

Working with emotions in daily life

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Part 1: Creating space

During these next weeks when we will be together on sundays, I will try to give a summary of the points which might be important and helpful for working with emotions in what is called daily life. Daily life means "right now", ~ ourselves in the situation we are living now and not somewhere else nor in the distant future.

When thinking about how to present the subject I thought I should not take an academic view on emotions and the working with them. Instead try to talk freely of what seems to work for us in our life as practitioners. This will be based of course on the teachings of the Buddha and in this case on Karma Chagme, a tibetan master who wrote a wonderful summary of these instructions. For those of you who would like to read the teaching in its full length you can do this in the book entiteled "*Working with emotions*" [oder auf deutsch "*Der grosse Pfau*"]. You will find all five steps nicely explained.

What are "emotions"?

First of all, when we talk about emotions we should define what actually is ment by this short word emotion, whenever we use it in the context of our teachings. We will not be talking about emotions in the sense of open states of mind conducive to awakening, for example joy, love, gratitude, compassion and so on. We will be talking about what in sanskrit is called "*klesha*". Klesha, or *nyon-mong-pa* in tibetan, are the states of mind that veil our mind and which create suffering. We are talking about how to work with states like desire, anger, fear, feelings of guilt, pride, jealousy and so on, which lead to states of suffering and which will be purified, and left behind on the path to awakening. And the question is, *how do we do that? How can we get out of this strong influence which these emotions have on our life?*

The starting point is to have a look and to come to the conclusion, "*yes I have emotions.*" I have these disturbing emotions, which create suffering for myself and others. It is very easy to say yes, I have emotions in general, it is easy to admit. But do you right now have (do we have I include myself), a disturbing emotion present in our mind...?

Oh!, some people say "yes".

I am actually very happy to hear some of you say yes to this question. It makes things easier because you feel that right now; something is still disturbing the mind. Something is present now which makes it that we are not fully awakened and this something is ~ a klesha.

The term klesha which we translate loosly as emotion is actually much finer, more subtle than what we generally call an emotion. We don't sit here having strong emotions except perhaps those who would like to run outside now. The rest of us have subtle emotions present, maybe small forms of doubt, the veils of not really understanding what Lhundrup is getting at. There is the presence of little agitations in the mind, little tentions; not completly relaxed and accepted, not completly open.

The beginning of the training to free ourselves from the influence of the emotions is to become aware in every single situation – in what is called daily life, in every single moment,- whether or not an emotion is present in our mind. This is called developing mindfulness of mental states and it is

a necessary [prerequisite in order] to do the rest.

In any given situation, we need this capacity to know that there is actually an emotion. For example, *"Oh Lhundrup look!, here you are angry, Oh look there is jealousy in your mind, or envy, or desire"*. When we look at this capacity to know the emotion we might feel at a loss even to be able to say what is actually going on right at the moment. This capacity is not something which is just there because we want it. We need to be able to compare with some kind of reference. And the reference is found when we simply just sit in a state as relaxed as can be. That is what I would call the baseline. It is not without emotions, not without obscuring states, but it is where we feel pretty much O.K, that basic state of our very individual, normal being. This is what we can find when we just do nothing. We can call this meditation but actually it is not being preoccupied by something else and that gives us a feeling of how we are when things are pretty much O.K. Then when emotions come we feel the difference. This feeling of *the difference* is actually with what we will work when we work with emotions in daily life.

To put things very briefly, the whole of working with emotions consists in always finding our way back to this basic natural state, the most relaxed state we know, the greatest openness we know. It is always in the same direction. Now this openness, (this relaxation) will also develop and change, but when we are in an emotional, agitated state, where do we want to go? Back into that open, natural, relaxed state! That is the work we want to do. The difficulty is that, when the anger is there, we get stuck in the emotional state and we don't know how to find our way back to an open, relaxed mind. That is where the tools of the dharma come in. We will talk about some of them in these three teachings, but all of them have the same aim, to bring us back into openness. That openness will evolve as we continue on the path.

When I say that this openness will evolve I am talking about a personal experience of knowing today, *"Oh, this is when I feel completely relaxed"*. This is the reference baseline, but maybe ten years ago [from now], I discovered deeper states of letting go and so these will be the reference. This will be towards what we are going to, in our working with the emotions.

Working with emotions was described by the Buddha in the four noble truths. This is suffering, this is the origin of suffering, this is the cessation of suffering, this is the path which leads to the cessation of suffering. In these four noble truths the whole path of working with emotions is actually already described.

The first step is to know this is suffering. If we translate this into our own language this means, yes, I am tense, I feel agitated, I feel cramped as if with a closed heart, I can not find love and compassion any more, there is fear. There are many such signs of what is an emotion. With some of the emotional states, we will not be able to identify, for the moment, the tension going along with certain forms of clinging,. We have not yet developed the antenna to be sensitive [enough] to the tension that certain states create in our minds. That will come later. We can only work with what we already have an antenna for. As we work with that our sensitivity will increase, and we will notice more. Then we will work with that. We work with our present capacity.

I would like you now to choose one emotion. Choose one which you are very familiar with and perhaps which creates a lot of trouble for you. Keep that emotion in mind while I continue to explain the four noble truths because things will become more clear as to what the Buddha was actually talking about.

Is the emotion which you have chosen a form of suffering? Does it represent a form of suffering? Have a look...

The reason we ask this question is because usually we are in fact in love with our emotion. We like to be angry. We find it super to be in desire. Pride is just tops and jealousy is the noble power of competition. We do not identify the emotion as being suffering. So this first question is very important. It will make the difference between whether we want or do not want, to dissolve that

state of mind, to get out of it.

This goes for all emotions, even for those which quite obviously are disagreeable, like fear. We want our fears. We identify with our fears. *"Don't try to take away my fear". "I want, I need my fear". "My fear is a voice of wisdom". "I need it to survive".* We can not have any results in the work with emotions if we are not convinced that these mental states actually represents a problem, that they are a source of suffering.

Keep your preferred emotion in mind, and ask yourself now the second question: *What is the origin of that emotion or that state of mind ... ?* You have to find out for yourself what is the cause of that state of mind. To just answer: *"It is ego clinging"* will not always be sufficient because that's good for every emotion and the work has to be done in much greater detail. It is good to be aware that ego clinging is behind every emotion, but there are great subtleties and it is in the subtleties where the work lies.

Let's take anger as an example. I am angry and I feel this, I have the right to be angry. What is happening is unjust and I have to defend myself. I know that I am agitated, I know that I am about to create harm and perhaps even to lose control. Yet I feel correct, I feel that's what I should be like.

When we look at the situation, then we actually see that the anger is a state of suffering, but that there is a reason for it. I do indeed want to defend my interest. And that's the dilemma. We see on one side something which is the cause of suffering; on the other hand there is a reason for that and we don't want to let go of that reason; of that which motivates us behind the simple justified anger.

The work on these more subtle tendencies is just an example. There are many such examples, within which it is necessary to do realistic work on our emotions. Otherwise we will simply take everything as ego clinging and we will go on cloud number seven to drift off as the practitioner who has no clinging. But when we are challenged again, we will again fall in the same trap because nothing has been resolved. We have thus to discover the motivations behind the emotion and these are multiple (motivations). Then we have to look and see if we can deal with that more wisely.

Wise examination

I will give you a quotation from the *second sutra of the middle length sayings* of Buddha Shakyamuni. *"Someone who has one capacity which he or she masters can indeed hinder the emotional influences, to exhaust the influences. When these undercurrents of emotional influences appear, this person will indeed have the capacity to overcome them. What is this capacity? It is the capacity to examine things profoundly, that means in depth and to handle them with wisdom."* So wise examination, wise handling of emotions, is the key quality to develop. When the Buddha had explained this basic capacity of mind he continued by explaining the four noble truths as the understanding which gives rise to this wise examination and the handling of emotions.

We were on the third step, we have not begun with the fourth step. The third step would be: *Can I imagine that this emotion which I have, and am looking at, is completely liberated, that it is gone, that it is completely purified? Can I envisage the possibility of being completely free of that state..?*

At this point where we ask ourself this question, could there be an end to that suffering, things become a little difficult. We might say yes, we might say no, but it will be of great help if we have a living example of being free of these emotions. That's what the Buddha was for the first disciples, and that's what the great awakened masters are for us nowadays. We can feel that they have found dimensions of non-clinging, and openness of mind, that we don't know. They seem to be free of anger while we are not and this gives us a mirror image of what is possible. It will give us the energy to actually do the work. If no one is capable of getting out of it we will simply not be working on them. We will just say, O.K. if no one else can do it, I will also not be able to do it, so

let's leave it as such.

That is the importance of the third noble truth, it is to give us the encouragement to say - yes, do it. The fourth one is the path, how to get out. That will be the subject of the rest of the teaching.

Working with emotions in five steps

For the sake of brevity I will jump over some of the explanations of the Buddha (in the second and the twentieth sutra of the middle-length-sayings) on working with emotions. He gives a list of seven approaches and five methods on how to deal with them. If you are interested, have a look for yourself on how the Buddha explained it. For us it is easier to follow the explanations of Karma Chagme, who two thousand years later, summarized the art of working with emotions into five steps in a descending order of difficulty. The first step is the easiest and the last step is reserved for very advanced practitioners.

Today we will only talk about the first step but I will give you the list of the five steps.

The first level would be to *abandon the emotions without suppressing* them. To put it in one word "stop". That means to not follow the emotion as it arises; this is the first step.

The second step is *working with remedies* that will help us to get out of the emotions, called working with antidotes or remedies. Different methods which help us to work with emotions in the long run.

The third step is called *transforming the emotion* or changing the emotion, which actually means integrating the emotions into a larger perspective. Changing our perspective of what is actually happening. You can call it changing the perspective.

The fourth step is *recognizing the true nature of an emotion* knowing it's illusory nature or empty nature.

The fifth step is *taking emotions as the path*, which means using every single instant of emotionality to again recognize the nature of mind which we have already seen on the fourth step.

First step: "stop"

The first step can also be called "creating space". Actually all of the steps create space but this is most important in the beginning, ~ taking a step back. Normally when we have an emotion, when I am angry, I am completely in it. I am the anger. When I am in desire, that's me. I don't have any distance. So the first step is to create that distance.

To do this work of creating space, to take a step back, is actually something which you can do now. Because maybe Lhundrup is talking too long. He is using too many words, we are getting a bit nervous, our knees are hurting, our buttocks are hurting, our mind is beginning to get a little bit tired and filled up to the rim. Then comes the reflection, "*Oh, not so important, it is O.K. it is not such a big deal*". Actually this little thought "*not such a big deal*", is taking you out of the emotional involvement.

We can also tell ourselves - relax, breath, take some time, breath three times. You know that is always good, it never harms. So we take our time, breath, don't do anything. Actually we are not doing anything else with the mind but just giving the mind some space. Very important. If we can get that into an emotional situation, we are creating a bridge. We are creating a little opening and we are not glued to the emotion anymore. The emotion does not have a complete hold on us. We are not completely under the influence of an emotion any longer. We have a little bit of space.

It took a long time before I was capable of bringing in mindfulness of breathing and to create a space with a strong emotion like anger. The constant anger arising in me when my father would send another arrow with words across the table. But when it was possible, then this was a big relief, because I was not in that reaction pattern anymore. Today it might happen, (25 years later,) that when such an arrow comes, I can answer with a joke. I can turn the arrow into a joke; take it easy. But before there was no space, there was no possibility, I was too identified with the reaction. So there is a lot of work behind this "not identifying" in order to be at ease in a situation that

normally would provoke an emotional reaction.

We always have this possibility of stepping out of the situation. Of course this is the greatest distance we can make, ~ physical distance. Get up from the table, leave the room, go else where. This is not being a coward, ~ chicken. It means rather that we are discovering means of managing a difficult situation that we could not handle if we stayed in the situation. It could be very wise to get out of the situation and to come back later when we are calm. We can avoid a lot of harm like this.

Questions and Answers

Would you like to help me to clarify questions on this first phase? I would like to know were you see a difficulty or perhaps your reflections so that I can answer to them and elaborate.

Question: *The question is how to take distance with an emotion without suppressing it?*

Suppressing an emotion is essentially linked to a judgement. *"This is bad, I don't want to have that"*. If you want to avoid suppressing an emotion, avoid the judgement of saying, *"this should not be"*. We make the movement in our mind - *"No, I don't want to have this"*.

Instead, the attitude should be more like a scientist or someone neutral. A neutral observer who says: *"O.K. this is anger"* – rather than *"what shall we do with this?"* Not pushing it away, not pulling it towards you. Just noticing and accepting the presence of that state of mind.

Question: *When I hear you saying not to suppress the emotions, I understand it to stay in the emotion, is this right or wrong?*

(My answer would be that) In order to maintain an emotion we have to invest a certain amount of clinging and identification. Only then will the emotion continue. Stepping out means to install the distance of observing an emotion. This is already less of an identification. When we begin to observe we are not one with the observed. We are stepping out, having a look at it. If we want to create this "observing distance" and get out of the emotion, what we can do, for example, is to ask ourselves: *How does it feel? What do I feel now? What is going on?* The person in front sends us an arrow, ~ a challenge, ~ we are getting angry, and then we have the reflex *"feel the anger, feel it"*, and this is definitely not suppressing. It's the complete opposite of suppressing. We are completely aware of what is going on. But what we let go of is the chain of thoughts, of *"yes, but ..."* and *"I am right..."* and all the justification and counter attack. That game is for the moment completely finished. For example, we are with the experience of feeling hurt. We feel hurt, we feel sad, we feel angry, and we feel the palpitation, the heat, the sweat is coming and we feel it. So there is no suppressing but we have cut the chain of reactions. We are just being aware of what is.

Question: *I find it difficult to believe that we are in love with our emotions because I for myself am suffering a lot from anger. I would really wish to get out of it, but then also I wonder how I could work with the emotion, how this could evolve and while avoiding the feeling of guilt, feeling guilty to have that emotion. Feeling like ashamed of my own emotions.*

The first thing is that if someone has had his or her fill with an emotion (up to here) and really wants to find a solution, then the state of being in love with the emotion is indeed finished. We are ready to start work on that emotion. Next, we notice that it is not at all helpful to feel ashamed of that emotion. It is just adding more weight, making it heavier still to work with.

Being able to accept oneself with the emotion that one is having is the first step in the healing process. It can help to know that we all share the same problem. We all have strong emotions. Different emotions dominate in different individuals, but we all have a good share of every single one of them. To accept that basic fact and to accept it deeply is not easy. It is the first step in working with it. The feeling of shame and guilt in relation to our emotion is similar to the feeling of shame and guilt we have when we are physically sick. It does not help at all but we can not avoid

feeling a little strange, we are not in order, we do not feel O.K. and it is natural to feel this but as long as we are actually in this feeling of shame we have not yet completely accepted the challenge.

The second step would be to accept the challenge and say: *"O.K. my emotions are my practice"*. This is like a sick person saying "my illness is my practice, it is what I am going to work with now". I can not refuse to acknowledge the presence of the task to be done. Let's take a moment of reflection together. Each one look in yourself: *Am I ready to take my emotion as my practice?* If there is a clear "yes" it will help, if there is no clear yes in your mind, then look at what prevents you from saying yes. *"Where is my hesitation, why would I not agree to saying I take emotions as my practice?"*

It seems this chain of explanation leads me to another important point. Perhaps some of you have come to the Dharma, wishing somehow to find a straight way out of your dilemma, the straight way to Dewachen, happiness forever, without having to go through your shadows, the dark zones of your being? But this path does not exist. We have to face all the emotions and dark sides in us which we do not want to see. Usually we don't want to have them, we don't want to see them, and this is a part of starting to work with emotions which is to accept this challenge and it's a very heavy challenge.

Perhaps we underestimate the path a little, thinking that there could be a straight way towards the light. Actually this light of wisdom, the light of love and compassion, of understanding and comprehension, has to enter all the different mechanisms, the shadows and dark zones of our being. This is painful and this is also what we experience in the long retreat. It is not going from happiness to happiness but it's going from happiness to deception, to heavy work and to finding our way back to happiness. Bringing in that openness to the next difficulty, losing the openness again, being overwhelmed by the difficulty, finding the openness again. Like this the path is evolving. We are beginning to know the way to get lost and the way back to openness. We begin to know that as a constant work.

Question: *When I look into the causes of the suffering called fear, then I came up with an answer which is losing control. The fear of losing control is very much the source of any fear and the question is do we have to accept to lose control in order to work with fear? I believe fear makes us very alert, very awake to situations, perhaps there is something very good in the fear which should be kept.*

First of all I want to say that the loss of control is indeed one of the main mechanisms of fear. I don't know if it subsumes all the deep aspects of fear. There is a fear of the unknown which is very much related to fear of losing control. There is the fear of death and so on.

Question (same person): *I have a lot of fear for my brother who is a suicidal and I really do not know what is happening. And of course there is no control.*

Does this fear help to properly take care of this situation? Normally what happens with fear is that we single out a small aspect of reality. We are only aware of that. A panoramic vision of the overall situation is normally not present in fear. Further, fear goes along with tension, so perhaps not the most helpful state of mind. What we would like to keep is this wakefulness, which is induced by the fear but without the tension. We would like a wise, open, very wakeful state of mind. In order to get there we have to relax our mind somehow.

The process to find this openness is actually very difficult, because it's the life of my brother. What can I do, what should I do, what will happen and the whole scenario of if he kills himself... it's very difficult to relax. We can try to breathe a little, to relax physically, we can try to take refuge, we can try to call on all the invisible helpers, awakened beings etc. We can also just simply tell ourselves, *"Well it does not help him the least bit if I am tense"*. Many reflections like this will come and will

create a little relaxation. As we relax more the mind becomes more fluid again and it's possible that a thought arises which brings a new perspective to the situation. We might have forgotten that my brother has a good friend and we might be able to call on this person, to make contact. Thoughts will appear like this; we don't have to follow them, but as the mind is relaxing we are not losing our wakefulness but we are regaining flexibility. So the way we begin will have a lot to do with the antidotes, or the remedies we will use. But the simple method is to first feel the fear, become aware of it and not focus on the object of the fear. Take the thoughts away if possible from the brother, just feel the fear.

Let's take another example. We are in a kind of tibetan valley, 50 meters deep, with a small bridge and little railings which has wooden planks where you can see the ground far below. We have to get to the other side. Will the fear help us to get over the bridge? No, it's obvious. The fear is an obstacle. We have to find a relaxed mindfulness. Something which will make it possible for our body to be loose and walk carefully without being distracted. That would be the best. This is with all fears. All fears have one thing in common. They make us tense and actually diminish our capacity of mindfulness and wisdom.

We all know the situation, we want to go to the toilet at night, we switch on the light, "*bing*", the bulb has gone, no more light. We have to go in the dark, so we go. And how do we go? If we don't take care and become afraid and completely tensed, we will almost certainly fall, we will stumble, we will bang into things. But, if we go quietly, relaxed and mindfull, one foot after the other, one hand in front, one to the side, we will find our way. We only need to be relaxed and mindfull long enough. That is with all fears, all fears have this restricting aspect to them.

I would say no need for fears. Fears are not vital. A Buddha does not need fears in order to act. Everything is a question of trust and confidence.

Exercise: Just feel the emotions

From now until next Sunday if you could work with feeling the emotional states as they pass through, trying not to react but just feeling them, then next Sunday we can continue working with the antidotes.

Antidote: Wise reflection

Antidote means using the space we have created by breathing, feeling, not reacting. In that space we can make intelligent use of our mind. We can do something with it. For example being angry: we are sitting around the table in our company, there is a discussion and there is someone who really gets on our nerves. So we calm ourselves, we don't react while the others are talking. What do I do now? The thought arises, "*Oh this person is just as much as myself a prisoner of his or her own emotions. This person is not free, this person is not acting out of free will*". Even if it seems that the person is intentionally doing all that, actually that person is under the influence of emotional patterns which make this person unfree. This thought is the antidote for the thought that we think that he is doing this on purpose and he just wants to make me angry. If we look at the whole situation, we see he can not act differently, he is by his own emotions forced to act that way. That takes out one aspect of what makes us so angry, so hurt. We think it is on purpose and intentional and we take out that part of it.

There are other such antidotes which will attack other important concepts that together create the anger.

We can take another thought which could be, "*always on me, they always trample on me, always it is me who is the black sheep, the one you blame*". So the second thought, that of being a victim could be helped very much by reflecting on: "*In how far did I contribute to this situation? What made me come to this company? Why do I always say these kinds of words? Why do I always fight for injustice? How far am I by my acts of the past and the present also part of those who have constructed this situation?*" I am not merely a victim, but also an actor. This takes the hardness out feeling like a victim.

In this way we identify the underlining thoughts, that give rise to such emotions, and apply reflections to them that deactivates the bomb. This is the whole work. We are deactivating the underlined concepts that give rise to emotions. This is the whole work, which the Buddha called wise reflection, that will help us to work on the emotions.

So you understand a little bit the subtlety of the work. It's not enough to say it's all ego-clinging. It might sometimes work, but it will not do the work in depth. If we have this conclusion after thousands of preliminary reflections that actually all we are talking about is just our ego-clinging then it will work because it is backed up by thousands of such reflections. We have always come to the same conclusion. But if as a newcomer to the Dharma, we come for one week to Kundreul Ling to help on the working site, and we have an emotion and then someone tells you it is ego-clinging. If we start with that reflection it is not going to work. There has to be a more skillful way, and then after long reflection we can tell ourselves "*it is just my ego-clinging*", and then it will work. Then it will have power because it is well founded. If we do this too early, "*it is just my ego-clinging*", we actually just add a layer of guilt and shame to our normal emotion. Then we are ashamed to have ego-clinging, to be unenlightened.

Question: *What I feel is that the good as well as the harmful emotions actually they are part of our normal human being and I can not imagine that a human being could live without having for example such emotions like fear and for me the point seems to be that rather the work should consist in not clinging to the emotions.*

There is one part of your reflection which I share completely. Indeed it is completely normal to have this mixture of emotions. There are those of a very open nature and those which are disturbing and create suffering. The keypoint is not to cling to the emotions. This is really what we have to work on. The part I do not agree with is that it would not be possible to live without these emotions. Today I have come to a certainty that it is possible because of the examples I was able to see in my life. I am thinking especially of masters like Gendune Rinpoche, Karmapa and Shamar Rinpoche and so on. But also the many accounts of the lives of awakened masters which describe the path of how to become free of emotions.

Part II: Wise reflection

Did you work with this first step during the last week, the step we looked at last time, which is to stop, to create some space, not to react immediately when an emotion arises?

Of course I am asking you this question, but there are so many people, that maybe it is a little difficult to engage in a dialogue. However it is indeed a step, which is an absolute must in order to be able to speak of some kind of working, or practising with one's emotions. One has to first create a little distance.

Last time especially, we saw the aspect of creating some immediate space, "right now", in this very situation, not reacting, be it through taking a deep breath or even if necessary stepping out of the situation, going out of the room, but anyhow, just not reacting.

Longterm perspectives of creating space: decisions and commitments

Something which I did not explain last time is how to create space with a longterm perspective.

This is the case when we take vows. When we make clear decisions of not acting in certain ways anymore, like the vows of not killing, not stealing, not lying, refraining from sexual misconduct, not taking toxins, these five basic vows.

In other decisions as well, when we see that certain situations are likely to stimulate strong emotional reactions in us, which cause suffering due to the karma that we create, then we abstain from those actions. Take this like a vow, or as a commitment with oneself, or even with the witness of spiritual teachers. For many situations this creates a space which otherwise would very likely be a very strong temptation for us. One can actually create a lot of space in one's own life by deciding to do one's best to avoid situations that we know are going to be very conflictual.

This question of taking profound decisions and commitments is an intermediate position between the first step, which is to say "stop", to create some space and the second one, which is to apply remedies and antidotes to our emotions. The vows, (the commitments or the decisions) we take, can be seen as the beginning of a remedy. We have learned something from repeated situations. We do not want to fall into that trap anymore. We try to avoid the trap and take a different direction with our life. This we do, because we see that if we go into these situations, if we do not avoid them, we are very likely to repeat those actions again that we regret afterwards because they create strong karma and suffering. There is already some wisdom in operation.

Describing the first phase (saying "stop"): *The way our life goes in five acts*

Maybe you know this little anecdote or a sketch, it is the way our life goes in five acts.

First act: I go out of my house, walking down the street, there is a hole, I fall into that hole and it takes me a long time to get out.

Second act: I go down the street, I see the hole, I fall in and it still takes me a long time to get out.

Third act: I go down the street, I see the hole and I still fall into the hole, but I get out quickly.

Fourth act: I go down the street, I see the hole, I avoid the hole and continue on my way.

Fifth act: I go out of my house and I take a different street.

This little story is actually describing what happens in the first phase. We become aware of the traps. We fall into these "holes" and we have difficulties to get out. We will see how to get out and we notice that we have tendencies to fall back into the same holes again and again. Wisdom tells us: that even if occasionally we manage to avoid the hole, it would be even better to take another path. We are not in danger of stepping into the hole.

This is actually the meaning of these vows and these decisions to take a different street. We do not go where there are so many holes that we can fall in.

Second Step: Using remedies or antidotes

When we speak about the next step, which is using remedies or antidotes, this refers to the tibetan word "nyen-pa" which actually means something that helps us to be cured, or to be healed and there are many such remedies.

We say bodhicitta is the all-encompassing antidote or remedy, because bodhicitta is such a vast term that it includes both the relative and ultimate aspect. The relative means to face situations with love, with understanding, with compassion, with generosity, patience and so on. Everything that helps us on the relative level to better deal with situations. Ultimate bodhicitta is to develop a deep understanding of the nature of one's own mind and of phenomena. This means to profoundly understand how this world functions without ego-clinging and together these two levels encompass all remedies.

We might be just too quick to tell ourselves, "*practise bodhicitta*" but we don't really know what this means in detail. We will have a look in more detail at what the reflections are that we can use.

It will be impossible to go through all these antidotes in detail in the short time we have together, but let's take a few examples.

Remedies concerning desire: the changing nature of phenomena

The emotion of desire, ~ of wanting, or of wishing, to have a certain object or to be with a certain person, ~ for this there is a classical remedy which is to meditate upon the changing nature of phenomena: impermanence. Non-permanence is the non-lasting nature of phenomena. This means we investigate what is a lasting, reliable source of happiness and what is just a temporary source of happiness [pleasure], which means a happiness that will be unstable and dependent on outer situations.

When we use this remedy we might say "Yes", "Yes", "*I know, it is impermanent, but I still want it*". This means you have not really done the work on it, it is just the surface which has been scratched.

When we really work, reflecting on impermanence, we do it in depth and we reflect well: *"Is this so important? Whether I get or do not get this object, will it really have a deep effect on this life and how I live, at death and after death,?"* Reflecting like this, we actually see, whether or not getting a piece of clothing or going on vacation, is so very important [or not]. What really counts is whether from within there can be happiness. All the forms of happiness which depend on outer objects and people, we discover step by step as being unreliable sources of happiness.

Really have a look at what is happening when we use this remedy of meditating on the changing nature. We can do this with the person we love very much, and feel very attracted to. We could meditate our self and that other person aging, becoming old, wrinkles appearing, the softness of the skin disappearing, the strength disappearing, illnesses coming about and so on and so on. That will take away some of the fascination if not all the fascination with the outer aspects of this person. What remains might be that we feel very interested by the inner aspects, the inner characteristics. We feel we like very much the way that person is and we want to be with them. We are still under the influence of desire. So let's have a look at applying the antidote of contemplating impermanence on the inner level.

At that time we should reflect on the changing nature of the mental attitudes of the person we love. These beautiful exchanges we have right now with that person will not continue for ever. That person is bound to have different states of mind, different emotions. There are various karmic tendencies which I am not aware of right now, but which are definitely going to show up. *Am I willing to share all these situations with the other person? Am I willing to walk through all the different challenges? The morning after the party, waking up with a headache before the coffee has been served? The moment when he or she shouts at me because I have not been up to the mark, up to what the person expected of me? The moments when we miss out on something important and find ourselves in big difficulty and everything becomes very dark and suddenly full of fear? Am I willing to go through all the different changes of emotional attitudes? Am I willing to love that person through all these changes, that are bound to happen?*

There is not only going to be happiness, there are going to be difficulties as well.

Becoming realistic

Because we are not awakened beings we have to be realistic and this is what this remedy does. It makes us realistic. We come out of this fantastic dream. Desire is a dream of being happy because the object which we desire is so wonderful, and we forget the other aspect of what we desire, which is not so wonderful. For example an ice-cream is really wonderful as long as it lasts, but it has an end and it can have side effects also. But O.K. for the time being we might want to enjoy that. Everything changes, there is nothing which lasts. The moment of the party is fine and then there is the time afterwards. It has to be lived through as well. Just as many hours as the party was going on, there is the after-effect of the party.

We have to become really sober in our approach to reality. We need to know the changing nature of phenomena on all levels. We should always have this reflection: *What I am pursuing so much? This great wonderful object of my pleasure, is it going to make a real change for all my life, for when I face death and for the time after the death? Is it really so important or is it blown out of proportions by my desirous mind?*

This is something which we will see regarding all the remedies, they change the perspective of the situation. They make us more realistic, they give a wider perspective of a fuller life and the lives to come.

Remedy: reflections on karma

We contemplate for example karma thus ~ *"What karma do I create if I follow this emotion, what karma do I create if I act it out?"* This is another antidote and example. We can take this contemplation on karma for every emotion. *"If I follow pride, what will be the cause-and-effect-relationship, what will be the karmic fruit of following that?" "If I follow anger, what will be the karmic*

fruit of following that”?

For example pride, in the situation itself pride is “a very fine emotion”. We always think we are on top when we are proud. We don't usually feel that we want to abstain from pride when we are in it because it feels so agreeable. But when we look at the long term effects, what are the effects karmically speaking, of acting with arrogance, of acting with pride? Others become more and more distant from us. We will not even benefit from their capacity to act as a mirror, to give us some supportive criticism and so on.

We can by ourselves find out what the effects of pride are and due to this contemplation we become motivated to step out of the pride “right now”, as much as we can. We would not do this if we didn't meditate, on the long term effects. Reflection on karma is just another of these very very big antidotes.

Remedies concerning anger: wise reflection on karma, compassion and patience

To continue with the example of anger. Reflect on the karmic chain reaction that has brought me into this situation today. *What karma is it that makes me today the object of extreme aggressivity from the other side? What has brought the other person from their side to be so angry? And what will happen if one or other of us acts out in full this anger, this aggression? What will be the effect right now, in this life, before death, and after death?*

We reflect on this naturally, everyone does. We hold back because we know if we hit him now, this will be the end, this will be a disaster, this will destroy everything. Our friendship will be destroyed, confidence will be destroyed, and there will be endless fighting. One can see already with normal wisdom many of the effects of such an action.

One can also take the reflection further and say: “*Well, acting like this today, I will tend to act like this again in the next situation and the tendency to act like this will never stop and I will continue accumulating the same kind of causes*”. We are re-enforcing the same kind of karmic tendencies.

These reflections are called a remedies, or antidotes. Be very familiar with them. We need to apply these antidotes. Every wise reflection is an antidote. Remember last Sunday I told you that the Buddha defined the necessary quality to work with emotions as being wise reflection. That's exactly what we are talking about now. The pali term *yoniso manasikara* is the central term for this wise reflection. When you look: All Dharma teachings, everything we have heard nourishes this wise reflection. Mind is working wisely with the situation at hand.

Continuing with the antidote to anger. The major antidote for anger is of course compassion. If you don't call it compassion you call it patience. We all know this, everyone knows it, for no one is this surprising news, but we are not so very skillful in applying this remedy. Otherwise we would not get angry. So there might be a point that we have not looked at yet.

The first reason why our understanding does not work is because we don't really want to let go of our anger. We are not completely willing to let go. And so we are not applying the antidotes, (the remedies which we know of) with enough strength, with enough inner decision. Actually we want to be angry, we want to defend our rights, we want to hold on to have justice, to have fair play, etc. We don't let others “*just roll over us*” because our dignity does not allow for this.

What we call dignity is actually our pride. It is our pride which is talking. Pride is justifying our anger.

This unwillingness to let go of our anger is due to thinking that anger brings an advantage. There is something is good in anger! At this point we first need to apply the reflections on the disastrous effects of anger on our own mind and on the situation. We have to become completely convinced that there is not a hairtip of an advantage in being angry. If you look honestly in your mind, you might not be completely convinced. You might think it is very healthy to have anger. The sign of

a sound personality. We have to defend ourself and we have to stand up for our rights and so on.

Actually there is a mistaken view behind these ideas. We think that through anger we can stand up for our rights. But No! If we stand up for rights without anger it will be much more effective. If we can be guided by wisdom and compassion we will be much more effective in changing things in this world in a positive way. Anger does not help, it makes things worse.

Not suppressing, not projecting outwardly, but investigating the emotion

The next thing you will probably say is, *"But listen Lhundrup, if you talk like this you are just adding to the weight of guilty feelings about being angry. This will just lead to suppression of ones anger. This can not be the path"*. No it's not the path, I completely agree. The path is skillfully dealing with anger. Skillfull, wise reflection, on how to deal with anger when it arises [is the path].

So the path is not to suppress. For people who do suppress their anger it is very likely, almost unavoidably so, that when beginning to accept anger into their minds and not to suppress it that there will be moments of explosion. Moments of not being able to do differently than just letting it out. But this is not the end of the path it is merely not suppressing anymore. We then need to learn to hold the anger, to be able to be angry without projecting it out on others, to look at it and then to work with it. Within this first frame of stopping and of creating space, we need to apply the antidotes. Then they will work. We are decided not to harm others. Not to create suffering through our anger. Being fully decided we have a good basis for the application of antidotes.

In this situation, where we neither suppress nor project outwardly, we can investigate the anger. *Why am I angry? How does the anger feel?* Many questions can be asked.

The list of antidotes for anger and developing patience is so long it is impossible to give them all to you today. Let me just give you one or two examples that have worked very well for myself.

What helped me a lot is the reflection that the person who makes me angry, who does something that really get's on my nerves is actually himself [or herself] a prisoner of karmic tendencies and that he is not acting out of free will. This person is bound by his own tendencies and can not decide to stop. It looks perhaps like the person should be able to stop, but actually the person is not able to. The person is not free. At least no more free than I am in my own emotion. That's the first step. If I can understand that, it is already taking out a lot of my angry projections which tell me, he is doing this on purpose.

The next step would be to see that, being a prisoner of his own tendencies, this person is actually suffering. This person, who is creating such a difficult situation for me, is himself [or herself] actually suffering right now. And in order to get out of that suffering that person would need help. Suddenly the one whom I percieved as the agressor before, is now seen as the one that needs help. The one that needs to be supported in some way to get out of the cage, (out of the prison). That changes the perspective completely. In my heart something changes. I get out of the projection of some one doing it on purpose, out of free will and only out for harm. Instead I see the other one as a suffering person at least as much as myself, if not more so.

If you want to know more about these kinds of remedies you can look them up in the chapters that concern anger, the chapters on the paramita of patience, and you can look in Shantideva, Gampopa, Patrul Rinpoche and so on. You can also discuss amongst each other the different Dharma possibilities. It will not be this short teaching today that will make you capable of better living with emotions. That would be an illusory hope. What can happen today is that when you walk out of here, you decide, "Yes, I want to know more about these remedies". "Were can I look"? "What can I do"? And then you look in the different texts. We have a typed out transcripts of teachings in the past. You can look in these different texts and search for a remedy that you feel really touched by, which makes sense to you. This remedy you study, you apply yourself to it. You prepare yourself even before a situaton arises. When the situation is there, you try to apply [the

remedy]. You work with it so long and so much that it will arise spontaneously. It will become your spontaneous response to such situations. Then you have a real tool working for you. But this is due to your own work. This is not something that can be done in a teaching, that is completely impossible. It is because you are motivated to use that tool, [that it becomes possible].

Tonglen

I would like at the end of this teaching for today, to talk about one of the most universal antidotes or remedies for emotions, which is the practice of tonglen. Tonglen means giving and taking. Or to put it differently, to open up to the suffering of another person, to accept that suffering into my own heart, to share that, to open up to this deeper dimension with the other person. Then to share in the giving aspect, our love, our compassion, our qualities, our support with the other person. This is a remedy good for all emotions. It is something which can become a great, great helper for every emotional situation. It means that from the psychological point of view we are taking the place of the other. That's why it is also called, "exchanging oneself with the other". Actually we give every importance to try to feel what the other person might be feeling. Because normally with emotions we feel for our selves, we feel nothing of the other person. We think we feel, but we don't. We are completely preoccupied by ourselves. In order to step out of that preoccupation, we step into the field of what the other might be experiencing. We try to feel the fears, the loneliness, the wish to be loved, all the different aspects of the suffering, the wishes, the hopes, the fears of the other person. We open up to [all of] the dimension of what might be difficult for the other person. We can connect this with the inbreath. So we take it all in, we open up to feeling what the other might experience and with the outbreath or with the thought going out, we offer support. We offer that which the other needs in that situation. Perhaps what we feel about the other person can not even be expressed by the person in question. It is not what comes out verbally, it is something which we feel on a deep level of contemplation. We are not sure if what we are feeling is correct. We are still in a world of trying to feel. It might be a complete projection but it is the best projection we can have. It is the compassionate act of trying to feel. Then, we will try to know more from the other so that our feeling of the situation, our acts and our words become more and more close to the reality of that person.

If you are doing this practice please do it daily. Make it a daily support for yourself until it becomes spontaneous, until it becomes the reaction that arises when a situation becomes difficult. It is something good for all ones life and it will always deepen, [the understanding of that practice will always become deeper]. There is no limit to the depth of the practice. It goes into the complete understanding of the nature of mind, of emptiness, of suffering and so on. There is no limit to the depth of this practice.

Questions and Answers

Question: *Since the emotion can make us progress and improve ourselves do we really have to avoid the situation which creates anger or something like that?*

The answer is actually very simple. We can ask ourself: "Do we have to continue to go through the same lessons over and over again if we have already learnt our lesson"? "Have we developed the capacities in question"? "Does a Buddha need to continue to have emotions in order to be a Buddha"? "Does a healthy person need to be sick again in order to be healthy"? It is not necessary. When the work has been done and it has become stable then we don't need to go through the same lessons.

However, if we lose our mindfulness, our clinging and so on will come back and then we have to go through the same lesson again. The question of going through the same street or not, or using another street which dose not have the same hole is only a temporary one. If we become really strong we can actually guide a whole group of people along that street and not only ourselves will not fall into the hole but we will even help others not to fall in. We have learnt that much from our

lesson. We do not have to make this hole a sacred hole, like a shrine. *"You know, this wonderful hole which has taught me all the necessary lessons"*. We don't have to sanctify samsara. There is nothing else to learn in samsara but how to get out of it; there is no inherent value in samsara.

This question which was asked is actually more profound on a philosophical level. Buddhists have a vision of the world where it is indeed potentially possible to live without suffering. Suffering is not something inherently necessary for life and especially not for a happy life. However, in our western world influenced by the Judeo-Christian belief system, it is more difficult to envisage a world without suffering. There seems to be some inherent value attributed to suffering. So to leave suffering completely behind becomes a little bit difficult ~ even just as an idea in mind. On the relative level we all agree that suffering is an excellent teacher, it is our first teacher, its the first lama we have, the one which teaches us everything we need to know.

Question: *I would like to know if you make a difference between anger and firmness, in relation to children?*

Yes, what you are suggesting is exactly what I meant. We need this firmness and stability in order to protect others in difficult situations. There is no need for anger in order to hold back a child who is running towards a fire, water, a steep abyss. We just need to be strong and clear and decided, even if we outwardly display anger to make it more convincing perhaps to the child (it can also be an adult), inwardly there is no actually need for anger.

Question: *Sometimes I feel for example anger during the morning, I feel angry but there is no object to be angry against. Is there a cause for this anger?*

This question is similar to the question about how it is that when we sit on a cushion not doing anything, that suddenly some angry feeling or other emotion arises? This is something that currently happens, it happens to every meditator. It is because of past imprints, we call it karma. These impressions of the past in the depths of our consciousness, which arise, which liberate themselves, come to the surface because there is space because we are not distracted. For example, when we sit in a room all alone by ourselves, when there is no outer situation that overshadows or clouds our mind and makes it preoccupied with something else, then mind from within shows what is latent, what has not been digested yet. When this comes to the surface, when we let go of this, it is one step further in the purification process. We have a tendency to let go that becomes stronger, [the capacity to let go becomes stronger] and the karmic tendencies become a little weaker. That is the answer for all those situations when we do not even know where a certain state of mind comes from.

This process of karmic colouration; the colouring of our perceptions, does not stop when outer situations are challenging and intense. It does not only happen on the cushion in the morning when we are quiet, it goes on all through the day. Right now while we are sitting here together one or two hours, there are all the time karmic imprints. That means impressions of the past that change and influence our experience of the situation, sometimes more agreeable, sometimes less agreeable, coloured by little moments of aversion, attachment and pride. We do not notice this, but it goes on all day long. We are so occupied with our sense perceptions, with the concepts that are stimulated through talking, hearing and so on, that we don't notice the influence of these past tendencies. We just believe that this is the way it is. Only when we go back to our meditation cushion and the outer situation calms down, do we notice all these changing of states of mind that happen without having sufficient outer explanation. It happens all the time. Thank you for your question.

Question: *Once we have gotten out the desire towards a person by meditating on the changing nature of the outer aspects, all these features that create an attachment towards the sensual aspect of the other person, then how could there still be such a couple relationship? Should there not only be equanimity in the relationship like a relationship of friendship similar to the teacher-student relationship?*

... So now the clarification has brought to the surface the real question. The question is: "*What is it that makes people stay together*"? A couple could stay together for example even after the attraction to the outer features has gone away and after the attraction to the "way of being" of the person has also been levelled out into equanimity.

What holds a couple or a friendship together, is that one has a common purpose, a common meaning. Be it the project of raising children or one wants to support each other on the spiritual path or one wants to help each other to live through old age and illnesses up to death. Whatever one formulates one needs to have a purpose to stay together. Otherwise when one reaches the letting go of outer and inner fascination, the couple drifts apart because actually there is no reason to stay together. That is very normal. So then one has to define for what are we staying together? What the Dharma suggests; if you wish to stay together besides taking care of children and the like - help each other to travel the path of awakening! That is a good project, that is worthwhile, if you can do this then your couple relationship would actually be very helpful.

Question: *I was reflecting on the notion on wise reflection and how one actually does that. Because is it not opened to the self, the ego, taking over and actually feeding you false "wise reflection"? How is one going to clearly do this or look out for the dangers when one is attempted to do this?*

Trés bon question. You see this is a really difficult point you are raising, you can turn a good tool into a means of deviation by clinging to a self. This wonderful tool of reflecting on the changing nature of phenomena, the impermanence, can be used in a very neurotic way to suppress all spontaneity in life saying: "*Oh, I do not care for this, this is impermanent; this I have nothing to do with, this is also changing*", in a very nihilistic way. It can be completely misused by the neurotic set-up of the person using it. In the same way even *tonglen* can become a complete "saviour trip". It can be so distorted in ones way of applying it, in many subtle and gross ways. Every tool needs to be checked with someone wise and also against the whole Buddhist teaching in a very broad perspective in order to watch out for neurotic twists. Using the so called "wise reflection" which becomes just egoistic reflection, is not wise any more. We always compare our reflection with the reflections of really wise masters like the Buddha and other awakened masters. This checking of our Dharma practise is the safety belt or the air bag, it avoids deviating too far.

These tools that we were talking about are like gold, they are wonderful. They are such powerful means for working with our ego clinging but only when used properly. Properly means as they have been taught, and tested and not deviating in the usage, not exaggerating, not doing it only halfway – but just the way they have been taught.

Question: *Sometimes I feel that during the night the emotions are much more powerful than during the day and I like to know if we can do something just before sleeping?*

The best way to prepare for the night is to take refuge before falling asleep, cultivate bodhicitta and to connect with our Buddha Nature by visualising the Lama or the Buddha. Here we usually use Buddha Vajradara Dorje Chang, in our heart, to connect with that presence and to fall asleep. We can also recite a mantra. What we are actually doing is that we are setting our mind on the best possible track. We give it a very positive direction, which is all we can do when falling asleep. During the night we cannot avoid karmic imprints manifesting as dreams in our mind. There will be emotions, clinging and so on.

This also is a mirror of what we have clung to during the previous day. All the past and present that has to be digested. Generally things are better lived through if we have cultivated a positive mind before entering sleep. When we wake up we can see if we fell asleep with a positive attitude. It will be much more often that we awake with a positive attitude, and that we quickly take refuge again, remember bodhicitta and so on. If on waking up we remain in our strong emotional confusion, the fact that we may even have lived states of hatred, aggression and so on, then we are advised by teachers to immediately apply remedies, for example, the Vajrasattva meditation.

Whatever (other) practice helps us to purify and let go of what has been in the night, to open up our mind again and to turn positively towards the day without traces of what we have lived through during the night influencing us in the situations we are going to live through during the day.

Part III: further steps

During the last two teachings we saw the first two steps of how to deal with emotions. The first is to create some space, not to be carried away by one's impulsive reactions but to say "stop", I won't go further into this, let me first step out a little, step back, and reflect on what is the wisest thing to do, so as to create this time for wise reflection.

Now for today, what is left is to have a look at the three other steps (of how to deal with the emotions). The third one is called "transforming the emotions", the fourth one is "to see the nature of the emotion" and the fifth is to take "emotions, as the path". It's obvious that we can't go into much detail, especially with the fourth and the fifth steps, which are quite advanced practices. We will just have a short look at them and then we will go back to the third step.

Third step: transforming the emotion or the attitude towards the emotion

When we look at the third stage, which is called "transforming the emotion", it's not the emotion which is actually transformed. It's our attitude towards the emotion, which we transform. We only change this. This is just the short way of saying it. It does not mean that the emotion itself, for example anger, would suddenly become something else. It's our attitude towards the emotion which changes. It's not possible to make coal into gold, or stone into gold. Stone remains stone and gold is gold, but you can discover that inside the stone there is some gold. It's this kind of relationship.

Fourth step: seeing the nature of the emotion

The fourth stage is the one of "seeing the nature of the emotion". What is meant here is to let go of all the objects of the emotion. For example [the object] of desire, anger and so on, and to look in our mind at the emotional movement of the mind itself. To discover the absence of any true existence; what we call "emptiness". To discover this "empty" or "illusory nature" of the emotion is called "seeing the nature of the emotion". When we have had this very convincing experience of seeing that the emotion is nothing in itself, that the emotion is just like a water bubble which is pierced by the direct looking into its true nature, then we are sure and convinced that this is the same with all emotions, and we can use this direct experience as a basis to look into all other emotions. We could try to do that with every emotion that arises, but this is easier said than done. We have to be very mindful and actually apply that direct looking into the emotion.

Fifth step: taking the emotion as the path

If we do that each time, we will have the same experience of seeing (the empty nature,) the illusory nature of the emotion, and that's called "taking the emotion as the path". What we actually do is we use every emotion that arises due to our karmic imprint, as a reminder to look at the very essence, and that deepens our understanding of emptiness. It does not at all mean cultivating emotions, and somehow making something really good out of the emotions. We just use every moment of strong clinging [at the beginning, and of more subtle clinging later on,] to have a look at the essence of that clinging. Then we see the empty nature, its non-existence, the absence of a lasting nature in that mind movement. So that's called "taking the emotions as the path".

When we look at Karma Chagme's teaching on "transforming emotions", in the chapter of remedies he gives an example of using a famous mantra called the mantra of emptiness or the pure nature of phenomena, which is OM SWABHAWA SHUDDHA SARWA DHARMA SWABHAWA SHUDDHO HUNG. This mantra means "*all phenomena are pure by nature, and so am I*" (my own mind is pure by nature). What is meant by that is that no phenomena has any lasting existence. The same is also true for my mind, the mind of the meditator. This is actually summarizing an essential part of the Buddha's teachings on the true nature of phenomena and of

the self. But for ourselves we may not be familiar with this mantra and with all the teachings about it. Usually this is not the starting point, we have another way of entering into practice. For example we come to a Dharma center (like this one), and we become attracted to the Chenrezi practice. We start to use the mantra OM MANI PADME HUNG. We start doing Chenrezi and in that practice we are taught at the mantra phase, that all manifestation is the body of Chenrezi, all sound is the speech of Chenrezi and all conceptual thoughts, are the mind of Chenrezi. We kind of get stuck on that sentence and wonder : *"Well, how can it be? How can it be that my dualistic thinking, my projections, my dualistic ideas, all of this, how could that be the thoughts of an awakened being like Chenrezi ?"* It becomes like a koan for us. It becomes a troubling question, which stimulates our search for understanding, and we work with this. We begin to change, to have a different attitude towards our own thought process. We begin to consider the possibility that maybe these thoughts, these emotions may not be such a problem as we thought in the beginning.

What happens is that our way of looking at emotions begins to change a little. If we take it to heart, if we are really interested, we will see that there are many different situations where anger (or desire or any other emotion) arises and we become more interested in understanding how the process happens [rather] than remain stuck on the object of our anger, (desire and so on). We see that the objects are changing all the time but the process of the emotion appearing and disappearing seems always to be very much in the same way. So we get interested in the way this happens. We begin to notice that, no matter WHO makes me angry, anger itself always arises in the same way, and as soon as I let go, it always goes the same way. If we investigate in a little bit more detail, then we see that an emotion is actually following the same patterns, we are beginning to observe patterns in mind, ~ kind of laws of how the mind functions.

As long as we give importance to an emotion it will grow, it will spread, and we identify that this "giving importance" is what we call "clinging". As long as that is there, the emotion seems to be very alive. As soon as we let go off the clinging, if we don't give importance to it any more, or if we do something else, then the emotion dwindles away. It is gone in one moment depending on how clearly we turn away the mind. This is very different from other things which we believe to be existing, for example this watch, which I believe to be existing, If I look somewhere else, or if I do something else, I can still come back and the watch is still there, and I can take it up and put it on my arm. But the emotion, if we have done something else in between, (if we have focused our mind on something else,) then when we look for where it is, often we cannot find it any more. There are just a few traces of it; then, giving importance to it, it will again become alive and grow into something which can be the cause of a lot of suffering. But it does not seem to stay as something solid. This is a very important discovery in how to deal with emotions. Although we might have had the impression of a very solid emotion, none of the emotions we have had so far have been able to continue to exist just as it was, until now, here in our meditation hall. None of them are solid. They appear quite solid when we are completely into it, but actually they are not. Maybe you have noticed, perhaps when doing Chenrezi, in the space of one hour, how many emotions can pass through. It's quite amazing, there is enough time for quite a few emotional states to pass through; none of which has a solid existence. This impermanence we call the changing nature of the emotions. It's a very crucial understanding.

From this understanding of the non permanent, ever-changing nature of the emotion, we move on to understanding that actually we are living in a film, in many films, which continue like a whole big film. Outside the actors are changing, within ourselves, the film of our emotions is changing constantly. The emotion which was so strong, and so big yesterday, or perhaps the one you had at lunch today or before, ~ where is it now? Since we have seen this so often, even while we have an emotion, we begin to say to ourselves: *"Don't get too much hooked on that, because probably it's going to be gone quite soon. So be careful, don't act now, you might make a big business task, you're just believing in very strong projections. Don't act, wait. Let the wave pass."* This is the result of beginning to see that we are actually living in a film. We become more conscious, a bit more patient and a little more relaxed. This actually makes the wave pass quicker, because there is less clinging. So the waves move through - they can still be very strong, it doesn't mean that the waves

are not strong -, but they pass quicker, and we begin to have an attitude of not involving too much in this film, because we see it creates a lot of suffering. We become more like a spectator to these movies. It can be quite fascinating, but more fascinating when it's happening in others. When it's our own movie, then we still tend to get caught in it.

From here on, from this understanding of the illusory nature of the dream, knowing that we're in fantasies, in emotional projections, which are due to our karmic imprint, we move on a little more. The next step is to understand more of the mechanism behind how the emotion becomes stronger, how one puts in more clinging, elaborates on the different scenes of projection and how the letting-go-process will help here and there. [We learn] which remedies will help to let go off this or that emotional state. This can be compared to someone who watches a movie in the cinema, and who is not caught by the movie any more. Perhaps we are seeing the same movie for the third or fourth or sixth time, then our mind is much more aware: *"Oh, this actor is really playing well"* and *"look at that dialog"*, *"how the scene director arranged the background"*, but *"this music coming here now, this was not fitting"* ... You have this more critical, more distant look at what normally would completely capture you.

Since you are more experienced now, you have a different "take" on the film. You get caught, but not so much as to lose completely some objective distance with what is happening. This we also do with our emotions. We become more and more skilfull in seeing the mechanisms. We see that a similar mechanism is at work and we begin to differentiate more finely the different shapes and degrees of emotion. We begin to know better which remedy to apply. Like this we become more like students becoming stage managers. We're growing, we already have a little influence on what's happening, and we use these skills. The more our skills grow, the better we can influence whether or not we're actually going to enter an emotion.

We continue a bit further (we stopped at the point where we were the apprentice to the scene director). If you learn well to observe the mind, how it works, to use the different tools, then you really know more and more how emotions arise, how they disappear, what are the different causes and conditions that make emotions become strong and what are the causes and conditions that make emotions dissolve and disappear. We actually become like the director of the play himself, we know all the ingredients and we have an influence on what is happening. In Dharma texts, this is called "to become like a magician". The image used in the indian and tibetan texts is the one of a magician who is able, in front of a large public, to create miracles, like the famous rabbit out of the sleeve and so on. This kind of miracle, (the texts even talk of projecting cities into space with beings inside), happens in big films now. The magician knows all the tricks and exactly how it comes about, but the public does not know (the tricks). Before starting to practice with emotions we were like the public. We were completely caught up in this hallucination, in this wonderful film world, and we got very emotional. The magician never gets emotional with the illusory productions, because he knows that it is all illusory, Not for an instant is he falling into the error of believing that the manifestations are real.

This is entering the mind of Chenrezi. When we enter the mind of Chenrezi, then we know that all of what is appearing in mind is of an illusory nature and has no lasting substantial existence. So there is no more belief in the solidity of what appears. There is not the slightest trace of clinging. Everything appears as the spontaneous play of manifestation. Then it does not make any difference whether this manifestation is wrathful or peaceful, agreeable or disagreeable, all have the same taste of emptiness.

Actually the third step in transforming emotions is to bring all of what is happening in mind into what is caled *"yidam awareness"*, the awareness of the meditation divinity. This is the work of a completely changing pespective. It is the step that will immediately lead to an understanding of the true nature of the emotion, which is not conceptual any more, but which is the direct seeing of that empty nature, of the emotion.

To remind ourselves of this "other dimension" which we call Chenrezi is so incredibly helpful, that just that, helps us to deal completely differently with emotions. We can see this when, in the middle

of an emotion, we take up our mala and recite OM MANI PADME HUNG, OM MANI PADME HUNG, remembering Chenrezi and whatever intuition we have of that other dimension; ~ the emotion changes on the spot. If you have a correct basic understanding, then the longer you continue with that way of practicing, the more sure you are of finding your way out of that emotional state.

So far what we have had was the traditional explanation on how to transform emotions by integrating the mental movements into this vast mind of the yidam-buddha-divinity, but there are other ways of being able to changing the perspective of an emotion. To give an easy example, which you know, which is also a classical one, and which is taught frequently: to regard one's emotion as the lama. It's not that the lama sends your emotions, the point here is we take a different look and we say: *"There is a hidden teaching here, there is a hidden emotion in this unpleasant (emotional) state which I'm experiencing right now, which is causing a lot of suffering and leading to even more suffering. This is something I have to avoid, discard, reject, get out of or finish with but let's have a look at what I can learn from it"*. So, instead of aversion we take a curious look. We are interested, we want to learn [from this], and we will take this as the basis for developing more insight, more patience, more compassion and so on. The disturbed state of mind becomes the basis for the development of qualities. That's a big, big step in our dealing with emotions.

Let's have a short look into our selves: *What is the most disagreeable emotion I know, what is the emotion I really want to have the least?* Become conscious about that.

Now, I hope you found it. *Can that emotion, which you have chosen, teach you something?* That's the question to ask in order to enter the third step of "transforming emotions". If you can work with that question, you can use it in order to learn something. That emotion is not there in order to teach you, it's just there because of clinging and because of karma and so on; but that's your choice.

Emotions aren't sent by the Buddhas, or by the devil, or by the neighbour, or by who knows, in order to teach us something. No! But we can choose to use the situation to learn something. So I'm not saying that emotions are the blessings of the Buddhas. They can be used so as to become the blessings of the Buddhas. That's different. When an emotion arises, it's actually just a sign that we are in disharmony, that something or myself am dysfunctional. There is clinging, there is suffering, there is upheaval and somehow I'm not getting to the point of being in an open state of mind.

So the question is: *What's going wrong here, what attitude do I need to change? Where are the points where I could do things differently so that this closed state does not arise any more? How do I find a much quicker way into an open state of mind?* That's the basic question.

Questions and Answers

I forgot to give you a little detail. Referring to Karma Chagme; this explanation in five steps can also be found in four. In that case this third step is one aspect of the remedies. The integration of the emotions into the vision of the yidam deity is then just one of the superior remedies to be used.

Question: *Could you explain how fear is connected with all other emotions ?*

Fear is connected with every other emotion as you probably have already thought. There is the fear in connection with desire which is the fear of not getting what I want. There is fear in connection with anger which is the fear of getting what I don't want. There is the fear in connection with pride, which is the fear of not being respected; and the fear in connection with jealousy would be the fear of not being better or as good as someone else, or not having what others have; and so on. When you look you can say that fear takes on different colours according to what kind of fear one has. Then there are underlying fears like the existential fears of "do I exist ?", "do I not exist ?":

these very basic fears of losing control, of losing reference points, fear of death and so on. They are very deep underlying fears in direct relation with the idea of self, and the uncertainty of whether the self exists or not. In the buddhist context, all these fears are related to ignorance. When we talk of the five emotions, we usually say desire, anger, pride and jealousy and then the fifth one is always ignorance, or stupidity, and actually it means fear. As an emotional colour, ignorance brings fear. Only when this basic ignorance is uprooted does fear not arise. This is how it's connected with all emotions. You can also say that it is the underlying clinging to an illusory self, which of course is a very shaky issue, and which creates a basic instability in our mindstream.

Question: *How do you define fear ?*

How do we define fear? This is what I wanted to say: fear is actually not receiving a definition as such. It is actually what comes from not knowing the true nature of phenomena, so fear is arising whenever there is a lack of knowing, a lack of understanding how things really are. That's the Dharma way of describing the arising of fear.

Just as in everyday life, as soon as we don't know a situation, we will be anxious, we will worry, there is fear. Or at night when the light goes out and we don't know our way, then there is fear, we are troubled. But there is no fear when we perfectly know our way, even with closed eyes. Because we know there is no fear, and this mechanism we can see everywhere when there is fear.

Question (translated by the teacher): *The question is the transition between the third and the fourth stage, because I said that one wouldn't work in a dualistic way any more with the emotion while reaching the fourth step.*

I'm happy to be a little bit more clear: On the first three levels we are using dualistic mind to understand emotions better. We are working with a basic pattern of looking into the emotion, and learning from it. So that's fine. The way of developing understanding becomes more and more subtle, but there is still this notion of someone having an emotion, even if this feeling becomes less and less because there is less fixation. Then, when we really enter the nature of a mind movement, whether we call it an emotion or other, there is no more separation, there is no more feeling of self and others, subject and objects. The first moment of (being in the) seeing (of) that which cannot be seen because there is no subject and object. At that moment the emotion is instantly finished. There is no decrescendo, there is no diminishing of the emotion, it abruptly and absolutely disappears without any trace. It is completely finished on the spot. At that moment one understands completely that it is just like a spook. The emotion is really just an illusion. There is no substance whatsoever to it, there is no need for it to finish slowly, the moment when one sees the nature, it is nothing by itself.

Question: *You make the relation between fears and emotion. For me, fears are like a compensation of emotion. It seems to be easier to work directly on emotions because you can project it outside. You can project it outside, observe it, but when you look at it and observe, you are very quickly connected with very deep fears and panic, and it's not so easy to work with that. Most of the teachings teach how to observe emotions and I don't find how to work with fears directly, how to do, is it a way to do?*

The first part of my answer is just to confirm what you are saying, that yes, as soon as we work with letting go of emotions we are indeed facing our fears, because the simple fact of envisaging letting go of an emotion will raise the question: *"What will happen if I don't follow my desire? Who will love me? Who will take care of me? And if I don't follow my anger, who will defend my rights?"* and *"How will the other ones ever change? I hope I don't have to put up with the other ones and their behaviours for the rest of my life!"*

There are fears, fears after fears, very superficial fears and then as you continue working with your emotions, deeper fears coming to the surface. The fear not to exist, the fear of dying, the fear of not being worth anything, not to be loved, all this comes to the surface with very great power. We can say, (if we use dharma terms) we are beginning to work with our ignorance at that time. We are not working with the superficial colouring of desire, anger, jealousy and pride subjects, but the

basic wanting "to be", the basic fear of not having sense pleasure, the basic fear of not existing. These are the basic fears the Buddha was talking about.

What seems to work with fear is what seems to work with the other emotions; we go through the same steps. The first step is: don't run, don't run away; no counter-attack, no defense, no running away. Just stay, breath, have a good look, be as mindful as possible. That's very difficult, it's not easy. Only when we come to the point of being able to stay with the fear will we be able to really learn. All other learning is always after we have already run away. Now the learning happens in the situation itself. We stay, we feel; we feel the trembling of the body, the trembling of the mind. We all have a fearful scenario in our mind. Whatever it might be, it's very hard to just feel it but as we stay, as we hold the place we can come up with wise reflections, with remedies - second stage of how to deal with emotions.

This is the first important discovery. When I stop running, I discover that it is "livable". This experience of feeling the body, feeling my mind, and not running away is actually not killing me. This is an incredible discovery because before, I thought, if I stay mentally in that situation, then it will be a complete disaster. Now if I am able to stay with mindfulness, it's not a complete disaster. I still breath, I'm still alive; life continues, disagreeable, very disagreeable, but possible. And from there onwards we develop other remedies. In this state of paranoia, we discover that there are helpful ways of thinking and behaving. We will discover these ways ourselves. It can be a refuge prayer, it can be spontaneous mantra recitation, it can be a thought that helps us remembering an instruction, it can be doing something with the body... Many, many ways are possible, you will know yourself what you want to try at that moment. There can be for example a person with nightmares, almost every night, with the feeling of being persecuted. Normally, in those nightmares, we are always running, in a fear to die, always close to death or actually being stabbed to death. Then when for the first time a thought of compassion arises towards the one who attacks you, the whole dream goes differently. It is the same with any other form of fear. As soon as a thought arises that changes the perspective of the situation, it becomes completely different. It's not up to me to tell you which thoughts to have because you will not remember what is said today when you have your fears. You will need the space, the mindfulness of being able to stand that situation, and from within helpful thoughts will arise, helpful ways of dealing. This fundamental fear of not existing, fear of death, will be helped enormously by the dharma teachings which you receive, the teachings about the mind, the non-self nature of mind or illusory nature, the way mind continues through deaths and rebirths. will be helped

All fears will be helped by the growing understanding of the illusory nature of all manifestations. Slowly, slowly, as we practice these instructions during the day it will help us in situations at night or during the day when strong fears arise. But this is due to the training done in situations where there is no fear.

As a continuation of the process, there will be a growing courage to face fears. Instead of running away (and not only staying in one's place), one will go towards the fear, and one will directly search: *"Where are you fear, you who make me run all the time, where are you?"*

We look inside our mind. We try to find it and we can only find physical after-effects of the fear, but the fear itself has already disappeared. We cannot hold on to it, we cannot grasp it. This is the preliminary stage, and one day it will be possible to directly see the nature of fear, and that will be the same experience as with any other emotion: The fear will be gone in the very moment of looking; no more fear, not even a trace. That's the end of that moment of fear. And that of course gives courage to face other fears.

To give you an example which you might know, nightmares where we feel that we are falling down, there is nowhere to hold on, we fall as in empty space and with the fear to get crushed. Now, to turn towards the fear would be to say: *"OK, get crushed, no problem."* This can only happen of course if we have a certain confidence in the illusory nature of the dream. All fears are like dreams, but at night it's easier. During daytime we cling very much, we have much more of a tendency to hold on and many mechanisms are working at the same time which maintain our fears.

I'm not saying that working through our fears is as easy as getting out of a nightmare. It is a work of many years to face up to every fear that we encounter in our life, and each time to do courageous work with these fears.

Question: *I would like to know when we are in a situation where a lot of different emotions appear at the same time, how to know which one is the basic emotion?*

I'm not sure we can always find out what is the dominating emotion in a given situation. What we need to do is to be mindful as soon as we can. We do this by creating a situation where we don't have to do anything else but sitting down somewhere. On a chair, on a bank, wherever we can, and have a look at what is happening in our mind. In our mind what will happen is that thoughts will be coming through the mind. We have thoughts right now, of different colours and emotional shapes. Some thoughts are expression of fear, some are of desire and so on, and we might have a certain pattern that is repeating itself very strongly. So that would be the dominating emotion of the moment, but it's not necessary that this was the dominating emotion moments before, it can already have changed.

If we want to know what was the dominant emotional situation before, we have to have a very well developed mindfulness to be able to remember the thoughts that went through our mind in that situation before. Then we can go back and let the film run through the situation we have already lived, and remember: *"Ah, there was this thought. That was at the beginning of that strong emotional reaction, just before I reacted so strongly I had that thought"*. In this way, we can go back and we will know what was the dominant impulse in the situation. This is not possible if our mind was not very mindful at the time we lived this difficult situation. Then thoughts become too hazy, we don't remember precisely any more and then we just have to work with what is present right now.

Question (translated by the teacher): *You're asking for the final aim of this work with the emotions, is the final goal not to have any emotions any more?*

To answer this question I have to come back to the definition I gave in the first teaching, where I said that we are talking about emotions in the sense of disturbing emotions which create suffering. We are not including in our discussion emotions like joy, love compassion, gratitude and so on. All of these are not included now when we speak about emotions. We are only talking about what creates suffering, and indeed yes, the aim of the buddhist path is to put an end to all disturbing emotions and to all of that which creates suffering. Which leaves (all the] space for the natural movements of mind based on the inherent qualities, the natural expression of our inborn qualities: love, compassion, wisdom and so on. These will naturally be present, and as we can see with people that we can observe, who have less and less anger, desire and so on, actually they do not transform into vegetables but they become very lively, very happy and enjoyable to be with, very dynamic people. The natural dynamics of mind are actually freed in this process.

Question (translated by the teacher): *So, the question was: "There seems to be something missing in this approach when I hear a lot of psychoanalytic work to be done, I would call it deprogramming, but there seems to be something missing."*

Well, it's true, we can talk about deprogramming because there is very deep programming at work, which is the program to always take ourselves, the me, as the most important element of a given situation. This gives rise to all the emotions we were talking about, so you can say Dharma is deprogramming the importance of the self... I was asking what element was missing.

Question (same person): *So, the question then is "What to do with the karmic imprints because we could either suppress them or we could amplify them, we have to give some space to them".*

The way we handle these karmic imprints is part of this deprogramming. We are normally programmed, to have very strong tendencies to react with attachment and aversion as soon as some karmic imprint arises in mind. The deprogramming is to get out of the attachment, aversion, or suppression of ignorant patterns which we don't want to deal with. To acknowledge the arising of this karmic imprint in our mind, this very often emotional thought and not to cling to it, neither in the way of attachment nor in the way of aversion and to let it go its own natural course. This means that it will be what we call self-liberated. It could go its natural way of arising and disappearing.

Question: *What takes the place of this?*

We would all like to know how it is to be a Buddha. Of course we will not know it so easily but we can know it a little by looking at what happens in our own mind. All these emotions are like veils, curtains which veil the natural way of being. You took the example of pride, so when there is no more pride then there will be simplicity, natural humbleness, humility without pretention, just simple being without arrogance.

When there is no more desire, attachment, avarice, there will be generosity, sharing, there will be no holding onto what I have, or if desire for another person is gone, then there will be much more space for love.

In the same way when anger is not present as a veil, compassion arises very easily. For every emotional veil we actually know by experience what will manifest when this veil is not present. These are the naturally inherent qualities of mind.

Actually your question leads us to a very important second question, which is: *Whether or not the human being or any other being which has a mind is basically bad or basically good?*

On the Dharma path, we affirm the basic goodness of sentient beings. There is no risk that when the veils are taken away and purified, that there would be more negativity arising. As negativity is purified, then basic goodness can show itself. This is something which we can know from our own experience. The more our mind is relaxed the more qualities show. Qualities very easily come to expression when we are relaxed, but as soon as our mind gets tensed, our heart tenses up, then the qualities become less and disappear. As we relax, they come back. Because they come [into being] due to letting go and relaxation, we develop a growing confidence that we do not need to construct, or to fabricate these qualities. They are already there as the basic nature of our mind. The more we relax, the less we fabricate, the more they show themselves, and finally this leads to the understanding that buddhahood is not something fabricated, not something constructed, but is the most natural state of being. It is something which is just there ~ when all veils are purified. This kind of teaching is based on experience, this is not a theory, we can see this happening and we can see this in our own mind, also.

So we will stop here with our short teaching on emotions, [over] the last three Sundays. I know it's very short, but actually even if it would be longer it won't help so much more. We could continue talking about it for very long. But talking can in no way replace the work that everyone has to do by himself or herself. The most important element in this work is to be really motivated to get out of these emotions that create suffering. When this motivation is strong, then we will search for better ways to deal with emotions, to use them as teachers on the path.

Dedication prayers.