

## The Experience of Loving Kindness and Compassion

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Today and tomorrow we'll be exploring the subject of loving-kindness and compassion. In Sanskrit, the term for loving-kindness and compassion is *bodhicitta*. In Tibetan, it's *chang chup chi sem*. *Chang chup* means complete development, complete awareness, the completely awakened state. *Chi* means of. *Sem* means mind. *Chang chup chi sem*, literally translated, means a mind that is for completing the awakened state of all the potential there is.

Bodhicitta (Chang Chup Chi Sem)

Traditionally, *chang chup chi sem* is broken down into four aspects:

- loving-kindness
- compassion
- joy
- impartiality

These are the four aspects of the particular way of thinking and relating to ourselves and others that we refer to as bodhicitta, or *chang chup chi sem*.

Loving-kindness always relates to the happiness of others. Compassion always relates to the suffering of others, the wish for others to be free from suffering. Joy means directly experiencing joy for those who are in a positive condition, who are free from suffering and who have a chance to experience happiness. At the same time, just knowing that every situation is a process is also regarded as joy. Impartiality means that this loving-kindness, this compassion, this joy, is supposed to be free from, or beyond, subject and object relation. It goes beyond friends and relatives. It goes beyond "my side and your side," beyond all the differences. When we've gone beyond the differences, that's impartiality.

### **Obstacles to Bodhicitta**

If we're confused when we look into this subject, it will appear complicated. The less confusion we have, the less complicated it will appear. Several factors contribute to how much or how little confusion we experience. The first factor is our degree of ignorance. Ignorance simply means "not knowing." Whether we think we know something or not, if we don't clearly understand it, then, practically, we don't know it. This basic ignorance causes confusion.

Ignorance is overcome through contemplation, becoming familiar with the subject we need to know about. But then, a sense of greed and a sense of hesitation arise. A

person who tries to be helpful can go too far, and become greedy about it. A person who tries to be helpful can also go too far and become hesitant about whatever they were going to do. This greed and this hesitancy go side by side. It's like the front and back of the hand. Depending on how much greed there is, that much hesitation will also be there. And depending on how much hesitation there is, that much greed will also be there. So, greed and hesitation encourage each other.

Greed and hesitation, then, are the two main obstacles for any person who tries to practice loving-kindness and compassion, joy and impartiality, or *chang chup chi sem*. Many translators use fear instead of hesitation, and hope instead of greed, which also makes sense. Hope and greed can represent the same thing, of course, but I think we should try to overcome our greed first. Then we can try to overcome our hope.

### ***Relative and Ultimate Bodhicitta***

When a person is able to overcome greed and hesitation, we call that entering into the ultimate bodhicitta, ultimate *chang chup chi sem*. When this person is working to overcome his or her greed and hesitation, we call that relative bodhicitta, or relative *chang chup chi sem*. Relative bodhicitta, or relative *chang chup chi sem*, starts from a simple practice based on the principle of loving-kindness, compassion, joy and impartiality.

Those of us who are involved with the practice of bodhicitta are practicing on a relative bodhicitta level. When we practice on a relative bodhicitta level, the principle is important, of course, but the method to fulfill the principle is equally, if not more, important.

There are millions, even trillions, of methods to fulfill the principle. Each moment of life offers another method that can fulfill the principle. But rather than leaving us with millions of methods, Buddha skillfully simplified the entire vastness and depth into six basic categories—the six paramitas.

#### The Six Paramitas

The six paramitas are:

- generosity paramita
- morality paramita
- tolerance or patience paramita
- diligence paramita
- contemplation paramita, and
- wisdom paramita.

In some translations, I've seen wisdom paramita referred to as knowledge paramita, but in this case, it would be incorrect. When we talk about the "ten" paramitas, then

we can say knowledge paramita, but when we talk about only six paramitas, the last one is wisdom. In the ten paramitas, the last one is elaborated. The sixth one becomes knowledge paramita, the seventh one method paramita, the eighth one strength paramita or power paramita, the ninth one inspiration paramita or wish paramita, and the tenth, wisdom paramita. However, since we're learning about the six paramitas, the last one is wisdom paramita.

Now, even though Buddha teaches about the six paramitas, they're not exactly discrete categories. In fact, you cannot really attain any one of the paramitas unless you attain the other five. There's a sentence from sutra that states this point clearly: "One paramita is all paramitas." This means that complete generosity isn't possible without all six paramitas. Generosity is generosity, but when it becomes a paramita, it must involve morality, diligence, tolerance, wisdom and contemplation as well. A person who develops and fulfills generosity paramita, but not the morality, diligence and wisdom aspects, has not reached generosity paramita, because one paramita is *all* paramitas.

The example for this is a dog getting lost in a mist. There's a vast mountain and field covered with mist. A dog is left there alone and doesn't know where to go. He can't see anything, and because there's so much water in the air, he can't smell anything either. Even though the dog is free to go wherever he likes, he has a hard time finding the right direction. He might have to look one-hundred times harder. For that reason, Buddha skillfully stated the six aspects of paramita.

Before we go on, I'd like to say a little bit about the relativity of the teachings. Buddha clearly said that every method, every teaching, down to the specific details, is just a method, a guideline. The teachings are all relative truth. What lies behind this relative truth is absolute truth. Absolute truth is beyond number, beyond any specific quality—like generosity and morality—beyond any categories we can devise. Teachings are given to provide ways to reach that ultimate state, but are, in themselves, considered relative. But they're relative truth, not relative falsity.

The difference between a particular quality, like generosity, and the paramita, like generosity paramita, is the depth of it. Generosity is always generosity, but the destination of generosity is generosity paramita. In Tibetan, paramita is *pha rol tu phyin pa*. *Pha rol tu phyin pa* means reaching the other side. When we cross a river, all of our effort goes to reaching the other side of the river. All of the methods Buddha gave for practicing generosity are for the ultimate destination of reaching the other side of generosity. That's the paramita. The action of giving, and everything around the action, externally and internally (i.e., the intention and the action), is the generosity itself.

Generosity paramita doesn't mean we must give and give until we have nothing. It also doesn't mean we must give until someone else is fully satisfied. At first, we're hesitant to give. At the same time, we become greedy to give. We want to give. It's a process. When we go beyond this, it becomes one. There is no difference between our having it or someone else's having it. There's no giver, there's no one to give to, there's nothing to give. It becomes one. We call this the three circles: the circle of the giver (the subject), the circle of whom something is to be given (the object), and the circle of what is there to be given. The paramita is reaching beyond all three.

This same principle applies to all six paramitas. They only become paramitas when they reach beyond the three circles. In Madhyamaka terms, we say *khōr sum*, which means three circles. *Khōr sum nam par du tok pa* means reaching beyond the

thought and any notion of those three wheels. *So, khor sum nam par du tok pa* is the *pha rol tu phyin pa*, the paramita.

Now let's go through the specifics.

### ***Generosity, the First Paramita***

All six paramitas involve loving-kindness, compassion, joy and impartiality. I'll use generosity as an example, but the same principle applies to the other five paramitas as well.

First let's look at the loving-kindness of generosity. Generosity simply means giving. There are many aspects of giving, but Buddha simplified it into three:

- Giving of understanding
- Giving of material things
- Giving of protection

Let's talk about material giving, first, as it's the most popular notion of generosity. (There's always lots of fund-raising going on.) As it relates to loving-kindness, our purpose for giving is to fulfill another person's longing, their feeling of not having something they want. In order to see another person happy, we give them something they long for. Loving-kindness means we give to develop happiness in another person.

Compassion is the giving of something that will overcome suffering in others. When someone doesn't have something they need, like food, shelter or clothing, we give what we can to help them overcome their suffering, to fulfill their need.

The joy of generosity is a little tricky because we must contemplate to get the exact meaning. One part of joy is quite simple—when others have it, we feel happy. The other side is that when a person doesn't have it, he or she needs it, and therefore sees the value of it. In my life, I've never had to worry about clothes, food or a place to stay, in spite of being a refugee. As a boy, I often took two or three bites out of an apple and threw it away. Or I would chew some candy and throw the rest away. But in parts of India, China and Tibet, many children have never even seen a piece of candy. If someone were to give them a piece of chocolate, it would mean as much to them as a diamond would mean to most Americans. I once saw a Tibetan child share a small piece of brown sugar with his friends. He licked it and then let all his friends put it in their mouth for just a minute. Then he took it back and put it in his pocket. It was quite moving. For them, sugar is very special. Its presence directly relates to their psychological and emotional improvement. Losing it will definitely interrupt their improvement. So, this is process that affects a person, so they see the value.

When we see someone who lacks something, we sometimes think, "Poor thing; they don't have what they need. They must have terrible karma." Sometimes we become prejudiced against them. Instead, we should simply appreciate the situation—that we're seeing it, that those people are in it. Instead of feeling affected by it, we look into it with wisdom, and we do our best to make it more meaningful for them, to introduce a value for them, since they don't have it already.

I've observed occasions when people have been given something by a person who is lacking in wisdom and compassion. This can bring joy in the short run, but can be very harmful later on. We have to be effective in our acts of generosity so that what we do will be of benefit and can bring true joy.

For the Western mind, it would be simpler to say, "They don't have it. I have it. How fortunate I am to be able to provide something for them. I'm happy about it," instead of saying "They don't have it, how terrible it is," and getting carried away by emotion.

Impartiality is very simple to understand. Whatever we have to give, we give impartially—as a subject, as an object, and as an activity. We give in this way until it becomes paramita. When it reaches to the paramita stage, it goes beyond even that. But it has to develop gradually.

So this is one example of how the main principles of bodhicitta relate to generosity paramita. We can extend this same principle to the others.

Now let's look at these three aspects of generosity in more detail. First, the generosity of understanding.

### **Generosity of Understanding**

Two sentences express the meaning of understanding quite clearly: *yang ta ni la yang tab ta, yang tab toma nam par tok*. This means, "When you see the profound truth of the profoundness as it is, when you understand it as it is, then you have a chance to realize it. When you understand the profoundness, the truth, as it is, that is true liberation." So, right understanding is important for anyone's development.

In order to accomplish even a small degree of development—that is, to be a person of good will, not a crook or a fraud—we need right understanding. When we have right understanding, we're absolutely fine. With right understanding, we have a chance to develop. And once we've developed profound understanding, we can share it with others.

Several examples of profound understanding are given in Madhyamaka. One is *nye pa ne men*. *Nye pa ne men* means positive cause and positive circumstances bring positive results; negative cause and negative circumstances bring negative results. Positive circumstances and cause won't bring negative results; negative cause and circumstances won't bring positive results. It's quite simple. This is an example of right understanding.

Another example of right understanding is *den pa nyi*, which means two aspects of truth—relative truth and absolute truth. Relative truth is how we see, relate and become affected by positive and negative circumstances. Absolute truth is beyond that. Absolute truth is [lost a sentence when tape turned over] The relative of what? The relative of the absolute. And when we talk about the absolute, the absolute of what? The absolute of the relative. It is inseparable. It is unity. It is the oneness of the relative truth and absolute truth.

Right understanding is based on everything we developed with our Hinayana principle. For a Mahayana practitioner, the Hinayana principle is more important than the Mahayana method. Without a foundation in Hinayana practice, we cannot really have right understanding, which is the beginning of Mahayana.

How, for example, can we expect to be accurate and clear if we're affected when someone says something nice or something nasty to us? It begins with balance, with building a stable foundation, a stable consciousness. We do this through the Hinayana method. We must develop the capacity to be down to earth, to hear what others are saying, to understand what they mean, to think according to what they mean, and to react according to that.

Buddha introduced this foundation for right understanding through the Hinayana methods—shamatta, vipasyana, vinaya, etc. Their purpose is to discipline our confused physical, oral and mental condition so that when we ride into the jungle, for example, we'll be able to tell the difference between an elephant and a cockroach. We develop a simplicity that enables us to see things as they are. If we drop a bean into a glass of water, we know we have one small bean. We see it as a bean from every direction. We don't wonder if it's an elephant or a house or a mountain, because we know it's a bean. This accuracy, this clarity, is developed through the Hinayana methods.

Then, we can share with others any understanding we accumulate. We are generous with it. This is the generosity of understanding. How do we go about it? We say *tos-sam-gom*. This is the beginning. First we hear, then we contemplate and finally we meditate. Using these methods, we develop right understanding. And if we have something that's worthy to be shared with others, we share it.

In learning anything, contemplation is certainly important—but practice is even more important than contemplation. Practice involves the total circumstances of our lives. There are two kinds of practice, actually. One is our intensive daily practice, like prayer, meditation or visualization. The other is our daily engagement. We have a saying to remind the monks: "When our stomach is full, when sun is dry and the weather is kind, we're better than ordinary. When negative circumstances come, we become worse than ordinary."

That is why the practice we do in our meditations and prayers, as well as when we're just walking down the street or going to the market, is important. We can be disciplined in our daily practice, but when we shop for material for our clothes, we try to get an extra six inches without paying for it. That's no good. Our principle has to be applied in all aspects of our life circumstances, and this will take time and effort.

The practices and methods most of us use to improve our understanding come from Tibetan Buddhism. Actually, it's not Tibetan Buddhism, it's Vajrayana Buddhism, which Buddha taught in India. It wasn't invented by Tibetans. However, I think Tibetans are very fortunate for the privilege of having this profound teaching thought of as Tibetan Buddhism. Other schools of Buddhism give the same emphasis, but we're talking about Vajrayana right now.

To insure proper understanding, we have lineage. Without the principle of lineage, this process is shaky and difficult at best. It would be easy for someone to purchase a complete text of the teachings of Buddha and make their own commentaries and interpretations and share them with others. This might bring some benefit, certainly, but there will be harm as well, because if that person gets it wrong, everybody who reads it or listens to him will also get it wrong. And wrong understanding is difficult to overcome. That's why we have lineage, from the time of Buddha until now, Buddha taught and his disciples listened, contemplated and practiced. When the disciples were capable of sharing something, Buddha encouraged them to share. As the disciples developed, they became teachers, and they shared the teachings with the

next disciples, accordingly. It is an unbroken continuation of right understanding, right practice and right development.

Some teachers had more students, and some less. Some students managed to develop and then shared their knowledge with others, and some didn't. Some students developed a great deal of understanding and shared very little. This always depends on the individual. We're not all cast from one mold. Some of us are more talkative, some less; some of us come more from the heart, others from the head, and still others from the body. It's an individual thing. But lineage has continued from the best of the disciples of Buddha, and the best of those disciples' disciples. So, lineage means the continuation of teachers. When a disciple becomes a teacher, lineage begins. That's how it continued from the time of Buddha until now.

As far as I can tell, the lineage has continued without corruption, from Buddha until now. In my own case, my main teacher—I think you call it “root guru”—is His Holiness Karmapa. I had several other teachers, like Sangye Nyenpa, Kalu Rinpoche and Thrangu Rinpoche. Next to His Holiness Karmapa, I received most of my teachings from Kalu Rinpoche and Thrangu Rinpoche. It seems to me that their practice was maybe one-hundred times more intense than my own, maybe one-thousand times more intense. At the same time, I received so much understanding from them. Because of the continuation of the blessings, it's almost impossible to corrupt or to introduce any delusion into the lineage.

By sharing these simple words, I'm hopefully reminding you, because all of you have some potential for this understanding. With the blessings of the lineage, we can be little bit talkative and spend some time listening to and staring at each other. We can get a few things sorted out, so they become a little more clear. We can look into the jungle and see the difference between cockroaches and elephants. Sometimes we might confuse tigers and leopards, but that's not so bad. But to mistake elephants and cockroaches is definitely a problem. Anyway, that explains the generosity of understanding.

### **Generosity of Material**

The second aspect of generosity, the generosity of material, is quite simple. I've seen much generosity being extended toward Third World countries by more developed countries in the form of hunger projects, programs to combat disease, or to improve agriculture. This is giving something we have for the benefit of others. Let's say we have five things. Since we don't really need the fifth one, we give it away. It starts from there. After a while, we're able to give away the fourth one, which means something to us, but isn't too important. Eventually we're able to give away even the third thing, which is quite important to us. In this way, our greed, our stinginess, is gradually liberated. Our value becomes a valid thing for everyone, instead of only concerning ourselves. That's how material generosity starts.

An interesting example is given for this in *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* of Shantideva. It can apply to everything, but in this case it's offered in the context of generosity. He says, “Generosity doesn't mean we must make everyone on earth rich. If we wish to protect our feet, we cover our feet with leather the size of our feet. This is the same as covering the whole earth with leather.” If we reach beyond the three circles of giving, the giver and to whom we give, that's the paramita. It becomes deeper and more profound, until we reach that final stage.

## Generosity of Protection

The third aspect of generosity is the generosity of protection. The example given here is of a bodhisattva, like Chenrezig or Tara. That's how far the generosity of protection can develop. Generosity of protection starts at protection from a simple threat, like a potentially fatal disease, and continues to the level of protection from the delusion of negativity. All of us have the potential to be overwhelmed by neurosis—desire, anger, ignorance, jealousy or pride. To help others overcome that threat is the highest expression of the generosity of protection. It's said in *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*, "If everything on earth is against you, the worst that can happen to you is you will die. But if your neuroses are developed, that can kill you and torture you for millions of lifetimes."

When people express fear of a nuclear holocaust, I tell them that although a nuclear holocaust would be terrible, and we should do our best to prevent it, there's no reason to be afraid. We will die once anyway, and if a holocaust happens, we'll die only that once. Instead of giving ourselves over to fear, panic and feelings of helplessness, it's better to do something meaningful. We should do our best to overcome our individual neuroses, like desire, anger, ignorance, jealousy and pride. Honestly speaking, those frighten me more than a nuclear holocaust. A nuclear holocaust can kill our body, but, as Shantideva said, neurosis can torture us and destroy us for millions of lifetimes. If we develop concern and caring for others, and wisely and skillfully share our understanding with them, that's how the generosity of protection will manifest.

These are the three aspects of generosity, and this is how loving-kindness and compassion can be practiced as a paramita.

So, I think I'll stop here for today. Do you have questions?

Rinpoche, could you say something about the sadhana practice of Maitreya Buddha or Maitreya Bodhisattva?

There are several practices on Maitreya Bodhisattva, or Maitreya Buddha. The simplest one was written by one of the previous Karmapas and involves visualizing Buddha Maitreya and receiving his blessings of loving-kindness and compassion in order to cultivate loving-kindness and compassion in ourselves. It also involves recitation of his mantra. This would be the most appropriate and simplest one to practice. I'm not certain the text has been translated, but even if it hasn't, it isn't too difficult to translate, since it's short and simple.

Would you talk about the need for lineage for our development, and how we know that a particular lineage is best for us?

It always depends on the individual. At the beginning, there's a period of searching. At a certain point, you decide, and then you continue with your decision. These two stages are obvious, particularly for people who aren't Buddhist by birth, who weren't born in a climate where Buddhism was practiced. We all have buddha nature internally, of course, according to the principle, so we're all Buddhist. It doesn't relate to the historical Buddha, only to the ultimate principle of Buddhism.

While you're searching, you must remain open; otherwise you cannot make the right choice. If you go into something with an expectation, or with the demand that things happen as you want them to, that's not openness. That's being closed. When you're

open, you must be ready for anything. But there should be a simple principle that develops throughout the searching process, something more than seeing yourself as a conscious vegetable who talks, thinks, functions and then dies. There isn't much principle in that.

So, first we search for the principle. When we've determined this, we search for the method to fulfill the principle. That's going to take some time. But when we find the right path, one that we feel from our heart, we feel a faith and a trust in it and we become involved in it. When we're involved in it, we can apply whatever we learned in the past. We can also apply whatever we're going to learn in the future.

Let's take a great teacher like Marpa, for example. Marpa is the great, great grandfather of our lineage. He had one-hundred-and-eight teachers. In those days, we didn't have such nonsense about not studying with someone because they represent a different lineage. That's not Buddhist—it's nonsense. The only reason we practice one particular lineage is for our own sake, so that we don't get confused. Since we have one body and one mind, we should have one path that we can follow. But we should attempt to learn from whatever is available to us, without greed, and with openness, appreciation and respect.

Our late His Holiness Karmapa learned from many teachers. Each of the great masters who is currently living learned from many teachers. The Dalai Lama learned from Gelug teachers, Kagyu teachers, Nyingma teachers and Sakya teachers. We can learn from many sources, but we apply what we learn on the path we've chosen, as part of our bodhicitta practice. That's the correct way, and that's how it was practiced throughout history.

Viewed in this way, there's no reason to get confused. When we decide on one particular lineage, we remain with that lineage, working with the teacher to whom we feel the closest, the most open. That teacher's wisdom and compassion, and our devotion, dedication and trust, all work together. We keep that connection and learn from this teacher. We go to other teachers when we feel we can learn from them, and we get advice from our own teacher about how to apply this new teaching in our life and current practice.

Or, our teacher might say, "Here's a wonderful teacher who teaches about emptiness. Your understanding of emptiness is a little poor, so go and learn from that teacher." When we come back, our teacher will ask what we learned from that other teacher and show us how to apply this teaching to the practice they've given us. So, I don't think you need to worry.

Is it really possible for us to remain open in such a violent world?

We have to. The question is, how? It's very interesting—when people use the word "open," they sometimes think it means completely passive or limp; like if someone tries to hit you, you let them do it. They might hit you ten times, and you might wake up in the hospital, but that doesn't help anyone. If somebody tries to kill us, rather than just letting them do it, we should try to knock them out. It's better for them to end up in the hospital than for us to end up in a grave. If somebody tries to kill us and we let them do it without a struggle, that's not being compassionate. If we really have compassion, we should stop them however we can. Hitting them on the head, knocking them out and letting them wake up in the hospital will be much better for them than if they kill us, and consequently become a killer.

When you suspect you see a possible harm and you think you can help, should you try even if you're not certain? How do you know when to take a risk, and what limits to set for yourself? And is it greedy to care too much?

This is a combination of several questions. With regard to taking risks, your principle is very important. Why do you want to take this risk? If you take a risk because you really mean it, you feel it from your heart, it's okay. But if your principle isn't so clear at that moment, then you should think very carefully before you do it. As a result of contemplation, your principle becomes clear. Depending on how deep, sincere and clear your principle is, right action will manifest. The other question is, is it greedy to care too much? The term "too much" already tells us it isn't right.

Rinpoche, we get all kinds of pleas in the mail for financial and other kinds of assistance for many causes—like animal protection, protecting the environment, to do research on modern diseases, and also pleas from relatives and friends for personal assistance. Some people feel the need to respond to all of these pleas, even though these causes may not really be helping the problem in the long run. It seems like giving in this way, without prajna or skillful means, is a kind of "idiot compassion." How can we deal with these things properly?

There are many sides to it. This term "idiot compassion" is very strong. You need a clear explanation when you use it. Strong words are useful when they're clearly defined, but if they aren't, they become a little misleading. This term can be used, but you have to contemplate on it more. You have to explore from the hair to the nails of the subject.

At this point, we're talking about relative bodhicitta. It has nothing to do with absolute bodhicitta, directly. Of course, relative bodhicitta and absolute bodhicitta are ultimately one, but relatively, relative bodhicitta and absolute bodhicitta are different—one is relative and one is absolute. When you practice relative bodhicitta, it has to start from that kind of statement. But it has to develop beyond that. For example, if relatives and friends really need it, that's generosity. But, gifts and generosity are different. If I give a book to a billionaire, I cannot call this generosity. If I give a billion dollars to a millionaire, maybe that can be considered generosity. Generosity means giving with a principle—the thought, the action, the way it happens.

In the 1980s, the differences between words like generosity and gift are valueless. The same is true of words like devotion, respect and care. They're all considered pretty much the same. Even words like offering and generosity are considered the same. We've lost the depth, the taste, of the words we use. We give a gift to a friend and we say this is generosity. But it doesn't work that way. I think this difference has to be explored.

When you talk about giving that involves loving-kindness, compassion, joy and impartiality, it's my understanding that we begin with ourselves through the Hinayana method. Is this correct?

I believe the heart of this question is "At what point do we start?" The Hinayana path can tell us what a person needs, what you can give and how to go about it. This is the Hinayana foundation. The Mahayana teachings will help us determine what is most beneficial for that person. Hinayana is the foundation for Mahayana practice. The Hinayana foundation is more important than the practice itself, but after you have the foundation, the practice becomes the most important.

Rinpoche, I'm not sure I understand the distinction you made between greed and hesitation.

Actually, hesitation and greed are two sides of one thing. Whenever we're involved with something, we have some expectation and desire, whether we admit it or not. Otherwise, why are we doing it? Hesitation and greed are specifics. I'll give an example of generosity of practice. Day after day we give one dollar to somebody who needs it. We give and give and give until we've given 10,000 dollars. When we force ourselves to give, without tolerance, without clarity and openness, or authentic awareness about it—that's greed. Hesitation is more like thinking, "This person might be doing more, that person might be doing more, so I should be doing more," and that sort of thing.

Most practitioners seem to struggle with this. With preliminary practice, for example, like 100,000 prostrations—it doesn't just mean you have to finish 100,000 prostrations. Otherwise, you could just pay somebody to do it for you. You have to do it for yourself. And why 100,000? Why prostrations? There's a reason. Prostrations aren't kindergarten stuff; they're a complete practice. You can attain realization just doing prostrations. It's a very simple, very profound, practice. But just as Buddha taught a simplified number of paramitas, he had a reason for choosing 100,000 prostrations. Since our mind has a tendency to become confused and discouraged if things are too little or too much, he selected a number somewhere in the middle.

Prostrations are a purification practice, a complete body, speech, mind education and purification. If we do it completely the first time, the second time will definitely be better than the first. And the third time will definitely be better than the second. The fourth time will be better than the third. So, 100,000 prostrations will be much better than 99,999

[Continuation of the teaching]

### ***Morality, the Second Paramita***

We continue with the second of the six paramitas, morality. In Tibetan, this is *tsultrim*. *Tsul* means proper, appropriate. *Trim* means law, how things work. When we plant rice seeds, those seeds will grow rice. When we plant potato seeds, they'll grow potatoes. If we plant rice seeds expecting potatoes to grow from them, we'll be disappointed. That's the law. We decide what we want, we plant the appropriate seed, and the result will grow from the seed. This is often translated as morality. I'm not certain of the connotation of the word morality, whether or not it means the same as the Tibetan word, but I use it because it's the most commonly-used equivalent, and we know what it's supposed to mean.

Morality paramita is separated into three aspects:

1. Avoiding negative actions and intentions.
2. Doing those actions and having those intentions that are beneficial and helpful.
3. Manifesting our actions and intentions so that they assist others to avoid doing something that's not good for them. This means we try to be helpful and provide the

right circumstances for others to do something that's right, something that's beneficial.

Let's go into each of these in more detail.

### **Avoiding Negative Actions and Intentions**

Avoiding negative actions and intentions can mean many things, but the foundation, or the first step, is to avoid anything that will cause suffering and disharmony to others. We avoid any action or intention that might result in pain to others, or will disturb their peace or happiness. This includes avoiding any actions or intentions that will develop negativities in ourselves, or any causes and conditions for developing negativity.

When I say morality, most people think I mean "You shouldn't do this—it's bad for you. You shouldn't do that—it's terrible for you." This is certainly one aspect of morality. Monks, for example, take ordination vows to not kill and steal. All the basic vows are put into this category. Then it develops further, going one more step. Morality is defined as something that isn't necessarily directly harmful to ourselves or others right now, but has the potential to cause disharmony in the future. Examples of this are anger, desire, ignorance, self-importance, etc. When we claim, for example, that we know better than everyone else, and our truth is the only truth, this attitude can become an obstacle to developing our potential. We can get blocked here. It's like being locked behind a wall. Whether the wall is made of gold or clay, either way we don't have much of a chance to get out if we're locked behind it. So, even if a particular attitude doesn't bring a negative result immediately, it will in the long run.

Another word for negative attitudes or poisons such as desire, anger, and ignorance is *klesas*, or neurosis. The abhidharma term for it is *tab je*. *Tab* means very small. *Je* means grow. Brush fires are good examples. They start very small. At this stage we can put them out easily. But once they spread, they can burn thousands of acres in a short time. That's how desire, ignorance and self-orientation work. To overcome these, we do everything possible to avoid negative actions and intentions.

If we go deeper, we get into the ten non-virtues involved with body, speech and mind. Just as there are negative actions that manifest from our physical body, there are negative actions that manifest from our speech, and negative mental intentions or concepts that manifest from our mind. These are elaborated into ten non-virtues.

Killing, stealing and misconduct are negative actions that issue from our physical body. Lying, slander, harsh words and gossip are four negative intentions we manifest with our speech. Greed, hatred and wrong view are negative intentions or concepts of mind. The dualism of eternalism and nihilism, for example, represents incomplete understanding. It brings us to a wall that we cannot cross. If there's a wall, there's certainly a "beyond the wall," but eternalism is like a wall on one side and nihilism is a wall on the other. If that wall becomes a philosophy, a view, we're no longer able to scale it, so we're stuck there. We call these "non-virtues" because they're a cause and condition that will bring a negative result.

To practice this aspect of morality, one starts from a simple, basic understanding about this reality, about all the connections, and puts effort into working with that simple, basic understanding.

## **Practicing Positive Actions and Intentions**

The second aspect of morality is the other side of the first aspect, but it's the same principle. Instead of avoiding the ten non-virtues, we practice the ten virtues. Instead of avoiding killing others, we try to save them; instead of avoiding lying to others, we try to tell the truth; instead of avoiding greed, we try to be open and generous from our hearts. These are considered virtues because they're the causes and conditions that will bring positive, beneficial results.

This subject is explained in simple terms: "There's nothing a bodhisattva won't practice." A true bodhisattva can find a way for anything to be beneficial. Beneficialness and helpfulness can be practiced through anything. And it doesn't stop with ten virtues, but with everything. There's a way to be helpful and benefit others through anything involving our mind, our body and our speech.

## **Acting in Ways That Will Be Beneficial to Others**

The third aspect of morality is being beneficial for others. Being beneficial for others relates both with the practice of positive actions and intentions and overcoming negative actions and intentions.

Four simple points, called the four positive dharmas, are introduced here:

- Giving what is needed;
- Saying what complements the understanding of the other person;
- When we try to be helpful to someone, not only do we do what we think should be done, but we help according to what's really involved; and
- Practicing what we preach.

These four positive dharmas clarify how we can make things better for others. In any situation, we deal with a situation appropriately, so that instead of its being less helpful, or even harmful, our principle will make it more beneficial, and certainly not harmful.

The first thing is giving whatever is needed. "Needed" is a very important word, because giving isn't really enough. We must give what's needed. It can be protection, it can be understanding, but it always means something going from us to others. And when we say giving what's needed, it doesn't mean what's needed by us, but by the others. If we see that someone already has a good understanding, we don't try to add to it. But if someone doesn't have a good understanding, and we have some understanding about that thing, we can share our understanding. When someone already has more than enough of something, we don't give more of the same. But if someone's lacking something, we can provide it. That's what giving what's needed means.

The second thing concerns speech. It means the opposite of harsh words, but it's more than that. It means saying something to complement the understanding of the other person. We don't say something simply because we want to say it, but we say

it because other person needs to hear it. When the person hears it, it fills in the gap in between, so the person's understanding flows.

The third situation can be a little tricky if we don't understand it correctly. When we try to be helpful to someone, not only do we do what we think should be done, but we help according to what's really involved. When Buddha taught in India, 2,500 years ago, he taught the external form of teaching according to that time, and those particular people. When he taught vinaya, he said, "The basic principles of vinaya involve *tshul khrim*, but the details can vary accordingly." When he introduced the appropriate colors for monks' and nuns' robes, he said the color was appropriate because it was unlikely to arouse ego in India at that time. He believed it would provide monks and nuns with a climate of modesty. But Buddha said the details of vinaya could be adjusted according to the times and conditions. In saying this, he was establishing a principle. He wasn't being stubborn and insisting his followers wear a certain color because he just happened to like it. He had a reason for it. This reason is aimed at the result. When we try to be beneficial to others, we must first understand how it will affect them.

The fourth one is the most important; we must practice what we preach. This is the key. If we say that killing is bad, we shouldn't kill. If we tell others not to steal, we shouldn't steal. If we tell others it's no good to steal, and then we, ourselves, steal, we're not living it. Whatever we expect of others, we must expect of ourselves. And it must come from our heart. It's not like homework that we do and then forget.

These are the four positive dharmas. If a person maintains them as a principle in trying to be helpful to others, one way or another their actions and intentions will become helpful. It's not limited to the first aspect of morality, avoiding negative actions and intentions. Nor is it limited to the second aspect of morality, practicing positive actions and intentions. It involves both. It involves everything, actually.

Another explanation in the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* of Shantideva is also quite beneficial. It says, "How do we know when we can, and should, help someone?" The answer given is, "We can help others when it won't become a cause and condition for our ego." If we have a particular understanding we think will be beneficial for others, we should contemplate on it before sharing it. We should ask ourselves, "If I share this with others, will I develop ego? And, if so, why?" We contemplate on it and find the reason. Then we work with it. Only when we're entirely clear do we attempt to share what we've learned because, once we're clear, definitely it won't become a cause and condition for our ego.

### ***Tolerance (Patience), the Third Paramita***

The Tibetan word for tolerance is sometimes translated into "patience." I'm partial to the word tolerance because patience often has the connotation of "I've been patient with you so far, but now I'm going to explode." It's as if the person who's patient has been suffocating. On the other hand, tolerance has a connotation of letting go of differences, appreciating similarities. But since English isn't my native language, I'm never certain I'm judging connotations or word usage entirely accurately.

There are three aspects of tolerance:

- Tolerance toward those who've taken something from us;
- Tolerance of suffering; and

- Tolerance of understanding.

The first aspect is related with people, or sentient beings. Someone does something purposely, consciously, to hurt us, to disturb us, to take something from us. In this situation, intolerance or impatience arises towards that person who has taken something from us. Being tolerant toward this sentient being is one aspect of patience or tolerance.

The second aspect of patience or tolerance is suffering itself, the negative situation itself. In addition to developing tolerance toward the person who purposely causes us suffering and discomfort, we must be tolerant toward the discomfort itself. This is the second aspect.

The third aspect is tolerance of understanding. There will always be another obstacle to overcome, another process to go through. We develop certain understandings, but we hold on to them. Usually, we hold on for a long time, and only move beyond our current level of understanding when we suffer some kind of shock. Then, we continue on with our new level of understanding until something painful happens again. Then we take another step.

That happens because of the tolerance of understanding. When we understand something, we stop there. We don't go further. Because of this, in Mahayana it's explained that for a first-level bodhisattva to attain the realization of the second level, he must clean up the mess he made attaining the realization of first-level bodhisattva. When a second-level bodhisattva attains that particular realization, what does it mean? It means they worked out everything that was developed during the first-level bodhisattva. It continues this way until the person attains complete realization.

There are several ways to relate to each of these three aspects. Let's look at each of them a little more closely.

### **Tolerance Toward Beings Who Have Taken Something From Us**

The first aspect of tolerance, tolerance toward beings who generate negativity, starts from simple understanding. If we're neurotic, but sensible, we can say that someone tried to hurt us. But it's only when we become intolerant and impatient towards that person that they've really managed to hurt us. Until then, they didn't get to us. So, to be tolerant and patient are, practically speaking, the wisest thing.

Now, let's be a little bit more enlightened than that, not that neurotic. The second step is that if we're tolerant, that person has actually accumulated merit, because they've helped us to develop tolerance. That's a reverse way to help others.

I recall a very interesting story. In Sikkim there was a very good monk who talked too much. Next to his quarters there lived another, very kind, very good monk, but with a hot temper. The hot-tempered monk was a doctor. The monk who talked too much always went to this doctor and constantly irritated him.

One day the doctor became really impatient and grabbed a piece of wood and hit the monk on the head until he bled. The monk simply sat there looking up at the doctor saying, "Thank you very much. If there are no circumstances for anger, how I can practice patience?" I don't know if he meant it or not, but that's what he said. It was talked about for many years. The doctor, seeing the blood, immediately dropped the

piece of wood, applied some medicine and a bandage to the monk's head, and they became very good friends.

This is a second step. Because of their neurosis, the other person tries to create problems for us, intentionally or unintentionally. If we're tolerant in the right way, we're helping that person, because we're allowing the cause and condition of their action to assist us in our development. This is a second way of looking at it.

The third and more subtle way of looking into this is that, in any situation, everything is a process. There's no such thing as ultimate ups and ultimate downs, only relative ups and relative downs. But relative ups and downs happen in a straightforward way. It's not a zigzag but a straight line. From the moment we're born, we're getting closer and closer to the end. It always goes straight from here to there, like an arrow to its target. Whatever happens is a process.

Another way of looking at this process is that if someone irritates us, or projects negative words and activities towards us, there must be a reason for it. Instead of getting mad at that person and trying to retaliate, we look at the situation in a civilized way, a more subtle way, as a continuation of something that happened in the past. We know that, since it exists, there's a way to overcome it, so we're tolerant of the person's reasoning. We look into the history of the reason, which is an aspect of contemplation. The result will be that every situation that causes disharmony, pain and suffering can be worked out. So that's the first way to look at tolerance.

### **Tolerance of Suffering**

There's a second way to look at tolerance. When we face suffering, we have some choices. We can leave the suffering alone, as it is, and be tolerant of all the side-effects of it. We can work with tolerance and patience to overcome the suffering. Or, we can fight it and generate resentment and aggression. This kind of intolerance of suffering makes the suffering more intense than what it actually is. The more one gets into it, the more impossible it is to overcome, because it becomes bigger and bigger.

Here's a simple, but effective, contemplation. When we're in a difficult situation, instead of looking at it negatively, we say, "Take it easy. It's here, definitely, for sure. It's happening. I'm not dreaming it. I'm not imagining it. It's happening." So, the first step is to accept it. When we accept the suffering of the negative situation, everything starts, because there's no delusion around the real situation. When there's no delusion, our potential also appears without delusion. We see the negative part of the suffering as well as the other side of it. The other side of it also manifests there. If a person who is suffering accepts it, they can overcome it. That's the second aspect of tolerance, or patience.

### **Tolerance of Understanding**

With the third aspect, or tolerance of understanding, I've found a slight, but noticeable, difference between cultures. For example, in Eastern countries, the goal of most people engaged in dharma is freedom from the suffering of samsara, so they can develop further. That's their main wish and inspiration. On the other hand, in countries where the dharma has only recently been introduced, people who are engaged in dharma express their aim as a desire to attain enlightenment, to become Buddha. That's a very interesting difference, because, of course, attaining Buddha is a much higher goal than being free from the lower level suffering of samsara.

The tolerance of understanding is the gate or the threshold between the suffering of samsara and the ultimate realization. When a person develops tolerance of understanding, they won't fall back into the lower level suffering of samsara, because they developed these aspects of wisdom, this realization. This particular aspect of tolerance bridges the two kinds of mentality between most Eastern practitioners, like Tibetans or Himalayans, and Western practitioners.

The tolerance of understanding comes with the Path of Application, which is the second of the five paths of Mahayana practice. I'd like to briefly explain these five paths, since they're essential for our understanding of Mahayana practice.

### ***The Five Paths of Mahayana Practice***

There are several things we must learn to understand Mahayana correctly. The entire Mahayana practice is explained in five levels, which we call the "five paths." These are:

- accumulation
- application
- seeing or realization
- practice, like meditation
- no further meditation

On the path of accumulation, a person accumulates merit and wisdom. We call it "merit accumulation" and "wisdom accumulation." For example, many people say, "I know what I'm doing is wrong, but I have no choice; the circumstances around me don't permit me to make a different choice." People who say this really mean it, really believe it. That's the lack of merit, because the understanding is there, the inspiration is there. From our perspective, those people appear insincere. We think, "If they would just do this or that, they can overcome it." We can say that, of course, but to be really practical, it would take them the effort of an entire lifetime to avoid something like this. That's a lack of merit.

So, we accumulate merit in order to contain the wisdom. When we accumulate merit, wisdom accumulation is possible. With the accumulation of wisdom, we begin the path of application.

The path of application means the understanding, the wisdom, the practice and the realization—all applied. These things work in a wholesome way. On the path of accumulation, many specifics are involved. Like, this is good, this is bad, I should do this, I shouldn't do this. When it comes to application, we go beyond this. We reach a certain stage where we've developed the tolerance that things flow in a right way—without being too specific, too fundamental or too dualistic about it.

At this level, we develop tolerance. And it's here that the tolerance of understanding is explained, almost towards the end of the path of application. When one reaches that realization, that stage, this tolerance will never go away, because it's not an intellectual acquisition, it's from the heart. It is true wisdom, so it remains. What's left

from there is to go on to further awakening, further development of the potential. This is the tolerance of understanding.

Many of the sutras explain the benefits of tolerance and the harm of aggression, because these go hand in hand. One text mentions, quite specifically and strongly, that there's no negative action and no negative intention like aggression. And there's no positive action and no positive intention like tolerance. Out of the three paramitas we've learned—generosity, morality and tolerance—tolerance is quite highly encouraged for bodhisattva practitioners.

I think we should stop here. Would you like to ask some questions?

With regard to morality, some teachers say it's important not to break certain rules. Other teachers say it's our intentions that are important, as in being homosexual rather than heterosexual. Would you speak about this?

We need to look a little deeper into the principles, because Buddha didn't make many distinctions about what does and does not constitute misconduct, what is and is not stealing. He didn't proclaim these things as universal law. It's also directly related with how it will come out. If we put too much salt in too little food, it will come out salty. If we put enough salt in a small amount of food, it will come out good. So, Buddha doesn't say salt is good or salt is bad, but explains everything by the result.

Whether behavior is or isn't misconduct can only be judged by how it affects others. For example, a tree is affected by everything around it—the conditions of the atmosphere for hundreds of miles, and beneath the ground, to the very center of the planet. According to the heat of the center, fewer or more trees grow. Some trees have more branches, some trees have less. It's also according to the seed, to the generations that go back for many hundreds and thousands of years. So, everything affects everything.

And as to how things work, when things aren't in harmony, I definitely think they'll be difficult. But also, I think it depends very much on the individual. I can't really say more than that. I haven't seen it in the texts, so I dare not make up something.

You said that Easterners who embrace dharma say they do so to attain release from samsara and that Westerners who embrace the dharma say they do so to attain enlightenment. Is it too ambitious to want to attain enlightenment?

I wouldn't say that, exactly. Milarepa made it in his life. The eighty-four mahasiddhas did it in their lives, and Buddha did it in his life. Throughout history, many great beings have attained that realization in one lifetime. And we're only talking about since Buddha attained enlightenment, 2,500 years ago. So, I cannot say this is ambitious, definitely not. But, if I talk about myself, that's a different story. Because I think—well, okay, I don't want to talk too much!

Rinpoche, is it really possible to cross the threshold or gate of understanding in one lifetime, or will it most likely take four or five?

I can't say four or five, but I think this is definitely possible for one lifetime.

What would it take?

It depends on the individual and their practice—Bodhisattva, Vajrayana or Theravada practice.

But one must first complete the purification and accumulation?

You can say that, but it's a tricky subject. What do we mean by complete the purification and accumulation? When we complete our purification and accumulation, we've attained enlightenment. Otherwise, the last minute before the enlightenment—it sounds very neurotic, but there's got to be the last minute, or even the last second—so even at the last second before enlightenment, there's still one more to go. Until that moment, there's something to be purified, there's something to be accumulated. But when we talk about the path of accumulation, we're talking about until a certain level. So yes, we must go beyond the path of purification and path of accumulation—almost to the end of the path of application. The path of application has four steps, the third step being the tolerance of understanding.

Are there ways to use daily situations as the practice that will achieve this, or must it be a meditation practice?

You need both, because without doing a certain amount of intensive meditation practice, it will be difficult to be mindful and aware in each situation. In order to develop mindfulness and awareness, to bring ourselves together, we need to practice at least a half hour to an hour daily. If it's possible, our practice should also involve inner development, the awakening of insight and potential.

Being mindful and aware in our daily life will assist us in our development, certainly, but there will still be some negativity. If we combine daily meditation practice and daily engaged practice, it's certainly possible to reach that state in one lifetime. I'm quite certain about it. If enlightenment is one-hundred percent, I consider this to be five percent. If there are one-hundred steps to go, this can be somewhere around fifth. But we've already reached a level where we can only go up, not fall down.

It seems that after we do our practices for a while they begin to lose that pristine quality they had at the beginning. Could you say something about that?

My answer might be influenced by culture, so I suggest you don't accept it one-hundred percent. Some people have a hard time getting into something, but once they get into it, they really get into it. We say something is carved in the scalp, carved on the ribs, can never be washed, cannot be taken off. We also say, "I'll take this word to my grave." People like that are considered good people. They're well-respected. That's how we would all like to be. On the other hand, there are people who get into something new quite easily, and get very excited, but before they can get deep into it, they're already bored and moving on to something else. We say this person is like a feather. If we blow on it, it flies here and there. It has no weight. There's no principle, no ground. In this situation, we can't be like that, because if we get into something new, until we grasp it, we'll get nowhere.

For example, in the West if you want to hire someone, you look over a piece of paper called a resume, which states a person's education and employment history, what they've done, what they can do, etc. Then you talk to the person. If you like them, you might interview them several times. Then you hire them. That would never happen in our culture. It would be impossible. We would have to know the person's great grandfather, great grandmother, their entire family history. If the great grandfather was solid, strong, down-to-earth, trustworthy, we would trust that his

children and his children's children are trustworthy as well, and on that basis we would hire them.

So, I think it has something to do with cultural influence. No matter who we are, the whole system around us is superficial. If we get into something new—a practice, for example—at the beginning, when it's fresh and we have the inspiration, we feel good about it. But the more we do it, the more fed up we get. After all, we don't eat the same food day after day. It's just like that. It has nothing to do with developing clarity, it's just the influence of culture. It doesn't mean you have a problem with your practice. It's just custom, like fashion. Our people wear the same style of clothing they wore 500 years ago. Here, clothing and hair styles change every week. It's simply a side-effect of that.

What can we do about it?

You need to go a bit deeper into the subject and contemplate on it. Take an afternoon off and think deeply about all the subjects you find it hard to relate to. Don't expect anything particular. Your contemplation cannot be successful if you expect something from it. Be tolerant. Go deep into each of the subjects and clarify them. Then, the next time you're involved, it will be fresh and deep.

What's the best way to cleanse accumulations of past negativity?

There are many methods. Actually, every practice is designed to overcome past negativities that manifest in our present situation. We call it purification. Every practice involves a process of purification. But then, there is one simple thing that might help us feel easier about a particular negativity from the past. Right now we're not concerned with the results of the negativity, we're concerned more about the memory of it. If we're concerned about the result, then the purpose of every practice is to overcome all aspects of the outcome of negativities and develop all the positive qualities of our potential. Then we don't need specifics. But if we're talking about memory, we need a deeper understanding about it. If you asked about it, you've taken one step toward that understanding already. Otherwise you wouldn't ask. So, we know the past situation was negative. We don't appreciate it. We don't like it. That's the first step.

The second step is to view it as a process. We'll say "That shouldn't have happened. It's not positive. It isn't right." But instead of viewing that negative memory as punishment, it serves as a reminder, and we appreciate it as the process that brought us to our current physical, mental and emotional state. That can be helpful. And I'm sure there are many other ways.

You talked about the importance of spontaneity earlier. Would you talk about this in relation to our practices, which are quite disciplined?

Spontaneity must come out of our practice. Spontaneity comes with the deeper sense of involvement with the principle. When our principle is clear, deep, profound and unshakable, spontaneity arises out of it. Take a few hours of time, whenever possible, and sit quietly. Ask yourselves what your principle is and whether or not it's unshakable. If you let things come, and act accordingly, you'll improve. But there is still the possibility of being negatively affected by them. If you find it won't affect you, then you can take it easy.

When you're contemplating in a quiet place, there's no reason to lie about anything, because nobody's listening to you. You're not talking to anyone, you're not writing a resume, so there's no reason to be anything but one-hundred percent honest. What you learn from your contemplation depends on your level of consciousness. If you're ready for it, you can take it a little easy. But you also have to be aware, because mindfulness and awareness are very important. At times people interpret spontaneity in such a way that it opposes mindfulness and awareness. This shouldn't happen, because constant mindfulness and awareness is very precious.

Rinpoche, could you say something about the relationship between devotion and compassion?

Devotion and compassion are best friends. They work together. You cannot have devotion without compassion, nor compassion without devotion. They're inseparable, one. If we have difficulties with devotion, we also have to develop our compassion. They go side by side.

Some interesting cultural differences exist, though. In the West, it's much easier to develop compassion than devotion. To get the job done, the most simple and effective way is for a person to develop compassion, loving-kindness. That will naturally manifest into devotion. In certain countries in the East, it's the other way around. Devotion is much easier to cultivate, and compassion a little difficult. So, Easterners develop their devotion, and compassion manifests from it. But this may simply be my projection. I can be wrong.

Could you talk a little more about self-will?

Self-will is a word one can twist in whatever way one likes. A will is there, definitely. If we wish to be happy, we have the will to go for it. If we don't want to be happy, we can manifest the will to be unhappy. The choice rests with the individual. Buddha's teachings give advice, never orders. As far as I'm concerned, they don't contradict at all with self-will. This is because we have the will to improve. There are many methods to help us improve, but if we have to stumble on them by ourselves, according to our present situation, it might take several lifetimes. On the other hand, if we follow a path that hundreds and thousands of people have followed and benefited from, it will save much time and effort.

We must finish now.

[Closing prayer]

[Continuation of teaching on Loving-Kindness and Compassion]

[Opening Prayer]

This is a continuation of yesterday's discussion. We've been going through the six paramitas and learned some guidelines for relating them to the principle of loving-

kindness and compassion. We have already covered generosity, morality and tolerance paramita, and the next one is diligence.

### ***Diligence, The Fourth Paramita***

In our language, diligence is *brston grus*. *Brston* means effort. *Grus* means together. The word *grus* can be used in a number of contexts, but here its connotation is quite simple. If we travel from America to India with another person, we *grus* with that person; we're going together. Also, we're always together with our own body, mind and expression, so that's also *grus*. So, the translation of the Tibetan word for discipline, or *brston grus*, is "ourselves and our effort together."

We need diligence so that when we start something, we'll complete it—unless it's terribly wrong and we find out halfway through that it's wise to stop. Ordinarily, anything we start, we should carry through to completion. That's why there are some things to be done and why someone must do them, finish them. If we start something, drop it, start something else, drop that, and start yet another, after twenty years we may have begun a thousand things, but never finished one. That's not so good. For that reason, diligence is introduced as an important quality.

We have a saying that if a person starts one thing and finishes it all the way through, anything that person begins is likely to work in a similar way. But if the individual begins something and drops it halfway through, or even one-quarter or one-tenth of the way through, more likely than not, everything that person does will work like that. So, *brston grus* is very important.

Diligence was explained in three aspects:

- Diligence like armour
- Diligence of application
- Diligence of openness

In the olden days, when people went off to battle, they wore lots of metal for self-protection. Now, we have tanks that bullets cannot penetrate. This is the first aspect, or diligence like armour. The second aspect is quite straightforward—the diligence of application. We apply our effort. The third is diligence of openness. We won't say, "I've done many good things; now I'm tired and don't want to do anything good." Instead, we remain open, fresh. Out of our openness, we're ready to progress.

It would probably help if we had a general perspective about these three aspects of diligence, its principles, and how it works. Without all three aspects, diligence can become limited. For example, without openness, we don't progress. Ego comes up as a result of what we've been able to accomplish, and we stop growing. We say, "I've worked hard and accomplished many things. Now I'm going to kick back." A fear, a hesitation and a sense of greed is also there. A person works hard to achieve a certain level of wisdom and then holds onto it. Automatically, he becomes unwise, because when we hold on to something, we become specific about it, self-oriented about it. So, without all three aspects of diligence, it can be limited.

## Diligence Like Armour

When we look into it deeply, the other side of diligence like armour is that each time a person attempts an activity, obstacles arise, one at a time, which interrupt the fulfillment of that activity. This can be described in many ways, but we'll just go through a few of them.

The first one is *nyam le*. This is the lack of diligence that we're most familiar with. *Nyam* stands for *tang nyam*, or "in between." Let's say that just before leaving our office, our boss hands us a ten-page memorandum to read in preparation for a meeting the following morning. He asks us to write a conclusion on the memorandum and present it at the meeting. While we're studying the memorandum, we absent-mindedly turn on our television and get absorbed in an interesting program. After a while, we fall asleep on the couch. We oversleep the next morning and don't have time to review the memorandum. We have to go to our meeting unprepared. Instead of focusing on our subject, we let our attention be diverted. Consequently, our time, energy and effort was wasted. It became cheap. We were unable to complete our task. That is *nyam le*, in between. It's a lack of discipline, a lack of dedication.

The second aspect is what we call *sgyid lub*. This is a rather poor example, but it gives a clear image. *Lub* is when someone is overweight and certain parts of the body look gross. It's not tidy anymore. That is *lub*. *Sgyid* means the calf of the leg—so, it means fat calf, or big calf. That's the exact meaning of this word. If our calves are over-sized, we have difficulty climbing. This example is used to illustrate a particular lack of diligence, as in "I cannot do it. I'm very bad. I'm stupid. I'm weak. I'm not qualified for it." These are obstacles that keep us from doing what we're supposed to do.

Another example is *nepa*, which is more like an insult. The connotation of insult is talking bad about someone, but here we're referring to an insult to the principles we need to fulfill.

The greatest obstacle to anything we might want to do usually manifests as the opposite of that thing. For example, if we're supposed to wake up, we want to sleep. If we're asked to talk loud, we only manage a whisper. If we're supposed to write ten pages, we write only one page. If we're supposed to drive three-hundred miles, we only go fifty miles. This works like an insult to the principles we aspire to fulfill. It works totally against them. When we contemplate on these things, it can cover everything that interrupts the fulfillment of our destination, or the principles we aspire to.

Diligence like armour, or armour-like diligence, simply protects us from these obstacles. We can use the word strength, or solidness. We can also say confidence. If we wish to attain a goal, it must be clearly defined. We must know it from top to bottom, inside out and upside down. Without this clarity, we can be shaken by every possible obstacle. So, diligence like armour means that everything we need to know, we know from the inside out, from top to bottom. When things become clearly defined, little things cannot overwhelm us, because we have the depth and clarity that will arouse our dedication, our trust and our belief.

Obstacles like *nyam le*, *sgyid lub* and *nepa* work like weapons. If we don't have diligence, firmness and solidness based on clarity and depth of understanding, these weapons can affect us in negative ways. They can even destroy us. But, if we have diligence, firmness and solidness, based upon our clarity, they won't affect us. Our

condition is unshakable. The bodhisattva is always given as an example of this in the Mahayana sutras. The bodhisattva develops gradually. Three examples are given, according to the development of the bodhicitta of a bodhisattva.

### **Bodhisattva Like King**

A beginning bodhisattva is like a king. A king's first desire is to erect a big palace with a protective wall around it. Next, he wants ditches and moats to surround that protective wall. He makes sure he has sufficient guards, soldiers, guns and swords around him. Then he makes sure he has unlimited entertainment, many barrels of wine, and storehouses full of meat and other delectables. When he acquires all of this, then he thinks about his people. Then he can say, "This family has no food, so give them one bottle of wine and five pounds of meat." He helps people, but first he helps himself. He makes certain he is well-established and secure before he helps others. I'm not saying that's bad, but that's how it is for a beginner. Then the person gradually develops and reaches another level of the bodhisattva.

### **Bodhisattva Like Sailor**

The second level is called "bodhisattva like sailor." The example is given of a sailor because when sailors sail across the ocean, they carry passengers with them on their boat. The sailor cannot say, "First I'll sail for myself, then I'll sail for you," because he only has one boat and one sail. So, he takes himself and his passengers together, at the same time. So, on this second level, we wish to be liberated along with others. This is a great improvement from the first level, the bodhisattva like a king, because here the welfare of others is considered simultaneously with our own.

### **Bodhisattva Like Shepherd**

Gradually we reach to the next step, the bodhisattva like shepherd. It's hard to find an accurate example for the bodhisattva like shepherd. Forget about the shepherd who looks after sheep for their wool, or the shepherd who looks after sheep for the meat. This is a shepherd who looks after the sheep for nothing, which is almost impossible.

A shepherd looks after his sheep. He doesn't have to be afraid of the sheep, because sheep don't eat people. They're pretty good in that way, very peaceful. And the sheep aren't going to say "thank you," even if the shepherd is nice to them. Nor will they give the shepherd a Christmas present, no matter what he does for them. That shepherd spends day after day on a mountain, and stays up all night listening for wolves that might prowl on their sheep. He finds the best grazing land for them. When the sheep are cold, the shepherd leads them into the sun. When they're hot, the shepherd takes them to the valley, where there's shade. When he thinks the sheep are thirsty, he takes them to the river. The shepherds' entire effort goes into serving their sheep. This is the greatest bodhisattvas' way of doing things, because everything is done out of concern for others.

That is the gradual development of bodhicitta. First the diligence like armour of the bodhisattva like a king. Second, the diligence like armour of a bodhisattva like a sailor. And third, the greatest one, diligence like armour of the bodhisattva like a shepherd. The bodhisattva like a king's compassion and loving-kindness can be improved. The bodhisattva like a sailor's compassion and loving-kindness can also be improved. They can improve to bodhisattva like a shepherd. It's a gradual process, and each has its own armour-like diligence, according to the principles.

The principle for all three levels, all three aspects, of the bodhisattva process is, “May I attain liberation or realization for the benefit of all sentient beings.” That’s what enables the bodhisattva to continue without getting carried away like a king, a sailor or a shepherd. He continually progresses because of that one strong, clear, deep, well-grounded, unshakable foundation. The depth of it takes care of the whole thing.

### **Diligence of Application or Activity**

The second aspect of diligence is the diligence of application, or the diligence of activity. First we have the principle, and then we must become involved with it.

The Mahayana sutras describe what it means to be involved and active with our principle as three:

- stability
- joy
- unshakability

First is stability. We continue. We’re not moody. We accept both the ups and the downs. Some days we do more than enough, and others we do nothing at all. We overcome that moody aspect. It’s becoming smooth, a continuation.

Next is joy. In the West, and especially in America, I hear the term “job satisfaction” quite often. Job satisfactions means the joy of doing something we want to do. We find the right job and we’re good at it, so we’re happy about it. We enjoy doing our work. That’s another aspect of diligence, but it’s a very rewarding aspect, of getting involved, getting engaged. We must find a way to appreciate it, to enjoy it.

I hear many people say, “With pleasure.” That’s wonderful. Someone applies effort and doesn’t get into complications. And deep inside they have pleasure. That’s great. That’s wonderful. So joy is the second aspect.

Third is unshakability. In Tibetan, the word for moving or shaking is *yo wa*. *Mi yo wa* means unshakable. By unshakability, we don’t mean stubbornness. Some people are unshakable because they’re stubborn. We say “stubborn like a bull.” Stubborn means that whether it’s right or wrong, we’re going to cling to our idea. Even if we suspect we’re wrong, we don’t want to admit it. This stubbornness is a waste of our time and opportunity. It doesn’t help anybody, least of all ourselves.

Here, unshakability comes down to one simple thing: whatever obstacles to our diligence, our continuation, our well-balanced effort, arise, they won’t affect us. Whether good things or bad things happen, it won’t affect our ego. So, first we cultivate armour like diligence, and then we begin to apply it. Diligent action will definitely succeed if we have stability, joy and unshakability.

We have an expression, that “\_\_\_\_\_.” [Tibetan word] means in front. [Tibetan word] means face. So, it means face to face. [Tibetan word] stands face to face. [Tibetan word] means absence, when we don’t see the person from the back. Now we say, the front of the face and the back must be the same. This is an important principle and is emphasized in relation to this aspect of diligence. Because whether people see it or not, it doesn’t matter. Whether people hear it or not also

doesn't matter. And whether they believe it or not, it doesn't matter. What's there goes beyond mood, and beyond ego involvement, because they're the same.

There are two more words that might help—*mo-tsa* and *tel*. These involve what people describe as guilt and shame. *Mo* means face and *tsa* is when we eat a chili and our tongue is hot. So, it means hot face, or burning face. It's something like losing face, in English. *Tel* means that in our heart we know something isn't right. Nobody sees it, so there's no *mo-tsa*. But we know it, so it's *tel*.

I've actually never felt comfortable translating *tel* as guilt, as many translators have done. When people say they're feeling guilty, they seem to feel quite helpless against their feelings, as if there's nothing they can do. It's like saying "I'm guilty. I'm finished. This is the end. I'm done for." That isn't the meaning of *tel*. *Tel* means we admit to ourselves that we did something, and we're not blaming anybody. We say "I did it. I know it." We accept it. That's the beginning of doing something to overcome it, because we accept it.

There's a difference between this and guilt. It's also the same with face in front and behind. But *mo-tsa* means we don't do the wrong thing. We apply effort to do the right thing in front of people, because of *mo-tsa*, but we do the same when nobody is there because of *tel*. Even if nobody saw it, nobody heard it, nobody thought it—if we did it, we know we did it. This is another aspect of it.

These principles can all be included as part of the diligence of application.

### **Diligence of Openness**

The third aspect of diligence is openness. Openness is a very important point. At the same time, it involves depth perhaps even more than openness. Tibetan people understand openness quite easily, so I don't have to explain too much. In the West, especially in the United States, and particularly the West Coast, and most particularly, San Francisco, when we talk about openness, we need to contemplate a little deeper about it and see what we really mean, because it's very fashionable to be open here.

This openness is very subtle. With diligence like armour we have the foundation, the heart, the center. With diligent application, we have the ongoingness. To these we add openness. Without diligence like armour and diligent application, openness is shaky. With them, openness is very healthy. It becomes wise openness. It becomes appropriate, beneficial openness. Without those first two aspects of diligence, openness cannot be considered as diligence, because it's not complete. We would just sit back and say, "Whatever is supposed to happen to me, may it happen." That's one example.

Another example is, we might be open, and that's wonderful—much better than being aggressive or fanatic, absolutely—but still, we're talking about diligence paramita, and openness won't really lead to the paramita by itself. It won't happen easily. After many lifetimes, possibly. Something can be wonderful and open, but, in itself, it doesn't have the completeness to fulfill our potential. There's a lot of openness in San Francisco. This is very precious, because openness is rare in many places in the world. But if we don't use this potential properly, we waste it, and it's much too precious to waste. So, this diligence represents that. We apply effort.

Let's say there's an unlocked door five meters away from us. Because of our lack of the openness, we pound against the door until it eventually opens. Because of our lack of openness, we weren't able to move to the side to see that the door was unlocked. When this openness is there along with the first two aspects of diligence, it becomes complete diligence. But remember, when it becomes complete diligence, it's simply meant to lead us to ultimate liberation, or the diligence paramita.

### ***Contemplation, the Fifth Paramita***

The fifth paramita is contemplation, or *samten*. We also have another word—meditation—that means something slightly different. But when we talk about the six paramitas, *samten* represents both contemplation and meditation.

Contemplation and meditation have three aspects:

- familiarization
- practice
- remaining in it

The first aspect is easy. It means getting familiar with the process of contemplating and meditating. The second aspect is the actual practice of contemplation and meditation. The third aspect is remaining in contemplation and meditation. In Tibetan, we say *mi yo wa*, which, as we saw above, means not moving, not shaking, always in it, not going away from it, never absent from it. But remember, these descriptions are only for our understanding. The description itself won't bring wisdom.

### **Familiarization**

There are a number of methods to familiarize us with contemplation and meditation. The three we are looking at here are a step-by-step process. First we familiarize ourselves, then we practice, then we remain in it. When we're familiarizing ourselves, it's one-hundred percent method. When we actually practice, it's less of a method and more of the real thing. When we remain in it, it's no longer considered a method at all.

We can say that the familiarization process is the relative aspect of contemplation and meditation, the practice is a combination of the relative and the absolute, and the remaining in it is more of the absolute. First, we're dealing with the basics—in contemplation, we attempt to build a stable mind. Otherwise, we get confused. Also, we should sit in the appropriate position for the appropriate reason. Finally, we need clear understanding about the subject of our contemplation.

I've met a number of people who appear to be unclear about why they do things, why they get involved, why something is important to them. In the East, and in many other undeveloped parts of the world, many people are superstitious. One common superstition is possession. I, personally, don't believe in that sort of thing, but I understand how superstitious people feel. Instead of simply being involved in what they're involved in, with a clear idea of why they want to be involved and the value of their involvement, they become "possessed" by what they're involved in. It's almost like a superstition. What they're involved in becomes quite powerful, and this power

can possess them. There's a similarity between this kind of possession and the belief in demon possession.

As we become increasingly familiar with the process of contemplation, we work this out. We contemplate on everything that relates to us, everything that influences us, and we find the clear reason for it. We become familiar with it. Once we're familiar with the process, we move on to the contemplation itself. Then to the meditation.

When we do the meditation, we need a deep heart connection, or at least a clear understanding—otherwise it's incomplete. Contemplation is an important step, because, in doing it, we become clear about our subject. Familiarizing ourselves with the subject of our contemplation or meditation is the beginning.

I think we should stop here. Do you have questions?

Rinpoche, would you please repeat the Tibetan word for openness?

Openness is the translation of the meaning, rather than a literal translation. The word-by-word translation is a little difficult. Here they use *dag-pa*. *Dag-pa* means "something on your hand." Your hand is dirty, so you apply soap and hot water. But the dirt still doesn't go away, so you apply something stronger than soap. Then it goes away. Now you can say, "My hand is *dag-pa*." You can also say pure or stainless. It's like a mirror that's polished. Whatever is there can be seen clearly, instead of through a layer of dust and dirt. So it means clean, purified. It has the connotation of applying some effort and getting something done. It translates into openness because it's like a clean canvas. We can draw whatever we like on it.

I have heard that we shouldn't try to transcend our ego but should develop a healthy ego. Can you describe a healthy ego?

I think a healthy ego is one that always eats soybeans. [Laughter] Ego in Tibetan is *nga gyal*. *Nga* means I, or me. If you say, "Do you like it?" I say "*nga* like it." *Gyal* means glory, glorious. So, *nga gyal* means "I am better," "I am glorious," "What I say is right." This word is translated as ego. The positive part of ego can be *pob-pa*. There are two words that can represent this—*pu* or *pob*. *Pu* is a little more negative. *Pob* is the positive side of it. *Pa* is a grammatical word to make this word more than a word. *Pu* represents courage. If you ask, "Can you climb this high ladder without becoming afraid and shaky?" we'll say, "Yes, I *pu*."

Now, *pob-pa* is, "Can you manage to be calm and not distracted in front of an angry and diverse crowd of fifty-thousand demonstrators?" Then we say "Yes, I've the *pob-pa* to do it." Without the *pob-pa*, we might say, "No, I may get killed, I might get burned alive." That would be the other side. Also, some people might say, "No, I don't want to do it because it will ruin my public image." So, *pob-pa* is a little more than just *pu-pa*, but is similar. That can be the healthier, more positive, side of ego.

I'm confused about the different kinds of compassion we were talking about before.

I think you're talking about relative compassion and absolute compassion. Everything has both a relative and absolute aspect. We say absolute bodhicitta, relative bodhicitta, absolute compassion, relative compassion. When we talk about the virtues of generosity, morality, diligence, etc., until we reach the level of paramita, it's all relative. When we say paramita, this is the point at which we go beyond the relative. The paramita level is the absolute, as far as we're concerned. In the relative,

relative loving-kindness is involved, relative compassion is involved, relative impartiality is involved, relative joy is involved. But the absolute goes beyond the relative.

Can we develop diligence through intensified effort?

We need one-hundred percent clear understanding about why we're doing something. When we see it clearly, deeply, we'll be committed. When we're committed, we're engaged, and diligence comes up. Many people's lack of diligence is based on that, because they're not motivated, not really involved, so they don't really apply effort.

Could you repeat the Buddha Maitreya mantra?

*Om Buddha Maitreya mem soha* is the Tibetan pronunciation of the Sanskrit mantra. I'm sure an American way of chanting it is already developing.

What is the Tibetan word for devotion?

The Tibetan language has several words for devotion. One that expresses it well is *mu-gus*. *Mu-gus* is two words, *me-pa* and *bkur-ba*. *Me-pa* means inspiration, wish, an inspiration that's pure, a wish that's pure. *Bkur-ba* translates into respect. It's the real respect—from the heart. We respect someone because of some connection, or we respect them because of their principle. We trust them. *Mu-gus* is these two together. It's like the inspiration, the wish and the respect, based on an understanding that develops into trust.

Could you give an example of superstition?

I don't know exactly what superstition means. In our language, superstition is *nong pu*. *Pu* means *pu-pa*, a kind of faith. We say, "I have faith that this banner won't fall down." "I have faith that this house won't collapse." "I have faith there will be no earthquake." *Mug* means ignorance, absence of knowledge, absence of wisdom. We don't know it, we have no clear understanding about it, so we're *mug-pa*. Let's say a butterfly approaches the flame of a candle. He thinks it's beautiful, so he jumps in and gets fried. The butterfly didn't do it on purpose. He didn't know it was a flame, and that he would die if he got too close. He didn't die purposely. He didn't commit suicide. It's because of the *mug-pa*, not knowing this is a flame and it will burn. *Mug-pu* is part of *mug-pu te-pa*. It's the *te-pa* of the *mug-pa*, people who place their faith in something they know nothing about.

On the other hand, if we feel something, if we know it with intelligence and wisdom, and we have deep trust in it and practice it to invoke this quality within us, and if our purpose is clear, then it's not *mug-pu*. Otherwise it is. We might say "I don't know why I do this. I feel someone is up there. I don't know that for sure, so I'm trying it." That's superstition, that's *mug-pu*.

Did you give us the Tibetan word for corruption?

I'm not certain what the word corruption actually means. In Tibetan there are several words for it. The simplest word is *ngug-pa* (*nyu-pa*), which means that something is diluted. If we have a glass of clean water and add some dirt or dye to it, it becomes totally diluted. That's one example. In the context in which we've been using the

word, if a person has difficulties practicing because of the absence of a guide, I wouldn't call that corruption. If we practice what we're capable of practicing, according to our development, there will definitely be no chance for corruption. But if we practice what we want to practice, even if we know we don't have enough information about it, corruption will come. It will come as a result of confusion and ego. And when one thing goes wrong, everything goes wrong. That's how things work.

We shouldn't be too impatient about our progress, or getting on to new practices. We need to be tolerant and flexible. Perhaps we want to begin a particular practice but don't have enough information or understanding. In that case, we should be willing to wait, and continue with the practice we're currently doing. Definitely that can't hurt us. But when we have so much freedom, and so much opportunity, as we do nowadays, it's more difficult to be patient.

A common example of this is a child at the river. Near the riverbank, the child finds colored rocks of all shapes and sizes. He wants to take all of them home in his pockets, but it's impossible, so he must choose just a few. But he doesn't know which to choose, because there are so many, and he has complete freedom of choice. Freedom isn't so easy to handle.

Why is it that many teachers won't tell students about the particulars of some of the practices?

Some things are important for us to know and others aren't. Sometimes students want to know why Chenrezig has five fingers, or two eyes, or why his mouth or his nose is one way or another. Those things aren't so important. There are reasons for them, of course, but going through the details becomes very complicated. All we really need to know is the basic principle—why there are four arms, why it's white, or green or red, and what the gestures and ornaments represent. Also, we need to know when to practice, how to practice, etc. These are the important details.

There's a sutra called The Sutra of Eleven Faces, about Chenrezig. It's an enormous text with about five or six companion volumes that explain every detail. But if we had to study five or six volumes of Tibetan texts in order to do our daily sadhana and develop compassion, it would take lifetimes. That's one reason why teachers don't go into detail about every practice.

What is the "universal law" you talked about?

I'll explain this in greater detail when we talk about intelligence and wisdom, the sixth paramita. Briefly, let's say you want to make a clay pot. You can't do it without following the universal law. How accurately you follow the universal law determines how good a pot you'll make. It's the same with painting, music and dance—these are more subtle, more sophisticated, and more advanced, but still, you can't create anything without following the universal law.

Can you tell us again what contemplation is?

Contemplation is the time we take to think about a particular subject in a focused, clear and pure manner. We contemplate with openness, so that we see whatever is there to be seen, instead of expecting to see what we want to see. Openness is a basic principle of contemplation. Okay, I think we should stop here.

[Closing prayer]

[Continuation of teaching]

This is our last session on bodhicitta, loving-kindness and compassion. We've gone through the first four paramitas—generosity, morality, tolerance and diligence. We're at contemplation and meditation.

### **Practice**

We stopped at the second of the three aspects, or three categories, of contemplation and meditation. The first is familiarization with the contemplation and meditation. The second is the practice of the contemplation and meditation we've become familiar with. This contemplation and meditation involves our entire self.

In Tibetan, contemplation is *samten* and meditation is *ting nge dzin*. These are the most basic words, but others can also be used. Meditation is also *gom*, but *ting nge dzin* is more subtle. *Samten* is a straightforward word, and *ting nge dzin* is an example word. *Sam* means thinking, or *sam-pa*. When you want to ask a Tibetan what he or she is thinking, you ask "What *sam-pa* do you have?" That means "What are you thinking?" You reply by saying, "I'm thinking of a mountain," or "I *sam-pa* mountain."

*Samten* means thinking that is well-grounded and stable. You contemplate on a specific thing without going in an extreme direction. You just go deep into it. The purpose is only to understand it. That's *samten*, or contemplation.

*Ting* means foundation, or base—that which is stable. If there are a pair of dice on a table, and you rattle that table, the dice won't move very much—even if you shake the table. On the other hand, an egg would roll right off. *Ting* is almost a sound. When you hit the gong, it will make *ting* sound. So, this kind of word is both an example and an expression, simultaneously. *Nge* makes this *ting* more expressive—like you say flash and flashy, or mood and moody. The *nge* or *ting nge* is clearer, stronger. *Dzin* means holding, but not holding blindly, holding *ting nge*. Whatever meditation method you use, you're concentrating and being aware, and holding and directing, and looking into this particular thing in the manner of *ting nge*.

So, this contemplation and meditation involves whatever we have. We have a number of things, but what we specifically have is our physical body, our speech or expression (whether emotional, psychological or external) and our mind, which is somehow a part of all of this. Everything else is made up, manipulated. Our pulse isn't us, our house isn't us, our money isn't us, our clothes aren't us—it's just this body, this speech and this mind.

We can go even deeper. We can also say our body isn't us, our expression isn't us and our mind isn't us. We can even say we don't exist. But we won't go that far,

because it won't help us in our discussion of contemplation and meditation. So, let's stop there. This physical body, this expression, this mind—this is us.

When we contemplate and meditate, we're really just leaving our body, expression and our mind alone. To meditate, we find a place to sit quietly. We curtail our physical activity. We neither speak nor think too much. We just let our mind rest. In the beginning, especially, we put all activities, expressions and thoughts to rest. As we improve through the first step, we can move on to the next, which can involve physical, speech and mind activity.

In Theravada, walking and eating meditation are examples of physical activity. Vajrayana also has many physical activities. Prayer and recitation are speech activities. Visualization and sending and receiving practice are mind activities. These physical, speech and mind activities are the second step of the contemplation process; they are the practice. First we need a good clean canvas, clean paints, a clean brush and a clear mind. When we have this, we can make a masterpiece. So, the first step is leaving it alone and the second step is working with it. It's a step-by-step process.

### **Remaining With It**

The third aspect is remaining with it, or living with it. How long do we do this practice? When do we reach the end? Where does it lead? It leads to this third level, the third aspect of contemplation and meditation. We say that a person can continue to receive benefit from contemplation on a good commonsense level until they develop clarity and complete faith and trust. When they have a clear understanding about a particular subject, and know it from the heart, they can stop contemplating on it. It's no longer necessary to keep digging for information.

When it comes to a continuing meditation method, as long as effort is needed to apply a particular method, we continue to practice it. When our method becomes spontaneous, when it comes and goes as it should, this usually means we can move on to the next step. I say "usually" because there are a number of meditation methods, so there can be exceptions. Generally, we first apply effort, then it becomes familiar, then it becomes spontaneous. Then we repeat the process with the next method.

Another way is to meditate on the nature of mind, directly. This is one more step into it. We practice. We go through simple experiences. We receive our teacher's constant care, and he or she is usually close by. We're instructed on each experience we go through. In this particular case, we cannot say that when we become familiar with something, we should move on to something else. Somehow, when we reach the stage that we remain in the contemplation, remain in the meditation, have a clear understanding, the result of which is trust, then it remains. It doesn't go away. When our heart understands, nothing can shake that understanding. So, in both meditation and contemplation, when we develop spontaneity, the next method comes and we move ahead. When we move on to the next method, the result or outcome of the previous method remains. It simply develops to the next step. So, that's the third aspect of contemplation, where we remain in the contemplation, remain in the meditation.

Milarepa had a particular way of relating with reality. He related to everything as a magician. Our actions and intentions create everything that we see and experience. Some people are depressed wherever they go, about whatever they see. Others feel

aggressive about everything they see. It is always according to our level of consciousness, our psychological and emotional state. If we look at life with humor, there is nothing that isn't funny. Even our own hand is funny. It is according to our state of consciousness that everything manifests.

Sometimes people say karma isn't fair. But a person who says that doesn't really know what karma means, because there is nothing more fair than karma. The first thing that makes karma fair is that, ultimately, nothing is happening, so relatively, everything is happening. Relatively, a person develops a negative intention. Because of that negative intention, and influenced by that negative intention, a negative action comes. That is one step. This negative action becomes a negative result. That's the next step. That negative result causes more negative intentions. Those negative intentions cause more negative actions, which lead to more negative results. And it goes on and on. To overcome that, we need positive action, positive intention. Positive intention leads to positive action. Positive action leads to positive result. This goes on and on and on. Positive action and intention overcomes the negativity.

But that's not good enough, because the positive is only to overcome the negative, but the positive isn't the ultimate. But if you deny the positive, you cannot overcome the negative, so you work with the positive to overcome the negative. Without getting to the first floor, you can't get to the third.

The last step is overcoming the positive. When we've looked at everything—the negative, the positive, the good part of everything, the bad part of everything—it's just like a magician looking at the magical manifestation he has created. We say, "yogi like magic," "practice in the world like magic," "greet a realization like magic." This is a simple example of remaining in contemplation, because when that person practices, it's just like going through it, but when they realize the essence of all magic, that's the final stage to remaining in the contemplation or meditation.

### ***Wisdom, the Sixth Paramita***

The sixth paramita is wisdom, intelligence, or knowledge. It's explained in three steps. It says "ordinary intelligence and wisdom," "extraordinary intelligence and wisdom," and "beyond extraordinary intelligence and wisdom," or maybe we can temporarily use "super intelligence and wisdom."

### **Ordinary Knowledge and Wisdom**

Ordinary knowledge and wisdom includes eight things.

#### **Creation**

The first aspect of ordinary knowledge and wisdom is creation, the creation of anything, including painting, structure, poetry and architecture.

#### **Healing**

The second aspect of ordinary knowledge and wisdom is healing. When a door is broken, we fix the door, we heal the door. If a person's system isn't functioning well, we make it function. That's healing the physical body. The pot is broken, so we glue it together. That's healing the pot. A painting is spoiled, so we redo the painting. That's healing the painting. We call this *sod*, the creation. We say that a potter making a pot

has to learn everything about the principles of this universe. If he creates a pot on the planet earth, he follows the law of the planet earth; otherwise he cannot make a pot.

This planet is made out earth, water, air (the movement), fire (the heat) and space. To create a pot, we must go through everything. We need the right material to make the pot. We need water to hold the materials together. We must move, or nothing will happen. We need the space in which to do all this activity. Finally, we apply heat and dry the whole thing. Otherwise, as soon as we add water, the pot will collapse. It won't serve the purpose for which it was intended. So, that's how a creation is based on the basic law of nature. We can't create anything without following nature's law.

For example, we can't carve metal with wood. We need something harder, something with more earth quality. We must follow the laws of the elements that form our physical existence in order to create something that will serve the purpose for which we intend it.

To heal something, we must know the function, the interrelation. We cannot haphazardly just slap some glue on a broken pot and expect it to hold water again. We have to know the function of the pot to be able to fix it. To heal a certain part of the body, we must know its function.

Tibetan medicine, or more accurately, Buddhist medicine—because all medicine teachings are from Medicine Buddha—is based on the principle that our bodies are connected with the planet itself. This human body cannot survive on any other planet unless that planet is similar to our own. This is because everything is interrelated. This earth contains everything our body needs. This planet functions as our body functions, and our body functions as this planet functions. That's why a human body can live on this planet and nowhere else.

If we find ourselves on a planet that is the opposite of our own, with a different balance of elements, we won't survive. We will instantly melt, or catch fire or freeze. Our physical body is intimately connected with this planet. Here we find plants, minerals and fruits that represent particular aspects of our body. We can make medicine out of these substances to cure disease. The cure for a human body is here on our planet. According to our particular physical problem, medicine is prepared in an appropriate balance of earth, air, fire and water.

These days, much Tibetan medicine is made into pills, like Western medicine. That's a corruption of Tibetan medicine. In the past, Tibetan medicine took the form of a powder, or a preparation to smoke, or something to drink as a tea. There were many different ways to prepare medicine, according to the specific situation.

When medicine is practiced in a traditional way, a Tibetan doctor will prepare a specific dose for a particular patient, according to that patient's sickness. Two people might have the same disease, but it won't be exactly the same. So, the dose is always adjusted to the individual situation.

There are many ways to diagnose disease, including looking at the person's face, listening to their voice, feeling their pulse and examining their urine.

When urine is collected in a container, and examined, the top part represents the head, the middle part represents the torso, and the lower part represents the lower part of the body. In other words, the whole person is represented in the urine. Tibetan doctors can determine what's wrong with a person simply through examining that

person's urine. The most meticulous doctors will divide a person's urine into twenty parts and give the medicine first to the different parts of the urine and see what happens. The urine is the guinea pig for testing the medicine.

But examining the urine is only one way of diagnosing illness in Tibetan medicine. There are many ways. In particular, there's a method for checking pulses that's considered to be quite advanced. It's called the "seven amazing pulses." As far as I know, there's only one person in India currently practicing this method. Not only can this doctor accurately diagnose a particular person's state of health from head to toe, but he can also determine the physical and mental state of the person's close relatives. Astrological charts can be drawn up on the pulses, so they can be viewed from the perspective of past, present, and future. This is all included in the second, or the healing, aspect.

## **Sound**

The third step is sound. Sound is the result of movement. If nothing moves, there's no sound. If something moves, then there's sound. Sound comes from music, from voice and from nature—like waterfalls, wind and fire. These are all interconnected.

The Sanskrit language is based on the principle of sound. The principles and rules of Sanskrit have been translated into Tibetan as the two volumes known as the *Kalapa* and the *Chandrapa*. A person who studies and totally understands these two books understands both sound and the basic principle of the language.

The basic principle of the Sanskrit language is quite simple: Everything starts from "a." There's no sound without the "a" sound. We cannot make any noise at all without involving "a." So the key, the foundation, the heart of all sound is "a." That is an example of sound as it relates to the human voice.

There's an historic event that took place during the lifetime of one of the emperors of India that illustrates the power of sound in the context of music. A particular emperor decided to test the musical accomplishment of all the musicians in the land. When one of the musicians performed what was known as "fire music," the fire quality of the sound lit the candles in the various lamps. This is a true story. Even now, people practice this type of music, although I, personally, know of no one who has that level of accomplishment these days. In a museum, I once saw a half-burned sitar that supposedly caught on fire when its owner played the sound of fire.

I've seen another story in several instruction textbooks, or *ti*. *Ti* contain factual stories, not fairy tales. In this particular story, a man was in a cave, meditating on sound. One day a crow flew into his cave and told him that a group of people were approaching and that the horse that the leader of the group was riding was having some trouble.

The man rose and left his cave. Just as the crow had said, a group of people were approaching on horseback. A colt, which was making a lot of noise, followed in the rear. The horse that the leader of the group was riding was the colt's mother.

The man heard the colt say to its mother, "I cannot walk so fast. Wait for me." The mother horse replied, "I want to wait, but there's something on my back that's hurting me and making me go fast."

The man walked up to the leader of the group and told him that something was wrong on the back of his horse.

When they removed the horse's saddle, they found that a needle had been left there by mistake, and that needle was pinching the horse.

This story demonstrates that if we develop this practice, we can even understand the language of animals. I once saw a practical explanation for this in a text: "If your mind is together, and you hear a dog bark, you'll know why that dog is barking. You'll know if the dog is happy or upset, angry or afraid." I think this is the key. When our mind is more together, these senses can develop quite spontaneously.

### **Tsad-ma, or Science**

The fourth of the eight ordinary knowledges is *tsad-ma*, which is like science. Everything has a reason. The reason for everything that happens is the interdependence of whatever exists. Yesterday I said that the appearance of a tree depends on everything around that tree—the sky, the conditions under the ground, the air for miles in all directions. A tree is affected by everything around it. The same is true of people. We're in a particular situation because of everything that has happened to us over many lifetimes. Everything contributes—parents, friends, atmosphere, environment. This is all included in *tsad-ma*. *Tsad-ma* directly translates into truth, but many people translate it as logic, because certain logical methods are developed in the *tsad-ma* text to prove the truth.

These are the four basic kinds of ordinary knowledge and wisdom. There are four additional subjects that complement these—poetry, astrology, term and expression. Poetry includes everything that tries to express something. Astrology includes complicated calculations, mathematics, measuring distance and direction, and geomancy, or the principle of the energy flow. Term means terminology. Our terminology is how we combine sound, meaning and truth. The last one, expression, includes everything, but the most intense expressions are drama and dance.

These eight things—the four ordinary knowledges and four things that complement them—cover all ordinary knowledge. The deeper we get into this ordinary knowledge, the more wisdom we develop. The less deeply we get into it, the less wisdom we develop. We deepen our ordinary knowledge and ordinary wisdom out of our desire for extraordinary knowledge and wisdom, the second aspect of wisdom.

### **Extraordinary Knowledge and Wisdom**

In this particular text, extraordinary knowledge and wisdom is expressed through the Four Noble Truths, which involve the truth of suffering, the truth of the cause of suffering, the truth of the path, and the truth of the peace.

The truth of suffering means that anything that happens in life, whether positive or negative, will eventually bring suffering. It's easy for us to see how negative circumstances will cause suffering, but harder to see that even positive circumstances will lead to suffering. This is true because, without understanding, without awareness, we naturally become attached to those positive circumstances. We don't want to lose them. Without awareness and wisdom, we don't realize that we will eventually lose them. Because we don't want to lose them, when we do, it brings suffering. How much we suffer depends on how much we cling to whatever it is.

The second of the Four Noble Truths is the cause of suffering. The cause of suffering is simply the absence of awareness and wisdom. In the absence of awareness and wisdom, passion and aggression arise. No effort is needed for passion and aggression to arise. Simply leave everything alone, and passion comes, aggression comes. We let ourselves get carried away by our passion and aggression, which only brings more passion, more aggression, more suffering. That's what we call the truth of the cause of suffering.

The truth of the path is beyond suffering. It's the absence of suffering. When we say "the path to peace," it means that since all of this passion and aggression brings suffering, if we develop a sense of awareness, mindfulness and wisdom, there's a chance for us to overcome our passion and aggression. When we overcome passion and aggression, we develop peace. So that's the path to peace. And that's the truth of the path.

The last of the Four Noble Truths is the truth of peace. The truth of peace is a vast subject, but, for now, we can say that if a person who has constant, spontaneous mindfulness and awareness, and who develops constant wisdom, experiences something negative, it won't be too bad. If it's positive, it won't bring suffering. When that person enjoys pleasant circumstances, he will appreciate it. When those circumstances pass, he will expect it and it won't bother him. His suffering won't be excessive, or cause him to sink into depression. Constant ease and peace will develop in the person, which can gradually lead him to a high level of peace.

### **Super Knowledge and Wisdom**

I used the term "super knowledge and wisdom" when I first introduced this highest wisdom, but it was only for lack of a better word. In *Bodhisattvacharyavata*, Santideva says about this wisdom: "All of the branches are explained by Buddha for wisdom." By "all of the branches," Santideva means the other five paramitas—generosity, morality, patience, diligence and contemplation, because they all develop wisdom. Wisdom is the outcome of the other five. In other texts it says, "One paramita is all paramitas."

Whenever the highest aspect of wisdom is achieved, it becomes the paramita. When it happens with generosity, it becomes generosity paramita. When it happens with morality, it becomes morality paramita. Until this highest wisdom, a gesture will remain as a specific act of generosity and morality, not the paramita. This super aspect of wisdom goes beyond ordinary knowledge and wisdom, beyond extraordinary knowledge and wisdom. It's reaching the highest aspect of wisdom, which is the end of the development of the wisdom process itself.

At the beginning of our discussion yesterday morning, I explained the three circles—the circle of the subject, the circle of the object and the circle of the action. The highest wisdom means freedom from these three circles. Remember, when we talk about wisdom, we're talking about ordinary, extraordinary and the highest. We can get confused if we don't know that it covers both ordinary worldly knowledge, like making a cup of tea, as well as the highest of wisdom, like going beyond the three circles.

So, the paramita means reaching beyond all the understanding, all the knowledge, all the development of that understanding and knowledge. How far can a person develop their understanding? A person can develop their understanding until they reach wisdom. How far can a person develop wisdom? A person can develop

wisdom until they reach the last stage of wisdom, the highest wisdom. The word that's most often used for this is enlightenment.

I think that covers our discussion. Would you like to ask some questions?

At what point during these three stages of contemplation and meditation can one begin to influence the health of the body?

It very much depends. A person can do a specific meditation with the motivation for better health, certainly. There's a practice which involves eating nothing but small stones. The body digests the essence of the stones, gets full nourishment and stays very healthy. I, personally, studied the texts, and received the instructions and transmission for the practice. Specific stones are selected according to their shape, color and texture, and depending on your physical, mental and emotional condition. We also have certain herbs or pills made out of plants, along with many physical exercises and visualizations.

In the beginning, we take the stone with the pill, and cut down on food. By drinking water, doing lots of exercises and doing visualizations, we digest the stones. We receive the essence of the energy from the stone. We grow very thin and strong. So, this is an extreme method of influencing the body.

Are these eighty-four wisdoms related to the other wisdoms?

All of it is related to the law of nature. For example, when we hear soft music, we feel a certain way because it's touching the law of nature. When other kinds of music are played, we feel angry or aggressive. That's also touching the law of nature. Or when we read poetry, we get very specific feelings. That's also getting close to the law of nature. That's how it works.

Rinpoche, you talked about laws or rules that apply to writing poetry. Can you say a little about that?

All Tibetan poetry is based on a text by \_\_\_\_\_ [?], of India. There are three parts. The first and last parts involve philosophy, calculations and sound, and are very complicated. The middle one is similar to poetry I've seen in the U.S. There are many kinds of poetry, but all poetry follows certain laws. If we don't follow the law, the poem doesn't make sense. It becomes contradictory. Bad poetry is poetry that doesn't follow the law of nature.

This particular text has thirty-five laws. I can't go through all of them, but I was very impressed with this approach. I even wrote a book about it sixteen years ago, when I was sixteen years old. We call this poetry "direct poetry." We don't use any examples at all. We don't use any words that represent something else. You just use the direct word. For example—"a blue-necked peacock." There's no example of a blue-necked peacock—only the blue-necked peacock itself.

Now there are four words in this first one: kind, activity, quality, what it has. First—the main kind. Something can be of the elephant kind, the man kind, the tree kind or any other kind. In this instance, the blue-necked peacock is from the peacock kind. So, we're talking about one particular kind. Second is activity. Voice can reach distance. That's an activity, an action. It can reach far. Third is the quality. The peacock moves slowly, carefully. That's the quality of the peacock. Fourth is what the

peacock has. The peacock has colorful feathers. It's talking about one thing in four different ways.

When you study poetry, a teacher will give you one of these four categories and ask you to write maybe twenty examples. Your teacher will review them and tell you which ones work and which don't. For example, if you say "peacock speaks," your teacher will tell you it doesn't work, because a peacock doesn't speak, it makes noise. In that way, it's very subtly refined. It's a discipline.

After you finish all thirty-five, the second one is the example. There are thirty basic examples. These are the particular terms, like "it's like it," "it's similar to it," "it competes with it," "it's unseparated," "identical." These are the thirty laws. It also involves the second part, which has sixty. So, there are ninety laws to go through.

The third thing involves the finish. For example, you say, "there's nothing which isn't impermanent." That's it. There's no more. This also has many aspects.

So, there are many rules, and when you study poetry, you have to master them, one by one. If you don't succeed at first, the teacher will teach again and again until you master it. If you don't succeed at all, the teacher will quit, concluding that you can't manage to write poetry.

But if you're able to master these rules, you can spontaneously write poetry without contradiction. You become good at it. It's like studying drama. When you're beginning, you make lots of mistakes. But when you practice and become good at it, you don't have to think about it.

Rinpoche, in the West we have lots of freedom. How can we use that freedom responsibly?

Total freedom is only truly meaningful if your principle is clear. When you have no principle, your freedom drives you crazy, because you have nothing to base that freedom on. For instance, if you have the choice of seeing any of ten films, unless you have a clear principle, you don't know which to choose. When you have principle, you can go to the movie you like and leave the rest. That's how principle relates to freedom.

I'm curious about the sound structure in Sanskrit language.

It's not about learning the Sanskrit language, it's about learning the principle of Sanskrit sound. If you expect to be able to speak Sanskrit after you learn this text, you'll be disappointed. But it will explain the nature of sound.

What is the function of sound in the meditation practice?

Its specific function varies, but definitely, meditation practice involves sound. Silence is one example of sound. It's the ultimate of sound, but sound manifests out of the silence.

I understand what you said about fear being rather useless—for example, if a bomb is dropped, because we only die once. But my fear is that the entire planet will be gone and will no longer be here for the precious human birth. Is there a teaching about that possibility?

Anything is possible, but as far as prophecy is concerned, the present time is quite bad. Some people call these days the kali yuga, but this isn't accurate. The kali yuga isn't referring to ten years, or one-hundred years. Kali yuga refers to the time when, from the beginning of the universe to the end of the universe, there's no understanding at all. That's not the case in these days. This is simply a bad time for our planet.

I haven't seen any Buddhist prophecy that says the whole world will be destroyed at this time, although there are many texts I haven't yet seen. It's a vast subject. But like I said yesterday, there's no point in being afraid, because fear doesn't help. Feeling panicked or helpless about something gets us nowhere. If I learn that a nuclear bomb has been discharged and it's going to drop at any time, I'm going to call my friends and have a tea party. What else can I do? I'm not going to hide under my bed. I'd rather have a tea party and pray and meditate, rather than just crying and hiding under the bed.

There are many signs that we're in bad times. For example, because people come to me for blessings, I touch hundreds of heads all the time. I don't mean to insult anybody, but some people's heads feel just like wood. They're very tight. There's no light. Something's missing. That's a sign that many people are in bad health.

We can see it in the food we eat. Since the year 1500, the human genetic system has altered very little, and yet, our food has changed a lot. Since we've been feeding our bodies foods that aren't really suitable for our physical systems, diseases inevitably arise. Also, in the year 1500, we were walking and doing a lot more physical work. Since then, we've been doing more mental and emotional work, and sitting around more. If someone from the year 1500 were to see us in our present condition, they'd consider all of us very sick.

Can suffering become so extreme that you can disassociate from life on this planet?

It depends on how you look at it. That relates very closely to what I said about the kali yuga, which is like total night, the total absence of understanding, so it's possible.

Is there a rationale for not being moral in some circumstances?

I think it's a matter of how you define morality. Yesterday we translated morality as *tsultrim*, or proper or appropriate law or rule. It doesn't mean that because somebody said something it should be that way and you become fanatic about it. That's not morality. Morality means that a positive result is the result of positive cause and negative result is the result of negative cause, and that a positive result isn't caused by a negative cause and a negative result isn't caused by a positive cause. That's what morality is all about. When you're aware of this, your way of thinking about it changes.

I read a letter from Rumtek saying His Holiness Karmapa's letter had been opened and ceremonies he requested had been done. Has he been reborn and found?

I think the information is one-fourth correct. His Holiness Karmapa passed away in the United States five years ago, and, historically, his incarnations were usually recognized by a letter that was left by the previous life, saying what family he would be return into, and when and where he could be found. His Holiness Karmapa was the 16th. He left a letter several years before he passed away. That letter was opened in his monastery in Sikkim by his disciples.

When we opened the letter, we found that it contained two letters—one open and one sealed. In the open letter, he wrote many prayers, many things to do. He also told us when to open the next letter, and asked that we keep it confidential until the appropriate time.

In Tibetan Buddhism, the enthronement of a person like His Holiness Karmapa should be done in a traditional way, which goes back about a thousand years, to the first Karmapa. So, we do it as it was done in the past, as appropriately, elaborately and traditionally. We try to give people at least a year's notice before the actual enthronement, so they can prepare. If that's not possible, we try to give at least six months advance notice. But I cannot say anything for sure, because his letter might say "I'll be born in this family, and do this and this and that, and do the enthronement in a certain time, only two weeks." That's also a possibility, so I cannot say for sure.

Can you speak about the prayers he left?

He left a number of instructions, including instructions to read the entire teachings of Buddha. This means the *Kangyur* and *Tengyur*, which consists of 333 volumes.

Didn't he leave specific prayers for the various centers?

Yes. Each center was sent a letter requesting that they do specific prayers.

Okay, I think we'd better stop here.

[Closing prayers]

[Transcribed and edited by Stephanie Harold]