

**THERE'S NO
KARMA THAT
CAN'T BE PURI-
FIED TIBETAN
BUDDHISM
CENTER FOR
WORLD PEACE
SAN ANTONIO,
TX WITH VEN.
ROBINA
COURTIN MAY
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Painting of Shakyamuni Buddha by Jane Seidlitz.

1. WE CREATE OUR OWN REALITY: KARMA

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KARMA: FUNDAMENTAL TO BUDDHISM

If we take on board Buddha's view that we can become an enlightened being, then understanding karma is vital; without it, it's a joke.

And if we're saying we're a Buddhist and we're attempting to practice Buddhism, if we're not applying the laws of karma, if we're not taking that as our hypothesis, if we're not applying that in our daily life, we're not really being a Buddhist. This is fundamental to Buddhist teachings – his view about the world, how it comes into being, what our mind is, what causes happiness, what causes suffering, etc..

So, this law applies – runs – in the mind. So the mind, for the Buddha, is where things happen. The mind is where the workshop is. The mind is where everything happens. The mind is where the source of

suffering is. The mind is where the source of happiness is. The mind is the point.

WHERE DO I COME FROM?

The question of course, is demanded, “If I’m not created by somebody else, where do I come from?” Well, in a simple sense, you could say you come from previous moments of yourself. Think of your mind as a river of mental moments – your thoughts and feelings of *now*, in the simplest linear sense of cause and effect, your thoughts and feelings of *now* come from the previous moment of your thoughts and feelings. And your thoughts and feelings of the previous moment come from – guess what? – the previous moment of your thoughts and feelings. You track it back to ten years ago, twenty years ago, in your mothers’ womb. “Well, maybe I began a month before conception.” Well, no. If my mind existed then, it must have come from a previous moment of my mind. Then clearly you get back to the first moment of conception, when we all assume we began. If you’re Christian, God put a soul there, in the egg

and sperm; and if you're a materialist, you are only the egg and sperm.

Well, the Buddha has this third option. Your egg and sperm are there. Yep, the parents worked hard to get them to stay together, and not go down the toilet with the rest. But what *causes* them to stay together is the entry of consciousness, your consciousness. So you can track your consciousness right in this continuity of mental moments going right back to that first moment of conception. "Well, I must have begun then." Well, yes, relatively speaking, this package called "Robina" began then, but where did the body come from? Mummy and Daddy. Where did your mind come from? Previous moment of itself. So your mind is its own continuity of mental moments.

It's a very simple concept, actually. Not difficult for us to intellectualize, to theorize about. Your mind is its own continuity. And obviously, to assume this, you have to assume it's not physical. Because, clearly, if you think your mind is your brain, then you did come from your parents, which is the

materialist view, that they “made” you, you know?

YOUR MIND IS YOURS

And so the experiential implication of this is that your mind is *yours*. And that means the contents of it are yours. And so what are the contents of your mind? All the love and the kindness and compassion and wisdom and contentment and anger and jealousy and fear and paranoia and rage – all of this. This is the contents of your mind. So all of these, being contents of your mind, they too come from previous moments of that particular quality in your mind.

So this is a simple idea that implies reincarnation, isn't it? It's a simple concept. Not a difficult concept intellectually. But we're so familiar with the view that I come from mother and father and my anger comes from mother and father and my jealousy and my depression and my all the rest come from the DNA and the egg and the sperm and all the rest, you know. They play a role, no argument. But they're not the main thing. For the Buddha, the main things are your mind, your thoughts, your

feelings, your emotions, your unconscious. Your tendencies, your feelings. All of this. This is yours. This is *yours*.

We come into this life fully programmed with all of our tendencies, with all of our characteristics. It's a big surprise to us. I mean, we accept we come fully programmed, but we think the programming comes from mother and father. It doesn't, Buddha says. Tendencies in the mind are mental and mind is not physical and it comes from previous moments of itself, not from the external condition, which is called the brain.

One can see indicators in the brain of certain things, no argument with this. So this fundamental point of Buddhism is that your mind is yours. And whatever's in it is simply from you having put it there in the past. Hardly surprising concept – cause and effect.

KARMA MEANS THE MIND INVOLVED IN THE ACTION

This is the essential idea of karma. Karma is a Sanskrit word, that is translated as “action,” really simply. Which implies

reaction. Action-reaction, in this meaning: cause and effect. Seed-fruit, you know.

It's also, more fundamentally, translated as intention, will, volition. Every microsecond of everything we say, everything we think and feel, and indeed do and say, with our body and speech on the basis of what's in the mind, is a karma. An intentional action that necessarily will leave an imprint, or a tendency or a seed in your consciousness and will ripen in the future in that consciousness as your experiences.

What goes on in our mind, in other words, is the main cause of our future experiences. This is what Buddha says.

This is a simple concept. Not a difficult idea. It's just a question of being able to say it and get our heads around it. It isn't complicated. We think it's complicated, but it's just because we haven't got the right words, you know. It's not a complicated concept at all.

Of course, it's not evident to us. So we take it as our working hypothesis. Buddha's saying basically: we are the creators of ourselves. It's a very simple point. Whatever's in your mind is there because

you put it there, not because Mummy and Daddy did something to you. This flies in the face of the assumption that we all have that's the basis of our lives, and is, as Buddha would say, a misconception. That, you know, I am angry because my father was angry. I am jealous because my mother was jealous. I am depressed because I have certain hormones. We always put an external reason to it, you know. Which sort of, for us, is a way of saying, "It's not my fault."

We've got this dualistic view. We assume we're made by mother and father. We assume the anger and the jealousy and the depression are either there because of the genes or the DNA or they're there because I've got a mean boyfriend, or because I had a lousy mother or a horrible husband or a bad kid or a horrible boss. This is the typical way we talk. And this is, in fact, the view of the materialist world. This is the philosophy of the materialist world that is backed up by the view that your mother and father made you, that you're only physical.

ACCOUNTABILITY

One has to know one's mind, because that's the one we can change. Yes, certain people's external conditions make it quite tough – if you're in a prison and you can't open that door; you can say "Well, I can't help being angry, I'm surrounded by mean people."

You might say that. But the ones who are really practicing don't say that. They know that this is their physical condition, and this is indeed the result of their karma (and we'll talk more about that in a minute), and so they will adapt themselves to that condition and still work on their minds.

The person who's got the chemicals that aren't working, that seem to be the trigger for depression, yes, you recognize that you've got those particular chemicals, but the depression is your mind, it's your viewpoint. You might be around people who are mean and ugly who hit you all the time, and if you've got an angry tendency it'll make it easy for you to get angry, it's true. But if you're really being accountable, you'll recognize the anger's yours. This is what we have to do. This is the toughest part. This is the part that's massive for us.

So difficult because we're so used to this dualistic way of talking. It's always like, "It's not my fault. It's not my fault."

And that's the view of the materialist world, you look. It's an assumption of ego. "I didn't ask to get born, did I? It's not my fault. My mother made me. My father made me." We don't want to blame God – well, if you're an Italian, you will. They blame God in the most rude way. They say, "God is a pig!" when things go wrong. They say even worse things about Our Lady. We don't mind blaming our parents – a bit nervous about blaming God, maybe.

So, the whole way ego works, Buddha says, is in its nature dualistic. It's always, "Poor me, the victim." Lama Yeshe would call ego the "self-pity me." And as the ego, you look at how we are every time – instantly trying to cover ourselves, defend ourselves, "It's not fair." "It's not my fault." "I didn't mean to." Everything to try to deny accountability. It's so painful for us to be accountable. You look at it. It's typical. This is how ego is, this is its nature. This is the way it is.

So, to go against this and slowly become accountable, you listen to the Buddha's views of karma – that your consciousness comes from you in the past, not your parents – it reinforces this ability to be accountable. Because my mind is mine, I came fully programmed with my tendencies. Don't blame anybody else. But this includes our good ones as well, and we forget about those. We agonize, "Why do bad things happen to me?" We never agonize, "Why do good things happen to me?" We don't care why, just give me more, you know. But we have all the good things for the same reason: I created the cause to have them.

FOUR WAYS THAT KARMA RIPENS

There are four ways in which our actions from the past lives – you know, before we even entered into this present womb of our mother – there are four ways those past actions ripen in the present. Or indeed, there are four ways in which our present actions leave seeds in the mind that will ripen in the future as one's experiences. It's a constant process, ongoing. Every

microsecond of everything that goes on in our mind, and the things we do on the basis of those thoughts with our body and speech, this is the karmic process. This is constantly occurring. This is the natural process of cause and effect, constantly in play.

1. FULLY FULLY RIPENED RESULT: A REBIRTH

The first, main one – they call it the the Fully FULLY RIPENED RESULT – is the type of rebirth we get born into. So, you know, if we're materialists, or if we're Christians, for example, we both agree on one thing at least – that someone else made us. I was made by God. I was made by Mummy and Daddy. They're the same principle, aren't they? That you're made by someone else. Which means it's got nothing to do with you.

Whereas the Buddha says, "Everything to do with me. " We are accountable. Our past actions are the main cause of why my mind found its way to my present mother's human womb. Why blame your parents? They're just lying there having fun and you

come along. So Buddha puts us right in the center. Which is kind of an interesting concept – who thought that you were the main cause of who you are? Big surprise!

Not more than a few weeks before conception in your present mother's womb, your consciousness was in another form, another life. And at the time – very simply speaking – at the time of the death of that life – and it doesn't always follow that it was a human life, there's a whole bunch of options of types of rebirth as far as the Buddha's concerned – at the time of the past death, then a very strong tendency of morality must have ripened at that time due to many, many, many complicated causes and conditions all coming together. So this is a very simplistic explanation of it.

We've programmed ourselves, basically – in a very major way – with past practice of morality, of goodness, in the context, no doubt, of a spiritual path, which then ripened at the past death when the consciousness got to the subtle level and eventually left the body, which is when you're dead. Then it would have been on autopilot, basically, programmed, and then

in a few weeks or could have been a much shorter time, after having been in the intermediate state, as they call it, like a dream state but out of the old body, then our consciousness found its way very precisely into our present mother's Fallopian tube and joined the egg and sperm there.

The main cause of this is our past morality. Your father and mother having sex is just a co-operative cause. They did not make you, they did not create you. They merely had sex. Your consciousness had very strong karmic connection with them from past history with those particular parents. I mean, it's a highly complex scenario, you know, but simply speaking that karma ripened at the time of your death and then caused your mind to go on autopilot to find its way into our particular mother's human womb.

One lama said that at the time of a male and female human having sex, billions of consciousnesses that are recently passed away – and that's obviously not just from the human realm, Buddha would assert a whole spectrum of possibilities of types of

consciousnesses existing in different realms – that at the time of the male and female having sex, billions of consciousnesses are all hovering around trying to get in. Well, we got in. From Buddha's point of view, we should be weeping in delight every day at how fortunate we are, getting such an extraordinarily fortunate life. Human life – so few of those, obviously – we have more mosquitoes in one summer in the backyard than you have humans at any one time.

So, clearly it's easier to get a mosquito birth, dog birth, giraffe birth – maybe less giraffes, not so many of them – fish, who knows how many fish, plenty of fish – the vast majority – anyway, billions and trillions of other consciousnesses, we can see this. So, we got the human one.

Amazing – already amazing. That's the first way our karma ripened – we got this human birth. But, you know, Mother Theresa and Hitler both got one of those, so clearly there's some differences.

2. ACTIONS SIMILAR TO THE CAUSE: OUR TENDENCIES

That gets us to the second way in which our past actions ripened in the present. And this is our tendencies, our characteristics, our personality; our depression, our kindness, our wish to kill, our wish to lie, our being good at piano, our being good at math; whatever it might be. And that's an interesting point, psychologically speaking. In Buddhist terms, we give equal status to whether you're good at love, good at anger or good at music. It's just a tendency. We make this big dramatic difference, you know, we are honoured, actually – you think about it – we are delighted and own responsibility for our being good at music.

“Why are you good at piano, Robina?”

“Oh, well, I've got a tendency and I practiced five or ten years – what did you think?” We're honoured to own responsibility for our being good at music.

“Why are you good at anger, Robina?”

“Oh, well, it's my father's fault!” No accountability whatsoever! We love being accountable for our being good at music, or math or being a gymnast, you know, but not

emotional stuff. We have this different set of laws when it comes to emotional stuff, which I find most fascinating – no logic at all.

The Buddha says, those tendencies – whether you're angry, jealous or just being good at music – are just tendencies. Why do we have a tendency? From having done it before. Quite simple. Mozart clearly had musical tendencies. Hitler clearly had other tendencies, and he expressed them, didn't he, in his actions.

Our mothers and fathers – this is a big shock to us – they're not the main cause of this. The absolute default explanation in the materialist world is it's all in the DNA and the genes. That's why we always in our minds go back to the parents, to check why I am what I am. No, we don't need to. Yes, my mother was good at music. Everyone says, "Yeah, Robina's good at music because her mother was good at music." No – Robina's good at music because she practiced it before. So has my mother, and we happen to come together. And then she encouraged my music by teaching me. It doesn't come from your parents, Buddha

said – it's a very simple point. A simple point, but shocking to us.

So, your tendencies – they call this Actions Similar to the Cause. They're yours. You're fully programmed with every one of these from the first second of conception. Millions of these different imprints. Millions of these different tendencies.

3. EXPERIENCES SIMILAR TO THE CAUSE: HOW PEOPLE TREAT YOU, ETC.

The third way that your karma ripens, your actions from the past ripen in the present, is called Experiences Similar to the Cause, and that's all the stuff that happens to you. The people you meet, the parents you get, the teachers, the abusers, the ones who are loving to you, the ones who rape you, the ones who give you a million dollars, the ones who are kind to you, the ones who steal from you, whatever it might be. The way you're treated and seen in the world. The main cause? Your past actions.

So Buddha puts us in the center, in the absolute center – each one of us – in the center of all our experiences. He says our

actions are the main cause of why we are who we are and why what happens to us happens to us. All the good and all the bad. This applies to giraffes, dogs, ants, fish, humans – all “*sem-chens*.” The term in Tibetan for “sentient being” is “*sem-chen*,” “mind-possessor.” We’re all mind-possessors. Buddha says that there’s not an atom of space where you won’t find mind-possessors. Trillions of them. So, for this reason, Buddhist psychology, interestingly, refers to all sentient beings, not just humans.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL KARMA

And fourth, they call it Environmental Karma. Environmental karma, which is the very way the physical world impacts upon us. So that could mean – so here we are, sitting in this room. It’s quite pleasant, isn’t it? It’s quite peaceful, pleasant view out there, it’s quiet, you know – the walls aren’t dripping with mold. It’s pleasantly painted. It smells nice.

Don’t take this for granted – this experience of a pleasant environmental experience is the result of our collective

virtue. If suddenly the building explodes, or a gunman comes in, this is due to our collective non-virtuous karma.

Basically, Buddha's point about karma is that suffering, when everything goes wrong – could be externally, could be the people, could be the environment, could be in your own mind – when everything's out of whack, out of balance, disharmonious, when the elements are all crazy, when people are all fighting, when people are mean to you, when your own mind's berserk – this is when everything's all messed up – this is the result of negativity. Negative karma. It's not blame, it's not punishment. There's no concept of punishment in Buddhism. It's a natural law.

And positive karma is the cause of things work harmoniously and nicely. When non-virtue is prevalent, everything goes berserk. It's very simple.

So the four ways your karma ripens: the very fact that you're this human being, with this very particular family and friends and people who harm you and people who help you – whatever those experiences are. All your tendencies and even the way the

physical world impacts upon you – where you were born, the way the physical world is, all of this – our actions in the past are the main cause of this. Buddha puts us absolutely in charge. “We are the boss,” Buddha says.

I’M THE BOSS

So if I am the boss of my own present experiences, if I am the cause of it, then indeed I can be the cause of my future experiences – which is why you should then check up, do I like this life, do I like people punching me in the nose? Do I like having people being angry at me? Do I like being depressed and angry and jealous and poor and living in an ugly environment and all polluted or horrible? No, I don’t. Then, okay, there must be causes of this; what were they? You check up; well, do I like this? No. Well, guess what, what’s the solution? Don’t do it again, baby! It’s pretty simple.

This is Buddhist practice. Not complicated. It’s just that we fight mightily against this because it sounds like blame, “Oh you mean it’s my fault...I must go and

kill myself.” because we’re used to this dualistic view of “poor me” “victim me” “not fair” “ life is done to me, I didn’t ask to get born, it’s not my fault.” That is the default mode of ego.

FOUR WAYS THAT KILLING, FOR EXAMPLE, WOULD RIPEN

Let me give one example of one action and the four different ways it ripens; let’s say “killing.” So, one of the main – we can see, generally, if we look at the world, one of the most harmful things we do with our bodies is to kill other beings, wouldn’t you agree? It’s quite an intense way to harm. And that, in Buddha’s view, would be any sentient being.

So, as a result of killing in the past – those four ways I described – if it ripens at the time of your death, and it becomes the main karma, it would program your consciousness to cause you to get born in a very suffering type of life like an animal realm or a spirit or something like that. Okay. So we can deduce in our case, it was morality that ripened because we got a human life. And the Buddha would say that

in general, getting a human life is the result of morality ripening.

But then we look at the next way karma ripens is as a tendency, so the second way killing ripens is as a tendency to kill. Now look at humans – we might be born humans, our main karma that caused the life itself is morality, but lots of humans kill, don't they? Can you see that? So, lots of humans, due to past killing, are born with the tendency to keep killing.

The third way killing ripens is called as an experience – which is you get killed or you die young, or you get sick. So anything that's an experience of where – the opposite to health, or the opposite to the length of life, or the opposite to that, that's the result of harming or killing. Do you understand? So, generally speaking, sickness – the elements not working properly, food not being digestible, things harming us instead of nourishing us, this is the result of past killing, in general.

So, for example, the fourth way, environmental karma, would be the very environment itself, which is meant to nurture us, nourish us, right? – it harms us.

Look at people who eat peanuts – that’s a particular environmental karmic result for a person from past killing, where just peanuts will kill them. We’ve got the collective karma now to have poisoned water, haven’t we? More and more – who drinks water out of rivers anymore? So there’s pollution – polluted water, polluted air...where the elements themselves are harmful to us. That’s the result of killing. Do you understand? Make sense?

IDNETIFY THE CAUSES OF A PROBLEM, THEN WE KNOW HOW TO FIX IT

In the Second Noble Truth, the Buddha states the causes of suffering. And he narrows it down to two main causes: karma and delusions. And they subsume down to the one: delusions. Delusions are the main cause of suffering: because of these we do negative actions, we harm others.

So, in relation to the two causes of suffering, karma and delusions, there are two levels of practice. The most immediate, the most urgent, as Rinpoche puts it, is in relation to the delusions: at the very least

refrain from creating more negative karma in day-to-day life. So, if someone punches your nose, you at least protect your mind to not create more negative karma. And that's our ongoing, everyday practice, watching our body, speech and mind like a hawk every minute.

But the second one is in relation to karma, for all the countless past seeds we've already got, all sitting in our mind right now, trillions of lives-worth of seeds, latent, waiting for the appropriate conditions to ripen as one's suffering. Obviously we need to get ahead of the game and purify them before they ripen.

THE PRECIOUSNESS OF THIS HUMAN REBIRTH

Q: Earlier you were talking about...coming as a human...the seeds have ripened, you've got high morality...

A: As a result of the practice of morality and goodness and keeping vows we get this particular life; yes, in general, even an ordinary human life is the result of a lot of morality karma ripening at the time of the previous death.

Q: If we come back as a dog, does that mean that we...I mean, in my mind I don't see that necessarily as a lower form...?

A: I understand. I understand. Okay. Where that fits is this. Would you agree – as nice as dogs are – would you agree they're not very bright? I mean, you have a talk about developing compassion, they don't really get it. You try to explain emptiness to them, they're a bit thick. You try to teach them piano, I mean they're just like a bit limited. I mean, I'm not being rude about dogs.

Let me put it this way. If you want a really long neck, best to be a giraffe. Guaranteed. If you want to fly, be a bird. But, honey, if you want to work with your mind, and have a few more options, probably best to be a human.

So, it's a contextual thing. It's not high or low or some kind of hierarchy – it's a question of what you want to achieve. Lama Zopa Rinpoche said one time, if just for a couple of minutes you could have a direct experience of the mind of your little cute doggy-woggy, the suffering, the mental suffering of the most profound ignorance of

that mind would be so intense, you'd never want to waste another second of your precious human life. That's the ordinary ignorance of an animal's mind.

Now, we don't think this way in our culture, I agree. But just think about it – it's a different way to look at what ignorance is. We all have ignorance. Ignorance is the term for this ego-grasping that's this panic state that rises as soon as we're attacked or insulted or hurt or don't get what we want. Well, animals live in that one. Your dog has been living in your house for years, and it barks every time it hears the gate squeak. By now you'd think he would have learned he knows it's the gate squeaking. But he doesn't, the poor thing, because he's paranoid. His big eyes are round, he's barking like crazy; his unhappy mind, honey, is called fear, and fear is a function of ego-grasping, ignorance. So if you think of it this way, without being mean to dogs. Buddhist psychology refers to all living beings, not just humans.

KARMA IS RIPENING AND WE'RE CREATING IT EVERY MICRO- SECOND

Q: Does the consciousness that moves from lifetime to lifetime – is that a ...collection of seeds or is it –

A: It's a collection of seeds or a bunch of programming.

Q: So, what happens, say for example in this life, like if a karmic seed has ripened, or a number of karmic seeds have ripened over a lifetime, that consciousness that moves on, it is based on those seeds that are left in the consciousness....

A: Every microsecond that you're existing – so, what's your name?

Q: Helen.

A: Okay. So here we have Helen. So your consciousness, every microsecond right now it's working. Every second, you're doing something, thinking something, feeling something, assuming something. Each second, you're programming your mind, aren't you? Every second, you're sowing a karmic seed. This is a way of saying it, for whatever we do, say and think that leaves imprints in the mind. So this is

your consciousness. If you tracked it back, just logically going back, each second, each second, you get back to the first moment of conception, wouldn't you? Then you have to go back to a moment before that. And it's the same continuity of mind. And then a previous life, and a previous life and you go back a million lives.

So we can deduce that there's this particular tracking of consciousness that at this moment in time is labeled "Helen" on the basis of this particular human form. So that consciousness will continue to program it, program it, program it, and it leaves this body, and program, program, and takes another body, program, program – so it just keeps going.

The Buddha says we're usually not in charge of this process, because we think everybody else does it to us, it's not my fault, and how dare? and all this business. But if you're really in charge of this business, you're cleaning up your act. You're stopping programming your mind – as best you can – with more negativity. You're trying to program your mind with positivity, and you're purifying the seeds

you've already grown – hopefully this is your spiritual procedure – until eventually you've cleaned up your mind completely and now you're an enlightened being. Do you see what I'm saying? This is a way of saying it.

Q: So, it is a collection that keeps on going from lifetime to lifetime until you...

A: ...cleaned up all the rubbish and grown up all the good. That's it. Precisely. That's it. That's what the process of becoming enlightened is all about. That's the Buddhist way of putting it. You understand. We're communicating, right?

Q: And every microsecond, we're experiencing the ripening of karma, and creating more.

A: Precisely. That's exactly right. That's exactly right. That's exactly the point. Every microsecond is the fruit of a past one, and on the basis of this we do more. So that's why we've got to get ahead of the game. Stop creating the negative ones, clean up our act, control body and speech, clean up the mind, rip out the negative ones from the mind so we quit that, and then grow the positive ones, and that finally eventually

will be a mind that's now completely what they call "enlightened" – fully developed in goodness and completely rid of badness. That's what it is and that's where we're heading. So it's not a random thing... if one is in charge of the process, it's not a random thing at all. You're really on track with it and you know what you're doing. You know what to do, what to say, what to think, what not to do, what not to say, what not to think, what seeds to sow, and you just keep on bopping.

2. THE TEN NON-VIRTUOUS ACTIONS AND THEIR RESULTS

1. HOW WE CREATE A COMPLETE NON-VIRTUOUS ACTION

Each of the ten non-virtuous actions has four components or factors. For the action to be complete, that is, to bring the full karmic result, lower realm rebirths, all four components must be present.

1. THE BASIS OR OBJECT OF THE ACTION

2. THE MIND INVOLVED IN THE ACTION

This has three parts: recognition, intention, and motivation.

3. THE ACTION

Actually performing the action.

4. THE COMPLETION OF THE ACTION

If any of the four factors are missing, the

action will not be complete; nevertheless, it will still bring suffering in the future.

The ten non-virtues are divided into three: three non-virtues of body, four of speech, and three of mind.

THREE NON-VIRTUES OF BODY

1. KILLING

BASIS A living being other than yourself.

THE MIND INVOLVED IN THE ACTION

a. recognition: You recognize unmistakably the person or being you intend to kill.

b. intention: You intend to kill.

c. motivation: You are motivated to kill out of anger, attachment, or ignorance.

For example, out of anger, killing an enemy or a being that annoys you; out of attachment, killing an animal for its meat or skin; out of ignorance, killing animals with the belief that they were placed on this earth to be used by humans for food, etc., or killing an animal as a sacrifice to a worldly god, believing this to be virtuous.

ACTION You carry out the killing by

some means, e.g., a weapon, poison, black magic, etc., either directly by yourself or indirectly by ordering someone else to kill.

COMPLETION The other person or being dies before you do. (Suicide is a negative action that will bring suffering in the future but is not a complete act because factors 1 and 4 are missing.)

2. STEALING (TAKING WHAT IS NOT GIVEN)

BASIS Something of value belonging to another.

THE MIND INVOLVED IN THE ACTION

a. recognition: You recognize unmistakably the object to be stolen.

b. intention: You intend to steal.

c. motivation: One of the three poisons.

For example, out of anger, stealing something from someone you wish to hurt; out of attachment, stealing something you wish to possess; out of ignorance, stealing or cheating, thinking that it's not wrong.

ACTION Whatever means you use to steal, e.g., taking the object secretly, not paying taxes or fees you owe, misusing

donations, etc.; or getting someone to steal for you.

COMPLETION You think that the object now belongs to you.

3. SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

BASIS For lay people, improper time, improper place, or improper partner; for ordained people, any kind of sexual activity is sexual misconduct. (Some lam-rim books say that the basis is the person with whom you engage in sexual misconduct.)

THE MIND INVOLVED IN THE ACTION

a. recognition: You must be in no doubt that the act is sexual misconduct. (Other lam-rim books: You must have unmistakable recognition of the object of your misconduct.)

b. intention: You intend to engage in an improper sexual act.

c. motivation: One of the three poisons. For example, out of anger one might rape the wife of an enemy; out of attachment, engaging in sexual misconduct with someone other than one's spouse or with someone who's already married; out of

ignorance, committing adultery thinking that it's cool, or engaging in sexual misconduct thinking that it leads to enlightenment.

ACTION The two organs come into contact.

COMPLETION [The two organs come into contact.]

FOUR NON-VIRTUES OF SPEECH

4. LYING

There are many objects of lying, but most are included in the following eight: denying something you have seen, heard, experienced with your other senses, or known; or falsely claiming to have seen, heard, experienced with your other senses, or known something which you have not.

BASIS Another person who can understand you, and who can speak.

THE MIND INVOLVED IN THE ACTION

a. recognition: You must know that what you are saying is untrue.

b. intention: You intend to lie and deceive someone.

c. motivation: One of the three poisons.

For example, out of anger, lying to hurt someone or destroy their reputation; out of attachment, lying to get something you want; out of ignorance, not thinking there's anything wrong with lying.

ACTION Conveying the lie by some means, e.g., speaking, writing, making a gesture with your hand or eyes, facial expression, remaining silent, etc.

COMPLETION The other person understands and believes your lie.

5. DIVISIVE SPEECH (SLANDER)

BASIS Two or more people, who have a good or bad relationship.

THE MIND INVOLVED IN THE ACTION

a. recognition: You must have unmistakable recognition of the parties involved and their relationship/feelings for each other.

b. intention: You intend to cause division or disunity.

c. motivation: One of the three poisons.

For example, out of anger, creating disharmony among people you dislike; out

of attachment, speaking in a harsh or rude way to be accepted by a gang, or insulting the husband out of desire for the wife; out of ignorance, causing disharmony, believing that it's healthy, or causing disunity among followers of a religion you disagree with, believing this to be positive.

ACTION You undertake either to cause disunity among friends, or to prevent reconciliation among enemies, by saying something which is either true or false.

COMPLETION The other parties understand and believe what you say, and, as a consequence, become hostile towards each other.

5. INSULTING WORDS (HARSH SPEECH)

BASIS Another person whose feelings could be hurt. (We can express insulting words to a non-human being or to an inanimate object, but the action is complete only when there's a being who understands and is hurt by our words).

THE MIND INVOLVED IN THE ACTION

a. recognition: You must correctly

identify the person you intend to insult.

b. intention: Intend to speak harsh words.

c. motivation: One of the three poisons.

For example, out of anger, insulting someone you dislike; out of attachment, speaking in a harsh or rude way to be accepted by a gang, or insulting the husband out of desire for his wife; out of ignorance, using abusive or rude language thinking that it's cool to do so, or not realizing the hurtful effect of your words, or thinking there's nothing wrong with hurting others' feelings.

ACTION With a negative intention, you speak words pointing out faults, etc. in the other person, whether true or not, in a hurtful manner; or you get someone else to speak such words on your behalf.

COMPLETION The other person understands and is hurt.

6. IDLE GOSSIP

BASIS Something meaningless or insignificant, which you treat as important. (It's not necessary that another being hears our words.)

THE MIND INVOLVED IN THE ACTION

a. recognition: You believe that what you wish to say is important or meaningful, although it is not.

b. intention: You intend to express such words.

c. motivation: One of the three poisons.

For example, out of anger, chattering idly in order to disturb someone you dislike who is trying to meditate or do something virtuous; out of attachment, indulging in gossip or frivolous talk about things you are attached to, or to spend time with someone you're attached to; out of ignorance, thinking there's nothing wrong with spending time idly gossiping.

ACTION Speaking without purpose, or getting someone else to do it for you.

COMPLETION Actually expressing the words.

THREE NON-VIRTUES OF MIND

8. COVETOUSNESS

BASIS Another person's property, possessions (includes merchandise in a

shop), qualities, children, etc.

THE MIND INVOLVED IN THE ACTION

a. recognition: You identify correctly the object you covet.

b. intention: You wish to make the object your own.

c. motivation: One of the three poisons.

For example, out of anger, wanting to buy something before someone you dislike has a chance to buy it, or wanting to deprive your enemy of his cherished possessions; out of attachment, wanting to possess many things, thinking that they will bring happiness; out of ignorance, wanting to buy many things thinking that it's good for oneself or for the economy, or as a habit or obsession.

ACTION The wish to possess the object becomes stronger.

COMPLETION Deciding to find a way to make the object your own. The motive, deed, and final step are all part of one train of thought.

9. MALICE/ILL WILL

BASIS Another being who would be hurt

if you acted out your harmful thoughts.

THE MIND INVOLVED IN THE ACTION

a. recognition: You correctly identify the being you wish to harm.

b. intention: You wish to give harm to this being.

c. motivation: One of the three poisons.

For example, out of anger, wishing to harm someone who has harmed you or who you dislike; out of attachment, wanting to kill your father to get your inheritance, or to harm someone to get his possessions; out of ignorance, wishing to harm others because of thinking that violence is good, or that you can do whatever you like.

ACTION Putting more effort into the wish to give harm, so that it grows stronger.

COMPLETION You decide to act out your wish and do something harmful.

10. WRONG VIEW

BASIS Something that exists or is true, e.g., the law of cause and effect, the four noble truths, etc.

THE MIND INVOLVED IN THE ACTION

a. recognition: You believe that your denial of the object is correct (that is, you do not recognize that what you are denying is in fact true).

b. intention: You wish to deny something that exists.

c. motivation: One of the three poisons.

For example, out of anger, because of hating someone who holds a correct view, you deny what he/she says and assert the opposite; out of attachment, asserting some wrong view in order to get something you desire, or to impress or gain favour from someone in a powerful position; out of ignorance, not understanding what is true and correct.

ACTION Thinking about carrying out the repudiation of the object by, for example, telling others what you think.

COMPLETION Definitely deciding to deny the object.

2. RESULTS OF A COMPLETE NON– VIRTUOUS ACTION

There are four different results of a complete karma (that is, an action that has been committed with all four components/factors present):

1. FULLY RIPENED RESULT

The future rebirth state you will experience as a result of having created a complete karma.

The next three results are the residual results from having been in the lower realms and not having purified all aspects of the karma.

2. EXPERIENCES SIMILAR TO THE CAUSE

Once your karma to be born in the lower realms has been exhausted and you take rebirth in an upper realm, you will have experiences similar to your original actions.

3. ACTIONS SIMILAR TO THE CAUSE

Once your karma to be born in the lower realms has been exhausted and you take rebirth in an upper realm, you will have the instinctive tendency to commit the original action again and again – the worst karma of all, because it causes again to be reborn in the lower realms.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL RESULTS

Once your karma to be born in the lower realms has been exhausted and you take rebirth in an upper realm, will experience results of your actions in the form of environmental conditions.

1. KILLING

Fully Ripened Result Rebirth in one of the three lower realms.

Experiences Similar To The Cause:
You will have a short life, get sick easily, you will get killed; many troubles, no success in your activities.

Actions Similar To The Cause You will have the habitual desire to kill and harm others.

Environmental Result Taking birth in a place where there is much violence, war, many problems, etc., and where food, drink, and medicine have little power; people around you die young.

2 STEALING

Fully Ripened Result Rebirth in one of the three lower realms.

Experiences Similar To The Cause Lack of wealth, possessions and resources; it's hard to make ends meet; your things will be stolen or lost; what you have is all just common property.

Actions Similar To The Cause You will have an instinctive tendency to steal.

Environmental Results Taking birth in a barren place, where crops do not grow or are destroyed and there are shortages of food, and bitter frosts, hail, etc., and business ventures fail.

3. SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

Fully Ripened Result Rebirth in a lower realm.

Experiences Similar To The Cause You will be unable to keep relationships

with, and will quickly separate from, your spouse, family, friends, students, employees, etc.

Actions Similar To The Cause Having the tendency to be unfaithful.

Environmental Results You live in a place where there is urine and feces all round, and mud, dirt, filth; everything stinks, and everywhere seems unpleasant and distasteful.

4. LYING

Fully Ripened Result Rebirth in a lower realm.

Experiences Similar To The Cause Others do not believe you, even when you tell the truth; others always deceive you.

Actions Similar To The Cause Having the tendency to lie and deceive others.

Environmental Results Your work in cooperation with others fails to prosper and people don't work well together, everyone generally is cheating one another and is afraid, and there are many things to be afraid of.

5. DIVISIVE SPEECH

Fully Ripened Result Rebirth in a lower realm.

Experiences Similar To The Cause

Being lonely, having few friends, followers or employees; having difficulty developing good relationships; people around you have an undesirable character.

Actions Similar To The Cause Having the tendency to cause disunity.

Environmental Results The ground where you live is covered with obstacles like fallen tree trunks, thorns, stones, sharp broken glass; it is rough, dreary, and there are no streams or lakes or water springs; the earth is parched and poisoned, burning hot, useless, threatening; a place where there are many things to fear.

6. INSULTING WORDS

Fully Ripened Result Rebirth in a lower realm.

Experiences Similar With The Cause

Others will abuse you, and even when you speak pleasantly, they will interpret it negatively; you will always hear distressing words.

Actions Similar With The Cause

Having the tendency to be critical and hurtful.

Environmental Results You will be born in a desert country; nothing can grow.

7. IDLE GOSSIP

Fully Ripened Result Rebirth in a lower realm

Experiences Similar To The Cause

No one listens to you. No one respects what you say; no one thinks your speech has value.

Actions Similar To The Cause Having the tendency to talk continuously and fill any quiet moment with the sound of your voice.

Environmental Results Fruits don't grow, or grow at the wrong times, seem ripe when they are not, have frail roots; there are no leisure places like parks, glades, pools of cool water; and many things around make you afraid.

8. COVETOUSNESS

Fully Ripened Result Rebirth in a lower realm.

Experiences Similar To The Cause

You will be unable to achieve your aims and get what you want.

Actions Similar To The Cause Being continuously dissatisfied and grasping; your attachment increases.

Environmental Results Having to live in a place where the crops are poor and material resources are easily destroyed or lost, or fade quickly.

9. ILL WILL/MALICE

Fully Ripened Result Rebirth in a lower realm.

Experiences Similar To The Cause

You will be a person who easily becomes frightened and panicky. You always find yourself without help, or never find the help you need; you are always being hurt by others.

Actions Similar To The Cause Your personality will be dominated by anger; you'll have the tendency to hurt others; your anger and hatred increase.

Environmental Results You live in a world of chaos, diseases spread, evil is everywhere; there is plague, conflict, and

you have fear of your country's or others' external military; there are dangerous animals, and you are surrounded by harmful spirits, thieves or muggers, and the like.

10. WRONG VIEWS

Fully Ripened Result Rebirth in a lower realm.

Experiences Similar To The Cause Being ignorant of correct views, and finding it difficult to develop realizations and correct understanding.

Actions Similar To The Cause Your personality is dominated by stupidity. You have the tendency to draw wrong conclusions again and again; your ignorance will increase.

Environmental Results Having to live in a place where there are shortages of water and other resources such as food, and there are no precious things such as treasures, works of art, scriptures, or spiritual guides.

You live in a world where the single highest source of happiness is steadily disappearing from the earth, where people

think that unclean and suffering things are actually nice and happy; where there is no place to go, no one to help, nothing to protect you.

COLOPHON

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3. HOW TO CHANGE OUR REALITY BY PURIFYING KARMA

VEN ROBINA COURTIN

As Lama Yeshe says, “We create negativity with our mind, so we can purify it by creating positivity with our mind.” This is the process of purification.

If we are the creators of our own reality, our experiences, then we change things. Of course, easy to say, but very hard to see this, mainly because we’re addicted to the samsaric way of interpreting life: that we didn’t ask to get born, that it’s not my fault: so deeply ingrained in us!

THERE IS SUFFERING: FIRST NOBLE TRUTH

So, if we’re sick of suffering, we’d better know how to accurately identify it. This is the First Noble Truth. There are three levels of suffering.

1. The Suffering of Suffering

This is in-your-face suffering; all the bad things that happen.

2. The Suffering of Change

Now this is a bit depressing, because it's what we actually call happiness. Buddha calls it suffering. It's a sneaky, honey-covered razor blade; it's basically when attachment gets what it wants. It looks to us like happiness, but it's just the junkie getting the fix. It's actually fraught with suffering.

3. All Pervasive Suffering

The third kind of suffering, even more subtle – we don't even give it a name in our culture, or even in our religions – is being born in the first place with this body, which is the body of a junkie in a world constructed of junk, and to survive you need to ingest it. There's no choice: it's all in the very nature of suffering. That's the third level of suffering.

THERE ARE CAUSES OF SUFFERING: THE SECOND NOBLE TRUTH

So, we're locked in suffering – the world is in the nature of suffering, the Buddha says.

And why all this? Well, it's got causes – that's the Second Noble Truth. And guess what? There are two main causes, and we created both of them. It's scary – we think it all comes from everybody else.

One is the **1. past karma**, the past action, that left the seed in your mind when you did the negative action that is now ripening as your suffering. And the second cause, and actually they both subsume down to this one, is the **2. delusions** in the mind that cause you to do the negative action in the first place, which then again manifests when you punch me in the nose and I say, “How dare you,” and I punch you right back, and the ball keeps rolling.

TWO LEVELS OF PRACTICE

1. WATCH OUR BODY, SPEECH AND MIND LIKE A HAWK AND REFRAIN FROM DOING HARM NOW

So, in relation to these two causes of suffering, there are two main kinds of practice. And as Lama Zopa Rinpoche says, the first one, the most immediate, the most urgent, is in relation to the second cause of

suffering, the delusions: do not respond in a deluded way to the good and bad things that happen every day, which are the fruit of our past action.

You own these karmic appearances as yours, so you do everything in your power to not respond with negative mind, body, or speech. You do everything in your power to avoid harming the person back or grasping at the good things; you watch your mind like a hawk and try not to sow more negative seeds. That's your first immediate practice. Every minute, watch your mind like a hawk, watch your body and speech like a hawk. You avoid at least creating more negative karma in relation to the situations of daily life.

The second one is where you now have to take care of the karma you've already created in all the countless past lives, the seeds that are lying in your mind, latent, waiting for the conditions to ripen as your suffering. They haven't ripened yet; so you've got to get ahead of the game, you've got to pull them out, or at the very least weaken them. And that's what purification is.

THE FORCE OF OUR PAST HABITS

But before we get into purification, first let's look at why it's so hard to do the most immediate level of practice, the most urgent: to watch our body, speech and mind and not create negative karma now.

So it's a tough one, because the tragedy of karma is, we're brainwashed, we're completely conditioned, we're completely habituated, we're completely brainwashed – not by others but by our own past actions, habits. We are propelled by the force of our past habits.

Now, when it comes to good things, aren't we fortunate? For example, a friend of mine taking the lice out of her three-year-old son's head, and the little boy cries, "Mummy, Mummy, leave them alone, don't hurt them. It's their home." The little boy is full of compassion. He's three. She hasn't taught him this. So *he* is propelled by the force of *his* past karma, which is his compassion. We can deduce logically that he has practiced compassion in the past so that now it arises just naturally. How fortunate that spontaneous compassion

arises in his three-year-old mind and he cries with compassion for the lice in his own head! How marvelous! Programming is good when it's virtuous karma.

Look at Mozart: his mother gives him a piano at the age of six, off he goes writing, his sonatas. We can deduce that he's programmed with music. When I popped out of my mother's womb, shouting and kicking, we can deduce that I was programmed with anger. So, it's a tough one when the programming is negative, because whatever's happening to you appears bad, not fair; it feels so spontaneous that you believe that anger is totally right.

Another example I use, a friend of mine, another mother of a child – she said when her little boy first saw the fishing, he ran like a magnet. She hated fishing. She never taught him this. He saw fishing and he ran like a magnet. Why? Because he had the karma to kill. We can deduce he's been in the lower realms in the past, he's finished that karma, but the tragedy is, he didn't purify all aspects of it. He's still got the residual result, which in this life is the habit

to keep killing. The habit is very strong. The three-year-old boy with compassion, he didn't have to think about it; it just spontaneously came because he'd practiced compassion in the past. So this little boy, he must have practiced killing in the past. He saw the river, the fishing, attachment is instantly activated. He was magnetized by the fishing, it looked so delicious to him. And the thing you run like a magnet to is a thing you've done before, then you put your attachment glasses on instantaneously so it will look good to you, it will therefore trigger a good feeling, therefore logically you assume, "Oh, this must be good because it gives me a good feeling." So then he pursued it. He followed the fishing. He became a professional fisherman.

She said she went fishing with him one time, to please her boy. And she found it unbearable. All she could see was suffering fish. All she could see was the fish, who by their body language were clearly showing that – poor things – they would rather be in the water, please! The poor things can't shout; they haven't got a voice. Their poor little eyes can't show much; the best they

can do is wriggle their body, isn't it? I mean, if he had the addiction, the attachment to killing pigs, you'd *know* the pigs were unhappy – they'd squeal and kick and try to run away on their little legs. Who'd want to go pig killing? Nobody. We go fishing because they die seemingly peacefully, poor things – they don't make a noise.

So he can't see suffering. All his life he's killed fish; he's attached to it. He's addicted to it. Every single day going out – and the feeling of feeling good. This wonderful feeling comes from attachment to something. So, because the world accepts fishing, no-one's going to argue with him. If he was attached to killing poodles, he would've been in trouble – keep it secret, snuck out at night. No. Fishing, everyone does it so no-one tells him it's not good. So he never questioned it.

But his mother, having no attachment to fishing, all she can see, nakedly, is the suffering of the fish. He literally couldn't see it, and this is the proof that we make up our own stories based upon what's in our minds.

So, because he had a habit to kill and attachment to it, then his rose-colored spectacles caused it to look good. He couldn't see the suffering. Literally. He was a lovely human being, she said, a kind, lovely, generous man. But he was blinded; and that's what attachment causes – so sneaky. It blinds us from seeing the truth. She saw suffering; he couldn't see it. He'd been doing it for years, killed hundreds of thousands of little fishies. He felt blissful. This is the tragedy of habit.

JUNKIES FOR PLEASURE

So we are propelled by the force of our past habit. And that, conjoined with the attachment – you're lost. Completely lost. That's why it is so hard to change – because we are junkies for pleasure. We are junkies for pleasure. That's this human realm. Buddha calls it a desire realm. So that means we are junkies for pleasure; we are born with these senses that crave their objects. The moment we get the object, that's what we mean by happiness. If we feel happy, then we logically deduce the action we did must be good.

The same with the torturer – I remember reading about one of those guys years ago, a multi-murderer and a torturer. He said, from the time he could remember, he was compelled to kill, to torture and kill creatures, little ants and animals, because it gave him pleasure. And then of course as he got older, he graduated to humans.

He intellectually knew it was wrong; because he could see the world didn't approve, but you know, he had to keep it secret, of course. But he was totally addicted to the pleasure that it gave him. Why? Habit from the past, programming from karma.

We think in the West, Oh, he's just this devil, he's an evil person. But the logical reason he did it is because of his past killing, no doubt as an animal, torturing – look at animals, they torture each other all the time. Constant. They're just addicted to torture. Being tortured and torturing – that's what animals do. Worst, most intense suffering. This guy – karmic imprint, you know, of torture. And what happened? He got pleasure from it: habit meets attachment equals pleasure. And the logic

is, “It must be good, because it gives me a good feeling.” Of course, the world doesn’t agree, so he’s going to keep it quiet. There’s always this conflict in his mind. But he is addicted to the pleasure.

Look at our pathetic little habits, you know. Overeating, smoking, junkies for sex, maybe... look how hard it is to get past our old habits, and we’ve got pathetic little habits, you know. Imagine if you got born with the habit to torture! What a terrible suffering – can you imagine? Or just to even kill fish and not realize it’s suffering, not realize it’s negative, all because it feels good. This is why attachment is so tricky.

This is why we have to have really logical, intelligent minds to have a sound basis for what is good and what is not, and then judge our experiences according to it. And then struggle to change our old habits. It’s a tough job, because we are propelled by our habits. We’re on autopilot, you know. We think we make choices. We think we’re intelligent. We’re not. We’re just junkies for habits, you know, craving to get good feelings. Stuff the food in, whatever we do. So we have to look into our minds carefully,

and then struggle to change the habits. And it is a struggle, we all know that.

So that's the immediate level of practice, the most urgent, as Rinpoche says, the here and now, dealing with what arises every second.

2. PURIFY THE KARMIC SEEDS THAT HAVE NOT YET RIPENED

This other one – the purification – is to deal with the seeds that haven't even manifested yet, that one can see no evidence of. This is called purification. And as Lama Zopa says, we are insane not to do this practice every day.

PURIFICATION IS A PSYCHOLOGICAL PROCESS

So, like all this work in Buddhism, this process of purification is practical, it's psychological. A really easy way to remember is – and I like this one – is to call the steps the Four Rs. There are different orders of these, according to the practice, but I like this particular order.

The first one is Regret, the second one is Reliance, the third, the Remedy, the fourth

one, Resolve, the determination to make changes.

1. FIRST OPPONENT POWER: REGRET

So the first one is you've got to acknowledge what you've done wrong. If you've taken poison, let's say, the very first step is to recognize that you've done it. You've got to first acknowledge there's a problem. It's pretty reasonable. You've first got to acknowledge you've eaten poison. "Oh, what a fool! Quick, what can I do about it?" Then you find yourself a decent doctor; then you do something to purify it, you apply the antidotes. Then you determine never to do it again. This is reasonable; it's practical, it's common sense.

Trouble is, when it comes to morality, we seem to have this other set of rules and we get all guilty and ashamed and neurotic, or we blame; we're ridiculous. We do everything to avoid responsibility.

BLAME, GUILT, DENIAL

When it comes to doing things like killing and lying and stealing, instead of simply

acknowledging it, we want to find someone else who's fault it is. That's as ridiculous as trying to find someone to blame for the poison in my dinner. You're dying, but all your thoughts are for blaming. Blame is pretty useless, which is our typical mode.

Another typical mode is guilt – “Oh, I ate poison. Oh, I'm such a bad person. I ate poison.” Every day, you're getting sicker and sicker...” Oh, I'm such a bad person, I ate poison.” We love to live in this one. Completely useless. Complete waste of time. Totally impotent. It's the same as blame, but you're the person you're blaming. One is anger, one is self-blame. They're the same problem.

The third one, even more ridiculous – and we love this one – “Robina! There's poison in your dinner!” “There is not!” We call it living in denial.

ACCOUNTABILITY

So we've got to be accountable. This entire process of purification is based upon the understanding of karma and on the recognition that you don't want suffering. Regret, the first step, is all about yourself.

So, we have guilt, now, which beats ourselves up. “I’m just a bad person.” Blame or guilt, we run to these spontaneously because they are a natural response to having ego-grasping, of having this ignorance that clings to the self-existent me. It’s this dualistic state of mind that naturally blames others, or naturally blames yourself. And we have to conquer that. We have to argue with that wrong view.

One time His Holiness was asked the difference between guilt and regret. It was such a sweet answer, but quite profound. He said: “With guilt, you look into the past and you go, “I did this and I did that and I did this,” and then you go, “and I’m a bad person.” We just assume naturally that if I’ve done bad things, I must be a bad person. That’s how we think. That second thought is the view of ego, the view of ego-grasping, that over-exaggerates the badness, and paints the entirety of myself with that brush.

The same with blame. “You are a bad person. You did this and you did this and you did this and you’re a bad person.” This

is what all delusions do; they exaggerate. And it's just not accurate. Forget being not morally right – it's just not accurate. It's an exaggeration. It isn't accurate to conclude because you've killed and lied and stolen, that you're a bad person. You're not. That's mistaken. Your *actions* are bad, no problem with that. That's clear. That's more precise.

But the point here is, then His Holiness said, "With regret, you also look into the past and think, "I did this in the past, and I did this, and I did this..." but then you think, "What can I do about it?" Now, we have to cultivate this consciously, it doesn't come naturally. Instead of saying, "...and I'm a bad person," you then say, "What can I do about it?" You change the thought. We have to cultivate that view. That's what regret is. It's wholesome, courageous, and optimistic.

You could say that regret is like compassion for yourself. Like the poison, the reason you say, "Oh my God, what an idiot! Quick, where's the doctor?" – it's obvious why you say this. You don't have to state it: you know that poison will cause you suffering, and you know you don't want

suffering. Well, same here. You're sick of suffering, and you understand that having harmed others will cause you suffering.

WE HAVE TO SAY THE WORDS

So, when we do this practice at the end of the day, you speak out to yourself what you have done to harm others. You bad-mouthed your husband, you talked about your girlfriend behind her back, you took the pencil at work and you never returned it. I mean, maybe you're not going around torturing and killing too many people, but whatever it is, you've got to acknowledge it. "I did do this and this..." And then you check the main things throughout this life – maybe you had an abortion, maybe you went fishing, maybe you're a hunter: you acknowledge it, and you regret it.

And, of course, this step is most important if you have taken vows: lay or monastic vows, bodhisattva vows, tantric vows. It's vital to regret having broken them, and not just this life but in the past as well.

And this is regret. You acknowledge what you have done to harm others and, because

you don't want suffering yourself – this is the motivation behind regret (compassion for others comes in the second step), you regret having done it. “I regret this. Why? Because I'm sick of suffering. I don't want the suffering that will come from this if I leave that seed in my mind. Because if I do leave that seed in my mind – that poison – it will ripen as my suffering and – hey! – I do not want suffering.”

This attitude does not come naturally to us. Guilt comes naturally! Even if we say the word regret, it still feels like guilt. So, we have to spell it out to make it a new thought. It's a really crucial point, I tell you. It's not enough just to say, “Oh, I regret killing and lying and stealing.” It feels like guilt, so you've got to change the words.

The simple, most fundamental thing about karma is that everything you do and say and think leaves a seed in your mind that can ripen as that experience for yourself in the future. You just have to think: do I like being stolen from? Nope. What causes people to steal from me? I must have stolen from them. So if I've just stolen a pencil, then I'll get stolen from in

the future. I don't want that. It's just logic; you've got to think it through, if you apply the law of karma, you know.

So you've got to be logical. Think it through. Make it real for you, not just some religious feeling. Not some weird, guilty feeling. That's useless. It's practical – I regret having done this because I don't want to be stolen from, I don't want suffering, I'm sick of it. Yet again I've shot my mouth off – shouted at people. I'm sick of this habit. First of all, too, you can even right now see the suffering and the hurt it causes you, the pain of that anger, you're feeling all caught up in it and fed up with it and you're so sick of it. You've got to feel that pain and be fed up with it. "I'm sick of this suffering, I'm sick of this boring habit."

And, of course, the main suffering we do not want is to be born in the lower realms, which is the main result of negative actions. We really have to think these things through.

And we're just talking here of the habits that we do that harm others; we're not looking at just our own emotional problems yet. We're looking at the actions of our body

and speech first – what we do to harm others first – killing, lying, stealing, bad-mouthing; there’s only so many names for them. You regret them. Remember the things, your old habits in this life – you know, maybe you’re addicted to sex and you harm people with your sexual attachment; but you look at the suffering you’re causing yourself.

THE BUDDHA’S VIEW OF MORALITY

You see, this is a very interesting point, let’s look at this a bit more – Buddha’s view of what morality is. It’s a really important point to think about. The usual view we have about morality, which is why we’re like children and resisting it mightily, is because we think it comes from somebody on high forcing it upon us: either God or our mother or the judge or the police, you know. We think it’s done to us.

It isn’t like that, not for Buddha. I asked a Catholic priest, a friend of mine, “What defines something as a sin?” He said, “It’s going against the will of God.” That is what defines a sin: something you do that is

against the will of God. Now, that's reasonable if God is the creator, and that's reasonable if you are a Christian. That's appropriate. That's correct.

But that's not the Buddhist definition of a negative action. Going against Buddha's views is not what defines something as negative. It's got nothing to do with Buddha! That's like saying, "Why is smoking bad? Oh, because my doctor told me not to." Your doctor's merely a messenger. The reason smoking's bad is because it'll hurt you, dear.

For Buddha, what defines killing as bad is really simple; it's because it harms another. Buddha says this is a conventional truth that you can prove quite quickly. You just do your market research in this world, in this room and you ask around, "Do you like getting killed, stolen from, lied to, kicked in the teeth?" Everybody will say no.

So we can deduce logically that a negative action is one that harms another, because you've just proven it by agreeing we don't like it. That's what makes it negative. It does not come from somebody on high, it's not set in stone; it is not, in other words,

self-existent. It is a dependent arising. That's Buddha's view; it's a natural law. So, what a negative action is is one that harms another.

But in this very first stage of practice where you regret doing actions that harm others, the reason first – you have to hear this point – the reason you regret having done it is not for the sake of others yet; it's for *your* sake, remember? So, a negative action is defined as an action that harms another; but at this first step, you regret it because your doing it programs your mind to keep doing it and to have it done to you, not to mention being born in the lower realms.

So, you regret it because *you* don't want the suffering. This is a crucial point. We've got to understand this, not just be vague about it. "Oh I do my Vajrasattva practice, oh I regret lying, killing..." We don't even give it thought, you know, we just wishy-washy gloss over it.

So a negative action is defined as one that harms another, but at this first stage – and this is the very meaning of the first level of practice in Buddhism – in the first scope of

practice, junior school, I like to call it – His Holiness uses this analogy as well: the way the teachings in the lam-rim are structured, it's like the education system. In Tibetan medieval language they call it the Lower Scope of practice. So junior school level of practice is to control your body and your speech.

The reason you will regret killing and lying and stealing and bad-mouthing – and there's not that many actions you do with your body and speech that harm others, sexual misconduct, lying, killing, stealing, you know, shouting at people, harsh speech, talking behind backs; there's only so many. "You know what, I'm sick of this suffering, I'm sick of the pain it causes me right now and I do not want the karmic fruits of this in the future. No way! So I regret having killed, lied, stolen, etc. etc."

Then it makes it very real for you, because it's about yourself. Don't feel bad about this. Don't feel guilty, like I should just be having compassion for others.

Compassion's the Great Scope – that's university, people! You've got to recognize your own suffering before you recognize the

suffering of others. You've got to be sick of your own suffering – this is what renunciation *is* – you're sick of your own suffering. That's why you've got to contemplate what these ridiculous things that we do, do to *ourselves*. Don't gloss over this step, it's extremely important.

So, you regret the things you did today, yesterday, this life, in beginningless past lives – the things you've done with your body and speech to harm others. “I regret anything I have ever done, since beginningless time to any sentient being.”

And of course, for those of us with vows, deeply regret our broken vows: pratimoksha vows – vows of individual liberation, the vows you take for junior school and high school – if you've broken those, then you deeply regret having broken those. If you've taken bodhisattva vows, then you deeply regret having broken your bodhisattva vows. If you've taken tantric vows, you deeply regret having broken your tantric vows, because these are lifelong vows. So you regret these, hugely, because you don't want the suffering that this can cause in the future: being separate from our

lamas, the Dharma, the Buddha's teachings, not to mention other suffering.

And if Buddha is right in asserting, as he does, that we've had beginningless lives, that we've had countless lives as animals, and that mightn't be the most suffering life, but that's where we do the most harm; animals just in their nature harm and get harmed. Look at one whale: it opens its mouth for one mouthful of one breakfast on one day and forty million creatures go in. And you get guilty because you killed one person. Get some perspective, please! That's a lot of sentient beings. So they live in a killing environment; they live on killing, animals do. So, the harm we've done to sentient beings as animals is inconceivable in comparison to what we've done as humans.

So if our minds are beginningless and we've had these lives, we've done countless things and that means those karmic seeds are on our minds now. So, you better regret them, because you know you don't want that suffering again! "I regret anything I've ever done to any sentient being since beginningless time." Regret the lot! Because

I do not want suffering – we’ve got to add that thought. “Because I am sick of suffering. Because I do not want suffering.” You’ve got to say that. That’s what makes it real, and not just some nice religious feeling. Not just guilt.

That’s regret, the first of the four opponent powers.

1. SECOND OPPONENT POWER: RELIANCE.

a. REFUGE

Now you think, “Well, good! Whom can I turn to? Where’s the doctor, please?” So you turn to Mr. Buddha. He’s our doctor. Second step: Reliance.

There are two parts in Reliance: the first is reliance upon the Buddha; that’s called Refuge. So what does that mean? Let’s look at this again, carefully. If I’m a Christian, I would rely upon God, because he’s my creator. So how I get purified is by requesting him to forgive me. Well, Buddha will forgive you; he’s a nice guy, I promise. But it’s got nothing to do with purification. Nothing. It’s nice to be forgiven, but it’s not

the point. It is not the discussion. Quite different.

So we rely on Buddha because he's our doctor – he's got the methods; he's got the medicine. So, "Thank goodness I've got a decent doctor," you think. And you do a little prayer, you visualize Vajrasattva, the particular manifestation of Buddha that all the lamas praise as the best one for this practice.

In the bodhisattva path, the Buddha manifests as like, gorgeous, you know, jewelry on his arms and ears and throat, and silken clothing; they call it the royal aspect. This is coming from tantra, where that's a whole different discussion and it has to do with enhancing the senses and energizing them. It's quite different, another level. So, Buddha in that aspect is called Vajradhara, or in Tibetan, Dorje Chang.

When I first became a Buddhist, I really like this name "Dorje Chang" and I asked Lama Yeshe, "Who's Dorje Chang, Lama?" and he said, very simply, "He's the biggest Buddha, dear." I was very proud to know I liked the biggest Buddha! So basically,

that's the tantric aspect of Shakyamuni Buddha.

For this purification practice, we use another aspect of Vajradhara, who looks the same, but he's white: Vajrasattva. He's particularly to do with emptiness, because realizing emptiness is when you've finally cut the root of the delusions, and that's when we actually purify our minds. Until then, by doing this purification practice we are simply stalling the ripening, we're weakening the seeds, we're like burning them, we're not pulling them out completely. Until you've realized emptiness, you will never cut the delusions, you'll always have more suffering. We need to stop their ripening, though, and that's what the purification process does. So, one relies upon Vajrasattva.

So, we visualize him above our head, and then we take refuge, say a prayer remembering the Buddha, grateful to have a Buddha, and we imagine him as our own lama, who manifests as the Buddha for our benefit, to show us the way. That's what refuge means. You rely upon the doctor.

Now, you've got to look at what it means, "rely upon the doctor." Why would you rely upon a doctor? Two reasons: one, because you do not want more sickness and you need their medicine; and two, because you are confident they're a good doctor. It seems kind of obvious; you don't go to a doctor because they've got a cute nose. So you rely upon their advice. It's perfectly reasonable.

Here, of course, this implies having thought about the Buddha, seeing that he's valid, and wanting to rely upon the Buddha because you want his medicine so that you can heal yourself.

In other words, if you've never thought about suffering, and you haven't regretted anything you've done wrong because you haven't thought about suffering and its consequences, then the Buddha will be pretty meaningless to you. If you haven't taken poison, or you don't realize you've taken poison, you might have heard about some amazing doctor who's got every antidote to every poison on earth, and you go, "Oh, how interesting. But how boring. Who needs him?" You don't care. But check

how you feel when you've discovered you know you've taken poison; you're going to hang on every word that doctor says and take his advice perfectly.

b. COMPASSION

The second part of Reliance is where you have compassion for those you have harmed. It's a bit curious that it's called reliance. The lamas put it like this: here we are, now wanting to cultivate compassion for the suffering of others. Whom do we rely upon, or need, in order to accomplish compassion? Suffering sentient beings, of course. If we never meet a suffering sentient being, how could we ever cultivate compassion. It's in this sense that they say we "rely upon" sentient beings.

In the first step, Regret, it's like having compassion for yourself. You're regretting the harm you've done for your sake. Now here, what you need to cultivate is compassion for those you've harmed, and you regret for their sake and want to purify yourself for *their* sake. But you can't have that until you've got the first one. Compassion is based upon this first one, on

Regret. You can't have compassion for the suffering of others until you've got this real sense of renunciation for your own suffering. It's impossible, you can't. You've got to have this one first.

Why? Very simple. Renunciation has two parts: The first part is: you are sick of suffering. Now, we all know that – we're all sick of suffering. But the second part's crucial: you now know *why* you're suffering – your past negative actions and your delusions. When you've got these two, that's renunciation.

Compassion is these two as well, but instead of yourself, it's applied to others. One: you see people suffering, and you find it unbearable. But, two: you now know why they are suffering, and that's the big shift here. You now know why they are suffering: because of their karma and their delusions: They, like you, are the source of their own suffering. You don't have compassion because they're poor innocent victims, which is the only people we usually have compassion for now; we love to have compassion for innocent victims, usually animals and children.

Now you see others suffering and you know why they're suffering. It's a crucial difference and one has to cultivate it carefully. Again, it's completely based on the teachings of karma, so one has to think of this so carefully, analyze it so carefully. Because the feeling we have now is guilt and shame and hate and blame, you know.

Our compassion now on based upon there being no karma. We only have compassion for innocent victims, because we assume the cause of suffering is the horrible oppressor. Buddha says, "Wrong view." Actually, when you've got this view of compassion, you'll have even more compassion for the oppressor. That's a fact. Why? Very logical. It's like a mother for her junkie kid. Everybody else hates him – he lies, he steals, he's a pain to be around; but the mother, her heart breaks for him. Why? Because he is causing himself suffering. That's the basis of compassion.

You see people who are the victims of harm, you realize it's the result of their own past actions and your heart breaks for them, but you have even more compassion for the people who caused it, because the

people who are the victims are just finishing their suffering and the ones who caused it are just beginning theirs.

Once you've got this first for yourself, which is renunciation: I'm sick of suffering, I know why I'm suffering: karma; then it's easy then to have compassion for others. You can't get it properly until you've got it for yourself. This is a reasonable psychological kind of progression, and all of it's based on karma.

Now, in this second part of the second step, Reliance, you think about compassion now. You think of those you've harmed, and you know what it's like to suffer so you know what it's like for their suffering. You regret for their sake, now. Compassion for others.

And if you're brave enough, you can have compassion for those who have harmed you, because they're going to suffer in the future. And of course, the dynamic of all this is you know you caused them suffering in the past, that's how come they're causing you suffering now. When you've got karma down, you can own it so strongly.

WITH THE VIEW OF KARMA, NO BLAME, THEREFORE NO ANGER

In 2003 I remember, in New York, I was there for a conference that Richard Gere had organized: a bunch of ex-prisoners, when His Holiness was there. Twenty ex-prisoners who had been meditating in prison: black and white, male and female, Puerto Rican, Mexican: a cross-section of American society. So people like me who had worked with people in prison were invited as well. We had this very nice talk all day, just a lovely conference, you know? And they all met His Holiness.

Richard also invited two young Tibetan nuns who'd been tortured and sexually abused in prison for a couple of years, basically for just being nuns. So they were telling their experience.

First of all, if you could quantify suffering, then it was obvious to all the Americans that the suffering of the nuns was more than all of theirs put together. But second, it was really clear they weren't angry, which is a big surprise to us. Because we have a victim mentality, and because we think we're innocent victims, and we think

suffering is caused by others, we assume anger is normal; because anger is blame, isn't it? Anger is the response of the innocent victim.

But if you have the view of karma, you don't have blame. The nuns were sad, there were tears, but they weren't angry. And that's a big shock to us: we assume anger is normal; in fact, we'd think you're not normal if you don't have anger.

But these nuns, at the end of their talk, they said very quietly, "And of course, we had compassion for our torturers, because we knew we had harmed them in the past."

This is a huge point. This is why we can't just gloss over karma, we've got to really give it thought. And this is the basis of all of Buddha's teachings. It is a way of spelling out the law of cause and effect. Really think it through – it's the basis of all practice. And it's the basis of compassion.

3. THIRD OPPONENT POWER: THE REMEDY

So now, the third step. Now you take the medicine. You apply the antidote. You can say in Buddhism there's a whole medicine

cabinet of remedies, but all the lamas in the Tibetan traditions praise this particular meditation, this particular visualization, this particular mantra as a really potent medicine. Often this step is simply called “applying the antidote.”

So, you know, anything here would apply. If you’ve got a habit to kill, you make a point of saving lives. You go get a bunch of worms and instead of having them killed as bait, you release the worms. It’s a powerful thing to do. Or one of your practices could be, one of your antidotes could be to help sick people: anything you do that’s opposite to the thing you’re regretting. If you’re regretting lying, you make a special point of telling the truth. You must do this anyway in your life. They are necessary.

But here, in this step, the very powerful practice, very powerful antidote, remedy – and one has to think about why it’s powerful, not just because it’s religion, you know – this very potent medicine of visualizing Vajrasattva and saying his mantra. This is said to be a very powerful medicine that works at a very deep level of your mind. So, one does this visualization

of Vajrasattva purifying the various actions of your body, speech and mind and reciting the mantra.

All the lamas say that any practice that involves saying the Buddha's name, visualizing, reciting their mantras, is hugely powerful, far more powerful than practices that don't involve the Buddha. They talk about the "power of the object," the object of one's thoughts, actions, etc. So doing this practice of visualizing nectar coming from the Buddha and purifying your negative actions of body, speech and mind while you recite the mantra, is like an atomic bomb on the negative karmic imprints. That's the third step.

4. FOURTH OPPONENT POWER: RESOLVE

And the fourth one, as Pabongka Rinpoche says, is the most important: Resolve, or the determination to change. If you can't own responsibility for what you've done wrong, you can never make the decision to change, can you, because you don't want to own it. First with regret and then the determination to change, you're really

becoming accountable. You're really growing up. You're becoming mature. And you're becoming your own friend. That's why this practice is so crucial to do. Not just to gloss it over, say, "Oh I've done my Vajrasattva mantras..." That's not enough, I tell you. That's just not enough. You've got to think through these four steps. It's psychologically really profound. It's being your own therapist, as Lama Yeshe puts it, I'm not kidding.

Things really shift if we can do this properly, because this is where we get the courage to know we are in charge of our life and we *can* change. Because it's the power of our own will, our own determination to change.

So this fourth step, again, is so practical: you make determination not to do again. So, if you have taken vows – I will never kill, I will never lie, I will never steal – you've taken those five lay vows, and they're lifetime vows, so obviously you need to reiterate that vow.

Every time you say "I will never kill," it's like digging that groove deeper in your mind. It's not enough to say, "Oh, yeah, I

took vows twenty years ago. Twenty years ago I vowed I wouldn't kill," but you've never thought of it since. It's like saying, "Oh, I'm a pianist, I played piano twenty years ago." You're not, unless you do it every day. We see these things as so self-existent. It's not enough. It's an ongoing, dynamic daily thing.

If every day you say, "I will never kill," I mean, excuse me, guess what the result will be? It's hardly rocket science. If every day you say it, that protects you every day from ever killing. It's obvious. It's so embarrassingly obvious. But we forget these things. So you need to reiterate your vows. I will never kill. I will never steal. I will never lie. I will never whatever they are. I will never break my bodhisattva vows. I will never break my tantric vows. You need to say this every day. Reiterate your commitments.

And it's not just because you're hoping God will make you good or Buddha will bless you; it's you training your mind. Like if you do pushups every day, guess what? You keep getting better at it. We understand it when it comes to creativity

and art and learning things, but we think this is “religion” so we don’t understand why I should say every day I’ll never kill. Because you’re training your mind in that direction. Because everything comes down to the thought. All you’re doing by becoming a Buddha is programming your mind with positive thoughts. It’s nothing more secret than that.

Then, of course, you don’t lie to yourself, as Rinpoche says. If you’re not ready to say I’ll never do it again, if you haven’t taken the vow, and you’re still going fishing every day or going hunting, then don’t lie to yourself and say “I’ll never kill again”; you’re not ready. Be realistic.

Look at our old habits, like getting angry. So maybe you’ll say, “Okay. I see the reasonableness of not getting angry. I’m going to give it a go. I won’t get angry for five hours.” Or you might say, “I won’t lie for ten hours,” – and because you’ve got to go to bed soon, when you’re asleep, you won’t lie, believe me; you’ll keep your vow!

Be realistic; it’s an incremental thing, and you’ve got to take this seriously on board. That’s why you can’t just do your mantras

and think, “I’ve done my practice.” It’s not enough. It’s a serious psychological procedure that you’re involved in. Practice is real; it’s you dealing with your own mind.

So, give yourself a timeline. And when it comes of course to your delusions, your neurotic thoughts, the things that harm you only – and I didn’t mention this in Regret – but of course you can think of your own rubbish: your own angry thoughts, your depression, your jealousy, which are destroying you. You can deeply regret these because it’s obvious the suffering it causes you; because you’re sick of the suffering.

Now here in this fourth step, you maybe can’t say, “I’ll never be depressed again”; it’s not possible, if you’re caught up in the middle of it. But you make some decisions for yourself; realistic, humble decisions. “Okay. I’m going to watch my mind like a hawk. I’m going to do my best tomorrow.”

Any vows you’ve taken, you must reiterate them at this step: I will never break my lay vows, I will never break my bodhisattva vows, I will never break my tantric vows, etc.

If you haven't taken vows, and if you can start to say I will never kill, lie steal, etc., then great.

Take it at your own pace. Make decisions every night with this practice, and you will change. "We can mold our minds into any shape we like," as Lama Zopa Rinpoche says. We're the boss, remember.

4. PURIFICATION PRACTICE: VAJRASATTVA IN THE CONTEXT OF THE FOUR OPPONENT POWERS

There is no negativity that cannot be purified. The purification process is basically a psychological one. As Lama Yeshe says, it is our mind (and on the basis of that our actions) that create the negativity and it is our mind that transforms it by creating positive energy. Although we rely on Buddha's methods for the purification, it is not as if it is Buddha purifying us or forgiving us; we ourselves do the purifying.

We purify by applying, the Four Opponent Powers.

THE PRACTICE

Prostrate three times then sit. Bring your mind to a quiet state.

1. THE POWER OF REGRET

Sincerely regret, from the depths of your heart, anything you have done to harm any living being, on this day, in this life, in all past lives.

As Lama Zopa Rinpoche says, “Not only that, but continuously I have also been breaking my pratimoksha, bodhisattva, and tantric vows. Worst of all, I have created the heaviest of negative karmas in relation to my virtuous friends – getting angry at them, generating wrong views, having non-devotional thoughts towards them, harming their holy body, and disobeying their advice.

“Having these negative imprints on my mental continuum is unbearable. It’s as if I’ve swallowed a lethal poison. I must practice the antidote right away and purify all this negative karma immediately, without a second’s delay.”

The reason to regret is based on the logic of karma: We experience everything due to our past karma, our past actions; so having harmed others we ourselves will necessarily experience suffering in the future. Thus we cannot bear the thought of the future

suffering that we ourselves will experience. And who wants that? We know from the present suffering that we do not want it, so the logic is, therefore, to remove the karmic seeds before they ripen as future suffering.

Go through the three non-virtuous action of the body and four of the speech, regretting those we remember and those we don't, in other words all the harm we have ever done to any sentient being since beginningless time.

If we have taken vows, then we must regret having broken them specifically: pratimoksha vows, bodhisattva vows, tantric vows.

For all of these, think like this: "I regret from the depths of my heart having harmed others, broken my vows, etc., because I do not want the future suffering. I am sick of suffering."

Then think, "What can I do about it? Whom can I turn to?"

2. THE POWER OF RELIANCE

Refuge

We rely upon, turn to, the Buddha, the doctor, who has the methods that we can

use the purify. It's not that we need Buddha to forgive us; we purify ourselves by relying upon his methods..

Visualize Vajrasattva above the crown of your head. He is your guru manifesting in this aspect for your benefit.

He is in the bodhisattva aspect, radiant, blissful white light. He is adorned with jewels and silken clothes. He's sitting cross-legged on a white lotus, which although born out of mud is untainted by mud, just like our enlightened potential, which is born out of our delusions but is untainted by them. His face is radiant and beautiful. His eyes are long (horizontally) and peaceful and full of love and compassion for you. His mouth is red and very sweet. His hair is black and held up in a top knot.

Guru Vajrasattva's right hand, holding a vajra, which represents compassion and bliss, is at his heart; his left, holding a bell, which represents the wisdom realizing emptiness, is resting in his lap.

On a moon disk at Guru Vajrasattva's heart stands a HUM encircled by a garland of the hundred-syllable mantra.

Think: "Vajrasattva is my root guru, the

holy mind of all the buddhas, the dharmakaya, who out of his unbearable compassion, which embraces me and all other sentient beings, appears in this form to purify me and all others.”

Now invite the wisdom beings to merge with your visualization, the commitment being: imagine light goes out of from the HUM at Guru Vajrasattva’s heart to all the ten directions and hooks the energy of the body, speech and mind of all the enlightened beings of the universe. This light comes back and dissolves into the heart of Guru Vajrasattva, who now embodies all their energy. He is even more brilliant and blissful than before.

Now, say a prayer of refuge:

To the Buddha, the Dharma and the
Sangha

I go for refuge until I am enlightened.

By this practice of meditating on Guru
Vajrasattva

May I reach Buddhahood so as to benefit
all sentient beings!

b. Compassion In order to develop compassion, we need to rely upon other beings, the very beings we have harmed and who have harmed us, by developing compassion for them.

Think in particular of people you have harmed recently; and in the past; and then, in general, all beings we have ever harmed since beginningless time.

Then remember those who have harmed you: have compassion for them because they will suffer as a result of the harm they have done to you.

Make the strong aspiration to do this practice of purification for the sake of all these sentient beings. “I must purify for their sake.”

3. THE POWER OF THE REMEDY

This is the actual medicine, the doing of the actual practice of purification. There are three stages to the meditation, and it consists of visualization and recitation of mantra.

a. Purification of body

Guru Vajrasattva very compassionately sends powerful white nectar, like coming out of a hose very forcefully, from his heart. It arcs around and enters your crown and pours into your entire body, filling you completely. It keeps coming and it forces out of your lower orifices all the harm you have ever done to any living being with your body in the form of inky liquid, which pours out of you and disappears into space, not one atom left. Feel completely purified.

Recite the mantra as you visualize (3 or 7 or as many as you wish):

OM VAJRASATTVA SAMAYA MANU PALAYA /
VAJRASATTVA DENO PATITA / DIDO MAY
BHAWA / SUTO SHAYO MAY BHAWA / SUPO
SHAYO MAY BHAWA / ANU RAKTO MAY
BHAWA / SARWA SIDDHI MEMPAR YATSA /
SARWA KARMA SU TSA MAY / TSITAM
SHRIYAM KURU HUM / HA HA HA HA HO /
BHAGAWAN / SARVA TATHAGATA / VAJRA MA
MAY MU TSA / VAJRA BHAWA MAHA SAMAYA
SATTVA / AH HUM PHAT!

Then be delighted that all the harm you have ever done to any sentient being with your body is completely purified. And think that there is no way you could do anything but benefit others now with your body.

b. Purification of speech

Again, Guru Vajrasattva very happily sends powerful nectar from his heart chakra. It arcs around and forcefully enters your crown, filling your entire body, this time forcing up to the top of your body all the negativity of your speech, which overflows and disappears into space, not one atom left – just like, as Lama Yeshe says, when you turn on the tap in the sink and fill the dirty glass, all the junk in glass comes to the top and overflows.

So imagine that all the gossip and harsh speech and useless speech and lying and talking badly about others behind their backs – all this is purified by the powerful nectar filling you.

Recite the mantra as you visualize this.

OM VAJRASATTVA SAMAYA MANU PALAYA /
VAJRASATTVA DENO PATITA / DIDO MAY

BHAWA / SUTO SHAYO MAY BHAWA / SUPO
SHAYO MAY BHAWA / ANU RAKTO MAY
BHAWA / SARWA SIDDHI MEMPAR YATSA /
SARWA KARMA SU TSA MAY / TSITAM
SHRIYAM KURU HUM / HA HA HA HA HO /
BHAGAWAN / SARVA TATHAGATA / VAJRA MA
MAY MU TSA / VAJRA BHAWA MAHA SAMAYA
SATTVA / AH HUM PHAT!

Again, feel so happy that your speech is now completely purified. And imagine that it's not possible that you could do anything but benefit others with your speech.

c. Purification of mind

Third, Guru Vajrasattva now very compassionately sends powerful beams of laser light from his heart chakra, which arcs around and enters your crown chakra and fills your entire being – just like, as Lama Yeshe says, when you turn on a light in a room the darkness is instantly dispelled. So, just as the light hits your heart chakra, the darkness of the negativity of your mind – all the attachment and neediness, the anger and violence, the depression and

resentment and jealousy and bitterness, etc.
– all instantly dispelled, not one atom left.
Recite the mantra as you visualize this.

OM VAJRASATTVA SAMAYA MANU PALAYA /
VAJRASATTVA DENO PATITA / DIDO MAY
BHAWA / SUTO SHAYO MAY BHAWA / SUPO
SHAYO MAY BHAWA / ANU RAKTO MAY
BHAWA / SARWA SIDDHI MEMPAR YATSA /
SARWA KARMA SU TSA MAY / TSITAM
SHRIYAM KURU HUM / HA HA HA HA HO /
BHAGAWAN / SARVA TATHAGATA / VAJRA MA
MAY MU TSA / VAJRA BHAWA MAHA SAMAYA
SATTVA / AH HUM PHAT!

Again, be delighted that all your
delusions, which are the source of our own
suffering and the cause for why we harm
others with our body and speech, are totally
purified, gone, finished.

Think: there is no space in your heart
now for anything but love and kindness and
forgiveness and wisdom and bliss and
compassion.

***d. Purification of even the imprints
of negativity of body, speech and
mind***

This time imagine that Guru Vajrasattva sends light again and it fills you completely and eradicates even the subtlest imprint of negative energy from your mind. (It's like once you removed the garlic from a jar, you still need to remove the smell.) Again recite the mantra.

OM VAJRASATTVA SAMAYA MANU PALAYA /
VAJRASATTVA DENO PATITA / DIDO MAY
BHAWA / SUTO SHAYO MAY BHAWA / SUPO
SHAYO MAY BHAWA / ANU RAKTO MAY
BHAWA / SARWA SIDDHI MEMPAR YATSA /
SARWA KARMA SU TSA MAY / TSITAM
SHRIYAM KURU HUM / HA HA HA HA HO /
BHAGAWAN / SARVA TATHAGATA / VAJRA MA
MAY MU TSA / VAJRA BHAWA MAHA SAMAYA
SATTVA / AH HUM PHAT!

Now feel you are completely purified, not one atom of negativity left in your mindstream; even the subtlest obscurations to omniscience have been removed.

4. THE POWER OF RESOLVE

The fourth step in the purification process, and such a crucial one, is the determination not to harm with our body, speech and mind again. Without this, we keep doing the same old things. The determination, the aspiration, to not harm again is like a beacon that guides our body, speech and mind in new directions. Remember, as Lama Zopa Rinpoche says, “Everything exists on the tip of the wish, the aspiration.”

If you have taken vows, then think, “I will never break my pratimoksha vows. I will never break my bodhisattva vows. I will never break my tantric vows and commitments.”

As for our other old habits, if we can’t commit to never do them again, then don’t lie to ourselves, as Lama Zopa Rinpoche says. So think carefully and then decide to refrain from them for a year, a month, a day, even a minute – whatever is realistic. Then in general vow to make the effort to avoid the others.

This determination not to do again is what gives us the strength to change.

CONCLUSION

Guru Vajrasattva is delighted with us. Wanting to merge with your mind, he melts into white light and absorbs into you through your crown. Think: “My guru’s body, speech and mind, Vajrasattva’s body, speech and mind, my own body, speech and mind: same thing.” “Union-oneness,” as Lama Yeshe would say. Meditate on this.

Next, as Lama Zopa Rinpoche recommends, meditate on the emptiness of the three circles: “In emptiness, there is no I, creator of negative karma; there is no action of creating negative karma; there is no negative karma created.” Place your mind in that emptiness for a little while. In this way, look at all phenomena as empty – they do not exist from their own side.

DEDICATION

Finally, dedicate all the merit, the positive energy, you have created by doing this purification to all living beings. See page 90.

THE FOUR TYPES OF KARMIC RESULTS THAT THE FOUR OPPONENT POWERS PURIFY

1. The power of regret purifies the *experience similar to the cause*, which, let's say for killing, is to get killed, to die young or to get sick.

2. The power of reliance, *Refuge and bodhicitta* purify the *environment result*, which for killing is living in a place where the food and medicine are not conducive to good health.

3. The power of the remedy, in this case the *visualization and recitation of mantras* – or whatever action one does as the actual antidote – purifies the *throwing karma* that causes birth in the lower realms.

4. The power of the resolve or determination not to do again purifies the *action similar to the cause*, which in a sense is the worst result: it's the habit to keep killing, which propels one back into the lower realms.

THE MEANING OF THE MANTRA

OM the qualities of Buddha's holy body,
speech, and mind; all that is auspicious and
of great value

VAJRASATTVA the being who has the
wisdom of inseparable bliss and emptiness
SAMAYA a pledge that must not be
transgressed

MANU PALAYA lead me along the path you
took to enlightenment

VAJRASATTVA DENO PATITA make me
abide closer Vajrasattva's vajra holy mind

DIDO MAY BHAWA please grant me a firm
and stable realization of the ultimate nature
of phenomena

SUTO SHAYO MAY BHAWA please grant me
the blessing of being extremely pleased with
me

SUPO SHAYO MAY BHAWA bless me with

the nature of well developed great bliss

ANU RAKTO MAY BHAWA bless me with the
nature of the love that
leads me to your state

SARWA SIDDHI MEMPAR YATSA please
grant all powerful attainments
SARWA KARMA SU TSA MAY please grant all
virtuous actions

TSITAM SHRIYAM KURU please grant your
glorious qualities

HUM the vajra holy mind

A HA HA HA HO the five transcendental
wisdoms

BHAGAWAN one who has destroyed every
obscurations, attained all realizations, and
passed beyond suffering

SARVA TATHAGATA all those who have
realized emptiness, knowing things just as
they are

VAJRA MA MAY MUTSA do not abandon me

VAJRA BHAWA the nature of indestructible
inseparability

MAHA SAMAYA SATTVA the great pledge
being; the great being who has the pledge,
the vajra holy mind

AH the vajra holy speech

HUM the transcendental wisdom of great
bliss

PHAT! clarifying the transcendental
wisdom of inseparable bliss and emptiness
and destroying the dualistic mind that
obstructs it

COLOPHON

By Ven Robina Courtin, based on the
teachings of her lamas, Lama Thubten
Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche.

5. THE WORKSHOP IS IN THE MIND

VEN. ROBINA COURTIN

Buddha's psychology is not made up by Buddha; he's not a creator, nor does he posit one. He's this amazing observer of the workings of the human mind, from his own direct experience. The mind, in fact, is his expertise.

He came out of the Indian tradition in which these incredible Indian philosopher meditators, more than three thousand years ago, began the investigation into the nature of self. It was they who came up with the sophisticated psychological skill known as concentration meditation that's the basis of what the world knows these days as mindfulness meditation.

With this skill, we can plumb the depths of our own mind, go beyond the conceptual and sensory levels of consciousness, our own cognitive process – not the brain; we're not discussing the brain – to degrees of subtlety that we in the West don't even

posit as existing. Why? To rid the mind of the ego-based states and develop to perfection the goodness with us.

For Buddha, mind is the central player in our lives, and the source of all happiness and all suffering. Therefore, we need to learn to go deeply into the mind, to unpack and unravel its contents, deconstructing the layers of thoughts and feelings and emotions and assumptions, and reconstructing it into the mind of a buddha, our natural potential.

BUDDHA'S OWN EXPERIENTIAL FINDINGS

From his own direct experiential findings he's found that the negative states of mind, these neuroses, the voices of ego that we consider utterly normal – so normal that we think we'd be abnormal if we didn't have them – are not at the core of our being, are adventitious. We can get rid of them.

It's shocking to hear this. If I go to my therapist and ask them to please give me methods to get rid of all ego, all fear, all jealousy, all anger, all attachment and develop infinite love and infinite

compassion for all beings, I think they'd be seriously worried about me. But this is the view of Buddhist psychology.

Clearly, then, we need learn to know the contents of this mind of ours and, crucially, be able to distinguish between the neuroses and the positive states of mind. Normally they're mixed together like a big soup, and we can't tell one bit from another.

In our contemporary models of the mind, we don't pay such clear attention to the workings of our own cognitive process; or, it's only when someone's about to kill me, or I'm about to kill him that I think I'd better go do something about it – and it's a little bit late. Vesuvius has already exploded! Way before then we need to pay attention to the internal workings of our mind to begin to distinguish between neurotic attachment and the virtuous love, for example;

BE OUR OWN THERAPIST

We really begin to practice when we learn to be our own therapist, as Lama Yeshe puts it: seeing our mind, noticing the anger, the attachment, the fears, and learning to

work with them and change them. That's the real immediate practice to do. And this is what's so difficult. Of the two causes of suffering this is the main one; these delusions impel us to create negative karma, the second one (see chapter 1).

So, to even see what's in our mind is already difficult for us, because in our culture we're not used to looking at our mind. We don't learn techniques where we can look into the mind and understand it, be our own therapist.

The way we think of psychology in the West, is we're all born this way, you do your best, you struggle along, and if things get so bad then you have to go find a therapist. It's sort of like we're just brought up to just hop into a car and get onto the freeway. No one teaches you to drive; it's just the way life is, you don't drive. And then if you have a crash you have to go find someone to help you. Well, it's a bit backward isn't it? If you learn how to drive, you can avoid the crashes.

That's all Buddha is saying. From day one, start to know your mind. It's your mind, it's your anger, it's your jealousy,

darling, it's your love, it's your compassion. We need to learn to see our mind deeply, to distinguish between the various conceptual stories, and thus have the ability to sort it out as it happens – well before the crash. By the time we're 20, we're going to be an amazing human being, aren't we? Can you imagine? Not to mention 60 and 70 and 80.

SENSORY CONSCIOUSNESS

But let's step back a little. We have thoughts and feelings and emotions, intellect. And then we have the sensory consciousness, which is the experiences of the mind through the medium of the body. This is the way to say it. So technically, in Buddhist terms, eyeball is not what sees things. The eyeball is just the physical medium through which that part of our mind functions in order to perceive shape and color. It's not just splitting hairs; it's a very major point. Ear consciousness is that part of our consciousness, mind, that functions through the medium of our ear, through the drum and all that business, in order to perceive sound.

So the sensory consciousness is really very limited. It's got a very limited capacity for cognition. But we make the body the boss as Lama Yeshe says. Big mistake. For example, we will say, "Oh wow, look at that delicious chocolate cake." We think we see a delicious chocolate cake. Technically not true, according to Buddha.

Eye consciousness perceives only shape and color. It has no more capacity. Ear consciousness, it can't hear divine Miles Davis. I'd say, "Oh wow, that's Miles, I can hear Miles there" because I'm a big fan of Miles Davis. But ear consciousness doesn't know that. It only knows or perceives or cognizes sound.

So they're a very limited level of awareness. But we give them so much more power than they actually have. They're the interface between me and the world, aren't they? Without the senses we have no way of experiencing anything because this is the level we function at. We're living in a sensory universe now. Buddha calls it the desire realm.

THE WORKSHOP IS IN THE MIND

Then we have mental consciousness. That's where the workshop is, as Rinpoche says. That's what we have to become familiar with, that's what we have to get to know deeply, and that's where we have to be our own therapist. And that's what we have to change, because that's where the potential for enlightenment is. And that's where all the potential for suffering is. This is the point. So even beginning to recognize that our sensory experiences and our mental consciousness are fundamentally different is crucial, because then we don't get fooled by what the senses tell us. It's an extremely important point in order to become a good practitioner.

NEGATIVE, POSITIVE, AND NEUTRAL STATES OF MIND

According to the Buddhist model of the mind, we divide the contents of our mental consciousness into three categories; there's no fourth. There are the so-called positive states the negative ones, and neutral. Examples of neutral – which doesn't mean they're not important; it means they're

neither negative nor positive in their character – are concentration, mindfulness (which really means not-forgetfulness), discrimination, alertness, attention, intention, and so on. These are vital states of mind that enable anyone to function properly – whether you're a murderer or a meditator. I like to call them the mechanics of the mind. Remember, we're not discussing the brain here. Buddha doesn't talk about the brain, he's talking about the cognitive process itself: thoughts and feelings and emotions.

The virtuous ones like love and compassion are altruistic, are the source of our own happiness, and cause us to want to help others. The negative ones are necessarily I-based, totally self-centered and in their raw form really neurotic, really delusional, and really disturbing; and they're the source of my suffering and, of course, the source of why I harm others.

In the long-term we need to use the single-pointed concentration technique that hones concentration, mindfulness, alertness and the rest to an incredible degree of brilliance and clarity, and with

these we learn to unpack and unravel our delusions and eventually rid our minds of them.

NEGATIVE STATES OF MIND HAVE TWO MAIN FUNCTIONS

There are two main characteristics that the negative states of mind have. One is indicated by the term disturbing emotion. So even if we became familiar with just this, it would give us great courage to want to go beyond it because this is what suffering is. Just the suffering of being angry, just the suffering for yourself of being jealous, being depressed. It's so obvious, isn't it, it's so clear that it's so painful for us.

Another characteristic, and this is the really tasty bit, another characteristic that these negative states of mind have is that they are delusions. What Buddha's saying is that the extent to which we're caught up in depression or anger or attachment is the extent to which we're out of touch with reality.

If someone accused us of being delusional, we'd be very hurt. But Buddha is saying exactly that.

WE'RE ALL MENTALLY ILL: IT'S JUST A QUESTION OF DEGREE

So in our culture, we just take as a given that everyone has a bit of anger, a bit of this, a bit of that, and we call that normal. We bring delusions into our normality. Buddha has a more radical view of what is mentally ill, what is delusional. Are you seeing my point? He says we're all delusional, it's just a question of degree. And that really is the best way to say it.

Which is quite shocking. What it also implies is the level to which we can be the opposite. If we just take as normal a bit of anger, a bit of jealousy, a bit of this, a bit of that and that's a rounded normal person, then you can't really move very far from this, you're stuck with that. But by saying that all attachment, anger, pride, jealousy, are delusions and are not at the core of our being – that's Buddha's fundamental finding – we're saying that we can get rid of them.

He is more subtle in his assessment of how we are crazy and he is more subtle in his assessment of how we can develop. You see my point? That's the flip side.

KNOW OUR OWN MIND

The Buddhist model of the mind is very clear in distinguishing between these positive states of mind and the neurotic ones, the negative ones. Buddha's main finding, as I mentioned, is that these negative states, these neuroses – he would have liked that term, I think – are adventitious; they do not belong in the mind and thus we can get rid of them.

The positive ones, we all know: love, compassion, kindness, generosity, forgiveness, self-confidence. As soon as we hear those words we go, “yeah, that's great,” whether we're on the receiving end of them or whether they're inside us. We know they're the good stuff. Then you've got the stuff that's miserable: we know depression, jealousy, low self-esteem, self-hate, anger, arrogance. These we know immediately aren't cool.

Therefore, we need to know our mind because what goes on in our mind is the main source – *the main source* – of our happiness and suffering; and because we need to rid the mind of these causes of

suffering. That's what Buddha means by "nirvana."

Now, we're not used to thinking that, not at all. We don't believe that for one second. I believe that Mary is the cause of my happiness and she's *out there*, and I believe that Fred is the cause of my suffering. To think that what goes on in *my* mind is the main cause, that's a bit shocking. But that's Buddha's thing. Once we take this on board, then obviously what it means is, given that I don't want suffering and do want happiness, please, I had better start knowing my mind and working on it – being my own therapist, as Lama Yeshe puts it.

WHAT ARE DELUSIONS?

There are three main delusions, Buddha says. The root of them all is known as ignorance, ego-grasping, the mother of them all, a primordial grasping at a concrete sense of self

Its main voice is attachment. So let's look at attachment because effectively, in the four noble truths, attachment is the main cause of all our suffering.

As I said, the two main characteristics of all the delusions is, one, they're disturbing and, two, they're delusional, they're liars. When we're caught up in our depression, for example, things appear in a way that isn't accurate. It's like we have put on our really dark, ugly glasses. Everything looks horrible. Same with anger, same with pride, same with jealousy, same with all of them. They've all got their own flavor. They're all liars, they're all voices of the primordial ignorance, they're all voices of ego-grasping. And then we believe in the lie and we follow it. That's samsara.

6. ATTACHMENT IS THE MAIN SOURCE OF OUR SUFFERING

VEN. ROBINA COURTIN

The Buddha's view is that actually the basis, the source, of our day to day suffering is attachment. If that's true, then clearly we'd better know what he means by it.

Otherwise, as Lama Zopa Rinpoche says, when you hear that Buddha says you've got to give it up, you'll go, "Oh, I've got to give up my happiness? I've got to give up my heart?"

This is really difficult because when we use even this word in our culture we use it interchangeably with the words love, happiness, joy, pleasure. So please, throw out all your definitions, all your assumptions now and listen to this view, because Buddha uses this word in a very specific way.

I remember Lama Yeshe saying one time, "I could tell you about attachment for one whole year, but you'll never begin to really understand it until you start to look deeply

inside.” This is interesting. “Attachment”: it’s such a cute word, a simple word. We use it in our culture, but in a very different way. So it’s really important when we hear Buddha’s views about attachment we understand clearly what he means by it.

For us it’s virtually synonymous with closeness, love. But for the Buddha it is very, very different. If you want to understand what Buddha’s saying, you’ve got to know what his definition is. And we’re not used to thinking this way, you know? If think about it, even just the word “love” – if everybody in this room gave their definition, we’d have as many meanings as people, and we tend to think that’s okay. No wonder we don’t communicate!

I mean, if everybody had their own view about what one plus one was, we’d all be in serious trouble, wouldn’t we? “I’m allowed to think it’s seven!” We wouldn’t say that. We communicate nicely when it comes to numbers; you can’t get it wrong. But if I say “I love you” and you say “I love you” – wow, we think we’re communicating! But we’re not, because we have different definitions, different assumptions. When it comes to

emotional stuff we're very wishy-washy in terms of what we mean by words.

Attachment is one of the deepest neuroses, for the Buddha. But why and how? When you say, "My god, she's so *needy*," straightaway we know that's not pleasant. "What a control freak he is." "Oh, she's so possessive." Well, these are some of the characteristics of what Buddha refers to as attachment. It's multi-faceted.

THE MORE WE GET, THE MORE WE WANT

But you know what? That's the junkie mode. We truly believe that when I get it then the satisfaction will come. It's like an ache, a pain and I've got to get that thing to assuage the pain. That's the junkie mode. So we're all junkies, it's a question of degree. We're all deluded; it's a question of degree. We're all insane; it's a question of degree.

Attachment is the source of most of the other unhappy emotions we experience in daily life – like anger and jealousy and all the rest. It's deep in our bones. At the most primordial level it's the deep feeling of

dissatisfaction. We're never satisfied: no matter what I get, not enough; no matter what I do, not enough; no matter what I achieve, not enough; no matter what I eat, not enough. As my mother used to say, "The more you get, the more you want." That's profound. That's the very energy of attachment, actually. It's a driving force within us. It's at the deepest level, it's so instinctive. That's the Buddha's point. That's the tragedy of attachment.

So, just naturally, on the basis of this deep feeling of dissatisfaction comes the next level of attachment, which is the obvious one, the hankering after something – because if you feel dissatisfied, something's missing, isn't it? So, if something's missing, you've got to look for something to fill up the gaping hole – pretty obvious. At this level of attachment, attachment goes out the objects of the senses: the food, the bodies, the handbags, the houses, the things, the sounds, the smells. It's obvious. And that's the very world we occupy: it's nothing other than all the objects of the senses.

Some people are more into getting a beautiful body; other people want the delicious food. Well, actually we crave both, don't we? As Lama Yeshe says, "you people are ridiculous! You can never work out whether it's the food you're more attached to or your body!"

It's pretty obvious that the motor that drives us is this craving, this hankering, this yearning for the things out there, assuming totally that when we get them, we'll get happy, get satisfied. That's the philosophy of attachment.

ADDICTS

In our contemporary models of the mind, when this attachment is severe we call it addiction. Well, Buddha says, I'm sorry, guys, you're all addicts – it's a question of the object and the degree of it. The low levels of the dissatisfaction, the everyday yearning, the craving, the neediness – for us it's just normal and we don't even call it a problem until it's overwhelming.

And that's Buddha's point. If we start to know our minds well and look more deeply before something dramatic happens, then

we can really do the work that he would suggest we *can* do, which is to fundamentally change our minds. This is what he's saying.

It seems a bit depressing and a bit shocking to talk about our pleasures like this, but we need to look into these experiences, trying to understand how attachment lies to us, cheats us, fools us.

WE THINK HAPPINESS IS WHAT WE GET WHEN ATTACHMENT GETS WHAT IT WANTS

The trouble is, the only way we know how to get any good feelings at all – and that's a bare-bones way of saying what “happiness” is – is to get an object of attachment: a nice house, nice clothing, nice body, nice husband, nice family, nice job, nice money in the bank, nice food, nice this, nice that. It's never-ending. This is the only method we know for getting happy.

In other words, what we think happiness is is getting what attachment wants. That's the motor that drives us. And it's the way the world is. The mice and the dogs are the same – check their behavior. Because it's

universal, it seems so normal, so it seems a bit mean and cruel of Buddha to point it out, isn't it? Is he trying to make us suffer or what?

BUDDHA SAYS HAPPINESS IS WHAT WE GET WHEN WE GIVE UP ATTACHMENT

Not at all. He's actually trying to show us how to get happy. It's just that he has different methods. What he has found from his own inner work, in the depths of his own mind, is this: happiness is what you get when you give up attachment. This is shocking!

If this is so, we had better be clear about how to identify it. We don't want to chuck the baby with the bath water. Attachment, then, is far more nuanced than it appears on the surface.

DELUSIONS EXAGGERATE

In general, all the delusions exaggerate, distort certain aspects of their object. Anger, when it's strong in the mind—the state of mind that informs the anger is aversion — when aversion is there, the

thing, the person, the situation that you're averse to appears uglier than it really is. We know this.

Equally when attachment is in the mind, the function of attachment is to exaggerate the delicious qualities of something. When attachment is in the mind, the thing or the person or the situation that you're attached to, that you're hankering after, appears more delicious than it really is.

So let's use the chocolate cake as an example. What's extremely hard here now: because we're so on autopilot with this process, it's so ancient within us, we're so brainwashed with these delusions, they all happen spontaneously. We have practiced them literally to perfection from life after life after life. So to deconstruct this is extremely difficult. You need to really put the microscope of your mind on to it.

First there's this feeling of not having. What's missing? Then the thought comes – chocolate cake! Now there's the next level of attachment, the manipulating to get it, the anticipating, the expectation. And now what happens is – and this is the killer – we get the cake and how does it appear to us?

Totally divine! It looks unbelievably delicious. In fact, it looks *way more* delicious than it really is. The attachment tricks us. It makes the cake look so divine we can't believe it, isn't it? That's attachment's job: to grossly exaggerate the deliciousness of the object.

Next, of course, we *totally* believe that when I get the cake, I'll get happy. It'll fill up the gaping hole. It'll make me satisfied. Well, we all know it's not true. Actually, we're still dissatisfied. So then we try again, we keep going, each time hoping satisfaction will come. And not only that. From experience we know that not only does it not satisfy us, it actually causes us to crave even more next time. In other words, the more we get, the more we want.

Attachment, then, is a honey-covered razor blade. We *know* it's true that the more we get the more we want. Just test the last time you kept trying to get happy from eating cake. Temporarily, it tasted pretty good. But if you keep eating it – and you do, because you're not satisfied yet – it becomes revolting. But we forget that. We go to the toilet, we go to sleep, and then the

next day, having forgotten the belly ache, the acid reflux, the indigestion, again we hunger for the cake even more, again trying to get happy. Of course, eating the cake did bring some pleasure, but it's probably just the first mouthful – it's downhill from there!

The word attachment sounds so simple. “Oh I love chocolate cake!” That's just the tip of the iceberg. It's coming from this aching sense of missing, of lacking, of not having. And so it manifests as incredible neediness, yearning, neediness in a neurotic sense. And it's just there all the time. So depending upon the kind of karmic imprints you have, the kind of habits you have with certain kinds of phenomena and things from past lives, that will then attach itself to that type of thing.

ATTACHMENT SELECTS ITS OBJECTS

I saw a movie recently called “De-Lovely,” about Cole Porter. There he was, in a rarified world, in a worldly sense, very rich, very elegant, always surrounded by beauty. He seemed a very lovely man, very kind,

very patient, very sweet, he didn't get angry. But he had this massive attachment, this aching, yearning neediness, and for him it was people: he was always falling in love with people.

A junkie has dumped their attachment onto heroin. Another person is constantly needy for people to love them. "Oh, she's so needy," we'll say, this little emotional needy person who needs other people to approve of them. Frankly, that's the one we've all got deeply. They say the need to be approved of is the deepest attachment of all. They talk about the yogis in the mountains, who've given up sex, drugs, and rock and roll, they're still thinking about what the people down in the village are thinking about them.

So then you make it far more than it is, that's how attachment works. So of course, because we are born with it and it's "instinctive" as we would say – and all instinct is, in Buddha's terms, is the habit of thinking and doing something so often that now it happens spontaneously. That's all instinct is. And then we take it as true, we see it as true.

So, the function of attachment is that it's a liar, it is strongly imprinted in us, it's habitual. It's a liar in the sense that it makes the things seem more delicious than they really are. It's a liar in the sense that it make us believe that if I get it or do it, I'll get happy. The energy of attachment is this ache, this pain – you look at even when it's just the cake, you've got to put it in, it's so painful, you feel so distressed.

But we all know that it's not happiness, because the more we do it the more miserable we get – not to mention fat and everything else. So that's the junkie mind. This is the attached mind.

CONFUSING ATTACHMENT AND LOVE

Right now, for example, if I say, "I love Andy," and you'll know by the way I say it that I mean "in love" not just "like." There is indeed the altruistic state of mind called love – the wish that Andy be happy – but it's polluted by attachment.

There I was, hankering after someone, *a boyfriend*. I'm looking and looking and eventually – boom! – this fellow comes into

my sight. I grab hold, we talk, and it's not long before I've got my entire next eighty years planned. "Finally I've found happiness!" As we discussed, the attachment absurdly exaggerates his deliciousness, doesn't it? Certainly in the beginning, when we're completely blissed out, you can't believe how divine this person is. You can't stop thinking about him *all the time*. You just hear his name, you practically want to faint. We *know* this experience.

It seems cruel of Buddha to say that attachment causes suffering; because everything in your being at this moment, when it's all fresh and new, is telling you that it's the exact opposite: it's the cause of unbelievable happiness.

As we discussed, the way it causes suffering is that it *exaggerates*. And we all know that. And then comes this *massive* expectation, anticipation that he will do *everything* that that my attachment wants.

Of course, there is plenty of love there too: that means I want him to be happy. But if the attachment is fierce, it pollutes the love, and it won't last.

So what happens to my expectations? Now that we're in close proximity, I'll start to see that he's a regular human being. He might snore at night. Maybe his armpits stink, you know? He'll leave the toilet seat up. He mightn't do the dishes. The smallest things. The more I have attachment, the more I'm a control freak, the more I'm anticipating, the more I'm needy, then the more poor Andy will disappoint me; he can't blink without doing the wrong thing. That's because of my attachment. With this, love has got no chance!

And then gradually what comes is aversion, irritation, annoyance, frustration, upset – all these polite words for anger. Because anger is the response when attachment doesn't get what it wants, when it's thwarted. Then, a month later you look at this man in your bed and you wonder, "Who the hell's this revolting bloke?"

Attachment over-exaggerates his deliciousness, but it has the bonus of triggering pleasant feelings, and that's what throws us. And it's almost impossible to distinguish between genuine love and this

attachment and neediness and expectation and possessiveness and all the rest,

Love, then, is under the positive heading. It's altruistic in its nature. Defined simply, the bare-bones level of love is: "May Andy be happy." It's the delight in Andy's happiness. The trouble is, we simply can't tell the difference between love and attachment. Ironically, it's the presence of our good qualities that make it difficult. If I had just raw attachment for Andy, and virtually no love, I'd be a vampire and I'd eat him up for breakfast. Then it's easy to identify attachment.

The trouble is, attachment is a honey-covered razor blade because it *looks* like I'm being kind, it seems like love. We know when we're on the receiving end of that kind of attachment, it's a terrible letdown when you realize a person's just been using you. I'm not being mean about us; we all do this; this is what attachment *is*. It's like this monster, you know. So, interestingly, our love and our compassion temper our attachment but at the same make it hard to see it; we fool ourselves.

So, at the moment, because I'm in love with Andy, of course I *love* Andy. Absolutely, I want him to be happy. I will love him to death, you know – but as long as he does what my attachment wants. When he starts coming home late and being mean and not looking at me any longer and not being so kind, my love will turn off like a tap, I'm sorry; and then only anger will be there and then if I'm not careful I'll kill him. Do you understand?

But we think, “Oh, this is normal; this is relationships.” Well, Buddha says, sure, it's normal but it's mental illness. Our heart should break for ourselves when we realize the pain that we're experiencing because of attachment.

But we can get rid of it, that's the point.

7. WE NEED BODHICITTA!

LAMA THUBTEN YESHE

I think it is absolutely essential for us to have loving kindness towards others. There is no doubt about this. Loving kindness is the essence of bodhicitta, the attitude of the bodhisattva. It is the most comfortable path, the most comfortable meditation. There can be no philosophical, scientific or psychological disagreement with this. With bodhicitta, there's no East-West conflict. This path is the most comfortable, most perfect, one hundred percent uncomplicated one, free of any danger of leading people to extremes. Without bodhicitta, nothing works. And most of all, your meditation doesn't work, and realizations don't come.

Why is bodhicitta necessary for success in meditation? Because of selfish grasping. If you have a good meditation but don't have bodhicitta, you will grasp at any little experience of bliss: "Me, me; I want more, I want more." Then the good experience

disappears completely. Grasping is the greatest distraction to experiencing single-pointed intensive awareness in meditation. And with it, we are always dedicated to our own happiness: “Me, me I’m miserable, I want to be happy. Therefore I’ll meditate.” It doesn’t work that way. For some reason good meditation and its results – peacefulness, satisfaction and bliss – just don’t come.

Also, without bodhicitta it is very difficult to collect merits. You create them and immediately destroy them; by afternoon, the morning’s merits have gone. It’s like cleaning a room and an hour later making it dirty again. You make your mind clean, then right away you mess it up – not a very profitable business. If you want to succeed in the business of collecting merits, you must have bodhicitta. With bodhicitta you become so precious – like gold, like diamonds; you become the most perfect object in the world, beyond compare with any material things.

From the Western, materialistic point of view, we’d think it was great if a rich person said, “I want to make charity. I’m going to

offer \$100 to everybody in the entire world.” Even if that person gave with great sincerity, his or her merit would be nothing compared with just the thought, “I wish to actualize bodhicitta for the sake of sentient beings, and I’ll practice the six perfections as much as I can.” That’s why I always say, actualization of bodhicitta is the most perfect path you can take. The best Dharma practice, the most perfect, most substantial, is without doubt the practice of bodhicitta.

Remember the story of the Kadampa geshe who saw a man circumambulating a stupa? He said, “What are you doing?” and the man answered, “Circumambulating.” So the geshe said, “Wouldn’t it be better if you practiced dharma?” Next time the geshe saw the man he was prostrating, and when he again asked what he was doing, the man replied, “One hundred thousand prostrations.” “Wouldn’t it be better if you practiced Dharma?” asked the geshe.

Anyway, the story goes on, but the point is that just doing religious-looking actions like circumambulation and prostration isn’t necessarily practicing Dharma. What we have to do is transform our attachment and

self-cherishing, and if we haven't changed our mind in this way, none of the other practices work; doing them is just a joke. Even if you try to practice tantric meditations, unless you've changed within, you won't succeed. Dharma means a complete change of attitude – that's what really brings you inner happiness, that is the true Dharma, not the words you say. Bodhicitta is not the culture of ego, not the culture of attachment, not the culture of samsara. It is an unbelievable transformation, the most comfortable path, the most substantial path – definite, not wishy-washy. Sometimes your meditation is not solid; you just space out. Bodhicitta meditation means you really want to change your mind and actions and transform your whole life.

We are all involved in human relationships with each other. Why do we sometimes say, “I love you,” and sometimes, “I hate you?” Where does this up-and-down mind come from? From the self-cherishing thought – a complete lack of bodhicitta. What we are saying is, “I hate you because I'm not getting any satisfaction

from you. You hurt me; you don't give me pleasure. That's the whole thing: I – my ego, my attachment – am not getting satisfaction from you, therefore I hate you. What a joke! All the difficulties in interpersonal relationships come from not having bodhicitta, from not having changed our minds.

So, you see, just meditating is not enough. If that Kadampa geshe saw you sitting in meditation he'd say, "What are you doing? Wouldn't it be better if you practiced Dharma?" Circumambulating isn't Dharma, prostrating isn't dharma, meditating isn't Dharma. My goodness, what is Dharma, then? This is what happened to the man in the story. He couldn't think of anything else to do. Well, the best Dharma practice, the most perfect, most substantial, is without doubt the practice of bodhicitta.

You can prove scientifically that bodhicitta is the best practice to do. Our self-cherishing thought is the root of all human problems. It makes our lives difficult and miserable. The solution to self-cherishing, its antidote, is the mind that is

its complete opposite – bodhicitta. The self-cherishing mind is worried about only me, me – the self-existent I. Bodhicitta substitutes others for self.

It creates space in your mind. Then even if your dearest friend forgets to give you a Christmas present, you don't mind. "Ah, well. This year she didn't give me my chocolate. It doesn't matter." Anyway, your human relationships are not for chocolate, not for sensory pleasures. Something much deeper can come from our being together, working together.

With bodhicitta you become so precious – like gold, like diamonds. You become the most perfect object in the world, beyond compare with any material things.

If you want to be really, really happy, it isn't enough just to space out in meditation. Many people who have spent years alone in meditation have finished up the worse for it. Coming back into society, they have freaked out. They haven't been able to take contact with other people again, because

the peaceful environment they created was an artificial condition, still a relative phenomenon without solidity. With bodhicitta, no matter where you go, you will never freak out. The more you are involved with people the more pleasure you get. People become the resource of your pleasure. You are living for people. Even though some still try to take advantage of you, you understand: “Well, in the past I took advantage of them many times too.” So it doesn’t bother you.

Thus bodhicitta is the most perfect way to practice dharma, especially in our twentieth-century Western society. It is very, very worthwhile. With the foundation of bodhicitta you will definitely grow.

If you take a proper look deep into your heart you will see that one of the main causes of your dissatisfaction is the fact that you are not helping others as best you can. When you realize this you’ll be able to say to yourself, “I must develop myself so that I can help others satisfactorily. By improving myself I can definitely help.” Thus you have more strength and energy to meditate, to keep pure morality and do other good

things. You have energy, “Because I want to help others.” That is why Lama Tsongkhapa said that bodhicitta is the foundation of all enlightened realizations.

Also, bodhicitta energy is alchemical. It transforms all your ordinary actions of body, speech and mind – your entire life into positivity and benefit for others, like iron transmuted into gold. I think this is definitely true. You can see, it’s not difficult. For example look at other people’s faces. Some people, no matter what problems and suffering they are enduring, when they go out they always try to appear happy and show a positive aspect to others. Have you noticed this or not? But other people always go about miserable, and angry. What do you think about that? I honestly think that it indicates a fundamental difference in the way these two kinds of people think. Human beings are actually very simple. Some are a disaster within and it shows on their faces and makes those whom they meet feel sick. Others, even though they are suffering intensely, always put on a brave face because they are considerate of the way others feel.

I believe this is very important. What's the use of putting out a miserable vibration? Just because you feel miserable, why make others unhappy too? It doesn't help. You should try to control your emotions, speak evenly and so forth. Sometimes when people are suffering they close off from others, but you can still feel their miserable vibration. This doesn't help – others with even momentary happiness forget about leading them to enlightenment. To help the people around you, you have to maintain a happy, peaceful vibration. This is very practical, very worthwhile. Sometimes we talk too much about enlightenment and things like that. We have a long way to go to such realizations. Forget about enlightenment, I don't care about buddhahood – just be practical. If you can't help others, at least don't give them any harm, stay neutral.

Anyway, what I'm supposed to be telling you here is that bodhicitta is like atomic energy to transform your mind. This is absolutely, scientifically true, and not something that you have to believe with blind religious faith. Everybody nowadays

is afraid of nuclear war, but if we all had bodhicitta, wouldn't we all be completely secure? Of course we would. With bodhicitta you control all desire to defeat or kill others. And, as Lama Je Tsongkhapa said, when you have bodhicitta all the good things in life are magnetically attracted to you and pour down upon you like rain. At present all we attract is misfortune because all we have is the self-cherishing thought. But with bodhicitta we'll attract good friends, good food, good everything.

As His Holiness the Dalai Lama said recently, if you're going to be selfish, do it on a grand scale; wide selfishness is better than narrow! What did His Holiness mean? He was saying that, in a way, bodhicitta is like a huge selfish attitude because when you dedicate yourself to others with loving kindness you get a lot more pleasure than you would otherwise. With our present, usual selfish attitude we experience very little pleasure, and what we have is easily lost. With "great selfishness" you help others and you help yourself; with small it's always me, me, me and it is easy to lose everything.

Remember, Atisha had over 150 teachers? He respected them all, but when he heard the name of one – Lama Dharmarakshita – he would come out in goose-bumps. He explained this by saying, “I received many teachings from many, many great gurus, but for me, Lama Dharmarakshita, who gave me the bodhicitta ordination and teachings on the method and wisdom of bodhicitta and the six paramitas, was the most helpful for my life.” This is very true. Sometimes techniques of deity meditation are extremely difficult, but bodhicitta meditation is so simple, so incredibly profound and real. That’s why Atisha would shake when he heard the name of his main teacher of bodhicitta.

The main point, then, is that when you contact Buddhadharma you should conquer the mad elephant of your self-cherishing mind. If the Dharma you hear helps you diminish your self-cherishing even a little, it has been worthwhile. But if the teachings you have taken have had no effect on your selfishness, then from the Mahayana point of view, even if you can talk intellectually on the entire lam-rim, they have not been must

use at all.

Do you recall the story of Shantideva and how people used to put him down? They used to call him *Du-she-sum-pa*, which means one who knows how to do only three things: eating, sleeping and excreting. This was a very bad thing to call someone, especially a monk. But that's all that people could see him doing. However, he had bodhicitta, so whatever he did, even ordinary things, was of greatest benefit to others. Lying down, peacefully, he would meditate with great concern for the welfare of all living beings, and many times, out of compassion, he would cry for them. Westerners need that kind of practice.

Fundamentally we are lazy. Well, maybe not lazy, but when we finish work we are tired and don't have much energy left. So, when you come home from work, lie down comfortably and meditate on bodhicitta. This is most worthwhile. Much better than rushing in speedily, throwing down a coffee and dropping onto your meditation cushion to try to meditate. It doesn't work that way; your nervous system needs time and space. You can't be rushing through traffic one

minute and sitting quietly meditating the next. Everything takes time and space. It is much better to have a quiet, blissful cup of coffee.

And don't pressure yourself either; that too is very bad. Don't punish yourself when you are too tired to meditate: "I should be meditating; I am very bad." You destroy yourself like this. Be wise. Treat yourself, your mind, sympathetically, with loving kindness. If you are gentle with yourself you will become gentle with others so don't push. Pushing doesn't work for me, that's why I tell others not to force themselves. We are dealing with the mind, not rocks and concrete; it is something organic.

In a way, bodhicitta is like a huge selfish attitude because when you dedicate yourself to others with loving kindness you get a lot more pleasure than you would otherwise.

The Western environment offers lots of suffering conditions that act as causes for our actualizing bodhicitta, so life there can be very worthwhile. For example, it is much

better to subdue an adversary with bodhicitta than with a knife or gun. When attacked, you can practice loving kindness. We could also do this in the monasteries of Tibet, where there were often horrible monks. Don't think that Tibet was full of only holy people – we had unbelievably wild monks there that nobody in authority could subdue! If you would try to control them wrathfully they would get only more aggressive. But arya bodhisattva monks, people who had completely given themselves up for others, would treat them with loving kindness, and the wild monks would calm down completely. They would feel, “This man loves me; he has great compassion. He has given up everything for others and has nothing to lose.” In that way aggressive people would be subdued, without authority but with bodhicitta.

There are many stories about this kind of thing, but I'm not going to tell them now. Perhaps you think they're funny, but it's true – you can conquer your enemies, both internal and external, with loving kindness and bodhicitta. It is most worthwhile and there's no contradiction bodhicitta is the

totally comfortable path to liberation and enlightenment.

In his text *Guru Puja*, the Panchen Lama says, “Self-cherishing is the cause of all misery and dissatisfaction, and holding all mother sentient beings dearer than oneself is the foundation of all realizations and knowledge. Therefore bless me to change self-cherishing into concern for all others.” This is not some deep philosophical theory but a very simple statement. You know from your own life’s experiences without needing a Tibetan text’s explanations that your self-cherishing thought is the cause of all your confusion and frustration. This evolution of suffering is found not only in Tibetan culture but in yours as well.

And the Panchen Lama goes on to say that we should look at what the Buddha did. He gave up his self-attachment and attained all the sublime realizations. But look at us we are obsessed with me, me, me and have realized nothing but unending misery. This is very clear isn’t it? Therefore you should know clean clear how this works. Get rid of the false concept of self-cherishing and you’ll be free of all misery

and dissatisfaction. Concern yourself for the welfare of all others and wish for them to attain the highest realizations such as bodhicitta and you'll find all happiness and satisfaction.

Bodhicitta is the most perfect way to practice Dharma, especially in our modern Western society. It is very, very worthwhile. With the foundation of bodhicitta you will definitely grow.

But it is not an easy thing. Easy things bore you quickly. It is quite difficult, but there's no way you'll get bored practicing it. People need to be most intelligent to actualize bodhicitta, some, though, have no room for it. "Forget about yourself and have a little concern for others?" they'll ask. "That's not my culture." It is very difficult to change holding yourself dear into holding others dear instead – the most difficult task you can undertake. But it is the most worthwhile and brings the greatest satisfaction.

After practicing some meditations, such

as impermanence and death, for a month you'll say, "I'm tired of that meditation." But you'll never get tired of meditating on bodhicitta. It is so deep; a universal meditation. You'll never get tired of bodhicitta.

You have heard of many deities that you can meditate on, many deities to be initiated into – Chenrezig and the rest. What are they all for? I'll tell you – for gaining bodhicitta. As a matter of fact, all tantric meditations are for the development of strong bodhicitta. That is the purpose of your consciousness manifesting as a being with a thousand arms so that you can lend a hand to a thousand suffering beings. If you don't like to manifest yourself this way you can relate the meditation to your own culture and see yourself as Jesus. Avalokiteshvara and Jesus are the same: completely selfless and completely devoted to serving others.

Remember what happened the first time that Chenrezig took the bodhisattva ordination? He vowed to guide all universal living beings to enlightenment from behind, like a shepherd. "I do not want to realize

enlightenment until first I have led all mother sentient beings there first. That will be my satisfaction.” He worked for years and years, leading thousands of beings to enlightenment, but when he checked to see what was happening he found there were still countless more. So again he worked for years and years and again when he checked there were still so many left, and this cycle was repeated until finally he was fed up and thought to himself, “For eons and eons I have struggled to lead all sentient beings to enlightenment but there are still so many left. I think it is impossible to fulfil my vow.” And because of the intensity of his emotion his head split into eleven pieces. Then Amitabha Buddha came and offered to help, and blessed him to be successful.

So I’m sure some of you people can be like Chenrezig. The main thing is to have strong motivation. Even if it comes strongly only once, it is extremely powerful. It is very rare to have this kind of thought. A mere flash is so worthwhile; to have it for a minute for a day...

8. YOU CANNOT FIND THE I ANYWHERE

LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE

Let's concentrate for a few moments on what I'm saying. [Silence.] We believe, "I am here, in this building." We believe, "I am in America, Soquel, Land of Medicine Buddha, Land of Medicine Buddha, Land of Medicine Buddha! I'm in this gompā, I'm in Vajrasattva retreat, I'm on this cushion, I'm in pain! I'm tired! I'm sleepy! I'm exhausted from a long day! What is he talking about? What is he mumbling about?" Anyway, thinking like that.

We think there's a real one, a real I, a real me, here doing Vajrasattva retreat, or listening to teachings. Here, sitting on this chair, or on this cushion – a real me listening to teachings. Now, I is your label; me, I.

You point to your body and label it I: "I am going out." You don't pick up a book and point to it and say, "I am going out!" No. You point to your body and apply the

label, “I am going out.”

And as your mind does the activity of thinking, you label, “I am thinking.”

As your mind meditates, “I am meditating.” By first thinking what kind of activity your mind is doing – for example, it’s wandering – you say, “I am wandering. I am not meditating.” “Are you meditating now?”

“No.” You check the mind, then you say, “I am wandering,” or, if it is meditating, being transformed into virtue by analytical or fixed meditation, you say, “I am meditating”; you call, or label, it, “I am meditating.”

In exactly the same way as in this example, when you say “I,” instead of pointing here [at your chest], point at this table; label I on this table.

So now, you have labelled I on the table, but where is that I on the table?

You cannot find I on the table. Even though you label I on the table, you cannot find it anywhere, on any corner of the table, inside the table, above the table – you cannot find I anywhere. Not only that, but this corner of the table is not I, this other

corner is not I – no part of the table is I. Even all the parts of the table together are not I.

So now, like this, it's exactly the same, exactly the same, even though our mind constantly labels I on this association of body and mind [Rinpoche pointing to his chest], constantly, twenty-four hours a day, labels I on this association of body and mind, exactly as in the example where your mind labels I on the table – even if you label I on the table, you cannot find I on the table – the table is not I, nor is I on the table, inside the table, or anywhere else; you cannot find I on any part of the table, and even the whole thing is not I – in the same way, I cannot be found anywhere on the association of body and mind. If you look for your I, you cannot find it, from the ends of your hair to the tip your toes – your little toes, your big toes – nowhere can it be found. You cannot find your I anywhere. It is neither inside your nose nor on the tip of your nose! I'm joking!

Anyway, I is nowhere to be found, not even inside your body.

Normally you believe I to be inside, but

even if that's what you normally believe, apprehend – that there's a real I inside the body, there's a real me inside the body – if you look for it, you cannot find it. When you start to analyze, it cannot be found. Where is it exactly? Look for it. Where is it exactly, inside the body? Where is it exactly, inside the chest – the part of the body where we normally believe the I to reside? It's somewhere there, within the body. We don't think that the I is outside – we think that it's inside, inside the chest. But if you try to identify exactly where the I is located, it cannot be found. There is no particular location. You can't find it. If you look for the I, you cannot find it or its particular location.

Even though you normally believe that the I is there, somewhere inside your body, inside your chest, if you really check inside where it is, its exact location, you cannot find it.

SUBTLE DEPENDENT ARISING

When you think that the nature of the I is dependent arising, subtle dependent arising, the real I that appeared to you at

the beginning and that you apprehend, disappears. It immediately becomes empty. It becomes empty, as it is empty in reality. If that real I that appeared to you were true – that you believed at the beginning to really be there – if that were true – according to the way in which it appears, the way in which you believe – if that were true, then even after analysis it should still be there. Even after your analysis of its dependent arising, it should remain. You should be able to find it. But it is not there.

Even when you meditate on the chakras, a real I seems to exist, but there is no real I existing in this body the way it appears to exist, the way you apprehend, or believe, it to exist. That I is not there, neither on the body nor inside the body. The body is not I; nor is the mind. Even the association of body and mind is not I; these aggregates are not I.

Without going through the Madhyamaka or lam-rim analyses of emptiness – for example, if the aggregates are I, then what happens, what illogical consequences arise? If the body is I, what illogical consequences arise? If the mind is I, what illogical

consequences rise? – without going through all those detailed analyses, what I have just mentioned gives you an idea of how the aggregates are not I. From that, you can understand, or get the idea of, the rest.

SUBJECT & OBJECT CANNOT BE ONE

Even this association of body and mind is not I. As the texts state, the aggregates – this association of body and mind – are what is received.

They are what is received, and I is the receiver. I received these aggregates this time; I is the receiver. I is the subject who receives these aggregates, who has received, or taken, them. The I is the receiver. Can you say “taker,” that I is the taker? Like take-away food! I is to be taken away, like take-away food! I is to be taken away. Anyway, I’m joking...well, there is a way in which this can be true.

In Tibetan, we say *nye-wa lang-cha lem-pa-ko*. *Nye-wa lang-cha*: what is to be taken, the aggregates. The aggregates are what is to be taken, and I is the taker, who takes them. I is the subject and the

aggregates are the object, what is to be taken. I is the taker of the aggregates. *Nye-wa langcha*, and *lem-pa-ko*; *lang-cha* is what is taken and *lem-pa-ko* is the taker.

So, there are two. The I created the cause of these aggregates; the continuity of this I created the cause of these aggregates, this samsara. Then this I has received, or taken, these aggregates. So the aggregates are what is to be taken and I is the taker. Subject and object. Therefore, they are not one. Therefore, the aggregates are not I, cannot be I, the subject.

Because aggregates are what is to be taken – the object. I is the taker of that object. So they cannot be one.

Similarly, an ax and the tree it cuts cannot be one. One is the object, the other is the subject, so they cannot be one. The cutter – the ax – and what is to be cut – the wood – cannot be one. The wood that is to be cut is not the cutter, the ax.

POSSESSOR & POSSESSION CANNOT BE ONE

In that way, there's one reason. The other reason is similar. [We say] "My aggregates,

my aggregates, my aggregates.” Even from the common, language point of view, “my aggregates” shows that the aggregates are the possession, and my, or I, is the possessor. “My aggregates, my mind, my body.” Even normal language shows that these two are completely different; two completely different phenomena. They are not one. They are totally different phenomena. “My aggregates, my body, my mind” shows that they are possessions, and from that it follows that my, I, is the possessor.

Again, through that reason, you can see that there’s no way in which the possession, that which is possessed, can be the possessor, I.

There is no way. The two are totally different phenomena. They don’t exist separately, but they exist differently.

THE LABEL & THE BASE CANNOT BE ONE

Perhaps another thing to mention is this. The aggregates, the association of the body and mind, is the base to be labelled, and I is the label to be applied – what the base is to

be labelled with. Again in Tibetan, I is dagchö, the label to be applied, and the aggregates are dag-shir, what is labelled, the base to be labelled. The aggregates are the base to be labelled, and I is the label, what is labelled on the base. Thus again here, one is the base, the other is the label. Two totally different phenomena; two totally different phenomena. They don't exist separately, but they exist differently.

If they did exist separately, it would help a lot if you were a criminal!

It would help a lot. Because then you could say, "It wasn't me that did it; it was the body. I didn't do it"! Or you could say, "This mind did it, not me"! You could have many arguments! In court! You could argue in court, "I didn't do it – the body did it; the mind did it." If what you did was criminal or something for which you'd get punished, you could say, "The body did it; the mind did it. I didn't do it." But if it was a situation where you had something to gain, then you could say, "I did it"!

Say your body did something that normally brings millions of dollars, but nobody saw it. If your I had no relation to

your aggregates, you could say, “I did it”! Since doing the action that brings millions of dollars didn’t depend on the body or the mind doing it, you could take the credit, “I did it. I should get the money”! You could argue like that. If there were something good to gain, something that you like or want to acquire, you could say, “I did it.” But if what you’d done were criminal or subject to punishment, you could say, “It wasn’t me”!

Anyway, I’m saying that if the I existed separately from the aggregates, it could be very helpful. You could do that. Maybe you could still argue, “I didn’t do it because I cannot find the I anywhere. I cannot see the I, so how could I have done it?” I’m joking!

What I’m trying to say is that since the aggregates are the base to be labelled and I is what is labelled on them – the aggregates are the base and I is the label – they are two totally different phenomena. Therefore, they are not one; the aggregates are not I.

THE MIND IS NOT THE I

Similarly, the mind is not I. It’s the same – you can use all those reasons that I

mentioned regarding the aggregates, with the mind, to understand that the mind is not I. Your mind is not you. My mind, your mind – that shows it is not you. Your mind is not you; my mind is not me.

If something that the I possessed had to be I, were the I, then everything you possessed would be you. Your car would be you. Your kaka would be you!

It's exactly the same with the table, as I mentioned before. You can find the I nowhere on these aggregates. Neither are the aggregates the I.

Exactly the same. Even though you label I on the table, you cannot find I on the table. The table is not I. Exactly as you cannot find your I on the table even though your mind labels the table I, exactly like that, even though your mind labels I on the aggregates, you cannot find I anywhere on the aggregates. Neither that, nor are the aggregates I.

When you get a feeling that the aggregates are not I, when you cannot find I on the aggregates, this understanding makes very clear what is the base and what is the label; you are able to differentiate.

Now you are able to differentiate between the base and the label. After this analysis, you are able to differentiate what is the base and what is the label I.

Before, it was unclear to your mind; these two things were unclear. His Holiness the Dalai Lama would say those two are mixed up, as if the table were mixed into the base, as if the table were inside the base.

His Holiness Ling Rinpoche used to say that the definition of the object to be refuted is the appearance of the base and the label as undifferentiable.

For your mind, in your view, the base and the label – for example, the base to be labelled “table” and the label “table” itself – are undifferentiable. His Holiness Ling Rinpoche explained during a commentary on the Seven Point Thought Transformation at Drepung Monastery many years ago that this is the object to be refuted.

You are unable to differentiate between the label and the base. Your mind is very confused. Your mind is in a state of confusion. What appears to your view is that these two – the base, the aggregates,

and the label, I, are undifferentiable. Now, through this analysis, you can see clearly that they – the label, I, and the base, the aggregates – are two totally different phenomena.

WHEN THE REALIZATION OF EMPTINESS OF THE I IS REAL, IT IS SO POWERFUL

Now, even if you have one hundred percent understanding, or recognition, that the base, the aggregates, is not I, that the I exists nowhere, I would not call that having realized emptiness. In other words, you understand through the four-point analysis, the analysis of the four vital points, that if the I is inherently existent, it should exist either as oneness with the aggregates or as completely separate from them; it has to be pervaded by being either oneness with the aggregates or existing separately from the aggregates. But simply understanding that the inherently existent I is neither oneness with the aggregates nor does it exist separately from them – having a clear idea that the aggregates are not one with the I but also don't exist separately from the I –

this awareness alone, the ability to distinguish between label and base, is not the realization of emptiness. Even if you had this awareness – the ability to distinguish label from base – even if the difference between the base and the label had become clear for your mind, still I would not say that you had realized emptiness.

When you realize emptiness – not just that there is no I, not just the feeling that there is no I – you should feel something very intensive. It should be very much more than that. Your understanding should be something very intensive. Not just the feeling that there is no I. The feeling should be something very deep; the feeling “there is no I” should be very intensive, very deep. You should feel as you would if you’d had a vision that you had received a million dollars, that somebody had put a million dollars into your hands, and you had totally, one hundred percent believed that you actually had all that money – and then suddenly realized it was just a hallucination! It’s gone! Like that, suddenly you realize that it’s not there, it has totally

gone.

What you have believed, were one hundred percent convinced of, and so strongly clung to, grasped at, is suddenly, totally non-existent.

There's nothing to grab onto, nothing to hold onto. Suddenly, it's totally non-existent. Nothing of what you have been holding onto, cherishing as if it really exists, is truly there. Nothing of what, so far, you have never had any doubt about, have been grasping at continuously, holding onto like a cat grabbing a mouse – all its claws clutching tightly together – nothing of that I exists. Suddenly, that about which you have never had any doubt since beginningless rebirths – even since this morning or since you were born into this life – suddenly, it doesn't go anywhere. Suddenly, there's nothing there. Maybe it's gone to the beach! Or to the mountains! To a retreat center! Anyway, it doesn't go anywhere.

Just there! Suddenly! You realize there is nothing there. Suddenly, it is not there. You realize that it's totally non-existent. Totally non-existent.

There's nothing to hold onto. It's lost. Totally lost. Just right there – where it was – totally lost. Not that it's gone somewhere, but right there, it has become totally lost. There's nothing to hold onto. You feel something very intensive – not space, but empty, like space. During that time, there's no dual view, there's no “this is I and that is emptiness”; no “here is the subject, perceiver, realizer and there is the object, emptiness.” It's not dual; non-dual. At that time, the view that should appear should be non-dual, not “this I is meditating on emptiness, seeing emptiness. Oh, that is emptiness.”

Instead, there should be a very intensive understanding, seeing very intensively that . . . the I is empty. It's not just thinking that there's no I; it's not just that. It's not like, after searching for the table, the labelled table, the general table – not the inherently existent table but the general table, the labelled table – looking to see if any part of the table is the table – it's not that – or if perhaps the whole collection of parts together is the table – it's not that either – and only after all that, then thinking that

the table does not exist. It's not that kind of experience. Nor is it like analyzing the body to find if the I is inside the body or on the aggregates, or understanding that the aggregates together are also not the I, then, after all that analysis, at the end, coming to the conclusion that there's no I.

Because you cannot find it, thinking that there is no I. It's not just that.

WHEN YOU SEE EMPTINESS, THERE IS EITHER UNBELIEVABLE JOY . . .

The right way of perceiving that the I is empty is an extremely deep, intensive experience, but there are basically two kinds of experience you can have. You can feel incredible, that you have discovered the most precious thing, such as a wish-granting jewel. Or like a person who has been looking for or waiting to meet a dear friend for many, many years – praying, wishing, to meet that person for many years – and then, after all these many years, suddenly meeting that friend. Or like you've been waiting to get a billion dollars for a long time and then suddenly you get the

money. In other words, when you see emptiness, you feel unbelievable joy; incredible joy that makes you cry.

. . . OR UNBELIEVABLE FEAR

The second kind of experience is one of unbelievable fear, incredible fear. Not just any kind of fear. Not just the fear of being attacked by somebody; not that kind of fear. It's a very deep fear; something deep inside your heart, in the very depths of your heart. A very deep fear. The other fear is not fear of losing the I – something is going to happen to this I, but it's not losing the I. The ordinary is fear that this real I is going to receive some harm, but here, something that you've believed in – not only from birth but from beginningless rebirths up until now – something that you've believed in one hundred percent, only now, only now you realize that it's not there. Only now you realize that it's totally nonexistent.

This can cause an incredibly deep fear to arise.

As I often say, even when you recite *The Heart Sutra*, when you say the words, “No ear, no nose, no tongue...no ice cream! No

coffee, no chocolate, no cigarettes, no drinks...!” – if fear comes into your heart when you say “no this, no that,” if fear arises, that’s a good sign. Fear arising means your recitation of *The Heart Sutra*, The Essence of Wisdom, is hitting, or touching, the root of samsara, hurting it. Your recitation of *The Heart Sutra* has touched the root of samsara, ignorance; has hit it.

Your recitation of *The Heart Sutra*, your way of thinking when you recite *The Essence of Wisdom*, is fitting – like an arrow or a bomb. As an arrow hits its target, as a bomb or a torpedo hits its target, the enemy at which you aimed, like that, your recitation of *The Heart Sutra*, those teachings on emptiness, your way of thinking, your meditation, has hit its target, the object of ignorance, the inherently existent I – the I that is apprehended by simultaneously-born ignorance. You have hit the target you’re supposed to hit. The target that you are supposed to hit with the arrow or bomb of your recitation of the words of *The Heart Sutra* and thinking on their meaning is the object to be refuted,

the inherently existent I.

Fear in your heart means that you have hit the target.

The texts explain that it is highly intelligent practitioners who have the experience of incredible, blissful joy, tears running down their cheeks, and feel as if they'd found an unbelievably precious jewel, and less intelligent practitioners who feel fear when they realize emptiness. At that time, you should not try to escape from this fear – trying to do so is your greatest obstacle to realizing emptiness. Instead, you must realize that this is the one time, the one opportunity, to realize emptiness – the only wisdom that can directly cut the delusions, the root of samsara, the gross and subtle defilements, bringing liberation from samsara and full enlightenment. Knowing this, you must go through the fear; you must complete your experience. Go through the fear like crossing a river.

Otherwise, if you block your own progress the one time that you have the opportunity of realizing emptiness, if you run away from that, like running away from teachings, from meditation courses, especially my

meditation courses – of course, those are good to run away from! – if you run from the fear that arises when you realize emptiness, that is no good at all.

BUT DON'T BE AFRAID THE I WILL DISAPPEAR; THERE IS ALWAYS CONTINUITY OF THE LABEL I

However, you never have to worry about the I ceasing, because the I never ceases. The I that is the label never ceases. The I never stops, never ceases. Why is there always continuity of the I, the label? Why is there always continuity of the self? Because there is always continuity of consciousness. Even after enlightenment, the consciousness continues forever.

Even though the body might change – one body stops, another body is taken – the continuity of consciousness is always there, even after enlightenment. Therefore, the continuity of the I never ceases. It always exists because the base, the continuity of consciousness, always exists.

Therefore, thinking, “I’m going to cease, I’m going to become non-existent” is totally wrong.

When that feeling arises, the appearance of losing or having totally lost your I, you shouldn't be worried that that appearance means you're falling into nihilism. Because of that appearance, you should not be worried that you are falling into nihilism – just as you should not be worried that the I is becoming non-existent. There are two things – one is the fear of falling into nihilism; the other is the worry, “I am becoming nonexistent.”

You should not be scared of those things. If you do get scared, you'll block yourself from realizing emptiness; this one opportunity to realize emptiness will have arisen and you'll have blocked it yourself.

A very clear commentary on the Mahamudra by Ketsang Jamyang (I'm not hundred percent sure that's his name), which is regarded as a very effective teaching, explains why this appearance of the self becoming non-existent happens. It happens because it has to happen. Furthermore, it is a sign that there is no inherent existence on the I, the merely labelled I. There is no inherent existence on that I, and the experience of its becoming

non-existent shows, proves, that. When you have this experience, you see the Middle Way, the Madhyamika, view. You see the Middle Way, devoid of the two extremes of nihilism and eternalism.

REALIZING EMPTINESS IS THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS LIBERATION

I would say that realizing that the object of ignorance – the concept of the inherently existent I – is empty, realizing the emptiness that is the negation of the object to be refuted, is the first step towards liberation.

I'm not saying that by that alone you have entered – of the five paths to liberation – the path of merit. I'm not saying that. But it's like you've taken a step towards liberation, because that wisdom is the main thing that directly ceases the defilements.

CONCLUSION: THE I EXISTS BUT NOT HOW WE THINK IT DOES

Just to conclude now – before we all go to sleep! – as I mentioned before, how when you label I on the table, it's not there – in exactly the same way, when the mind labels

I on these aggregates, it's not there either. The aggregates are not the I; the I is not there. I exists, but it's not there. The I that is labelled by your mind exists, but it's not there. Even that is not there. Even that. Besides the real I that you believe to reside in the heart, inside your body, not being there, even the I merely labelled by your mind, which does exist, is not there either. I'm not saying it's not here [in this room], I'm saying it's not there [on your aggregates].

So now, the I that is merely labelled by the mind exists. That is here, that exists, but even that cannot be found on these aggregates, on the base of the aggregates. It doesn't exist on these aggregates. The merely labelled I exists because the base, the aggregates, exists. In the same way, the base, the aggregates, which are merely imputed, exists, but it doesn't exist on the gathering of the five aggregates; it doesn't exist there. The merely labelled aggregates exist, but they don't exist on the collection of the five aggregates. They don't exist there; they cannot be found there. So that's clear. The merely labelled aggregates

cannot be found on the collection of the five. They don't exist there.

In exactly the same way, for each aggregate – for example, the aggregate of form, the general aggregate of form – it's exactly same. The same logic applies. The merely labelled aggregate exists but it doesn't exist on that base. Empty. It doesn't exist there; it's not there, not existent on this base. The aggregate of form does not exist on the collection of the limbs, either in all their parts or on the whole collection together. So there's no question about the inherently existent, real aggregate: it doesn't exist anywhere.

The real one appearing from there – the aggregate, the general aggregate of form – exists nowhere. Similarly, if you go to the parts of the limbs, to the arms, head, legs, stomach, and so forth, all those merely labelled ones exist, but they don't exist on their own bases. Even the merely labelled head cannot be found on the collection of its parts, the brain and everything else. If you look for head, it cannot be found there.

Like that, it's the same for the arms, the legs, the main body – everything down to

the atoms – that which is merely labelled exists, but it doesn't exist on its own base. Even the merely labelled atom exists, but it doesn't exist, cannot be found, on the collection of the particles of the atom. And it's the same for even the particles of the atom – they can't be found on their own base either.

Thus, everything from the I down to the particles of the atoms, or, from the general aggregate of form down to the particles of atoms, which appears as something real, is not there. It's totally empty; every single thing is totally empty. What appears to your view, your hallucinating mind, seems to be something real, from there – but it's not there.

Starting from the real I down to the real particles of the atoms, what appears is not there; it's totally empty – not space, but like space; totally empty, non-existent.

That was form. How about the aggregate of feeling, that which is labelled on the thought, the mental factor that experiences pleasure, indifference and suffering? It's the same with the aggregate of feeling – the merely labelled aggregate of feeling exists,

but cannot be found on its base. It's also the same with the aggregate of cognition, which discriminates phenomena as bad or good, as this and that, as friend and enemy, fat and skinny, long and short, and so forth. The merely labelled aggregate of cognition exists – because its base exists – but it doesn't exist on that base. So that's the same. Then, if you analyze the pleasant feeling, the suffering feeling, the indifference, you cannot find those feelings on their base. Similarly with the aggregate of cognition – you can do the same analysis, but neither can cognition be found on its base, even though merely labelled cognition exists.

It's also the same thing with the aggregate of compounded phenomena.

It's also labelled, merely imputed, because its base exists. Subtracting feeling and cognition from the fifty-one mental factors, the rest are called the aggregate of compounded phenomena, labelled that, but that aggregate cannot be found on that base.

Finally, it's the same with the aggregate of consciousness. Merely labelled

consciousness exists, but it cannot be found on its base, like a carpet on the floor. The merely labelled consciousness doesn't exist like that. The mind, which knows phenomena, which does the function of continuing from one life to the next, perceiving merely the essence of the object, that knowing phenomenon, she-pa, because that mind exists, your mind labels it nam-she, consciousness. But using the same analysis I mentioned before, neither that consciousness nor the split seconds of consciousness can be found on their respective bases.

Therefore, starting from the I down to the split seconds of consciousness, each aggregate – form, feeling, cognition, compounded phenomena and consciousness, down to the split seconds of consciousness – everything that appears to our mind, to our view, as real, as something real existing from there, is totally non-existent. Normally, after making all this analysis, you should meditate on this emptiness; let your mind dwell in it for a while. Looking at everything as empty, let your mind stay in that state of emptiness

for as long as possible. That's extremely good, very effective.

DWELL IN THIS EMPTINESS OF NON-EXISTENCE FROM ITS OWN SIDE

So that's reality; that's how things are. This is reality, so let's place our minds in this state for a while. Concentrate for a little bit on this conclusion that the whole thing is totally empty. Everything – from the I down to, and including, the particles of the atoms and the split seconds of consciousness – is totally empty from its own side.

[Long meditation.]

The final thing is that it's totally non-existent – from its own side. It's totally non-existent, but non-existent from its own side. So the second part of that expression makes the way of thinking or the experience correct – seeing it as not just empty, non-existent, but empty, non-existent, from its own side.

Like this, the nature of everything else in existence – forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangible objects, hell, enlightenment, samsara, nirvana, happiness, suffering,

life's gains and losses, virtue, non-virtue, everything – is totally empty, non-existent. But, non-existent from its own side.

**WHILE EVERYTHING IS EMPTY,
THEY DO EXIST – MERELY
LABELLED BY MIND**

So, while things are empty – everything is totally empty from its own side – they exist. They exist in mere name, by being merely labelled by the mind – which also exists in mere name. Things exist as merely labelled by the mind, which itself also exists in mere name. Everything is unified with emptiness and dependent arising, as Guru Shakyamuni Buddha realized and Lama Tsongkhapa praised highly. Lama Tsongkhapa himself also actualized this emptiness – which is unified with dependent arising, subtle dependent arising – this right view, this wisdom, which is the only one that can cut the one particular root of samsara: the ignorance, the hallucinating mind that – while there's no I on these aggregates, including the inherently existent I – through negative imprints left on the mental continuum, projects on to

these aggregates the appearance of an inherently existent I and then believes it to be true; the ignorance that believes this inherently existent I is true, that it really exists.

This particular root of samsara – the ignorance that apprehends the I, which is merely labelled by the mind, as existing from its own side, as not merely labelled by the mind – can be cut only by this specific wisdom, only by this right view, this wisdom, this right view. Only by generating that can you be totally liberated from samsara, from the entire ocean of sufferings of samsara, which are divided into three – suffering of pain, suffering of change and pervasive, compounded suffering. Within samsara, there are the specific sufferings of each realm and the general sufferings of samsara, such as the six, the four and the three.

It is only with this wisdom, this particular right view, the Prasangika view, that you can be totally liberated from the oceans of samsaric suffering – all the specific sufferings of each samsaric realm, and the three, four and six general sufferings of

samsara. By ceasing the cause – delusion and karma – you can achieve the sorrowless state of total liberation from samsara, and only with this wisdom, the Prasangika view, can you also eradicate the subtle defilements, achieve full enlightenment and be able to do perfect work for all sentient beings, leading them to enlightenment as well.

I'd better stop here, otherwise we won't finish until tomorrow morning!

To escape from this hallucination, to be liberated from this hallucinating mind, we take refuge and keep precepts. Refuge is the very foundation of the Buddhadharma, the gate through which we enter the Dharma path.

We take refuge and vows to make certain that we practice, to make sure that we devote ourselves to actually practicing Dharma. That is the fundamental reason for taking refuge and vows. In order to liberate others from the hallucinating mind, ignorance, first we ourselves have to be liberated from the hallucination, from the hallucinating mind, from all these sufferings that we have been caught in since

time without beginning, for beginningless lifetimes. Thus, refuge and precepts are the basic means, the very foundation of the path, for liberating both ourselves and others from the hallucination, from the hallucinating mind, from all suffering, and gaining the ultimate happiness of the highest, full enlightenment.

COLOPHON

Teachings of Lama Zopa Rinpoche given during a Vajrasattva retreat at Land of Medicine Buddha, California, in 1999.

9. DEDICATION PRAYERS

As a result of the three-times' merits of
myself and others,

May bodhichitta – from which the
happiness of all sentient beings
comes –

Be generated in the minds of self and
other sentient beings without delay,
even for one second.

And that which has been generated, may
it increase.

As a result of the three-times' merits of
myself and others,

May emptiness be generated in the minds
of self and others sentient beings,
without delay, even for one second.

And that which has been generated, may
it increase.

Whatever dedication the Victorious Ones
Gone to Bliss

Of the three times have admired as best,

I shall also perfectly dedicate in the same
way all these roots of virtue
So that I may perform good works.

Because of the past, present, and future
merit
Created by me and by the Buddhas,
Bodhisattvas and sentient beings,
May I, my family, students, and all
sentient beings
Be able to actualize completely in this
very lifetime
Lama Tsong Khapa's path of unified sutra
and tantra,
Which is pure like refined gold.
May this pure teaching of Lama Tsong
Khapa
Spread in all directions and flourish
forever.

DEDICATE IN EMPTINESS

Due to all the past, present and future
merits
Collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas
and all other sentient beings – which
are totally non-existent from their own
side –

May the I – which is also totally
nonexistent from its own side –
Achieve Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's
enlightenment – which is also totally
non-existent from its own side –
And lead all sentient beings – who are
also totally non-existent from their own
side –
To that enlightenment – which is also
totally non-existent from its own side –
By myself alone – which is also totally
non-existent from its own side.

COLOPHON

Prayers translated or written by Lama Zopa Rinpoche.