make this emotion stronger?

What happens if I do not activate these forces anymore?

(People getting up to close the windows)

Continue with that same investigation. Which forces were active when directing our attention to the windows, the sounds of the wood, the people getting up, taking care, and now: Where is it all gone?

Is the emotion I was working with still there, can I find it somewhere or do I have to kind of reproduce it from scratch?

And then we just relax and sit without stimulating any emotions, simply looking at the nature of whatever arises by itself.

(Break)

We continue like that. looking at the nature of whatever arises. The difference to what we did just now, is that if we do not really stimulate mental events, they are of a much more fleeting nature, much shorter usually. But their arising and vanishing follows the same principles as before.

Have a look to see if a sense impression, a thought, an image stays in your mind if you don't pay special attention to it. Just be aware. Besides being aware, there is nothing to do.

And now there is a little exercise. Let's try to produce a strong sense of self. So that's not a particular emotion, just a strong feeling of me, "I". observe what is needed in order to do that. How can we make the feeling of self-importance stronger? And how will that self-importance

disappear, or what allows it to disappear? Do this two or three times alternating, to really find out how it works.

How does it feel?

What is really a so-called self?

When you have done this on purpose a few times, then just observe what I would call the waves of more or less ego-clinging arising in mind, feeling the sense of a 'self' becoming stronger and weaker with various experiences.

(Dedication)

## LESSON 49: LOOKING AT EMOTIONS

G 2017 (12)

We did the exercises of this lesson this morning (G 2017 (11)), but you might need some support to do them.

*“Look directly at the nature of whatever thoughts (or emotions) arise. When the thoughts themselves are experienced as an ungraspable luminous emptiness, there is no need to reject a bad thought or to seek a remedy apart from it.”*

And now comes a very famous quote:

*“Whatever it may be that is binding (creating tension in) you, once you become aware of it, it will become liberated. If you understand this extraordinary way, you will go to the place of the buddhas in this life.”*

So if it so important and so helpful, we should spend some time trying to understand it.

This first paragraph is like the whole lesson already, that's the teaching. Then the rest is explaining how to do it.

The direction we are going for is to be able to look at whatever movement occurs in mind in such a way that we see just how ungraspable and luminous this dynamic of mind is.

“Ungraspable” is easy to understand, there is nothing to hold onto so that is the first aspect of the nature of what we discover, nothing to hold onto.

“Luminous” means that as the movement is arising, we very clearly perceive it. For example I see this image in my mind, I see my grandmother, whatever, very luminous. And as the luminous appearance disappears, very clearly and luminously I see that there is no more grandmother in the mind, it is just as clear and luminous as before, but the movement was there.

Let’s take a very simple example. You have a screen on which a film is projected. Now when the images are there, you can see how luminous the screen is to produce all these colours. These changing images, colours, are ungraspable, they have no substance. As the images and also these ungraspable sounds (truck passing by) of the film arise in our mind, they form a reality, they form the contents of the film; let’s say something dramatic, and we believe in that reality. If the film is over or if the film stops and we just have a blank screen, still it is very luminous. The light is still there. It is just not filled with images. The luminosity does not change between whether it is an active mind or a quiet mind, it is still that presence, this very awake state of mind which we call luminosity which allows for experiences to arise. And that experience of no more film, just being there, is just as ungraspable as the film before. That cannot change. Both are ungraspable, you cannot catch hold of them. And as we look into these appearances arising, we see: Yes, nothing of that is solid, all of that is process. This is what we call ‘empty’. Everything is empty, nothing has solidity, nothing blocks the process. Everything is part of a process. And when that specific film is over, when we are aware that there is just a gap and nothing in particular is happening, that is also process. It is on-going awareness. On-going awareness of a kind where no drama is happening. Just being. That is also process. It is not a stand-still, where everything is blocked. No. On-going. And then something can arise again, just the process has changed, but everything is process.

So this was the explanation of the three words: “ungraspable luminous emptiness. “

When we begin to see that, then we begin to understand that there is no need to reject a bad thought, in the sense that a movement in mind makes us all tense, we don’t need to reject that. We don’t need to look for remedies actually, to make it go all away, it is enough to see through:

Oh. it is just a film. It is just appearances and when the conditions are not there to create those appearances anymore, they will cease by themselves, they will be finished.

We are in the section of insight meditation. Here, the way we work with emotions, is not any more to stop, to apply a remedy or to transform our vision of the things, here we work with the fourth step of working with emotions: Look directly into the nature of emotions. This is an extremely relaxed way of dealing with whatever appears in mind. There is no reaction of trying to search somewhere else, to search for help, to deal with what is happening now, we don't need to look for help. It is all there now by looking into just how it is.

So, let's go into the more detailed explanations.

*“Think of an attractive object of passion, so that you completely lose control over your passion. Then develop aggression toward something unpleasant and examine both of them. When you feel like going to sleep, observe the nature of the mind that desires to sleep. Likewise inspect the nature of pride, jealousy and miserliness and examine them intently with undistracted attention.*

But then of course some of the emotions are just under the surface, and as soon as you give them permission to arise, they come up like a wave and already you are in it, before you can count to three.

So even although the Karmapa says that we completely lose control, he doesn't mean that really. It is just that we feel it very strongly. Because the next thing is he will ask us to develop aggression towards something unpleasant and examine both of them. So we have to have enough control to then change the emotion, go into some other state of emotion.

So usually, relationships are very good for this because you don't even have to change the object, you can have great desire and great aversion following on from each other, just depending on what aspect you concentrate on.

We did this already a little bit (Lesson 48; alternating and we worked with that. We will continue doing that, examine both of them to get to know what we would have to do with the mind in order to create one or the other. And without talking about it, we also learn what we need to do in order to be able to shift, so somehow the letting go of the previous one is included in the exercise because otherwise we cannot go from the desire to the anger. Something must happen to enable the next state to arise. Here, at this time, we are just interested to really know how it is to



feel passionate, to feel aggressive and we will continue with ignorance, pride, jealousy. We are interested to really get to know them. how they feel, how they arise. Whenever we can, we direct our awareness towards that ungraspable, luminous nature. Whenever we can, we do that as much as possible.

So, basically, we go through the whole lot of our various emotions. We always do the same thing. We give them the possibility of arising, we stimulate them until they becomes strong and we look into them; sadness, loneliness, whatever you like. So we remain undistracted in that. This is very important. We remain completely in the emotion and being aware of it. So anything else, distracting, useless other thoughts and so on, we don't care about. We are investigating this. We need in a way a stable mind to stay with it and not be distracted into the story and so on. We want to know the nature of what's happening. So in order to be undistracted,

*“Do not follow previous thoughts, so you do not create trains of thoughts. Do not let other thoughts interrupt you.”*

You know, just stay with that emotional experience. Do not let other thoughts interrupt you.

*“If you examine these mind poisons only briefly, you will not be able to recognize their true nature.”*

They are called poisons because they cloud the mind and they make us lose our fluidity, they make us get stuck.

So let us remember what kind of questions I asked you this morning. I gave you many questions with which I hoped to keep you on the topic. You didn't just look once, and you looked in many different ways. Let's collect those questions. They will be very helpful for you to do that exercise. Which questions were beneficial to you? (Order of the following according to students' comments:)

The very basic central question was: 'How does it arise? How does it stay? - that means what makes it stay, which conditions make it stay - and how does it disappear? That's very important.

An additional question was how about the sense of self? In that emotion, or even I let you treat it like a separate emotion. Just like: Create a strong sense of self, what do you need to do to feel "I", me? How does it

arise, how do you maintain that when does it disappear? So that was a personal invention to do that. But it helps you understand the core of every emotion. Basically you could classify that as investigating into ignorance, lack of awareness, and from there how pride arises. So the sense of self is at the root of the feeling of pride.

What else did we do to investigate? I asked you to observe the impermanence of the emotion while it is there. This is another very important one: While it is there, is it stable or does it evolve, does it change? How is it? How does it change? And then also: Due to what does it change? What are the influences that make it change?

Then I told you repeatedly: If it gets too weak, put some more oil on the fire. So how do you stimulate an emotion? How do you get it back when you lose it? Normally, we do that automatically. But here we had to do it in order to do the exercise.

In order to make an emotion stay and to make it stronger, we have to remember and we have to give it a meaning, we have to give it a story, we have to give it contents. It needs something to hook onto. You cannot really make an emotion strong if you don't give it something to hook on. It has to be angry about something, desire for something. Proud about something. Fear of something. So you need to give it a little input there.

I directed your attention towards forces that were in operation. That was a help for you to see that dynamic aspect we were talking about. Forces interacting that were creating the emotions. That's a very helpful question to ask.

We are investigating the process nature by looking at the interdependent arising of the phenomenon that we call emotion. Emotions do not arise only due to one cause. There is an interdependence, there are various forces contributing to the arising of a particular emotion.

Many emotions arise without having a conceptual thought. They don't necessarily have a thought with words. They are quicker than that. There is usually no time for verbalised thinking, the verbalisation comes afterwards. They could be subconscious, but for someone who knows their mind, the nonverbalised thoughts are very conscious, the nonverbalised movements are also conscious then. Like your motivation, your impulses, you feel that, you can remember them.

For example, sound identified as a car, this is not verbalised thinking. We know that it is a car before we verbalise it as a car. Our head already turns in that direction before we have verbalised anything, so there is already physical reaction before there is any time for verbalisation. In the same way, anger can arise so quickly that we can hit before we have had a verbalised thought.

Question: Psychosomatic relationship?

Answer: Definitely, the automatic transference of mind and body with the somatic experience makes the emotion stronger and we feel that it is more real. But we do not depend on it. Look at the dream state. Sometimes the dream state goes through into the body and has its effects on the body. But in the dream state as such we can have all kinds of emotions without having feedback from the body. But we know that the more senses are included in the experience, the more real it becomes for us, the more we feel that it is really happening.

We use this in psychotherapy to deepen a healing experience by insisting that we feel it with every cell in our body to really anchor it in our physical memory.

And this is also a principle that has been used for a long time in vajrayana where we always include the physical sensations in the healing experience. Like it says in the tantras: The body is the palace of the deities, the body is the place of liberation and so on. This connection is used to deepen our experience of liberation. But we can have emotions in dreams, we can have emotions in out-of-body experiences, the bardo beings have emotions without having a body and so on, tetraplegic patients have emotions in parts of the emanation where they can't feel the corresponding body. There are lots of experiences indicating that emotions do not depend on the body although they include the body wherever possible.

Question: Why is it that sometimes we can control the emotions and sometimes not?

Answer: More or less awareness makes the difference. Less awareness - the things go through immediately; more awareness - you have space to decide, no impulsive reaction. It is always when there is relaxed presence of mind, then there are no impulsive reactions. If the mind is already tense, there are strong reactions. So for me, awareness and

relaxation go together. Maybe it is better I talk about relaxed awareness. A tense awareness or mindfulness is not enough to stop the impulsive reactions. You might be carried away nevertheless.

Question: It could be the opposite: when you are very relaxed and get verbally attacked, then you don't get a chance.

Answer: Don't worry. You feel very relaxed, but inwardly your ego-clinging is fully there. So you don't have your defences up, but your ego-clinging is not relaxed. So it will reach you without the defences and will stimulate an immediate pain and identification because there in the centre there was no relaxation.

So you will have to explore all of that yourself. Don't rely on the words of the teacher. Explore, examine and you will know all of it for yourself.

Question: Would you say that you are relaxed when something happens and you don't react inside?

Answer: Yes, this is a good sign. If it is not a veil of dullness but if your awareness is fully there, but there is no immediate reaction of this emotional impulsive type, this is a good sign of relaxation. Very good, yes. For example, you meditate, you are fully aware and - bang - a door slams behind you. You are fully aware, you know what has happened but there is no jerking. You can measure this physical, mental relaxation by the way you react to such sounds for example. To make this really clear: Awareness means that you can react, if necessary, appropriately. If you suddenly see an object flying towards you, you can react. But inwardly, you remain very peaceful, while outwardly doing the right movement to get your head out of the way of that flying object. Sometimes you can have incredible reflexes of catching something in the air, while inwardly your mind stays completely calm. This is what you look at. There is no reaction of fear. It is just doing the necessary. In a way, this is the principle of every good martial arts.

Question: Is it possible that we can feel the emotion of anger in the body, but because of our awareness, our mind doesn't get this foggy, this blind impulsive reaction?

Answer: No, when you feel anger in the body, you will also feel it in the mind. You cannot separate the two. You cannot have anger in one part of your being and not in the other part of your being.

Question: But if it doesn't make you blind?

Answer: There are many different degrees of anger. You can have anger like shooting flame, that you are so aware at the same time, you feel the anger, but that's it. You don't go further. It shoots like a heat wave through your body, your mind is for a moment completely in anger, but there is enough awareness at the same time, so it stops there, you don't continue.

Question: Do we have to express the anger?

Answer: Feel, but not express. The feeling has to become aware, we have to give space to it in an awareness, but we don't have to follow it, we don't need to express it. Psychotherapy has gone a long way in the last thirty, forty years from this belief that emotions need to be expressed in order not to be suppressed. And they know now, just as in the dharma, if they become aware. And the best is that we become aware of them to such an extent that you can feel them, but without being overwhelmed. That's the best way of becoming aware in order to work with an emotion.

(Break)

*"You should make for each mind poison at least ten sessions and inquire with fully sharpened attention."*

'Ten sessions' means ten times working intensively with an emotion. So that's a minimum. You should take this work seriously. So anger - you work with strong anger at least ten times, in retreat you really dedicate one session to that. You take pride, you take desire, ten times each, jealousy ten times each, sadness ten times each, loneliness ten times each. That's the minimum. So we inquire with fully sharpened attention. Completely undistracted. We stay on that just like this morning, we learn how to do that ourselves.

Do we all agree that this is the most important point, to get clear about our emotions, to look through? That's what makes samsara turn, right. And then, once we get familiar by doing like fifty, sixty sessions like this with these various emotions, then

*"Whatever mind poisons arise, particularly passionate desire and so on, do not follow them, but look directly at their true nature."*

We then know how to look at their true nature and that will become a new habit. In previous courses I already told you how it happened for me for the first time. After doing all of that, after practising with the different emotions then, in the encounter with one person anger arose. My mind automatically turned to look at the anger, there was no conscious impulse: Now look at the anger, but because of that training, it automatically looked at it, and the anger collapsed, disappeared, and I could just laugh, I couldn't find the anger anymore. It is very strong: When you see the nature of the emotion, then it is really gone. There is nothing left. You can't find any more. You can only laugh at how silly you are yourself.

I have explained in previous courses already that if you see the nature of an emotion only a little bit, that will have the effect of the emotion having a decrescendo, finishing within a few seconds, finishing within a short time, but it will go like a wave that comes to an end. When we really see the nature of an emotion, it is immediately gone. There is no decrescendo, it is gone, like a balloon that is pierced, it is finished, exposed, the illusion is gone. Like a bubble of soap.

Question: Is it like lucid dreaming?

Answer: More so. The lucid dream experience is still a very dualistic experience, here we are talking about an astonishing clarity free of any emotions. In lucid dreaming, you can still be quite involved with emotions, with ego-centred attitudes and so on. They will all have disappeared for a moment.

Then you maintain this practice. This becomes our main practice. You have to maintain the emotion without getting caught in it so that you can look again and again into it. So you need to feed, you have to maintain and follow it a little bit, but only so that you can look at it again and again so that you begin to notice how it is functioning.

Question: Should we always work with the main emotion?

Answer: You should try to go always deeper. It is not certain which one is the main emotion. You go deeper into what is really going on there. Pride is a very basic emotion, usually it is that, but work with the emotion as such, it doesn't matter what kind of emotion it is, the way it works, the nature, is the same for all of them. You don't have to really direct it,

basically it is about some kind of ego-clinging. This is where you always finish actually, you see the basic self-importance.

Question: So the purpose is to relax the ego-clinging?

Answer: It will happen because we look at that.

Question: The experience of a bursting bubble?

Answer: The experience of the bursting of a bubble is easier with the strong experiences. But it happens with every single mind movement, every single thought, you can have the bursting bubble. It does not depend on intensity, but for the first experience, they usually happen with stronger ones.

There is no ego you can look at. There are only the forces creating emotions. There is no other ego-clinging than the forces creating emotions.

When we were doing that exercise of stimulating the sense of self, that was also forces in action. There is not a block of something that is there, but it is like it comes and goes, it becomes stronger, it becomes weaker, goes underground. You feel that it is dynamic! There is no solid ego-clinging. It doesn't exist, it is forces, and without those forces creating the sense of self-importance, all the other emotions have no chance.

*“ When, by maintaining this practice undistractedly, you experience the five mind poisons as groundless and rootless, passionate desire is purified without rejecting it.”*

Normally, passionate desire is called the root of samsara. It is like the first thing we have to be careful about if we don't want to get entangled in samsara. So there are practitioners who would reject passionate desire as well as they would reject their anger. And it's true: Out of these passions, a lot of suffering arises. But if we see the nature of those passions, we don't have to reject them! They can arise, we know their nature, and they lose their power.

Some of you are in relationships where you can practise in sexual union. And it is an extremely interesting but also wonderful experience, while you are in union, to look at the nature of passion, of desire and to enter that selfless state without ego-clinging. It is a completely new experience

which you can make. Deeply, deeply satisfying. This is where you contact real bliss in your being.

But you can also have all these experiences without being in a sexual relationship. I remember women and men coming out of three-years-retreat and saying: Well, that's better than any sex we ever had. So don't think that you have to practise it, but if you do, remember to bring the dharma into the sexual relationship as well as into any other situation. It is the discovery of a relationship of deepest intimacy without clinging. It usually takes two for that. You have to agree to practise that together. If it is just one practising and the other one continuing to cling, it is still a source of suffering.

So when a passion is purified, is looked through, actually that process is called 'self-liberation'. It is not that we liberate the emotion. What we do is actually very simple. By looking at the nature and seeing as it is, in that moment there is no more feeling of the emotion. That's the only moment when there is actually no more oil on the fire because by seeing the ungraspable, groundless nature of the emotion, that's when there is no ego-clinging and that's the condition that the emotion does what all emotions do: They liberate themselves. There is no more obstacle to the instantaneous self-liberation of the kleshas. No more obstacles, because that moment there is no more ego-clinging, no more forces of ego-clinging which nourish the emotion. And that's the reason why there is no decrescendo, it is immediate because all the conditions that nourish the emotions are cut at the root. The decrescendo happens when the forces nourishing the emotion gradually decrease.

The Tibetan term for self-liberation is "rang-grol". "Grol" (pronounced dröl) liberating, "rang" self, by itself. Rang-grol happens all the time anyhow. It is not that it waits until we see the nature of the mind movement, the klesha, and only then it would happen. No, no. It is anyhow happening all the time. All the billions of thoughts, mind movements and emotions we have had since childhood, we have done nothing to liberate them. They have been self-liberating from the very origin. That's their nature. It is like the waves in the sea. They are all finishing by themselves. The same with our minds. As soon as there is no karmic wind, no karmic forces pushing them, nourishing them, always making them into something new, that's it.

But in the normal way we experience rang-grol, the self-liberation, it is a little bit secret, it is a hidden rang-grol. So some moments we are angry. Then, from the anger, we get desperate, from desperation we get sad,



then we feel lonely. All the emotions have liberated themselves, but the forces continued and new emotions were arising as the old ones were finishing, so we don't really see the self-liberation. But it is actually going on all the time. It is just transforming. The rang-grol is not so clear to see because there is constant transformation into the next experience of life. So we don't have that clear-cut experience of it going away completely and then have a peaceful state of mind.

*“This is called ‘self-liberation’. Precisely this is what is meant by discriminating primordial awareness among the five aspects of primordial awareness and by Amitabha among the five kinds of buddhas”*

We have these five aspects of timeless awareness, I usually give that image of the lotus with the five petals. In the centre there is the timeless awareness called the dharmadhatu, the space of all phenomena, the spacious quality of buddha awareness. On the front petal is the aspect which is like a mirror, it is that unobstructed clarity of mind which is called mirror-like timeless awareness. To the right, which would be the southern direction, is the aspect of equality, that deep knowing that all phenomena are of the same nature. On the back petal, behind, is what we call discriminating timeless awareness, all-distinguishing timeless awareness. While being aware of the same nature, we also know the precise differences between one experience and the next. And it is that aspect of our timeless awareness which knows exactly the difference between the previous confusion and the liberation experience now. And on the other petal, to the left, the northern petal, there is the all-perfecting aspect of timeless awareness which means that buddha mind sees all phenomena in their perfection, in the complete experience of enlightenment.

So precisely knowing this self-liberation is what is meant by discriminating timeless awareness among the five aspects of timeless. And also this is called Buddha Amitabha among the five kinds of Buddhas. You can imagine that on each part of the lotus sits a Buddha: Vairocana in the centre, Akshobhya in the front, Ratnasambhava on the southern petal, Amitabha on the western petal in the back and Amoghasiddhi on the northern petal.

And to make sure that no-one gets the idea that they would be separate, we have one Buddha on top: Vajrasattva who combines them all. So these five aspects of timeless awareness are by no means five separate wisdoms, they are just aspects, like facets of a jewel, they belong

together, they cannot be separated. And as we realise the nature of our emotions, we will realise all these Buddhas together.

*“Likewise, by looking directly at all arising thoughts, they are naturally liberated, being without any real existence.”*

So a big emotion is like a big tanker in the sea, it is like a big cargo ship charged with emotion, that's a big mind movement. And a tiny, passing, fleeting thought is just like a little wave on the water. Or to stay with the image of the wave, one is like a tsunami wave and the other is just like a ripple wave on the water. So all of them have the nature of rang-grol, self-liberation. All of them, no exception.

*“This is called the pith-instruction for taking the five poisons on the path. As is said: “Just as there are mantras to neutralize poison, there is the pith-instruction for taking the five mind poisons on the path.””*

To remember these pith instructions and to apply them is as if we had a powerful antidote to a body poison, a poison that is intoxicating our body.

(Summarising and commenting insights of the students:)

The reason why we don't do it in the actual situation is because we want to have the emotion. It took me some years to acknowledge that. When you try to work with people in their emotion, you will see how they desperately cling to their emotion.

An emotion can only harm us when we take it personally. No emotion without identification.

“Nothing to hold onto is uncomfortable.” - First of all to look at this awareness just how it is, the quality of it, actually this is very important. This is the main way to insight. And the discovery how uncomfortable it is to be in that state where you cannot hold onto anything, this will let us understand why actually we don't want to let go of our emotions. We are afraid of entering that dimension where we cannot hold onto anything, we don't know who we are.

When investigating an emotion, if we feel it in the body, we are better protected against distraction even if short thoughts come in between, through the physical sensation we can connect to it again, if it didn't happen too long ago. If it is just recent, in the body we can still connect

to that physical sensation and from there on find it again, look at it again. The effects of emotions in the body can last much longer than the emotion that has triggered them. Although they come very quickly, sometimes you can feel them for hours after. And this leads sometimes to confusion for a practitioner. The emotion, for example anger, is already gone in the mind, but in the body there is still some heat, some palpitation, some tension like in the anger and we think the anger is still there because these physical symptoms are still there. But actually, this is only the after-effect. But for as long as these physical symptoms are there, it just needs a little image, a little memory, something to connect it again to the emotion that originally triggered it.

It is very common that existential fear is too difficult to bear and that another fear installs itself, which is a fear of touching that. What is uncommon is the courage to go with that fear that is afraid of the existential fear and finally enter that complete fear in order to find out about it. We need this fearless attitude with all emotions. This is real courage. When we have that courage, nothing can happen to us. If we start to fight again and to get into the fear of the emotion, we complicate everything.

This is very important: We are not a victim of our emotions. With the forces of our mind, we can completely modulate them, bigger, smaller, let them go, make them arise again. Completely. When we understand that we know that we can be happy.

Student: I was battling against physical pain, I was trying to escape the self, and when I stopped fighting, the pains were gone.

LT: What did you discover about the self whom you wanted to avoid?

Student: Nothingness.

LT: Is it like nothing special, nothing to be afraid of, or were you like in a complete empty, like space?

Student: It was like an empty space.

LT: If that ever happened again, would it be OK for you to explore that empty space? It is probably this feeling of empty space that you were afraid of to start with and this was the reason for your battle. But this experience is not the end of what you can feel there. You will have very beautiful discoveries to make, it is a very new dimension of being, just

opening up. When we enter into that with a very relaxed, loving awareness, we find it easy to live and easy to die.

What you were experiencing is similar to that feeling of having nothing to hold onto, discoveries of being nobody, when the emotion is gone. It is the first sense of the absence of a solid self. It is not the emptiness we talk about in the teachings, it is an emotional emptiness, there is no-one there, where I thought that there should be me. It is this emotional first discovery of the absence of self. It needs courage to go deeper to discover what a richness of qualities is to be found there. It is incredible what will open up when we have the courage to go in there, through there.

## LESSON 38: DIFFICULTIES IN THE PRACTICE CONTINUED

G 2017 (13, first part)

Let's continue with the chapter how we can screw up our practice.

### C. Ownerless meditation

*“If someone has given rise to good meditation but then lets it decline instead of fostering it, one speaks of ownerless meditation. Someone like this will be told to meditate with more perseverance, in order to maintain a continuity.”*

It is a pity: Someone is really capable and has had a good start and then conditions and so on lead to a carelessness and there is no more direction in one's life and practice. A good start and then dropping it somewhere. I have seen this with a few practitioners in three-year-retreat. They had a good retreat, came out, different conditions, lost their practice. The practice became ownerless, no-one taking care of it.

Nowadays it is not as easy because people don't just do what the lama tells them: No way! What we have to do is to find ways to stimulate a renewed interest to get some good experiences going again so that a person can reconnect and find their way back to the original motivation, the one that started the original good faith in practice.

### D. Wanting to reproduce good experiences

*“When practitioners experiences at times great joy which then fades away, they will become sad and fabricate a meditation trying to imitate that previous experience. Since this does not work they will get depressed.”*

This we all know, come on, really.- That’s normal. Will they get depressed? That maybe a little bit strong. But they may find that nothing makes sense, the dharma doesn’t make sense, I am not at all good at practice, I can’t do it anymore - all these doubts about themselves will come and it will completely block their practice.

*“If they strongly persevere in this, their life force will be concentrated there,”*

They really get stuck. They can go as far as going suicidal. It is really a drama. What happens? All the attention is stuck in this lost happiness that is now not there anymore, and by comparison the life now is useless and the life then was good life. And they become completely desperate.

*“if they persevere less, they will get stuck in their hope for an enjoyable Dharma practice. Someone like this will be told:”*

They will also get stuck, but more in the hope for enjoyable dharma practice, they will also look for a dharma practice that is fun, that gives joy, that immediately gives happiness.

What would you tell such a person, what would you tell such a person? How would you help yourself if you were there?

Students:

- Go on with the practice and try to see what makes sense right now and find a new way to trust in the practice.
- Be friendly to yourself and relaxed.
- It is important to be just aware, and that gives a very good ground to stabilise this awareness of just what is.
- Do Tonglen for all the people who are meditating and are having the same experience. And then look into the true nature of the experience.
- Not to have expectations because you are not going to have the same experience twice.

- I was in this situation and I needed a strong input or inspiration from outside, like from a teacher. I couldn't solve this problem alone.
- I would be trying to help the person to see is that happiness is a kind of by-product. It is not something you can focus on and decide: I am happy, therefore my practice is going well. When you are trying to hold onto happiness, it doesn't work.
- I would ask them to look for some joyful activities and then test if that experience is really so joyful. Examine the experience of joy.

The Karmapa says:

*"In those bad times do not hanker after good times. Practice by looking right at the difficult experience, and you will gain confidence that it is easier to practice with difficult experiences than with good ones. They have a greater potential."*

This is not a cynical remark. It is very easy to lose one's practice in times of happiness and joy. Then one becomes careless, and of course the grasping is there, it is normal to cling onto it, and of course then it stops the joy and happiness.

So some of you have already said: Look at what is now, look at the experience now. This is the first part of the advice: Do not search your practice anywhere else but in the experience just now. Always now. So in that, there is breathing, there are physical sensations, there is seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, there is thinking. That's where we find the practice.

We experience a certain degree of suffering. And this suffering actually is a motivation. We can use it to become diligent in our practice. We could do Tonglen practice. We could use that suffering as the starting point to help all those who hope for better circumstances, for more happy times and to connect with them and to use that suffering as the starting point for deeper compassion.

Difficult experiences are more precise. There is a very clear clinging to discover. These are experiences which are easier to investigate the way we did this morning than happy experiences when the mind is more relaxed and it is not so easy to come to the point of touching that self-centredness. It is easier in difficult experiences.

So we would encourage people by saying: 'You see, practice is not about being happy, it is a by-product. Practice is about dissolving that ego-centredness, the root of all the various kleshas, whether it is clinging to wonderful things or aversion to disagreeable things, the point is the same. And for this your present state of mind is a very good start. You can really see the workings of that ego-centredness. You can easily see it, touch it, bring into awareness and also see the dissolution of it.' Working with difficulties "has a greater potential."

And this you know from your experience. Someone who has really gone right the way through suffering and knows how to get him-/herself out of suffering will be a great help to others. There is a great potential of learning and becoming a good assistant to others on their path because one has gone through these difficulties. We actually need to go through that if we want to be bodhisattvas in this world. Those, for example, who have gone through drug addiction and have worked themselves out of that, are the best people to help others with drug addiction. The same goes for those who have found their way out of depression, who have actually been close to suicide or even have tried to commit suicide, then if they find the way out, they know and they are very good at helping others. Every difficulty I work through with the pure goal of helping others has great potential to do that.

When we are helping each other in the dharma practice, it is very good if we avoid giving advice to each other. Especially direct advice: "You should do like this, you should not do like this." This is normally not such a great way to help each other. It is better to describe our own experience in that area, what has helped me. Try also to help them understand what is actually going on so that the process of how that suffering came about is better understood and help the person to bring awareness into that area until it becomes so obvious, so clear what would be the obvious next step.

Are we clear about the process if someone talks about a difficulty? We let ourselves be guided by the person's description, so deeply into it until we begin to feel the situation as if from the insight of the person. And then we begin to look around and we begin to look for the way out, the way the person cannot see right now. And we search together and then, usually it will be fine.

## E. Changing around Practices

*“Some practitioners feel uneasy as soon as they begin to meditate and think they should change it. If they get lost in trying to change it or in subconscious gossip, they will feel even worse. They will be told:*

They have just started and think something is wrong and they must change it. It is as if there was a voice telling them: ‘Oh, you are probably doing wrong. You are never doing it right’. It’s like they are getting lost in subconscious gossip and they will feel even worse. It is these subconscious voices, this internal dialogue: ‘Shall I do like this, shall I do like that, what is better’ and so on, I cannot decide and everything gets worse.

Maybe you have experienced situations like this where you sit down and you think: OK, I’ll do my practice. You open your text, maybe Chenresig practice and after ten lines you feel: Oh no, that’s not it. I should do breathing meditation. That’s what I will do. After ten breaths you say: ‘oh no, that’s not it. I’ll do the seven-point posture.’ Then: Oh no, that’s too tense. I think I should do something for the heart, I’ll do some Tonglen. Then: No, that feels so artificial. Then: Maybe OM MANI PEME HUNG. And like this, you never get anywhere. You start and something tells you: Oh, not so right and again you change, and again you change. And you never get around to staying with one practice.

With these subconscious voices, always creating this lack of confidence in what one is doing, what do we do, how do we help such a person? What would you do, how would you proceed, how would you try to help such a person?

Students:

- Just be aware of the continuous flow of pleasantness and unpleasantness, neutral-ness. This a flow, it is not me.

LT: This advice would take out some of the identification with how this is not feeling good. I don’t feel good so this identification would be taken out. So this “resistance”, this identification with unpleasant feelings would be lessened already. That would make it easier to continue with the practice.

- You get out of choosing a practice, but you go back to your motivation and get a new start from there.

LT: Would you give the advice: Just do your practice, don’t change?



- Yes, I would.

- It depends on many aspects. I wouldn't say there is a general advice for everybody.

- I would advise to look at why the person is so restless.

LT: It is probably a pattern we are facing: Starting to do one thing, we also feel that the other thing is better. Doing that, we feel that the next thing is better so probably we have to do with a pattern and we might have to look at that.

- To go with the emotion that is right now. If, for example, you feel uncomfortable, to allow yourself to feel uncomfortable, to open up to it so that you can relax into it.

LT: So you would say more or less that the practice you are doing now is not important, you have this uncomfortable feeling and take that as your practice whatever form of practice is around it. So with that additional advice, the advice to just continue would make more sense. With that additional encouragement to within that practice work with discomfort.

- It depends on the person, but I would be concerned, say you have somebody who is sitting there, telling themselves semiconsciously: I cannot do this, I am not good at this, I am never going to get anywhere and I tell them to carry on with the practice. What they are probably going to do is just try harder, it is almost like they were to compensate for this feeling that they are not going to do it, just showing how hard they are trying. And that just creates more and more tension. It really doesn't work. What people sometimes do is that keep pushing those voices away by trying harder, but those voices keep coming back. You get into this constant battle with yourself. You have to do something about it.

- I find the barlung helps. (LT: That's a really good idea.) It is letting everything drop down to the centre just below the navel and becoming aware of the movements around that area, especially what the breath is doing around that area. As we do that, the central gravity drops down, the whole of the awareness can drop out of the conceptualising mind. It takes the energy away from the thought process and makes it easier to simply attend to the actual sensations.

L.T.: I'll make you also one suggestion which continues on from the suggestion of barlung before. We have to come to a place of confidence in ourselves, we are lacking confidence in what we are doing. So there is this old vajrayana trick of the guru yoga. It would be worth trying to say: Well, you are trying so hard to do the practice by yourself. How about if you do that in prayer to the lama, to the buddhas, so they send their blessing, you dissolve that into yourself and then you let the lama do the practice? It is like saying to the person: There is a part of you, there is an aspect of you who can do that. You can do that. Just imagine you are one of those smiling buddhas, you know with a big belly and doing barlung. Breathing in, breathing out. No worry. You can do that. Just ask them to dissolve into you and let them do the job.

As a lama, as a teacher, I would avoid changing the practice at a time when a person is coming: "It doesn't work for me." I would rather try to find a way of having a good experience with that practice, like the Buddha inside doing the practice, before changing it. If I change it at a time when a person is doubting their own capacities all the time, then I would add another defeat in their biography: 'Oh, I didn't even manage to do that, the lama had to give me an even easier practice.' You know, like adding on. Actually, I try to find a way so that the person can do the practice and helps the person have a good experience with that.

The Karmapa actually gives advice about developing insight, of using the lhagthong, intuitive insight to solve the problem:

*"If you look precisely at that feeling of unease without altering it, you will experience utter ease and relaxation as if a knot had been untied."*

So this joins some of the suggestions which you made. Take that feeling of unease as the basis of our practice. The way we look is like we did this morning.

## Meditation

Awareness of 'just how it is', is the only thing that is really important.

If you need a little support, you can always have look how an experience is arising, how it is changing, how it is becoming the next experience.

Perhaps by looking into the experience, you can get a feeling for its ungraspable nature. There is also that natural clarity or luminosity.

For example, when you hear a sound in meditation, it is not so important what am I hearing, but how is it to be hearing? What I am seeing is not so important, but how is it to be seeing? Instead of being interested in what am I thinking, it is rather: How is it to be thinking?

And perhaps you have a little look if it is the “I” that is meditating or if you were allowing the Buddha to meditate instead of you.

(Break)

## LESSON 64: THREE SKILLS CONTINUED

G 2017 (13, second part)

***“ IN BETWEEN INTERRUPTING THE MEDITATION SKILLFULLY.***  
*Practicing like this, you should not make the duration of sessions your main concern, but rather put aside both the meditation and the body posture and alternate. You should meditate with clarity for short and frequent periods, and without becoming disinterested, consistently continue your meditation with joy, clarity and vigor.”*

So how to stop and how to make pauses skilfully? You might have been surprised several times already that our meditation as a group is going really well, then I ring the bell and it is already the pause. And your feeling would have been: ‘Oh, I could have easily continued for longer’. Actually, it is very important also as a group not to lose that joy in meditating, to keep the sessions short and to stop when it is going well so that everyone is happily returning to practise more.

So try to never get tired from your meditation. Don’t go to the limits of what you can do. Stop when it is still fine. And if you are very sensitive, stop when you begin to cling. Of course, just because a little clinging arises, we don’t need to stop. We also find ways to relax that clinging, but if it comes back and becomes stronger, then it is time to stop.

So the main instruction is: Meditate with clarity for short and frequent periods.

Question: Clinging to what?

Answer: Clinging to how well it is going. 'Oh, now I can do more! Ah, this is how it should be!' In my own mind it is like this: When the meditation has been going fine, there is no commentary, there is no-one saying that it is going fine, it is just normal, it is authentic, it is like that. It is simply being. When the commentary comes in: 'Oh, I have to see if I can really continue', then I leave it.

There is another reason for this. It is much better to do frequent sessions because we frequently travel the path from being ordinary, from ordinary relaxation, into meditation. Get out of it, travel again. We begin to know the way into meditation so well, our mind gets used to that and you can then do it very quickly because you have done it so many times, you really know the way. Nothing is lost by making a pause and then meditating again. Nothing is lost. There is always the fear of losing something - no, no! It is possible again. What a miracle!

So the first point was: Become skilled in entering the meditation and now this point was: Become skilled in making pauses at the right time, early enough. And the third point is:

***“FINALLY MAINTAINING THE EXPERIENCE SKILLFULLY.** You should not have any attachment to and craving for whatever experiences of bliss, clarity or non-conceptuality may arise. By never getting involved in the impurities of good thoughts, bad thoughts or neutral thoughts, experiences are brought forth through the force of realization. This is called gaining experience through realization; for this you must be free from attachment to experiences. Since the opposite is called losing realization because of experiences, you must have the skill of maintaining experiences without being attached to them.”*

So watch out if you are craving, longing for that, if you become attached when it arises. That's the time to relax more and to trust more in not manipulating the mind. So the advice is: "Don't get involved with that impure way of judging." This spoils our practice if we begin to classify and judge our mental movements. Let's not try to have a pure mind. Mind is pure by nature, so we don't have to try. All that judging, labelling, all that ego-centred involvement creates a temporary impurity. So if we don't get involved in this differentiating between good and bad and so on, then "experiences are brought forth through the force of realisation."

We realise that these experiences have no substance, that they are ungraspable, that it is completely stupid to fight with them. They go by themselves, they are self-liberating and this realisation brings forth the meditative experiences of deep calm, deep well-being, clarity and so on.

“This is called gaining experiences through realization.”

When we use our understanding of the nature of whatever arises, this actually opens new fields of experience, of being so calm, so peaceful, unruffled by the experiences.

“The opposite is called losing realization because of experiences.”

So if we cling to experiences, our realisation gets lost. You see, we have done quite a bit of work during the last few days on understanding the nature of experiences. The meditation is deepening, becomes easy. Now, if we cling to that, we are losing that actual understanding that brought us there. We were getting there because of being less attached to ourselves, to what we experience and letting it be, letting it liberate by itself. There was an understanding that opened these doors to us and now what happens as we enter that realm of experiences, new experiences arise and then we need to apply that same understanding again to that new experience of happiness, peace, clarity and so on. And then we will continue to be relaxed and further doors will open to us.

If we understand that this calm, this openness and clarity is really a natural expression, a natural quality of our mind, then we know that it is always there. We can always get there and it is useless to cling to it, because it is always there anyway. It is just a matter of knowing how to touch into those qualities of mind which are always there.

This is the skill of maintaining and deepening the experience by the fact of not being attached to the experiences. This is a secret of life. Relationships are so much more beautiful, if the joy of a relationship is skilfully maintained by not being attached to the other person. Never try to repeat an experience, always go for the new one.

## THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EXPERIENCE AND REALISATION

An experience (tib. nyams) is a dualistic experience with an observer. There is still somehow an aspect of our mind watching the experience unfold. Realisation (tib. rtogs-pa) means a non-dual insight, arising intuitively, not through thinking.

*“Experiences are unstable because they do not go beyond the conceptual mind. They are like the sun between clouds.”*

They are within the conceptual, the dualistic mind. There is a watcher and there is an observer, they are conditioned by the forces in our mind combining to produce these experiences. Some of them can be very special - special feelings of lightness, physical sensations of warmth and bliss, then there are experiences of clarity of mind, of seeing all kinds of things and so on. Many, many experiences.

So sometimes there and sometimes gone, clouded over. And when we analyse those meditative experiences,

*“sometimes all three experiences of bliss, clarity and non-conceptuality are present. Sometimes one of them is dominant.”*

And when duality becomes too strong, then none of them appears. By allowing them to appear without attachment...

*“By maintaining them without attachment, the distortions of the conceptual mind will clear up and the realization that was present from the beginning will appear.”*

The distortions of the dualistic mind will become less and less.

These experiences of bliss, clarity and non-conceptuality are actually how our mind is by nature. We don't have to create them. They appear in the mind of all people on all continents. There is no difference in that. They appear in everyone, from early childhood to old age, they are always available.

I always give a very simple example: Imagine you receive a wonderful skilful massage, someone very sensitive to your needs is just touching you in the right way and you can open into that and you can relax. Every human being all over the world will feel happy due to that. There is a well-being, a joy in body and mind. That's the aspect of bliss, of joy. That's general. There comes a joy in body and mind. By that relaxation and openness the mind becomes clear. And people get up from the massage and look at the world around as if they were seeing it for the first time. This experience is called clarity. And for some time, they forget all their worries and their thoughts. It is like they are out of it. This is called non-conceptuality. No need to think.

When we are meditating, we are doing self-massage. We are giving a massage to our deeper inner being. We help our body-mind to relax, we breathe and we sit, or we walk, exactly in the way which is fitting to us. There is deep acceptance of ourselves, all our pressure can appear and

dissolve, we allow for that, there is space for that, we don't need to care. So by that relaxation, the mind becomes clear, no more need to think about past, present and future, non-conceptuality, and there is an incredible wellbeing in the body and a joy in the mind. This is how the experiences appear and they appear completely naturally in everyone.

Every person in every culture can experience that. However, when we experience that first - and you can also see that with people receiving a massage -, most of them quickly have to make comments about it and spoil the experience by getting involved with the conceptual mind, a strong observing tendency. And that's what happens with those experiences as they show in meditation, usually they are being commented upon, there is clinging to it, the wish to repeat, and that spoils the whole thing. So these are unnecessary complications. Then we learn to relax those unnecessary complications. And we understand, we see that that the less we manipulate ourselves, the more these experiences are there. And in time, we begin to realise: Wow, they are just the natural qualities of mind. When we leave the mind to its self-liberating nature, knowing it to be ungraspable, not grasping to anything, that's just how it is and that's how realisation shows. The inherent realisation will appear.

*“Furthermore, if experiences are experienced in a dualistic way as objects of a subject, it is experience. If they do not arise as objects, it is realization. If they are experienced by the mind, it is experience. If the mind itself appears as their essence, it is realization. If they are experienced in the form of references, it is experience. If there is an understanding of the particulars of the reference, knowing directly their characteristics, it is realization. If the mind exists as a meditator and the meditation on bliss, clarity, non-conceptuality and emptiness exists as an object of meditation or experience, it is experience. If the meditator and the meditation are directly recognized as inseparable, without it being just a fabricated, intellectual understanding, it is realization.”*

It is very important to know the difference between experience and realisation because realisation is awakening. That's where realisation shows itself and grows.

Experiences are temporary, fleeting and are kind of appropriated by the ego-centred habitual tendencies. Pride can build up around them because “I” have had a nice experience and then they can actually nourish our ego. Even if within the experience we were relaxed and afterwards, because it was a reference point, we can still build our pride on it.

Realisation will never stimulate pride. Realisation is not an object of pride. It cannot be. It is not an object of anyone and anything. If we feel pride, there is no realisation.

That's also a very good indicator with experiences, you know these extraordinary experiences, there comes this missionary impulse to want to tell the world about it. This is absent in realisation. In realisation, there is no "I" or self that is kind of compelled to talk about it to others or needs to convince others. There is no personal need there. There is compassion, there is the understanding that this would be good for others, but there is not this emotional, missionary, enthusiastic reaction of the normal clinging to experiences.

Question: Is realisation indescribable?

Answer: Realisation is indeed indescribable, but there are also dualistic experiences which feel indescribable to the meditator. So in itself it is not a sure criterion to differentiate between the two.

As a teacher I need to know, I need to feel when a person talks about these experiences or perhaps realisations, where the description comes from. I can usually feel if that description comes from being in contact with that dimension that was experienced or whether it comes from a conceptual representation of it.

But we teachers do not depend on how a person describes the experience. It is not very important. Realisation leaves the person changed in specific ways. There are traces of that now, so we don't even have to talk about happened previously. Just the now can tell us.

Question: Is there advice for people who have no experiences in meditation?

Answer: We are here talking about silent meditation. Shine meditation, not lhagthong meditation. Then experiences do arise. There is no way around them. They come naturally because they are the nature of mind. If they don't arise, I either have to help the person and ask - oh, yes, I didn't even realise these moments of greater clarity; oh yes, the thoughts just cease. If it is not happening, I know that the person is not really relaxing the control. The control is going on all the time and that is why there are no experiences. Always the "I" trying to meditate, and then no experiences will arise.



If we do mainly vajrayana practice with lots of mantra recitations, visualisations and so on, the kind of experiences that arise are slightly different and the signs for practice are a little bit different. There is for example more emphasis on devotion, compassion, moments of forgetting oneself, not so precisely bliss, clarity and non-conceptuality. They are in there, they will appear, but how one would describe the experience is a little bit different.

Question: How can we relax the control?

Answer in the form of a guided meditation:

Maybe we start by reflecting on the hundreds or thousands of times that we have tried to do it. We are just so fed up and we give up. Give up all trying and sink a little deeper. Let the mind do it itself.

If the mind doesn't want to meditate, let the belly meditate.

Let the jaw drop, let the shoulders drop, all of that. All the tension in the face, let everything drop. No more tension in the cheeks, nothing.

Let the four extremities drop wherever they want to go. Especially the neck should have no responsibility for keeping anything up.

I am not responsible anymore.

There is nowhere to go, nothing to do.

Mind does what it wants. It takes care of itself.

There is really nothing to do.

Mind goes wherever it wants. Perhaps it relaxes into its own depths.

And there is complete trust that mind unwinds itself. We only give it complete freedom.

(Dedication)

DAY 6 (170705-0295 to 0297)

G 2017 (14) Morning meditation

(Recitation)

Starting practice right away, remembering different aspects of our life for which we can be thankful.

Remembering impermanence and death.

Remembering what is really important in our life.

Remembering what we want to be free from in order to be truly happy.

With this we direct our mind towards liberation, awakening. And we know that awakening always happens in the now, never before and never after. Always now.

Being awake to just how it is now.

Whatever our experience might be, let's look at its essence, its essential nature.

Be very soft and gentle in this looking, knowing. It is as if we were simply open to how it is.

(Bell)

If your body is painful or restless, you can do some walking meditation at the back of the room, just standing, walking up and down a little bit, that usually helps. Standing and walking meditation is just as good as sitting meditation.

And of course, you are welcome to do the exercise of bringing up an emotion and looking into it, just like yesterday. You remember how to do that, or you simply take whatever arises by itself. We can also look at the fluctuations of this feeling of self, of "I", sometimes feeling it stronger, sometimes less. Have a look into that, play with that.

(Bell)

How is it? How is the experience of now? Is there anything to grasp in it? Is there any sense of self in that experience? Can you find that self? How does the sense of self arise and how does it disappear?

(Dedication)

## LESSON 50: USING MENTAL MOVEMENTS

G 2017 (15, first part)

How about continuing a little bit with the passage about using all movements in mind as the basis for meditation?

Karmapa writes:

*“In short, from the innate creative power of mind arises a multitude of experiences, some wholesome, some unwholesome and some neutral. Bring these experiences to the realm of equal taste, neither denying nor affirming them, and look directly into the true nature of everything that arises without seeking a remedy for it apart from that.”*

The creative power of mind is that dynamic of mind which is always producing new experiences. That potential to think, imagine, perceive - all of this is called the creative power. And that's innate, that's the nature of every mind, it is inborn, you are born with that. And the experiences arising from that creative play are wholesome, unwholesome or neutral. So some are opening us up and some are closing us and the third kind is neither nor.

And then bring these into the realm of equal taste. This is the equal taste of emptiness, of knowing the ungraspable nature. Taste means feel into every experience, whatever kind it is, feel how ungraspable it is, that there is no solidity, that it is dynamic, changing. They are all equal in that.

The way to do that is first not reject, not to deny those experiences. Yes, these experiences are there. However awful or beautiful they might be, they are simply there. Not affirming them means not to give them more reality than what they have, they are passing phenomena. They are appearing, they are not staying, they have no solidity, don't affirm them: It's so awful, it's so beautiful, like giving them more power. No need. Just see how it is. The way the Karmapa wants us to understand this is

to not deny the existence and not to affirm that existence. They are phenomena appearing of which you cannot say they are non-existent, because they appear, and you cannot say that they exist, because they disappear immediately.

The best thing we can do as meditators is to step out of that whole thinking “exist, does not exist”, just feeling how it is now, how do we stay in that? Don’t get into thinking about it. It would be a mistake to say to ourselves: ‘They have no existence, they are empty, don’t care’. This would be denying. Then it would be another mistake to say: ‘It is like this, it is really like this, I am like this..’ - this is like affirming. So looking into just how they are, this means looking into exactly the true nature of everything that arises. We really become interested in: Just how is it? And we begin to feel that incredible fluidity of experience, that nothing is stable for even a split second.

So we see directly that dynamic process nature of all experiences, we don’t need to search for any remedies, no need to look for remedies to deal better with reality. Knowing its nature is enough.

If you like having problems and if you have problems which are very dear to you, then please don’t apply this practice. A problem is an experience in mind, it is a chain of experiences in mind. When you look at the nature of those experiences and you see that they are ungraspable, there is nothing solid in them, then your problem has disappeared. If the sense of self gets into the way and you see that this is also an experience and, feeling the very nature of that, you see that the problem of self has disappeared. It is gone. The mind opens into that incredible luminosity which is the nature of mind itself, no matter what kinds of experiences arise. This is the ultimate remedy. This is how you really cure the illness of samsara.

*“By practicing undistractedly like this during the four daily activities, those manifestations are experienced nakedly as groundless and rootless, being ungraspable and nothing really existing. Once the self-knowing primordial awareness has become actualized, the delusion of dualistic grasping will dissolve by itself.”*

Whether lying, sitting, standing or walking, moving, we always practice that. And any combination of those postures is included. We can also say when brushing our teeth, when drinking our morning tea, when talking to someone, when working, when relaxing, when meeting our partner and so on, all the time. If we practise that all around the clock,

then we are a full-time practitioner. Some of you smile, but I want to encourage you: Go for it! It is within your reach. We can do that. You will lose your identity, be careful. That's not just clever talking. You will become much more at home in that open, luminous dimension of mind than in your normal ego-centred vision of the world. You will have to learn to live without problems. That's threatening. What can we talk about? We can always talk about the weather (remark of an English student: 'Then you will become an honorary English person.'). When we look inside, feel how it is and we find this incredible space, then the problem of being human is over. I really encourage you to go for that. If you remember that three times a day, then you have three great times in the day. If you remember it five times, you have five great moments in the day. You can try to look more and more often into the nature of the experience of just now.

When I started to practise this, I did it first when sitting and I would make sure that whenever I was sitting, I would look into the nature of my experience. This was the starting point. And the next step was that whenever I walked for a bit of a longer distance, like from my room to somewhere else, crossing the courtyard, going to the street and so on, a little bit of a longer distance, so that in the movement I would have time to look. I don't remember all the stages. But I remember one very clearly: I would look at the nature of my mind when other people were talking. I didn't have to talk. We were sitting, and I would use the time when I don't have to talk to quickly look at the nature of the experience.

And then of course there are encounters, like for example with your partner, when you can really make it a point to both look. When you have a partner who shares that with you, then you can both look at the same time. That makes it easy.

Later on, of course, it was my practice to look into the nature of the experience while I was talking, while I was teaching. I remember this was one of the strongest practices as I began teaching when I was about thirty-three years old. Teaching is a wonderful practice ground because it is not interactive in the normal way. So you are not interrupted, you can actually tune in to your meditation as you are teaching and you can maintain that while talking about the dharma.

The most difficult is quick interaction. But there is a way. If you begin to touch that in your meditation, then do not hesitate to integrate it in your activities. The simple ones first and then the more complex later on.

We do not have to do anything else to dissolve dualistic grasping, clinging to subject and object. Dualistic grasping does not exist. It has no real existence. We don't have to take care of it as if it were something we would have to take out or dissolve or cut up or something. No, it is forces that are active, creating this illusion of self and others and when there is timeless awareness, these forces are simply not active. We don't have to deal with them.

*“Avalokiteshvara:*

*Whatever arises is the innate state. Whoever is mindful and leaves whatever arises, as it is, in the state of emptiness, is a king of yogis no doubt about it.”*

The innate state is that which was just mentioned above: That which is experienced nakedly as groundless and rootless, being ungraspable, nothing really existing. It is this innate, dynamic, ungraspable vast dimension of mind.

Question: Energy densifying into objects?

Answer: I also experience everything as energy, but this idea of energy 'densifying into objects' is conceptual interpretation. Go into the experience of what you call object and you will see that it is just as vast as the space right next to the object. Here, you have to investigate more to really see that all of that is energy and at the same time is completely vast, spacious. There is a need for more investigation. Too much conceptual interpretation has come in.

So Avalokiteshvara's instruction is here: 'Leave whatever arises in the state of emptiness.' That means: As it is, without solidification, without clinging to a solid reality.

*“Jnanadakini:*

*Once you have found this self-knowing primordial awareness, you are a blazing torch in an age of darkness. You totally defeat the karmic delusion. You are like a person who has woken up from sleep.”*

What is the karmic delusion? The principle one is to separate subject and object. It is the patterns in your mind to interpret the things your way. And with the belief that this is so, that this is the reality.

So on the basis of a subject-object split, one interprets the other world as such with one's own karmic habitual tendencies including a certain view of what the self is. All of that together, is my world in which I believe.

You are "like a person who has woken up from sleep" is the old meaning of bodhi, you are awakened, this is why the Buddha chose this word, talking about himself as an awakened one. He wanted to say: I have woken up from my sleep of ignorance. That title of "Buddha" didn't exist before.

There is also this term "self-knowing timeless awareness". We don't have to do anything for that awareness to know, it knows by itself, out of itself.

*"The incomparable Dagpo Rinpoche (Gampopa):  
Thoughts are the dharmakaya. There is nothing to alter with remedies.  
Awareness is a state of clarity."*

These are very strong statements. In the history of teachings, to say that our dualistic thinking is actually the complete awareness of a buddha, which is called the dharmakaya. It is like saying that the main dynamic of samsara, the root of samsara, that's Buddhahood. That's strong. These thoughts which put your face into wrinkles and create all the problems of the world, the desire, the fear, the anger, all these dualistic thoughts, mind movements, me, "I", what shall I do, that is dharmakaya, the body of truth? This is not said so clearly in other traditions. This is a strong statement: The confusion, the confused thinking, actually has the same nature of mind as all the wonderful dharma awareness.

It is important to get the message that thoughts don't have the dharmakaya when we become aware of them. They are of the nature of the dharmakaya even before we become aware of them. We just understand, we realise, we see their true nature, but that's their nature, it has always been like that.

All our self-importance, all this drama of karmic delusion has always been of that nature of not having any substance, of being process,

changing, being the expression of the luminous clarity of mind. It has always been groundless, rootless, ungraspable. You know, all these many words one can use to describe that. When we are awake to how it is, then we are not caught by the dream of karmic delusion anymore.

Question: What about the six realms?

Answer: They are not a description of an objective reality. They don't have an existence apart from the beings that produce that karmic illusion of living in them. So if these beings become liberated, when the delusion is seen through, it is not as if empty houses are left over. The six realms are experienced in the mind of beings so that is why I call it subjective reality.

The human realm is experienced by human beings. Within that same outer structure, there is also the animal realm and realms that are invisible to us. They intermingle, but they all have a different perception of what is going on. So to put it clearly: When a person reaches enlightenment, that person's human realm is finished. In this way, this stream of mind leaves that perception of reality by shifting into another appreciation of reality.

Objective reality is when you think that there are objects existing by themselves, which no-one knows anything about. In my understanding, objective reality is a complete illusion. This would be like pretending there is a human realm, a hungry ghost realm even without any humans or hungry ghosts experiencing it which is absurd.

*“Maitreya:*

*In this there is nothing to remove, and not the least to establish. Look truly into what truly is. If you see the truth, you are liberated.*

*Gyalwa Gotsangpa:*

*When thoughts arise, do not consider them to be a fault. Knowing them to be empty, leave them as they are. Then the thoughts will be experienced as dharmakaya.”*

This is the key for us. We leave (mental movements) as they are, not getting involved with them, not solidifying, just experiencing them as they are. Then we see.



Question: How can I do this with tension?

Answer: So you feel tension, and probably there is some wanting or not wanting. These create tension. Test out what happens, if you can relax that wanting or not wanting. If that works for you, you can see it with your own experience, you don't have to believe any more.

*"This has been explained abundantly. Having fostered such an understanding through this pointing-out instruction, the practice will become easy. Previously you did not know how to meditate on non-conceptuality, now you can use thoughts in your meditation. Until now the thoughts were obscuring themselves. Like eyes which cannot see themselves, you did not see their transparency. Now that the thoughts have become transparent and you see their true nature, you are making thoughts the base of your meditation. Recognizing all arising thoughts and leaving them in their luminous and empty nature by remaining uncontrived and free from hope and fear, they dissolve by themselves. Thus you understand that this luminous and empty freedom from conceptualization itself is the true nature of thoughts."*

These thoughts, these mind movements which you thought before to be so complicated and complex and only producing problems, actually, by nature they have no complication whatsoever! Out of themselves, they create no problems. They are like drawings in the sky, disappearing immediately.

Let's meditate a little bit like that.

If you need a second breakfast, eat your thoughts. That's really good food: Simple, refreshing, luminous, no need to digest. And it is the best recycling we can do. They are produced by karmic tendencies and help us to develop buddha awareness.

(Bell)

The instructions about taking every movement of mind as a support for our practice cannot get more essential than that. When we realise, how profound and simple this is, we feel quite silly. We feel a little bit ashamed of all the cinema we have been creating up to now. So we have to get through that as well. That's part of the cinema; to feel silly, so don't take it personally. I know it does not help to be told: 'Don't take it personally', for as long as we are inside the identification with it, It is not a good joke. But it is all about that. So actually, this advice: 'Don't

take it personally, is the key advice that unlocks the practice. Normally, every sense impression, every little thought is taken personally. “I” and what I experience, “I” and my body, “I” and my thoughts, “I” and my emotions and so on. To take everything that arises just as it is, wholesome, unwholesome or neutral, it doesn’t matter. Just to look how it is self-liberating, that’s the key.

As we begin applying this, we will make these experiences that I will start with now:

## LESSON 64 CONTINUED: THREE KINDS OF EXPERIENCES

G 2017 (15, second part)

We will see that there are more happy moments and blissful moments, we will see that mind becomes clearer at times and we will have moments of less involvement in thinking; non-conceptuality.

*“There are three kinds of meditative experiences: Bliss, clarity, and non-conceptuality.”*

### a) Joy

The Tibetan word for bliss (tib. bde-ba) covers the whole range from feeling something agreeable to great bliss. I personally prefer the word joy because it makes it a little less extraordinary.

*“The bodily bliss is mixed with afflictions in the beginning. Later on the whole body is filled with bliss, which is free from afflictions. And finally there appears a complete bliss, not influenced by outer heat or cold.”*

In the beginning, physical well-being will create clinging, that’s the affliction here, desire. Later on, as we learn not to identify, the whole body will be filled with bliss, with joy, and this experience will be free from afflictions. No more clinging. And later there appears a complete well-being not influenced by outer heat or cold.

This goes a very long way. The physical energies, the prana, the subtle energy circulating in the body becomes so harmonious that even great heat or great cold do not affect negatively that harmonious flow.

*“Mental bliss means joy, being content, being free from any kind of mental strain, a very clear, pure joy in the mind, a pure ungraspable joy. One may think, “I have*

*absolutely no more afflictions, now I am a spiritually advanced person" and laughs without reason. Many wild thoughts may arise, such as, "Through the blessing of the teacher, there is no happier person than me, I renounce all worldly activities they are completely useless, the Dharma is the only thing to do:' One feels like dancing and uttering meaningless sounds."*

We can become a little bit drunk on that happiness and you get on the nerves on the others around. They just wait for you to calm down a little bit.

*"Sometimes one does not feel like meditating or doing anything and thinks that one cannot meditate at all. One feels so lost, that everything seems meaningless, and thinks"*

Now we have crossed the top point, we have lost our practice, we got involved with clinging to the joy and then one feels so lost. "What am I doing in retreat, what's going on here?" And then one becomes very critical of oneself:

*"The mind poisons have apparently become even stronger. The mind is either agitated or drowsy, nothing else. I would like to think about nothing anymore. Now I cannot even meditate anymore."*

So this is part of the experience: very elated, euphoria; then going down into depressed states of mind. and taking both of them for real.

The message here is: Yes, you meditate, and you should know that there will be ups and downs in your joy, in how joyful you feel. Normally, as you relax, the mind opens and joy appears and because the clinging is not dissolved, because the tendency to cling is still so strong, then we will also experience the contrary, the rebound of that clinging.

So you understand: Joy in body, joy in mind means well-being and can go all the way to ecstasy, the whole scale. But for a Buddha, it is not ecstasy in the body. It is complete harmony. Harmony in body and mind. there is no clinging, no impulse that makes us sing and dance around and laugh in joy. A Buddha can be very serious also, there is no need to always laugh and smile.

b) Clarity

*“ THE EXPERIENCE OF CLARITY. As a sign that the mind is concentrated there appear in the clarity aspect of the five sense doors certain experiences: visual objects like smoke, fireflies, mirages, candle flames, moon light, sun light, fire light or light drops, light spheres and rainbows. Furthermore it can happen that one is able to see with closed eyes, or one perceives different beings, forms, sounds, smells, tastes and bodily sensations.”*

Concentrated actually means posed, collected or absorbed.

Visually, there might be so many experiences that can arise. You know, they come and go. Usually, they don't even repeat themselves. There are lots of light experiences that will occur. Since most of us are very visual people, the majority of experiences will arise in the visual field.

But of course, the same goes also for the other sensory fields. We might be completely convinced that we hear music or that we hear singing. We are completely convinced that sounds are there. I was opening the window of my retreat - there was nothing there. It is just when the subtle energies change, these experiences arise.

The same for smell, taste and physical sensations, in all those areas you can experience so much, the whole variety of possible sensations can manifest.

But there are also other forms of clarity, belonging to the clairvoyant realm. It can happen that we are able to see with closed eyes. Or one can see various beings that are normally not visible to the eyes. Like dwarfs and beings of nature like beings in the trees and so on. we might suddenly see scenes of people or other things far away, happening just now, and you can verify: Yes, it was happening like that.

It can happen that you hear conversations which take place like one hundred meters away or more, you can hear what is being said, back and forth, the whole dialogue.

*“In the clarity aspect of mind all kinds of thoughts of rejecting and remedying arise”*

Basically, the mental activity is already an expression of the clarity of mind, our capacity to experience is the clarity of mind. So within that natural clarity, the clarity then gains in precision. It becomes more lucid, sharp, less distracted. one of the first clarity aspects is that you can think better than you have ever been able to think before.

In my case, for example, in my second ten-day-retreat as a student, I had just moved to a new place outside of Freiburg and I needed to build a kitchen. All from rough wood with wonderful thick wood and so on, all by hand. Now in retreat, I designed without ever taking a pencil the whole kitchen with every screw, with everything. I was completely distracted, but this clarity of thinking was such that the whole plan evolved inside, of course I didn't spend the whole retreat on it, but when I got home, I just had to do it. You know, it becomes clear and continuous, you feel it all, it will be like this and like that.

Other people will go on philosophising about some subject. If they can talk, they will try to explain the world to the other retreatants because everything becomes like perfectly clear. You can follow chains of thought without anything else coming in. That's the clarity of thinking, it is a great capacity for coherent logical thinking which is the first sign of that category.

Some retreatants have written whole articles which they were going to publish in retreat just by thinking about it. They didn't pick up a pencil. The memory function is also so active, you don't forget what you were thinking before. This is part of the clarity of mind.

And then, as you continue, this capacity shifts to the dharma and you will begin having very clear thoughts about how to deal with certain situations, how to remedy, how to reject certain mind poisons, you will go through all the explanations, you can remember them very well and you are deeply engaged with that dharma thinking. That's what is meant here when it says: All kinds of thoughts of rejecting and remedying arise. These are dharma thoughts.

*“And although the awareness is extremely active, one is aware that it is in accordance with interdependence.”*

One sees the impulses that lead to this kind of thinking, the connections and so on. So clarity begins to involve sensitivity. One becomes much more receptive and sensitive and clear even about the smaller, pre-conscious movements. They become conscious. All the small thoughts. One begins to become more and more subtle and this is also an aspect of clarity.

All the senses become more acute. This is part of what we have seen in the beginning here of the explanation about that experience of clarity, that you not only begin to see and feel things that are not there, but what

is actually there; what is actually happening, one begins to experience with an incredible sensitivity, subtle differences in feeling are distinguished and everything becomes very nuanced. The clinging that appears in those experiences is that one discovers mind to be an incredible tool. One begins to love mind and the capacity to perceive, to investigate, to think, all these abilities begin to be incredible tools to learn more about the world, about reality.

But it is not only the active mind which becomes clearer, the calm mind also becomes much clearer. One is able to perceive mind just as it is in between the thoughts. This is part of clarity. This is the explanation for the next sentence:

*“The consciousness is transparent, radiating and clear, without drowsiness and dullness,”*

That’s especially strong at night. Then the clarity experiences are such that one feels that the mind resting, not thinking about something, is completely bright and not sleepy at all. This is the pre-sign before the actual clear light experience arises.

Because the mind is so luminous and bright and because of that excellent memory and that excellent analysis, the capacity of thinking and so on

*“and one thinks that one understands all phenomena and similar things.”*

One completely overestimates one’s own capacity. But so incredibly (laughing)!

Question: What happens when you cling to that?

Answer: When you cling to that it is not that it disappears. It just goes in this agitated direction. You will engage yourself in doing things. This is when people lose themselves in projects. And then they lose their capacity in their activity. In retreat, they have this idea of writing a book and the process of writing, they’ll lose that clarity and don’t continue meditating.

This clarity is pretty stable. it is not as fluctuating as the joy. It is not the same.

But yes, there are ups and downs. For example, a normal experience of clarity would be: 'Ah, I see so clearly now how each thought arises, small thoughts and so on'. And then, in the next meditation session or a day later: 'I don't see anything anymore'. It becomes hazy, vague, it becomes all one big soup.

Part of the clarity is to be able to visualise in great detail. You can do all the visualisations you like. You can see the hundred syllables of the hundred syllable mantra of Vajrasattva in Tibetan writing, the whole thing, and then the next day maybe not. Of course there are fluctuations, yes.

### c) Non-conceptuality

*“THE EXPERIENCE OF NONCONCEPTUALITY. At first the mind is concentrated by directing it towards an object. Then the gross conceptual thoughts stop and the mind remains where it is directed to. Finally there comes the feeling that all conceptual formations have calmed down.”*

So the wild activity of the mind has stopped and a sort of a natural concentration, natural settling of the mind occurs. If you continue with these kinds of shamatha practices, then there is the feeling that all these kinds of conceptual formations have calmed down, there is no more conceptual thinking. This is what we would call no thoughts, no thinking. In that experience, single thoughts may arise, but there is no chain, no train of thoughts developing.

Non-conceptuality should not be understood as having no thoughts, but as not to be engaged in thinking, continued thinking. Single thoughts are part of non-conceptuality.

In the family of the experiences of the non-conceptual kind (tib. mi-rtog-pa), there is a subgroup called the “stong-nyams”, the experiences of emptiness. They happen when this no-thinking opens up and with that openness that one is discovering at this point, one gets feelings of nothing-whatever, everything empty, nothing there, empty.

Of course they go together with experiences of clarity because they often arise together. And you will have experiences of nothing is substantial, everything becomes transparent and being a nobody. But there is always a little bit of conceptualisation going along with it. In this way one can have very strong, but dualistic experiences of the

insubstantiality of the world, including oneself. And one is very convinced, this becomes absolutely clear. But it is not realisation yet. There is always someone fascinated with the discovery. Or let's say someone who makes the discovery.

And it is this group of experiences of empty non-conceptuality which is usually mistaken as realisation when they appear. So the practitioner thinks that this is realisation now: "I've got it!"

So this is why it is really necessary to have a teacher who can differentiate between the two.

A few times I have had students come to me where teachers had acknowledged such strong nyams to be true realisation. Much to the disadvantage of the students who build their whole dharma practice and dharma life, even becoming a teacher themselves, on these experiences which were not yet the true understanding of the dharma.

d) Concerning all three experiences

*"If these experiences lead to craving, attachment and pride, realization is lost because of the experiences."*

Then one can of course become attached to these experiences and they might lead to the wish to repeat them again and again, this is called craving and attachment, and it can lead to the pride of experiencing them. Although this could be an excellent basis, an excellent ground for realisation, because of this identification and clinging, realisation then becomes impossible or is lost.

Joy, clarity and non-conceptuality are also part of mahamudra and realisation. They are an expression of the nature of mind. You will have that in the mahamudra as well. But in a pure form, without the clinging, without the identification. But you only keep the essential features of well-being, harmonious prana flow, clarity, precision and non-involvement in thinking. Only those basic features continue, not the seeing halos, rainbows, hearing sounds and so on. These are not part of the mahamudra realisation. They stop. Once you enter nondual realisation, all these nyams, these transient experiences stop, they don't come back, they are finished. It is just a purification process as you continue on your path.



Gendun Rinpoche explained it to us like this: These nyams occur when there are blockages in the prana flow, the flow of the subtle energy in our body. And through our practice of relaxation, we open more, but the prana runs into a blockage. Like a river which runs against a dam. For example, in our inner ears. And as there is this pressure in the subtle energy channels, these sounds will appear. And they will continue for as long as the blockage is still there. When the blockage opens, the experience goes away. And it is the same with other blockages, the visual sense is very much affected. All over the body, for as long as the prana is trying to move through a knot in the channel, then the experience will continue. And as it opens, there is a new harmonious equilibrium which installs itself.

This is the explanation given in the Six Yogas or Six Dharmas of Naropa.

These experiences must arise and it is fine if they arise. It is OK. We know: OK, another blockage stimulated, let's find a way of relaxing through that and not identifying is the best way.

Question: I am not clear what experiences are of a transient kind and what stays.

Answer: Misperceptions disappear. Seeing what is not there, hearing what is not there, feeling in the body what's not there and so on, all of that disappears. However, the sensitivity remains.

The clairvoyant faculties disappear for longer than one would like. We would like them to reappear quicker. But actually they are stronger in the shamatha phase when there are still these experiences. And then in mahamudra they come back slowly, slowly and when they come back they are stable. That's the difference.

And one realizes that one has given a lot of energy to those experiences, actually because it is like new discoveries in life. This discovery of well-being in the body is so fascinating, the discovery of clarity, the discovery of non-conceptuality. So a lot of our attention, our energy, has gone into that, whereas in mahamudra one doesn't care anymore. There is not this personal involvement in having such experiences, this is gone. If one has thoughts or no thoughts, it is not a problem. One sees through. So the non-conceptuality is rarely of the kind where one would have no thinking for long stretches, because one is not subconsciously blocking the thoughts.

In those experiences of clarity, there is so much precision and fascination with one's own clarity that without noticing it, a lot of energy goes into exploring and using that. And when one has no self-interest in that, one does actually does not put in that much energy. You can feel that the mind has become a little bit less clear and precise, a little bit hazy. And one has to go through those phases entering into mahamudra, because clinging to that previous clarity obstructs the natural, much more fluid clarity of mind as it is without effort. So as one enters mahamudra and this much more relaxed practice, one feels usually that one has lost some of the capacity of the shamatha phase before. One is uncertain: Hey, come on, am I more distracted now than I was before, there is less clarity. One cannot go back to controlling because the path is one of letting go of control. So one goes into a more fluctuating experience of life. And then gradually the natural qualities show more again.

When I remember my own experiences of clarity, for example, first of all I don't have them anymore, they have stopped. But if I wanted to get going in that direction, I wouldn't have sufficient motivation. Only compassion would be sufficiently strong to motivate me to use these capacities to such an extent as in those days where it was with complete self-involvement, exciting discoveries of the capacities of mind and so on. It would be far too much effort for me now if it wasn't for a good reason. So it changes. The basic capacities are still there, but you would use them only if it is really needed, not just because of some pride to prove to yourself your capacities and so on.

*"Therefore one has to give up desire for and clinging to them. It is said: 'On a summer meadow all sorts of plants grow. In the experience of a yogi all sorts of experiences appear.' As experiences are unpredictable, it is unreasonable to cling to them. As it is said: 'You have to let go of precisely what you cling to.'"*

Gendun Rinpoche used this quote to say: You see, there are so many flowers appearing in summer, it is completely natural. When you meditate, it is completely natural that nyams, these experiences, appear. Don't make a fuss about it.

Usually they don't repeat themselves. I don't know if there is an exception, but those nyams like, for example, the sounds you hear or visions you have, they never come back. They are a sign of the blockages, when the prana goes through, they finish. And if it doesn't

block in the same place again, they don't come back. They are done with. You go through and to the next and to the next.

(Dedication)

## LESSON 38 CONTINUED: DIFFICULTIES IN THE PRACTICE

G 2017 (16, first part)

### F. Iron hook meditation

*“Some practitioners do not notice when the thoughts are moving. They think that their mind is undistracted. After a while they think, “Now there have apparently been some conceptual movements which I have not noticed, this is not good.” They claim that they rest in meditation by pursuing and catching those previous thoughts”.*

You sit very relaxed and open, mind seems clear. But after a while we realise: “Oh, but what was that thinking?” And then we try to find out: “What have I been thinking about?”

So we could call this double distraction, right? There is first this thought that has gone unnoticed. we just have a kind of faint idea: there was something. And then we make that the object of our meditation.

So this trying to catch previous thoughts, which have already passed is useless. They were so unimportant that we didn't even wake up while thinking them. And they will not become more important by thinking them a second time with full consciousness.

This is not only for thoughts that are from sometime in the past. It is actually the moment we become aware, we don't even have to try to remember the half thought we just had. We don't even have to finish the thought we just had. No need.

When we meditate, this is a special time of training. We are training to let go of this involvement with conceptual thinking for that time. We need the conceptual thinking in our life, for projects and so on, but now we train to have no involvement with conceptual thinking.

When I learnt with this, it was one thing to stop catching the past thoughts, to go back and try to rescue it from oblivion, to not forget it. Retrieving it before it is completely forgotten. No need to catch these fishes that are swimming away.

And then that same attitude of not getting interested in what is already gone applies to the immediate thought that is there, as I become aware of the thinking. I don't have to finish it. Do you know this in your own mind? I had the feeling of having to think the thought properly right to the end before I could let go of it.

It is really not necessary. The wonderful thing is: Now I have become mindful again, I have become aware - just leave everything as it is. Nothing to do. Not finishing thoughts, no bringing back thoughts that I haven't been mindful of. Now is the present moment and that's fine, the present awareness is back.

*"They are told: 'The catcher is not a separate entity, the catcher is also a thought. Recognize this iron hook meditation to be a double delusion.'"*

So I called it a double distraction because we were distracted when thinking, we didn't even notice, and now we distract ourselves by trying to catching it.

But now the Karmapa calls it a double delusion which is about the subject and the object. He seems to be referring to the motivation behind this attempt to catch the past thought. The motivation we could say is like this: 'I want to know what I am thinking. So who needs to know? Who wants to know?' That's the delusion of a self, the "I", the catcher truly existing. So not only is the thought not an entity that it would be necessary to catch; it is a process, it is a 'thinking', it is happening due to forces coming together. That so-called object is not an entity and the so-called subject, the one catching is not an entity. So there is double delusion in that iron hook meditation.

You notice that we are receiving answers from the Karmapa that are very often on this insight level because we are already quite far into the book. So he is giving advice for meditators who can use their insight to stop these processes. He is not giving them shamatha advice, but through the insight of seeing the nature, (e.g.) the ungraspable nature of the self, stopping trying to catch a thought and seeing that what one is trying to catch also has no substance, no relevance and so on, then stop catching that.

Question: Does a thought stop when we become aware of it?

Answer: Usually it stops, but we can pick it up again.

Question: Are the thought and the awareness the same?

Answer: There is a different awareness now. There is an awareness which at that moment: 'Oh, I have been thinking. This the contents of this awareness.' So there is a coming to the senses of: 'Ah!' And that's already for a short moment, an interruption of the thought chain. We can go with that, we can stay with that, no need to do anything else. - The thought is also the contents of awareness, but it is a form of consciousness or awareness that has not been accompanied by mindfulness. We were not present in it. It was happening like in a dream, we were not fully present. - It is maybe not so helpful to think whether it is the same awareness or the same mind because within what we call mind, are all the capacities of consciousness and awareness. There is the capacity to think, to be half aware or even not aware, subconscious, unconscious movements in mind. That's possible, that's one of the capacities, and then there is the capacity of a very precise awareness of knowing what is going on. These are different capacities of the same mind. I wouldn't say that it is one or the other awareness.

I'll describe the process to you: Most thinking, as it happens, does not have our full awareness with it. It happens semi-consciously. When we become conscious of it, it stops. When we become very conscious, then we usually only think very useful things. Things we really want to think. And that's an interesting phenomenon. When we begin to use that mindfulness-awareness of the contents of what we are thinking, we think much less. There is all this semi-conscious gossip, or semi-conscious emotional thinking, all that first comes to a stop and then we continue with everything that that can stand full presence of mind. It is an interesting phenomenon. It reduces the amount of thinking by maybe nine-tenths.

There are processes going on and light going into those processes. Many processes need the darkness of semi-consciousness in order to continue. And when the full light comes in, there is a new dimension, a new understanding, they re-organise themselves.

I will say it again: I think it is a new awareness. It is a new awareness in mind with that new mindfulness arising. The conditions, the forces leading to that subconscious thinking, the subconscious mental movements, need the condition of being not fully conscious in order to continue. When full awareness comes in, that means fully being conscious of it, the situation changes dramatically. The conditions for

these processes to continue in the same way are not present anymore. They cannot continue in the same way because a very strong new force has entered into these movements in mind.

For the type of practitioner here who would be tempted to know in retrospect what he or she has been thinking, then the advice is: Look at the one who tries to know. Look at the catcher. There is not even a subject trying to know, which has true existence.

Different advice could be: While you are trying to catch the past, the present is not fully experienced by you. You don't notice what is now. You could actually just be with awareness of now and there is nothing else to do. That is the standard answer of most vipassana teachers, for example. The moment you become mindful again, stay with that.

## G. Clay Pigeon Shooting

*“Some practitioners, when they notice the conceptual movements, think that they are empty and try to get rid of them by shouting some phat. This is even worse. They should be told: “The best thing is to just look at the mind, that thinks, I have been absent, the moment you notice it.”*

The example of shouting the PHET is referring to a misuse of the Dzogchen teachings. This PHET in the Dzogchen is meant to open the mind to the ungraspable dimension of being. You open the mind and you cut through the clinging. So with the energy of that sound you open up into a dimension of appearance free from subject and object.

This is a wonderful practice, but here it has been transformed into a practice of shooting down thoughts, like clay pigeon shooting. What happens here is that thoughts are noticed and then just the moment after, you think: Oh, that's empty! So that's a commentary thought, it is not an understanding of how it is: That thought is empty: PHET!

But there is a big misunderstanding. The misunderstanding is that the thought, the thinking process, needs a “Phet” in order to finish it off. We try to get rid of the thought which means actually we are thinking that it exists and that it needs to be shot. If we really understood how it is, we would know that this already empty, there is no need to do anything about it. This is self-liberating, no need to do anything to get rid of it. So that's how to correct the basic mistake.

But again, in his advice, the Karmapa goes a little deeper because he says:

“The best thing is just look at the mind that thinks: I have been absent.”

So there was thinking: ‘oh, I have been absent, there is thinking’. So look at that moment now, that movement: ‘I have been absent’. See the nature of that, because that’s what is happening now. In that: ‘oh, I have been absent; oh, there is a thought; oh, there is great awareness’. We could be, by looking at that, be immediately back into full awareness. The thinking that was going on before has already finished with the “oh”. There is no more, this is what is happening now, no need to shoot anything. “Oh” - and we can come back.

But that needs a high level of training, a high level of presence to be able to use that and not to follow anything else. Just be with that awakening to how it is there. Therefore there is more advice.

“If you cannot do that.”

If you cannot immediately use that high energy of becoming aware, then do not take care of these thoughts,

*“do not pursue regretfully past thoughts. As soon as you become mindful remain completely relaxed. Then the thoughts will dissolve like knots being untied.”*

Just relax. The “oh” produces a gap in the thinking process. In that gap you can relax. Of course, when I say “oh”, I don’t want everyone to do “oh”. It is just that moment when you become aware. And that produces the gap. There is no sound, it is just the movement in mind of becoming aware. And then you will have the experience that there is nothing to be dissolved. Thoughts, the thinking has already dissolved. If you stay aware, you will see that all thoughts, even thoughts that stay within the awareness, all dissolve by themselves.

If our awareness is too tense, too focused, no thoughts will appear. What we call awareness then is like a cat sitting in front of a mouse hole. The mice will not show their head.

But with a relaxed awareness, you will see the arising of this and that. Firstly it is very easy to see the arising of various sensations in the five outer senses and then, as your mind begins to trust the situation, the sixth sense also produces thoughts, some karmic images, memories,

things will pop up. Your awareness is there, very relaxed, but present enough so that no thought chains form.

Question: What is the difference between awareness and attention?

Answer: Attention I use in this sense of being mindful of something. So I strictly use that in a dualistic sense. And awareness I use as well for being mindful of how it is; being aware in a dualistic sense, and it covers the whole spectrum until it goes into a nondual awareness.

## H. Excessive Relaxation

*“Some practitioners, when they interrupt their practice of undistractedness and relax, will have wild mental activity like fish waiting in the water which is called not noticing the little thief of the thoughts. The mistake here is too much relaxation. They should be told: “It is important to tighten your awareness.”*

Actually, they should keep a little bit more presence as they relax and not be so concentrated as they practise in formal meditation so that they don't suppress so strongly.

Let's take the example of a very focused meditation on breathing; breathing in, breathing out, very focused. During all of that time there are no thoughts appearing. And the moment we say: 'It is OK, I have done my one hundred breathing cycles, now I relax': Puh, there are lots of thoughts and also emotions which appear.

So the advice here is for the break: During the break keep some awareness so that you begin noticing all that activity in your mind which is important to know about . You begin to work with thoughts and emotions. So keep some mindfulness, keep some presence of mind here.

It is like we would experience the after-effects of too much concentration, too much effort in the practice and then the after-effect of relaxation is - puh, a lot of activity which was previously suppressed comes up.

When our practice is quite balanced so when we do some concentrative practices of being mindful with in-breath, out-breath or with visualisations, if we have found a good way of doing that, then when we



take the break, we experience that even in the break the mind remains quite calm and it takes a minute or two before more thinking appears. We have this very beneficial effect of the after-practice.

This point and the next one belong together:

## I. Excessive Tightening

*“If, when exerting themselves in tightening their awareness, they get caught up in something, or their body and speech get tense they should be told: “It is important to alter this with relaxation.””*

Tightening means being a little bit more concentrated, more present.

The idea is clear: One needs to find the relaxed presence that allows us to see what is going on without being drawn into thought chains. How to find that out? Sometimes tightening a little bit, then relaxing more, until we find what’s just right for now.

In general, when I teach you and most other teachers do the same, we emphasize the relaxation a lot because we usually come from a background where in our work in our studies and so on, we are quite tense. But when you have learnt to relax, you will find that the time comes that you need focus, that you need to make some effort. You cannot only do it through relaxation. Only relaxation of the kind we usually know, leads to dullness and sleepiness, lack of precision. Thoughts proliferate and we don’t even notice it.

An intelligent person who really understands the dharma can continue with relaxation through dullness and through these proliferating thoughts, but one would have to relax with great mindfulness, one relaxes precisely the clinging that leads to the dullness and precisely the clinging that leads to the various thoughts. Relaxation is still good but it needs to be brought where it is needed, where the subconscious clinging produces the proliferation of thoughts or produces the dullness. So that is the right place to relax.

So we can relax everything, but we will not become mindless, we are not going to lack of awareness. That’s for sure. And since awareness is a natural quality of mind, we can always rely on that, it will always be there and we don’t need to use effort. We only need to be interested in being aware. It is different from effort. I suspect the wish or the interest to be

aware makes the difference between practitioners who progress quickly or slowly. If there is a high interest, a high wish to be aware, these practitioners will go into deep meditation very quickly.

Question: What did you mean by effort above?

Answer: We teach so much relaxation that the impression could arise that we go with relaxing, but that will not produce the results because it is not subtle enough. So there is the need for formal practice, there is the need to make some effort and continuing with the same exercise again and again to train. We are doing mind-training and, in the beginning, we have to go against strong habitual tendencies. And there has to be an effort counteracting those tendencies until we find a way to skilfully use the mind qualities to do the job. But in the beginning we don't know. There are many people who get the taste of the relaxation, but they forget that actually we need to train. We need to do it.

When you find out what the right effort is, then through effort we come into the non-effort. That's the path. The effort gets always less and less, and you see: 'I still need less effort'. That kind of effort was too much and that kind of effort was too little. There is a basic interest, that in the beginning you can call effort, that is needed. We stay on the ball, staying in touch with the essential points of practice.

It is like the flight of the eagle as an example for the mahamudra practice. The eagle is one of the strongest birds that exist. And the eagle grew up and learned how to fly. Then, when you see the eagle flying, you often see just little adjustments at the tips of the wings, sometimes one flap of the wing. It looks effortless, but behind that there is such a precise knowing about just what is needed, the minimum effort to glide through the sky. That's comparable to what you reach when you become skilled in meditation. You have learned, you have become strong, you are very aware, you know the winds of the karma, the winds of the movements in mind and you know the little adjustments which are necessary in order to stay aware.

Question: I had learnt to stay with an object until it is no longer needed.

Answer: Here the effort goes further. Here this subtle effort I am talking about is even the effort to remember to look at the nature of what's happening again and again. Or the effort to remember bodhicitta. There

is a little voluntary directing of the mind. This volition, which is there, this is the effort that is still needed for quite a long time on the path before we can let it go and become completely natural, it is quite a journey.

## Meditation

Play with your inner adjustment to find out what is the minimum. How much can I relax without entering dullness?

If I am already dull, what is needed to be aware within that?

I will maintain this interest in being aware and relax all the rest.

Just enough effort to be aware.

(Bell)

Let's continue with that minimum effort. Just as much effort as needed.

We are not trying to produce a meditation, but we just discover how it is to be.

How is it when that awareness is not directed towards objects but is aware of itself?

(Bell)

## LESSON 76: DESCRIPTION OF THE PATH

G 2017 (16, second part)

This chapter is giving a description of the path.

*"Generally speaking, mahamudra does not depend on the arduous traversing of a gradual path. As Shang Rinpoche explains: "Mahamudra is one level. Fools deceive themselves by counting levels and paths."*

*Nevertheless, in order to guide students in their practice, it is not a contradiction to describe the progression on the spiritual path temporarily in accordance with the gradual development, even though, owing to the various capacities of beings,*

*there are many different manners to traverse the path, such as all at once, erratic, or gradual. Concerning the gradual progression through the four yogas, the frontiers between the different levels and the completion of the path, it is possible to relate each of the four yogas to the ground, the path and the fruit, if one differentiates them in a detailed way. Here they will be explained in relation to the path."*

An explanation following the perspective of the path describes more about what needs to be practised and what is practised.

The perspective of the ground would be to show how the buddha nature, the qualities of mind, gradually unfold.

And the perspective of the fruit would be to describe the developing capacities of the practitioner, the fruit, the result of the practice. Actually, the Karmapa will also include that in his description.

*"It is said in the teachings of the early Kagyu masters that experience and realization can be confounded easily. First concerning the experience of one-pointedness,"*

The first big step in mahamudra practice is to develop one-pointedness, the capacity to stay focused. This is shamatha practice. And almost everything happening there is in the realm of dualistic experience. Here and there, there might be tiny glimpses of insight. Usually it is all about experience.

Basically, the practice is about the lucid nature of our consciousness. That's what all the practice is about. That's why it says:

*"The lucid consciousness is the true nature. If there are fluctuations, it is still experience, which is unstable. If the fluctuations are small, it is already quite good. Generally speaking, the level of one-pointedness is about experience, not realization."*

But in shamatha practice, in the practice of mental calm abiding, there is always clinging involved. So there are fluctuations of more or less clinging. This is why we don't really become one with the lucid nature of mind. We begin to know it and it develops more and more. The deeper the shamatha, the more lucid the mind becomes.

*"Simplicity: understanding the unborn a little bit from within, thinking, "This must be what the teacher has been explaining," and recognizing one's mind, this*

*is experience. When the awareness clearly realizes itself to be not inherently existent, it is realization."*

Of course, in the practice of shamatha , the simplicity is already increasing. That specific simplicity we are talking about is the absence of complicating dualistic processes in mind, Skr. prapanca, tib. spros-pa. This complexity, these complications due to always getting involved with an observer or the feeling of "I" and my experience, this drops away.

Over the last few days you might have moments of great openness where you understood what I meant when I was talking about this simple, lucid awareness, but probably it was of the nature of: 'Oh, this is what he is talking about.' There was this comment and you recognise your own mind, but this is still experience, it doesn't leave you with complete certainty. When awareness really realises its own nature, there is no need for a comment and for it to be stable, it needs to have that certainty. When awareness realises its own nature, the illusion of a self does not appear again.

If it fluctuates; sometimes the awareness is stable and at other times there is a strong sense of self or even a conviction: 'Yes, I am', and then there is a conviction: 'No, it is like that,' this fluctuation is a lack of stability in the realisation.

From one-pointedness and simplicity we move into one taste where all phenomena, all experiences are experienced in that nondual awareness of being of the same taste. But be careful: The simple intellectual understanding,

*"One taste: to think, "My body, the outer appearances and my mind are all three not inherently existent," is experience."*

This is only experience. We have some intellectual glimpses of understanding and that's not what we are talking about with the realization of one taste.

*"To realize directly and without contrivance that all outer appearances appear separately like images in a mirror but are nevertheless one, this is realization."*

This means to realise without any effort, without artificiality, that appearances appear separately like images in a mirror, but are nevertheless one. And this experience of one taste of all phenomena

leads into the natural knowing of everything just as it is. Then begins the yoga of nonmeditation, that's the next one.

*"To think repeatedly, "There is no object of meditation and no meditator" is experience."*

Let's not be fooled by temporary feelings, experiences, thoughts of that kind: No-one meditating, no-one there, no meditator, no meditation. That's not the non-meditation we are talking about.

*"When the mind realizes without contrivance that there is no object of meditation and no meditator, it is realization. It is said that it is crucial not to confound experience and realization."*

It often happens that by the presence of a teacher or by reading a very inspiring book, all of that makes so much sense and we open up to that understanding that we are convinced: 'Yes, that's it.' Usually that's experience. Realisation happens silently. It comes in and it's there and our understanding has changed. There is usually not a big thing happening.

(Dedication)

DAY 7 (170706-0298-299)

G 2017 (17) Morning meditation: Tonglen

At the end of the prayers, we let the Buddha dissolve into us. And this we can do in a very simple way, just directly coming here, feeling everything. Or we take the time to take the blessing of the body, the physical dimension of the Buddha, the blessing of speech, the communicative blessing of the Buddha, and the blessing of mind as the mind dimension of the Buddha. This communication between the Buddha and ourselves is visualised as rays of light which are dissolved and come into our forehead, throat and heart. And afterwards, all the three lights come simultaneously and then the Buddha dissolves into light which enters into us and stays in us. And we can imagine that the Buddha stays in our heart, that the light stays in our heart or that even that takes the shape of a buddha appearing in our heart. All of that is quite simple because it is just like a sunrise and then all that light dissolving into us.

So, if you wish so, you can visualise an awakened being in front of us that embodies the blessing of all awakened ones. And all the prayers are like requests for blessing.

(Recitation)

Then all that light touches our three places, fills us completely with blessings of body, speech and mind, and finally all that light enters through the top of our head and enters into our heart and we can feel the presence of the Buddha in us.

And with that, we begin to breathe in and to breathe out consciously and we allow that buddha dimension to fill us even more with every in-breath and out-breath, compassionate acceptance of ourselves, loving support to ourselves.

And without doing any more than that, we first let our mind gather in that experience so that we become very stable and settled in that.

We let go of all forms of thinking that take us elsewhere and say to ourselves: OK, now I will practise some Tonglen.

Let's start the practice of Tonglen with ourselves. Either with ourselves as we are now or with ourselves in a situation that wasn't so brilliant, where we had emotions, where we got entangled and see if you want to position yourself in front or whether you will do the Tonglen, the exchange with the experience inside of yourself.

And then we begin to imagine ourselves or feeling ourselves as we were or as we are in that situation. How did I feel then, what was actually going on in myself? Breathing in, we feel exactly how it is or how it was to be in that situation. Breathing in compassionately with all our sensitivity, we go deep into feeling that situation. What was actually going on? And for those who work with the present situation you transform this into: What is really going on now? What kind of fears and needs, hopes can I feel in that situation? And all of that we allow to enter into our heart to be completely felt and received without any clinging and identification. Compassion and wisdom joining with the in-breath opening up.

And as we begin to really feel, we send from our heart loving support to that other self, to the one who experienced that situation.

Breathing in with compassion, knowing it in its very nature of being ungraspable and offering our help, our support with love. This love you can imagine as an encouraging flow of light towards yourself in that situation or we can imagine that there is a loving presence. The light takes a shape and is secretly present in that situation and helps us to contact our deepest resources. And we see how thanks to that beneficial influence we felt differently, we acted and spoke differently.

And we continue breathing in all the obstacles, all the narrow or tight states of mind and sending that kind of support, those qualities that were really needed.

We continue deeply until we can really see ourselves being in our buddha potential in such a situation.

And probably there were others in the situation as well. And now, having taken good care of ourselves, we imagine that all others in the situation are also received by that compassion and touched by that love. And all of that can be done by simply breathing in with all of our sensitivity and receptivity, and breathing out with a heart of generosity and support.

We have to conclude this practice of Tonglen in some way. The best way would be to imagine that this exchange has become complete, that everyone finds their way deeply into their true self which is also called buddha nature.

And then we either let the visualisation dissolve, and as far as we are concerned, we might also imagine that we dissolve into light and into us. We come back to the place where it all started from.

We deeply feel that in our whole being we are integrated. We make a little mental note for the future: Whenever a similar situation arises, may we find a way of dealing with it more deeply, more openly.

And then there is nothing more to do. We settle into simply being just now.

(Bell)

Question: The self in front of me didn't want to experience the same situation again, so there was a resistance.



Answer: There is a little clinging to the reality of that visualisation. But of course, if we go into a difficult situation and it is a really heavy one, we have to be careful. So we don't go there, we don't want ourselves to be, what we call in psychotherapy, to be retraumatized.

What we could try is a little trick, coming also from psychotherapy: We stay here, we don't go there and we make the situation we work with very small. Very small, as if it was a small TV screen far away. So we don't get involved, but we can see. It is just big enough to be seen, it is just big enough to be aware of. That helps not to get identified. And we could work with that. But if that is also too much, just leave it and work with the situation but with someone at your side, if you want to work with that situation.

And then there is a second answer which would be just as good and may be the first thing to do: Work with the one now who is afraid. No more. Don't think of the situation, just take care of the one who is now in trouble.

## LESSON 38 CONTINUED: DIFFICULTIES IN THE PRACTICE AND ENHANCEMENT

G 2017 (18, first part)

### J. Changing meditation objects

*"Some practitioners, when they remember any place or person in their thoughts, feel that their mind has arrived there. When they look at it without contrivance thinking, "Here is my object of meditation" it vanishes. When at that moment a noise or a bodily sensation arises, their mind goes there. Then a meaningless thought suddenly arises and they think, "I just stay with this as my meditation object." Concerning all of this they are told: "The best is to look directly at whatever comes to your mind, in this way it will be self-liberated."*

What is described here is not a meditation. It is just being dragged along by sensations. How would it be if each of these experiences were really taken as a meditation, then what would be different?

Student: Each time we can see that it is insubstantial.

LT: Yes, if we were to see each time that it is insubstantial, then our meditation wouldn't change. Then just the object that stimulates that awareness changes, but the meditation stays the same. Always on the nature of the experience.

When the Karmapa described in the first sentences: "When I think of a place or a person, my mind goes there", this is indicating a clinging, a complete involvement. So if we are looking at the nature of the experience, we are not getting involved in that way.

The way to look is in such a way that self-liberation occurs which produces this kind of gap. There is no more clinging, there is this openness. Then of course another experience arises and again we look at it's nature and we experience the opening of the ungraspable experience.

*"If that does not work,"*

If we are not precise enough, not present enough to make that work,

*"then make short sessions, relax again and again and stay loose."*

Then work simply on your deep relaxation, not following the object so much. Always relax and relax again, as soon as you feel a sense impression, relax.

So always look at the nature. Even if it is a dualistic looking, we look, we see that it is ungraspable, this non-solid process nature. All of this is about the nature of the experience, even if it is not yet completely unlocking deep inside, but it is already a good way in that direction. Sometimes it doesn't work and then we relax. Short sessions. Very easy.

## K. Monkey mind

*"The consciousness is like a monkey. If a monkey is locked up in an empty house, he will pop his head out of all the windows imitating people. Thoughts are like that. When the eyes see a form, the thoughts run after it repeating it. It is the same with sounds, smells, tastes and sensations, whatever is perceived, the thoughts run after it and repeat it."*

There is an after-image of what we have just thought, we repeat it. It is the same with sounds, the mind repeats the sound, comes back to it. and so on.

So imagine you had a nice encounter with someone and then you bring that back to mind, including how it felt physically, the smells. the tastes, all of that. This is how the monkey mind brings things back, constantly imitating what has already passed.

It is not exactly a very creative, productive way of using our mind. But we spend a good part of our time with that in our distractions. What kind of advice would you give to yourself?

Student: Leaning forward. Instead of leaning back into what's happened, a slight movement forward would help me to stay in the now, in the present.

LT: You are referring to a question you had in your retreat: "How can I be more fresh, how can I be more present, not preoccupied with the past?" Then I said: "Well, lean forward a little bit until you come to the brink of the present experience, into that area where your present experience is arising from always the now. Be always ready for the new, the new sense impression, the new, what is now appearing. Not a moment of hanging on to the past but: Now. Always ready for that." What you like to add something to that?

Student: It was extremely subtle, but observable. There was like a readiness for the next experience that really became vibrant.

LT: The inner attitude of the practitioner changes from digesting the past all the time, always being a little bit behind and just digesting previous impressions, to actually being ready for the next sense impression that life offers to us. It is like a football player who doesn't think about previous missed passes and so on, but must be ready for the next ball that is being played, always ready, always receptive. So this is the change of attitude.

Student: My problem is more about the future, so how do I step back to the present?

LT: When we lean forward into the future in the way of thinking about the future, we also miss the present moment. We are not feeling the present

moment. So when you work with that, you stop thinking about anything that hasn't arisen yet, you stop planning and projecting yourself into the future. And you would feel like someone facing upstream. You are like in a flowing river and you face upstream, always ready for the next experience. You don't imagine what the wave will do that is ten meters away from you, but you are with the experience of now, upstream.

Student: Threefold advice: The first advice would be: Come to this jumping quality. In order to jump, I have to be balanced. So the monkey is very alert, relaxed and open to everything. The second is how he is doing it: He is immediately there, he is always immediately everywhere. Because he is jumping, he is so light, he has no weight. And then: Where is this monkey? This would be nice to know because you cannot catch him, you cannot locate him because he is gone already.

LT: The monkey mind cannot be located, yes, actually no mind can. With this advice we begin changing towards becoming interested in the monkey, instead of being interested into what the monkey perceives. We become interested into what is happening in the process. And that's already the cure.

*"If you recognize this and stay directly with it, your mastery will quickly become perfected. For that, your awareness has to be as subtle, as if perceiving a moving hair tip."*

In order to get to know this monkey mind, your awareness has to be very subtle and also very quick. A moving hair tip is very subtle, very fine, always following the movement. So our awareness becomes just as quick as the monkey mind. And in whatever is appearing, wherever the attention is moving, that awareness of how the process is going on goes with it.

It can come to an experience of simultaneity of sensations arising, being attentive, being mindful of them and being aware of just how that mindfulness arises in the mind.

This is very much how my friend Fred von Allmen teaches Vipassana: He encourages the students to be more light, more quick, more subtle with their mindfulness until mindfulness reaches the speed of the sense impressions.

We don't run after, but we let it arise. And then the speed of mind is automatically like that. That's important because we might think that we have to speed up somewhere or make an extra effort. Actually, we relax that clinging to gross appearances and we become very subtle and receptive. The mind has that speed naturally because otherwise sensations couldn't arise.

But if we do not remedy to that monkey meditation and

*"But, saying that you cannot do that, you let yourself go without restraint for a long time, occasionally fabricating some meditation on some meditation object. This is called mentally fabricated meditation, holding remembering to be supreme. Most of present day's great meditators do that."*

It is talking about a misunderstanding of sati, translated as mindfulness, or awareness usually. It is said to be the one path of awakening. It literally means to remember, and I already want to add: To remember the essential points of meditation. That's the real meaning.

But mindfulness, as it is often practised, becomes unfortunately a way of grasping at sensations. So instead of becoming very aware and open to the subtlety of experience, for example, one grasps so much at the sensations that one walks slower and slower and cannot walk quickly anymore. It becomes like impossible because the grasping at each sense impression becomes so big that one wants to slow down everything that one cannot handle. The mindfulness becomes such that with everything we perceive, there is like a double image, a double sense impression which is produced, very subtle, and on top of that the question of whether I was sufficiently mindful with that experience, which makes sense impressions very complicated.

Playing music is a very good example of this. If you want to play (e.g.) the violin with full awareness, with full sati, you can fall exactly into that mistake. You play. The sounds are there. We are completely present with it. To be completely present with that experience, we need to produce the sound a second time in our short-term memory. Do we need complicating thoughts: Was I mindful with that? You see what happens: We would slow down the playing because we would have difficulty being completely sure if we are completely mindful with what's happening. We would have difficulty opening up to the flow of the sounds.

So when you practise mindfulness, try to verify and see: Am I experiencing this just once or am I repeating to myself the experience in order to assure myself that I really lived it? Recalling sounds, recalling tastes and so on after they have gone, that's not what is meant by sati. That form of meditation will produce blockages. You will not be able to talk while you are walking anymore because you can't do two things at the same time. Already one thing has to be done so slowly that an additional activity will just not be possible.

There was a nice story in a zen book. A teacher always said: "Do one thing at a time. When you drink tea, you drink tea, nothing else." And one day the student was observing the roshi drinking tea and reading the newspaper. The student said: "How come? You always told us: When I drink tea, I drink tea. And not anything else, one thing at a time, completely present." The roshi answered: "But I am drinking tea while I am reading the newspaper. Completely."

You see, our mind should not slow down because of our practice of mindfulness-awareness, but we are just completely with it, not somewhere else. We can do very complicated tasks and we shouldn't stop being able to do that. If we were to apply this in the wrong way, we would have a car accident as soon as someone asks us a question while we are driving.

So this remembering we are talking about is not remembering what we have just experienced, but it is remembering to always be on the spot, to always be present with what is, once, one time. One impression, one sense experience. No going forward, no going backward, no clinging, no projection, in the flow, always present. And within that, the awareness shifts from knowing the contents of what we are doing which we know anyhow, it shifts to knowing more and more to how it is to experience that; the nature of the experience.

We call this in Tibetan *lenshig kypa yeshe* (*lhan-cig skyes-pa'i ye-shes*), simultaneously arising timeless awareness. This "arising together" means simultaneously, at the same time, inseparably. With the sensory experience there is the knowing of its nature. They cannot be separated. That's the real point of sati, that's where sati should lead us, into this simultaneously arising timeless awareness, simultaneously present.

That's why pretty much all the old teachers that I have gotten to know, after having taught walking meditation with slowing down to be very precise, after a while they teach: 'And now, you come back to normal

speed'. Or even: 'Now, you practise that while jogging, you move, don't stay in slow practice'. We have to come back to full functioning anyhow. And when we come back to normal speed while maintaining that presence, we notice that we cannot have second thoughts. We cannot engage so much with after-images and so on because we'd always lose the present moment.

This whole cult of slowness, slow mindfulness meditations, is just a cult of clinging to sensations.

*"Practise one-pointedly without making up any mentally fabricated artificial meditation."*

This means everything produced afterwards, any idea of situations, anything fabricated. All of that: Stop it, be open to just now.

Question: How to work best with thoughts that are involved with planning or with something from the past which come again and again, that are somehow pre-occupying us?

Answer: That's a sure sign that we need to give them space. So we will say: Now or later, I decide, I take time to plan that properly or to digest that properly, to deal with the past or to learn from it. This is then not meditating in the present, but in the present we will invite thoughts about future or past to properly deal with them. This is a capacity which we need to live our lives.

Usually, when we sit in meditation, we decide to train in being mindful in the present, but OK if things arise persistently, that's necessary, but I will do it later. For example, I promise to do that today and then these thoughts can subside, there is an inner knowing that it will have an (appropriate) place. And we do that in the same undistracted way. In this way it will become constructive thinking about the past and constructive thinking about the future, very helpful.

#### L. Water dripping into water

*"There is no harm if all arising thoughts are noticed and vanish without a trace, which is called wild thought activity like water dripping into water, and if through mindfulness you are immediately aware of the slightest movement like the tip of a bird's feather being moved by a breeze."*

Now that's good. Immediately, in the very moment, aware of the slightest movement of the mind, right on the spot. A bird's feather, when it lies there and a breeze comes, you see the finest movements, even though it flies away. Our awareness is this subtle. And there is some British humour in the Karmapa's saying: "There is no harm". Actually it means that it is very good.

Water into water is a very good example because if a drop of water falls down, of course there is a little splash. That's the moment when the mental activity is greatest, but then water becomes one with water, there is no more difference. Everything that is a mental movement is one with mind, so there is no more trouble, no problem.

## LESSON 50 CONTINUED: USING MENTAL THOUGHTS

2017 (18, second part)

We now come to one of my favourite quotes, one of the most important quotes in the book by Gampopa when he talks about thoughts.

*"Master Gampopa said:*

*Consider thoughts to be necessary. Consider them to be greatly beneficial. Consider them to be pleasing. Consider them to be indispensable. Thus considering their appearance to be meaningful, they are the abiding nature."*

In Tibetan, the verb and the noun for thought and for thinking is the same, so you have a choice. And sometimes it is good to replace the noun by the verb. For instance, like the first sentence of the quote: Consider thoughts to be necessary, and maybe it makes sense to say: Consider thinking to be necessary.

Abiding nature is another term for the nature of mind (tib. gnas-lugs), the way the mind is.

So not only are thoughts not an enemy. Even from the point of view of awakening, not only from the point of view of practical life, they are necessary, thinking is necessary. It is necessary that the mind moves. It is of course necessary to deal with one's life to be thinking and all the small mind movements which are not conceptual are very necessary,



but from the point of view of awakening, they will allow us to realise the nature of mind.

If you experience those absorptions where there are no thoughts whatsoever, then you see how necessary they are in order to realise the nature of mind. There is no way without it. Or at least it is very difficult. Therefore Gampopa says:

Phenomena (Skr. dharma, tib. chos) means experiences, sense perceptions and so on. We wouldn't know the nature of phenomena if we didn't allow phenomena to arise.

*“Previously, we wandered around in samsara, because you did not know the nature of thoughts, whereas now the thoughts reveal the dharmakaya, therefore consider them to be greatly beneficial.”*

Every time we have a clear sense impression, we can see how we can meditate on the illusory, insubstantial nature, how we can get caught by the contents, how we can get into aversion or liking. It is wonderful, so much! And actually, we can realise that all these movements of mind connected to these experiences are without any solidity. It is incredible! just that. What an offering which sensory experiences give to us.

If someone showed to us the dharmakaya, we would be very happy and thankful to that person. This person would be like the greatest benefactor to our life. Each thought, each sensation offers us exactly that: an opportunity to realise just how it is, the nature of phenomena.

*“If you can stay with all arising thoughts in a state of effortlessness, they are themselves dharmakaya.”*

Effortless means that there is no tension produced in our mind with whatever movement arises. That's wonderful, that's great.

*“Therefore consider them to be pleasing”.*

They are the joyful play of mind, the dance of phenomena, so wonderful, so enjoyable because it is the dance of phenomena in the dharmadhatu, in the sphere of phenomena. I admit that this is sometimes a little bit difficult to practise. The first car coming by with a megaphone is easy to practise, the second one still is OK, but the third one is just too much. What happens, why would it be more difficult with the third one? What has happened?

Students: We lose the freshness. - There is some subtle aversion. - We are already a little bit charged from the first ones, so there is no space now to accept and to be patient and relaxed the third time he is coming.

LT: So there is a built-up which shows that we haven't completely liberated the aversion the first and second times. There has been a slight effort. And when it repeats, we become unwilling to let go of that effort.

I am OK with the first barking of the dog, the fifth barking of the dog, but at the tenth I get up and close the window.

It is interesting to look at that how maybe we think we are in a kind of effortless practice, but actually still some effort is involved and that's why there is a built-up of tension. And let's not be fooled. Even if we are very relaxed, usually there is some kind of effort involved and we have to be realistic with our practice.

But the more we realise this nature of phenomena effortlessly, then of course we will enjoy it, we will enjoy the dance of phenomena.

*"When you experience thoughts to be pleasing, there is no reason to be contracted."*

I can see this with problems, like the daily challenges, one can deal quite well with them if one gets used to them. But only if one truly enjoys them, there is no building up of tension.

Over the years, in the monastery, we wondered why the lamas started fighting with each other, everyone is doing mahamudra practice, how come? We were not completely letting the experiences liberate, there was a built-up, a little effort to live bodhicitta, a little effort to work with the challenges and, due to that, a little built-up when the same experience repeats.

Question: Does that also mean that very difficult experiences can be liberated like that?

Answer: Yes, absolutely, it means that. That's the good news. But let's not dream, until we experience that, it can be quite a path of practice. It

can happen now for one experience, but to be able to repeat it every time it happens, it will take a lifetime of practice.

I am not happy with problems normally. I begin to really be happy with problems sometimes. If I am honest, it is only since two or three years that I begin to start to truly appreciate a problem, but it is not for the majority of them. It is sometimes. When I have difficult talks, when I am touched myself, I don't usually appreciate it. And then there is an opening up to it and practice meets the challenge and then OK, then that is being worked through. And it's nice. But it is not immediate. But sometimes there is an immediate response of rejoicing. I have been hearing and teaching this for so long, but it is only now that it actually opens up. Sometimes it is like that.

*"We become contracted - that is we become tense, we become stressed - to the extent that we consider these experiences to be a fault."*

We don't like them. So whatever thought, whatever experience arises, if we consider it as something we don't want, then we get tense.

So this is a key for us. That's why actually, if we don't notice what is going on, we go with the tension. We have this inner 'tensiometer', we have an indicator of our tension, and then we know we are fighting with something, we are in a kind of clinch with life. So really, take this quote and meditate many times on it.

*"When Gampopa had come from the province of Gampo to the region of Upper Dagpo, he addressed the assembly of monks as follows: All the meditators want to be without thoughts. But the thoughts keep coming, they cannot be stopped. So the meditators grow weary. However the more wood, the bigger the fire. The more thoughts there are, the more the nondual primordial awareness increases. Therefore it is all right to just let the five poisons and the thoughts arise. This uncontrived state, where there is nothing to prevent or produce, is the primordial awareness, the very heart of all the buddhas of the three times. We may not recognize the buddha, but it is precisely that. Apart from that there is no buddha"*

Upper Dagpo is where his first monastery was.

So what's the buddha? It is the uncontrived state where there is nothing to prevent or to produce. Uncontrived means completely without tension. No manipulation. That includes also no clinging, no identification,

because all of that is tension. When we are completely uncontrived, automatically there is timeless awareness.

So what we call contrivance includes control. For as long as we control, there is tension, there is slight manipulation, slight holding back. So the idea is to become completely natural and relaxed with whatever appears, or to put it better: in whatever appears. There is the difference between being relaxed and surfing a wave or becoming the wave. So we become the wave. It is already nice to surf the wave, but I try to indicate an even deeper level.

Our so-called identity, our identification, this holding together of some seeming identity, dissolves into the flow of experiences. It is not like we lose it and we remain, it is like all of that dissolves.

Question: How much calm abiding do we need for that?

Answer: The more the better. Otherwise it is very jumpy, there is a moment of that, but you cannot stabilise that.

*“Phamodrupa:*

*Thoughts are awareness. Wise persons know that awareness has three doors of liberation. With great joy think of them as particularly beneficial. Thoughts are mind itself. If you want to get rid of them they increase. But since they are unborn, there is no need to get rid of them. And:*

*When thoughts are arising I clearly know them to be my teacher. I understand that thoughts are greatly beneficial. There is not the slightest difference between the dharmakaya and thoughts. Unshakable certainty of that is my unerring teacher. Knowing thoughts to be mind and knowing mind itself to be unborn, I do not need to abandon thoughts. Nor do I need to fabricate the nonconceptual primordial awareness. The appearance of a multitude of thoughts is like salt put into water. The teacher who shows that thoughts and emptiness are inseparable is the teacher who opens the door of wisdom.”*

Phamodrupa was one of the five main students of Gampopa.

What are the three doors of liberation?

Vessantara: They are related to the three marks. When looking at things, you find that they are impermanent, they are not satisfactory, and if you cling to them, there is no self, there is no core to them.

(1) So if you go deep into impermanence, it takes you to the signless, you are not clinging to the characteristics.

(2) And then, if you explore the unsatisfactory nature of things when you cling to them, push or pull, you move into this state which is called the directionless or the wishless. So you are a bit like a beach ball on a perfectly flat surface with no winds. There is no tendency to move towards or away from the experience. There is no pushing and pulling in relation to experience. You are not separating out, either pushing or pulling, you are not separate from the experience.

(3) Thirdly, as you explore into the experience, you find that it is completely ungraspable, empty of any inherent existence you can get hold of. So that's the empty or ungraspable door of liberation.

LT: So you got the three doors of liberation, wonderful.

Student: In the second one you said that there is no separation from the experience. So are we the experience?

LT: The idea of a self has dissolved. So there is no one asking: Am I the way? The question is finished. There is no-one wondering: Who am I?

So we have the three marks of existence which are impermanence, the changing nature; we have unsatisfactoriness, also called dukkha, that everything finishes in tension if there is grasping; and we have the no-self, the absence of solidity.

The deep understanding of these three marks of existence becomes the three doors of liberation.

(Signlessness)

As I understand the process nature, the change, it is clear that all the signs and characteristics which I think to be so solid, to be the signs of that there is an object, all of that. As I understand the process nature, the change, then it is – 'oh, all the signs and characteristics which I think to be so solid, to be the signs of that there is an object, all of that is process.' None of that stays the same for even an instant.

Now we apply this directly to thoughts, to mental movements.

Let's take sound as the first one. That's very easy. We think that there is a sound, for example the sound of the megaphone, the voice talking. And it's very clear for us: That's the sound, there is the talking of words, like a CD playing the whole time. But on closer examination, where is the sound? There are constantly changing sound waves; which part of the sound wave is the sound? Is it composed of many sounds and the sub-sounds, where do they start and where do they end? It is all process! We can't find the beginning and end of any entity that we can call sound and which would last. It is gone, already the moment we try to find it.

Let's take a visual impression. We could take of course seeing this room, that would be a very complex example. But imagine our sight would be so narrow, I could just see one person. and then I would call that: 'yes, this is the seeing of this person, it's a sight. I see a house, I see this person and that person, that's what I see'. And then, on closer examination, I notice: 'my God, this is constantly seeing'. The seeing experience develops all the time, sometimes the nose is more there, the eyes, the knees, whatever. What I call a sight is a very complex phenomenon which is moving around, developing. It is not a stable sight. So I see the instability of all those signs and characteristics which I thought were the precise characteristics of that sight. But actually, in our experience, it is an on-going process. There is nothing permanent in that. It is constantly in the making. So, basically, what seems to be so stable in terms of objects with their characteristics is seen as constant process, always in the making.

I might turn to my friend and say: I have had an idea. I had the thought of going shopping this afternoon! It sounds like a clear thought. I had a thought and I can communicate. But then, with closer examination, where does the thought start? Does it start with another thought: Oh, I have free time this afternoon, what can I do with it? Perhaps, between all the different possibilities, shopping. And then I imagine the shops, I imagine what I might buy and I begin reflecting what I could buy and so on. And that I call the thought of going shopping. But actually it is a series of visual impressions, of feelings, of preferences, comparing with past experience, seeing the place where I could shop or different places, all of that I call the thought, the idea of going shopping. As I investigate this, I see that it is a huge process. And when I talk to my friend about going shopping, the idea of going shopping that I have now when I talk about it, is yet another process. It is not the same thought I had before. It is on the move. It is forming as I talk, and it is forming anew.

So when we become more precise in our observation, we see that objects with clear characteristics cannot be found. There is no such thing as a clear defined thought, sound, visual object and so on. All of that is process in the making. That's called signlessness, no objects to be found with stable characteristics.

Question: Isn't it artificial to separate visual consciousness from the others?

Answer: If you go with the combined experience of all of that, it is even more obvious there is nothing stable.

To explain, when we separate all that and we analyse the visual processes, the hearing processes, the thinking processes, then it makes it obvious that every area is process. And even more so, the combination of them is complete process.

It would be very helpful to combine this when you look at a wall or a pillar, something that is visually very stable. Then, as you look at this visually very stable object, you will nevertheless see that seeing is a process because you are looking at it all the time with different mental attitudes. And while hearing sounds, feeling different things in the body and so on, so the whole experience is constantly changing, even if the visual sense might trick you into believing that there is something stable.

(Wishlessness)

The second mark of existence is dukkha, is tension. Wherever there is a samsaric mind, there will also be dukkha. Actually, it means that we cannot relax with what is. The sense perceptions, including thoughts, produce a reaction in us: Disliking what we judge as disagreeable, that's the obvious suffering. Feeling attraction towards what is agreeable is the second kind of suffering, the suffering due to change of agreeable situations. The third kind is the subject-object-tension that we produce in the experience.

So the first tension is: I don't want. The second kind of tension is: I want. And the third kind of tension is: I feel separate.

Now imagine that we could be so relaxed that none of these compulsive reactions arose. That is what Vessantara described with the example of a beach ball on a completely flat ground, no wind, no pull and push into any direction. I am not sure if our mind has a plastic covering (laughter).

But that complete harmony of not being pulled into any direction or being pushed, being completely aware without feeling separation, that's called wishlessness. No wish to be free from what is disagreeable, no wish to hang on to what is agreeable and no wish to be someone in union with something else or to overcome separation or to be separate. If we can be in that wishless openness as movements arise, that's the door to liberation!

So we open that door to liberation if we do not enter into those reactions of aversion, attachment and believe: 'I exist separate from other existence'. We relax that positioning of ourselves as being a separate subject and separate from the experience.

Right now we are going from the dualistic experience to the nondual experience. And in between we have three doors of liberation, they are three ways of entering nondual experience. One is by understanding the process nature, the impermanence. The second door is understanding the wonderful benefits of wishlessness, not going into these reaction patterns, relaxing those reaction patterns. The third one is:

(Selflessness)

We start out with the experience of self. That's the basic ground of samsara. We investigate, we look if such a self can really be found. And this so-called self seems to be composed of lots of processes, thinking: This is me, that's me and so on, we find no clear self.

We look into our perceptions, the feeling tones of our experience, into our differentiations, the various creative workings of mind and into different consciousnesses, you know the five skandhas, and we find nothing solid in there.

And it dawns on us that all these processes that we call life are empty of a self. That there is no such thing as a "me", something stable, individual, that we can find in the centre of our mind or life.

In this way, the experience of emptiness, of not being able to find a self, becomes another door of liberation through which we can enter into that nondual awareness.

OK, please use any of the doors. You have the keys, they are with you, and you always have these three doors leading into the same room. The



room is called, when you see the sign you know you are right: “dharmadhatu”. It is a strange room. No escape signs. Once you are in there, everything is fine, the walls drop away. If you look for doors to go back, it is difficult.

So these teachings on the three marks and the three doors of liberation, take them to heart. It is central to the dharma, it is really central to the understanding that we call awakening.

(Dedication)

DAY 8 (170707-0300-0302)

2017 (19) Morning meditation

You have to be wide awake, your inner lama has to be active and you do it yourself as if you were at home. But you have the support of the whole sangha doing it at the same time with you and a fresh memory.

It is completely OK if you have the book open in front of you, you have your notes, and you read and you contemplate. You can really go through. Take one passage which you like and meditate on that.

This is why we take notes so that we become independent, we become integrated and take it wherever we go. Wherever place in the world we are, the teachings are inside of us. We will know them by practising them. Like this they become a treasury that we carry around everywhere and it can even accompany us in the bardo, after leaving this body.

So don't let your mind vagabond, but direct it to where you want to have your practice.

LESSON 50 CONTINUED: USING MENTAL MOVEMENTS

G 2017 (20)

We continue with the quote of Phamodrupa.

*“With great joy think of them as particularly beneficial.”*

So think of thoughts as being awareness and the three doors of liberation. The same level. All the mind movements are awareness and wherever there is awareness, it has the three doors of liberation.

*“Thoughts are mind itself,”*

So don't try to get rid of them.

*“If you want to get rid of them they increase. But since they are unborn, there is no need to get rid of them. And:”*

If your thoughts run very wild, probably you have an aversion towards them. You might not notice it because you think you are just simply daydreaming, but as you wish to meditate, of course, like all great meditators, you wish to be free of thinking, and then this subtle aversion is there. There is a lack of wisdom. There is a lack of understanding. We are fighting against the movements of mind, thinking that they are something solid. But thoughts, all these experiences in mind, are unborn, they are not created as something. There is no need to get rid of them. We only need to take care not to cling to them, to grasp at them as something solid and not to fight against them as something solid. Then we will experience them as self-liberating. They will not stay a second longer.

*“When thoughts are arising I clearly know them to be my teacher.”*

Please do that in your next meditation: Take thoughts as your teacher. There is nothing else to do. Do you know what they teach you?

Student: How things are.

LT: They teach us the nature of mind.

*“I understand that thoughts are greatly beneficial. There is not the slightest difference between the dharmakaya and thoughts.”*

That means that there is no difference between the buddha dimension of mind and thoughts. A buddha also thinks. And in the thinking of a buddha, there is not the slightest clinging to a self. Because the mind of a buddha has movements, including also conceptual thinking, then the buddha is able to explain the dharma in different languages. A buddha is

able to understand the questions of those people coming to see him or her. The buddha understands them, understands the underlying problem, gives the appropriate answer - all of that is due to movements of mind, to thinking.

The historical Buddha was known to speak several dialects of northern India, and the great accomplished masters of today and the past also often knew several languages, and they mastered their own language in order to communicate. So the secret is all in how we think, not in the fact of thinking. It is about whether we think with all that identification and clinging to self and with an idea of being separate from others.

So every thought is our teacher in showing us: 'look, all mind movements dissolve by themselves. Look, as the movement arises, it has no solidity. Look, it is process. Look, there is no thinker apart from the thinking'. There are so many aspects about the nature of mind that we can learn from thoughts, from mental movements.

*"Unshakable certainty of that is my unerring teacher. Knowing thoughts to be mind and knowing mind itself to be unborn, I do not need to abandon thoughts. Nor do I need to fabricate the nonconceptual primordial awareness."*

Now this is the second part. As we do not have to chase away the thoughts, knowing them to be the dharmakaya, of course we don't have to produce the dharmakaya, that timeless awareness. It is there, it is there in the thinking, in the mental movements.

We always look for the ultimate somewhere else. This is a big error. It is the same as Christians who look for God somewhere else, but not in the mind and the mind's creativity. The fundamental error is always: Since I am so confused, then liberation, awakening, God, dharmakaya cannot be here, because I am too confused. But it is knowing the nature of that confusion which is the door to liberation.

*"The appearance of a multitude of thoughts is like salt put into water. The teacher who shows that thoughts and emptiness are inseparable is the teacher who opens the door of wisdom."*

It would be a good discipline for each one of us to notice when we are fighting with ourselves. Actually, we are fighting with what is going on in our mind. when we notice that, let's stop and look at the nature of what is going on. That will be a major turn in our life.

Some of us occasionally struggle with depression and depressive thoughts. Look at the nature of them.

Some of us struggle with addiction or obsessional thinking behaviour patterns. Look at the nature of these experiences.

Some of us struggle with pride. Look at its nature. - Some struggle with jealousy, some struggle with aggression, some struggle with desire - look at the nature.

When we look at the nature, we step out of the identification with the contents. We do not identify with the story anymore. We look at just how it is happening, at the nature of what is happening.

So whenever we can do that, let's change from being involved with the story to looking at the process. Then liberation and awakening are just around the corner, they are close by and we will reach them in this life.

I know that it is the strongest habitual tendency to get involved with our stories. I am not saying it is easy not to get involved.

Contents is always what happens. And process is how it happens. So we shift from the what to the how. The process changes, that is what we call changing ourselves. There is no self to be changed. There has never been any self apart from the process. Process is life, experience, the way we see, the way we think, the way we feel, all of that. I am always a bit careful when you say that we change the way we think because maybe you mean just the way we think about something. No. It is the way we think, the way we perceive, all of that changes.

Many of you have been reporting that over the last year you noticed that you had more space, you were less involved, less identified with what was happening to you. One can feel it also in the group. So this direction is the change. The world has not become easier, but we have become lighter in dealing with our experiences.

First we start from the point of view of observing, of watching, and we begin to see with a little distance how it is. And seeing with a little distance that it all dissolves by itself gives us more trust to let go and to loosen the control. And as we let go of the control, we become one with the process, there is no more separate self.

*“Siddha Orgyenpa:*

*There is no need to deliberately seek a nonconceptual state. There is no need either to consider thoughts to be a fault. Do not let your practice suffer from starvation, seize the opportunity of an abundance of mental states. Take whatever comes as your practice, neither rejecting nor cherishing anything, and without seeking a particularly calm, clear and joyous state of mind.”*

We do not need to seek a state free of thinking. Take whatever comes as your practice.

Before, when we sat down and had an agitated mind, we thought: “shit, I can’t meditate.” Now when we sit down and have an agitated mind, “yeah! Abandon, let’s do it.” It’s like telling your child: look at the fireworks. Wow, arising, disappearing, different colours, look at it! Don’t think about the meaning of each of these colours. Don’t get involved with the story. Look at the firework, just how it arises, continues, dissolves. So we all become pyrotechnicians. We are already. We are fire workers, karmic fire workers. There is a big supply. We don’t have a lack of storage, we have a big supply of karmic fireworks, we have enough for a lot of meditation sessions. If you block them, pull a little and stimulate karmic thinking. Don’t suffer from starvation.

Now the conclusion of the Karmapa for this chapter:

*“It is important to leave the mind in a natural, loose condition, without conceptual grasping, utterly thought-free and open, simply observing the true nature of whatever thoughts arise with undistracted mindfulness, without modification, neither denying nor affirming them.”*

Without grasping to concepts, is better than “without concepts”. We are not utterly without thoughts, we are not getting involved with thought chains.

The sentence in the text here is the summary of the whole lesson. That’s the instruction, that’s what we need to practise. When I was working through this, I wrote out this sentence and put it in front of me on my meditation table. Of course you need to do such things. You need to have your notes until you know them by heart. It seems that some of you have lost the capacity to study properly. You think that you can do without study, just listening and then it will work. Study means that you understand every word of the text and verify all questions concerning every word of the text. Then, in every paragraph you single out, you underline the key message. You make notes of the key messages with your own hand so that it goes through your own inner process. Then we

meditate with that. After deep meditation, we go back to the original source: Is our understanding really corresponding to what is there, are there any questions? Which of the instructions have been most helpful and we deepen them? And which instructions do I not understand yet? And then we concentrate on them.

And this we can do with prayers: 'Please, Milarepa, Gampopa, Karmapa, Buddha Shakyamuni and so on, please grant your blessing': What's the meaning of that? Like this we can understand everything. Especially if we have already received a complete transmission. Then somewhere, actually, the knowledge, the understanding is already there. We have been exposed to that, and in our personal practice we can contact that again.

And then we go through the teaching a third time. Verifying whether we now really have a direct personal experience of everything that was said in this chapter. I don't think you can do it in less than three times. That's a minimum. I have done much more than that.

This is developing right view through study, contemplation and meditation. And then we go beyond view because then it becomes certainty, clear personal experience. We are like researchers, like scientists who work in ways that other scientists have already opened up, but we need to make the same experiments and we need to make them properly so that we get clear results: We see it, we know how it works, we know the ingredients, we actually know, in time, the science of mind. All of that is a real science. It is a science of liberation. It works in a completely reliable way.

However, this science is a science of the subject, of the person studying. We are going inside of our own mind. We are not studying others, we are studying our own mind. And that science studies qualities, not quantities. It studies qualities like love, compassion, wisdom, generosity, patience and so on, including things like letting go, not identifying, being identified, clinging, fear, anger and so on, all the emotions, all of these, normally difficult to grasp experiences in mind are being studied and how they interrelate. It is completely reliable.

It involves a deep study of cause and effect, this means what kind of thinking, seeing, feeling and so on creates what kind of effects. It includes a study of perception, how perceptions arise, how they are interpreted, how they form our experience of the world. Basically, it is the signs of what we call the Four Noble Truths: (1) Exploring what kind of

suffering is present, (2) exploring what are the causes of that suffering, (3) exploring whether there is an end to suffering, whether a cure or liberation is possible and (4) exploring how we can get there, how we get to being free from suffering. That's why I completely agree with people like the Dalai Lama who say: 'Buddhism is not a philosophy, it is not a religion, it is a science of liberation'. It is not a view, it is not a lifestyle, it is not a tradition, it is a science. You can rely on that, we can all rely on that and we see: Wow, the more we know about how it works, the better we can help others. It really works. You will see that in that state of mind, a little bit of devotion would be good, that kind of devotion would be exactly what is needed, you know the ingredients, like in a biochemical reaction.

And this transmission we are sharing is pretty much a scientific transmission. How to do it, how to find the way into liberation.

The Karmapa writes:

*"The moon is reflected on water, not outside of it. Likewise are all the thoughts only in the mind. Mind is luminous and empty, similar to a reflection."*

There are no thoughts outside of mind. Thoughts are not objects that have an independent existence. They are all expressions of mind. What we call 'mind' is luminous and empty, that means it has this aspect of clarity, of being like a very luminous show and it is empty which means: Not solid, there is no entity, there is no core to the mind, no self. It is similar to a reflection, there is nothing to grasp at.

*"Look directly into it: that groundless and rootless distinct clarity, unceasingly giving rise to thoughts is pointed out to be the dharmakaya. For example there are no waves apart from water. Likewise there arises a multitude of thoughts in the luminous, empty space of the innate nature, but actually they are inseparable..."*

If we fight with thoughts, we fight with our own mind.

"In the Hevajra tantra..."

If you try to run away from samsara and want to find nirvana somewhere else, (it doesn't work). We have to know the nature of that what we call samsara. Samsara is the world of appearances with clinging. Nirvana is that same world of appearances without clinging. With identification or without identification. Struggle or peace. Same world, different attitude.

That's great, that's fantastic, we can work with what we have! Yes, it is good. We don't need to change the world, we don't have to find another place. We change our attitude. We go towards a deep understanding of just how it is.

The Karmapa concludes:

*"In the Hevajra Tantra it says:*

*This so-called samsara is nirvana. Apart from samsara, by renouncing it, you will not realize nirvana.*

*So you must persevere in your practice until you recognize that thoughts are mind and experience them as groundless and rootless."*

Do you get an intuitive feeling of what is meant by groundless and rootless? If you tried to show how it feels when something is groundless or rootless, how would you communicate that?

What would it be like if this garage was groundless? It would fall down.

It is groundless because it is changing. There is nothing solid. Wherever you try to find it, you can't go. Not coming from somewhere, not going anywhere.

When a plant is rootless and you want to pull it out of the earth, what happens? You almost fall down because there is no resistance. It is not connected to anything.

Groundless means: When you want to go this way, you don't find anything to rely on, you fall through. And rootless means when you go the other way, you also fall because nothing holds you back.

Contemplate that. These are nice words, because they are powerful. We always think that there is something I can rely on and if we pull, there is resistance. It also means that something is born, it is rooted in something, it has a ground on which it grows and it is connected. Somehow it is integrated into a world of solidity, of truly existing things. But that is not the nature of thoughts.

It is a blow if you realise what this all means. We have been taking ourselves so seriously, and our problems of course. If you understand the meaning of all of what has been said, 'oh, oh ... What have I been



doing all along?' All psychologists and psychotherapists could immediately close their offices, if you were to realise this. But of course, fortunately, they don't realise. So we go slowly until we see: Every drama finds its solutions, all the knots can be untied and finally we realise: Actually, there hasn't been a solid knot right from the beginning. This solution is so radical and of course, if I could apply it, it would solve everything, but of course it is not so easy to apply. It is not so easy to get to that deep understanding and it takes a lot of looking into it, investigating, applying it testing it out and so on, it takes a lot, so of course in the meantime it is nice to have psychotherapists to help the process.

## Meditation

Encourage yourself to take everything that arises, every experience as your teacher.

Teachers in karmic fireworks. Teachers in conditioned arising. Teachers in interdependence. Experiences teaching us the nature of mind.

Whatever arises showing us the groundless and rootless nature of phenomena.

No fighting, just knowing.

Taking every state of mind as a teaching.

Is there anything substantial in those experiences? From drowsiness to wild mind, agitation, is there any solidity anywhere?

From the very subtle feelings of self to the very gross identifications. Can a stable self be found?

How is that experience of meditating? Is there a meditator, can you find one?

Is there someone meditating and someone giving up meditating? Is there someone understanding these words and reflecting on them?

When a question is asked and you look, can you feel the answer without conceptual thinking?

(Bell)

When those questions are asked, answers are not needed. Experience is the answer. Just as it is, is the answer.

## LESSON 64 CONTINUED: THREE KINDS OF EXPERIENCES

G 2017 (20, second part)

We left off after some remarks about these experiences of bliss, clarity and non-conceptuality.

*“Thus you must give up craving and attachment, conceit, and overestimation in relation to experiences.”*

These mediation experiences are so nice and I should give up craving, i.e. longing for future states and attachment to past ones? Actually, if we don't do it, they turn into enemies. They turn into poison. Instead of diminishing the clinging to a self, they will augment it.

That would then result in conceit which is a form of pride. So conceit is thinking of oneself as being a better person because one has these experiences, or one has had these experiences. And thinking that one is worse than others if one has not had them.

If there is overestimation, it is due to a misunderstanding of the importance of these experiences. Especially of course if one confounds them with realization, this is a big overestimation, and thinking that they are necessary to reach awakening. They are not. They are just basically inevitable because our knots have to be worked through, the knots in the channels, the subtle energy needs to circulate freely. So wherever there is a blockage, there will be an experience. So no way to get around them.

I remember when we talked about our experiences to Gendun Rinpoche like something nice which happened in meditation. And he said: “Oh, don't worry. it is not this bad. This blockage will also dissolve.”

*“In this state you should recognize the nature of the four kayas in the present mind: dharmakaya is the nature of mind without origin, sambhogakaya is its not dwelling anywhere, nirmanakaya is the multiplicity of appearances that are*

*without beginning and end, and svabhavikakaya is the inseparability of the three.”*

What is called dharmakaya is the ground nature of mind, you can say. It is that spacious aspect of mind, without origin, without ground, without root. Dharmakaya means “body of dharma”. Don’t take kaya literally. Here, kaya basically means that we can rely on that. It is the aspect of reality on which we can absolutely rely. So that basic truth is that mind is spacious and without ground, without origin.

Sambhogakaya is the body of enjoyment, “not dwelling anywhere” because it refers to the dynamic aspect of mind. It is not only spacious it is also dynamic, creative. It doesn’t stay anywhere.

Nirmanakaya is translated as emanation body, which is the multiplicity of experiences, all those fireworks which are emanated in mind. Never ending. This means that mind is spacious, dynamic and colourful, lots of stuff happening. Our thoughts, the processes, the movements, the experiences are called nirmanakaya. The creativity behind that is called sambhogakaya. And its spacious nature is called dharmakaya.

The svabhavikakaya is the body of essential unity, the essence kaya. It is saying, actually, that all the others are inseparable. So svabhavikakaya is not a separate aspect, you can say that it is the aspect of inseparability, which means you cannot find one of the three without the others. You cannot walk around in your meditation and simply find, for example, the sambhogakaya. This is not possible. There would always be the dharmakaya, that aspect of spaciousness, and the aspect of appearances together with the dynamic aspect of mind.

But then you can also put it the way round, there is a sort of playing with words. So don’t get upset if you painfully memorize the meaning that was just given and then some teachers use the words differently.

*“Or to put it in another way: the unobstructed manifestations of the mind are the nirmanakaya*

The first one goes OK: The unobstructed fireworks are the nirmanakaya. And of course they are dynamic because you cannot have multiplicity without dynamism.

*“Awareness and clarity are the sambhogakaya.” -*

is that the same as the dynamic aspect? It is not the same in words, but it is the same in meaning. Awareness is always dynamic. And that awareness is very elusive, there is a clarity to it with which you can then see, you can differentiate the multiplicity of appearances. That's the clarity aspect. Basically, it is the same as talking about the dynamic nature of mind.

*"Emptiness is the svabhavikakaya."*

That was inseparability before. That's not fair! This is just to twist our minds. "Svabhava" means essential nature. Previously the essential nature was called the inseparability. But now this essential nature is said to be emptiness, this means ungraspable, no solidity, not entity. Svabhava is also sometimes called the suchness, the thusness. That's also emptiness, different words. And actually, we can accept because it is the essential nature of everything, of mind.

*"The dharmakaya is called inseparability."*

Because the dharma, the truth is that they are inseparable.

*"In short, all phenomena that appear and exist in samsara and nirvana are completely contained within the five kayas"*

The fifth kaya is called mahasukhakaya, the body of great joy, of great bliss because the experience of the inseparable three kayas is great bliss. All phenomena of samsara, the clinging mind, the world of suffering, and nirvana, the awakened mind, the world of liberation can be described as the five kayas.

We can see that there is a great variety of manifest states in the experience of the confused as well as of the awakened sentient beings, that's the nirmanakaya.

We can see that there is an enormous creativity, dynamic at work, unceasing, unobstructed, all the time. Mind is even dynamic when it is not producing anything. We can call this dynamic the sambhogakaya, body of enjoyment, creativity.

But if you want to put special emphasis on the fact that this could be experienced as completely joyful, as free of clinging, as free of suffering, you can also call it mahasukhakaya, the body of great bliss.

And all of that is of course empty, without substance. And all of it is inseparable, you never find just one aspect of this. They always go together. So the manifestations are inherently free of suffering. The suffering comes from clinging to them, it is not in the manifestation, the suffering is not in the nature of mind. That's expressed by mahasukhakaya, actually it is great bliss.

Question: Is it that actually there is only awakened mind, that everything else is created from that?

Answer: Yes, you could say that it is additional complications that create the samsaric mind. But I have bad news for you: Actually, you can't even find the mind. So we find observable qualities of the process, but you can't catch it, it is just a term for that indescribable process.

Question: Sometimes people say that there is awareness without content. So what would be the appearance in that?

Answer: They didn't go deep enough into that experience of awareness. They will see it and live it, and it actually has that aliveness as its content. It can still be experienced. Otherwise they wouldn't even try to find words for it. So those describing that are actually describing a content.

If you cannot remember all this, it is OK. Just remember the qualities of what is being described, the words are not important.

The Karmapa says that it can be described even more easily. Actually, there is only

*"The dharmakaya that unites in itself sambhogakaya, nirmanakaya and svabhavikakaya. As it is said: "Because it is the body of phenomena, because its highest qualities are unimaginable, and because it is the true nature of awareness, it is considered to be the dharmakaya of the protectors:""*

Protectors refers to the Buddhas here.

Question: Are the bodies here connected with elements?

Answer: No, the dharmakaya is like the element of awareness, it is not connected to earth, fire and so on.

When the dharma came to China in the fourth century (sic!) onwards, they had real difficulties in translating the word “dharmakaya”. They simply chose Dao to translate it because that word was already familiar to the Chinese. Why not! It is a good word. We can also, when the dharma comes to the west, try to translate it as God. God father, God son and the holy spirit. Then we have that same trinity. But when we do it like this, we also run into a lot of difficulties, because concepts have already have their place. So we have to redefine what’s meant. That open dimension would be God father, the basic dimension. The dynamic aspect would be the holy spirit and the manifestation, the emanation aspect, would be the son. That makes complete sense and with mystic Christians who have an understanding of the nature of mind, there is an understanding. It is fine, it is exactly that. But don’t try to discuss it with people from the church. it would to them as if you were trying to rob, to steal what is most precious to them and to say: ‘oh, it is the same as Buddhism.’ It is terrible for them. But of course, people all over the world in different cultures don’t have a different nature of mind. So those who really investigate must find the same. It is not different.

*“Therefore you should reach a definite certainty about the nature of the so-called dharmakaya endowed with the two purities...”*

Twofold purity means to be free of the two veils, the veils of the obscuring emotions (kleshas) and the veils which cloud awareness, of all the things that are to be known (To Vessantara: I think L.T. refers to a mistaken note in the German copy. The two purities usually are: a) natural purity; b) freedom from the transient veils.). The emotional obscurations are the five which you already know, basically desire, hatred, pride, jealousy and ignorance or lack of awareness. But the veil of what is to be known, this second veil, is part of ignorance. It concerns this basic split of experience into subject and object. We have to become clear of the meaning of awakening. And awakening means to be free from emotional obscurations and to really know life as it is.

*“ Besides this you should reach a definitive conclusion about the fact that all phenomena are by nature free from arising, ceasing and abiding, that they do not truly exist in the least, and that they are free from all conceptual limitations such as existence and nonexistence.”*

It is the same as knowing the process nature of reality. It is the same thing that is expressed here. When it says: “Free from arising, abiding and ceasing”, it means being born, arising as some ‘thing’, being there and staying there for a while, then ceasing to be. So really coming into

existing, staying and then ceasing to be. That's the idea here of what we would normally call the arising of a truly existent phenomenon. It has to stay there at least for some time, unchanging, at least for a short moment.

So what happens when we investigate into how experience unfolds, is that there is never anything that arises as a definite entity and then disappears, but in the forming of the experience, it continually evolves, never stable for an instant. That's why we say that there is no arising, staying and then disappearing.

We usually think in terms of existence and nonexistence. That's how we are kind of programmed. But that's not applicable to how life really is. There is no moment when the experience is stable. If we were to define: What is the sound of the car, i.e. what is the sound experience of the car, where do we have it? Not only do we have difficulties saying where it starts and where it ends. This could be done, It is maybe a process, becoming stronger and disappearing again. But at the same time, there are birds singing, there is our experience of it, there is our reaction to it, we don't hear one stable sound for even a single moment. So to say: "This sound" is not correct, there is not this sound, there is a developing experience of hearing a sound produced by a car passing by. OK, we can describe that, but it is not one thing. So we cannot say: This exists as that.

But we should also not fall into the opposite extreme of saying that it does not exist. We all hear it. So of course there is an experience. Actually, the experience of something simple like that is so multidimensional and so dynamic, evolving and also different for every person and so we can say: 'Yes, there is a subjective experience unfolding, but it can't be categorised with words like existence and nonexistence.' It is there, but ungraspable in its very nature. And we abandon working with ideas of existence and nonexistence.

If this is true for one hearing experience, for one seeing experience, one experience in the body, what do you think about the "I", the self? The right answer is that we abandon this idea of "I exist" or "I don't exist". It is just not convenient to describe experience of life in that way. That experience which we call "me" and "you" is such a multidimensional experience which unfolds continuously. It is so incredibly rich in experience that words are never enough to describe it. That's what we call nirmanakaya.

It is so dynamic, constantly on the move, constant process, never stopping. That's what we call sambhogakaya.

And it's completely spacious, there is no solidity, it is empty, there is nothing to grasp at. That's what we call dharmakaya.

And to be sure that we don't separate them we call it svabhavikakaya.

And to be sure that people want to practise that, we call it mahasukhakaya (laughter). Sugar-kaya.

*"You must abandon all hope and fear, the hope of attaining buddhahood and of giving rise to exceptional experiences and realizations.."*

This is good news, not bad news. There is no "I", no self that has to strive, to make something better of himself or herself. It is already all there. There is also no need.

*"and the fear of wandering around in samsara and not developing any experiences and realizations."*

If we practise as much as is possible, free from hope and fear, we will quickly attain the insight that no-one will ever attain buddhahood. There is not someone, there is not this entity that could attain anything.

The encouragement is that you go through everything leading up to this chapter. We practise it and practise it until you understand all of this. And it is not a self that understands, but this understanding occurs in this process that we call "I".

## LESSON 39: CONCLUDING REMARKS ON SHAMATHA

G 2017 (21, first part)

*"The supreme way of removing obstacles and enhancing the practice is to rely on devotion. With superior devotion the meditation is superior, with average devotion the meditation is average, and with poor devotion the meditation is poor as well. If there is no devotion at all, meditation will also not arise. Since here the quality of meditation depends on the force of devotion, it is important to focus one-pointedly only on devotion and heartfelt supplication."*



Devotion, tib. mos-gus, is not exactly what we think of when we hear the English or French word. There are two parts to the Tibetan word.

Tib. mos(-pa) means aspiration. It is a longing, it is like a driving force in us to actually become awakened. You could say: To become like the examples which inspire us. We want to become like these great masters, those great bodhisattvas. This is an element missing in the Latin word "devotion". It is this striving aspiration-inspiration, this is what you definitely have to add to your understanding.

The second part of the word is tib. gus(-pa) which means respect. Respect has to do with respectful bowing down and so on. It is respect for Buddha, Dharma, Sangha as well as respect for the transmission lineage, deep respect for this mission which we have together of sharing the dharma with everyone.

The Tibetan word does not have this connotation that would lead to this misunderstanding of blind devotion. There is a very bright, inspired vision of how we could become and we wish to become like that, to really develop that potential that is reflected in the teachers and a great respect for how precious the transmission is, how incredibly important each word of the transmission is.

Neither of these terms invokes this idea of a sentimental devotion. It is not emotional. It is not like a very strong emotional link with the teacher. Gendun Rinpoche used to say that being attached to the teacher is just clinging, this sentimental link is attachment. In itself it does not lead to awakening. This much said, then you know that Tibetan teachers also play a lot with this and they also love to have some attached blind devotion because then they can get what they want. It is not that it is not there in Tibetan culture. This is abused also. But that's not the meaning of the word.

That emotional attachment is seen just as a phase one has to go through. Not necessarily very strong, but it has to finish some day and then you get down to practise. The way I learnt devotion was - well, Gendun Rinpoche said: 'I don't need people who are attached to me and devoted to me, I want them to practise. If they really consider the teachings and really apply them, that's devotion'. In one's emotional attachment, one will have dreams of the lama, one will have prophecies in the dreams and so on. There are people who have received text transmissions even from me in dreams, just through attachment. I was very calmly asleep at night when they had those dreams.

Some of teachers have complained to us about current day Taiwanese, Malaysian, Chinese followers who are extremely devotional but don't practise. They make offerings for a better rebirth, very devotional, very attached, they finance big temples. But just a little practice is not easy for them. Prayers OK, but to really get down to practise shamatha-vipasyana, they find very hard. And of course, in western culture we also find that emotional attachment which does not lead to awakening. These are the pitfalls of devotion.

But then, to really develop that force of devotion and aspiration means to continuously practise guru yoga, but not in a sentimental way. It is this deep understanding that the guru we are praying to is actually inside. Outside and inside are the same. It is not that we make the guru very big and ourselves very small. No, it is the opposite. For as I see qualities in the guru, it is a reflection of the qualities I see in myself. We always dissolve the image of the guru into us and let the guru inside of us meditate.

Once in the retreat centres, when the seventeenth Karmapa came through, one of the students said: "When I die, will you guide me, will you save me in the bardo, will you care?" Karmapa replied: "No. Karma will take care of you." This is to show you these projections on teachers: 'I cannot practise, but because I have that sentimental devotion, then the teacher will kind of fish me out of the bardo and place me in Devacän, in Sukhavati.' No.

These are things that are important to be said and to be repeated. With all that understanding, if we then develop very strong devotion, like any guru yoga you like to practise, any relationship, but with that proper understanding that this is a mirror of how we can become, then please give your maximum into it. The force of that devotion can be so strong that your hairs stand on end, that you have tears running down and you feel shivering up your spine. The presence of the guru becomes absolutely felt in your heart and all your questions can be heard and answered. There is no limit to what is possible then.

The safe way to do it is to develop devotion towards a teacher who has already died. Not a living teacher. With a living teacher, be very careful with the emotional projections. They are father, mother and lover. If they are unreachable, all the better. If they are monks, for example. It was terrible for a certain type of woman when the seventeenth Karmapa Thaye Dorje announced in January 2017 that he is married now. So feel

into that and be careful with any form of guru-lama who tries to pull you. When there is a pull into some kind of dependent situation, be careful with that. It is not good, it is not helpful.

Question: What is the difference between a guru and a yidam?

Answer: A guru has a biography, a yidam has no biography. A guru has been born as a human being, has lived, has had a story, has had an activity and has died one day. And you can refer to that as bodhisattva or buddha activity.

When you refer to a yidam, this is on the level of no personal story. Vajrayogini, Tara, Chenresig and so on have no place, no time. They are energies of enlightenment, you can say.

Usually, in the guru yogas, we are in a yidam form, mostly Vajrayogini, and the guru stays in human form. There are some rare exceptions, for example the Karma Pakshi guru yoga, the second Karmapa, where one visualises oneself as the second Karmapa with Guru Rinpoche on top of the head, Rechungpa behind, Hayagriva as a yidam on the right side, Vajrayogini on the left side and Mahakala and Palden Lhamo as protectors in front. So this whole mandala then becomes our practice of guru yoga with a second mandala like that in front of us. But that's a rare exception.

But let's come back to the point of the passage here. Nothing better to practise than constantly praying to the Buddha, to the lineage, to the masters to receive their blessing, let them dissolve them into you and that energy will do the meditation from within.

Question: Is there any difference if you practise complete devotion to a guru or to a yidam?

Answer: It is very important to melt them and to see them as inseparable. There would be no yidam without the guru. All yidams are transmitted by gurus. So if one tries to escape the human relation with a master by focusing entirely on the yidam, that's a move of avoiding feedback. So we have to be clear about that as well. If you go deeper in practice, you need personal guidance. And that person who gives you the guidance is not necessarily the central figure of your guru yoga.

That's very important. And that's why it is good to do the guru yoga with a person who is already dead.

16th Karmapa instead of 17th, we don't have any politics in that way (laughter). Like this we are on the safe side. It is about the qualities we are meditating on, not about people. Because we have another 17th Karmapa Orgyen Thinley who is also full of qualities. So we get all mixed up when we meditate on people, especially when it is not so clear.

Usually the guru yoga on Vajradhara or Samantabhadra like the union of all gurus or on gurus like Yeshe Tsogyäl, Guru Rinpoche, Karmapa, Milarepa, Shakyamuni Buddha and so on who have a clear finished life story without scandals.

And then in relation to our learning we need a meditation guide. We need someone who shows us how to use our mind. And if we go far in our vajrayana practice, we need a vajra master. But this is a living relationship.

And then we meditate for example on Milarepa as our guru yoga, we think that our personal lama also manifests through the guru that we meditate on. This is the classical way to meditate. But we don't meditate directly on the living master.

I want to draw your attention to the possibility and the experience that one can have an enormous devotion to the dharma and to living beings. One can be greatly devoted to them. And that's a very important aspect of devotion because actually we want to understand the truth that liberates for the benefit of all. And that's devotion. And we will do everything for it. Whichever teacher communicates the truth, communicates the dharma, that's fine. We learn from everyone and for everyone, all sentient beings. Like this, our devotion can be very strong, but not so fixed, not limited.

Devotion to the dharma does not come through a formal guru yoga. It is the joy every time you hear a bit of dharma: 'Oh, wow, yes!' And you want to understand, you want to practise it. You are just so deeply touched by every word of truth which you hear. It is an uplifting force. You open any text of truth, and it is like you hear the teachings coming out through the books or wherever you get it. Wherever there is the mouth that opens and talks to you, you have a deep inspiration. And as the text says, you would even cross through fire walls and so on to just hear one sentence of real dharma. That's the bodhisattva's inspiration for the

dharma: I go throughout the whole world, on the other end of the world, I travel to the furthest place if there is a completely authentic teaching, that I need to hear.

Sometimes I feel that I have this strong link of devotion with Gendun Rinpoche. With the Buddha it is even stronger than that. But most strongly, more than all of that, is my link to the dharma because what they teach is not personal. It is not the dharma of Gendun or the dharma of Gautama Buddha. It is that dharma that liberates and I will do anything to not let that die out, that's the most sacred thing, that's the most important and also the devotion to that is much more important than the devotion to some personal teacher or personal teaching. It is this universal truth which liberates, that's like my whole heart energy is there.

And you know: it is not the transmission. That's not the important point. It is what it can do for sentient beings. This devotion is actually just another aspect of compassion. It is only that. It is because there is a very, very strong wish to be of help to others and to do what is really beneficial, what liberates beings. That's why the dharma becomes so important. Because it is only the truth that liberates and it is that what we want. We actually want to free beings. People, animals and so on. We want to have them in their full potential. We need the means to get there. And that's why the dharma becomes so important. This devotion is actually not different from compassion. It is the compassion which searches for means and wisely discovers what that could be and then becomes completely devoted to that in order to help, in order to be of benefit.

I said this during this retreat already: When I hear "serving the dharma", this is like when you have devotion to the dharma, you would serve the dharma. But actually this does not exist. We are only serving sentient beings. That's the only point. So our devotion always goes towards sentient beings who need help.

I repeat: Gendun Rinpoche said that devotion and compassion are exactly the same energy of the heart, only that devotion goes up to the buddhas to receive the means to serve with compassion all sentient beings. But it is the same heart energy.

*"For beginners starting to meditate, it is important to make short sessions. In the beginning each coming and going of the breath is a session."*

Keep your sessions short, very attentive, you might even feel ashamed of yourself doing such short sessions but go from success to success. Like: One in-breath, one session. Be able to take one in-breath fully concentrated.

Let's do it together to let you have some experience of what sometimes we need when our mind is wild.

Don't take up a special posture, anything is fine.

Let's take one fully present in-breath. Very good.

Now let's link over: In-breath, turning point and out-breath. Let's not have any other thought come in. Just that: Feeling it and doing it.

Great, that's it. And then you do that several times before prolonging it to two breaths. We need to learn undistractedness and go from success to success. It is so helpful.

Walking meditation: One step at a time. One step. Break. One step. Pause. It feels so silly but it's exactly what we need.

Question: Can't this be slow mindfulness?

Answer: No danger. You can take a quick step.

So find the right dosage, and then, gradually, as you become accustomed to it, you go on for longer. And if the next moment your mind is agitated, go back to very short sessions. It happens to me that sometimes my mind is very agitated and I do what I teach. I do it myself. I am not talking about another person. I do it when I need it. And I enjoy doing it.

Question: What is the difference between suppressing thoughts and exercising undistractedness.

Answer: No problem. You do it at certain times of the day and you always have pauses where anything can appear. There is no problem. If you can remain undistracted and let your thoughts appear, it is

wonderful. It is a little bit more advanced. But when you are distracted, there is no benefit in letting your mind go wild.

*“Later, when they become longer and longer, it is important to part in good terms from your practice. With good experiences at the end of your last retreat, you will have good experiences as soon as you start your next retreat. It works the same way in the bad sense, and it applies for sessions as well.”*

Finish with good experiences at the end of your last retreat. Then you will have good experiences as soon as you start your next retreat or session. So we take care to finish every session early enough, before we are exhausted and before we accumulate difficulties. We want to finish on a good note. If we don't overdo it and finish the retreat well, we already wish for the next one, we cannot wait. With joy, we learn best. We take care that there is joy in our practice, especially towards the end of sessions and retreats.

*“Moreover, if you stray into laziness at the beginning of your retreat or your session, it will get worse and more difficult, and later it will be hard to correct. If in the beginning you make short practice sessions, it will be easy to meditate until the end of the session or the retreat and the continuation will be smooth. If the mind is clearly and one-pointedly focused on whatever meditation you are doing, you will be able to stay with it for a long time. If it is not clear, make your visualization bright and vivid, and stay relaxed and uncontrived while keeping in mind, “Like this I shall meditate.””*

He is writing that because to make these short sessions and to be on top of it, needs a little bit of effort. You put in a very structured plan, how to organise your time, how you do it, you really go for it. But you make short sessions. if you begin with a laissez-faire attitude, it is very difficult to correct.

When the mind is not clear, we open up to natural luminosity and we do not make more effort but connect to our motivation and the clarity of knowing how we really want to meditate. So it is all about this skill to take ourselves by the hand, not making too much effort, but starting with a good dose of really doing what we set out to do, make the breaks soon enough, do it again, until we find that the mind has found its balance and we can go with that.

*“Settling the mind completely by means of the instructions on concentration is called calm abiding. However, not encountering any distracting conditions, it will remain only an ordinary experience and cannot be counted as concentration.”*

*Because even those who are as dull as sheep experience it, it is not the authentic calm abiding. When one obtains by means of meditation practice a one-pointed mind for just a moment, or a day, a month, a year or a kalpa, it is appropriate to speak of the various divisions of small, medium or great calm abiding in meditative concentration.*

*Calm abiding is called like that because the characteristics of mind poisons or conceptualization in the mind have been calmed, and there is one-pointed abiding in the nature of virtue.”*

So the measure for our shamatha, our calm abiding, is not how we feel in meditation, but how stable our mind is when we are challenged emotionally. And shamatha happens when, inspired by challenging situations, we can remain settled. Settled is much better than concentrated, the mind stays, it settles without all the tension of trying to keep it there.

Small shamatha is when there is still a lot going on in mind, but we are completely relaxed with that as if we were watching a waterfall, but not getting involved in it.

Medium or average shamatha is when the mental processes become much lighter and flowing, it is much more like watching the process of a flowing river. That's average, very relaxed, not involved. not identified.

And great shamatha is when our mind becomes as calm as the sea without any winds, any waves, completely calm and luminous as if the sun were shining on the ocean.

What we call shine or shamatha, calm abiding, is called that because the characteristics of the mind poisons, of the kleshas, i.e. the thoughts, the emotional movements in connection with that have been calmed down. So first they have been calmed down enough to have that distance, like watching a waterfall, then it becomes even more easy and then they become completely calm.

We settle in a completely virtuous mind. So, for example, the concentration of a thief wanting to rob a bank is also enormous, but it is not Shine, it is not settling in virtue, it is not that absorption that contributes to the path of liberation.

*“The cause of calm abiding: it is based on ethic discipline. Its essence is the absence of thoughts nourished by mind poisons. Its condition: it arises from an exceptionally settled mind. Its benefit is the subduing of the mind poisons and of gross suffering.”*



Meditation becomes easy with wholesome conduct. Shamatha is about reducing ego-centred attitudes. The kleshas are greatly reduced. So that is already part of liberation. When there is no shamatha, then there is great involvement with oneself, the mind is constantly agitated by self-concern. When our mind is turned towards the benefit of all, which is called wholesome conduct or sila, with this respect for everyone and this very pure wholesome conduct, it becomes easier and easier to have wholesome conduct and to let the mind settle because we are not so concerned with ourselves.

However, even within that, we have to take care to develop the conditions for non-distraction. There is a little practice to be done to keep the mind focused until it naturally stays. And the benefit is that our lives become much happier because we are less entangled with the normal functioning of kleshas. Much less suffering, greater fluidity of mind, much more relaxed.

## LESSON 76 CONTINUED: THE YOGA OF ONE-POINTEDNESS

G 2017 (21, second part)

*“A practitioner who clearly sees the nature of mind and whose mind stays one-pointedly, experiences his consciousness as radiating, clear, and pure. From that arise the experiences of bliss, clarity and nonconceptuality. Depending on whether he is untrained, trained or well trained in it—that means depending on whether he can stay in it for a short or a long time, or as long as he wishes—one calls this one-pointedness small, medium or great.”*

We usually understand seeing the nature of mind as having a nondual insight into the nature of mind which is not the way it is used here. Here it means only as much as clearly seeing the process nature, the ungraspable nature, all of this still from the point of view of an observer.

### SMALL ONE-POINTEDNESS

*“When there is nothing fabricated and modified in the mind, the obvious movements of thought ceases. When the mind has gone into bliss, clarity and nonconceptuality, it will remain one-pointed. As the practitioner has not mastered his concentration at this level, these experiences will not always appear when he meditates. At other times they will appear even when he is not meditating. Sometimes they are clear, then again they are not clear. At this time he has not reached realization and does not feel a great certainty. But it can*

*uplift him, it is just the beginning of primordial awareness and just the first step on the path.”*

It is interesting that timeless awareness is dawning on us. It is coming. There is not necessarily an instant of recognition, but it is coming. It is showing itself. The first thing is that this conceptual thinking using words finishes. No need for that in meditation. Initially we think that there is no more thinking. But then we see that there is all this non-conceptual thinking going on, all these little movements, these impulses and so on. We see that there is a lot going on, but it is not this ruffled mind with intense involvement with conceptual processes. Often, when we meditate at this level, we enter into very peaceful states of mind. But not always.

But it can happen to us that even when we are not meditating, we are sitting somewhere, waiting for a bus, that same state of meditation appears by itself. Our mind has already gotten used to relaxation and that can show any time. But it is not stable. We need to continue. We will lose it if we stop practicing there.

*“Experiences at this level of one-pointedness can be compared to seeing the crescent moon on the first day of the lunar month. When the practitioner leaves his mind uncontrived and rests in pure bliss, he will not want to disrupt this experience. But if he does not disrupt it, true meditation will not be born in him. He should gain certainty that he will only recognize the nature of arising thoughts as having no inherent existence, if he disrupts this experience and lets thoughts arise unhindered.”*

A very tiny sickle of the moon, not much to see. But you cannot say that it is not the moon. It is already the moon, but you don't see much of it.

We need to have challenges. We need to know the way to get into it, so we need to get out and in again. We have to travel many times back and forth to become a real master at entering quickly into meditation and also maintaining it when it is at times interrupted.

Some of you might wonder if you already experience small one-pointedness? What is less than that? All the practitioners who have not yet had experiences of joy, clarity and non-conceptuality, they are before that. We do not yet talk about a yoga of one-pointedness.

Question: Can you give an example of how you destroy experiences?

Answer: Very easy. Create thoughts. Take any emotion, let it become stronger and look into the thought, look into the emotion. No big deal. It is just that one consciously allows for movements.

Actually, the sadhanas include this. They stimulate visualisations, they stimulate all kinds of movements in mind so that we can again and again look through the nature of those movements. We can see that. That's built into the sadhanas.

*“At the time of small one-pointedness he has determined that the mind is clear and empty, linked with an experience of bliss. In this state the arising thoughts become naturally transparent and there arises an intellectual certainty that this is meditation. Since in the post-perception the so-called solidifying mindfulness appears, the joyful experiences are mostly experienced as being solid.”*

Here, at this first level, we are still clinging to our experiences, we are making them into some 'thing': "I have had this, wow!" This kind of solidifying. And this is especially strong of course in activity.

*“When he is mindful having experiences, he has the mental habit of thinking, “They are empty and appear in the mind”*

So actually, we don't really see it. We are convincing ourselves, we are reminding ourselves: It is like that. We talk ourselves into it a little bit: Not to solidify, we know we are doing this, and we try to convince ourselves to cling less and to see the emptiness of that experience. So at this stage, you have the comments of the wise meditator in the background commenting on your meditation. We are trained already in the dharma and we give ourselves good instructions. And we believe that we are more into it than what we have actually understood.

*“Dreams are not much different from before, only a little more vivid and lucid. Sometimes his practice is difficult and full of fluctuations and he thinks that his meditation is not going well, while devotion, pure perception and compassion increase.”*

Pure perception (tib. dag-srang) means to perceive the buddha nature, the qualities in our dharma brothers and sisters and everyone else. So we have a much more positive attitude towards life which is a sign that our practice is going deeper, although there are all these fluctuations.

Question: How is it to perceive the qualities in others?

Answer: Before we might have been more critical in seeing the defects of others, but due to getting to know our own mind better, we are also more sensitive to how others are, we are more compassionate, and we begin to see the world from a more relaxed perspective. And we can see the qualities more easily in that moment.

We are getting more relaxed. we are having wonderful experiences in meditation where we feel like coming home. This is like a healing which is taking place. We are beginning to heal, to feel more comfortable in ourselves, in our own mind. And since we begin to feel finally at home in our own mind, the way we see the outside is much more positive. We are not so tense anymore, we are not so frightened and we begin to see the qualities of others more. This will continue now all through the following yogas, it will continually increase all the time.

Question: Is this related to suchness (German: Sosein, literally: "Being as it is")?

Answer: We begin to simplify, into just being. But what we call suchness is actually the nondual state of mind. So that comes a little bit later, as a direct experience. But I like to use that term very early because "Sosein" is a very good guide to our practice, not trying to change anything, just to be as such, as it is, and we discover this all along the path.

Question: Can you explain more about solidifying mindfulness?

Answer: Do you remember when I talked to you about this after-image, this mindfulness which creates an impression of what was just experienced (See commentary to Lesson 38)? This is part of solidifying mindfulness. It is a mindfulness with a degree of fixation inside.

I will give you examples:

The technique of labelling (German: Benennen) is, for example, when there is thinking, to say "thinking", or when we are walking in walking meditation to say: "Right. Left." Or: "Lifting the foot, lowering the foot." All of that is solidifying mindfulness. So in our meditation, when there is a thought arising, any comment to noticing that thought, for example: "Ah, I saw it", is solidifying. It is not the real fluidity of being in the moment, there is something extra happening. All of that is fixation within the practice of mindfulness.

Or you are, for example, driving your car, and you are very mindful and the observer is sort of mindful of how mindful you are. This is also solidifying mindfulness.

From those descriptions you will see that it is unavoidable to go through that phase, it is OK. But we also need to know that it is not yet it, we have to go further.

## LESSON 77: MEDIUM ONE-POINTEDNESS

*“Sometimes the meditator experiences concentration even when not meditating, and while meditating this experience becomes stable. In the transparency of well-trained concentration, which is characterized by bliss, clarity and non-conceptuality, he can display different abilities, such as conditioned clairvoyance and miraculous powers. During this experience less thoughts than before arise, and whatever appears becomes naturally transparent. During the post-perception the appearances are experienced as clear and empty. Whenever he remembers spaciousness he experiences them as meditation but otherwise as being solid. He dreams less than before. Sometimes those experiences appear, then again they do not appear. He feels very joyful while meditating.”*

So we get more relaxed. Even more relaxed than before. And of course, because we are so relaxed, when we meditate no great mental activity arises.

Pretty much every time we sit down, we are able to enter very calm mind. That becomes completely stable and reliable. In activity, what we had before; that the meditation suddenly arises, happens much more often. And the kind of presence and stability we experience in activity gets deeper. In activity, that presence also becomes deeper and more natural.

We have the feeling of being well-trained, we can rely on our understanding of how to enter meditation. It works pretty much every time. And we are not afraid of thoughts anymore. Thinking processes become so clearly perceptible as if we were visually seeing the process. They don't mix. We see them very precisely, but we see them more like rainbows, something transparent, something we can look through. As if the spaciousness in them that happens can be perceived at the same time as the thoughts. Physical and mental well-being, clarity and non-conceptuality arise pretty much every time we sit down.

And the duration of practice becomes long; when we meditate, we can sit for hours and hours. And due to that, depths of relaxation, some clairvoyant powers can pop up here and there.

Then there are fluctuating experiences of clairvoyance, clairsaudience, thought-reading, perception of situations arising in the future, a little bit like foreseeing the future: The mind opens. becomes more receptive. But that's doesn't happen to everyone going through the medium one-pointedness. You might go through all the four yogas without having those experiences.

When in activity, like going through town, doing your work, this feeling that even material objects are transparent continues, this is specific to that stage. It disappears afterwards. That transparent, light, easy feeling depends very much on being in touch with the spaciousness of mind. When we remember spaciousness, everything is easy. When we forget it, the clinging comes back.

So, at this stage it is very helpful to do sky-gazing or to meditate on space and to help yourself to relax, open up into the spaciousness of mind.

For a person who during the day doesn't cling to thoughts and to what arises in mind, of course the same will happen in the dreams, so there are much less dreams because there is no clinging to the contents. And this continues also in the night. One is not clinging to the contents of what otherwise would appear and develop into a dream.

Here, in this stage, when an experience begins, the meditator might be aware at night of dreaming but in the sense that a movement starts but because there is no interest, it stops. The dream does not develop. If the meditator is aware enough, notices beginnings of dreams but no further development.

When you are at that stage, you don't have to motivate yourself to meditate any more. It is so joyful, it is so much fun and you feel so at home. No need to give yourself an additional push, you are looking for the next opportunity to do it all the time.

Question: What is meant by transparency of thoughts and how is this possible in daily active life?

Answer: The belief in the reality of thoughts and the power of the thoughts has become so small that there is no more belief that the thoughts are something to be taken as anything serious. It is not that the thoughts are becoming weaker, but there is no-one believing in them. Our belief in them is diminishing. Thoughts are like they were before, but they are perceived differently. It is like when you have children going to the theatre, they might even believe that the actors are actually fighting on stage, that it is real what is going on.

And now this meditator, while in meditation, usually has no more belief in anything real there, they can already see through, it is just a little karmic drama appearing, but no more belief. However, outside in activity, one might still be completely caught up. Usually one is relaxed, but sometimes one gets completely caught up.

Question: Is this still the shamatha phase?

Answer: Yes, it is shamatha, but you will see that the differentiation between shamatha and vipashyana is not strictly drawn in any of these yogas. The insight increases as the dawning of the sun or the moon. There is an increase in understanding. There is no shamatha without insight. The experiences one has in meditation lead to an increasing intellectual certainty about the nature of mind which becomes complete at the end of great one-pointedness. Then the experiences have led to complete clarity concerning that, but it is not yet an emotional certainty, a certainty from within, because sometimes one is carried away. It is not so deep, and one does not always easily find your way back to it.

Question: Clairvoyant experiences without this level of shamatha?

Answer: Actually, there are people who have these experiences without having any shamatha, because of previous lives, previous involvement with these faculties, they seem to be able to manifest. You might have also changed your attitude towards them. You might have cared more in the beginning and later on you said: No, it is a side-track.

What happened for me was that as it started a little bit, I was just in this vipassana phase and there was a very clear teaching that this was an obstacle to your practice, and so I made prayers that it stop. It stopped.

Now I am open to it maybe coming back or developing, because it could be helpful for helping beings.

But there is something about one's fascination and pride. One puts a certain energy into that area. And as life becomes more fulfilling, you don't need that anymore.

Question: One-pointedness?

Answer: It means that our attention, our awareness focuses on what is most important now and can stay there without distraction. Actually, the old term means one top, one summit, like the top of a mountain. Going towards the summit. So it is not going towards a point, but is going towards a peak; to that which is most important. Our ability to hold our mind on what is most important is this one-pointedness. Unfortunate people in samsara might feel what is most important, but they can't keep their mind on it, they always waver, they are always distracted.

So in the beginning, what we feel is important might be to be able to stay with current experience, for example in the body. Mindfulness of the body and full awareness of that. That's where we direct our attention to. Later on we think: that's not really so important, it is much more important to always feel love and compassion. So our peak, which we go towards is love and compassion, and we remain undistractedly directed towards love. Then we might find out: Just to be open in the heart-mind, just that openness includes love, includes wisdom, includes fluidity, that's the peak to which I want to direct all my awareness.

Our reference, the summit to which we want to go, to which we direct our attention, changes as we develop our practice. And that's good. For example, we can be undistractedly aware of the nature of everything experienced. That could be one-pointedness.

So there is an idea of a unified energy. All our energy goes into one direction, all our attention, our interest, our absorption is in that.

DAY 9 (170708-0303-0305)

Meditation on Ngöndro Guruyoga

G 2017 (22)

(Recitation)



Having in this way developed refuge and bodhicitta, we let the refuge dissolve into us.

From the blessing, we arise ourselves as Vajrayogini. we are a standing female Buddha, red in colour, with a very powerful expression and very attractive, very fluid also with dancing movements. We are in dancing posture, standing on our left leg, the right one is lifted up and we move up the body we see that our left hand is holding a skull cup at the level of our heart and the right hand is lifted in dancing posture, holding a curved knife. We can feel inside that fluidity and complete stability of the mind of enlightenment. We are a complete Buddha surrounded by the flames of wisdom. So you can imagine being surrounded by a sphere of blazing fire that represents that all pervading understanding. If you look at yourself, you see that you are wearing five skulls on the front of your hair which represent the five buddha families. You also have lots of bone ornaments which symbolize the presence of all the awakened qualities. that knife which you have in your right hand actually is the one with which you can cut all the dualistic concepts. From the skull cup which you have in your left hand, it is as if you were drinking the nectar of bliss and emptiness. We are dancing on a corpse which means overcoming the illusion of life and death. In our left elbow there is a long stick made of bone. It is called a khatvanga. It has three heads on the top: A fresh one, a semi-dry one and one completely dry skull. They represent the three kayas of nrmanakaya, sambhogakaya and dharmakaya. This khatvanga also represents our secret partner, the fact that wisdom is always in union with compassion.

Above our head, on a seat of a lotos, sun and moon, is our root lama. The root lama takes on the form of a blue vajradhara, the blue Buddha Dorjechang with all the ornaments. If you look more closely, you can see that in his right hand he is holding a vajra and in the left a bell crossed in front of his heart. He is sits in vajra posture which indicates complete buddhahood. He is the essence of our mahamudra lineage and around him, above him you find all the other accomplished masters of that lineage.

He is sitting on the crown of our head as our crown jewel. And as we turn our attention to him, we contemplate the qualities of awakening. His blue colour indicates to us that the nature of mind is like the sky. The nature of phenomena is ungraspable like space, beyond arising and ceasing. But although phenomena are beyond birth and death, they nevertheless appear as clear as the moon in water. Just like vajradhara on the crown of our head.

And as soon as I think of the Buddha, the Buddha is there. All lamas, yidams, dakinis and dakas, when I now pray to you: "Please come here"- instantly, by the power of our trust, they all appear, instantly, and I realize that they have always been there. They show me my own mind as the dharmakaya, the dimension of truth.

In deep devotion, I offer my own body, all my possessions, together with all the offerings that I can visualise. I make prostrations, I make offerings and sing praises of enlightenment.

I also confess everything that has separated me so far from my vajrayogini nature. And I promise to remember in the future my true nature and not to act like this anymore.

I rejoice in the positive deeds of all sentient beings. I rejoice so deeply as if I were doing all these wholesome actions myself.

I ask the awakened ones to stay with us to teach us. Please, please, teach me, teach us the true meaning of dharma. Imagine that all the Buddhas above Vajradhara, including Vajradhara, accept and will stay and teach.

And I turn to them and ask them:

Please grant your blessing that I develop just like you limitless love and compassion.

Please grant your blessing that I directly understand ultimate truth, timeless awareness.

Please grant your blessing that I realize this illusory body as the nirmanakaya.

Please grant your blessing that I realize vitality as the sambhogakaya.

Please grant your blessing that I realize my own mind as the dharmakaya.

Please grant your blessing that I realize all three kayas in their inseparability.

We imagine that they respond to our request and that light rays touch us in body, speech and mind. White light rays enter our forehead, red light rays enter our throat centre and blue light rays enter our heart cakra. And then all the three light rays come together and we meditate for a first silent phase.

We meditate in the awareness that we are Vajrayogini, one with all the Buddhas.

In case our mind becomes restless, we can turn to any one of those Buddhas and ask for support, for blessings. We can turn to Vajradhara himself, or to the great mahasiddhas of India like Ratnamati, Saraha, Nagarjuna, Maitripa or to all the lineage lamas starting with Marpa, Milarepa, Gampopa, Karmapa. And all of those many masters who are part of this mahamudra transmission lineage. If we wish, we can hear their teachings. They all teach timeless awareness, the union of compassion and wisdom.

I pray to them:

Please grant your blessing that I realize nirvana to be the very nature of samsara.

Grant your blessing that I stop manipulating my mind, that I see that there is nothing to cultivate, nothing to reject.

Grant your blessing that I realise suchness, our true being, beyond all ideas of existence and nonexistence.

Grant up your blessing that I give up this idea of someone who needs to awaken and that I give up this notion of some awakening to be obtained.

Grant your blessing that I see that emotions and veils have no true existence.

Grant your blessing that I understand mahamudra. The ground, the path and the fruit of mahamudra practice.

And again I receive that blessing and I meditate for a while without further prayer, just sitting in the blessing.

And then, after a while when our mind becomes a little distracted or restless, then we continue with more prayer.

Lamas of the lineage, mahamudra masters, please grant your blessing that I develop true renunciation, that I don't care anymore for profit or renown, that I truly give up the eight worldly dharmas, that I deeply renounce to dualistic identification.

Please grant your blessing that true devotion arises in my being.  
Devotion free of any artifice.

Grant your blessing that my mind becomes one with your mind.

Grant your blessing that from within that unity I realise all appearances as the play of the dharmakaya.

Grant your blessing that I realise the inseparability of samsara and nirvana.

And again I receive all their support and blessing and rest in meditation.

And then, after a while, I extend my prayer to include all living beings, my former parents and in my compassion I imagine that we all develop devotion and understanding together.

And we pray the following famous prayer:

All beings, my mothers, as many as space is vast, pray to the lama, the precious Buddha.

All beings, my mothers, as many as space is vast, pray to the lama, the dharmakaya that penetrates everything.

All beings, my mothers, as many as space is vast, pray to the lama, the sambhogakaya of great completion.

All beings, my mothers, as many as space is vast, pray to the nirmanakaya of great compassion.

And usually we would repeat this prayer many times, developing compassion, devotion and understanding simultaneously. We can also replace this with the mantra Karmapa Chenno. Of course Karmapa is the name of one of the principal masters of the lineage, but here it takes on the meaning: 'May the awakened activities be performed for the benefit of all sentient beings.'

Karmapa Chenno....

As we do the prayer, we stay in the union of devotion, compassion and wisdom.

And then after a while of meditation, we would again pray to the masters above our head:

Please, please grant your blessing that my mind gives up clinging to a self.

Please grant your blessing that contentment arises in this mind stream.

Please grant your blessing that all paths that are not in accordance with truth cease.

Grant your blessing that this mind is realised as unborn.

Grant your blessing that all confusion dissolves in its own nature.

Grant your blessing that the world of appearances is realised as the body of truth, the dharmakaya.

We repeat this prayer many times. And we pray until our vision changes, until we see the world with the eyes of the masters.

And to finish this session, we then request the four initiations.

All the surrounding masters dissolve into Vajradhara in the centre. He becomes the complete focus of my trust and devotion.

White rays of light emanate from his forehead and dissolve into my forehead and dissolve all the veils of the body. I am empowered to see myself as a Buddha which will enable me to manifest as a nirmanakaya.

Then red light rays stream from his throat into my throat cakra and purify all the veils of speech. I am empowered to enter the communication of a Buddha, to work with the subtle energies and channels, and through this finally be able to manifest as a sambhogakaya, a body of enjoyment for the benefit of beings.

Then blue light rays come from the heart of Vajradhara into my heart and purify the veils of mind. I am empowered to enter the awareness of all the Buddhas, to enter into union with all phenomena. And to realise as a fruit the dharmakaya.

Then, as a forth empowerment, the white, red and blue lights emanate simultaneously. They simultaneously dissolve into my forehead, throat and heart cakra and their blessing makes me inseparable from the lama.

Vajradhara then dissolves into me and we become inseparable in complete openness.

(Dedication)

One practice of the guru yoga would include to visualize oneself as Vajrayogini, visualize the guru-lama on top of our head, to develop strong devotion, let the blessing come and meditate. This would be like one phase of the guru yoga. It would be complete in itself.

As you can see, this guru yoga in the preliminaries is made up of four or five such phases. So we cycle again and again into devotion, then dissolve, rest in meditation. As the mind becomes active again, then we pray again. You will see that every aspect of these various prayers, including the mantras and so on, is a little bit different. It stimulates slightly different areas of our being. If you want to do all of that deeply in one session, you need two to three hours.

When our mind is reached by the blessing, and we just sit, we never finish.

What is important to us is to learn to develop devotion, to really do it, which includes learning to pray. It is very important to find a way of praying which opens the heart. The best is to find into this prayer where we are not separated from the sources of inspiration, where we don't feel separation. Not separated from the Buddhas, not separated from sentient beings, not separated from complete understanding. This is the unity of devotion, compassion and wisdom. And this is called the supreme way of practising mahamudra, this is the easy way to practise mahamudra. The other preliminaries prepare us to practise in this way. When we have found into that way, we continue like this for the rest of our lives. Yidam practice is the same as practising in the unity of compassion, devotion and wisdom.

Let's enjoy practice!

G 2017 (23, first part)

It is very important to understand that these visualizations have not appeared as pedagogical devices, but they have appeared as visions. Buddhas manifesting in visions and talking to the practitioner and giving the instructions: 'Practise this mantra while doing this and this practice, these are the important points, transmit this to the disciples.' So there is a direct inspiration passing through with instructions on how to do that practice. The masters did not change it. They did not say: I don't like that, we'll do it a little bit differently. When we have gone a long way in our realisation, then we might feel: 'Oh, yes, now I understand the meaning of all of that and I can focus more on one aspect and other aspects may not be so important.' But in the beginning it is difficult to know what's good for us. What we usually choose is what we like and we leave out what we don't like. But maybe, what we don't like turns out to be very important for us to practise, because it will lead us exactly into that area where we have to work, where there is a lot of work to do. And if we practise what we like, we often get stuck. Even though it's a good practice and a good aspect of practice that we like, but we practise it with a clinging and fascination and don't go very far.

Usually, all these traditions and practices have developed over the centuries and are in themselves very balanced. If we take parts out of them and combine them, we are likely to create an imbalance.

For example, the Zen approach. You like maybe their cushions, maybe their shrine, but you don't like the rest. But it goes together. Some people say: 'OK, I am doing zen, I practise everything that is done inside the zendo'. But they forget taking care of the garden, the kitchen, the interviews with the roshi, the picnics out together, they forget the other aspects of the practice that are actually balancing.

And like this, some people who come to Tibetan Buddhism, they love the visualizations, the mantra chanting, but they forget, for example, the shine-lhagthong practice. Others like this shine-lhagthong that we are doing here but they forget that all of this is embedded in a world of transmission, where all the senses, all the appearances are actually used in the practice for developing this understanding.

Some people like Chenresig practice, but they forget that Tibetans did Chenresig all day long, they didn't stop the mantra. And you are going into a completely different realm of experience if you don't stop the mantra.

Perhaps in the end it is best to practise the whole package because taking bits and pieces will probably not be so successful.

We are progressing, I am very happy about the progress, but as you want to go forward, with all the various demands of individual adaptations, I feel a little bit exasperated. It is just because the ego-clinging is so strong, it just doesn't want to open to the rest of the package. I just want to choose what I like and leave out what I don't like. - If I go with that, I accept your personal preferences as the lama, which I shouldn't. That's why I am in a dilemma about how to communicate to you: Watch out, watch out, don't put me into a role where I have to say "No" to you because you want to have a nice short guru yoga which is fitting to your needs and so on. I am a little bit tired, frustrated, touching on limits of how far I can go with you.

So the approach I am following is very much like Gendun Rinpoche, that of giving you access to the depths of the dharma so that we understand by receiving this mahamudra transmission, what it is really all about, the very heart essence of it. And then, with that understanding and inspiration, you will see what methods you need to practise now to develop that understanding. So I teach the essence before the methods.

Most traditional teachers would teach you the methods before the essence. With every method, they will teach a little bit more of the



essence. Every method unlocks some essential understanding and over the years you would discover all the depth of meaning which lies behind. For example, a Tibetan teacher would say: 'Pray and you will see! Right now, pray to these visualisations, these are the four empowerments, here are a few words of meaning about them, as you receive them, you will understand what it means.' No instructions about the nature of mind before you have finished the four preliminaries, including the full guru yoga. So, that's a few years of practice before you receive the essential teachings.

But I trust your sensitivity, you feel how far you can go now with your meditation. As you touch your limits, you will look for methods, you will open up with the help of methods in order to go further. You notice that you are touching limits, and that's where naturally the wish comes, and that is very healthy also because you feel: 'Yes, I want to use the methods. Now I am ready for it'.

Probably I am like every other teacher: I teach pretty much the path I followed myself. I was so obstinate that I didn't want to use all those vajrayana methods, I wanted to go directly to the source, the key teachings, until I ran up against that wall of duality, the observer, and I couldn't get through. Then I discovered the power of mantra, visualisations, devotion, pranayama practices, you know these yogic practices. And then it opened up, there was no more wall. Thanks to those methods. Without that, it wouldn't have been possible.

Question: You said that Dorjechang is the primordial Buddha. Does he have a real existence?

Answer: That's the problem with the word primordial. Actually, it means more like the essential Buddha, the essence. That wisdom inside Gautama Siddhartha, who was like the prince of the Shakyas, that wisdom inside him that guided him, that made him understand, this wisdom is Dorjechang.

That would be a symbol. That would be easy to understand. Now, what makes it more complicated is that this Vajradhara actually manifests in visions and gives instructions. He has no biography. He lives nowhere, he has no buddha realm. Somehow that buddha wisdom manifests in that form and in other forms spontaneously, without having to go anywhere where it stays between meditations. So the vision disappears and doesn't have to go anywhere.

It is a mystery. I cannot explain. I am just completely amazed that it is like that. Coming from nowhere and going nowhere. And that's like my mind, which wants real beings to stay in real places and has difficulties to understand. But there have been so many encounters with this Vajradhara, he has spoken to so many female and male practitioners, that we can say: 'Yes, this is the essence of enlightenment'. The same as Samantabhadra, just a different name. I have the intuition that this dimension that we call Vajradhara and which can manifest like that, is behind all the buddhas and yidams. And that sometimes it uses the channel of buddhas, yidams and gurus to talk to us, and sometimes it manifests directly like that. I try to explain it to myself: 'This creativity of mind, that dynamic awakened mind, has the possibility of manifesting any time as whatever. It will manifest in the form of a rabbit to teach me, if that's what I need.'

Question: Is there a truth that is really existing?

Answer: There is a difference between really existing and truth. So the base, the thoughts and the emotions have no real existence. They appear, but that's not truth, they are not solid. Truth is how it really is. But it is not one truth. It is how it really is, that's the truth. For example, it is true that all of this appears without having solid existence. And there are many other true statements we can make. It is also true that the words of these statements never cover what they try to describe.

There is truth, but you cannot pinpoint it. It is always manifests as less illusion and a little bit more clarity. But if it becomes clearer, you go beyond the concepts and it is not an object which we discover, we become truth. The whole process becomes free of illusion. So no-one owns the truth, no-one discovers the truth. We become true. That's all. Not the truth. We become true, authentic, without illusion.

So right now, we can say that you are on the path of discovering the four truths. This is taking in conventional terms. (1) You discover that there is a lot of stress in suffering. (2) You discover also the truth about the origin of that suffering. (3) You discover that there is freedom and (4) that there is a way to become free.

The truth is a lot to take in. It is a lot to digest. There is something about reassuring truth and unsettling truth. Truth that is pronounced within samsaric conditioning and respects that, is usually reassuring. We can

be sure of knowing the truth. Truth which does not respect our normal samsaric conditioning and shakes it up, is deeply unsettling, but in the long term it is the only liberating truth.

## ENHANCING THE PRACTICE BY ELIMINATING POTENTIAL MISUNDERSTANDINGS AND ERRORS

### LESSON 65: MISUNDERSTANDING EMPTINESS AS AN OBJECT OF KNOWLEDGE

G 2017 (23, second part)

Basically, the Karmapa is teaching us emptiness by talking about how it can be misunderstood.

We might take emptiness as an object, of knowledge, as something we might know.

*“Someone who has abundantly studied the scriptures and logical analysis, like for instance the logical deduction that one and many do not exist, will meditate that all phenomena are empty, in the sense of nonexistent, and will believe this to be what the designations “the ultimate” “mahamudra” and “the abiding nature of things” refer to. When he then receives pith instructions from a teacher and is supposed to meditate, he tells himself that this is not different from what he has already understood. He will get lost in deceptive, destructive talk, pretending that there are no wholesome and unwholesome actions, settling with conceptual constructs such as, “Everything is dharmakaya,” or “Apart from emptiness there are no phenomena, what is there to meditate on?” His mind will follow the patterns of his previous studies of the scriptures and logical analysis, and he will not bring forth meditative experiences.”*

The most simple definition of emptiness is: “empty of a self, empty of solid existence.” No core, no unchanging core in the person or the phenomena. We come across this in all the dharma books. And we also might study with dharma teachers who make us go through logical analysis and we might read books on that. For example, that famous exercise which is called “the one and the many”, where we analyse: Is there one thing, can we find one definable unchanging object?

If we can find one thing, then we can find other things as well and then we might be able to say: Yes, reality is made out of many things. This is the normal idea of people that we live in a world made up of people,

animals, houses, nature and so on, made up of many things. They all together make our world. That's the normal way of thinking.

When we analyse carefully, not only through meditation but also with logical thinking, we find out that no object exists independently of others. Whether we look into our mind or whether we analyse outer objects, all the time we find forces at work. We find that everything is process, wherever we look and investigate. On the gross level, the universe is process, and on the subatomic level also, everything is process. And everything in between: Incredible process.

If we investigate our own perceptions, thoughts, emotions, all the objects of perception, we cannot delineate them, we cannot put frontiers on where the experience starts and where it stops. We cannot even find instants of time for which we could say that, for that time span, the object exists. When we look into our experience, we cannot even find time limits within which we can say: Within that instant the object exists without changing. And by logical deduction, we come to the conclusion: Not a single object exists as such, everything is process within a continuum of change and in which we cannot define the single continuous presence of anything.

All of that makes complete sense and it's true, but we can then move from that understanding into this idea: Nothing exists! There are no objects, objects are non-existent. Of course the conclusion is: If we can't even find one object, then we cannot find many. And this means that the world is not constructed of many objects because we can't even find a single one.

It might occur to us that we begin talking about this as the non-existence of everything we normally believe to be existent. And we think that this is the understanding of the ultimate, of mahamudra, of what we call the nature of phenomena, the nature of mind. But somehow the idea of an absence, of a nonexistence of what we normally we perceive to be real, has crept into our mind. We believe we know emptiness as (being) non-existent. Which is wrong!

Let's say I come to this teaching here with this kind of understanding and then receive these pith instructions about mind and working with the mind from a teacher and I am supposed to meditate. I will think: 'Oh yeah, the teacher is talking about that emptiness which means that there is nothing, nothing exists'. So we tell ourselves that this is no different to what we have already understood. And I might get lost in deceptive,

destructive talk, pretending for example that there are no wholesome and unwholesome actions. And one might say: "Come on, nothing exists. The person doesn't exist, enlightenment doesn't exist. There is no need to pay attention to one's actions because all of that is just non-existent. People are getting uptight about what to do and what not to do." And we might use such as labels as "Everything is dharmakaya", these conceptual constructs, to mean that for us: "Hey, come on, let's have good drink, more than a good drink. Everything is dharmakaya." That is to say, don't cling to existence. It is all kind of nothing. It doesn't exist. Or we might say: "Apart from emptiness, there are no phenomena. What is there to meditate on?" There is no meditation, no meditator. We are always repeating to ourselves: 'All of this is empty, non-existent', always with that connotation. So my mind will follow the patterns of my previous studies of the scriptures and logical analysis and the incomplete understanding which resulted due to that and I will not bring forth meditative experiences.

*"This is called misunderstanding emptiness as an object of knowledge."*

I will have thoughts like: I have understood emptiness. You will talk to your friends: "You don't understand emptiness. Look how empty phenomena are. Don't bother so much. Look, it is all empty", which means non-existent. When we think like this or talk like this, this is a mirror that we are in that trap.

*"For what reason emptiness is misunderstood as an object of knowledge? With logical reasonings like the nonexistence of one and many, the main subject matter is emptiness as an object of knowledge. Emptiness is indeed present from the beginning, but the conceptual fixation on its existence constitutes the distortion of intellectual fabrication. This does not correspond to the true path and must not be misunderstood."*

This will become clearer if I explain to you what happens when we make an observation, something observable into a noun. How we observe that. In all my experience I cannot find a solid self, so it is empty of a self, and then this empty quality, not having a self, is made into emptiness. It is made into a noun, something that we talk about, that we should know. It becomes an object. An adjective becomes an object of knowledge. The fact that our experience is empty of something solid is just one aspect of the experience. Actually, the experience is full of other aspects. It is very lively, it is colourful, it is changing, it is dynamic and of course there is all its contents, it is not only empty. It is just empty of something solid.

But when we say: 'You should know emptiness', or 'I know emptiness, we have made that aspect, that quality of experience into something separate that needs to be known. And it develops into something about which we can talk separately from the rest of what we know; *'that Emptiness'*. But emptiness cannot be known separately from experiences. There is no separate emptiness apart from life. So by fixing on that, we are taking out an aspect of life and making it into something on its own.

It would be the same if we say 'experiences are vivid'. And we take the vivacity of life and make it into something we should know. But one cannot know it apart from life. It is always part of the experience.

The normal explanation is taking a candle flame and saying 'There is the warm or hot aspect of that experience, there is the luminous, radiant aspect of that experience, there is the moving, dynamic aspect' and conceptually we can talk about the warmth, the light and the movement. But the warmth, the light and the movement of the flame cannot be known separately from the flame.

So to correct this mistake, we need to understand that we are talking about the non-solid, ungraspable, empty aspect of a very rich experience. Actually, it is empty of solidity, empty of a solid self because it is constantly interacting with other conditions in the universe. We cannot find one solid thing, but there is so much going on, there are so many forces at work. So there is a lot to be experienced, it is not nothing, it is not non-existence.

*"When emptiness is misunderstood as an object of knowledge, the basic error is to equate emptiness with nonbeing or nonexistence"*

The basic error is what happens at the basis, at the ground, of that misunderstanding. Here, somehow empty of solidity has been equated to mean: Not being, not existing.

When I say 'this singing bowl is empty', I don't mean the space inside where I cannot see anything. I am trying to say that the perception of the bowl in my own mind is a constant process. The bowl does not appear as one thing and then stays stable. I might also venture to talk about the bowl as an object that one can investigate and I might talk about the processes, the subatomic processes and so on at any given moment, and that also is process. There is nothing in this bowl which is like a

‘bowlness’ that will always stay like that. If we heat the bowl to a very high temperature, with fire, it melts. When the pressure in the environment increases, outer forces work on it, it can become flat, it becomes deformed and there is no ‘bowlness’ that will resist all the other forces. It doesn’t exist. So this so-called bowl is empty of a permanent self that will always stay the same. But it is very rich in quality: It has a weight, there is a feeling of touch to it, there is a taste to it, there is a smell, a sound, a visual form, there are conceptual labels that go with it. Very rich. So a lot has already happened with the so-called bowl, there is a lot happening now and there is a lot that will happen in the future. We are sure that in the distant future nothing of the bowl will have remained except forces which have been distributed all over the universe. So discovering the empty aspect of the bowl does not make the bowl go away. It is still a bowl. And the meditator clinging to emptiness might well be killed by a bowl. Even though there is a lack of solid existence in this object, it is still hard enough.

Now, if you transfer this explanation to yourself, to the person, it becomes really interesting. Tilmann is empty of a self. That’s fine. The emptiness of Tilmann does not mean that Tilmann is non-existent. It just means that there is no Tilmann-ness that will resist all changes. There is constant change, constant process, everything will change to the innermost dimension of our being, everything is process.

In the Christian tradition, or for example in the Jain tradition and some simple Hindu belief systems, the Tilmann-ness was called the soul of Tilmann, or the atman of Tilmann. As something unchanging that would go through all this life into after this life, next life or into paradise to sit next to God.

Understanding that there is no Tilmann-ness that would resist change is very important because it takes away this belief in something permanent which is at the same time individual. And it is very important to see that I am not solid and that my emotions are not solid and all the rest as well. When that Tilmann, free of Tilmann-ness, inflicts harm on Lisa, free of Lisa-ness, there is still suffering. I cannot take the emptiness of myself and the emptiness of yourself as an excuse to do whatever I like because there is experience going on, happiness and suffering is continuous. We have just discovered that all of that is process, that there is nothing solid. But it doesn’t mean that it doesn’t exist.

It's very important to understand that whenever we think of emptiness, it would be good to think of fullness at the same time, rich in experience, rich in qualities, but empty of some permanent self.

Unfortunately, some western philosophers seem to have fallen into this nihilistic trap when they heard about emptiness and non-self. And this has done some damage to the reception of Buddhism in the west.

So this was the explanation of how to avoid the basic error of equating emptiness with non-existence.

*“The immediate error is dry theorizing about an abstract emptiness.”*

The immediate error, what we do immediately in the mind, is dry theorizing about an abstract emptiness. So the remedy to that is to always stay close to the experience. The best thing, if somebody is talking too much about emptiness, is to pinch them. Talk about what you actually experience. Don't go about talking about abstract formulations about “ness-es”. Stay close to the experience. This is where the adjectives and verbs are much more helpful than the nouns. The flame is warm, the heart is warm. I feel empty of... It is a feeling, don't make it into a noun. We talk about our actual experience.

*“These two errors are eliminated through understanding the law of interdependent origination which is unobstructed on the relative level, and through sincere efforts in the practice.”*

So go back to how everything is conditioned by everything around. Everything is interdependent.

## Meditation

Let's feel just how it is to be right now.

Let's open up for all those sensations, feelings in the body.

Hearing, seeing, opening the six senses.

Opening, just being there completely, without any obstruction.

If you want to close your eyes, no problem. It is most important to be relaxed.



And let's pay special attention in this meditation to influences that change the experience.

For example, the turning ventilators that influence the sensations on our skin.

How various conditions contribute to various hearing experiences. How various sounds are conditioned and how hearing the sounds changes our experience.

Of course, our visual sensations, experiences are influenced with the movement of people, of a curtain, by the light of the sun and so on.

And besides the experiences of smelling, tasting, let's also have a look at thinking, that is perceiving movements in mind.

But now of course, my thinking, then my speaking, your hearing of that, understanding that, interpreting it, that influences what is going on just now in your mind. And at the same time your life experiences, your personal inclinations and so on, all influence that as well. Have a look how the movements in mind are triggered, changing, influenced by other movements.

Basically my wish is that everyone can feel how we are constantly influenced, triggered by sensory stimuli. How our past experience influences our present experience.

And we might also reflect a little bit how our being here influences the world around us. Physically, my body influences the wall, the cushion, the ground, the carpet, the air, my neighbours. My presence influences the seeing, the hearing, the tasting, the smelling of others and of course also the thinking. Constant process in exchange with everything around.

If you allow, I would like to use the words 'I' and 'me' in the very ordinary sense.

I have an influence on the cushion. The cushion has an influence on me. I have an influence on the ground, the ground has an influence on me. I have an influence on the air, the air has an influence on me (and so on with: space, the temperature, you, food that I eat, my mother, stick in my hand, clothes that I wear). Explore this for yourselves and feel it each time.

So that was a meditation on interdependence where we could perhaps feel a little bit that there is no solid self. And being empty of a solid self is a very rich experience.

(Dedication)

G 2017 (24)

I hope that the meditation we did helped you a little bit out of all the concepts that were stimulated by the explanations on emptiness. You saw that this kind of meditation-contemplation includes some reflection, so it is not just a meditation. It is asking ourselves questions and then feeling it. There is a part when we can feel how we are influenced, but then there is a part where we think how we influence others.

I have started with the idea that we have talked a lot about emptiness, but in order to feel what is meant by emptiness we have to create a personal experience of how one is not an independent being. So I took interdependence as the starting point. The idea was that by experiencing interdependence, I realise that I am not an independent human being, not a unit.

I started with opening the six senses. And each time the instruction was: Now we focus on how what happens in the senses influences us in our thinking, how it creates reactions, mental states. And how everything is moving and how new sense impressions continue to shape the process.

And then we notice that, for example, as I breathe in, not only the air influences the experience of this body, but also as I, this organism breathes out the air which changes the environment. Not only does the cushion support my back, but I also press the cushion, so we leave traces wherever we go, we influence our environment.

I also felt it important to mention that as I am influenced by the presence of others, my presence influences others.

As you were influenced by listening to the sounds of my speech, of my instructions, then you could, in the same way, by your silence or by your talking influence what happens in me. This is more conceptual, this type of contemplation, but it is not imagined. We definitely know how we

influence each other. Something I didn't say: As I become very important in the life of a mosquito, the mosquito becomes very important to my life (laughter).

I also asked you to reflect yourself. Was there anything that made an impression on you?

Student: I realised that I can influence situations without doing anything.

LT: What I like in this practice is seeing that there are influences between living beings. There are influences between active forces, you can call them the elements, and nature and living beings. But there are also influences between objects and living beings, like everything. There is nothing excluded. It includes everything in life. And all of this shows that we are not independent beings. You know our mental phenomena change when we don't have any food to eat? Or if we have eaten too much? Or when we have eaten food which is too cold or too hot? All of that and my mental states also... Of course I would have liked to go with you into a subtler exploration of interdependence, because in my own mind - well, I cannot explain it, but I see that my thoughts that arise do not arise by chance. There are causes and conditions that are responsible for the arising of certain thoughts, when I become very receptive.

Question: would you go as far to say that there are no random thoughts?

Answer: I think I would go as far as that. Try it out, you don't find any exceptions. And I would even go so far as to make it a very strong point that becoming a buddha is not becoming an independent being. The appearances in the mind of a buddha also arise in response to situations, environments, needs of living beings. There is also this same responsiveness. A buddha, an awakened being, has given up trying to be independent. There is no need to be independent. Why should we be independent? In the sense of being independent of the surroundings. However, an awakened being while being in that awakened state, is of course not identified with any of these processes. That gives great freedom of movement how the response will be. So within interdependence buddha activity is performed. One also defines buddha activity like that: buddha activity is the skilful use of interdependence, Tendrel (tib. rten-'brel). So awakened beings work with Tendrel. All these connections between what is (Ten) and what is linked to that (drel), what arises in dependence on that.

On the basis of that, do you begin to feel how love, compassion, taking care of each other, is the best solution for an interdependent situation?

Question: What can Buddhism take from modern developments?

Answer: Everything that reduces dukkha, everything that reduces stress in our system in the long term. So, to be a little bit more subtle: Everything that purifies the emotional veils and the veils of awareness. That would be to be even more precise. The veils of awareness would be the veils of that which is to be known, the veils that obstruct the knowing of just how it is.

If you work along those lines, then with psychotherapy, yoga and whatever other means, you look to see if the clinging to the self with all the emotions increase or decrease? We did actually very carefully examine all the major strands of psychotherapy in our exchanges with lamas and psychotherapists, and you will find that with every strand of psychotherapy there is a way of using it that makes it possible to integrate it into the path of awakening. There are also ways which could be counterproductive, that also exists.

Question: Was the Karmapa criticising a particular school in the above paragraph?

Answer: It is a possible way of misunderstanding emptiness in general. In guiding three-year and six-year retreats, I observed that although our teaching was always the same, trying to avoid those pitfalls, the students would go, one after the other, through all those traps of existence, non-existence, existent-as-well-as non-existence and neither-existence-nor-non-existence. If we continue, they find into mahamudra. One has to combine the madhyamaka teachings with practice, that's the point.

Question: What about neither-existence-nor-non-existence?

Answer: To negate two things doesn't make true statement. It is like saying: What I am talking about is neither an elephant nor a lion. It is in itself an absurd non-statement although it makes complete sense to the one feeling like that. The solution is that the practitioner needs to step out of the wish to look at the world in terms of existence or non-existence. So the solution is not to consider the world any more in terms

of existence or non-existence, to be happy to be in that direct experience without positioning oneself in terms of existence or non-existence.

## LESSON 78: GREAT ONE-POINTEDNESS

G 2017 (24)

*“The practitioner is completely immersed in a state of clarity and emptiness, day and night, without interruption, during meditation as well as during post-meditation and during all four daily activities.”*

To be “immersed in clarity and emptiness” sounds strange, doesn’t it? We should always add in these sentences: immersed in clarity and knowing emptiness, aware of emptiness.

So experiences are very lucid, very clear, very precise. That’s the clarity aspect. And at the same time, as they are so clear and precise, they are known to be insubstantial, experienced as insubstantial, without solidity, that’s called emptiness. And this day and night. Also during the sleep. the sleep becomes an experience of clarity which is a lucidity of mind with extremely little clinging, very little clinging so that it doesn’t really obstruct that lucidity at night. The meditation is without problems, there is no more what we normally call challenges, the practitioner just sits down and meditation is there immediately. There is no transition, it is immediately there. When getting up from the seat, there is the vivid clarity, undistracted, continuous all the time. And even when doing daily activities, this continues all through. The mind remains clear, unveiled and so on. And there is this very joyful experience of enjoying a stable mind all through the day. However, if one engages a long time in activity, without returning to sitting meditation, this will not continue. This will get less, one will kind of lose one’s practice.

*“(We) live without interruption in this blissful experience of clarity and emptiness”*

Here we could also do some fine tuning in the translation. Neither clarity nor emptiness can be experienced apart from experiences. The sensory experience, whatever happens in the six senses, is extremely clear, is extremely blissful without suffering and is felt to be without substance, empty. That’s what is meant.

*“and all thoughts (mental movements), the post-perception, and dreams have gone into that state. He has mainly experiences of emptiness: the nature of the mind is experienced as unity of bliss and emptiness, awareness and emptiness, appearance and emptiness, clarity and emptiness.”*

The experiences of emptiness (tib. stong-nyams), that’s what is happening all the time here.

This can still be with a little bit of an observer being there, it can be a dualistic experience, but one’s perception of reality, one’s knowing of reality already becomes more of a certainty. So this is an intermediate state between experience and realisation, one is entering the field of realisation.

These four that are mentioned here (bliss and emptiness, awareness and emptiness, appearance and emptiness, clarity and emptiness) are classical ways of describing areas into which this understanding of emptiness goes.

(1) Bliss and emptiness (tib. bde-stong, pronounced Detong).

De(wa) refers to all the experiences of well-being, of bliss, of joy, they all go along with this nongrasping inner attitude. These experiences are felt to have no solidity.

(2) Awareness and emptiness (tib. rig-stong, pronounced Rigtong).

You have all heard about Rigpa, the name Sogyal Rinpoche gave to his movement because it is all about this awakened awareness. But rig-pa has a larger connotation. In the abhidharma, it is actually a term for all the various fields of consciousness, the consciousness of the six senses. What happens here for the practitioner is that of course there is this incredible consciousness-awareness all through the day and the night. And this is felt to be empty of an owner, there is no-one inside of emptiness which is like the owner of that emptiness, the sense of ‘I am aware’. This is finished, there is just being aware. Awareness itself is not seen as being some ‘thing’. It is not made into an object of observation. This is why being aware is also experienced as being without solidity. Awareness is felt as being present everywhere, like pervading all experiences, inseparable from experiences.

(3) Appearances and emptiness (tib. snang-stong, pronounced Nangtong).

Nang(wa) has the general meaning of everything that appears. The word also means something that has radiance, a luminosity. It is exactly what the Germans mean by saying “Erscheinungen”, it is the “Schein”, the luminous aspect of appearances inside the word. So everything appearing as objects of the six senses is experienced as without solidity, nothing solid. It is experienced as ungraspable. If you go back to rig-stong, that is the experience that the subject is empty, snang-stong is the experience that the object is empty.

(4) Clarity and emptiness (tib. gsal-stong, pronounced Sältong).

Säl(wa) means clarity. That is saying that we are not concerned with the appearances, but the very fact that everything is so luminous and clear and appearing so distinctly is experienced in that same ungraspable way.

So, being aware refers to the subject as being ungraspable. Appearance-emptiness refers to all objects as being ungraspable. That experience of subject and object being ungraspable is blissful, is joyful, and that is also empty, is also ungraspable. And that clarity of experiencing all of that is also ungraspable. All of that, nothing is an exception to that experience of non-solidity.

The next sentence will immediately make sense to you:

*“(Such a practitioner) has many experiences in which everything is like a dream or an illusion.”*

It cannot be otherwise. And then due to this deep letting go that has led the practitioner so far, many qualities will arise, but they are still conditioned qualities. Conditioned in the sense that they are still based on the presence of causes and conditions that create these clairvoyant experiences, a superb memory and so on appear. It is not yet the inherent qualities of buddha mind. One might not need any sleep any more, one might have a few clairvoyant experiences, the mind is undisturbed, one does not feel the pressure of any emotions. And of course one must think:

“ Having many conditioned qualities he will think, "This is the great nonmeditation, since a better meditation than this cannot exist."

Do you smell the problem? there is still someone thinking in terms of achievement. And there is a little confusion there about the level of one's practice. The great nonmeditation will be nine stages later. We are approaching the first bhumi, but we are not yet there.

Question: What is a bhumi?

Answer: A bhumi is a level of bodhisattva realisation. There are ten levels of bodhisattva realisation, and of course everyone wants to put these four yogas with their (respective) three subsections, so twelve yogas, in comparison to the ten bhumis. So there all kinds of concepts about how they fit together, but it can be explained in different ways. The Karmapa is very skilful. He simply describes what happens. So there is no mistake.

*“Without clinging to these experiences and understandings, he realizes that thoughts are clear and empty and that appearances are appearing yet empty. He attains a mindfulness with the confident certainty that everything is mind, and that the mind is unborn and self-liberating. The evident movements of thoughts cease, and he perceives the teacher as a buddha.”*

*“The practitioner has mastered one-pointedness, given rise to its qualities, and has understood its essential meaning, if he is staying day and night in this experience of clarity and emptiness, has turned away from any attachment to the cycle of conditioned existence”*

One-pointedness is a completely undistracted mind. All the qualities of that completely stable, undistracted mind are present and he has really understood the essential meaning, that is he really knows what shamatha is all about, he has absolute knowledge of shamatha including the four dhyanas.

*“seeing the true nature of the mind in that state of non-conceptuality, one reaches a point where there is nothing to meditate on. Therefore he should practice with perseverance until these signs appear.”*

One does not need any object of meditation anymore. Here, the experience arises where mind just rests in itself, awareness rests in awareness.



Please note that these experiences will not appear if there is clinging to conditioned existence, to samsara. This will not appear if one is preoccupied with anything outside meditation. Outside the house, outside the retreat room - nothing counts any more. One is just exploring mind. That's the only thing that counts.

We are a little bit crazy in that stage. We are like a professor who locks himself up in the laboratory to be undisturbed for very important experiments. Of course, we go to the toilet, we can eat, we cook for ourselves, we can also take care of someone else, but all of that is kind of irrelevant. It is the continuous exploration of mind which counts.

*"On this level the five sense pleasures have to be abandoned."*

One is not preoccupied any more with the five outer senses, one is really just exploring more and more inwards how it actually is. Perceptions continue to some extent, but they have no importance. It doesn't matter whether the sun is shining or whether it is deep in the night. All of that is not important. The experiences of clarity, luminosity, bliss and so on continue independent of outer conditions.

To deepen his practice,

*"The practitioner should give up the attachment to this present life, the attachment to possessions and the attachment to concentration."*

He gives up all the self-importance connected to this life. When you come to visit such practitioners, then you find that they just don't care. Our hair would stand on end if we saw how they live in the most simple hut and they would only have to go up on the roof to fix some tiles so that it is not raining in. But they won't even do that. It is not that they are stubborn and don't want to do it. It is just that they don't care. Only meditation counts. Any little thing beside that, is not necessary.

And to go further, to go deeper, one also has to give up attachment to meditative absorption. Whatever clinging there is to samadhi experiences, one has to let go of them and then relax more.

*"We need to live in an isolated place"*

This means without any disturbances coming in from the outside in purity, which means completely wholesome conduct. For that deep exploration of mind, one cannot stand even very little deviations from wholesome conduct, even just killing a fly or a mosquito will be too much. One avoids all of these self-centred forms of behaviour. They are perceived with such clarity as being useless and harmful that one abandons all of them.

*“The difference between meditation and post-meditation on this level is defined as to whether the mind is abiding or not. Abiding in the experiences of bliss, clarity and non-conceptuality is meditation. Not abiding in them is post-meditation ”*

This difference is not defined by whether one is on the cushion or not, but if one is undistracted or not. Outwardly, one might have finished one session and is sitting on the balcony. It looks like a pause. But the mind is in meditation.

Post-meditation will then be talking with your retreat neighbour or engaging in some activity. The mind is then not so stable.

We could also say: Post-meditation is when there is clinging, and the rest is meditation.

So this brings you to the end of the yoga of one-pointedness and I have good news for some of you who are now deeply worried: In order to continue with the yoga of simplicity, we do not all have to go through the great one-pointedness. Medium one-pointedness will do. The great one-pointedness is like having a better microscope or a better telescope. You can really explore better. You see much better what is going on.

So the universe of mind is easy to explore when that level of clarity and stability is reached. It feels like you can direct the mind wherever you want and zoom in until you are really in that area which you want to explore. The mind is unwavering, it stays there for as long as you want and you can amplify, you can look. If that becomes the only area of exploration, everything becomes very clear in that area. So the zoom here goes inside, so to speak. It does not go so much to the outer senses. It goes to the inner experience of just how clinging arises and how it dissolves. Just how one mental movement leads to the next, what makes the connection and how that can be relaxed. And of course to just how it is, what is its nature, you can examine very clearly. And one becomes very, very, relaxed, so these practitioners are already very

relaxed, but one has to say: They are not as fluid as an accomplished mahamudra practitioner. They are a little bit stuck in their meditation.

## Meditation

I will try to communicate that experience to you with a simple guided meditation without going into hypnosis. It is very similar to the meditations we have already done. You just have to be very relaxed in your body, please no effort in the body.

Let body and mind relax so completely that you cannot relax more. And just for now, nothing else is important. Nothing in the world is important. So put away your papers, don't take notes. That experience of simplicity cannot be had when there is still some attempt to catch it with a conceptual processes, so let me just guide the meditation.

The body is relaxed so deeply, so completely that we can actually forget about it. Of course we feel it, but we don't have to take care of it.

And our preoccupation with the normal world is for now completely relaxed. We don't have to take care of anything. We can tell the buddhas: 'Listen, for this short period now, you take care. I don't want to take care of anything.'

There is hearing, but I don't have to name what I hear, I don't have to get involved with what I hear. I know we are safe in this place, no need to control through the senses.

Seeing can be completely relaxed wherever our regard drops, just leave it there. It is even allowed to wander, we don't have to control the gaze. There might be odours, there might be tastes, after-tastes, just leave it as it is, no need for comments.

So all of the five outer senses are in complete relaxation.

Inwardly we relax into that confidence that mind knows by itself how to liberate itself. Mind is self-liberating. As we relax all that self-importance, mind unties itself.

Whatever wants to appear is allowed to appear, but nothing is important.

There is no meaning in thinking about anything, there is no need.

We might notice how relaxed and fluid the inner processes become and we don't have to do anything about it.

Free of all responsibility. Actually enjoying that freedom. Enjoying without grasping.

If you notice tension in mind, open up as if you were opening up a dam so that it can flow through.

Allowing for complete freedom. Free movement, free awareness. Free in the body, free in the mind.

Allow everything to flow through. No obstruction. Very soft. If there is some tension, if there is some dullness, relax more. No fighting.

Trust that the more you relax, the inherent clarity will show itself.

Just as we relax the smallest muscles, we also relax the smallest thoughts.

Always opening, giving space, letting go, relaxing.

Really enjoying.

(Bell)

If you were relaxed, have a look how that relaxation carries over in the so-called post-meditation.

Student: At first it was difficult to relax because of the mosquitoes. Later on they were not coming.

LT: That's a very interesting thing. I was surprised when I discovered that in India when I was a student. There were times in meditation when they were swirling around me, I could clearly see them and hear them, they wouldn't land. Sometimes it is like that. At other times they land and no-one cares.

For shamatha practice; trust relaxation. Maybe some of you noticed how the mind became clear, just through that. The more you allow it to happen, the more stable it becomes. Until you have real stability and one doesn't even notice the outer sense perceptions anymore. And the experiences of joy, non-conceptuality and clarity will become your good friends. They will always be there. They are nothing special, they are just how mind is when it is relaxed.

You might have noticed that it was very important to enter into the meditation by really leaving everything behind, not caring for anything in the world.

Don't fight with dullness, just relax and your mind will become clear, even if it takes a quarter of an hour. Trust your mind. When you relax, you might feel sleepy, you might even sleep, relax more, continue when you wake up, then mind doesn't fall asleep again. It goes into its natural clarity. Just have the courage to do it long enough until you see: 'Wow, yes, wow! It is so good discover.'

(Dedication)

DAY 10 (170708-0306-307)

LESSON 66: MISUNDERSTANDING EMPTINESS AS A LABEL

G 2017 (25, first part)

*"Having performed all kinds of conditioned wholesome actions Having performed all kinds of conditioned wholesome actions with body and speech, the practitioner thinks, "By meditating on the unconditioned subtle emptiness I will enter into the space of the three-fold complete purity of actions""*

So basically, the practitioner thinks: 'I have done enough mandala offerings, enough mantra recitations, I have done so much good in the world with body and speech. Now it is time to meditate on the real thing. I will use my mind now.'

The threefold purity is to be pure of the fixation of a subject, an object and an action.

So the idea is fine to meditate in that way, but of course the practitioner is not seeing that while performing actions of body and speech, the mind is always involved, so he doesn't have to separate the two.

But then, he goes further

*“By using scriptural knowledge and logic as remedies against the clinging to the reality of virtuous actions, he settles through analytic reasoning that they do not truly exist.”*

All of that can be seen in that way. There is an illusory self that performs beneficial illusory actions for illusory sentient beings. None of that truly exists. So you can think like this.

There is a little problem there already because if you emphasize too much that no-one truly exists, what's the point of compassion and what about suffering, will you just explain suffering away as being not truly existent and which doesn't need to be taken care of? That is the kind of reasoning you could get into.

But let's see that a little bit later because the Karmapa continues writing:

*“Or the practitioner meditates on a partial idea of emptiness by making matter, which he thinks is not empty through the use of the shunyata and svabhava mantras nonexistent, and then meditates that they have become empty.”*

So the practitioner does not have a complete understanding of emptiness. The word that is translated as matter (tib. dngos-po) simply means object, whatever the reference point of the meditator is. So he thinks that the objects - thoughts, but also outer objects - that he encounters are not empty. And that, by using these two mantras, he could now make them empty. Both mantras (mentioned here) are the most used mantras to recall the ungraspable, empty nature to mind.

The fault here is that when we come in our practice to where the mantra appears, we use the mantra and think: And now, for example, my body is empty and now I can appear as the yidam. So the idea is that up to the mantra the body was not empty and after the mantra it's empty and now I can visualize the yidam. So there is the idea that the mantra has kind of a magical power. A magical power to transform something which was truly existent before into something empty, non-existent. First you do away with one thing and then another thing can appear. That's exactly the mistake and I think you can hardly avoid going through that

mistake. The idea is that the mantra creates something that was not the case before.

The purpose of the mantra is to *remind* us to look into how it really is, that's the idea of the mantra. It wants to stimulate us: 'Hey, have a look at the true nature, the essential nature of what you call yourself, your body, the world, the phenomena. Look: How is it?' Phenomena, the outer world, our body are already of the same nature before saying the mantra. Nothing changes concerning their nature. The mantra helps us to see and due to seeing that very nature as ungraspable, our grasping stops. That's what changes.

So there is a meditation to be done when we say that mantra. An insight meditation where we look into the nature of experience. Due to that meditation the grasping stops and from that non-grasping then arises the world of visualisation. And whatever the visualisation, it never leaves the dimension of emptiness. It always has that same nature and occasionally, we need to look again to remind ourselves.

So basically the mistake of the beginner here is that it is as if we were in front of a blackboard in school and there are lots of things written on it and these things truly exist, the words and numbers and so on. Then the big sponge comes and it erases everything, everything becomes empty. And because it becomes empty, there is space for something new to arise. You can write again on the blackboard.

*“Or he makes matter (something which he believes to be truly existent) by means of the knowledge of the threefold complete purity of actions nonexistent. First he considers matter as having characteristics, and then he puts the label of emptiness on it, considering it to be nonexistent.”*

First he considers matter or whatever else, all these objects, as having characteristics and then he puts the label of emptiness on it, considering it as non-existing.

*“Having thus labeled appearances as empty he practices the development stage. Then he labels this as emptiness and thinks that it has become empty. All these ways of meditating are called misunderstanding emptiness as a label.”*

Student: Could you give more examples how to do it correctly?

Answer: So we have been living our normal lives up to a moment where we remember emptiness. Maybe with mantra, maybe without mantra, but there is a moment: 'Ah, how about that emptiness?' And that remembering triggers an investigation: How is it?

Do it together with me now because we are living it now. Sounds, visual impressions, physical feelings, thoughts. As I feel into them, I see that they are not substantial. But it is not my old understanding from yesterday or years ago that I use, it is now. It is a fresh feeling of that ungraspable nature, we can feel it now, we don't have to activate a past understanding.

Ah, if it is so that all of this has no solidity, actually then it is possible now to visualise whatever I like to visualise, to think and so on, without taking a sponge. No need for a sponge. Everything is self-liberating, you see that, it has no substance.

The best example is the one of a mirror with all the mirror images because in a mirror you never have to wipe off the images. It is always fresh. And we realize that our mind is always ready for the next experience. No need to wipe anything out.

But especially when we have very challenging circumstances in our private life or working life, and we sit down to meditate, then these problems seem to be very real and it does feel sometimes as if we had to take a sponge. This is the normal feeling. I can't meditate, somehow I have to get that out of my mind. I have to use some kind of sponge.

Actually, what's needed is to let go of that clinging and identification with the challenge, with the problem, with that strong idea. And by looking, by investigating into the very nature of the problem, seeing that it has no solidity, that it is not graspable, then the grasping stops.

So actually we are like a mirror. That's our nature, that everything can manifest in our mind and never stays longer than the moment it appears. It is completely self-liberating, the mirror images don't have to go into some kind of storage, they never obstruct the next mirror image, always free. That's our basic nature. But due to our clinging, our mind transforms into a blackboard or a mirror on which the images get stuck. There is a new situation, but the old situations are completely present in our mind, like we can't open to the new situation, it is like we are completely stuck, like there is some definitive writing on the blackboard, that's how we feel, but all of it is the clinging to what was there before.



The solution is not to stay a blackboard and to use lots of sponges, but to become a mirror again, flexible, unobstructed mind.

And that's where these mantras come in to remind us: 'Hey, have a look. You forgot the true nature of just how it is. You don't have to do anything to liberate things, they are all self-liberating, they are empty of self, empty of solidity.'

So instead of labelling, instead of saying: 'Empty, empty, empty, non-existent, empty, non-existent, empty', we say: 'look and realise again just how it is.'

(Summary in German: Statt so eine schwarze Tafel zu sein, auf der man wie mit Kreide schreibt und immer einen Schwamm braucht, weil das Vorherige bleibt und nicht weggeht, schauen wir in dem Moment, in dem wir uns an Leerheit erinnern, genau hin, wie es wirklich ist, um eine neue, frische Erfahrung zu machen, wie die Natur des Geistes in der Erfahrung ist. Dann sind wir wie ein Spiegel, in dem sich alles ungehindert zwingen kann. Wir finden wieder zurück in unsere fließende Grundnatur, in der sich alles selbst befreit und sind nicht mehr so in diesem Haften, wo wir vorhergehende Erfahrungen festhalten und völlig dort feststecken. Es geht darum, dieses Haften zu lösen, indem wir merken, dass es da gar nichts Fassbares gibt in diesen Erfahrungen. Und dieser Blick in die nicht-fassbare Natur der Dinge ist dann, was uns ermöglicht, wieder in dieses Fließende zurückzukommen.)

Question: How does emptiness relate to problems?

Answer: When we realise the emptiness of a problem, that doesn't mean the problem is solved. When we have missed the plane, we have a problem. We are realising the ungraspable nature of the one who has a problem and of all the appearances making up the problem. We have still missed the plane but as we were thinking about the true nature, we have regained our flexibility. We have become flexible and not identified. So we are in a position now to work very creatively with the situation. So always do both: Look at the true nature and then solve the problem.

In the original error, there is a little bit of magical thinking: If I have no problem, there is no problem. That's the magical thinking. That's denial. I have mice in the house, I don't want to deal with them, 'OK' I say 'No

problem, I have mice in the house, that's fine'. They continue multiplying, I still don't have a problem, I still don't have a problem until they are in my bed. Then maybe I have a problem. The idea is always to relax that ego-clinging and then do the necessary in a relaxed way.

*“Without insistently demarcating appearances from emptiness, appearances are empty appearances even while they appear vividly without any obstruction. This is why the term inseparability of appearances and emptiness, a unity without inherent existence is used.”*

We cannot separate the empty aspect from the rest, we cannot find an emptiness apart from the appearances. They are in inseparable unity, like for a flame: Inseparable heat, radiance, movement, all inseparable.

So when I freak out about a problem, my appearances are already empty while I freak out, not only afterwards. All the time they are ungraspable, only I don't notice it. It is only becoming aware which makes the difference, nothing new is there. They don't change, there is nothing new in the appearances, it is only becoming aware of their nature that makes the difference. Samsara becomes nirvana through awareness of its true nature. We didn't run away of samsara or give it a new painting. It is as terrible as before. But due to awareness, there is no grasping to any solidity of that which is experienced. The mind of the practitioner is without clinging while all around the same challenges continue as before.

That unity we are talking about appearances and emptiness also has no inherent existence. It is not a new something that would be an object of meditation. Just like emptiness is not a thing, is not something, then the unity of emptiness and appearances also is not something. It is just an abstract concept, that's all.

*“When misunderstanding emptiness as a label, the basic error is to mark wholesome actions that have characteristics with the label of emptiness, being without reference point.”*

The basic error is that something is being marked and labelled, you put something onto it, you think that now it changes when you put that into it. That labelling would not be such a mistake if it were just to say: 'Here. look, empty, really, it's really empty, have a look'. Then that labelling would be of service to us to really look. Like we label a milk-bottle with "milk" and it doesn't change the contents. It is just that saying: "This is

milk” hopefully helps us to taste: Oh yeah, it is really milk. Then labelling can be helpful.

*“The immediate error is dilettante labeling, a wishful thinking lacking personal experience.”*

This stupid labelling, not knowing how to do it properly. This is like labelling a full milk bottle, putting on the label “empty” and then believe it is empty now. It is like thinking that by labelling it in a certain way, it will change something. Or labelling a problem as a “no problem”. Like writing on yourself: “No-one there”. You call yourself nobody. And then you think that there is no problem with clinging to the self. This is wishful thinking. It is like it is a terrible day, let’s call it a good day. It is very simple. It is what many people do: To label as empty and then think they are out of the affair.

Like: I won’t bother really, everything is empty. I just take another tour of the beach, swim for another hour and let the practitioners here wait for a teaching. Time is empty, the teacher is empty, the students are empty, the dharma is empty. Come on! Then the right teaching of the students would be to do something strong to me and then to say: ‘Do you see how empty that is?’ For example like letting the air out of the tyre: ‘Now it’s really empty!’ (Laughter)

You see, that’s what is happening. We don’t realise what is really going on. It is of course that all phenomena are mind, all these experiences are self-liberated, they have no solidity. But they are powerful, they are life, they have strength. they interact. This is how the world is created. That’s very strong! Empty people with empty ideas can build quite solid houses and they can make war. So, by calling it empty, nothing has been solved.

When we become aware, we see: ‘OK, unobstructed appearance, ungraspable, not solid, yet very clear, very powerful, of an interdependent origin and interacting with everything around.’ And: ‘Without identifying with a self, what would be the most skilful way to deal with that?’

*“Narrow minded persons stick the term dharmakaya on the mind and appearances like a patch. These three errors are eliminated by looking at the true nature of the remedy, developing a practice that is based on renunciation, and by maintaining the essence of the normal.”*

Looking at the true nature as a remedy means looking at emptiness itself, that it is not something you can stick on like a patch. The remedy is remembering to look just how it is and to discover, to rediscover emptiness.

So labelling is something that happens all the time in our mind. That's OK, it is in itself not a problem. When I was saying that, I looked over there and I noticed that my mind was labelling that visual appearance as a chair. A problem only arises when there is wrong labelling, if there is a mistake in the labelling and, second problem, if the labelling stops me from really experiencing how it is. I wouldn't have the experience of exactly that chair. It is like you go through the countryside and you see a flower, you label it: oleander, jasmine, whatever, you give the name, you label it, you forget about really seeing it, smelling it, there is not that experience, actually you live in a world of labels. Of course, we become a little bit more relaxed when we see the fortieth sunrising in Kalamaki. But that sunrise this morning was different again from all the other ones that went before. So even if the labelling is correct, there is still the danger that the labelling creates a distance with the experience.

Question: Fixation within problems?

Answer: Normally, when there is fixation within a problem, we say: 'I am like that, it is like that'. And we circle around. With additional awareness, the fixation: "I am like that", dissolves and I say: "Ah, it appears to me like that" and I have a new freedom to interact. And the problem might also be seen differently. It gives a great freedom to take new standpoints, new viewpoints, new ways of action and so on. The me has become fluid, the perspective of the problem has become fluid and now we can deal with the existent challenges in a fresh way. And of course it does not mean we can solve everything, it just means we have a good chance, a better chance than before.

A good example is our family situation with our parents, brothers, sisters and so on. Normally, we circle around in the same patterns. We see them in certain ways, they see us in certain ways, they are the family problems. And they keep on repeating. Seeing the nature of ourselves and what we experience in our family, and having a new look at our family members, makes a big difference to us. But it doesn't mean we

can solve the family problems. However, the effect of our change can be so big that we experience big surprises. We didn't even do anything to solve a family problem, it gets relaxed or even solved just by being different. And there are really interesting things happening in that.

(Exchange on the Meditation of Day 9)

G 2017 (25, second part)

I tried to guide you in such a way that you might experience a stable, calm mind. It worked for me, but I don't know about you. What are your experiences?

Student: I was very tired before, but then it was very refreshing and that refreshed energy continued until eleven o'clock at night.

LT: If you ask yourself, what was the most important thing to help find that fresh energy? What is the most important advice that you would also give to yourself?

Student: Abide in the experience.

Another student: There was no more: I MUST liberate my mind. It happens by itself.

LT: Very nice.

(Another student appreciated the image of the dam.)

LT: Actually, I had experienced myself, just before giving that instruction, that there was a little clinging, like a holding. And as I noticed the clinging there was this letting go of it. And as it felt like the opening of a dam. And this is why I gave that example.

(Summary in German: Das war in dem Moment, als ich sagte: Falls ihr ein Festhalten, ein Anhaften spürt, erlaubt dem doch nachzugeben, als würdet ihr einem Damm erlauben sich zu öffnen, damit es fließen kann.)

The instruction was: If you feel a fixation, a clinging, then let it open up as if you were allowing a dam to open up and to allow the flow.

Another student: When experiences or thoughts came, I would offer it on the table to the Buddha. That was really helpful.

LT: Let the Buddha take care of it! Very good.

Another student: I appreciated this advice not to feel any responsibility and to feel very free and enjoy freedom.

LT: This was due to noticing that one feels responsible for oneself, for one's meditation, for others. Even if there is no conscious involvement with responsibility, still unconsciously one is still carrying it along into the meditation.

Question: i very often feel that. but I don't know why?

LT: It gives me a sense of: I have to do it, I have to take care, that's the feeling I have. Afterwards I call it responsibility, but: 'I have to take care'. And I don't feel it as an energy of fear so much, it is not like the normal control, it can actually come from an attitude of caring, of compassion, of feeling interconnected. But all of that actually becomes an obstacle to that kind of meditation.

As always, I was doing the meditation with you. And in order to guide you in an authentic way, of course, I had to step out of any burdened sense of responsibility and so on. I actually did enter into those three experiences of joy, clarity and non-conceptuality during that meditation while guiding you. It worked. I was doing all the steps that I used to do when I was practising this. In one way, I was remembering a little how to do it, doing it, putting myself into that mind frame and giving the instruction while doing it. And it worked. This is why I said it worked for me. I came to the point that the mind was so free of being involved with the senses that I did notice, for example, a mosquito landing, but I didn't notice any more whether it was biting or not, it was like a mind settled very deeply into that experience of non-conceptuality.

To make the picture more complete: If it had been only shamatha experience, I would not have been able to guide the practice. To be able to talk and make the experience at the same time is more like a mahamudra exercise. In shamatha, you don't have that flexibility yet to shift into activity all the time, back and forth. That's not normal. It was like the state I was describing to you how to get there and I was there at the same time.

Another student: For me, the strongest thing was what you said at the beginning, maybe you said it very strongly, like really nothing else for three quarters of an hour.

LT: Yes, I said it very strongly. It needs to be that strong. You need to open the space by seeing: 'And here, now, nothing else counts. The rest of the world does not exist for me, it has no relevance'. This has to be very clear.

My experience is that many practitioners don't dare to be so radical because they confound it with an attitude towards life. No, no, this is not an attitude towards life. It is only for the time of meditation. Afterwards we can be completely involved. But if we always stay half-hearted, that's not good. It is not good for life nor for meditation. So when we are involved, we are completely involved. When we meditate, we don't bother. That's very important.

So we can develop complete renunciation for one hour and in that hour we can go very deeply. That's also the idea in our retreat house that we develop that renunciation for three months. We can go very deep in three months, just that. Then afterwards, internet contact, friends, family, it's OK. But three months. Go deep.

Student: When you say you were taking us in steps, can you tell us what these steps are?

LT: I felt like a gardener who sees what's going to disturb the garden. And I was uprooting the weeds. So I first created this kind of a little fence, the place in which now the garden of shamatha would be cultivated.

And then, within that, I would look at how mind was doing. Mind and body. And then of course the body has to be completely relaxed and more relaxed even. And I had my eyes open and saw that some were not relaxing yet, so I insisted on that: There needs to be complete relaxation of the body.

Then how to relax the mind? So there were these obligations, these responsibilities. having to do something with thoughts. No, we don't have to do anything. So I helped you to develop that attitude of not caring about whatever thoughts arise. No need to apply remedies. All of this is useless activity.

And I tried to help you to see how beautiful that is: we don't engage in useless activity, how nice the garden of our mind is if we don't complicate things.

Several times I encouraged you to enjoy what was happening. So this relaxation and this shamatha I was going for should be the most natural possible. I was talking only about relaxation, the whole time. There was no element of control and directing your mind.

And later on I mentioned trust. To trust your mind. Because trusting your mind is one of the strongest factors to develop calm abiding, shamatha. Trusting that mind unwinds itself. All of it is self-liberating, trust, trust, even if it is drowsy and dull, trust. Relax deeper. Don't fight.

So basically, I was trying to allow for a garden to grow, to be without any artificial involvement, the most natural possible.

The thoughts, the appearances come by themselves. There is no need to take care of that. We only need to take care not to create any complications.

After opening the senses, I did guide you for a while not to give importance to the five outer senses. I wouldn't call it closing the sense doors, but actually they close by themselves if you don't give importance to them. That's the way to do it. So this is very important to not engage with the five outer senses. As nice as that is to understand the nature of appearances and so on, for deep shamatha, it is not so helpful. The mind has to sink into itself to become stable in itself without needing a support.

A support is only needed when there is clinging. So what I did is to eliminate all possible forms of clinging instead of offering a support.

To close the eyes can be temporarily helpful, but my eyes opened after a short while again because they were so relaxed then that it was just fine to have that clarity of the visual impact. But in between also, I needed to close the eyes, they were tired, I didn't want to keep them open. So also: Full freedom to what your eyes want to do. That's what I remember.

Question: Could we also use breathing?



Answer: You might. But then I would really say: Enjoy it. The emphasis needs to be on enjoying the breathing and relaxing into it, letting it flow and no responsibility.

Student: With all the previous instructions, mind settled.

Answer: Something which probably made it easy for you: there was complete permission to be. No atmosphere of control, of authority and so on. Just allow, allow, allow. No fighting, allow.

If we want to experience deep shamatha, there is no way of it could be done with control and fighting against something and having fixed ideas about how it has to be.

Question: I was fighting with my body. If I had lied down, I would have fallen asleep.

LT: That's fine! We would have to see if you wake up during the meditation or after. If you wake up during the meditation, that's interesting because you would wake up, you would not change posture. You would wake up and that's where you can be: 'Wow! Into deep shamatha.

When you fall asleep, you don't fight with your body anymore. So the first necessary condition has been reached. If you have time, give complete permission. Sleep, sleep, sleep as much as you need and as much as you like. When you wake up, that's the interesting time for practice.

I hope you have got a taste of how radical you have to be in order to experience shamatha. Deep shamatha is not for half-cooked practitioners, doing a little bit, some exercise, OK, half an hour here, then I go to the cinema, then I do some reading, no! You have to be radical.

This is really about discovering your mind. It is very important. It is a revolution in your mind, you have to really change attitudes. Instead of fighting, go towards complete opening. Instead of tension, go towards relaxation. Instead of worrying about the world, let the mind rest inside

without caring about anything. Instead of trying to do it yourself, let the mind do it. There is no need to tell the mind what to do.

When you go through this process and you really touch bottom, you go into relaxation really deeply, then you will see that clarity arises. With the clarity comes a strength, also in the body. You suddenly feel like opening the eyes, you feel well. Sitting up, you don't feel like there is a weight in the body. The body can sit by itself. It is like a new birth. You can come into a new energy. But you have to have the time, the patience to relax.

The difference between shamatha and vipasyana is that in shamatha you don't have to look. You can look if you want to relax more, what helps you to relax, to open, to calm. We use the looking into the nature of the mind as a help to open up, to let go.

But this looking, especially when it is taught and repeated and so on, can be quite tiresome and takes a lot of effort. Stress. From the point of view of enjoyment, this meditation was much more enjoyable than the meditations we did before. But the others contribute more to awakening.

But to make good use of what I taught you before, you would need that foundation of a clear, calm mind. So we need that.

Question: (Not understood 01.51.58)

Answer: Your guess is correct and I think that comes from an attitude: I have to be a certain way.

It was a breakthrough for me in my practice when I was a young retreat guide. I had had my seven years of retreat, I was one of the responsible ones, one of the spiritual guides. In group practice, in the monastery, to do exactly what I was showing to you. To go deeper and deeper and deeper until my head was touching the practice table. And to not care what others are thinking, what is my reputation, what others think how I have to be, all of that is not important at all. I just do what is good for the practice, that's all. I don't care how I have to be or how others think I have to be. It is very important. Make yourself a complete fool.

Meditation

Well, it is fine to relax, just like yesterday. But we are not at the end of the day, so you might feel that actually, you can already go with the clarity. You are not as tired as yesterday evening.

If you have your eyes open, you notice that there is a visual luminosity. That is a good symbol of the natural luminosity of mind to be able to perceive.

What happens if you relax into that clarity?

Those who are tired can find that clarity as the very nature of dullness.

(Dedication)

## LESSON 67: MISUNDERSTANDING EMPTINESS AS A REMEDY

G 2017 (26, first part)

*“When impure thoughts like the three poisons arise, the practitioner imagines that they are impure and are killers of liberation and should be defeated with emptiness.”*

‘Impure thoughts’ means dualistic thoughts. The three poisons are desire, anger and ignorance. So the practitioner perceives them as enemies: “This is Mara and I have to defeat Mara.” Mara means killing, what kills liberation. And with that the problem starts, seeing them as two different things: “Here are the kleshas, mara, and here is emptiness”

*“After having intellectually made a separation between emptiness and the afflictions, he meditates about the afflictions as nonexistent. Or, if he has received pith instructions from a teacher, he thinks, “When I have understood emptiness a little bit, I will use it as a remedy in order to get rid of the afflictions and thoughts; then I will reach the highest goal, like the absolute, or buddhahood.””*

The afflictions are also empty and we don’t need to get rid of them. Just look and see their true nature.

So here, it is not labelling, but it is the feeling that it is a problem and the remedy is somewhere else. It is very similar, but it is the strong feeling that I have to face a problem and my solution is to bring in emptiness as a remedy.

*“To practice non-conceptuality as a remedy for thoughts, is called misunderstanding emptiness as a remedy.”*

Here, the text takes a little different turn: If we practise non-conceptuality (tib. mi-rtog-pa) as a remedy for thoughts (tib. rtog-pa), it is like thinking: If I don't think, then I will purify my thinking.

This arises because of many dualistic experiences, these empty experiences (tib. stong-nyams) arising in the state of non-conceptuality. One begins to equate emptiness with non-conceptuality, not having thoughts.

What usually happens in the practitioner is: ‘Oh, I am angry. And then, this is the other movement, not bringing in emptiness, but: “I have to go into non-conceptuality, this will be the remedy.” You will find this in quite a few practitioners. I see it more often in men than in women. Male dharma practitioners who have strong emotions run to their cushion and meditate and they search for non-conceptuality as a remedy for their emotional state. Maybe some women do this as well, but I have seen this many times in men. Many women would prefer to talk or to communicate. But let's stop generalising, this doesn't help!

You see the movement: Problem here, remedy there. Either I bring in the remedy into the problem, or I move from the problem to the remedy. But:

*“You should not consider buddhahood as something apart, to be reached after you have got rid of the afflictions and thoughts, but leave the appearances unaltered, just as they arise, not separating between good and bad, between the subject being harmed and the object causing harm.”*

The object being harmed and the subject causing harm - this shows that the problem arises from a dualistic notion: I am being attacked by my emotions. I want to get rid of my emotions.

Buddhahood is like the state of complete purity. There are no more kleshas, no more obstructing emotions. Of course we can understand that in order to get there, we first have to get rid of the emotions. I think that in normal Buddhist groups, pretty much everyone would accept that, they would not object if you say something like this.

The problem there is that there is an idea of an I, a self, traveling from the bad part of life to Buddhahood. There is no self apart from the

experiences, there is no subject having the emotions. So by looking closely at what has just been said, we see that it is a big error. We don't have to get rid of anything, but let that duality, that subject-object tension dissolve, and through that, the emotion, whatever mental state arises, whatever emotional state, perception and so on arises, will be purified of that duality. We don't get rid of it, it is just not manifesting like that any more. And there is no emotional world that we can leave behind. There is not even a single emotion that would be left behind. It is no more, but you don't leave it behind, it is not like garbage you leave behind. So you see that there is a very solidifying attitude, there is like the solidifying of a self which will reach Buddhahood, and the solidifying of the problem you have left behind.

If we leave appearances unaltered without changing them, this means I leave the mental state as it is now, taking good and bad experiences as the same, challenging us to be aware of their true nature, then they will show themselves in their complete purity, free of subject and object. That's why it is said in the mahamudra tradition that Buddhahood or Buddha is nowhere else but in the mind of now.

And that's why a famous zen quote says: "If you meet the Buddha outside, kill him." It cannot be the Buddha because you can only meet the Buddha in your own mind. But please don't kill anyone just because he is not the Buddha, only kill him if you are sure that he is the Buddha!

*"When emptiness is misunderstood as a remedy, the basic error is wanting to conquer with emptiness on the one hand, afflictions as separate from it on the other hand. The immediate error is to use the meditation on emptiness as a remedy for thoughts, in order to catch them like with a hook. These two errors are eliminated by looking at the true nature of what is rejected, and by effortlessly observing whatever appears in the mind."*

Question: How do we avoid these mistakes?

Answer: You can look how an emotion arises, how it disappears, how it changes. like this you will become more and more aware of its process nature. You will become aware that the more clinging there is, the more it increases. When there is less identification, it lessens. This is all very good, very helpful. But of course, you can go further in looking, more directly even at the nature of that which is appearing. You will do that when the time has come and you feel that: 'OK, I've looked enough on the more relative level, now I will go more to the root of it.'

Often what helps when we begin to bring in insight meditation on working with emotions, we ask ourselves: Who is angry? Who feels hurt? Who is sad? We begin looking into this question of who is taking himself or herself so important? And that's a good way to start into an inquiry which is not so much concerned with the emotion but with that self-cherishing which is at the root of the emotion.

Student: When I have an emotion, my sense of self is especially strong, it is obvious already. It is more in ordinary, low level emotional situations where the self is more uncertain. As for the self that arises in strong emotions, there is a sense of solid existence in it.

LT: And then you look and try to find that self because there is a strong belief in it. And you try to find that self. And that's astonishing because you cannot find it although the feeling, the belief is so strong.

Student: I can see that it is not there.

LT: What happens to the emotion when you see it is not there?

Student: There is just the feeling of the intensity of that moment.

LT: Yes, the remaining intensity. The emotion collapses in that moment when you see it is not there. That's a very strong experience. Maybe there is a need to look not only with an intellectual understanding but, really, in that moment try to find it.

Student: For example yesterday in the relaxing meditation, I had a mosquito coming to my neck and I could feel it drilling in and I got this rush of aversion and I wanted to slap it and I had to make a conscious decision to just stay with what was happening. So I stopped the urge to react to it and I could look at the emotion that was there and the sense of self. At the same time I could see how both arose together. Is it that what you are saying?

LT: No. What I am suggesting as a further step is: when you are there as you describe, you see the two. Then often we are looking into the nature of the emotion. But we can also look into that sense of self, not noticing it but looking into just where you can find it. Where is the self? Who is taking himself so seriously, really going into it. The sense of self, feeling it as gets strong, That is the basis for looking. So the stronger it is, the easier it is to look.

But that's the next step after it. You already went very far. You went so far that you saw all of this happening, you were able to control your reaction, relax, to feel really on the outer level what is going on. And now you have the choice to look into the illusion of the subject or the illusion of the object. These are the two big choices that you have in insight meditation.

Student: I wonder because it was more like that now I get a chance to see what's going on.

LT: Yes, but you were staying on the level of what's going on in the conditioned process. But insight meditation means to look through the illusion of that process. You were in a completely dualistic experience, you noticed it and then you could look in one or the other of the two.

## Meditation

Choose a physical posture so that it enhances your sense of presence. A posture which allows your subtle energies to flow well.

And within that we begin to notice breathing sensations. And breathing in such a way that it is very beneficial to us so that we feel: 'Ah, breathing filling my lungs, emptying them in a way that I can enjoy breathing.'

Enjoying feeling the body, enjoy hearing, enjoy seeing and so on. We can enjoy that while it becomes very relaxed.

We can even enjoy thinking. But at the same time, thinking needs to be relaxed.

And within all that, we can tune in into that ungraspable quality of experience. I am so clearly alive that it is just indescribable how it is to be experiencing, feeling all of that now.

Let's relax all effort to describe that to ourselves. No need for a reporter, a journalist, an observer.

Let's enter the mystery of experience, the mystery of life. Let's become one with it.

It is a little bit like a child being taken into unknown dimensions of experiences.

Let's stay in the inexpressible, indescribable, ungraspable.

Being without a need to define anything.

Relax every attempt at positioning.

(Bell)

## LESSON 68: MISUNDERSTANDING EMPTINESS AS THE PATH

G 2017 (26, second part)

(Beginning missing on the recording)

*“The practitioner wants to understand the whole path only through the aspect of emptiness and neglects the aspect of method. Even though path and fruit are inseparable in the emptiness, he thinks, ‘If I now use the meditation on emptiness as the path, I will obtain the fruit of buddhahood later, with the three kayas and the five aspects of primordial awareness.’ He believes that through his meditation on emptiness he will attain the ten bodhisattva levels, the five paths and the four yogas as a fruit. This mistake is called misunderstanding emptiness as a path and should be avoided.”*

We need to appreciate appearances as the potentially loving expression of mind as it is. And always being aware of the non-solidity, the ungraspable nature of those appearances and expressions of the creativity of mind will allow exactly that: That they become pure expressions of love and compassion.

*“When you understand your own mind, it is itself dharma-kaya. Since the four kayas and the five aspects of primordial awareness are spontaneously present in all phenomena, you should rest in the state of great equality without searching buddhahood as something new.”*

Repeating the five aspects of timeless awareness:

All the experiences are



- spacious (dharmadhatu timeless awareness),
- unobstructed (mirrorlike timeless awareness),
- the same in their empty, ungraspable nature (timeless awareness of equality),
- unique, vivid and dynamic (distinguishing or differentiating timeless awareness)
- and complete and perfect with all qualities needed to obtain buddhahood or to experience awakening in that (all-perfecting timeless awareness). Nothing missing. Every experience grants all the possibilities of awakening. Nothing to be added, nothing to be taken away. The all-perfecting awareness knows that there is no need to add anything or to subtract anything.

We put it again into one sentence because that's the beauty of it. It teaches us the nature of all experiences. All experiences that we might have, that we can ever have, are without centre or circumferences, limitless, just like space. They are unobstructed and self-liberating, just like images in a mirror. They are the same and of equal nature in their ungraspable aspect. And while being ungraspable, they can be differentiated so finely that every experience is unique. And every experience is complete and perfect in itself, a perfect moment of awakening.

(Summary in German: Alle Erfahrungen, die wir je machen könnten, sind ohne Mittelpunkt und ohne Grenzen, so wie der Himmelsraum. Sie sind unbehindert, befreien sich von selbst so wie Erscheinungen in einem Spiegel. Sie sind gleich in ihrer nicht fassbaren, leeren Natur. Sie können so fein unterschieden werden, dass wir bemerken, dass jede Erfahrung einzigartig ist. Und sie sind perfekt, vollkommen. Nichts braucht man hinzuzufügen oder wegzunehmen, um genau in dieser Erfahrung das Erwachen zu verwirklichen.)

So all of that is at the same time. They do not contradict each other, they are five aspects of every experience, always present in them.

*“If emptiness is misunderstood as a path, the basic error lies in assuming one could attain the dharmakaya later through meditating on emptiness.”*

Actually, it is right now.

“The immediate error consists in painting intellectual fabrications in the meditation, failing to use for the practice whatever arises. These two errors are eliminated by being aware of the equality of samsara and nirvana and by stopping fabrications born from desire.”

The desire here is to *have* emptiness. And the desire is to later on *achieve* realisation. The intellectual fabrication that one is painting onto one's experiences is of an empty nature. It produces an intellectually fabricated emptiness. And actually, it is all about discovering emptiness and not about fabricating it.

The following paragraphs are like a conclusion to these four chapters:

*“You should rest in the self-existing and spontaneously present great bliss of equality, without misunderstanding emptiness as an object of knowledge, as a remedy, as a label, or as a path.”*

The great bliss of equality is knowing all phenomena to be the same in their empty, ungraspable nature, which is great bliss because there is absolutely no tension, no stress, no fabrication. and that's exactly what appears when we relax and we discover that it is self-existing and always there already, spontaneously present.

Now you might wonder: How shall I meditate on emptiness? I can't make use of this, I can't really avoid the mistake of having some concepts about it.

*“If you are wondering whether it is unsuitable under all circumstances to fabricate a meditation on emptiness as in these four cases, the answer is no. Because if beginners do not meditate on the intellectual formula that all phenomena are intrinsically empty and peaceful, those immature people will be so extremely frightened by emptiness that they will not engage in it. Therefore it is not contradictory if they approach it gradually in their meditation, using different guiding methods like texts and logic. To accustom themselves to it, it is also acceptable to practice emptiness first as a remedy against karma and afflictions, to use it as a path and as a label to meditate on the elaborate as being non-elaborate. But finally they have to abandon it.”*

We build intellectual bridges of understanding. The intellectual approach is only provisional and then we get to the direct understanding.

Our studies give us a first intellectual understanding which makes already a little bit familiar and comfortable with that idea. This is the

view. We establish a view of emptiness. Then through the practice, we go beyond the view. It was only a temporary help to maintain that view. The realisation has no view because there is no-one who could have a view.

And in this process, in meditation thoughts arise like: 'remember, it's empty'. We will like talk to ourselves like that. At this point, we are not able to look and realise that it is empty, so this reminder of emptiness helps us to reduce the tension, it helps us to relax. So it has a positive effect.

There is a certain belief: 'If I always remember emptiness, I will get there'. All of that is OK but needs to be abandoned later on because it's not really it, it is just leading us there. That's also the reason why in Buddhist Shedras (tib. bshad-grva), in colleges, there are Buddhist views being communicated, being studied. But in the way the Buddha taught, view itself is seen as a klesha. It is not about right view, the right view is to have no view. That happens in such a way that due to simply being, any wish to position oneself drops away. One does not need a view to feel reassured.

View always means: 'It is like this and not like that.' That is the characteristic of a view. So this necessity to say: 'it is like that', is disturbing. There is no-one left who needs to say that, who needs to position himself, who needs to affirm a realisation to others. One goes beyond all views of existence and non-existence, of it is and it is not, that drops away. All of this stops when we realize nonduality.

*"Thus the manner to meditate for beginners and practitioners of highest capacity is at first not comparable, in the same way as food for grown-ups is not suitable for infants. In short, it is really important that everyone practices according to his capacities. Finally, the best enhancement consists in the unmistakable realization of the view of the abiding nature without getting lost in the four potential misunderstandings."*

It is a very different way of meditating. An advanced practitioner does not think any more about emptiness. It just doesn't occur in the mind. There is a complete understanding of it without the concept ever occurring. It feels absurd to label that indescribable experience as emptiness. The advanced practitioner also doesn't say to himself or herself that phenomena are ungraspable and so on. There is a direct experience of it, we don't need to tell ourselves. One does not remind oneself of change or process. there is no need for it. One is oneself the

change or process. There is no more clinging, no more separation that would need that kind of reminder. So all of the very important teachings like about the three marks of existence, the three doors of liberation and so on, they are all meant as bridges, as helps on the path until one is in it. Then there is no more need for it.

There is a change of dimension, like what we could call a quantum jump. But there is an energy built up, like before the quantum jump. There is an energy built up through the questions of lhaqthong, the investigation, study and so on, there is an energy built up that makes it possible to switch into that other dimension of experience. It cannot be caused, you cannot make it. It is not something you can produce. Actually, the practitioner knows how to relax everything that prevents it, and then it happens. It is as if some energy was holding us back in a dualistic fixation and then, as we relax, it automatically manifests.

DAY 11 (170710-0308-0309)

## LESSON 51: IS THERE A CREATOR OF APPEARANCES?

G 2017 (27)

It is a chapter where we enquire further into the nature of appearances.

*“The teacher will send the student to examine for a few days the following: “Look at your mind, what is it like, is it wandering or standing still, or busy doing something? Bring me your observations about it?””*

Question: What is the difference between wandering and being busy?

Answer: Busy is maybe indicating being occupied with something and wandering is like going everywhere, not staying so long.

*“If the student on being questioned says that the mind is just standing still, not doing anything.”*

I have not had somehow telling me that the mind stands still for several days, but I had people telling me: Yes, my mind stands still. As I sit down, mind stands still. This I have experienced several times.

*“Then the teacher should ask the student: “Since you left the other day until now, did you never have any thoughts about eating, putting on clothes, or going*

*to sleep, and so on? Was your mind just standing still, without ever thinking that you have to come here now, or that I am your teacher?"*

We constantly think. Although we might not be aware that I think that now I will take a coffee, but actually we do. These thoughts are very quick sometimes and might not be noticed.

Sometimes, when we ask this question, people will think that we are only asking about very heavy thoughts, strong emotional thoughts. Everything else is not thinking. But usually, in all the cases I have encountered, this is due to a lack of observation.

It might happen that people tell you: "I sat down and the mind just became still." It is probably just that they dropped away, no more observation. They didn't notice, they didn't look what was actually going on.

And actually, everyone when asked these questions, will say: 'Oh no, no, it is not like that. Of course I have had such thoughts.'

*"If he answers, that it was not like that, the teacher tells him, "Well, this is in contradiction with your saying that the mind was just resting. Go and examine this once more very carefully:""*

So, become more precise in your observation of the mind. Are there times between the thoughts?

Let's go slowly: Do you think that there are times between thoughts, there are gaps when there is no thinking there. What about sleeping?

Take the word "thought" to include mind movements, it also includes the mind movements which arise out of sensations. And there remains a time in deep sleep which is not dream and not not noticing anything where we are not sure because there is no observation.

There is an awareness in those timespans when there is no obvious thought. How would you describe that awareness?

In deep sleep, (for most of us), there is a sort of non-perception, it is like a gap. We can't even say if we were not unconscious, we wouldn't know. I can tell you from my experience that it is possible to go there and to remain aware. But that would be a task for you for the future to see what is going on in deep sleep.

It is easier to observe dreams than deep sleep. So it is already very nice to continue with lucid dreaming and also practise the dharma in your dreams. It is completely natural if you practise two to three hours a day these experiences start to appear. It will naturally increase, you don't have to do anything about it.

There are very subtle sensory perceptions which can be received in a very calm mind. So they do not disturb at all, but they are very finely perceived. We could maybe say that the awareness in between thoughts is either that fine perception of changes or it is even subtler, just the perception of being aware, just that, without any other contents, either sensory or physical sensory contents.

And then, when we go into more gross level of thinking or movements, we could say: Well, there are these very quick movements in mind which are already concerned with contents like home, family, profession and so on, but very quick, not very structured. But to an unobservant mind, this could go unnoticed. We could call it subconscious gossip. It is like going on, but it is already conceptual. It is not only sense perceptions.

And then we have the more conscious thoughts which decide actions: Do I want to do this, do I want to do that? Which think about alternatives, liking and disliking, all of this. With this we get into a level of stronger movements in mind. That's what most people call thoughts, conscious thoughts including commentator thoughts, reporter thoughts and so on.

Then we have a group of movements in mind which are like feelings of shame or guilt or a feeling drawn towards something, feelings of aversion. Sometimes they don't express themselves as conceptual thoughts, but they can be felt. Something is moving there, and if they get stronger, they will produce certain stronger movements. We call them moods or mental states and they can be compared to currents in the sea or ocean. We don't necessarily see the waves that are produced by the currents which would be the thoughts. But the currents are active and they influence what is going on. It's movements as well. And if we stay with the image, then although we don't see these currents, these moods, they can carry us away just like in the sea when you swim out. You don't see them, but they can carry you far away.

The fact that we do not notice some of the movements is no proof that these movements are less strong, that they have less influence on us. It could be that the subconscious movements in mind have a greater

influence on us than all the conscious thoughts. I open this to you for further observation: Have a look at what really decides how you live your life and how you take your decisions, if it is the very conscious thoughts, what really makes us decide?

Question: Could you repeat the first mentioned types of movements again?

Answer: First there are sensory movements. But then there are also more subtle ones, just being aware of awareness, of being aware. And this is probably the most subtle movement, the activity of mind, to simply be aware, knowing of being aware, but not being aware of anything. When you begin to notice that, you will see that one can relax into that as well. So then even awareness disappears as an object of awareness itself. Awareness does not maintain awareness as its object, then one goes into the nondual awareness.

Question: How is it possible to develop awareness during dreams or sleep?

Answer: By relaxing more. It is a mirror of your daily practice. If you can become more observant during the day, more relaxed, then this will begin to happen during the night states, dream states as well. One can train in that as well. Actually it happens by itself as we become very relaxed during the day.

Question: Kleshas and emotions?

Answer: Kleshas, obstructing emotions, are all movements in mind that create tension, no matter whether they are heavily conceptual or very subtle or moods, it would all be included. All our normal conceptual thinking is an expression of the kleshas because there are so many aspects of clinging, aversion and ignorance in our normal thinking.

Then we have the so-called virtuous movements. The virtuous creative forces, the forces that create experiences in our mind. They are not classified with kleshas, for example gratitude or trust, love, compassion. Without clinging, they open the heart-mind, they lead to relaxation. They are also movements and in Western languages we would call some of them emotions. The emotion of joy, for example. So there is some

incongruity between what we call emotion in Western language and what we call klesha in Sanskrit because we do include opening movements, joyful movements as well in the emotions.

*"An old meditator might come up with empty talk such as, "The mind stays uncontrived in its natural state" or "It is free from mental elaborations"*

These old meditators are hard to cure patients. They have been corrupted by too much dharma stuff and it becomes difficult for them to talk directly about experience. The Karmapa advises the teacher to tell such a person: Come on,

*"The other day I only asked you to bring me your experience of the normal mind, unprejudiced by doctrine and unmodified by remedies, I never asked for any phrases about meditation. Come back when you have investigated some more into this."*

That's good advice we can give to ourselves and also to those friends who like to discuss philosophically: Let's stay close to experience. When we discuss something, let's talk directly about experience and compare experiences. That's most interesting.

So the way to go deeper in dharma exchange is to ask: 'What do you mean by that? What experience are you referring to when you talk like that?' And you will find that not only in the Buddhist scene but also in what you call the spiritual or religious scene, many people refer to what is outside their experience. Some belief, something they have read, some teacher's experience, something one has heard... It is incredible how one avoids talking about one's own experience. One is everywhere else except with one's personal direct understanding.

It makes me very sad when I encounter such a situation which happens for example when I see my old companions from the monastery. I sit down and see them after one year and I ask them: 'How are you?' And they will start talking about the Karmapa or Jigme Rinpoche and the latest news of this and that, and then I ask again: 'How are you?' And they say: 'You know, we shouldn't teach like this, we should teach like that'. And I ask again: 'How are you?' And it continues like this. There is a sort of devoted talk, but always about others, the teachers and the Rinpoches. It gets so hard sometimes to feel the person.



I think that there is an atmosphere which we have created here again and again in these retreats. That's the new old thing that we can bring into the world, to stay close to our experience and in this way, we actually become quite simple people because we are not fantasising about the dharma. We talk about what we discover, which questions are on our mind, what we want to observe more, what we are working on... That's our practice, and we can talk with anyone from any religion or any spiritual practice because we are talking about experience, we are not talking about concepts.

*"A scholar might quote a lot from the sutras and tantras and speak in accordance with them, but without having had any personal experience. He will be told, "*

The khenpos and geshe, the real scholars, would come and travel with the Karmapa to learn to meditate. And then exactly that would happen.

In my own way of talking, I have to make a conscious effort when I talk with friends not to use dharma terms, to avoid using dharma language because somehow it is difficult to feel oneself when one is using standard terms or: "This is the way it should be." It is a practice to purposely use terms, words, everyone could understand. So I try to avoid terms like karma, refuge, emptiness, nature of mind. Avoiding all of that and taking directly from the heart. It is a real practice because the more we know, the more we have learnt, the more words we know that we could use to avoid a little bit ourselves, connecting with ourselves and showing what is actually going on. To such a learned one, the Karmapa would say:

*"The other day I told you that there is no need to come up with any dry book language, but to come back when you had observed your mind unprejudiced by doctrine. Your quotes are of no use, go and investigate once more."*

So you see that's the good old way, it is nothing new: staying close to experience. Buddhism has evolved from that. It is a very simple, direct way of communicating. No need for special terms.

Then other students come and when the teacher

*"If the student on being questioned repeatedly says that the normal mind, just as it is, without being modified by remedies and unbiased by doctrine never stands still for a moment, that it is constantly busy producing all kinds of thoughts, the teacher will confirm him, "Now you have observed it a little bit, that is right the mind does not stand still."*

My mind is constantly busy, producing all kinds of thoughts. Then the teacher confirms what is said and lets the student investigate: Since you have seen that the mind is never standing still,

*"The teacher lets the student investigate, "Now go on and examine minutely all the different appearances of the world and its inhabitants, and the discriminations between attachment and aversion, joy and sorrow, enemy and friend. Do they have a separate creator, or are they created by the mind, or are they themselves mind?""*

We will meditate now and investigate that a little bit together. We will try to notice what is going on in mind and to have a look where it comes from: (1) Whether there is some other force creating it, (2) whether mind itself is creating them or perhaps, (3) whether they are themselves mind? What can we say about that famous question of creation? What is the genesis of our world? What is behind that?

## Meditation

Settle into something like a meditation posture or a posture enabling you to look at your mind. It can also be lying down, no problem. We need to relax body and mind and give space so that whatever wants can appear.

When there is, for example, the sound of a car moving by, then of course there is something outside which stimulates a sense perception. But what creates the thought that this is perhaps a car or that this is a noise. What creates emotions in connection with that? What makes the arising of an experience?

In case you had thoughts just now, what stimulated them? Could we say that someone, some force, some 'thing' created them?

What is the reason these movements appear, these thoughts, these images, is it within the mind or is it outside the mind?

Or to put it in a more general way: Who or what is responsible for my experience of the world?

How come that certain thoughts arise, certain emotions, liking, disliking?

Who or what is responsible for certain feelings arising, moods, sentiments?

Is everything that I experience created by the same agent, being, mind, or do different experiences have a different creator?

And after all, is creation the right word? Does it describe the process of how our experience of the world arises well?

(Bell)

Question: Itching on the neck?

Answer: What created the itching sensation? Was it that perceiving thought, is it possible that a perceiving tiny thought creates the feeling of itching on the neck? I also occasionally have the impression that some kind of thinking precedes the sensation. It is so quick that I can understand your hesitation about what comes first. But in my observation, it seems that sometimes the thinking comes first and then the sensation and at other times, it is the other way round.

Question: Does the thought provoke the physical sensation?

Answer: Yes, this was the possible assumption that maybe it is because of the thought that the physical sensation arose. It is always good to check: Did you experience already something like that or is that mistaken perception? Sometimes I am sure that I have an ant crawling over my back or a fly, and there is nothing. So that sensation is seemingly without outer reason. Another observation is, especially concerning itching sensations, that there was something before, but by thinking it, it becomes stronger. When we direct our attention to it, it becomes even stronger and it can become unbearable.

(Summarising various contributions:)

None of you said that experiences were created by an outside creator. However, most of us feel that the so-called outside stimulates something in our perception. I would like to ask you: This outside which stimulates

something in us, is this really outside the mind or is it already inside the mind when it stimulates our experience?

Have any of us observed that past experience is used to interpret the present experience, to make sense of it, liking, disliking? Please have a look how past experience is available to us? In which way is it there? Is it always there? Or if it is there in a latent form, what does that actually mean? In which ways is past experience accessible, and, to a certain extent, responsible for our experience of now? Is the past the creator of the present in some way, could that be a possible interpretation?

(Summary in German: Im Austausch mit Euch kam zum Ausdruck, dass vergangene Erfahrung genutzt wird, um die jetzige Erfahrung einzuordnen, zu beleuchten u.s.w. Die Frage, die ich allen stellen möchte, ist: Wie steht uns die Vergangenheit zur Verfügung, wie nimmt sie Einfluss auf die Gegenwart, ist die Erfahrung der Vergangenheit immer da, ist sie statisch, ist sie dynamisch oder kann man vielleicht sogar so weit gehen, dass wir sagen müssten: Die Vergangenheit ist der Schöpfer der Gegenwart? Wie ist das Verhältnis?)

Then we had these observations about this wish to give meaning to what we experience. And this wish to give meaning was connected to uneasiness if we don't have meaning and explanation, if we don't have categories into which we can classify our experience so when there is this lack of certainty, there is uneasiness is connected to that.

One can even say that one touches something like an existential uneasiness, and seemingly, there is also a possibility to be at ease with that as long as one is relaxed with it. But if one is not relaxed, it comes back easily as a kind of fear or worry. Where does this come from, this basic uneasiness? Does it come from a lack of awareness and not knowing, ignorance? Would a 'knowing', an awareness be a possible solution for that? Could we perhaps also ask the question: 'Is it that lack of awareness, this ignorance, which produces our world? Would the world be completely different if we didn't have ignorance as the creator, but maybe awareness?'

Then there was this observation that I create the world, that it is within my mind. the forces in my mind which create the world. Well, I don't create the outer world, but I, that means the forces of the past, again we have the influence of the past, and the present interpretations, the concentration, where we put our attention, actually is responsible for fluctuations in our experience. Some aspects become stronger or

weaker. It depends on these forces of attention due to emotions, past experience, all of which is involved with that.

And we could go on from there to ask the question: Is it perhaps due to where we place our attention what kind of world arises? So perhaps the creator of our world is that which directs our interest, our attention? And that would connect to the question of awareness and ignorance. If that is an interest stimulated by ignorance or full awareness, it would have a different effect.

So these would be typical areas of investigation into which a dharma teacher would guide the student to explore more in the process of intuitive insight. The task of the teacher here is not to give answers and to say: 'This is how it is, you should believe that.' But to lead the investigation in such a way that the observation is deepened and can then lead to sure conclusions.

So very much in the style of good old Socrates who bothered people by asking them constant questions. So the dharma teacher is also like a midwife, stimulating, accompanying the birth of insight.

It is good to start with the analytical level first but be sure to make good use of it. So for every step find examples from your experience that underline that analytical progression. So always start from an experience, look at it, verify from your experience, look at it from your analysis, back and forth. We use our intellect in order to undo wrong assumptions and we try to avoid new assumptions.

Part of the work I have to do as a dharma teacher, especially with intelligent people, is that when they let go of some assumptions about reality and investigate their experience, then quickly they come up with a new theory, a new assumption. And then it is a little bit more difficult. One has to undo that again in order to go deeper again. So in this process, we need to develop that capacity to relax while the question is still in suspense. It is not solved yet. To relax and to not jump to conclusions. The dharma teacher, in working on those topics, becomes a very disagreeable person, constantly challenging all assumptions about reality. Then in that phase, if you are in personal dialogue, the teacher does not let you escape with any idea of: 'It is like that'. Very much like Nagarjuna who, as long as there was a position maintained, he would continue to show the contrary. The reason is that all of these assumptions about reality - to say 'it is like that' -, they serve to undo that

basic anxiety, that basic worry of not being able to live without a standpoint.

But it is not like some people who want to escape, saying: Oh, it cannot be known or anyhow, I don't care. That's also a belief. We can know. It is possible to know. But it is not a standpoint.

*"If the student says that the world and its inhabitants have been created by Cha, Ishvara or the ancestor of the world, (God)."*

The Shamanic tradition of Tibet called God Cha. In India he was often called Ishvara. But there are also beliefs in naturalist traditions all over the Himalayas that the ancestors of the world actually created the world.

Then it is good to ask a few simple questions:

*"the teacher will ask him, "Cha (God) and the others, where do they exist, when did they make the world, where did take the material from, and how did they make it?"."*

And you can perhaps continue: How did they take care that the world continues, that it doesn't collapse, how are they active now? One wants to know that. One goes deeper. One does not stay with the assumption of their reality, but tests. One takes it seriously and says: OK, tell me more about it.

Then, in an honest relationship, the other one will reply:

"I don't know."

I don't know where God lives, I have heard: Maybe in paradise. I have heard that he created once the world but that also was a process, maybe seven days or something like that. And then something went wrong because he sent Adam and Eve out from there. I don't know exactly if he created only the paradise or also our world. I really don't know where he took the material from. And I really don't know what he is doing now. I don't know if his creation went out of his hands or if he is still in control of it.

And then the teacher will have to say: 'If all of that you don't know, you know nothing!'

*“If the student replies, that he does not know, the teacher will tell him, “Well, what is the point of saying it was created by Cha and the others? Do not tell lies in the Dharma, you should only speak of things you are really certain about. The false legends of the world and the heretics that you have heard of are useless, you must investigate this once more.””*

Do not invent things. Please become a real dharma student and rely on direct experience and not on hearsay. Look what you can find out. So then, the believer will have more work to do. So I wish that you'll have the same critical attitude with the dharma as well. Do not believe, investigate. And watch out for the tendency that with a little investigation, one can jump to conclusions very quickly.

G 2017 (28)

Meditation

Let's explore again these questions.

The basic ground is always the same: we start with deep relaxation, allow the mind to become clear and then we explore whatever is interesting to us.

We take note of appearances, this means of experience as it is now as it is now, as an experience of the six senses.

The experience of just now, always just now, on the brink of where the present and the future meet.

The constantly changing experience of just now. Always just now, always. Again and again, all the time.

Freshness is connected with a sense of surprise, of not knowing yet.

How is the always next fresh, new experience produced? How does it come about?

What is needed to make it possible to observe when trying to answer that question? What are the observations we can make?

Have a look: Is there anything involved that would not be mind? To be more precise: The experience that I have now in any one of the six

senses, how does it arise? Does it come from outside, how is it stimulated?

What is needed so that the outer world can create an experience in my mind? How does the contact happen?

How can past experiences influence the present experience? What's needed for that?

How can someone influence me, what's needed there for one person to have an influence on the other person?

How could someone create anger in me, how could someone create love in me?

How can any force in the universe create an experience in this mind of now?

(Bell)

The questions are of course getting more and more broad and that can invite a philosophical discussion. Let's see what really makes sense from our experience.

What is needed so that a new experience arises? Can you imagine that something new arises, I notice it, but no experience of that arises? what is the missing link?

(Summarising answers:) There might not be a sense organ for that. Example: You can wave your hand from far away in front of a blind person, there would be no experience of a waving hand. - You might have no attention at all, like your daughter being completely absorbed in some game, you say something to her, but there is no hearing of it.

So, what is the creator here? Is the waving of the hand the creator of the experience of a waving hand? Is the "I" the creator of the experience of a waving hand? Is the eye consciousness the creator of the experience of a waving hand?

Student: It is a combination.

LT: Yes, it is a combination. It seems that they have to come together.



How can another person influence me? I try all the time to influence you, I try!

(Summarizing answers:) The attention and the importance given. In addition, we have to have a sufficient distance so that we can experience the impact of someone else on us. There must be a separation. Furthermore, sensory perception is needed.

If I want to make you angry, what's needed on top of that?

Student: There must be a lack of complete contentment, there must be a sensitivity. There must be a desire of having more or less of something.

LT: Yes, if that lack is not there, my attempt at stimulating anger will not work. We could say there must be a tendency, some readiness, to go into that direction.

Student: There needs to be some kind of vulnerability and ignorance.

LT: Yes, drive in the nail!

Student: There must be some stored impressions, so that I can compare.

LT: Yes, past experience, being accessible somehow for comparison. There is quite a lot needed there in order to make sense of the words which are spoken or to interpret the gestures, the facial expression.

Question: What about a Buddha?

LT: If you try to provoke anger in a Buddha, you would not be the creator of what you try to create. You would try to create something in the other person, but it would not work. You would have an influence, but not in the direction that was intended. Wow.

Student: Somehow there must be a place of decision.

LT: Yes, when the compulsory obsessive reaction might start or is there a possibility of a freer choice? A Buddha has a free choice in that

contact because he does not have this need and this fear and this habitual tendency.

The more awareness there is, the less we are conditioned and obliged to react in a certain way. The more we have space around it.

Let's make it even more complete: what's still missing in the picture?

Why do people experience the same situations differently? - We have different past experiences, different degrees of awareness, varying from moment to moment, different bodies. We can also never be in the same place, we will always be in different places. One of us might have slept well, the other not and so on. we can have had heavy food or light food, all these many things. There is so much that is contributing to the experience of just now.

In our past experiences, there is a little bit of a different culture, the influences of family, all of that plays a role. And somehow there is the question of stored impressions, of memory, how do we access to all these previous experiences? This is very subtle thing to explore in meditation. it is extremely subtle to explore how the traces of memory are actually contacted. These are very subtle observations. I'd like to keep that to one side, but the need to contact memory is obvious because without memory we couldn't make sense of these words in English language. Language always needs memory.

Question: How would you define memory?

Answer: For now, let's simply say that it is a trace of the past. Something which the past has left and we identify it as a kind of leftover, an imprint, an on-going effect of the past. Something is continuing and leaves a trace.

I could ask you: What do you do to find a memory? And what do you do to find a memory that comes from very far back and which I have kind of forgotten? What's necessary for that to become alive now? How is the process going? We could investigate into that but it is not today's subject. However, what is very clear: When due to finding a memory an experience arises, it is a new experience. It is not the old one. That thing is for sure and it is very important also to see that now. When I remember something from the past, a new experience is arising which is not identical to (the original experience). It is newly triggered and forming

anew. So this is very important because it is part of this investigation into what creates the appearances, the experiences.

So far, I think it is safe to say that we have found many conditions which come together in forming a new experience. A lot comes together, and none of the conditions can be said to be THE creator. A creator is philosophically defined as something which by itself creates something else, without depending on something else.

The descriptions you have given could be summarized as interdependence of causes and conditions. I am not trying to introduce an abstract concept, but it is a good summary.

The way the Karmapa guides this investigation, he wants us to make sure whether there is anything outside of mind that creates an experience inside the mind. Is that possible? For example, when I look at you, can this visually expression, seemingly outside, can it by itself create an experience in my mind?

Student: We'd need something that makes the contact.

LT: Absolutely, we'd need a connection. I think it is safe to say that an experience in mind will not arise if there is no contact with mind, inside mind, only then. It is not that just something outside will produce that.

Let's investigate that a little bit more. First please follow me in the next paragraph. The student comes back and when being questioned, he says:

*"Later on being questioned again the student may say, "The mind is the creator of everything. When the mind stands still, there is nothing at all, when the mind is active, it creates everything.",*

The student is beginning to get there, but the teacher will have to guide him a little bit further:

*" The teacher will then ask "The creating mind and the things created by it, are they the same or are they separate?" If the reply is that they are separate the teacher will ask, "When you are thinking of a pillar, the thought of a pillar is mind. Is there at the same time another pillar apart from that?"*

Let's play the game. we have a pillar here. we will take it in various forms.

Look away from the pillar and think of the pillar. How many pillars are there?

Students: Two, one, zero pillars.

(1) Student: Two pillars. There is an actual pillar made of matter in the room and then there is another one which is a very clear image in my mind.

(2) Another student: One pillar. When I close my eyes I have a pillar as well and when I open my eyes I have only one pillar.

LT: Is the one when you close your eyes the same one as when you open your eyes? No? So you might have two? Please visualise the pillar another time. Is it the same pillar that you saw before when you visualised the pillar? I am pretty sure that it is not the same. You have a third pillar now. That would lead us, if we continue, to have as many pillars as we have experiences of seeing a pillar. Every time we see a pillar with our mental eye and then we also have the experience of looking directly at a pillar. Which one is the real pillar? Is there a real one?

Student: The one which I see.

LT: I don't know which one you see. She says that the pillar she sees is the real pillar. Then she has a photo-pillar. I don't think this photo-pillar can carry this room! So the photo-pillar in her mind is the real pillar? If you look at the pillar or at the photo of the pillar, is it the same pillar? How about your copy of the pillar, is it the same as that of another student? So how many pillars do we have now?

(3) Another student: Zero pillars because when I think of a pillar in my mind, I don't know if there is a pillar. Any time, the pillar is arising in front of me, and any time the pillar is disappearing.

LT: So there is an appearing and disappearing pillar. What makes you inspired in spite of all of that to think that you can trust the ceiling to be held up by a pillar? Do you want to touch, are you sure? Is it helpful to have another sense, to touch to confirm? Then you will have another mind impression of the pillar.

So how many pillars do we have, is the pillar in mind or outside? Is there an outside pillar? You cannot know. All of your senses are consciousness, so all of your pillars that you will ever feel, see and taste are all appearing in mind, that's very true. We cannot say anything about the outside pillar.

As to the one who said we have two pillars: The mental one and the outside one. Is there an outside one or is there not?

What we do is, when we talk about outer reality, that we take confirmation from others, that others perceive something similar to us so that we believe that there must be something. But we cannot be sure. If I am the only one seeing the pillar and no-one confirms that, I begin to have doubts. But it could still be that the only one who sees that is right. the number of people who agree on an illusion doesn't make the illusion a reality, a truth. So we have to be careful: It is true that it is happening in mind. And many times over. Like there are many pillars: every time we see it, every time we touch it, we have a different, a new experience.

Student: If we propose there is a column that is outside our experience, this proposition is an idea in mind. So it is not a concept that makes sense in experiential terms. Therefore, to refer to something that is outside of sensory experience, in its own terms, doesn't make sense.

LT: One of the deep insight researches is whether the mind is located inside the brain. Is it dependent on the brain, is it just a condition for awareness to arise, or is it the cause, is it the creator? All of that area is to investigate. You see how much there is to explore.

*"If the student replies that there are not two pillars, he has gotten the point. In this way he should be led skillfully to recognize his erroneous perception."*

Basically, what we are asked to do is to investigate the basis of perception. And not to mistake an appearance within mind as something outside.

This becomes very important when it comes to human relationships. You might perceive an enemy outside, but that is only an enemy within the mind, there is no enemy outside. The same for friendships. We confuse internal, subjective experience with a so-called objective outside reality.

*“Now follow some pointing-out instructions on the questions above: “Your saying that your mind is doing all kinds of things, showed your having become aware of thoughts at that time. You should understand that the erroneous perception arises and vanishes instantly, and that through the habitual patterns of this erroneous perception the illusory appearances of the six kinds of sentient beings with their diversity of colors, forms and shapes, sounds, odors, tastes, tactile sensations and mental events manifest. Once you have begun to understand this instant arising and vanishing, you are getting the pointing-out instruction that the instant arising and vanishing of all phenomena takes place in the mind, apart from which there are no phenomena.”*

When thoughts arise, even like erroneous perceptions of pillars and walls and trees and people outside, then this erroneous perception arises and vanishes instantly. And what happens is that although they arise and vanish instantly, they actually pose no problem at all because they have no substance. Then, through the habitual patterns of various sentient beings, they become solidified. So the illusory appearances in the mind of the six classes of sentient beings become so solidified that they believe they live in that kind of world.

So because of our habitual tendencies, we perceive the world in all its diversity, with its colours, forms and shapes, odours, tastes, tactile sensations and our mental interpretations of all of that.

When we talk about experience, how we experience our lives and how we experience the world, there is no objective world. The dogs that come in here experience this same surrounding so differently from us, that’s incredible! That is called a different realm of experience. Just imagine all the odours a dog smells in here. A different world!

Then, our habitual tendencies of all these people here in the room, they create in each moment, in the now and continuously, just as many different worlds of experience. And I wouldn’t dare to say that any of our experiences are truer than anyone else’s. You cannot say which one is closer to any objective truth.

Objective truth is irrelevant for the experience of a sentient being. What we experience is always personal, subjective, happening in this stream of being. And in this stream of consciousness, there is this instant arising

and vanishing of experiences. All of that appears and vanishes in mind, it is a phenomenon of awareness. And apart from that, there are no phenomena, there are no experiences. What is not happening, what does not arise in my mind, what does not become an experience, a perception in my mind is not in my mind. It's not there. In that way you can say that that phenomenon is not there.

*“If the erroneous perception is impermanent how could its illusory appearances be anything else but impermanent. Understand this.”*

All our dualistic, erroneous perceptions constantly arise and cease, all the time. And of course the experience of knowing them to be illusory is also not a permanent thing. It is also arising and vanishing all the time. Everything is process, the insight into the illusory processes as well as being fooled by erroneous perceptions. All of that is constantly arising and changing into something else.

*“It is precisely like you were saying: the mind is the creator of everything and there is no one else doing anything.”*

But just believing it because the Karmapa writes it, will not be of help. Over years of practice, all the questions that we asked today, will at some point become your questions. And you will have to solve them.

*“When the mind is standing still, there is nothing whatsoever, and when the mind is active, it is creating everything.”*

Question: I thought the mind was never standing still?

Answer: It is not standing still. He is lying. He is repeating the words of the student without correcting the detail, without going with the main thing that was said. When the mind is very calm, without conceptual thinking and so on, there is no production of experiences. Before, he definitely said: ‘The mind never stands still.’ But look into your own experience and verify it there.

*“Moreover, the creating mind and the things created are not two separate entities. It is like you were saying: your thinking of a pillar is mind, and except for that there is no pillar. All appearances are mind.”*

All appearances are mind. This is very important. Please look into that again and again. Is it really all mind? Is it really so that the earth on which we are walking is mind? Investigate.

Question: Isn't it all dependent arising? So why do we need mind as a creator?

Answer: You don't have to. Just a little bit later he will be saying that there is no mind. So what do you settle for now?

Student: I don't like using "mind" because it makes it sound like a thing. Everything is self-created. It's just movements.

Student: It is not self-created. There are just a lot of conditions.

Student: I wonder if the "I" and the experience in the mind is the same. If everything is mind, then the self or the "I" is still good. So, saying: "I have a mind" is wrong.

LT: It is ridiculous (laughter). Is the "I" self-created?

Student: Yes.

LT: So it is very true when I say I have created myself?

Student: There is no consciousness in there.

LT: Self-creation without consciousness.

Student: Like a movement.

LT: Consciousness is not a movement.

Student: Yes, it is.

LT: It is? So, the "I" is self-created by a movement which is not conscious?

Student: It is not so complicated! It is just a movement, a process. I don't know where the consciousness comes from.



LT: In a way, that would be quite important when talking about mind. Is it good to have a mind without consciousness? If the mind is without consciousness, maybe it is like the waves of the water?

Student: But the mind is consciousness.

LT: Yes, so the movements would also be consciousness. So the creation would also be a consciousness movement.

Student: That's better.

LT: It is the opposite of what you said before, but it is better (laughter).

So please have a look. Something that is interesting is how this idea of a self appears and whether it has any foundation, whether it is well-founded or whether it is really just an illusion. That would be very interesting to explore. It would also be very interesting to find out if mind and I are the same, or whether the I is part of the mind. If they are not the same, then the "I" could have a mind. But maybe all of that is just self-arising and self-liberating.

Student: With consciousness (laughter).

If we don't find it out, let's blame God because he is responsible for everything. It is always good to blame someone who is not there.

Question: What are the conditions for awareness? Sometimes the forces are so strong, but I cannot become aware.

LT: I don't know where awareness comes from. The "I" is complete unawareness, it is not true. "I" cannot become aware because it is complete unawareness.

Question: What qualities are necessary for consciousness or mind to be aware of itself?

LT: Drop the I.

Question: OK, what are the qualities that nourish this awareness?

LT: There is no need for any qualities to nourish that awareness. If it is there all the time, then how can you not be aware?

When we take ourselves very seriously, we can see how absurd the things are that we are expressing. 'Mind becoming one with awareness' and things like this, we use concepts in different ways, and then really start to believe in what we are saying. We take them completely seriously, it becomes really absurd. So what remains is the direct presence, you know, this is also a concept, as few concepts as possible will be best. Relax into how it is, just so. Not searching to name it, that will serve well.

I will try to say some words to comfort the intellect again. When we begin to understand how it is, then mind is identical with appearances. They become synonymous. it is not different. Whenever there is mind, there is experience; there is consciousness, there is experience. So it goes together. And then there is always awareness because that's the nature of being conscious, of having a mind, being minding, means that there is awareness, so that also becomes synonymous. And it is always dynamic. So there is no stability in what we call mind, appearances, awareness. It is changing, it is dynamic, it is process and it becomes synonymous with life. Life, mind and experiences - it all becomes the same.

Question: Unconsciousness?

Answer: it is the same. It becomes just another term for that.

Question: Is the problem if we try to solidify something?

Answer: That seems to be the problem. And as soon as we hear a word, we try to define it and believe that that we define there exists and we begin creating a lot of problems.

*" In the Vajrapanjarah Tantra it says: 'Outside the jewel-like mind there exist neither buddhas nor sentient beings. The places and the contents of consciousness do not exist outside at all:*

*The great Brahmin Saraha stated: 'Mind alone is the seed of everything. It manifests samsara as well as nirvana. It grants all desired results. I bow down to the mind, which is like a wish fulfilling gem:*

*So you should make up your mind, that whatever appearances you experience, impure ones or pure ones, are solely in your mind and they do not exist in the least anywhere outside of it."*

This concludes the explanations of this year. You will need to meditate through all of these points by yourselves until you come to a clear

understanding. The understanding of this chapter we just did will show when you begin to know that problems never exist outside.

The whole dharma is about liberation from suffering, from dukkha, from stress. Whether or not this chair is mind does not create any stress for me. But what's a problem for me, that's really where the stress is. That's really where dukkha can be felt very intensely. So the first place where the newly gained understanding will show is where dukkha arises most strongly. And that's why we have problems. When we have understood that everything is mind, then of course we understand that all of our problems are mind. That dukkha is mind and enlightenment, awakening, is also mind. And we will work with that in our mind. We will completely accept to work with that in ourselves. That's the sure sign. In time, it will show as a great equanimity. We know that conditions outside can only create suffering in our mind when there is a habitual tendency responding to that, hooking onto it. Then the conditions form for an experience of stress, of dukkha.

If everything is mind, it means that we can work with everything. We can work with all the appearances in our mind. The forces that are active in our mind will determine what kind of appearances we have. Sometimes we end up in a dead end, but if we understand: OK, I am stuck in my mind, then how can I unlock, get unstuck, have a new look and become more flexible and continue.

If we get stuck and I guess we probably all will: First thing, relax. Getting stuck is always due to some identification and clinging. And as we get a little bit unstuck, new possibilities arise for dealing with that so-called problem that seems to be coming from outside or is triggered from the outside, we find new ways.

To understand that everything is mind, happens in mind, is maybe the central stepping stone for our practice. It is a stepping stone for a complete acceptance of all of our life as the working basis of awakening, of enlightenment.

I would wish very much that you take each lesson and work it through until you come to a personal understanding. When you don't really know where to start, start at the beginning. And then work your way through. You will see that the passages that you have understood will go really easily and then you run into chapters, into lessons that are really difficult. And that's where you spend more time. Sometimes it takes really long time.

My wife and me only got the hand-written translation, made by our teachers, Henrik and Walli, lesson by lesson. But we only got the next chapter when we had had experiences and had developed understanding of the previous lesson. We would not get the following without having developed that.

So for those who are in retreat and guided in retreat, we actually work lesson by lesson. If you are at home and you don't have the opportunity to check with myself or some other teacher, check with yourself and be honest with yourself: Have I integrated that lesson sufficiently to be able to move on? Sometimes you move on and you will feel: Oh, it was a little bit premature, so you step back a little. Like this, you can move on. Because you have the complete explanations, you can practise with them.

I remember - that was a very difficult time for me - I got stuck with one of the last lessons on intuitive insight for seven months. They wouldn't give me the next lesson for seven months because I just hadn't resolved that necessary insight realisation. It made no sense to receive the following lesson. So it's the same for you, be sure and honest with yourselves: where am I? What do I really understand?

The next two years will be increasingly difficult. You need to practise **now** to integrate what we have shared during this course. Then you will find it much easier to understand from personal experience what all of this is talking about. This is up to you. Do I need to say that each day counts? It is like the jewel in your hands and you do something with it.

END

