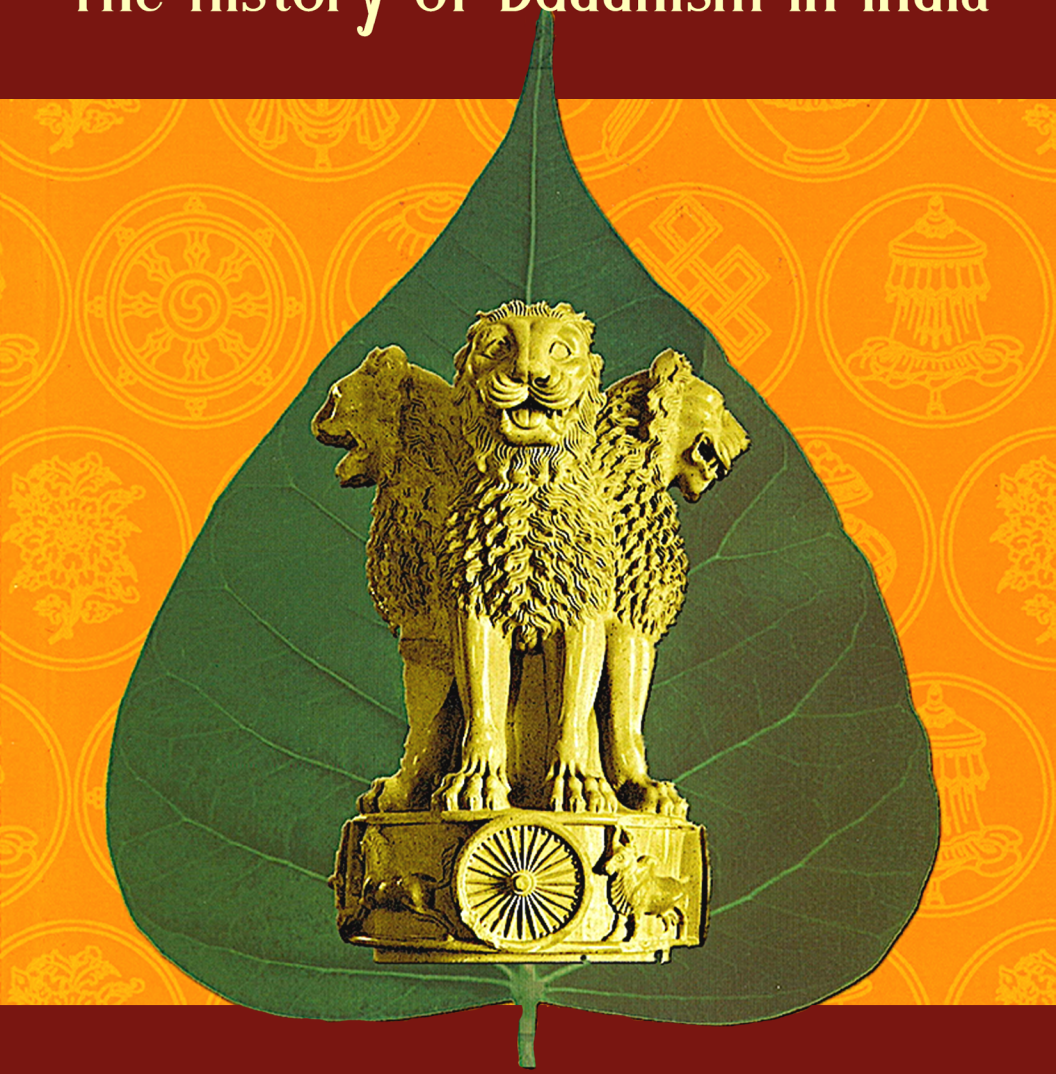
The History of Buddhism in India



Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche

The History of Buddhism in India

by Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche

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Foreword

I am very grateful to Palpung Institute, Zhyisil Charitable Trust, for the publication of this book, in which the great Kagyu master Khabje Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche expounds not only the meaning of the different aspects of the Buddha's teachings, but also brings together and illuminates three special topics: the life and major deeds of the Buddha, the development of Buddhism, and pilgrimage to holy sites.

As the enlightened Buddha is the embodiment of dharmakaya, his very presence and every activity are a teaching and an example. As a Buddhist, it is essential to have an awakened knowledge of the Buddha's life story in order to enter and follow the path of the true Dharma.

After the Buddha's passing, his uncorrupted teachings and blessings continue to be of benefit to oneself and others to help to pacify negative Karma, develop inner clarity and peace for spiritual growth.

At the time of Buddha Shakyamuni, he himself said that devotees should make pilgrimage to and pay homage at the main Buddhist historical sites, blessed by past Buddhas and to be blessed by the Buddhas yet to come. Through this we recollect and rejoice in the noble deeds and qualities of the Buddha which bless us in order to help strengthen our practice to achieve the fruition of the sublime Dharma.

Therefore, through the unsurpassable understanding of the Buddha's life and deeds, the noble efforts of those to preserve the Dharma, and the merit of pilgrimage, I pray that all beings be inspired to enter and progress on the path of enlightenment.

— Ven. Lama Karma Shedrup Cho Gyi Senge Kartung
Palpung Thubten Chokyi Ghatsal
Buddhist Institute Auckland, New Zealand
2 December 2007

The Life of the Buddha

The story of how Buddhism developed begins, of course, with the story of Buddha Shakyamuni,[1] who is the guide for all Buddhists. We should not make the mistake of believing that since the Buddha was born in India he taught in a typically Indian style. The Buddha was born for a very special purpose: he came to this world in order to help and teach the whole of mankind, and also all other sentient beings, the path that leads to happiness.

Examining the main religions of the world, one will find that all the great teachers, whether Christian, Muslim or Buddhist, were very special people. They all had extremely pure motivation and aspiration to help other beings. When they came to teach other beings it wasn't in the way of a military conquest, but rather in the form of a teaching that was intended to help beings find happiness. So most of these great teachers gave teachings that remain even today,

1. Actually there have been many Buddhas, but the one of our present time is the Buddha Shakyamuni, who was born in 563 B.C.E. in Lumbini (in present day Nepal) and died in 483 B.C.E. in Kushinagar (in present-day India).

while military empires have come and gone by the hundreds. One may wonder why those teachings spread so widely, and why they are still around today. The reason is that these teachers had a very pure motivation to help others, from the very beginning. They taught true, pure paths that could lead to happiness.

The Buddha Shakyamuni's teachings have been practiced for 2,500 years and, considering the history of people who practiced Buddhism, we find that the teachings generated little suffering, problems or difficulties. On the contrary, a great number of people found peace and liberation through these teachings.

The Twelve Deeds of the Buddha

There are many great deeds of the Buddha recorded, but these can be summarized under the twelve most important, most famous deeds.[2] The first of these twelve deeds occurred when the Buddha was teaching in the paradise of Tushita, which is in the *god realms*.[3] While the Buddha was teaching there, his previous motivation re-

2. The Hinayana interpretation is that the Buddha was an ordinary man who worked hard and achieved enlightenment. The Mahayana interpretation, which Thrangu Rinpoche uses, is that each of the thousand Buddhas of this eon will perform a set of twelve deeds as an example to ordinary beings and thus start a new cycle of teachings after Buddhism has disappeared from the world again each time.

3. Tushita is the place, more precisely in the sambhogakaya, which can be visited by highly accomplished masters such as Asanga. This particular realm, called a "pure realm" or the "god realm," is where the next Buddha, Maitreya, resides. It is the fourth of the six subdivisions of the desire realm of gods.

minded him that it was necessary to take birth in Jambudvipa and teach the Dharma. He then considered five things: the land where he ought to be born, the caste he should be born into, the family into which he should be born, who his mother was to be, and that the time was right for him to be born (when the five degenerations were on the increase). After having made these determinations, he decided to leave Tushita paradise and take birth in our world. This particular deed, of leaving Tushita to be born, had a special significance. It was intended to teach us that somebody who has achieved enlightenment is no longer constrained by *karma* and has control over anything he or she does.

The second of the twelve great deeds of the Buddha was his entry into the womb of his mother, Mayadevi.[4] One may wonder why he took such a birth, if he had complete control over everything. Why wasn't he born miraculously from a lotus flower, as was Padmasambhava, or why didn't he simply descend from the sky? He didn't do this because, although it would have been very impressive and attracted many people, the Buddha was thinking of the long-term. His future disciples may have felt that it was all right for someone like the Buddha to practice and achieve enlightenment because

4. The Buddha was born on the border of present-day India and Nepal in Lumbini, which is actually in Nepal near Rummindei. The ruins of the palace that Buddha lived in can be visited. We know this is the correct location because the Buddhist King Ashoka, who lived in the second century B.C.E. put a pillar in Lumbini to mark the spot where the Buddha was born and grew up. This pillar says, "Here was born the sage of the Shakya," which is the clan the Buddha came from.

he was a very special person from the beginning. They may have thought that ordinary human beings couldn't reach enlightenment because they didn't have these same miraculous powers. So the Buddha took a womb birth to show that even ordinary human beings can achieve the highest realization, to instill conviction and confidence in his future disciples.[5]

The third special deed of the Buddha was his birth in the garden at Lumbini (which is in present-day Nepal). Although the Buddha took an ordinary human birth, there was still something very special about his birth. He came out of the body of his mother through her right side. Some people might start wondering how this was possible. They might think, "Well, what exactly happened? Did the rib cage crack?" One doesn't need to think in terms of anatomical problems because the Buddha was a miraculous being, and he just took birth through his mother's right side.

At the time of the Buddha's birth there were many very special things happening where he was born. Suddenly, some crops started growing. Trees appeared all over the area of Lumbini, and some very special flowers, such as the Udumbara flower that had never grown in this area, started blooming everywhere. From that moment onwards, he was given the name of Siddhartha, in Sanskrit or

5. According to the Mahayana he was a bodhisattva who attained Buddhahood in this lifetime, but according to the Vajrayana he had already attained Buddhahood and only showed the appearance of a bodhisattva attaining Buddhahood for the sake of beings.

Dundrup in Tibetan, which means "The One That Makes Everything Possible." As a result of interdependent origination, the presence of a high being, especially his or her birth, produces changes in the environment, such as flowers blooming.[6]

A few years later, when the Buddha had grown up a little, he trained in all possible arts, crafts and sciences, and thus became very knowledgeable, very scholarly, and very skillful. This was his fourth deed. This may be a little surprising because the Buddha was already enlightened, or at least a great *bodhisattva* residing on the tenth bodhisattva level (Skt. *bhumi*). It should not have been necessary for him to train in worldly skills because he should have known them naturally. However, there was again a specific reason for doing this, and this was to counteract various misconceptions which people might have had. One misunderstanding may be to think that the Buddha was someone who was simply a meditator, without any academic education. Another was the idea that he already possessed all this knowledge and didn't need to learn. This could give rise to the doubt that if ordinary humans tried to learn something, it would lead to no results. So to overcome these mis-

6. Buddha's mother Mayadevi died just seven days after giving birth to the Buddha. Because a Brahmin named Kaundinya made a prophecy at the Buddha's birth that he would renounce the world, Buddha's father raised him in luxury and banned all things that might remind him of samsara. At sixteen the Buddha married his cousin Yashodhara. At the age of 29, just after the birth of his son, Rahula, he left the palace. One can see the ruins of this palace excavated originally by Makherji in 1899, and a modern temple was erected near this spot.

conceptions, the Buddha worked at becoming a scholar and became very skilled in all different arts. It also shows that it is necessary to receive a full education in the culture in which we are appearing. We must be fully at one with various positive aspects of our culture in order to become a vehicle for transmitting the Dharma.

The fifth deed of the Buddha was to marry, have a child and enjoy the company of his queen, Yashodhara, as well as consorts and all the pleasures of royalty. He did this so that his future disciples wouldn't think that the Buddha, or an enlightened person, was unable to enjoy any pleasures. The other reason for living such a sensuous life was to show that, even though the Buddha had all the finest pleasures, it did not bring him satisfaction. He had understood that there was a higher form of happiness to be sought.

The sixth deed of the Buddha was his renunciation. The palace was enclosed with high walls and four gates: one facing each of the cardinal directions. The Buddha began to walk outside the precincts of the palace, each time leaving through a different gate. The first time he went out through the eastern gate of the palace, he saw the suffering of an old man, and discovered for the first time that all people experience the degeneration of body. Another time he left the palace through the southern gate and, seeing a sick person, discovered the suffering that all people, at one time or another, experience. Next, he went out through the western gate and, seeing a dead person, discovered the pain of death, which everyone

must undergo. This hit him really hard because he realized that no matter how rich or powerful you are, and no matter how much pleasure and enjoyment you have, there is no way to escape from the suffering of old age, sickness, and death. No one can fight and defeat these three kinds of suffering.

Then the Buddha realized that maybe there is a way out, which is the practice of a spiritual path. The Buddha understood this when he left the palace through the northern gate and saw a monk. At this point he felt great weariness and renounced the world at the age of twenty-nine.[7]

His seventh deed was the practice of austerities for six years, near the Nairanjana river in India. The austerities did not lead to his enlightenment, but these years were not wasted. They had a specific purpose of showing future disciples that the Buddha had put an enormous amount of effort, perseverance and diligence into realizing the goal of enlightenment. This seventh deed was also to show that, as long as someone is attached to money, food, clothes and all the pleasures of life, they can't really dedicate themselves to spiritual practice. However, if one gives up attachment, then it is

7. The Buddha left in royal garb with his charioteer Chandraka and his favorite horse Kanthaka and then stopped at a river, cut his hair, which is a sign of renunciation, and took on the robe of a Shramana, which is the name of the wandering religious adepts seeking enlightenment outside the formal Brahmin religious orders. He is reported to have gone to teachers Kalama of Vaishali and Rudraka Ramaputra of Rajagriha but, not satisfied by these, went to the Nilajana River (its modern name is the Lilajan river near modern Urel) where, with five other Brahmins, he engaged in ascetic practices which led to starvation.

possible to achieve buddhahood without too much difficulty. So that is why the Buddha engaged in six years of austerities by a riverside.

The eighth deed of the Buddha was his giving up of the austerities by accepting a bowl of yoghurt, going to the bodhi tree, and vowing to stay there until he reached complete enlightenment. In contrast to the austerities, the Buddha ate nutritious food and gave his body a rest; he put his clothes back on and went to the bodhi tree. The Buddha gave up the austerities to show his future followers that the main object of Buddhist practice is working with one's mind. We have to eliminate the negativity in our mind and develop the positive qualities of knowledge and understanding. True practice should be in the middle of the two extremes: practicing too many austerities, and being too indulgent. The first extreme is when you starve yourself, or you don't allow yourself food and drink. These practices also involve placing yourself in extreme physical conditions, such as being too hot or too cold. This is pointless because it has no true significance. The other extreme is where you just follow any of your desires. This is endless because there is a constant escalation of desires: if you have ten pleasures you'll want a hundred; if you have a hundred, you'll want a thousand. You will never find any satisfaction, and you will also never be able to practice the dharma. So the Buddha wanted to show us that we have to avoid the extremes of too much austerity and too much indulgence: that practice lies somewhere in the middle.

The ninth deed of the Buddha is called "The subduing of the mara, Papiyan," with Papiyan being the leader of the Maras. This happened when the Buddha was sitting under the bodhi tree. Mara used forms related to the three *disturbing emotions* [Skt. *klesha*], of ignorance, desire, and aggression, in order to lure the Buddha away from his pursuit of enlightenment.

The first deception, representing ignorance, was that the Buddha was asked to abandon his meditation and return immediately to the kingdom because his father, King Shuddhodana, had died, and the evil Devadatta had taken over the kingdom. This did not disturb the Buddha's meditation, so Mara then tried to create an obstacle using desire. He showed the Buddha his beautiful daughters, who tried to deceive and seduce him in all possible ways. When this did not disturb the Buddha's meditation, Mara then used hatred: coming towards the Buddha surrounded by countless horribly frightening warriors who were throwing weapons at the Buddha's body. But the Buddha wasn't distracted or fooled by these three poisons. He remained immersed in compassion and loving-kindness, and therefore triumphed over this display of the three poisons.

The tenth deed of the Buddha was his enlightenment, which he reached while meditating under the bodhi tree. Because the Buddha had developed all the qualities of meditation to the utmost he was able to reach enlightenment, which he did to show that we also have the same potential. As a matter of fact, the main point of

the whole Buddhist philosophy is to show us that buddhahood is not something to be found outside, but something we can achieve by looking inside ourselves; we can achieve enlightenment in the same way as the Buddha Shakyamuni reached enlightenment. The qualities that we will attain with enlightenment will be no different from the ones that the Buddha attained. We can also purify whatever negative emotions the Buddha managed to purify. The Buddha started as a bodhisattva, and then became someone who achieved enlightenment, to show us that we, also, can do the same.[8]

The eleventh deed of the Buddha occurred when he turned the Wheel of the Dharma three times, which means when he gave the three great cycles of teachings. At the time of the Buddha, the people of India believed that if one made offerings and prayed to a god then that god would be satisfied and happy, and in return would give you liberation and happiness. They also believed that if you didn't make offerings and pray to the gods they would be very angry, throw you down to the hells and inflict other states of suffering upon you. This idea of gods isn't really one of a special deity, they are only the embodiment of desire and aggression.

8. At the age of thirty-five he took the milk offered by the girl Sujata and sat under the pipal tree, which is also known as the bodhi tree, for seven weeks seeking enlightenment. This bodhi tree can be visited in the modern city of Bodhgaya in northern India, which is one of the holiest places in Buddhism, particularly the Mahabodhi stupa erected after the time of the Buddha. The original bodhi tree has died but an offspring of this tree is still there and is the object of a great deal of worship. This area was excavated by Cunningham in the 1890s and there are still railings and other stonework from the first century B.C.E.

In Buddhism, we do not expect our happiness or our suffering to come from the Buddha. It is not believed that if we please the Buddha he will bring us happiness, and if we displease the Buddha he will throw us into some lower realm. The possibility of happiness or reaching liberation is entirely up to us. If we practice the path that leads to liberation we will attain buddhahood, but if we do not practice it then we cannot expect to reach enlightenment: it's in our hands whether we want to find happiness or suffering. But still, there is something that comes from the Buddha, and this is the path to liberation. To provide us with that means for liberation the Buddha turned the Wheel of the Dharma.

The twelfth deed of the Buddha was his passing away which was in the town of Kushinagar. He asked his students if they had any final questions, and then lying in the "lion's posture" he passed away. His last words were "Bhikshus, never forget, decay is inherent in all composite things."

The Three Wheels of Dharma

In the previous chapter the twelve deeds of the Buddha were discussed. The eleventh deed of the Buddha was turning the wheel of dharma. What is the actual meaning of this phrase? When we speak of dharma, we usually refer to the teachings given by the Buddha, but in fact dharma has two meanings: one is the scriptural dharma that came down to us from the Buddha and the other is the dharma of realization. Actually, the root of all dharma is realization, meaning that one understands the true nature of phenomena just as it is. To obtain such understanding, one has to develop all the good qualities of meditation with much diligence, effort and, perseverance. Through this work in meditation, one comes to a point where a special understanding, knowledge, and insight never experienced before arises. At this time one reaches the ultimate fruition, true realization. This is what is meant by the dharma of realization. But in order to achieve this realization, we need a foundation to work

from. We need to work from the scriptural dharma which is the dharma as a teaching given us by the Buddha.

There are two main classes of scriptural dharma: the teachings of the *sutras* and the teachings of the *tantras*. The sutras of the Buddha were given in three different waves or turnings of *the wheel of dharma*. The first turning of the wheel of dharma was the *Hinayana* teachings. These teachings were intended for individuals whose mind was not yet very open and who had a lesser aspiration to achieve enlightenment.

The second wave of teachings, called the second turning of the wheel of dharma, are the teachings on *emptiness* and the Prajnaparamita teachings. These are teachings of the *Mahayana*.

Finally, the third wave of teachings was the bridge between the sutras and the tantras. These were the teachings in which the Buddha taught that absolutely everyone has *Buddha-nature* or Buddha-essence.

The Sutras

The first turning of teachings were given in Varanasi, which you can visit in India nowadays. The Buddha taught in the deer park (which is now called Sarnath), which at the time was a very remote and solitary place.[9] After the Buddha reached his enlightenment, he

9. The deer park in which the Buddha gave his first sermon, explaining the four noble truths, is in modern-day Sarnath, which is located four miles north of the city of Varanasi

remained completely silent and didn't teach for seven weeks. The reason for this was to show that the dharma is very rare, special, and valuable, and this is why the Buddha just remained silent for some time until he was requested to teach. The request was made by many gods, including Brahma.[10] Having had the request to teach, the Buddha went to Varanasi and gave the teachings in the deer park. He gave the teachings to five men who were called"the five good followers,"[11] who were connected by previous karma to the Buddha and who through this link, were the first ones to receive his teaching.

The subject matter of this first turning of the wheel of dharma was the teaching of the *Four Noble Truths*. The Buddha expounded these Four Noble Truths to make it very clear to all those who were going to follow the Buddha's path what the teachings are, why one needed to practice it, and what kind of results one could be expected from the practice. So to clarify the path the Buddha laid it out in the very clear form of the four truths.

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in India. The deer park actually comes from a story of the Buddha, who was a Banyan deer in a previous life. In Sarnath the emperor Ashoka erected a pillar, which can be seen but has been broken off.

10. This may seem to be a contradiction with the statement that Buddhists don't believe in supplicating a god. Buddhists believe there are gods in that there are deities which were created by mind. But unlike theistic religions Buddhist do not believe these deities created the universe or that they can affect your individual karma by rewarding and punishing you.

11. These five were Kaundinya, Ashvajit, Baspa, Mahanaman, and Bhadrika.

He showed that if we don't practice the path of dharma, we will wander on and on in samsara, but if we practice the dharma, we will gain the liberation of *nirvana*. The Buddha first taught that suffering is inherent to samsara and that this is what we must really overcome. Second, he taught that the cause of this suffering is the disturbing emotions or kleshas and karma. To counteract samsara we must engage in the aspect of nirvana, which again has two parts. The third noble truth of cessation or peace shows what we can achieve. Nirvana is the cessation of suffering. And fourth, the way to achieve this is the truth of the path. Since samsara is by nature suffering, we have to go beyond samsara to eliminate samsara. Since nirvana is peace, this is what we have to try to achieve. But achieving nirvana and eliminating samsara cannot be done automatically. It is through working on the causes of these that we can achieve our goal. This is why the Buddha expounded on the four truths in the form of causes and their effects. The causes of the suffering of samsara are the disturbing emotions such as lust, anger, ignorance, and karma, which need to be overcome. In the same way, the cause of the peace and bliss of nirvana is the path, which needs to be practiced.

So this is how the Buddha gave the whole outline of his teaching in the form of these four truths. Within each aspect of samsara and nirvana, there is this causal relationship between cause and effect.

This series of teachings that began in Varanasi were called the turning of the first wheel of dharma. Later the Buddha turned the wheel of dharma for the second time at Vulture Peak in Rajgir, India.[12] The people who were present during this teaching were *arhats* and bodhisattvas in great numbers. The teaching itself was mostly the exposition of the Prajnaparamita. This is when the Buddha gave the teachings on emptiness and on the conduct of a bodhisattva through the teachings on the six *paramitas*.

In the first turning of the wheel of dharma, the Buddha showed that one had to abandon samsara to achieve nirvana. But how is this possible? Does it mean that we have to go on a long journey to where we have never been before to find nirvana? Does it mean that we have to create something new called nirvana? In fact, it doesn't mean that at all. All it means is that we have to understand the actual nature of phenomena,[13] we have to understand that our

12. Rajgir is located about sixty-two miles south east of the modern city of Patna and still is called Rajagriha and is a holy Buddhist site. Vulture Peak at Rajgir where the Buddha first taught the teachings on emptiness was the heart of the Magadha empire of the Buddha's time. Vulture's Peak (Gridhrakuta) was a place that the Buddha often visited and which can be visited even today. The monastery of Jivakamravana that the Buddha visited has been recently excavated. At Rajgir there are two natural caves where the Buddha lived.

13. Buddhists believe that the world as we see it is not the true nature of phenomena, but rather like an illusion. A Western example would be that we could go up to a red brick wall and hit it. The wall would appear to be solid and made of a single material of hardened clay. This would be its conventional appearance. However, a physicist would tell us that actually the wall is made of billions of atoms that are moving at incredible speeds and the spaces between these atoms is so great that the "wall" is actually 99.99% space. It only appears red because human eyes see the radiation coming from these moving atoms as

present view of reality is mistaken, and we have to remove our impurities. Once we see things as they really are, this is when we can achieve Buddhahood.

The third turning of the wheel of dharma is also called the teachings that gave complete clarification. These teachings were given in Shravasti and other places in India in the presence of all the great bodhisattvas. These teachings revealed that Buddha-nature is present in the mind of all beings. We may wonder why this was taught last. The reason is that in the second turning, the Buddha taught that everything was empty of inherent nature. This teaching could lead to the belief that the goal of the Buddhist path – nirvana – is actually simply complete emptiness or annihilation. To avoid this mistake, the Buddha gave this third set of teachings showing that the mind is not just nothingness. When one achieves Buddhahood, the original intrinsic luminosity of the mind becomes manifest. This luminosity or clarity of the mind means that the mind is not a dark, obscure thing by nature, but has its own inherent, intelligent clarity. Once one has removed the veils, the thick shroud of ignorance, the

being "red." So we can say the apparent nature of the wall is that it is solid and red while its true nature is more like billions of silicon and oxygen atoms flying around. Buddhists about 1500 years ago examining phenomena explained this in terms of saying that all outside matter and internal thoughts were "empty" (Skt. *shunyata*) in that they did not appear as they really are. Thrangu Rinpoche often gives the example of the great meditator Milarepa, who completely realized this emptiness and was then able to do such things as put his hand right through solid rock. This feat, incidentally, has been replicated in the past ten years by the Seventeenth Karmapa, who heads the Kagyu lineage.

inherent clarity of the mind, this brilliance of the intelligence of the mind, will shine in its fullness. Once this clarity of the mind has manifested, then one can understand all of nirvana and samsara very clearly. One has the understanding of phenomena, and this knowledge is accompanied by the greatest bliss and peace.

The Tantras

The three turnings of the wheel of dharma that have just been described correspond to the sutras taught by the Buddha. The Buddha also taught the tantras, which are the teachings of the *Vajrayana*. The Buddha gave four tantras: the *kriya tantras*, the *charya tantras*, the *yoga tantras*, and the *anuttarayoga tantras*.

These teachings were given in many places. Sometimes the Buddha gave these teachings in some of the god realms such as Tushita, and some of the teachings were given in physical places in India. Those receiving these teachings were bodhisattvas and *dakas* and *dakinis* practicing the *secret mantras*. The sutras already provided very deep and vast teachings on the nature of phenomena. But with the Vajrayana, the Buddha was able to give people the possibility of achieving the fruition of the Buddhist path very quickly and without major hardships. The Vajrayana can do this by providing special *skillful means* such as the meditation on the *generation stage*

and the *completion stage* of a deity, and using meditation techniques of looking at the nature of the mind directly.

So the Buddha turned the wheel of dharma and gave all the various teachings of the Hinayana, the Mahayana, and the Vajrayana[14] in different places with different people and at all different times. But also because he was teaching students of vastly different abilities, at times it seemed to them as if the Buddha was mainly spreading the Hinayana; at times it seemed to them as if he was teaching the Mahayana, and sometimes the Vajrayana. Of course, this was just a matter of the way in which the people were perceiving the teachings of the Buddha; it seemed to some that the Buddha was giving completely Hinayana teachings, and to others that he was giving Mahayana teachings completely. The Buddha could also be somewhere else and, through his miraculous powers, give other teachings to others.

Because of this, some people started having the impression that the Buddha had only given the Hinayana teachings, and had not given the Mahayana teachings, which were made up by someone else. Others believed that the Buddha had given the Mahayana teachings, but had not given the Vajrayana teachings and that these Vajrayana teachings had been fabricated by his followers. The belief that the Mahayana and the Vajrayana teachings were created by someone

14. For a detail explanation of these three levels of Buddhist practice see Thrangu Rinpoche's *The Three Vehicles of Buddhist Practice* published by Namo Buddha Publications.

else is based on the belief that the Buddha was just an ordinary man with no extraordinary qualities of enlightenment, instead of seeing a Buddha as being a very exceptional being who came into the world to help people out of his great compassion and to lead them to liberation. Once one thinks of the Buddha as an ordinary Indian man, then next one will have doubts as to whether he actually gave the various teachings attributed to him, and one begins picking and choosing between teachings of the various vehicles.

It is a mistake to identify the Buddha as an ordinary person and to start thinking that maybe the Buddha didn't have complete knowledge, or was not able to teach a complete range of teachings, or that the Buddha could have taught in this place but not in that place. It is not worth entertaining such doubts because the Buddha was not an ordinary person nor was he a god who, if pleased with you, will send you to heaven and, if displeased, throw you into the hell realms. But at the same time, saying the Buddha is not a god doesn't mean that we should think of the Buddha as someone devoid of any special qualities of knowledge, intelligence, and understanding or without any special direct intuition and insight. He was indeed a very special being who gave the complete set of dharma teachings, which were not in contradiction to each other. Each has its own relevance. Whoever practices a teaching of any level or vehicle properly will be able to achieve the respective result

of that particular path. So this was the eleventh deed of the Buddha, the turning of the wheel of dharma.

The twelfth deed of the Buddha was his passing away.[15] The Buddha could have remained in our world for thousands and thousands of years, and this might have been quite beneficial. On the other hand, there would have been the danger that people would start thinking that the Buddha was permanent, which could generate all kinds of misconceptions. Instead by passing away, the Buddha showed that if he had to die, then, of course, everybody else would also have to die one day. So it was to make everyone aware of the impermanence of life, so that they could generate a sense of renunciation, a sense of urgency in their practice, a sense of weariness with this world. It was also to instill the feeling that dharma, the teachings of the Buddha, are very rare, precious, and valuable. So this is why the Buddha passed away in Kushinagar in India.

15. When the Buddha was 79 years old he was accompanied by Ananda and visited several places, including Nalanda, and stopped at a mango grove in Vaishali. He was taken ill and decided to die in exactly three months. He gradually went to Kushinagar and there he laid down in the "lion's position" and passed away at the age of 80. He had taught for 45 years and his last words were, "Decay is inherent in all composite things. Work out your own salvation with diligence." Kushinagar where the Buddha died can also be visited. The ruins of Kushinagar are situated near the town of Kasia twenty-two miles north-east of Deoria in Uttar Pradesh in India. This place has two large Buddhist monasteries located where the Buddha passed away and was cremated. One stupa where the Buddha passed away has been excavated and restored several times and contained a number of relics. There are also eight excavated monasteries nearby. Where the Buddha was cremated is a stupa about fifty feet high.

Through his twelve deeds, the Buddha was able to help beings in our world extensively, particularly through the teachings of dharma. Why did the Buddha come into our world and act through these twelve deeds? The reason was the very exceptional compassion of the Buddha, wanting to help all beings and to lead them onto the path that leads to real happiness. He wanted to show individuals the path to peace, the path to true happiness, by teaching the four truths or the two truths that describe the true nature of everything. He showed us that we have the choice to choose our own happiness and travel on the path that leads to ultimate liberation and happiness. So the Buddha, because of his very great love and compassion for all of us, did not keep these teachings to himself, but turned the wheel of dharma.

The First Council

After the Buddha passed away, his teachings were preserved without any alteration or loss by means of the three great councils. The Buddha didn't speak from books that he had written, and didn't write anything down. Instead, people came and asked him questions and voiced their doubts and their uncertainties. The Buddha would answer these questions, so that the teachings of the Buddha were actually answers to various people's questions and doubts. These questions would become the opportunity for exploring the truth, for speaking of the true nature of everything.

We may ask, "Well, if everything was just said by the Buddha and nothing was written down, how come things didn't get lost or altered or modified as time went on?" The reason this did not happen was that many of those who were receiving the Buddha's teaching were monks totally dedicated to the path of the Buddha. When they listened to the teachings, they did it with all their heart and immediately put the teachings into practice so they realized the fruition of the path extremely quickly, allowing all the qualities of intelligence to rapidly blossom in them. Among other things, they achieved the power of perfect memory which means each word the Buddha said was engraved very deeply in their memory, so that every word was kept in their minds and nothing was lost.

After his passing away one of the Buddha's most important monks named Mahakashyapa gathered 500 arhats for a great council to keep all the teachings intact. The meeting took place in the great Sattapanni cave, which is quite close to Vulture Peak near Rajgir. So these 500 arhats gathered there and the meeting was presided over by three of them in particular: Ananda, Mahakashyapa, and Upali. They recited every word of the Buddha that they had heard and each of these three expounded on a particular aspect of the teachings of the Buddha: Upali expounded the Vinaya teachings, Ananda the Sutras, and Mahakashyapa the Abhidharma. They would begin by saying, "Thus have I heard. This is how the Buddha spoke," and then they would recite everything they had heard. In this way, they

established very clearly and formally what the Buddha's teachings were, so from that point onwards all the teachings were classified into these three groups and kept very systematically.

The purpose of this first council was to make sure that all the immaculate words of the Buddha would be preserved in their purity and wouldn't be lost. For instance, if even one part of a sutra had been lost, then the whole teaching of the Buddha would have lost some of its meaning. That is why they wanted to keep everything intact. But, of course, it is possible that some of us will have doubts about this. We may feel that if there were no books to record the teachings of the Buddha, then maybe the sutras are not complete or maybe some of them have been made up by his followers, so it is quite possible that the sutras are not pure teachings at all.[16]

Well, we do not need to entertain that kind of doubt because the arhats were very great beings who respected the Buddha's teaching so deeply that they wanted to keep the teachings very pure: as they had been delivered originally by the Buddha.

16. In fact almost all Western scholarship into early Buddhism maintains this position.

The Second and Third Dharma Councils

The first council was intended to make sure that all the teachings of the Buddha were kept intact and wouldn't be lost. This happened after the death of the Buddha and mainly consisted of gathering all the teachings together and keeping each category of teaching (the Sutras, Vinaya, and Abhidharma) very clear and very well defined. Each sutra was kept complete and each chapter was kept clearly separate so that nothing would get mixed up or altered. In this way, the first council established what the teachings of the Buddha really were and under which form they had been presented.

Later, the second council, sometimes called the intermediate council, took place 110 years after the Buddha had passed away (in the year 376 B.C.E.). At that time there had been a greater number of new monks joining the sangha and some of them started thinking that some of the rules of discipline laid out by the Buddha were too strict. They tried to establish another ten new rules.[17] They wanted

17. These ten rules were the permission of: (1) exclamations of astonishment such as

to say that these new rules were actually made up by the Buddha. This second council had to be convened to make sure that the teachings wouldn't become modified because of these people's initiative.

To give an idea of the kind of things that these monks wanted to introduce, one was this, if you had done some negative action,then it would be sufficient to fold your hands to your heart and to say something like "hulu, hulu" and then it would be purified and you wouldn't need to do anything else. Another thing they wanted to introduce was that if a monk had done something wrong that went against the discipline of the monastery, then all he would need to say was, "I'm going to confess this." Another monk would say, "Oh, that's very good" and that would be enough and everything would be purified. So they were trying to introduce a lot of simplifications and easy ways of doing things.

During this time, there was a very exceptional being who was an arhat called Yashah. He saw this happening and realized that if nothing was done, the teachings of the Buddha would be altered and perverted. To prevent this from happening, he convened this second council with several other famous arhats.

"ah-o," (2) making exclamations of rejoicing, (3) living by agriculture, (4) to mix the sacred salt that is to be kept for a lifetime with that used in general living, (5) eating at the wrong time because one is traveling, (6) eating food that has been left from a previous meal "with two fingers," (8) taking intoxicants under pretense that it was for medical use, (9) getting a new meditation carpet without fixing the old one, and (10) begging for gold and silver.

Where did the trouble originate about these new monks trying to create new rules? At the time in India, there were six main cities, and the group of monks who wanted to start these new rules all came from Vaishali. So the arhat Yashah invited seven hundred arhats to meet for the council in Vaishali. He led the meeting by saying, "Well, now we have these ten new items that these monks are trying to introduce. The questions we should ask ourselves are whether these ten items can be found in the Sutras or in the Vinaya or in the Abhidharma." He asked all of the arhats that were present where these could be found and all of the arhats replied that they couldn't be found in any of these works. Then he asked, "Are these items in contradiction with the teachings of the Buddha; of the Sutras, the Vinaya, and the Abhidharma?" And the conclusion was that they were in contradiction with the words of the Buddha. As a result, they decided that these rules should be rejected because they didn't agree with what the Buddha had taught and certainly were not part of the teachings of the Buddha.

It was decided that this attempt to introduce new rules should be stopped and that these ten rules should be eliminated. Then the council took advantage of this situation to define once again very clearly what the teachings of the Buddha were so that there was a new, complete reading of the whole of the Sutras, the whole of the Vinaya, and the whole of the Abhidharma to make sure that

these teachings were the only ones to be recognized as the Buddha's teaching.

After the second council, little by little the different communities of monks started to split up into different groups. So at first there were four different groups of shravakas and then this gradually evolved into eighteen different categories of *shravakas*, almost like different sects. Then each group started feeling that they really held the true teaching of the Buddha and their view was the right one and all the other groups were wrong. This, of course, generated a lot of arguments and debates creating a new danger that the teachings of the Buddha might be altered and degraded. So at this time a third council was convened.

The Third Council

At the third council there were 500 arhats led by the Arya Parsva and there were also 400 venerables or scholars with the main one being Vasumitra. The meeting took place in the "land of the Moslems" and this is commonly used to refer to Kashmir. It took place there in a new temple (the Karnikavana Temple) that had been built especially for the occasion by the king.

The individuals meeting were of eighteen different sects of shravakas and the council had to determine which ones were really true followers of the Buddha and which were not. The guideline that was

used to decide which were right and which were wrong was one of the sutras of the Buddha called the *Garland of Gold* sutra. This sutra is a story concerning something that happened at the time of the previous Buddha, the one that came before Buddha Shakyamuni, Buddha Kashyapa. At the time of the Buddha Kashyapa, there was a king called Krikin, who had ten very amazing dreams. His dreams were so unusual that he started to wonder what was happening to him. And he thought that maybe these dreams were a sign that either there was going to be some very bad danger for his kingdom or even to his own life.

So he called in a Brahmin who was a specialist in the interpretation of dreams and asked him to say what he thought of the dreams. The Brahmin said that indeed, there was going to be a lot of trouble for the kingdom and a danger for his own life if he didn't kill the closest thing to his heart.

The closest thing to his own heart was his daughter who was called "Garland of Gold," and she was a Buddhist and didn't like the Brahmins. So once the king had heard the interpretation of his dream, his daughter said to him, "Well, it's very easy. What you should do is to go see the Buddha Kashyapa, and ask him if he thinks it's the right thing to kill me. Then, please go ahead. I don't mind."

So the king went to see Buddha Kashyapa and told him about his dreams, and Buddha Kashyapa replied that the dreams didn't mean

that there would be any trouble for the king himself or his kingdom. The dreams were, in fact, foreseeing events that would happen much later on in a future time. He said each of the dreams depicted events that would take place at the time of Buddha Shakyamuni. So each of the dreams referred to an event in Buddhism with one being applicable to the situation at the time of the third council. In this dream the king saw a long piece of cloth and there were eighteen men who were each trying to get a piece of the cloth. In the end each one got a piece and there were eighteen pieces of cloth.

The Buddha Kashyapa interpreted this as, "This dream hasn't anything to do with your own life as the king. But at the time of Buddha Shakyamuni, there will be eighteen different schools of shravakas. But one shouldn't think that their views are in contradiction with the teachings of Buddha Shakyamuni. In fact, the whole of Buddha Shakyamuni's teachings remains pure and intact, and each of the paths that they are following is the true path and leads to the true fruition. So one mustn't think that some are good and some are bad. Each of the paths belongs to the true path of the Buddha."

So this was the prophesy made by Buddha Kashyapa in the sutra. And that is why the council had to come to the conclusion that each of these eighteen sections of shravakas were all correct in their line of thought and that the teachings that they were following were all the teachings of Buddha Shakyamuni.

During this third council, they also completed their previous work on the gathering of the Vinaya, the Sutras, and the Abhidharma. During the previous councils, they had started to write down these three sections of the Buddha's teachings. By the third council some of these works were already written down. So during the third council they corrected the proofs of what had been written down, so that these teachings were now pure and could be decisively considered as the Buddha's teaching. Then they finished writing down those teachings that were yet not written down. We can say that after the third council was over, all of the Buddha's teachings were finally written down and corrected; so from that point onwards there could be no distortion, no misinterpretation or any alteration of the Buddha's true teachings. This was the work of all these very learned arhats who had a great deal of spiritual insight and a very clear understanding. So through their work the whole of the Buddha's teaching was preserved without loss, without distortion, and remained completely intact.

The Mahayana and Vajrayana Councils

This history of the three councils actually relates more directly to the way in which the Hinayana teachings were preserved,particularly, the Hinayana tradition of the Vinaya. But a similar thing happened in the Mahayana tradition. Some time after the passing away of the Buddha one million bodhisattvas met together under the leadership of the three great bodhisattvas, Vajrapani, Maitreya, and Manjushri on the top of mount Vimalasvabhava, which lies south of Rajgir in southern India. All the teachings of the Buddha were also collected in the three same sections of Sutras, Vinaya, and Abhidharma. The bodhisattva Vajrapani recited the Sutras, the bodhisattva Maitreya recited the Vinaya, and the bodhisattva Manjushri recited the Abhidharma. So in this meeting they also collected all the teachings of the Buddha and classified them into these three main categories.

A similar thing took place with the Vajrayana teachings. The Buddha taught four categories of tantras: the kriya tantra, the charya tantra, yoga tantra, and anuttarayoga tantra. With the lower three

tantras (that is, the kriya tantra, charya tantra and yoga tantras) there was a special meeting of all the bodhisattvas in the god realm to gather all of these teachings, led by Vajrapani. For this reason, in the Vajrayana tradition he is known as "the Lord of Secrets," with secrets referring to the secret mantra, that is, the Vajrayana. How did he come to be the Lord of Secrets? First he was the one who requested the Buddha to turn the profound dharma wheel of the tantras and then, when it was turned, he was the most prominent of the disciples. Later when there was this meeting of the bodhisattvas to collect all the lower tantras, Vajrapani was the leader of this gathering and it is through his action that the tantras have been preserved up to now.

As far as the anuttarayoga tantras were concerned, the *father* tantras and *mother tantras* were mostly requested and received by dakinis such as Vajrayogini, and it was also the wisdom dakinis who collected and preserved these teachings. The *Hevajra Tantra* was transmitted mostly to the bodhisattva Vajragarbha. He later on gathered the teachings and transmitted them in their integrity.

The *Kalachakra Tantra* was transmitted mostly to the Dharma King Sucandra. He was actually an emanation of Manjushri. Hew as the one who also kept the teachings, collected them, and passed them on.

The Shastras

All the different categories of the Buddha's teaching including the sutras and the tantras were transmitted to disciples who didn't just hear these teachings, but who practiced and preserved them so that they were transmitted all the way down to the present time without any defect, alteration or loss.

There are two main categories of the dharma. First there are the actual teachings of the Buddha, and then there are the *shastras*, which are the works that elucidate the meaning of the Buddha's teachings. We've heard about the twelve deeds of the Buddha, and about the three councils and how these allowed all the actual teachings of the Buddha to remain intact and faultless up to now. As Buddhism developed and spread in India, many different scholars wrote works trying to elucidate and clarify the meaning of the Buddha's teachings for others. So these works are what we call the shastras.

The shastras are intended to make the original teaching of the Buddha easier to understand. They do not contain any personal ideas of the writer and do not put forward the author's own theory about anything. So when a teaching of the Buddha is very long and very detailed, the shastras present a summarized, easier to understand form of these teachings. Then when a teaching of the Buddha is rather complex, the shastras make these teachings much more easily understandable. Finally, when a teaching of the Buddha on a

particular topic is scattered in many different sutras, then a shastra may take all these different points concerning the same subject and collect them in one place. So the importance of the shastras is to present the meaning of the Buddha's teaching in a form that is easy for people to understand. One could say that the meaning of these shastras is so close to the Buddha's teaching that it could almost be counted as being part of the actual teachings of the Buddha.

Some people have doubts because they think that maybe the shastras were just concoctions by different writers and scholars that don't really have anything to do with the Buddha's teachings. They also make too much distinction between what is in the scriptures of the Buddha and what is in the shastras. But one shouldn't think that there is a great difference between what the Buddha taught and the shastras, the meditation instructions and the spiritual songs. They should be thought of as a whole, as the same teachings that originated from what the Buddha taught. So whether dealing with the actual words of the Buddha or the instructions of realized masters, we should consider them all as having the same value. Whether we practice the teachings given by the Buddha or the teachings laid out in the shastras, there is no difference except that maybe we will find the shastras a little easier to understand. This is why Tibetans favored the shastras so much.

The Buddha taught the various levels of the dharma by giving teachings of the Hinayana, the Mahayana and the Vajrayana. It is said in

a sutra of the Buddha that whenever the Buddha speaks even one word, that word can be heard in different places, indifferent times, in different ways by the various people according to their spiritual maturity. This means that when the Buddha was teaching, those who were ready for the Hinayana received his teaching from the Hinayana viewpoint and accordingly were able to practice this path and achieve the Hinayana fruition. Simultaneously, someone who was ready for the Mahayana received the teaching from the Mahayana point of view and through practicing this was able to achieve the Mahayana fruition. The same applies also to the Vajrayana.

In the Hinayana tradition it is the Buddha's teachings that are most important. But in Tibet, the shastras became extremely important. One might think that this was rather strange because these shastras in Tibet became even more important in a way than the actual words of the Buddha. But this shouldn't lead us to think that the Buddha's teachings were forgotten, put aside and replaced by the shastras that were just fabricated by scholars who lived after the Buddha. In fact, what happened was that some individuals practiced the Buddha's teaching. They assimilated the meaning of his teachings so well that through the power and blessing of the teaching, they managed to achieve the fruition of the path; so that if they practiced the shravaka aspect of the path, they became arhats. If they practiced the Mahayana, they achieved the bodhisattva levels from the first up to the tenth bodhisattva level. Or if they practiced

the Vajrayana, they achieved the ordinary and the supreme spiritual accomplishments, in particular, the power of direct, intuitive knowledge. Once they had achieved this fruition of the path they were then able to write a shastra which is a landmark, a guidebook for others who were to follow, to show them that if they understood the Buddha's teaching very well and practiced properly, this is what would happen, this is how one could go about it, this is how one should understand it, and so on. So the shastras that they wrote were not a contradiction of the Buddha's teaching, but a reinforcement of the Buddha's teaching.

Those scholars or *panditas* who wrote the shastras didn't necessarily write from their realization. If they wrote from their experience, the result was the same as teachings of the Buddha because they were so completely penetrated with the meaning of the Buddha's teaching and had assimilated it so perfectly that whatever they wrote was out of total conviction in the validity of the Buddha's teaching. Whatever they wrote wasn't just their own ideas put down on paper, but it was to make the Buddha's teaching more easily understandable to most people. This is why we should consider the shastras as being the same as the Buddha's teaching, not as being something foreign to the teaching.

The Three Vehicles

Historically there were different ways each of these levels of the Buddha's teachings spread, according to the various degrees of spiritual maturity and readiness of people. There was a time in India when the Buddhist practices were mostly Hinayana practice. It was the time of the seven patriarchs[18] and other great shravakas.

Later on there was a great flourishing of the Mahayana teachings. This was at the time of the great University of Nalanda,[19] which had such great teachers as Nagarjuna and Asanga. Then still later on there was a great flourishing of the Vajrayana at the time when the University of Vikramashila was prominent with Tilopa, Naropa, and the other eighty-four *mahasiddhas*[20] living in India.

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18. These seven patriarchs were Mahakashyapa, Ananda, Upagupta, Canavasika, Dhitika, Krisna and Mahasudarchana.

19. The ruins of Nalanda lie just seven miles north of Rajgir. The location is said to have been visited several times by the Buddha and is the birth place of Shariputra. When the Chinese pilgrim Fa-hien visited this site in the (4th century?) he saw a stupa to Shariputra there. The Chinese visitor Hiuen Tasang visited Nalanda in 637 C.E. and reports a six-story temple with an 80 foot high copper statue of the Buddha. He stayed and studied there and gave us a description of Nalanda. The remains of about a three story temple remains and one can see the walls of the monastic rooms of the monastery. The monastery was destroyed by the Muslims in the twelfth century. The site was recognized by Cunningham and has been extensively excavated. Today there are eleven monasteries uncovered and one large temple. The statues and bronzes that were recovered are in near by museums.

20. The 84 mahasiddhas were individuals living ordinary vocations who reached high realization using Vajrayana practices. Their story is told in Keith Dowman's *The Buddha's Lions*, Berkeley: Dharma Publishing.

We will look at these three aspects of the Hinayana, the Mahayana, and the Vajrayana in more detail in the following chapters.

The Hinayana Path

When Buddhism first spread the seven great patriarchs emerged and due to them it was the dharma of the shravakas that became widely propagated. We call this path the "Hinayana", which literally means the "lower (or lesser) vehicle." But, of course, this is only a name and we shouldn't think that the Hinayana is an inferior vehicle of the Buddha's teaching. It was only that the Buddha was very skillful in his way of teaching people by giving them many ways to reach enlightenment, and the Hinayana was one of these ways to come to the path and eventually reach liberation. So for a particular type of disciple, this type of teaching is best.

The Mahayana path emphases a very vast motivation. The Vajrayana emphasizes a very fast path that uses many different means to achieve the goal of enlightenment. This, however, does not mean that there was no need for teaching the Hinayana, because the Buddha was able to help countless beings to enter the path of liberation and achieve the ultimate fruition in this way. The Hinayana had this special

capacity and therefore it was the content of the first turning of the wheel of dharma, and it was this aspect of the Buddhist teachings that developed and spread in India first, benefiting many people.

The gradual approach to the path of liberation is most important, and that is why the Buddha first taught the Hinayana. The same thing is true of our own individual practice. We need the foundation of the Hinayana for all of our practice. In other words, we need to thoroughly think about karma, the inevitable link between our actions and their consequences. We also need to generate a very strong sense of renunciation of samsara. So we need to understand and to have developed all these things in ourselves before we can carry on practicing the other levels of the path. Someone who is a beginner cannot be expected to receive an immediate understanding of the deepest nature of phenomena and be ready to understand the ultimate truth. A good analogy is to look at the Buddhist path as a staircase. If you want to go to the top of a house, you need to go up the stairs one step after the other. If you try to jump from the bottom to the top, you will fall down and break your leg. But if you go up steadily and gradually, then your purpose will be very firm and stable. The same thing is true of dharma; you need the firm basis of the Hinayana to progress properly to the rest of the levels of the practice.

There is a very good example to illustrate this gradual approach. Milarepa in the beginning of his search for dharma was looking

for a teacher who would give him a very profound teaching that could free him from all his bad deeds. He went to central Tibet in the provinces of U and Tsang. There he asked someone, where he could find a very good lama who could give him very profound teachings. He was directed towards a great lama who used to give the teachings of the "great perfection" or *Dzogchen* teachings. Milarepa went to see this lama and he said, "I am a very great sinner and I need a teaching that will enable me to become a Buddha in this lifetime."

The lama replied, "Well, don't you worry, I've got just the teaching for you. I've got a very profound teaching, the Dzogchen teachings. If you meditate on it in the morning, in that very morning, you can become a Buddha. If you meditate at night, then that very same evening, you can become a Buddha. If you are a very special person who is spiritually mature with the right karma, then you don't even need to meditate. You will become enlightened immediately. So don't you worry. It will probably help you."

So Milarepa thought to himself, "Well, I must be one of those special people. I am spiritually mature and will develop realization very quickly." And then he went to meditate. And after some days,the lama came and said, "How are you getting on? Are you getting this sign or that sign or indication of progress in meditation?" But Milarepa had to admit that he had no signs whatsoever. Then the lama said, "Well, I'm afraid it must be as you said. You must be a really

bad sinner. I don't think you can manage to become a Buddha. I think you'd better go and see somebody else. You should go and see the king of translators, Marpa. I think he will be able to help you."

So the lesson we can learn from this story is not that Milarepa was a poor meditator or that the Dzogchen teachings are bad. Milarepa was indeed a very special person and the Dzogchen teachings are especially profound. But someone who tries to begin with the deepest teaching won't receive very much benefit from them because one needs some preparation before going on to higher teachings. This is also the reason why the Buddha began his teachings with the Hinayana. This also shows us that the gradual approach in practice is the best. So we shouldn't consider that the Hinayana is a lower teaching. It is instead a very special and necessary level of the teaching.

The Hinayana teachings were entrusted from teacher to disciple. First the Buddha entrusted them to his own disciple the shravaka Mahakashyapa. During his lifetime the Buddha made it very clear that he considered Mahakashyapa as his representative, empowering him thus and allowing him to sit on a throne half the height of his own. When the Buddha had passed away, it was Mahakashyapa who organized the first council with the 500 arhats. And after this council, Kashyapa himself passed away. Then his successor was another great disciple of the Buddha called Arya Ananda who become the chief holder of the Hinayana teachings after the passing away

of Kashyapa. Then when Ananda died, hew as succeeded by his own disciple named Upagupta who had great miraculous powers.

One example of Upagupta's powers is as follows: One time when he wanted to give teachings the mara Papiyan did not like this and emanated invisible devil-like dancers who would dance at the place of the teachings. So on the first day tens of thousands of people attended. On the second day the number of people receiving the teaching diminished, on the third day still fewer came and so on. Upagupta began to realize that there must be some obstacle to the teachings and when he examined this, he understood that it was due to the emanations of the mara Papiyan who managed to get the people to stay away from the teachings. On the seventh day Upagupta himself went to the dancing place through his miraculous powers and put a necklace of flowers around the neck of each of the dancing demons. But as soon as he had finished distributing the flower garlands, they changed into human and dog corpses. However much Papiyan tried to get rid of these corpses, he could not liberate himself from them. In the end he had to go up to Upagupta and ask him to help remove the corpses.

And Upagupta said, "Well if you can promise to stop interrupting the teachings, then I will remove these corpses for you." As he promised to create no more obstacles to the listening of the dharma, Upagupta took away the corpses. And after that, Papiyan admitted that really he had never seen anybody with such great miraculous

powers. He said that in the past he did create many disturbances for the Buddha, but that he had never encountered such an amazing reaction from him. And then Papiyan asked Upagupta, "Did you ever meet the Buddha?" Upagupta replied, "I didn't meet his physical body, but I met his mind, the *dharmakaya*." He could say this because he was a realized shravaka arhat, and so the mara said, "Can you show me the Buddha?" And Upagupta was able to make an emanation of the Buddha, and although it wasn't a perfect copy of the Buddha, it was so similar that the mara was completely overwhelmed as he recognized the form of the Buddha. He then felt very strong faith towards this teacher and started prostrating to him. But the teacher said, "Please stop," and prevented him from doing the prostrations. He said, "If you do this, then my merits, my abilities and my powers will diminish." So he didn't want him to offer him prostrations.

This is just an example of the way in which Upagupta subdued the mara Papiyan. He was a very powerful teacher and with his teachings a lot of his disciples were able to become arhats. Under his guidance there were one or two people reaching arhatship everyday. Every time someone became an arhat Upagupta would take a little square piece of wood and he would put it away in a cave. In the end, so many people had become arhats that the whole cave was filled up with these little wooden sticks.

At the time of the Buddha the followers of the Buddha relied entirely on the teachings of the Buddha, everything he had been telling them during his lifetime. Then at the time of the arhat Upagupta many other people achieved arhatship, and these arhats started a new tradition which was the tradition of writing commentaries on the Buddha's teachings. What they did was to gather together all the teachings of the Buddha and extract the essential meaning of all his teachings. Having done this, they wrote it out in this new kind of work called a shastra, or a teaching which is an explanation and elucidation of the Buddha's teachings. The first shastra was a work called the *Vibhasakosha* or *The Treasure of Special Explanations*. It was like a treasure because it contained all the meanings of the Buddha's teachings gathered into one, and it was a special explanation, because it explained them one by one anew. This work started a tradition of writing shastras which flourished later on.

We have mentioned the three great teachers Mahakashyapa, Ananda and Upagupta, who were three of the "seven patriarchs of the teachings." Most of these seven lived in Varanasi, where a great temple had been built and numerous members of the sangha The Hinayana Path had gathered. One might wonder if the teachings declined after these seven patriarchs had passed away. The transmission of the Hinayana lineage was no longer passed onto one person alone,but was transmitted to many lineage holders. After the passing of the

seven patriarchs we can no longer talk of single patriarchs, but only of transmission lineages.

The teaching transmissions were not interrupted, and this holds true for both the sutra and mantra teachings. In time, it spread from Varanasi to the monastic universities of Nalanda and Vikramashila. My particular lineage, that of the Kagyu Buddhist school, received transmissions from the seven patriarchs through the *mahapandita* Naropa, who was abbot of Nalanda and received both the sutra and tantric lineages from this great university. Naropa passed the tantric lineage to Marpa who brought it from India to Tibet. Marpa passed it to his great student Milarepa, who had a student Gampopa, who had the first Karmapa as a student, and he founded the Karma Kagyu lineage. The sutra tradition passed on to Atisha, who was abbot of Nalanda university and Gampopa received this transmission of the sutras. So Gampopa received the sutra tradition of Atisha and the tantra tradition of Marpa. Thus Gampopa received the tradition of both the sutras and tantras, so that this very old tradition of the shravakas going back to Kashyapa is still alive in the Kagyu tradition.

The Mahayana Path

Previously we saw how the teachings of the Hinayana spread in India from Varanasi and how with the seven patriarchs the Hinayana teachings emerged. Then as time went on, those who were spiritually inclined towards the Hinayana became less numerous. Gradually India entered a period of time when there was a new group of people who were especially suited for the Mahayana teachings and a great wave of propagation of the Mahayana teachings took place.

The main geographical point where the propagation of the Mahayana took place was the monastic University of Nalanda. There were many very great and learned masters or panditas at Nalanda University who expounded certain sutras such as the Mahayana *Lankavatara* sutra. These panditas gradually developed logical arguments that all inner phenomena – thoughts, feelings, perceptions – were empty. In other words they developed the philosophical view of *Chittamatra*, the Mind-only school. Then gradually they established the view that outer phenomena such as trees and houses and mountains

were also empty. In other words they developed the *Madhyamaka* (Middle-way) view.

The sutras and shastras that expound the Chittamatra view explained that the source of all our suffering, of all our problems, originates in a misconception or a delusion of what reality really is, and that this misunderstanding can be removed through understanding the actual nature of phenomena. When one sees the true nature of things, then the misunderstanding, the delusion, automatically disappears of its own accord. From the beginning of the Chittamatra school all the way up to the highest levels of the Vajrayana and the Mahamudra of today, instructions are given to remove one's misconception of the actual nature of things. This is the major intention of the Mahayana teachings. In contrast, the approach of the Hinayana is to analyze and counteract the disturbing emotions such as anger and desire, which are the temporary cause of suffering. The practice of the Hinayana, which results in pacifying these disturbing emotions, creates a temporary liberation. The idea of the Mahayana is to understand the nature of phenomena just as they are, and this will provide a more permanent liberation.

The Chittamatra School

The main idea of the Chittamatrins is that all outer manifestations such as mountains and houses arise from the mind. This is rather

hard to believe for a beginner because it seems to us that everything outside of us is really there and we can't see how it could ever come from our mind. But if we examine this more closely, we will find that the Chittamatrins are right. We just need to take the example of a dream to understand how this works. If we are dreaming and suddenly a tiger appears in front of us, seeing that tiger will create fear. So this vision of the tiger will generate fear in our mind because we take the vision as an external thing. But in a dream there is no real tiger there in the first place. So what takes place is reversed. It isn't something outside that creates something in our mind, but rather our mind creates something perceived as being outside of us. So in our dream, our mind creates the appearance of the tiger and then we react to this appearance.

If we transpose this situation onto our ordinary waking life in samsara, everything we experience in the world, all these outer manifestations that surround us, seem to determine our state of mind so that whatever we experience as pleasant or unpleasant,we believe is due to what is happening outside us. But really, it's the other way around. Whatever appears to us does so because it comes from our mind. This then is presented in great detail by the Chittamatra school: the root of everything is in the mind and our mind determines everything we experience.

The Madhyamaka School

The Chittamatra philosophy was the forerunner of the main Mahayana philosophy, which was the Madhyamaka view. This Madhyamaka view was expounded by the Buddha in the sutras in the second and third turning of the wheel of dharma. There are accordingly two forms of Madhyamaka called "empty of self" (Tib. *Rangtong*) emphasizing the second turning of the wheel and "empty of other" (Tib. *Shentong*) emphasizing the third turning of the wheel.

The propagation of the Madhyamaka teachings took place in India at Nalanda University. One of the great masters at Nalanda was Nagarjuna. The Buddha had predicted the coming of Nagarjuna in the *Lankavatara* sutra. The Buddha said that in the future in southern India in a place called Vedali, there would come a monk named Shrinat and sometimes he would also have the name of Naga. It also said his task would be to eliminate all biases of existence or non-existence and to establish the middle way of emptiness. So Nagarjuna would teach the Mahayana and in his lifetime he would achieve the first bodhisattva level called "the joyous one," and after his death, he would go to Dewachen, the land of great peace, great happiness. So according to this prediction of the Buddha, this is exactly what happened and Nagarjuna entered our world, took birth there, and everything happened as had been predicted.

Nagarjuna

The Buddha gave the teaching on emptiness in a work called the *Prajnaparamita* sutras. The longest form of the Prajnaparamita sutra consists of one hundred million shlokas. A *shloka* is a set of verses. Another long form is a sutra in ten million shlokas. But he did not propagate these very much. The ones that mainly spread were, in the longest form, the sutra in 100,000 shlokas. Then there is a slightly shorter form which is a sutra in 25,000 shlokas,and an even shorter one yet, 8,000 shlokas. Then there is a very concise form, called the *Sancayagatha*. Finally there is the mantra OM GATE GATE PARAGATE PARASAMGATE BODHI SVAHA, which summarizes the whole meaning of the Prajnaparamita in just a few syllables.

So these were the Prajnaparamita sutras, which Nagarjuna and his followers propagated and explained. In particular, he composed the Madhyamaka shastras, whose particular approach was to establish the validity of the view of emptiness expressed in the Prajnaparamita sutras by means of logic.

Nagarjuna's Followers

Nagarjuna had a lot of followers, disciples who propagated the teachings of the Buddha. Among these were Aryadeva, Dharmakirti and Shantideva. And at the time, there were not just Buddhists in India but also non-Buddhists, which in Buddhist terminology are

called *tirthikas*. In those days they used to have very large debates of logic where they would try to outwit each other to prove the correctness and the validity of their own teachings. So they had many of these debates. The followers of Nagarjuna, particularly Aryadeva, were very skillful and through faultless logic managed to defeat all their opponents and establish the validity of the Buddha's teaching.

One example was Matriceta,[21] a famous tirthika scholar. He was extremely skilled at debates, very clever and skillful. He wasn't just a scholar, but had realized the deity of his own faith, he had realized the powers of Mahashvara. So his fame was great and most people were quite frightened at the prospect of having to debate with such a man, because he was very accomplished. This Matriceta arrived at Nalanda and he said, "I have come to challenge you to a debate. If there is anybody here who would like to debate with me, then we will do that. That's fine. But if nobody steps forward, then your whole university will have to be converted to my faith." So everybody was in a state of panic because nobody felt they could challenge Matriceta. So nobody wanted to step forward and debate with him.

The scholars of Nalanda knew they would never outwit Matriceta, so they prayed to *Mahakala* and asked him to send someone who would be able to help. They believed the only person who could

21. This was a Brahmin called Durdhasakala, whom Taranatha identifies with Matriceta and who according to Tibetan tradition was in fact Asvaghosha before he became a Buddhist. We will call him Matriceta.

get them out of this difficult spot was Nagarjuna, who at the time was residing at a mountain in southern India called Sri Parvata. They asked Mahakala to give a message to Nagarjuna and then they waited there praying and praying every day hoping that Nagarjuna would turn up for the debate. In the meantime Matriceta was just sitting there and counting the people and saying,"One cow, two cows, three cows." He thought they were so stupid that he called them cows. "That's one, and that's two and that's three," because they were just praying and waiting for Nagarjuna to turn up.

Nagarjuna didn't come himself but sent his disciple Aryadeva. But when he came using his miraculous powers, Aryadeva met with some difficulties. One of these was that someone begged him for his eye, and in response he gave his right eye. So he ended up without one of his eyes, so that when he arrived at Nalanda, he had only one eye left. On that day Matriceta was still counting the people and saying, "One cow, two cows, three cows." He saw Aryadeva coming and said, "Ah! And one eyeless cow." Then Aryadeva replied, "Well, Indra has one thousand eyes and he cannot see the nature of all phenomena, and your Mahashvara has three eyes, but he cannot see the nature of all phenomena. I may have just one eye, but I can see the true nature of phenomena." Then he accepted the debate with Matriceta.

Aryadeva said, "I will challenge you in a debate tomorrow morning. So come and bring all the things you want for the debate and I'll

meet you in the morning." Then Aryadeva went to pray to Manjushri, and he asked Manjushri to advise him on what he should take to the debate. And Manjushri said, "You take one bottle of oil, a cat, and a dirty old shoe." Then on the day of the debate above Matriceta's seat was a very beautiful white parasol and Aryadeva tied the old shoe to the white umbrella so that it was just hanging over the head of Matriceta. Matriceta had also brought a few things including a very bright, clear mirror in which various things would appear for him and a parrot that would tell him many things.

They started debating. While they were talking, Matriceta would sometimes start looking into his mirror to get answers and ideas. Then Aryadeva poured the oil over the mirror so that Matriceta couldn't see anything in the mirror any more. At another point Matriceta got really stuck, so he started to get the parrot to give the answer. Then Aryadeva let the cat loose so that the cat neutralized the parrot. After the cat had neutralized the parrot,Matriceta saw that he was losing and he started calling out to his god, Mahashvara for help. But when Mahashvara started to comedown, he saw the horrible old shoe dangling from the white umbrella on top of Matriceta's head, and thought that was really disgusting, so he didn't come down. So now Matriceta was left all to himself and was completely powerless. Then they just had to carry on the debate by normal means and Matriceta lost the contest.

From that day onwards, there was no more trouble and the Buddhists were always able to use logic to defeat their opponents in debate. This is how the view of Madhyamaka spread, which is the interpretation of the second turning of the wheel of dharma. These teachings spread from the University of Nalanda to the rest of India and even beyond the borders of India.

The Story of Asanga[22]

After that came the time when the teachings of the third turning of the wheel of dharma spread in India. This was mainly the work of Asanga and some others. In the fourth century C.E. there was a tirthika greatly opposed to Nalanda and the monks of Nalanda. This man used his magical powers to cast a spell on Nalanda so that it caught fire. In the fire, the great library of Nalanda was burned, so that most of the Abhidharma teachings, both sutras and shastras, were burned. It became likely that most of the Abhidharma teachings would vanish unless something could be done. During this time there was a female bodhisattva who was a nun called Prasannashila. She realized what was happening and just couldn't bear the thought of all those very precious teachings of the Buddha being lost. She decided to do something to preserve the Abhidharma. She felt that she was too old to master the Abhidharma and spread it

22. Part of this story of Asanga comes from the 1988 Oxford Namo Buddha Seminar.

herself, so she left the order as a nun and had a relationship with a member of the royal family. From that union was born Asanga.

She then had another relationship with a Brahmin and from this union was born Vasubhandu. In India there was a tradition that whatever trade your father was in, you had to follow the same trade. So when the children had grown up somewhat, they started asking their mother questions about their fathers. They asked, "What did our father do? What was his occupation so we can do the same?" But their mother said to them, "I didn't give birth to you so that you would follow in the footsteps of your fathers. I conceived you because I realized that the Abhidharma teachings of the Buddha were going to be lost and I wanted both of you to do everything you could to preserve this teaching and spread it again. So this is now the task that you should set for yourselves."

The youngest son, Vasubhandu, was sent to Kashmir and there he studied the Abhidharma from the master Sanghabhadra and mastered the Abhidharma.

Asanga, the older brother, followed the path that had been given by his mother, which was to do the practice of Maitreya. In fact, Asanga's accomplishments had already been predicted by the Buddha in the *Manjushri Mula Tantra* in which the Buddha said that 900 years after his passing there would come a monk called Asanga who would be extremely skilled at writing shastras. This monk would

be able to clarify all of the Buddha's teachings, expound them and explain them very clearly in terms of the absolute and the relative meaning. So through this monk the teachings would be explained in all their clarity.

Asanga practiced the *sadhana* of Maitreya for three years in a retreat and did not get any signs of accomplishment. He thought that he should abandon his practice, but when he left his cave, he encountered a man who was rubbing a large iron bar with a cotton cloth. Asanga asked him why he was doing this and the man replied that if he kept rubbing it more and more, he would be able to make a needle out of it. Asanga thought, "This person is doing all this work to get such an insignificant thing as a needle, and I am trying to accomplish something important, so I shouldn't get discouraged," and he returned to his cave. He practiced another six years and nothing happened, so he thought there was no point in carrying on. Then again he encountered a man who was rubbing with a feather a large boulder that was blocking the sunlight from his house. Asanga thought that if he is doing all this for just some sunlight, then practicing for nine years is nothing. So he returned and carried on another three years.

After a total of twelve years of meditation he had not attained anything, so he decided that he would never be able to accomplish something with this Maitreya practice, and finally gave it up and came out of his cave. When he was walking, he came across a dog

the back half of which was rotting and full of maggots. When the dog saw Asanga, it began barking and wanted to bite him. Asanga was overwhelmed by all the suffering of the dog and all this negativity in the dog. Asanga wanted to help the dog, but realized that if he pulled the maggots out then the maggots would die, but that if he left these worms in, then the dog would die. Eventually he cut some flesh off his own leg to put the maggots on, but realized that if he pulled the maggots out with his fingers, that would kill them. So he decided to draw them out with his tongue, but he couldn't bear to look at what he was doing. So he closed his eyes and lifted out the maggots with his tongue, and put them on the piece of flesh. Then, the second time he stuck out his tongue, his tongue didn't touch the dog but touched the ground. So he opened his eyes and there was no a dog before him. Instead Maitreya was standing before him. When he saw Maitreya he became very upset and said, "Why do you have so little compassion? I have been practicing all these years and you never showed yourself to me." Maitreya replied, "It is not that I didn't have compassion for you, it is that you had too many obscurations and that is why you couldn't see me. But after practicing for twelve years, your obscurations became much less, so that you were able to see me in the form of a dog. Due to your compassion for this dog and your act of generosity in cutting off your own flesh and so on, you were then able to see me. If you don't believe me, I will sit on your shoulder and you will find out

if others can see me." So Asanga did that and went into town to ask, "Is there anything on my shoulder?" Everyone said there was nothing there, except one old lady who said that he had a dog on his shoulder and wanted to know why he was carrying a dog around.

Asanga was convinced, and then he went to Tushita pure realm, where he stayed with Maitreya and received the five teachings of Maitreya. Maitreya taught on the Prajnaparamita in the The Mahayana Path *Abhisamayalankara* sutra. He commented on the same Prajnaparamita sutras of the second turning of the wheel that Nagarjuna had commented on, but in a different way. Nagarjuna had emphasized the direct meaning of these sutras, that is, the emptiness of all phenomena. In contrast, Maitreya made what is indirectly taught in the Prajnaparamita explicit through the teachings on the bodhisattva paths covering what is attained and what is eliminated on the first level, what is attained and eliminated on the second level and so on.

In the third turning of the wheel of dharma there are the provisional teachings of the Chittamatra school view and the definitive teachings of Buddha-nature. So in the third turning there are *provisional teachings* and *definitive teachings*.[23] The provisional teachings say

23. When the Buddha taught, he did not give lectures, but rather would answer questions from whomever asked him a question. As a result the Buddha had to teach persons of all different abilities and levels of understanding. Also to a person without a very sophisticated view of Buddhism, the Buddha would give approximate answers to their question which they could understand and these are called the provisional teachings. When teaching students

that all appearances are manifestations of the mind, and this was explained by Maitreya in three commentaries: *The Adornment of the Sutras*, *The Differentiation of Dharma and Dharmata* and *Differentiating the Middle from the Extremes*. For the ultimate meaning he gave the last of the five teachings which was the *Uttaratantra shastra* or the "Changeless Nature."[24] The *Uttaratantra* teaches that the nature of all phenomena is emptiness or *dharmadhatu*. But this emptiness is not a complete nothingness because it has clarity (Tib. *salwa*) and awareness. This clarity and awareness are the nature of Buddhahood and they are present in all beings, so all beings have the possibility of attaining Buddhahood.

In the Kagyu school there are three texts which are considered to be most important and which the third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje, has suggested are to be studied. These are the *Uttaratantra*, the *Profound Inner Meaning*, and the *Hevajra Tantra*. The *Uttaratantra* is considered very important because it describes how Buddha-nature is present in the true nature of the mind, and appearances are manifestation of the mind. Then in meditation one understands this true nature of the mind. So it is important to study this text

with advanced understanding and meditational experience, the Buddha would teach the complete or final answer, and these are called the definitive teachings.

24. Thrangu Rinpoche has written an extensive commentary on four of these works namely *The Clear Ornament of Realization*, *Differentiating Dharma and Dharmata*, *Differentiating the Middle from the Extremes*, and *The Uttara Tantra*. All are available from Namo Buddha Publications.

to understand this intellectual viewpoint so that it can assist the realization from meditation.

Asanga was able to live for 150 years. Following 50 years in Tushita he studied the field of the Abhidharma and laid out the whole of the Abhidharma very clearly. Then Asanga had many fine disciples and followers, among whom was his brother Vasubhandu. So through Asanga and his followers, the meaning of the third turning of the wheel of dharma was explained and expounded very clearly for everyone to understand.

The Six Ornaments

The monastic university of Nalanda was the focal point for the great development of the Mahayana teachings. At Nalanda from about the second to tenth centuries there were great masters. The Tengyur, which are all the shastras that were translated into Tibetan, has two sections: those that relate to the sutras and those that relate to the tantras. Practically all the works of the sutras in the Tengyur were composed at Nalanda during this particular period of time. At this time there were great masters there, of whom six or eight masters were most prominent. They are sometimes referred to as the "six ornaments" and sometimes as the "eight ornaments" of India. Nagarjuna (second century C.E.) was the most important master of these; he expounded the meaning of the second turning of the

wheel of dharma; and Asanga was the main teacher for explaining the third turning of the wheel of dharma. So through this gathering of very great people at Nalanda, the Mahayana teachings were able to flourish. The six ornaments were Nagarjuna, Asanga, Gunaprabha, Aryadeva, Vasubhandu, and Sakyaprabha. If we add Dignaga and Dharmakirti, they become the eight ornaments.

In Tibet four great basic sets of Buddhist texts were studied. The first teachings concern the Madhyamaka, which established that all phenomena are empty. The second set of teachings is the Abhidharma, which gives an explanation of the way in which one has to travel through the various levels and paths that lead to enlightenment and describes what is to be realized and what is to be given up. The third main set of teachings are the Prajnaparamita teachings, which give a very detailed explanation of the levels and paths leading to enlightenment. Then the fourth section are the Vinaya teachings, which give all the rules of discipline and vows for all the different monastic ordinations.

Although the four main sets of texts are studied, one can reduce these into three sections, because the Madhyamaka and Prajnaparamita have similar subject matter and are counted together. These three mains sections of teachings can be related to the six great masters.

Three main teachers expounded each of these three basic teachings. The Madhyamaka was mainly presented and clarified by Nagarjuna.

The Abhidharma was mainly presented, explained and commented on by Asanga. And the Vinaya was mainly presented and explained by Gunaprabha. Each of these three masters had a disciple who then wrote commentaries about these basic teachings and explained and commented on them further. So the work of Nagarjuna was commented on by his disciple Aryadeva. The work of Asanga was commented on by his brother Vasubhandu. And the work of Gunaprabha was commented on by Sakyaprabha. So we have three masters who expounded the root meaning of the Madhyamaka, the Abhidharma, and the Vinaya teachings, and three other masters who commented on and explained these teachings further.

There is still another aspect of the teachings, which is the aspect of logic intended to produce valid cognition or *pramana* in Sanskrit. The teachings on pramana are very important because this teaches one how to examine the teachings in a logical way, so that one can develop a conviction of its actual validity. The two main teachers who expounded the Pramana teachings were Dignaga and Dharmakirti.

One may wonder how these teachings relate to the practice of meditation. As already mentioned, in accordance with the sutras of the Buddha there developed the philosophy of Madhyamaka with its two aspects of empty in itself and empty of external phenomena. But what is the actual implication of this philosophy as far as our practice is concerned? What we need to know when we meditate is the actual nature of things just as they are, and we need to develop

enough confidence in the fact that things are actually as they are. But for this we need to be given very clear, convincing reasons so that we can develop confidence in that kind of view. We need to develop the kind of unchanging confidence that could not even be moved by somebody else's arguments. If someone tells you, "Well, this isn't really true," you need to have such convincing reasons yourself that nobody can make you change your mind about the true view. So these teachings of Madhyamaka can help us develop that type of confidence concerning the right view for meditation.

With the Vajrayana it is slightly different. When we meditate we are no longer concerned with reasons. We just look directly at the actual nature of things. It's a matter of direct recognition much more than thinking about reasons and how things should be.

The Spread of the Vajrayana Teachings

In the previous chapter we saw the beginning and spreading of the Mahayana teachings in India which happened mainly through the efforts of the University of Nalanda. In this chapter we will see how this was followed by a great wave of the development and spreading of the Vajrayana teachings.

The Development of the Vajrayana Teachings

As previously mentioned, the Buddha turned the wheel of dharma of the Vajrayana with the four categories of tantra. We find the texts of the tantras in the Tibetan Kangyur and in the Tibetan Tengyur. Another name for the Vajrayana in Tibetan is the "secret mantra" or *sang ngak*. The syllable *ngak* is Tibetan for the Sanskrit word "mantra." The Sanskrit word *mantra* itself is composed of two syllables: *man* which means "the mind," that is, this inner mind, and *tra*, which means "that which protects" or "that which can give protection." So *mantra* can be interpreted as meaning "the means

to protect the mind." The Tibetans translated this word *mantra* by the word *ngak*, which actually has the flavor of this, the idea of the possibility to change, so the Vajrayana is to achieve happiness very quickly, instantaneously without having to rely on a strong, strenuous effort with many difficulties. So it's the idea of a means that is very powerful to accomplish, a sudden change for the better.

Now the word *tantra* was translated into Tibetan as *gyu*. This word means "continuity" and refers to the continuum of the mind. The goal of practice is to gradually change this continuum from a very negative one into the very positive one of a bodhisattva or Buddha. So this state is of a continuum from our present mind. This is why it was used to translate *tantra*.

What is required in the Sutrayana, the way of practicing according to the sutras, is meditation on a conviction one has gained, with a lot of diligence and effort in practice. In the Vajrayana one also needs faith and devotion, but what the Vajrayana has to offer in particular is a whole range of different techniques that make the practice very effective, so that it is possible to achieve the goal of enlightenment very quickly. In the Vajrayana one does not meditate on a mere conviction, but one is directly introduced to the nature of reality within one's own mind, using the forms of deities and many other skillful means for meditation. So the Vajrayana is very special and a great teaching because it makes it possible for us to follow a path that isn't very long and difficult. This is, however, a

path intended for those who have great intelligence, faith, devotion, motivation and interest in the practice.

The teachings of the Vajrayana developed in India after the great wave of Mahayana expansion from Nalanda. Although the Vajrayana spread more or less everywhere in India, the apex of this development was the monastic University of Vikramashila, where there were the six "doorkeeper panditas." These mahapanditas were very great teachers who lived at the University of Vikramashila, and each of them lived over one of the gates of the university so they were guarding the gates in each of the directions. These mahapanditas had two main functions. One was to refute the attacks of tirthikas. Sometimes tirthikas would come to the university and they would try to refute the Vajrayana teachings either through logic or through a display of miraculous powers. So one of the tasks of these panditas guarding the gates of the university was to keep watch against these tirthikas who came to refute the teachings. Another function was to look after people who wanted to practice the dharma, and in particular, the Vajrayana teachings. So these mahapanditas had to be there to give teachings to those who were ready for that type of teaching.

Over the eastern gate of the University of Vikramashila was the mahapandita called Shantipa who sometimes was called Ratnakarashantipa. Over the southern gate was the mahapandita Prajnakaramati. Over the western gate was the mahapandita Vagishvarakirti, and

then over the northern gate was the famous mahapandita Naropa. Then at the center of the monastic complex were two great pillars. In the first of these pillars lived Ratnavajra and near the second pillar lived the mahapandita Jnanashri. So these were the six mahapanditas who watched over the gates of the monastic University of Vikramashila. There were also six doorkeeper panditas at Nalanda University who held and spread the teachings in India.

The Buddhist teachings were spread in three great waves called the turning of the wheel of dharma. The first turning was done by the seven patriarchs or "holders of the transmission" who transmitted the Hinayana teachings. Then when Nalanda University was at its peak, the Mahayana teachings were spread,which were the second turning. Then at the time of the University of Vikramashila, the Vajrayana teachings of the third turning were predominantly spread. However, one vehicle did not preclude the spreading of the other two vehicles. For instance, at the time of the Hinayana expansion, the Mahayana or Vajrayana teachings were also practiced, but the main emphasis at the time was on the Hinayana teachings. Similarly, at the time of the expansion of Mahayana teachings, the Hinayana and Vajrayana were also practiced, though to a lesser degree.

We know from the biographies of the eight ornaments such as Nagarjuna and Dharmakirti that while they were propagating the Mahayana teachings at Nalanda University, they were also person-

ally practicing the Vajrayana teachings and were able to master these Vajrayana teachings because they became great mahasiddhas.

There are three stages one goes through in Vajrayana practice, with each level having a different behavior and action associated with it. When one is a beginner in the practice, all the qualities of meditation are still not present, and one has not developed any special qualities yet, so one follows what is known as "the behavior of Samantabhadra," which is a completely wholesome behavior. During this time one's behavior should be completely positive and one should always act in a very disciplined, careful way. By the second level, one has already gained some experience and understanding of the mind through meditation, so one's energies are turned inwards, concentrated on one's practice, one's mind and one's meditation. Finally, when one has developed an extremely high degree of meditation so that one has an unusual degree of cognition and understanding and one has achieved some miraculous powers, one enters the third level called "victorious in all directions." At this time, through one's miraculous powers,one can go anywhere, do anything, emanate in any form that is required. When it is necessary to counteract the doubts or the wrong views of another, one can use miraculous powers to convince them of the rightness of the dharma. Mahasiddhas behave in away that is completely beyond the domain of behavior of ordinary people. Some of them were seen to be riding tigers or flying in the sky and all sorts of unusual things. Whatever they did

and whatever they ate, and wherever they went, was completely beyond all the rules of ordinary human behavior. One never knew quite where they were or what they were doing. Sometimes they were on a beach near the ocean and sometimes they might be in a cave. So these people entered the realm of behavior which was entirely beyond all our normal standards. They are called *siddhas*, they reached the special powers called *siddhis*.

The story of Vajraghanta illustrates these various levels of behavior of the Vajrayana. When he first started with the practice of Vajrayana, he observed all the rules of conduct very carefully. He engaged in wholesome behavior and his practice was always extremely diligent and careful. He was so remarkable in his practice that he became quite well known to the king. The king thought, "I must get this man to come to me and give me some teachings." So he sent someone to invite Vajraghanta to come to the palace to teach the king. But when Vajraghanta was told about the invitation of the king, he thought, "I have no desire whatsoever to go there because the king's palace is only like a prison to me. I don't consider this a special honor or something good. As far as the pleasures of the king's court are concerned, they are like a pit of fire to me. I don't have any desire whatsoever to go to the king's palace and prefer to stay in solitude to practice meditation."

When the news was given to the king, the king was very disappointed because he wanted so much for this man to come and

teach him. So the king personally went to see Vajraghanta and asked him if he would come and teach him at the palace. But the monk Vajraghanta gave him the same answer, that he didn't want to come to the palace; that it would be just like a prison and all of the pleasures of the court would be like fire. The king was rather displeased and unhappy and left. Then Vajraghanta carried on with his practice and achieved the state of a mahasiddha. Having achieved this state, he took a wife and had a son and a daughter. He also used to drink a lot of *chang*, which is Tibetan beer.

Some time later the king heard that Vajraghanta was coming to town, so he assembled all the ministers, all the queens and all the people to meet him. When Vajraghanta came, the king said, "Here you are, the very virtuous, self-righteous monk. You could never bear to come to my palace to teach me because you thought it would be like a prison and all the pleasures would be like fire. Now what do I see? Who is with you?" Then Vajraghanta said, "That's my wife." Then the king and all the other people started insulting him and saying terrible things about him. Vajraghanta replied, "Don't do this because this is part of something you can't understand. This belongs to Vajrayana practice." But they wouldn't stop insulting him.

Then the king said, "Who are these children?" And Vajraghanta replied, "That's my son and that's my daughter." Again they insulted him and said all sorts of terrible things about him. Vajraghanta was carrying a pot full of chang and the king and all of the other people

started insulting him because he was drinking. When Vajraghanta realized that they wouldn't stop insulting him, which is a very negative thing to do, he arose as the mandala of Chakrasamvara and his son and daughter turned into a vajra and a bell. The pot of beer that he was carrying turned into an immense lake of beer that covered the whole area so that everybody – the king, the queens and the ministers – started to drown in the beer. So, of course, they all started to apologize and said they regretted what they had done. As soon as they had realized their mistake, the beer stopped rising. As a result of this great miraculous display, the king and everyone were convinced of the great value of Vajrayana and received the teachings and practiced them.

Another example of the miraculous powers that come from meditation can be seen in the story of the mahasiddha Luipa who lived in a little cave just near the Ganges River. There was a large crack in his cave and one day while he was meditating, he fell into the water of the Ganges. He was still meditating when a huge fish ate him up, but he just remained there meditating inside the belly of the fish. A fisherman who was fishing on the bank of the Ganges River caught that huge fish. When the fish was killed, they found Luipa inside the fish's belly still meditating. This, of course, shows the incredible power of meditation and this mahasiddha was given the name of Luipa, which means "fish belly."

The Eight Mahasiddhas

Eight mahasiddhas are particularly famous in India: Saraha, Nagarjuna, Kukkuripa, Vajraghanta, Birupa, Dombhi Heruka, the great king Indrabhuti, and Luipa. One finds in the *Eighty-four Mahasiddhas* that some of them are mentioned at one event and then another time 200 or 300 years later. For example, one finds the first mention of Nagarjuna in the second century C.E. and then several hundred years later Nagarjuna is mentioned again in the story of Tilopa (about 900 C.E.). The same thing with Saraha. But, in fact, there weren't two Nagarjunas or two Sarahas. It is just that these beings are completely beyond the domain of ordinary human behavior and what we can imagine. They were able to live something like 900 years. Sometimes they would live in one place for maybe 100 years and then they might go to another place and spend another 100 years there. Sometimes they might manifest in one body and sometimes they might manifest in two forms simultaneously. So it's not worth it to have doubts about these kind of things, because these mahasiddhas are completely beyond our ordinary beliefs of reality. We just can't judge them by our ordinary standards. It is because they have achieved the highest spiritual accomplishment and it is part of the power of that spiritual accomplishment that these beings are on a different level from us.

The Buddhist Sciences

In this history of Buddhism in India, we saw how the Buddha was born and how by means of twelve deeds he helped beings. We saw how he turned the wheel of dharma by giving teachings in correspondence with the various aspirations and capacities of beings: the Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana teachings. We saw how the six ornaments and the six doorkeeper panditas lived,practiced and taught in India and how there were the eight mahasiddhas and the eighty-four mahasiddhas. Since everything that was important in the history of dharma first took place in India, India is referred to as the holy land in Tibetan works.

The teachings of the Buddha were given in the form of the three vehicles, each one with its particular view, practice and meditation. Besides these teachings of the three vehicles, there were also teachings on what is known as the ten branches of knowledge or the ten sciences. These ten branches of knowledge are not indispensable

for meditation, but they can help people understand the teachings and gain a better understanding and conviction of the teachings.

These ten branches of knowledge are considered a secondary aspect of the Buddhist teachings and the ten branches of the Buddhist sciences can be divided into two categories: the five major and five minor Buddhist sciences.

The Five Major Sciences

The first of the five major Buddhist sciences is called the "inner science" or *nangdön ngpa* in Tibetan. These are all the teachings that have to do with realizing the nature of the mind. It is exactly in accordance with what the Buddha taught in the three turnings of the wheel of dharma and is intended to help us realize the true nature of the mind, to help us gain protection from suffering. So this inner science is the dharma and has already been covered in the previous chapters. The other four major and the five minor sciences are supporting limbs to the inner science, which is the main subject of the sciences.

The second major Buddhist science, called *dra* in Tibetan, is intended to get rid of all our doubts about words, about terminology. This is the science of linguistics and grammar, everything to do with words and understanding words. Whether we are dealing with the actual words of the Buddha or the words of the great teachers who

wrote the shastras, we will have to understand the use of words, because it is by means of words that these teachers convey their thoughts to us. To understand what they intended to say, to grasp what they had to transmit, we have to understand the use of words and understand why they expressed themselves in such a way. So the science that makes it possible to grasp the actual meaning of the words, the power behind each word, the expressive capacity of each word, is this science of grammar and linguistics.

The third major science is logic or in Tibetan *tantsig* or *shama*, and this science helps us to get rid of doubts and uncertainties about the meaning of words. This is not just in terms of the words,but in terms of the actual meaning. In order to understand what the Buddha and the great masters were saying, one needs to seethe reasons behind what they were saying, the justifications for what they were saying. One needs to understand why they said things in such a way, and what they expressed. If we can apply logic properly, then we will be able to understand more clearly what the masters had in mind, without doubts and misconceptions. That is why the third branch of Buddhist science is logic, which is also called Pramana.

The fourth major Buddhist science is the arts or *zowa* in Tibetan. The arts are a practical aspect of Buddhist science; it is necessary to make representations of the Buddha's form in either statues or drawings. One can develop more faith and devotion in the Buddha through learning these arts properly and knowing how to represent

the Buddha with all his particular attributes, doing this properly according to all the rules and standards. This can also be applied in the drawing of the yidam deities. One learns how to represent the various yidams and their attributes and their mandala, and about the other deities in the mandala. Being able to represent the yidams with their attributes and their mandalas is a visual support to the creation stage (Tib. *kye rim*) of meditation in which one visualizes these deities. One also learns about all the symbolism of the various attributes and forms of these yidams so one understands the qualities of mind that these deities represent. So all this is contained in the fourth major science, the arts.

The fifth major Buddhist science is medicine or *sowa* in Tibetan. Here one examines how the nature of the body is pervaded by the suffering of illness, how transient illnesses can be caused by the three poisons, and so on. Since everything in the universe is naturally interdependent, there are methods to try to cure the illness affecting us by using substances or medicines found in the outer world. So diagnosis and treatment of illness is the task of medicine.

In India at the time of the Buddha there were already various aspects of these last four branches of knowledge, but they were not particularly Buddhist, having been developed by non-Buddhists. So the particular Buddhist aspect of these sciences was gradually developed by various Buddhist teachers. The second major science, linguistics, developed with the study of the Sanskrit language, because that language was

used at the time for the teachings.[25] The main work started at Nalanda with a great teacher called Acharya Chandragomin. He was a teacher and also a bodhisattva, but didn't take the full ordination of a monk. He had taken all the vows of a lay disciple and that is why he was called "Gomin," which is a word that designates a particular kind of lay disciple. He composed the first important shastra on linguistics, which was called *Chandra Nyakarana.*

Another teacher, Saptavarman, composed another shastra on linguistics called the *Kalapa Vyakarana*. Also in the south of India there was a teacher called Acharya Anubhuti, and he had a direct,pure vision of the female deity Sarasvati. She transmitted to him directly a very important text that was to be the whole basis of grammar and linguistics in Sanskrit and that was later on extremely useful at the time when all the teachings were translated into Tibetan. This shastra was called the *Sarasrata Vyakarana*. These three main shastras provided the whole basis for linguistics and grammar.

The third major science, that of logic, is intended to help us develop great trust, confidence and conviction in the Buddha's teaching. There are two aspects of this science of logic: "direct cognition," which occurs when the mind can grasp whatever is looked at directly, and "inferential cognition," which occurs when things are understood correctly through inference. Through these two aspects

25. The Buddha spoke the popular dialect of the time, but the teachings were put into Sanskrit by the Sarvastivada school since that was the language of scholars.

one can develop the conviction that the Buddha's teachings and the shastras are correct. When the Buddha taught and later when the shastras were composed, there wasn't the science of pramana, this science of valid cognition. Logical analyses were referred to, but didn't deal with it at any length. So later on, in order to clarify this topic and explain it in more detail, one of the eight ornaments of India, Dignaga, wrote a work called the *Pramanasamuccaya*, which deals with this valid cognition. Then after Dignaga, Dharmakirti wrote seven shastras on the intention of Dignaga, making logic very widely known.

When Dignaga was writing the *Pramanasamuccaya* he first started writing out the notes and began saying, "To him who has become valid reason itself, who knows what is of benefit to beings,to the teacher Buddha I prostrate." Thus he was praising the Buddha for two reasons, one that he understood everything in a perfectly valid way, and second that he had great compassion for sentient beings. These two qualities make the Buddha a worthy object of prostration. But when he came back the next day to carry on with his work, he found that these words had disappeared. This was because there was a tirthika teacher who through his negative miraculous powers had erased them. So he wrote them out again. But next time he came, he found them gone again, because the tirthika teacher had erased them again. Then Dignaga wondered whether whoever was doing this was just playing a game or if he was really trying to challenge

him in some way. So he wrote down, "Whoever you are, if you are just playing, then stop fooling around because what I'm doing is important. But if you're trying to challenge me, then please come and let's have a debate. A debate will be more positive." Then the tirthika teacher called Krisnamuniraja came saying he'd like to have a debate. So the debate between Krisnamuniraja and Dignaga took place and Dignaga defeated his opponent. It was after this that he finished writing his work the *Pramanasamuccaya*, and after this the science of Pramana was able to develop and spread.

The fourth major branch of knowledge is the arts. The very first image of the Buddha was made during his lifetime. The daughter of the King of Sri Lanka (or Ceylon) had heard of the Buddha. Although she had never met the Buddha, just hearing his name made her feel tremendous faith in the Buddha, and so she wrote to him. The Buddha, seeing that it was time to lead some of the people in Sri Lanka onto the path of dharma, did a special miracle on a piece of cloth that the daughter of the king had. With the light from the Buddha's body there appeared on the cloth the whole form of the Buddha's body and a verse of the Buddha's words. As soon as the king's daughter saw this, she immediately realized the true nature of phenomena. Following this, the teachings of the Buddha were able to spread in Sri Lanka. So this first form of the Buddha appeared on the cloth and was afterwards used as the standard for representing the Buddha's features. There are many different stories about the

development of the art of representing the Buddha's form, but they won't be given here.[26]

The fifth major science is medicine. There was mention of some elements of medicine in the Buddha's first turning of the wheel of dharma when he was teaching the Vinaya. In the Vinaya there are some expositions of various types of medicines and remedies that heal the body and bring about a better state of health and well-being. Later, at the time when the University of Nalanda was flourishing, there was a *rishi* living in the forest near Nalanda who was actually an emanation of the medicine Buddha. He taught the four great tantras on medical science: the root tantra, the explanatory tantra, the instruction tantra and the later tantra. They represent the basis from which medical science later developed in Tibet.

The Five Minor Sciences

The main minor science is astrology, known in Tibet as *tsi*. Astrology has a general aspect which studies the movement of the planets and the stars, and according to these movements one can determine what will be the fate or the events that will take place in the world in a given period of time. This also has an individual application, insofar as when one knows the time of birth of a given person, one can predict the various happenings in that person's life: what is likely

26. In India the actual form of the Buddha was represented by a lotus flower, not by a person, until about the first century C.E.

to be good, what is likely to be difficult. The value of this is that if one faces a lot of difficulty, one can try to find out how one can avert the difficulties that might otherwise arise. Then there is also an application in predicting what may happen every year. Each year there is a different disposition of the external elements and the inner elements of a person. According to the correspondence between these outer and inner elements there are different possibilities for either sickness or absence of sickness each year. So once you know what is likely to happen within a given year, then you can try to apply the means that will change the course of events if they are going to be very bad. Astrology can also be used to see whether the elements are in harmony for two people who plan to get married.

The actual source of this science of astrology is to be found in the Kalachakra Tantra. The Kalachakra Tantra has three aspects, an outer aspect, an inner aspect, and a secret aspect. The outer aspect describes the movements of the various planets and stars. The inner aspect of the tantra explains the essential nature of phenomena. And the secret aspect describes the mandala of the deities. So from the Kalachakra Tantra the science of astrology developed and then spread in Tibet.

A second minor Buddhist science is poetry or *nyan ngak* in Tibetan. Of course when one writes any work or any teaching, one needs to know how to write according to the proper style. But when it comes to writing a prayer or a spiritual song, or any text that is

intended to really stir something deeply inside or to kindle devotion and conviction, then it is very necessary to know how to use poetry. This is why poetry is one of the minor arts of Buddhism. Poetry wasn't actually used directly in any of the sutras, but it is found indirectly in various Buddhist works.

The actual development of Buddhist poetry goes back to the time of Nalanda. In the previously given story about Aryadeva, who was challenged by Matriceta and his parrot, Matriceta was eventually defeated in the debate. The tradition of those days was that the one who was defeated had to embrace the faith of the victor. But it was very difficult for Matriceta to be really convinced to become a Buddhist. He couldn't really become a Buddhist from the heart. According to the tradition, he was kept at Nalanda until he embraced the faith properly. They decided to lock him up in the library at Nalanda. Of course, days are very long when you are on your own in a library like this. Matriceta got so bored that he started taking all the books off the shelves and leafing through them, looking here and looking there. In the end, with all the things he read, he developed tremendous faith in the Buddha because he thought, "Well, the Buddha was really an amazing being and what he says is really outstanding." He was so impressed that he composed a book called the *Jatakamala* containing the thirty-four stories of the previous lives of the Buddha[27] and this is actually the first real work

27. This has been translated as *The Marvelous Companion: Life Stories of the Buddha by*

of poetry in the Buddhist tradition. The first story in it is about when the Buddha gave his body to a tigress when he was a prince in a previous life.[28]

The third minor Buddhist science is of meter or *deb djor* in Tibetan, and this science tells one just how long the verses should be, what length or weight they should have in a sentence and soon. So it tells you just how you should balance the words out and what kind of meter should be used.

The fourth minor science is that of the tradition of making up a thesaurus or *ngön djöd* in Tibetan. It's a book that contains all the various synonyms needed. If you have one word, then it gives you another five or six other words that mean the same thing.

And the fifth minor science is that of sacred dances or *dö gar* in Tibetan. Strangely, the tradition of religious dancing didn't spread to Tibet at the time when Buddhism was introduced, because the Tibetan scholars did not consider dancing to be very important and did not care to translate it. So it didn't go to Tibet at the time.

These last three minor sciences of meter, thesaurus making, and sacred dances aren't set out in separate works or particular shastras, but are found here and there in different works.

Aryasura. Berkeley: Dharma Books, 1983.

28. This happened at Namo Buddha in Nepal where Thrangu Rinpoche has his three-year retreat center and where Namo Buddha Publications gets its name.

Bodhgaya & the Buddha Essence

As we understand the purpose of a pilgrimage in the tradition of the Buddha, it is like this.[29] To begin with, the Buddha appeared in the land of India and achieved complete and perfect Buddhahood there. Having achieved complete and perfect enlightenment, he turned the wheel of the dharma. All of us who hold the tradition of the Buddha as our own, in remembrance of his activity, therefore travel around to these various important places. That is what we call making a pilgrimage. The purpose of our doing so is so that we will remember the Buddha's good qualities. We begin by visiting the place where he achieved enlightenment, to see how Buddha achieved enlightenment, and then we go on to visit the various places where he turned the wheel of the dharma. In this way we develop some awareness and mindfulness of the exalted activity of the Buddha. The purpose of our doing so is that through remember-

29. This and the following three chapters were teachings given by Thrangu Rinpoche while leading a pilgrimage to the four main Buddhist holy sites on December 15 - 30, 1991. They were translated into English by Jules Levinson.

ing and becoming mindful of the Buddha's deeds we ourselves are encouraged: that is, our strength of heart or courage will increase, our longing and admiration for the dharma will increase and, in dependence upon those two, we will enter strongly into the practice of the dharma; and through practicing we may achieve the final fruition of the dharma. Whether one calls this the blessing of the Buddha or the blessing of these important and sacred places or, if we consider it from a worldly point of view, simply the fact of recollecting the history of the Buddhist tradition and in that way developing some aspiration to practice and achieve the fruition – however we think about it is fine. There are, in any case, a great many reasons forgoing on pilgrimage.

Generally speaking, in this world, on this planet Earth, which we refer to as Jambudvipa in the Buddhist tradition and which lies in the west, there are many different religious traditions. There is a purpose and need for all of these various religious traditions. In the traditions other than that of the Buddha, usually one speaks of a god or a deity. Through pleasing that deity, one achieves happiness; through displeasing that deity, one incurs suffering. However, in the Buddhist way we think about it differently. In the Buddhist way, it is said that the experience individuals have of pain and pleasure or happiness and suffering comes about as a fruition of their individual actions or karma and in dependence upon the motivation they have. In the Buddhist way we, therefore, speak about abandoning the

wicked states of mind or klesha and, through having abandoned those klesha, achieving the final fruition. The position of the Buddha in this tradition then is that he is the teacher of the way to do that, he is the one who gave these teachings. He did not begin as a deity. He began as an ordinary, common person. He generated within himself the aspiration to complete enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, called "the mind of enlightenment" or bodhichitta. Having generated bodhichitta, he began to accumulate the two collections,the accumulation of wisdom and merit. Having completed the collections, he achieved the final fruition. Following his example, many other accomplished persons, great bodhisattvas, achieved the final fruition. Similarly, people such as ourselves, even though we are not great bodhisattvas (we are just ordinary, common people), nevertheless, we too can generate this aspiration for enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, called *bodhichitta* in Sanskrit; having done so we too can accumulate the collections of wisdom and merit and, through accumulating wisdom and merit, bring into manifestation the complete and perfect enlightenment that was achieved by the Buddha by following the various methods or upaya that the Buddha taught.

When we say "Buddha," we are speaking about the fruition. In the Tibetan language the word that we use for Buddha is *Sang-gye* and those two syllables refer to the two aspects or the two sources of good qualities of the Buddha. Whether we are thinking about this

in terms of Buddha Shakyamuni, the one who has already achieved Buddhahood, or whether we are thinking about the Buddhahood that we ourselves will achieve in the future, it is the same. It is indeed suitable, appropriate and possible for people such as ourselves to achieve Buddhahood.

(1) At this point we have, however, the obstruction of the various faults that exist within our mind. The principal of those obstructions is called ignorance. In dependence upon ignorance the various other stains arise in the mind, such as desire, hatred, bewilderment, pride and envy: that is to say, ignorance gives rise to the two sorts of obstructions,

(a) the afflictive obstructions, or *klesha-vadana* in Sanskrit,

and

(b) the obstructions with regard to knowledge, or *vijnana-vadana*.

It is because of those two obstructions, the afflictive obstructions and the obstructions to knowledge, that we are not able to achieve enlightenment and that we remain and dwell in samsara, where we have to undergo various sorts of suffering from all sorts of difficult situations and conditions. In that way, there is a relationship of cause and effect. The cause, ignorance, gives rise to the effect, suffering within samsara. Therefore we need to clear away, abandon or eliminate those obstructions. That is what the first word *sang* in the Tibetan word for Buddha means. *Sang* means something like

"cleanse" and refers to clearing away, removing, abandoning these various sorts of obstructions. When that has been done, then various good qualities manifest. If we are speaking about ourselves and say *sang*, then we are talking about the need to separate ourselves from these obstructions. If we are speaking about the Buddha and we say *sang*, then we are referring to the fact that he has already done so.

(2) Through purifying the obstructions in this way, all the good qualities are brought into a manifest state, the good qualities and wisdom or *jnana* are generated or born within us. And when all of them without exception have been born or generated within us, then that is Buddhahood, which is what the second syllable in the word *Sang-gye* refers to. *Gye* means "expand, spread, develop extensively." When we say that the Buddha is *Sang-gye*, we are referring to the fact that all these good qualities have been developed in a complete manifest form.

Just as the Buddha accomplished such an enlightenment, so we too are able to practice the path and accomplish enlightenment. The reason is that whatever causes enabled Buddha to achieve enlightenment, whatever causes existed within the Buddha's stream of being, exist in us also – identically, just the same. Thinking of this, those causes that exist within us and which enable us to achieve enlightenment, Buddha said: "All sentient beings have the Buddha essence."

The Two Truths

We say then that this Buddha essence exists within all sentient beings. If we think about this in just a casual way, then we conclude, "I don't think that is so." Why do we think like this?

Because if we look at ourselves, we see that we have this fairly crude, ordinary body, this fairly crude, ordinary speech and this fairly crude, ordinary mind. Looking through our body, speech and mind, we don't see anything we would call this "essence of the Buddha." What we see, rather, is something impermanent, impure and dirty. So, looking through body, speech and mind, we may wonder, "Where is this Buddha essence? It doesn't exist. I don't find it. I don't see it." However, if you settle this fundamentally, take this back decisively, right down to the very basis, then you can understand that the Buddha essence does indeed exist in all sentient beings.

These appearances or experiences that we have of body, speech and mind are appearances from ignorance. And because ignorance blocks, covers and conceals, we are not able to see the true nature or mode of abiding of body, speech and mind. Rather what we have are mistaken and confused experiences. So in this way and in response to that, the Buddha said, "There is no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind, no form, no feeling" and so forth. All of these lack inherent existence; they are not established by way of their own nature. They are empty of any nature of their

own, they are empty of inherent existence. Speaking about this in the context of what are known as the two truths, we say that various sorts of appearances do dawn: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind, visible forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangible objects and so forth. As truths for a concealing consciousness, all of these things appear, together with both actions or karma and their effect. All these things do appear, dawn, arise, however, ultimately their mode of abiding is that they are like dreams, they are not established and they do not exist.

All these various sorts of appearances are not established by way of their own nature, they are empty of any such nature. Their emptiness, their lack of any inherent existence, was demonstrated with reasoning by many great scholars and learned persons in the past, persons such as the Protector Nagarjuna, the Superior Asanga, the Honorable Chandrakirti and so forth. However, if we just speak about this from the viewpoint of the experience that we ourselves have, it is like a dream. In a dream all sorts of things appear: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind, forms, feelings, sounds, smells, tastes, tangible objects and so forth. All of these things do indeed appear very clearly, vividly. But they are just dream appearances, they are false and not true. They are not what they *seem* to be. When we are sleeping and dreaming, we can imagine that we are in a very nice house where everything is very pleasant, well arranged and delightful, but in fact we are sleeping and we are just in our own

ordinary house asleep. We are not experiencing the things that we think we are experiencing and which seem to be appearing very vividly; they appear in a very clear way. Both oneself and the external world *appear* as if they were really and truly existent and established. In fact, it is right that, just as they do not exist, nevertheless they do appear; while they do not exist,they in that moment do appear. They appear, they arise, but they are not established, they do not exist. Ultimately then all phenomena are emptiness, all of these impure phenomena that we experience are emptiness.

What is the nature of this emptiness? Is it an utter nonexistence that is a mere nothingness? No, that is not what it is. Space, for instance, is an emptiness, but space is not something that allows various phenomena to appear, to arise and to dawn. It doesn't have any factor of luminosity or brilliant clarity. Space is just more or less dead emptiness. This non-establishment or nonexistence of phenomena that we call emptiness is also what we call by the name *chö-ji-yin* or dharmadhatu, where *yin* or *dhatu* have the meaning of "space, realm, sphere within which all good qualities can arise, within which anything could arise, could appear, could dawn." Impure phenomena could arise, pure phenomena could arise. It is entirely suitable, possible or appropriate for any sort of phenomena to appear within that dharmadhatu or "sphere of reality." That luminous clarity then is the basis for wisdom or *jnana*.

We speak then about the union of space and wisdom or the union of this yin or dhatu and wisdom. It is an undifferentiability of luminous clarity and emptiness. Because the nature of this union of wisdom and space is emptiness, stains and defilements are suitable to be abandoned. And because luminous clarity is simultaneously the nature of this dharmadhatu or sphere of reality, all good qualities are suitable to be born or to be generated. This union of space and wisdom, this undifferentiable luminous clarity and emptiness, pervades all sentient beings. And it is in the light of this that we say that the Buddha essence pervades all sentient beings or that all sentient beings have this Buddha essence.

This undifferentiable union of space and wisdom is also called by the name *Sugatagarbha,* which means "the essence of the one gone to bliss": *garbha* means "essence" and *sugata* is the name for the Buddha, the one gone to bliss. We say it pervades all sentient beings. Because the sugatagarbha exists in all sentient beings, the adventitious defilements, those that are not in the very nature of the mind, can be cleared away. Thus, in the *Uttaratantra* or the text on "The Hierarchy of Being that Exists within all Sentient Beings," it is said, "All sentient beings are Buddha, however, these adventitious defilements obstruct Buddhahood."

The Buddha Essence

The sugatagarbha is discussed in the *Uttaratantra* in terms of four different topics, as follows.

(1) The nature, the mode of abiding of the sugatagarbha. It is as I have just discussed and explained to you. Through listening to such presentations, contemplating their meaning and then meditating upon what one has understood, it is possible to achieve the fruition or effect.

(2) Having realized the sugatagarbha and having cultivated the path in dependence upon that realization, in stages or gradually one achieves the *bodhi* or *chang-chub*, "enlightenment," which is the second of the four topics in terms of which the sugatagarbha is explained.

The Good Qualities of a Buddha's Mind

(3) When one achieves enlightenment or bodhi, then various good qualities come along, because the enlightenment that one achieves is of the very nature of emptiness and luminous clarity which has been brought into a manifest state.

As we speak about the nature of this enlightenment, we talk about it first in terms of the extraordinary good qualities that a Buddha has: they are innumerable. We could go on talking about them and naming them for quite a long time. If we speak about them, how-

ever, simply in terms of the extraordinary and marvelous qualities of a Buddha's mind, we can summarize them as three:

(a) Knowledge,

(b) Tender love and

(c) Capacity, power.

The first, a Buddha's knowledge, is related to the luminous clarity that is the very nature of the Buddha's mind and of enlightenment. This exalted knowledge of a Buddha is able to recognize, know, cognize all phenomena whatsoever, both the relative or concealed phenomena and the ultimate phenomena that are the nature of relative phenomena. There is nothing whatsoever that is obscured from a Buddha; there are no objects of knowledge that a Buddha does not know; there is no obstruction of anything by anything whatsoever: rather, a Buddha knows conventional and ultimate phenomena. In dependence upon that knowledge, a Buddha sees the situation that various sentient beings find themselves having to endure and the sort of suffering that they have to undergo simply because of being mistaken about the basic nature of reality. And through seeing the suffering of sentient beings, a Buddha's tender love comes forth. We say that if the Buddhas just had knowledge and love for sentient beings but had no capacity to do anything for them, then it would not be of much use. But because of knowledge and love, the Buddhas are able to have tremendous capacity, tre-

mendous power. Through that sort of capacity or power, a Buddha is able to help sentient beings.

The Good Qualities of a Buddha's Body

That was a brief presentation of the good qualities of a Buddha's mind. We could also speak about the good qualities of a Buddha's body and speech. If we speak about a Buddha's body, then the good qualities are described in terms of the thirty-two primary and the eighty supplementary qualities.

The Buddha's Activities

(4) That brings us into the fourth of the four topics in terms of the sugatagarbha. This fourth topic is called "the Buddha's enlightened activity" and is described in terms of the three bodies or kayas of the Buddha.

(a) The dharmakaya, *chö-ku* in Tibetan, is translated as "truth body."

(b) The body that appears to students who are said to be pure, those who have achieved a high level. That body is called the sambhogakaya, the "complete enjoyment body".

(c) The nirmanakaya or "emanation body" appears from the perspective of students who are in an impure state: in particular, from among the many types of nirmanakaya there is the enlightened activity carried out by the supreme nirmanakaya, which demon-

strates the deeds of achieving enlightenment, turning the wheel of dharma and so forth.

The Ceremony of Receiving the Vows of the Bodhisattva

With regard to receiving the vows of the bodhisattva, first of all there is the notion of the bodhi-mind, the mind of enlightenment, which is a very special sort of motivation. It is endowed with two qualities:

(a) A special compassion and

(b) A special intelligence or knowledge, *prajna* in Sanskrit.

With regard to compassion, that is an aspect of the mind of enlightenment, *bodhichitta*: it is not compassion for just one sentient being or ten sentient beings or 100 sentient beings; rather, it is compassion for sentient beings who are as limitless in number as space is limitless in extent. One has the attitude that one would like to protect all of them from suffering. That is the compassion that is an aspect of bodhichitta.

Second, as for the intelligence or prajna of bodhichitta, it is not just a matter of protecting sentient beings from temporary suffering, it is not just a matter of protecting sentient beings from the suffering of extremely difficult situations such as the hell realms and so forth, rather it is an attitude of seeking to protect sentient beings from all suffering throughout all of cyclic existence or samsara, establishing

them in a state that is free from all of the suffering of samsara, in a state of liberation. That is the sort of *prajna* or intelligence, *jnana*, that is associated with this bodhichitta or "mind of enlightenment."

There are three phases to receiving this vow of a bodhisattva:

(a) Going for refuge,

(b) Actually taking the bodhisattva vow and

(c) Rejoicing in that.

With regard to the first, going for refuge, there is the general way of going for refuge and then there is the way of going for refuge that is characteristic of the Mahayana, the great vehicle. In the Mahayana way of going for refuge, there are two aspects:

(a.1) A sense of the scale of time that is needed and

(a.2) One's motivation.

As for the scale of time, one is saying, "Until I have achieved the essence of enlightenment, until I have gone to the very essence of enlightenment, I go for refuge to the Buddhas, bodhisattvas and so forth."

As for the motivation, one is going for refuge with the attitude that it is not just for oneself, but it is for all sentient beings. One is going for refuge to the Buddha, the dharma and the sangha for the sake of all sentient beings throughout all of space.

So, first of all when taking the refuge vows, we begin by offering three prostrations, then we assume the posture which has the left knee on the ground and the right knee up, with the palms at the heart. The preceptor says the vow in Tibetan and those taking refuge repeat the prayer after him. The meaning of the words that recited is, "I go for refuge in the Buddha, the dharma and, the sangha until I have arrived at the very essence of enlightenment." One's attitude at this point should be an attitude of faith and devotion.

(b) For the purpose of receiving the vows of the bodhisattva, we offer three more prostrations. Again you recite verses after the preceptor. The meaning of what we say is: "Just as the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of former times aroused the mind of enlightenment, they turned their minds towards complete and perfect enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, so I will arouse my mind for enlightenment in just that way. Just as the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of former times, having given birth to the intention to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, engaged in the activities and deeds that lead to such enlightenment, so I will engage in that activity." We say the verses three times. At the end of the third recitation the vow has been achieved.

(c) Following this, again we do three prostrations. We then recite more verses after the preceptor. The purpose and the meaning of the verses recited here is the increased mind of enlightenment. We have generated the mind of enlightenment, taken the vow and, for

the purpose of increasing it, we recite verses that express our joy in having done so. There are two aspects to this.

(c.1) The first is joy for one's own sake. The thought behind this is that to begin with one has achieved the precious human birth, endowed with leisure and fortune. In addition, one has been able to enter into the door of dharma and one has the extraordinary good fortune of receiving the vows of the bodhisattva. This is very unusual and very special. In receiving the vow of a bodhisattva, one's achievement of a precious human birth has become meaningful. In achieving this vow of a bodhisattva, one enters into the door of the dharma. It is definite now that one will achieve the rank of a Buddha; one has definitely entered into the path that leads to enlightenment.

(c.2) The second aspect of expressing one's joy at having entered into the way of the bodhisattva is from the viewpoint of considering how this is beneficial for others. One has expressed the motivation of wishing to protect all sentient beings, both oneself and others, from the suffering of samsara or cyclic existence, of liberating sentient beings from suffering and establishing them in a state of happiness. However, one does not at this point know the method and the way to do that. Having given birth to this mind of enlightenment or bodhichitta, one has definitely set forth on the path that will enable one to free all sentient beings from the ocean of suffering that is samsara or cyclic existence. One has committed oneself to that,

one has promised to do it, one has vowed to do it and in the future one will achieve the ability to actually enable all sentient beings to separate themselves from suffering and achieve the state of lasting and genuine happiness. From that point of view, one is expressing one's joy and delight.

Having taken the vow of a bodhisattva we express vision in our mission, vision and wishes for the future, called *mön-lam*, "the path of wishing" or "an aspiration of prayer." What we say and what Rinpoche would like you to keep in mind is as follows. "All sentient beings throughout all of space, whoever they are, if they have not given birth to this mind of enlightenment within the stream of their being, may they do so. If they have given birth to this mind of enlightenment within the stream of their being, may it not decrease and furthermore, may it not only not decrease, but may it increase more and more. May all sentient beings in this way achieve the rank of complete and perfect enlightenment."

At the conclusion we dedicate the roots of virtue that have been established to the welfare of all sentient beings throughout all of space.

Sarnath & the Four Truths

Varanasi is the place where the Buddha first turned the wheel of dharma and on that occasion taught the four truths, so I will talk about the four truths.

How should one listen to a presentation of the excellent and sacred dharma? One's motivation is extremely important and on this particular occasion, the motivation, called "bodhichitta," the mind or heart of enlightenment, the aspiration to complete enlightenment for the sake of sentient beings throughout all of space, is of extremely great importance. If one's motivation is not pure, then when one listens to a presentation of the dharma, whatever understanding one brings away from having listened to that presentation is like a reflection of the real thing; it isn't the real thing. Moreover, even if one has a pure motivation, if one is interested only in one's own welfare, if one has an interest and enthusiasm for accomplishing only one's own benefit, then that is a very small and narrow way to approach things. It is like the Hinayana motivation. It would not

be appropriate for us who have had the extraordinary fortune of entering into the gateway of the dharma of the Mahayana or great vehicle to listen to the dharma with such an attitude. Rather, we listen to the presentation of the dharma bearing in mind the welfare of all sentient beings throughout all of space, equal in number to the limits of space, wishing to accomplish perfect and complete enlightenment for their sake, so that we can establish all other sentient beings in the state of liberation and enlightenment. That is the sort of attitude one should have on this kind of occasion. So, turning your mind in that way toward enlightenment for the sake of all beings and arousing bodhichitta, please listen to this presentation of the excellent dharma.

Many different religious traditions have spread in this world, which is referred to as Jambudvipa in the Buddhist tradition, this planet on which we dwell. A great many different religious traditions about dharma have spread. If we were to talk about the view of most of the religious traditions that have flourished in this world, they are concerned with achieving happiness and avoiding pain through pleasing a deity who is regarded as the creator of this world. The view of those religious traditions is that there is such a deity and if one pleases that deity, then one will receive happiness, comfort, pleasure and generally a very delightful situation. If one does not do so, if one displeases that deity, instead one will have suffering and a very difficult situation. So, in order to please that deity,

practitioners of the various religious traditions engage in offerings, supplications and so forth.

The tradition taught by our teacher, the genuine, completely enlightened Buddha, is different from that. The thought,intention, and understanding that the Buddha expressed were that there is no deity who is the maker or manufacturer or creator of this world; rather, all these appearances arise in dependence upon ignorance and confusion, upon being mistaken about the true nature or mode of abiding of things. Therefore, what one needs to do in order to achieve a state of happiness is to abandon that ignorance and confusion. Having done so, one will achieve the final happiness. In order to abandon a mistaken or confused view, which has produced all sorts of appearances in this world, one needs to realize the true nature or the mode of abiding of things, one needs to realize the nature that is actually the "truth" about things. Through doing so, one will be able to abandon, dispel, throw out that which needs to be abandoned and thrown out. In that context, in teaching the true nature or mode of abiding of things, the Buddha taught the four truths. He also spoke about the two truths. Both of these sets of truths are teaching the true nature, the mode of abiding of the way in which things actually do exist. Between those two sets, the teaching on the four truths is the teaching that was given first, and that is what we will be discussing now.

The Four Truths

If we give an overall picture of these four truths, we can see that they are divided into two different sets:

(1) First of all in the context of what are known as "thoroughly afflicted phenomena" or samsara, if we speak about the truth or the effect, there is suffering, which is the first of the four truths.

(2) If we speak about the cause of that suffering, there are what are known as "origins."

(3) Then, in the context of what are known as thoroughly pure phenomena, again we talk about the effect and we speak of cessation.

(4) If we talk about the cause, we talk about the path.

Those then are the four truths: (1) suffering, (2) its origin, (3) cessation and (4) the path leading to cessation.

(1) Suffering is to be known or recognized as suffering.

(2) The origin of suffering is to be abandoned.

(3) The cessation of suffering is to be actualized.

(4) The path leading to the cessation of suffering is to be practiced, to be relied upon within the stream of one's being.

The Characteristics of the Four Truths

(1) The first of the four truths, suffering, is characterized in four ways. The four characteristics of suffering are

(a) impermanence,

(b) suffering,

(c) emptiness and

(d) selflessness.

(2) If we talk about the second of the four truths, the origin of suffering, it can be characterized in terms of different characteristics:

(a) The origin of suffering is a cause and it is a cause of worldly appearances, of samsara.

(b) Secondly, it is an origin in that it is the origin of the appearances of samsara. In particular, if we speak about the way in which origin is the origin of suffering, it is through dependence upon various sorts of actions. If we look at the actual nature or entity of the origin of suffering, we see that there are principally two components: (1) action or karma and (2) affliction or klesha. If we speak about action or karma, we speak about three types: of body, of speech and of mind. If we talk about affliction or klesha, then there are the afflictions of desire, of hatred, of bewilderment and so forth.

1. The Truth of Suffering

The Four Thoughts that Turn the Mind Away from Samsara

If we are speaking about the dharma in the way in which it spread in the snowy land of Tibet, we need to consider the way the dharma was practiced in the context of the gyu mantra Vajrayana or secret mantra Vajrayana. There, as I said before, "Suffering is to be known as suffering. The origin of suffering is to be abandoned," and so forth. The way these words were practiced in the tradition of secret mantra Vajrayana as this spread in Tibet was by way of what are known as "the four reversals of mind" or "the four thoughts that turn the mind away from samsara," those four being: (a) the difficulty of finding a situation that is free and well-favored, (b) death and impermanence, (c) karma and its effect, action and its effect, and (d) the disadvantageous qualities of samsara or cyclic existence.

(a) Impermanence and death

The main point of the four reminders or thoughts that turn the mind away from cyclic existence is impermanence. How is that? When Buddha said that suffering is to be known, what he meant was that suffering is truly the nature of samsara and that is what one needs to understand. One needs to understand that suffering is the characteristic or definitive mark of samsara. So, in order to imprint that on their minds, the learned persons and practitioners

of the past have focused upon the teaching of impermanence as away to impress upon their minds what the basic nature of samsara is, recognizing that which is impermanent as impermanent. If one does not recognize that which is impermanent as impermanent, then one will become attached to the various appearances of samsara and in that way, through attachment to the facsimile of happiness, the fake sort of happiness, that which seems to be happiness but really isn't – which is all of the appearances of samsara – through attachment to these, one falls under their power. Having fallen under their power, one is not able to enter into the dharma. And not being able to enter the dharma, one is not able to practice. For that reason, it is very important to know the impermanent as impermanent.

When they hear this particular dharma of impermanence, then those who do not have confidence and faith in the Buddhadharma think that the Buddhadharma is not good. The reason for thinking so is, they say, that "The effect or fruit of a tradition of dharma ought to be that a person's courage increases and that their strength of heart increases. However, the effect of this Buddhadharma is that a person becomes cowardly and their mind becomes less confident – it becomes smaller." Why is that the notion? "Because in this tradition of the Buddhadharma they say that the world is impermanent. They say that it is without a self. And they say that it is empty. Through their teaching this, through people taking this kind of presentation to heart, instead of their minds becoming more empowered and

more courageous,they become less courageous and more cowardly. The mind becomes small, sinks and becomes discouraged." This is the way many people think. In fact, however, there is a great reason and purpose for impermanence and so forth having been stressed right at the beginning.

The purpose of teaching impermanence and selflessness is that these are the actual characteristics of things. In this way, if it were the case that permanence and happiness or pleasure were the actual definitive quality or characteristic of things, of samsara, then there would be no purpose in the Buddha having said that impermanence and suffering were the nature of such things. It is not the case, however, that permanence and pleasure are the nature of things, of samsara: rather, impermanence and suffering are their characteristic. Even though they are truly the characteristic of samsara, one tends not to recognize or identify this as its actual character. And in teaching impermanence and suffering as the nature of things, the nature of samsara, Buddha is introducing one to the truth about them, and as he said, "It is a way of making it possible for one to achieve a great kingdom through recognizing the actual nature of the things of samsara."

Let me give an example. Suppose there was a poisonous snake right next to where I am sitting and I didn't know about it. As long as I don't know about it, I would be sitting here comfortably and happily while there is a great danger that I am not aware of.

Gradually this poisonous snake would come closer and closer and then bite me. After it did so, I would find myself in a very difficult situation, with a lot of pain and hardship – in fact, helpless, without any method for healing the injury that had been done to me. If,on the other hand, someone were to say to me, "There is a poisonous snake right near where you are," then even though it might be a bit alarming and painful to hear that, nevertheless, it would allow me to escape from the danger into which I would otherwise have fallen, and not to have to undergo that kind of hardship. For this reason, using that as an example, you can see why it is that the Buddha and the *Kalyanamitra* or "spiritual friends" of the past taught initially that impermanence and suffering are the nature of the things of samsara, so that it is possible to turn away from and flee from these. So, there is a real purpose in their having spoken those words, and there is a real purpose in our understanding, in knowing those things to be the truth.

(b) The precious human birth

Generally speaking, impermanence is the definitive mark of samsara and, within that, if we consider the lifetime of human beings in particular, we see that the lifetime of human beings is short. For instance, there are some turtles that live to be 300 or 400 years old. That does occur. Are there any human beings that live to be 300 or 400 years old? Well, not except those who do so through some very

unusual magical feats! It really doesn't occur that human beings live to be 300 years old. So, from that point of view, the lifetime of human beings is very short. In that short lifetime, it is extremely important to practice the dharma so one can pass beyond the impermanence of samsara. Is it possible for us to cross over this ocean of cyclic existence, to cross to the far shore and achieve freedom from this impermanent, painful, unsatisfying condition? Well, if we were talking about those who have as their basis for their particular lifetime the body of an animal or the body of what is called a "hungry ghost," no, their situation is difficult and it is not possible for them to do that. However, our situation is not like theirs. We have the very good fortune and situation of having achieved the body of a human being, with which we are able to practice the dharma of the Buddha. We have the intelligence or prajna with which it is possible for us to understand those things that are to be taken up and those things that are to be discarded. And it is from this point of view that the teachers and spiritual friends of the past have said such a human lifetime is a case of having found a situation that is both free and well favored, that it is extremely difficult to find and attain and yet one has done so. Having done that is extremely important and meaningful; it is an extremely fortunate situation. It is the basis for liberation from the difficult situation of samsara; it is the basis which one can use to go from cyclic existence to a state of freedom.

(c) Samsara

So, we have the human body that is the method or the upaya for achieving liberation from cyclic existence, which has the nature of impermanence and pain. How then shall we practice? Shall we focus upon achieving the happiness that is included within samsara and abandoning the unpleasant and manifestly painful situations of samsara? Is that the way to go about it? No, the happiness of samsara is not very stable, and the sort of happiness and pleasure we need is something beyond that, that has crossed over the ocean of such temporary happiness, that is something other than the type of happiness that is included within samsara. So, from that point of view, the learned and accomplished persons of the past have talked about the disadvantageous, unsatisfying, faulty nature of samsara, saying, "Well, in samsara there are both suffering and pleasure. As for the suffering, it is suffering. But as for the pleasure of samsara, it is just that and nothing more. There is no more promise beyond that. Whatever amount of happiness one achieves is not very stable in its nature. Achieving that is not of any great benefit and meaning. What one needs to do is cross beyond that and achieve the happiness of what is known as "nirvana." To translate it literally, "to pass beyond suffering." To achieve some other sort of happiness is not of any benefit." That, generally speaking, is the way the faults and disadvantageous aspects of samsara are explained.

(d) Karma

Is it possible to abandon the suffering of samsara? Is it possible to cross over, to pass beyond the suffering of samsara? Yes, it is possible to abandon that suffering; it is indeed possible to cross to the far shore. If it were the case that the world had been created by a god in the way I was speaking about it at the beginning of this talk, then we would be helpless. It would not be within our own power to do much about our own situation; it would not be within our own force or sphere of activity either to abandon suffering or to achieve real happiness. If we talk about the truth of the matter, however, it is not the case that it is some deity other than ourselves who has created the world and put us in this situation, then it is indeed in our power to do something about it. That is because the situation within which we find ourselves is the fruit of our own actions; those actions are the cause that have created the particular effect and therefore it is within our power to abandon the causes of suffering and to achieve the causes of happiness. If, for instance, one hears about the great suffering that beings have to undergo in the lower realms and feels frightened by that, and does not want to have to experience that kind of suffering, is it within one's own power not to have to experience that kind of suffering? Yes, it is within one's power. Why is that? Because ill deeds and non-virtuous activities are the cause of taking birth in a lower realm. And it is within one's own power not to engage in such ill deeds and unfavorable activi-

ties. If, on the other hand, one wishes to enjoy the happiness of the higher realms within samsara, is it possible for one to do that? Yes. Why? Because the practice of favorable or virtuous actions is the cause of taking birth in a comfortable, pleasant, good lifetime, a high migration within cyclic existence. In that way, one is independent; it is within one's own power to do what one wants to do. It is possible to achieve what one wants to achieve. Suppose one wants to achieve nirvana or the state of having crossed beyond all suffering of cyclic existence altogether, is that something that can be done? Yes, it is something that can be done, simply through engaging in the causes that lead to that effect and practicing the causes and paths that lead to that effect. Simply through engaging in the causes that lead to nirvana one can do so. That, generally speaking, is the way the discussion of karma is presented, that is, the discussion of the relationship between cause and effect.

In this way, the Buddha turned the wheel of dharma initially and explained the four truths and particular the truth of suffering. As I said before, in the snowy land of Tibet where the tradition of secret mantra Vajrayana was pre-eminent and most widely practiced, this teaching on suffering was given and taken to mind mainly in terms of the practice of the four reminders or thoughts that reverse one's mind or turn one's mind back from cyclic existence. How was that practice achieved? First of all, through coming to understand those four points. Having understood them, then to meditate upon them.

How does one meditate upon them? Is it something that one does just once or a few times? No, that is not it. It is through making it extremely clear and vivid in one's mind and doing this again and again, until one has got extremely accustomed, used to and familiar with it, to the point that it actually rests, dwells and abides in one's mind and one has great confidence in it, a knowledgeable and confident understanding of the meaning. That is the way in which this truth of suffering is to be approached.

2. The Origin of Suffering

The second among the four truths is the origin of suffering. This can be understood in terms of *karma* and *klesha* or action and afflictions.

Karma

The various sorts of pleasure and pain that we experience in samsara lead back to or depend upon actions, karma. What one needs to do, since we already accumulate various sorts of unfavorable or bad karma, we have to stop doing that and instead begin to achieve wholesome good karma. There is a method for doing that. The method whereby one can achieve favorable rather than unfavorable karma is through developing an antidote to the afflictions, the kleshas, and thereby abandoning the kleshas.

Klesha

It is with this in mind that the Buddha said that the origin of suffering is to be abandoned. There is a real purpose and need to abandon the kleshas, which are the origin of suffering. The reason is that the kleshas such as passion, aggression, pride, envy and so forth never produce anything beneficial; they just produce hardships for oneself and others. They don't put one in a state of happiness and comfort. Is there a way to abandon these kleshas? How would one go about doing so? Would it be, for instance, by saying, "I am not going to be desirous," or "I am not going to become angry?" No, just doing that will not do: rather, one has to get at the very root of desire, hatred, and so forth. There are various types of methods or upaya that are taught for abandoning the root of kleshas. There are (a) some that are taught in the context of the paths of the small vehicle, (b) some that are taught in the context of the great vehicle or Mahayana and (c) others that are taught in the context of the secret mantra Vajrayana. (d) there are various sorts of methods that are not, properly speaking, the paths of any of those three vehicles or *yanas*, rather they are just methods for temporarily suppressing, literally "pressing down the head," by temporarily taming the kleshas without actually getting rid of them from the root.

(a) Methods in the Hinayana

What sort of methods or upaya were taught in the Hinayana for abandoning the root of the kleshas? In the tradition of the Hinayana, recognizing that afflictions are the root and cause of samsara, the Buddha taught that in order to abandon the afflictions, one would have to abandon the conception of a self of a person, which is the root of the afflictions.

From beginningless time in cyclic existence we have regarded that which does not have a self as having a self and we have conceived that which is not a self to be a self. What we need to do is to understand that there is no self, that the person is not established as a self, does not exist as a self. Not having realized that since beginningless time in samsara, we find ourselves in a situation in which that conception of a self or person gives rise to afflictions, all sorts of afflictions. If one realizes the selfless as selfless, then the various sorts of afflictions, such as desire, pride, envy and so forth, will be abandoned. When the root of the afflictions is cut, then the afflictions that arise in dependence upon that will not be generated.

This is a brief outline of the way in which the kleshas are abandoned within the paths of the tradition of the Hinayana.

(b) Methods in the Mahayana

What about in the case of the Mahayana or great vehicle and the methods taught there? In the Mahayana it is said that the conception of things or the conception of actualities is the root of afflictions. Not having recognized the true nature of things but taking them to be real, taking them to be actualities, not realizing that they are empty, not understanding that fact, the none conceives of them to be real and holds them to be actual things. In that way one is confused and mistaken. One has to understand that all of the things of samsara are devoid of any nature of their own; they lack inherent existence, they are primordially unborn, unproduced. In the sutras that set forth transcendent wisdom, the *Prajnaparamita Sutras*, the principal thing that is taught is emptiness or shunyata. In that way, it is explained – as it says in the Heart Sutra: "There is no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind, no form, no feeling" and so forth – that if one meditates upon that emptiness and realizes it, one will be able to abandon the afflictions. That is the sort of path that is taught for abandoning the afflictions in the tradition of the Mahayana.

In the way we have just discussed, one listens to the presentation of the nature of phenomena, one contemplates the meaning of that, accepting definitely that emptiness is indeed the nature of phenomena. Then one meditates upon what one has understood.

This is indeed an extremely good way to proceed; however, it is not a very rapid way to proceed.

(c) Methods in the secret mantra Vajrayana

Other methods are presented within the context of the secret mantra Vajrayana, which presents a way of perceiving that is not common to the other yanas; it is not shared with the other yanas. It involves a direct introduction to the reality of things, such that one experiences, understands, and is introduced to the way in which all phenomena are self-risen and self-released, they are self-pacified. This is done in terms of meditative experience under the guidance of one's own particular Root Guru or Root Lama, whereby one is introduced to the wisdom that is the thing to be realized. Having been introduced to that wisdom and relying upon it, one is able to abandon the kleshas or afflictions.

Various methods are taught within the tradition of secret mantra Vajrayana for recognizing and meditating in terms of the true nature of the mind, the mind's actual way of abiding. That sort of meditation serves as a method or way of abandoning various afflictions. It needs to be done properly, correctly, and genuinely. There are a variety of ways to go about it. For instance, there are the practices known as the *kye-rim* or "stage of generation." There are also the practices of the *dzog-rim* or "stage of completion."

If we are speaking about the first, or stage of generation, methods are taught within this tradition for making one's mind extremely stable and vividly clear and bright through meditating upon the body of a deity. If one did not make use of such methods but just went along casually with meditation, one's mind would not become heightened, vivid, and steady in that way. In Tibet we have this way of meditating that involves the recitation of liturgies and making a great deal of noise when we go about our practice. There is a purpose to that and those who have initially just entered into the practice of the Buddhadharma could very easily think that there is some discrepancy between the dharma that is taught in the books of the Buddhists and the dharma that is practiced in the Tibetan monastic institutions or places of practice. For instance, one might feel that there is some dissimilarity, seeing that in the books it is said that one ought to abandon the kleshas or afflictions, however, these people go around making a tremendous amount of noise. They are chanting and ringing bells, banging cymbals, beating drums and all kinds of things. You would have to think that there is something wrong here and the two aren't connecting well. But, in fact, there is a very strong connection, relationship, and purpose between those practices and the teaching about the eradication of the kleshas or afflictions. Through doing this sort of recitative meditation, one's mind comes to rest very steadily. In particular, when the mind is resting steadily and music is played,

that serves as a method for the mind to rest even further, in a way that is very unusual and not possible in another way. So, indeed, there is a real purpose and method to this "madness," so to speak. There is a necessity and purpose to this.

If we consider this in further detail, the way various sorts of elaborate arrangements are made which serve as a method for the mind becoming steady, resting, brilliant and clear, there is the use of what is called *tor-ma*, literally "a scattered offering," but it is like a figure made out of dough – usually barley in the Tibetan tradition. Those of you who have seen ceremonies of the Tibetan tradition have seen such things, painted with bright colors, usually with colored butter. Someone who was new to this would look at those things and think, "What has that got to do with anything? How do these painted figures of dough serve as a way for abandoning kleshas? How is that going to serve as a way for generating this very sharp knowledge, this very sharp knowing mind that is known as prajna?" There is indeed a real purpose to this and it is that these tormas or "painted dough figures" serve as a basis for one's to mind to focus, visualize and observe the figure of a deity. The visualization of a deity is often very elaborate and if we just put a figure of the deity in front of the practitioner, then it will be very easy to think, "Oh, I don't have to meditate. I don't have to visualize anything. There it is. I just have to look at it." But it is making a conjunction between the dough figure and the visualized deity which enables one to

heighten one's mind and to rest it because one uses this torma as a basis for imagining, visualizing, and observing the body of a deity.

So, when you first encounter such things, you might think they serve no particular purpose. But if you think about it carefully, if you analyze and investigate this matter well, then you see that there is a real cause and purpose for doing things in that particular way and you can understand. If I spoke about this from my own experience, I could say that when I was fresh to this sort of thing, when I had done some studying but was new to the liturgical ritual practice, I would look at these figures and think, what is the point of that? It is not mentioned in any of the books I know about. There is nothing in the texts of the Madhyamaka that speaks about torma. What is the point? But actually, if you look carefully, you can begin to understand through your own knowledge and your own prajna the way these things are useful and important. They play an important role and aren't something one just does casually to amuse oneself. There is a real meaning to it; there is a purpose for it. When you understand that, then it is something you are delighted and cheered by and you like it quite a bit.

I have spoken about the truth of suffering and the truth of the origin of suffering.

3. The Cessation of Suffering

We begin by speaking about the third of the four noble truths,which is nirvana. From among effect and cause, this is an effect. We are talking about the third noble truth, called the truth of cessation. If we discuss this from the viewpoint of the understanding that is common to many different traditions and is shared by them, then cessation refers to the state of having abandoned the afflictions or kleshas. In the texts on higher knowledge or Abhidharma, they are spoken of as "individual,analytical cessations" in the sense that one needs to analyze well and thoroughly, so that one is able to realize the true mode of abiding of things, their true and actual nature. Having done this, then confusion, error, afflictions of all sorts naturally cease or stop. From that point of view, we refer to these afflictions having stopped as cessation.

The Characteristics of Cessation

What is the character of that cessation? It is described as peaceful and auspicious: those are two characteristics. The sense is that one has separated from the afflictions, which are a case of the mind being unpeaceful, disturbed and in a difficult situation, creating further obstructions and difficulties for oneself, and, therefore, having separated from those afflictions, one experiences peacefulness. This peacefulness is not a state that is a mere nothingness whatsoever,

rather it is endowed with marvelous happiness or bliss. For that reason it is referred to as "auspicious or plentiful."

This peacefulness, which is one of the definitive marks of the truth of cessation, is also what is referred to as "definite emergence." Sometimes this is translated as "renunciation," literally it means "definitely having arisen" in the sense that the happiness, pleasure and bliss of cessation, nirvana, is not a happiness that is included within samsara, rather it is a state of having achieved liberation and the final nirvana. For that reason it is called "definitely arisen, definitely emerged" or "renunciation." In that way, this third noble truth, the truth of cessation, has these four characteristics. They are (a) cessation, (b) peacefulness, (c) auspiciousness, and (d) definite emergence.

Practice in the Mahayana

As for the presentation of cessation according to the great vehicle or Mahayana, generally speaking it refers to the afflictions that are the objects to be abandoned. However, this is not to speak about them as previously having existed and later being abandoned; rather, it is a matter of recognizing that they are not established in the very nature of the mind and that, through realizing their lack of any establishment or existence, in the nature of the mind one is recognizing their true cessation, their natural cessation. In that way one is recognizing that the afflictions are naturally pacified. In

the treatises or shastras of the Mahayana, it is said that all sentient beings have the Buddha essence and that the afflictions or kleshas are something that is only adventitious, not in the actual nature of the mind. From that point of view, all sentient beings are primordially, right from the very start, Buddha. However, the defilements, the kleshas, obstruct that Buddha nature, that Buddha essence. The consequence is that the qualities and enlightened activity are not manifest in those who still have such adventitious defilements. Nevertheless, because the defilements are extraneous, adventitious, do not exist in the very nature of the mind, because the qualities of a Buddha exist right from the very beginning insentient beings, it is suitable for those defilements to be abandoned, it is suitable, appropriate, possible to separate from them and therefore, through realizing dharmata or "reality," one can abandon the defilements and achieve Buddhahood.

4. The Paths

The fourth noble truth is called the true paths or the truth of the path; there are two ways of translating this. In the common or shared way of understanding this fourth truth, it is like this. We are talking about achieving nirvana or Buddhahood. However we phrase it, it is necessary to achieve that effect or that truth, and in order to do so, one needs to exert oneself on the path or paths,and thus it is said that the cessations are to be actualized. In order to

actualize the cessations, one needs to rely upon the path in the stream of one's being.

According to the Common Traditions

Whether we are speaking about the Hinayana or the Mahayana, mainly the path becomes what are known as the five paths: accumulation, connection, seeing, meditation and no more learning.

(a) The path of accumulation

We are talking about initially entering into the paths that lead to cessation. In a way this was described by the Master Vasubhandu,who spoke about this as the need to engage in pure discipline, pure ethics, also one needs to listen well and contemplate deeply the meaning set forth in the spoken word of Buddha's sutras and in the treatises or shastras written by the great learned scholars, commenting upon and explaining further the teachings given by the Buddha.

Having come to understand the meaning of the teachings well, then one meditates upon the meaning that one has understood and in this way practices. Thus, this path of accumulation refers to the point of initially entering into the teachings.

(b) The path of connection

One meditates then upon the meaning one has understood and generates within one's own stream of being a sign of having understood this, having become familiar with the meaning, a sign of

some experience of the meaning of this, which is that the kleshas are suppressed somewhat – suppressed is not the right word because it carries the connotation of other psychoanalytic fields, but it has a notion of diminishment, setting aside the affliction. At that point one has reached the path of connection, the second of the five paths.

It is called the path of connection because it connects one as an ordinary being to the ground of a superior, an arhat, an elevated person. Those who are at the level of the path of connection are ordinary, common beings, however, this path of connection delivers one to the path of a superior or *Arya* (noble) being, one who has actually abandoned afflictions. And from that point of view it is called the path of connection.

(c) The path of seeing

When one generates in one's own continuum, in one's own stream of being, the genuine and authentic experience, one arrives at the point of the path of seeing, in which one sees the truth directly. Because one sees the truth correctly, this is called the path of seeing. In the context of the small vehicle, this is spoken of as seeing the selflessness of the person or seeing the true nature or mode of abiding of the four truths. In the context of the great vehicle, it is spoken of as the seeing of dharmadhatu or "the sphere of reality directly." One sees the true nature of dharmadhatu, the sphere of reality. From that point of view, having seen that definitively, one

abandons the afflictive obstructions and obstructions with regard to knowledge that are contradictory to that sphere of reality. One generates within oneself the wisdom of the path of seeing that abandons all obstructions which are to be abandoned on this path. Because of having done so, a great joy is born within oneself and, for that reason, because one has given birth to that joy, this path of seeing, which is also the first bodhisattva ground or *bhumi*, is called the "thoroughly joyful."

(d) The path of meditation

On the path of seeing, one does indeed see the truth. Is it the case that through merely seeing the truth one achieves the effect or fruition? No, one does not achieve the effect or fruition merely through having seen it. Even though one has seen reality, seen the truth, nevertheless, within the stream of one's being are many latent predispositions that have been established there. Due to one's having got used to the afflictions from beginningless time, one is very much accustomed to confusion and not very much accustomed to knowing the truth. Therefore, in order to purify those latent dispositions, one needs to grow familiar with the truth again and again and to extend that over a long period of time. This period of becoming familiar with the true nature of things is this fourth path of meditation. This fourth of the five paths abandons all of those predispositions that are to be abandoned on the path of meditation, and appropriate wisdoms are generated within the continuum of

one's being. In the context of the Hinayana, this period of practice is referred to by the levels as "returner," "non-returner" and so forth. In the Mahayana, this period of familiarization with reality on the path of meditation is called by the names of the remaining levels or realms of a bodhisattva, beginning with the second of the ten grounds, which is called the "stainless," extending up to the tenth ground, which is called the "cloud of dharma."

(e) The path of no more learning

Having traversed or crossed over the various levels within the path of meditation, one arrives at the fifth among the five paths, which is called the path of no more learning. In the context of the Hinayana this is referred to as the "state of a foe-destroyer," this translates the term arhat. In the context of the Mahayana, it is referred to as "the state of the genuinely, authentically, completely and perfectly enlightened Buddha."

So that is the presentation of the five paths according to the shared or common tradition.

Practice According to the Unshared Tradition: The Four Dharmas of Gampopa

The unshared or uncommon way of discussing this within the tradition of the secret mantra Vajrayana, and in particular in the lineage of practice of the oral instructions given by Tilopa to Naropa,

Naropa to Marpa, Marpa to Milarepa, Milarepa to Gampopa and so forth, is as follows. If we were to consider this in the way in which it was stated in the teachings of Lord Gampopa, there is a great deal one could say about these things. But if one were to abbreviate it, one can describe it in terms of the Four Dharmas of Gampopa. It describes how through traversing the paths the various wisdoms are born or generated within the continuum or stream of one's being and one thereby arrives at the final fruition.

(a) Mind goes into the dharma.

The first among the four dharmas describes the way one enters into the gateway of the dharma, and thus it is said "Mind goes into the dharma" or "Mind becomes one with the dharma," quite literally. When one is attempting to enter into the practice of dharma, from among body, speech and mind, what is most important? It is important that body and speech enter into the dharma, but this is not the most important thing. The most important thing is that one's mind enters the dharma, and therefore the first of the four doctrines or dharmas of Gampopa says, "Mind goes into the dharma."

What is the method whereby one's mind could enter into the dharma? It is the four thoughts that turn one's mind away from samsara which I discussed previously. Through coming to understand those, one is able to enter into the dharma. Therefore the four reminders

or reversals of mind are a method whereby one can enter into the dharma; they are the very root of entering into the dharma.

One then needs to engage in a great deal of hearing or listening to the presentation of dharma and contemplating carefully the meaning. How should one go about that? In the tradition that was set forth in the practice by the learned scholars or accomplished persons or siddhas of Tibet, the treatises or shastras were taken as the most important objects of one's study; one should study them mainly. Other scholars from other countries look at this and consider this approach as mistaken. They say it is mistaken to take these treatises as the main things; one should take the word of the Buddha as the most important thing. If one is going to study the dharma in the sense of listening to and contemplating the meaning, one should focus upon the actual sutras of the Buddha. However, in the tradition that was established in the land of Tibet, it was taken to be the case that the study of the treatises was more valuable than the study of the word of Buddha, and there was a reason for this. The reason is that when the Buddha taught, he would teach different individuals on different occasions according to what they needed at that time, so the teachings are scattered sort of piecemeal here and there. It is extremely vast; it is not something that an ordinary person, such as ourselves could engage in or enter into easily. Thus, what is done in the treatises is gathering this vastness together and putting it into a manageable, comprehensible form to clarify and

illuminate aspects of the teachings that were not particularly clear. Sometimes the Buddha spoke in a very terse, abbreviated way and another person would not be able to clearly understand the meaning given at that time. So these teachings in the treatises clarify the teachings. In particular, we speak about the Six Ornaments of the Land of the Noble One, the teachers such as Nagarjuna, Asanga, Aryadeva and so forth. Their work was to gather together the teachings of the Buddha that had been scattered among many different occasions, to take those that were vast and to abbreviate them into their main point and essence, and to look into those that were somewhat covered over and hidden in that way and to clarify them, to arrange everything newly and properly so that one could understand the meaning. Through having done it this way, it is easy for a person to know the meaning, to understand; for the one who wishes to teach it, it is easy to teach; for the one who wishes to train in it, it is easy to train. It is all made somewhat more approachable, which is the purpose of having arranged the teachings of the Buddha in these teachings.

If we consider the Buddha's teachings in the *Prajnaparamita*, (*Transcendent Wisdom*), the 100,000-stanza sutra fills up twelve entire books. In the condensation of that sutra into the treatise which is known as the *Abhisamayalankara,* (*The Ornament for Realization*), there are only twenty chapters; it is something someone can read, study and focus upon. It is something one can understand.

For instance, if we wanted to look at one of the more concealed sutras which is opened up fully in the treatises, we could consider the teaching of emptiness that is presented in the sutras on *Prajnaparamita*, where for instance the sixteen types of emptiness are presented. Even though those sixteen emptinesses are taught there, the reasons why such and such is empty are not taught; it is not explained clearly there, the reason being that on that occasion the Buddha taught highly developed bodhisattvas who themselves had profound realization, and so did not need to go about explaining the reason for things in great detail. However, so that ordinary beings like ourselves, who have not understood the meaning, could understand and enter into that teaching, could generate a realization that we have not generated, the great master Nagarjuna wrote treatises explaining emptiness, and he would give individual reasons: "This is empty because of such and such," and "That is empty because of such and such." He would establish the emptiness of phenomena with reasoning so that ordinary beings, such as ourselves, could arrive at a definitive knowledge, ascertainment and certainty about the meaning of emptiness. So the emphasis on the treatises or shastras is not from the viewpoint of saying that the word of the Buddha is of small importance: rather it is from the viewpoint of making it possible to understand the meaning of the Buddha's words.

When it comes to the point of actually practicing, the oral instructions are even more important than the treatises. This is because one focuses upon the treatises when one is listening to and contemplating the meaning of the dharma. However, that is not the way one actually goes about the practice; it is not the way in which one practices the manner of practice. The manner of practice is not described clearly in the treatises, in the sense that the treatises do not say, "First do this, and when you have done that, then do that. When you have finished that, then do the other." The treatises don't say, "If you have such and such an experience when you are practicing, then you should do such and such." Those sorts of things are not explained in the treatises. For that reason, the various persons who had achieved siddhis explained in their oral instructions the way one should practice in accordance with the various sorts of experiences that people would have. Thus they explained, "If you met with a certain type of impediment or if you fell into a certain type of state, then the remedy that you would need to apply would be such and such." They explained in the oral instructions the mode of practice appropriate for the students. For that reason, when it comes to practice, the oral instructions are even more important than the treatises.

(b) Dharma goes on the path

(b.1) Taking Refuge in the Three Roots

The second from among the four dharmas of Gampopa says: "Dharma goes on the path." This refers mainly to the mind of enlightenment or bodhichitta. The root of bodhichitta is the Three Jewels, going for refuge in the Three Jewels with an attitude of respect, a sort of knowledgeable confidence. In the tradition of the sutra, one goes for refuge in the Three Jewels, in Tibetan "the three rare and supreme ones," the term we translate as "jewel." The sutra tradition speaks of the Three Jewels as Buddha, dharma and sangha. The tradition of the secret mantra Vajrayana speaks of going for refuge in both the Three Jewels and the Three Roots. The Three Roots are the Guru, the yidams, and the dharmapalas. The Guru is the root of blessings, the yidam is the root of siddhi or accomplishment, and the dharmapala is the root of enlightened activity. So in the tradition of the secret mantra Vajrayana one goes for refuge in the Three Jewels and the Three Roots.

The Guru

Among those Three Roots, the Guru is the root of blessings and is regarded as someone extremely important. If one were to think about this without preconceptions, one might look at a tradition that places such emphasis on the Guru and might think that there is some fault, in that the Guru occupies a place that is even more important than the Buddha himself; one would think that after all it is the Buddha who is the founder of this tradition. He is the

most remarkable one. Why is it that the Buddha does not have the pre-eminent position; rather the Guru occupies that place? One could naturally think there is some fault in the way the secret mantra Vajrayana places such emphasis on the Guru. However, there is no fault and the reason is as follows. Of course, the Buddha is someone whose good qualities were completely perceivable and extraordinary. He was highly elevated and an exalted person. However, we find ourselves in a slightly unfortunate position. After all, a Buddha appeared in this world and passed away 2500 years ago and all those years have passed since the Buddha appeared in this world, turned the wheel of dharma, taught, and so forth. We have not had, did not have, and do not have the good fortune of meeting the Buddha face to face. One might say, "Well, aren't we ourselves in an extremely poor situation of not having had the good fortune to meet with the Buddha himself in person?" No, in fact we aren't in such a situation. The truth of the matter is that we have the good fortune of experiencing no difference in our ability to hear the dharma from that of someone hearing the dharma from the Buddha directly. In dependence upon whose kindness do we have the good fortune of there being no difference between our situation and that of someone who heard the dharma from the Buddha himself? It is in dependence upon the Gurus of our lineage and our Root Guru, it depends upon their kindness that we find ourselves in a situation that is in no way different. Because independence upon

their instructions, we are able to practice the dharma, we are able to achieve the fruit from practicing the dharma. This comes about through the kindness of the Root and Lineage Gurus. It is for this reason that we place such emphasis on the Guru and regard him as the source of blessings.

The Yidam

Secondly, we speak about the yidam, who is the source of accomplishment, siddhi. When we speak about siddhi, there are two types: there are supreme siddhi and there are ordinary or common, shared siddhi. The point of the yidam being the source of siddhi is that through practicing the dharma as taught by the Buddha it is possible for us to achieve the final effect, the final fruition of practice. However, the Buddha taught 84,000 skandhas of dharma (*skandha* means "heap, aggregate, collection"), in other words, he taught a lot. Is it possible for us to practice all of those? No, that is not possible; we couldn't do it. Is it necessary for us? No, it is not necessary for us to practice all of the dharmas that the Buddha taught. The Buddha taught these many various dharmas according to the situations of individual students, of those who were to be tamed and subdued by the teaching. The way we can practice all the teachings the Buddha gave is through the practice of the yidam, in particular through the practice of *kye-rim* or "stage of generation of the yidam," and then through the practice of *dzog-rim* or "stage

of completion of the yidam." Through doing that, we are able to practice everything that is essential in the entirety of the Buddha's teachings. For that reason, the yidam is said to be "the root of accomplishment, the root of siddhi and the very root of dharma."

The Protectors

The third of the Three Roots is the *dharmapalas*, the Sanskrit word for "protector of the dharma." They are the root of enlightenment. If we speak about them in the common or shared way, we understand that the spiritual community, the sangha, are those who are one's companions and helpers on the path. They help to clear away situations that are contrary to one's progression along the path and they increase all the conditions that are concordant with one's progression along the path. However, since they have the aspect or appearance of humans, there are situations in which they are not able to assist one. Clearing away contrary situations and fulfilling concordant conditions, the Buddhas and bodhisattvas take on the human aspect of appearance. With that appearance, they clear away interruptions, obstacles, impediments that would cut one off from progressing further along the path and, fulfilling concordant conditions, help one to proceed along the path.

So one goes for refuge in this way.

(b.2) Contrary conditions that must be abandoned

When it comes to practice, there are contrary conditions that one must abandon and there are concordant conditions that must be developed and increased. We speak about abandoning contrary conditions, first, to abandon the ill deeds that one has accumulated or got used to since beginningless time. What sort of method is there for doing that? Generally speaking, simply cutting and exposing it. Particularly, in the tradition of mantra Vajrayana, there is the practice of Vajrasattva, the "vajra being." Meditating upon one's head, one supplicates Vajrasattva and in that way one is able to purify the ill deeds and obstructions that oppose one's progress on the path and are contrary with one's progress.

(b.3) Concordant conditions that must be developed

In order to generate experience and realization within the stream of one's being, one needs to fulfill the concordant conditions. What that refers to is accumulating the collections of wisdom and merit. When we study the lifetimes previous to Lord Buddha's actual lifetime when he became completely enlightened, we see that in order to accumulate the collection of merit and wisdom, he engaged in extraordinary generosity such as giving his head, giving limbs of his body, giving whatever was necessary to sustain the retinue, and giving away his retinue, his resources and whatever – an extraordinary source of generosity. However, we are very ordinary

beings and it is not within our capacity to engage in that kind of generosity. However, there are profound methods that one can do, so that even though we are not able to engage in that kind of generosity, nevertheless, we are able to accumulate merit extensively. The profound method that has been given to us is the offering of our own wealth and resources, mentally, imaginatively, taking to mind whatever we have and offering it all to the enlightened and superior ones of the three times and ten directions. In that way we are able to accumulate merit vastly, and this is the practice referred to as the "offering of the mandala." In doing so, we accumulate the collection of both wisdom and merit. Our wisdom increases to the extent that we can actually give birth to the profound experience of realization. Plus it is merit for accumulating the two collections without having to put forth an extraordinary exertion; it is something that can be done; one can accumulate these collections without strong striving.

A further method for generating experience and realization within the continuum of one's being is the supplication to the Gurus of the Lineage, to one's Root Guru and the Lineage Gurus, practicing what is called "Guru Yoga," whereby one is able to accumulate the collections of merit and wisdom. Thus, this is a third *upaya* where by dharma could go on the path.

(c) The path clarifying confusion

The third of the four doctrines of Lord Gampopa says, "May the path clarify confusion" or "disperse confusion." This refers to the clearing away of the afflictive obstructions and the obstructions with regard to knowledge. If we speak about the unshared path where by such confusion is cleared away and destroyed, we talk about the path of upaya or "the path of method" on the one hand and "the path of release" on the other. In that context, when we say the path of method, we are speaking about the Six Yogas of Naropa, and when we talk about the path of release, we are speaking about the practice of Mahamudra. This is something that individuals need to learn about, stage by stage, and understand in accordance with their own experience, so that when the potencies of these practices come forth, one has a genuine, knowledgeable certainty and confidence in these teachings and practices and one generates a definite knowledge, ascertainment, and certainty.

(d) Confusion dawning as wisdom

The fourth of the four dharmas of Gampopa speaks of "confusion dawning as wisdom," which is to say, in dependence upon one's having practiced the path, confusion is clarified and wisdom or *yeshe* is generated within the continuum of one's being, dawns within one's being, and one has achieved actual Buddhahood. Thus, Gampopa spoke of confusion dawning as wisdom.

That concludes the presentation. If you have questions or doubts in your mind, please ask.

Questions & Answers

Maybe you could tell us more about the dharmapalas? What kind of things attract them to help you overcome obstacles and what kind of things repel the dharmapalas from helping you?

What methods invite and magnetize the dharmapalas? One is the offering of praise to the dharmapalas. Mainly, the principal way one invites and magnetizes the assistance of the dharmapalas is through practicing the dharma properly for oneself and through caring for the welfare of sentient beings. If one does so, then the dharmapalas will assist; if one does not, then they will not help. The background to this is that the Lord Buddha made them into dharmapalas. In his presence, he said to them, "Whoever practices the dharma well, properly, genuinely, please take care of that personas if he were my very own child, as if they were your very own child." Similarly, when one practices the dharma well, then the dharmapalas, in accordance with the instruction of the Buddha, take care of us.

Wisdom dawns. How do the five wisdoms arise, the five aspects of that one wisdom arise out of the nature of the mind by seeing the nature of the mind?

The nature of one's mind is dharmata and through realizing that, wisdom dawns within oneself. In particular, we speak about the transformation of the eight types of consciousness or types of knowledge that we have at present. When they are transformed, they become the five wisdoms.

First of all, there are the five sensory consciousnesses, called "the five consciousnesses by way of the five doors," eye, ear, nose,tongue, and body. When those five are transformed, they are transformed into the wisdom of accomplishing actions, that activity which accomplishes enlightened activity. Secondly, there is the sixth of the eight consciousnesses, which is called "mental consciousness." Its function in the ordinary state is to recognize the details of things. When one is detaching from ignorance, then it is transformed into the wisdom of individual realization, in the sense that it is individually realized, called "discriminating awareness." Thirdly, the seventh among the eight types of consciousnesses is called "afflicted consciousness." Its activity in a state of confusion is to apprehend and conceive something as a self. When that confusion is dispelled, the afflictive mentality is transformed into the wisdom of equality. The eighth of the eight consciousnesses has two aspects. Generally speaking, it is called "the basis of all" or *alaya*, but it has two aspects. One is just called alaya, the basis of all, and the other is called *alayavijnana*, "consciousness basis of all." When the basis of all is transformed, it becomes the mirror-like wisdom, and from

that point it knows all the varieties or extent of phenomena; it is the Buddha's omniscient wisdom which realizes each and every phenomenon, everything that exists just as it is. The consciousness basis of all, when transformed, becomes the wisdom of dharmadhatu, the wisdom of the sphere of reality. It realizes reality; it realizes the mode, manner, nature of things, how they are.

Kushinagar & Impermanence

Since the motivation is extremely important and is the principal thing when listening to the dharma, as we begin this teaching please turn your mind towards supreme enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, arousing bodhichitta.

The place where the Buddha himself passed beyond suffering or entered nirvana is known as Kushinagar in Sanskrit. The Tibetan name means "the city of the supreme type of grass, kusha-grass," so it is Kushinagar in Sanskrit.

The Benefits of Developing a Discriminating Awareness of Impermanence

Generally speaking, when the Buddha came to this particular place,he taught here both the shorter sutra on nirvana and the longer,more extensive sutra on nirvana, the *Mahaparinirvana sutra.* Then indeed he passed into nirvana; he passed beyond all suffering. From

among the various excellent deeds of the Buddha, what particular teaching was demonstrated by his passing into nirvana? Principally, what the Buddha taught on that occasion was impermanence. One might otherwise think, "Although everything else is impermanent, the Buddha himself is permanent." But whenever the Buddha dies, passes into nirvana and demonstrates impermanence in that way, then one cannot help but realize that all things are impermanent and recognize that in a very profound way.

The Buddha himself said that among all sorts of discriminating awareness, the supreme discriminating awareness is the thought of impermanence. He gave three reasons for that:

(1) The beginning phase

In the beginning, the discriminating awareness of impermanence exhorts one toward the dharma. In the beginning, one does not wish to practice the dharma, one does not have faith in the dharma,however, through faith in impermanence, through developing discriminating awareness of impermanence, one develops the wish to enter into the dharma and to practice the dharma; one begins to have faith and longing in the dharma. So, in the beginning,the discriminating awareness that things are impermanent arouses one to enter into the dharma.

(2) The intermediate phase

In the intermediate phase, the awareness of impermanence stimulates great exertion. One might not think that the practice of the dharma is anything of particularly great importance. In spite of having entered into the dharma, one might not have been able to put forth great exertion of practice; one might have become lazy and think it doesn't require much attention. However, through awareness of impermanence one is able to exert oneself greatly. If great exertion has not been generated in the stream of one's being, it can be generated. If one becomes lazy, one can abandon that laziness. Thus, in the intermediate phase, the discriminating awareness of impermanence enables one to exert oneself strongly.

If we think about this from the viewpoint of our own experience, we can understand that this is true. If we look at those who have entered into the path of the dharma, we see that most of them come to it through quite clearly understanding impermanence; solely through understanding impermanence, people initially enter into the dharma. Therefore, the recognition of impermanence is said to be a condition that exhorts – that is, arouses – one toward entering into the dharma. As for the second phase, there are people who have frequently entered into the dharma in a very clean and direct way and certainly even though they feel a great delight in the dharma, nevertheless, they don't seem to have the leisure to practice the dharma because of many worldly activities. They ask

me, "What remedy is there for this?" The Buddha himself said that the remedy for this is to remember impermanence. If one remembers impermanence, takes it to mind, then one will be able to exert oneself strongly. If one is not able to meditate, then through remembering impermanence one will be able to meditate. If one is doing the preliminary practices of Ngöndro and does not have much success in getting oneself to do prostrations or the recitation of the 100-syllable mantra of Vajrasattva and so forth, if one remembers impermanence, then that will enable one to give birth to proper exertion.

The contemplation on impermanence does not depend solely upon what one has heard from one's Guru or read in a book. From looking carefully at the world, one can understand the teaching of impermanence. Just looking around at worldly affairs, one understands impermanence. Studying the lives of the members of one's family, one recognizes impermanence. Looking at the change in one's own life (one's own body, speech and mind), one understands impermanence. Studying the fortunes of people in their lives, the length of lifetimes and how life goes, one can recognize impermanence. Life itself teaches impermanence; life itself offers the pointing-out, the introduction to impermanence. So, if one looks carefully, looks well, looks at the details of things, one will understand this teaching of impermanence. From that point of view one will understand the necessity of practicing the dharma, the benefit of practicing the

dharma, the disadvantageous qualities of not practicing the dharma. One will understand the reasons very clearly and through doing so, the effect of practicing the dharma will arise authentically within the stream of one's being.

If we look around at the impermanence of the world, we might think, "Well, so what? There is no particular fault to that." In particular, if we look at the lifetime of animals, whether their life was permanent or impermanent, does it really make much of a difference? Would there be any great advantage to it being permanent? No, it doesn't really matter in their case, however, in our case, having this type of lifetime as human beings endowed with our situation, being free and well favored, having the seed of prajna within ourselves, intelligence can be increased greatly, it does make a great deal of difference to recognize that life is impermanent. If we are able to recognize that and through having recognized it exert ourselves in the practice of the dharma, then there is great benefit for ourselves and there is also great benefit for others. Through recognizing impermanence and practicing the dharma, then our ability to benefit others will increase in the future; the capacity or potential to be of service and use will increase. Since we now have this extremely good situation, this opportunity and good fortune, it would be a shame to waste it. So as not to waste it, it is important to take this teaching and situation, this fact of impermanence, as upaya; it helps us to realize that our having such a situation, our having such a lifetime, is

not something of small importance, rather it is something of real meaning. Through recognizing that, we are able to undertake the activity of the dharma with real exertion.

(3) The final phase

What is the third benefit of developing a discriminating awareness of impermanence? It is that it serves as the companion and aid for the effect or fruition to arise in the continuum of one's own being. In the beginning, the awareness of impermanence exhorts one to the dharma. In the intermediate phase, the awareness of impermanence enables one to give birth to great exertion. Third, due to one's having practiced the dharma, having been stimulated by the recognition of impermanence towards practice, being able to practice and exerting oneself in practice, one achieves the effect of complete and genuine enlightenment, the accomplishment of the supreme siddhi and the ordinary siddhis also. What is the cause that enables one to do that? It is the awareness of impermanence that allows the effect to emerge.

Questions & Answers

It has been a few years since I read, I think in the Pali sutras, that Buddha said after his death that there would be 500-year periods of decline of Buddhism and I believe we are at the end of the fifth period; there are five of them. Does Buddhism still

have a chance in this world? For people to truly understand it, practice it? Is Buddhism impermanent, people practicing it? Will that decline as well?"

Buddha himself said that there would be ten 500-year stages in the history of the dharma. He indicated a steady decline. In one there would be people who actually achieve the effect and later they wouldn't achieve the effect but there would still be practice. Later they wouldn't practice but there would still be the scriptural tradition. Later there wouldn't even be that but still a remainder or signs of the tradition. When he said those things, hew as taking the perspective of the overall increase and decrease of dharma, if you look at the whole world. He wasn't talking about the situation of individual persons. Whether the dharma is flourishing widely in the world or whether it is not flourishing widely in the world, the excellent dharma is still the excellent dharma. If one has the good fortune to meet with it and to practice it oneself, the fact that it has not spread so widely in the world does not present an obstacle for oneself. There is no particular reason why one could not practice and achieve the complete fruition. Whether you are at the very first of those 500-year stages or the very last of those 500-year stages, when you yourself meet with the dharma, then you have the opportunity to practice. It is not the case, it doesn't occur that you wouldn't be able to practice and you wouldn't be able to achieve the complete fruition of practice. What one accomplishes is dependent

simply upon oneself. It leads back to oneself, whether the dharma has spread widely in the world or not. If we were to consider this from an example of some kind of sweet fruit, it might be that in one part of the world it was quite plentiful and in another part it wasn't present. But even if you were in a place where that fruit was very rare and not many people could enjoy it, if you enjoyed it, if you happened to get one, there is no reason why you would not find it delicious and nourishing. You could enjoy it just as much as anybody anywhere else could. So, it is like that example. When you meet with the dharma, it is completely available to you.

When you leave here and go back to your home, when you get there and are able to exert yourself at practice, if you are able to practice well, that will be great. There is no reason at all for you to think that because the dharma declined at this point in the history of the world therefore you can't accomplish fruition.

There is no need for us to have any doubt about our opportunity to achieve the fruition of the dharma. We could consider this in the light of the prophecy Naropa gave to Marpa. He said that the history of this lineage would be one in which each successive generation of students would be even higher than its predecessors. Having Milarepa in mind, he told Marpa that Marpa would have a student who would be a marvelous, fantastic student, that Marpa would be very delighted in this student and that because of this student the lineage would flourish. It came about in just that way. Further,

in the same way, Milarepa had a fantastic student; I think he was extremely delighted and well pleased. That was the history of the lineage in that each successive generation of the upholders of the lineage were fantastic students,who became completely accomplished. Things have become better and better and more and more profound. From that point of view, there is no reason for anybody to think they cannot accomplish the fruition of the dharma.

I want to confess that I asked His Holiness the Karmapa the same question 11 years ago. He said, "Yes, it is true that we are in a state of decline." I don't know which tantra he was quoting, but he said, "In the tantras this is when Vajrayana will flourish as well." This was his reply.

Thank you.

Rinpoche, when we were at Sarnath, we were talking about the truth of the path. At that time you were talking about the path of connection to the way of superior beings, when one generates within one's own continuum a genuine experience and one sees genuinely. Would you please expand on that?

The path of connection has four aspects. They are known as (a) heat, (b) peak, (c) forbearance and (d) supreme quality.

(a) As for the first, due to having practiced and cultivated the first of the five paths, the path of accumulation, a sign that is the imprint

of having practiced, having completed the path of accumulation, arises in the continuum of one's own being. That sign is called "heat" because the first of the four levels of the path of connection is called "the heat path of connection."

(b) It has the sign of experiences increasing. They rise to a pinnacle. From that point of view, the second of the four levels of the path is called "the peak of the path of preparation."

(c) As one's practice continues, one develops such forbearance that afflictions and obstacles cannot remain. So the third level of this path of connection is called "forbearance."

(d) One then passes to the fourth level, which is called "supreme worldly quality." It is given that name because there is no path of a worldly being superior to that path. For that reason, it is called supreme worldly quality.

All four of these are done mainly in terms of one's knowledge, confidence and practice. They then connect one to seeing dharmata or reality directly. That seeing reality directly is called "the path of seeing" and one achieves the ground of an arhat.

I wondered whether Rinpoche would mind saying something about the way in which bodhisattvas see *kun-zob*? There seem to be a number of stages. One way, there is a manifestation and finally the Buddha sees all conventional things directly. I have to try to get this clear in my mind now.

The Sanskrit equivalent for the Tibetan word *kun-zob* is *samverti*. There is a lot of discussion about these terms, which I will not go into now.

Generally speaking, when one talks about *kun-zob* (one might translate it as "conventional or relative phenomena"), one is talking about appearances, the way in which things appear. When one is talking about *dön-dam*, the Sanskrit is *pradamarta* ("ultimate" seems to work well as a translation), one is talking about the way things actually abide and thus about emptiness. We are speaking in the context of the Middle-Way School, the Madhyamaka.

The appearance of phenomena then is a union of *kun-zob* and *dön-dam*, a union of the conventional and the ultimate; these two do not obstruct each other, they are not contradictory to one another. Particularly, when we talk about objects, objects of perception, then the conventional and the ultimate are not contrary to one another; both exist right within that object. When something appears, at that very time emptiness is its nature and right when emptiness is its nature, that object appears. These two are not in any way contrary to one another. If we speak about the subject (the Tibetan word says "the object possessor, that which perceives and holds that object"), from the viewpoint of the subjective object-possessing consciousness, there is an obstacle to seeing both the conventional and the ultimate. The ultimate emptiness is the object on which a superior's wisdom operates. The conventional or appearance is the object for

confusion and ignorance. So, there is a sort of conflict, contradiction or difficulty in seeing the ultimate and conventional at the same time because they appear to different types of consciousnesses. But that is not to say that they are in and of themselves contrary to one another. They are not contrary in that obstructions do not exist with the object itself.

Conventional phenomena appear for ordinary beings and, when they appear, ordinary beings are not able to realize the ultimate, which is dharmata. When one sees dharmata (reality, the truth) directly, then conventional phenomena do not appear. The emptiness that is realized at that time is one in which conventional phenomena have been abandoned, so to speak. This is the realization of what is called "meditative equipoise," *nam-jag* in Tibetan; it means something like "the mind being set evenly or equally." However, when one rises from that meditate equipoise, mistaken appearances dawn from one's own perspective again. Due to the fact that one has within the stream of one's being accumulated predispositions for the appearance of objects from beginningless time, although one has realized the ultimate once, one has not abandoned all of those latent predispositions for the conventional appearance of phenomena. Thus when one rises out of meditative equipoise into what is literally called "subsequent achievement" (we often say "post-meditation" for that), phenomena appear again; it is as if they appear toward oneself.

Having realized dharmata directly and having arisen from that realization, such that in post-meditation conventional phenomena again appear, is there appearance for bodhisattvas in this case in the same way as they appear for ordinary beings, for those who have not realized dharmata? No, it is not the same, because ordinary beings take all these conventional appearances to be true, take them to be real things, whereas for those who have realized dharmata directly, the subsequent appearance of phenomena is understood to be like an illusion, a dream. So, from that point of view, it is not like the experience of phenomena that an ordinary person has. This then is the beginning of the first bodhisattva ground, called the "thoroughly joyful." One continues with this realization and gradually these latent predispositions are purified; there are fewer and fewer of them until, when one arrives at the eighth bodhisattva ground, the predispositions have been almost completely purified and abandoned. However, even though one has purified such predispositions, that is not to say that one does not know the appearances of conventional phenomena. The way in which one knows the appearance of conventional phenomena when one arrives at a very high level is not through their appearing from one's own perspective; rather, one knows them in the way they appear to other sentient beings. And the wisdom with which one knows them is called "the wisdom that knows the extensive variety of phenomena;" it is one of the two aspects of a Buddha's wisdom. So, one knows

phenomena as they appear to others rather than as something dawning from one's own perspective. One is no longer subject to ignorance and thus one does not have the sort of appearance and experience that come about through the power of ignorance. At this point, at the level of a Buddha, there is no division between the period of meditation or meditative equipoise and the period of post-meditation or subsequent achievement, rather at all times one realizes both the extensive variety of conventional phenomena and their emptiness; one sees both. One is not obstructed or prevented from seeing this and one is not subject to the confusion to which ordinary beings are subject.

That was understanding things manifesting as ultimate phenomena for a bodhisattva. On the Vajrayana path, when the mind is resting in that equipoise state, one arises and phenomena dawn. How should one view the dawning of phenomena at the end of the session?

Generally speaking, there is just the natural dawning and appearance of phenomena. If one's experience and realization go well, then one will be free from attachment and clinging to those appearances, whatever things just naturally arise from one's perspective. On the other hand, if one does not have particularly good experience and realization, then one will have attachment and clinging to things just as ordinary people do. In particular, if one is doing intensive

practice within a retreat situation, for instance, when one arises from a session, rather than discriminating phenomena as common things, one should have the discriminating awareness of oneself as a deity, of one's environment as the retinue and so forth and view phenomena as illusions or as dreams, and put some energy into having a very careful mindfulness about them.

I have a question about pilgrimage and purification practice.

The purification of ill deeds and obstructions and an increase of good qualities depends mainly upon oneself. Why is that? When we go to places where the Buddha himself went, the place where he was born, the place where he died and so forth, if one has faith and longing with devotion toward Buddha, and if one goes to those places and thinks about it, then one will find that one's confidence in the dharma, one's trust in the dharma, one's certainty about the dharma and exertion for the dharma, for practicing the dharma, will increase. If these arise in that way, this trust, certainty and exertion, then similarly one's samadhi, one's experience and one's prajna will also increase. If one does not have such faith, respect and devotion, then there won't be any benefit. For instance, think about all the beggars in Bodhgaya. They don't have that kind of faith, respect and longing for the dharma, so even though they stay in this most marvelous place all the time, except for generating more hatred and more kleshas, there is no benefit whatsoever

for them. They don't develop any faith in the Buddha, they don't develop confidence in the Buddha. So, when you look at that, you see what it depends upon. All the beggars think about is how many rupees they can get a day; that is the extent of their thoughts. Then they start quarrelling with each other; there is a lot of agitation and there is no benefit because they have no faith in the Buddha. You can see that it comes down to one's own motivation.

We can see that for all Buddhists throughout the history of the Buddhadharma who have come on pilgrimage, and for practitioners of the tradition, wherever they might be, there is a great deal of benefit from going on pilgrimage. How is that? Consider the example of the Chinese monk called Huien Tsiang, the one who wrote an account of his visit to all these sacred places of the Buddhist tradition in India. He went to all these sacred places and wrote an extensive account of his visit. And that has been of tremendous benefit to all Buddhists in all traditions, wherever they might be. So, there is a great deal of benefit from going on pilgrimage.

Now, we have done a good deal of pilgrimage. We have gone to important places and you have undergone hardships to do this. I am very glad about what you have done. You have shown real faith and longing for the dharma. You have put forth exertion in this pilgrimage. I am extremely pleased, glad, delighted and happy. It is really very delightful and extremely good fortune. Particularly, if you come from a Western country where you have real prosperity,

good roads and all conditions of travel are comfortable, it is very difficult to come to India, which hasn't prospered in the way the countries in the West have prospered. The roads are awful and everything is filthy; the problem is that these are the only roads there are. If you don't go on these roads, you are not going to go. So the only thing one can do is to realize that these are the roads there are; there are no other roads to get to these places and you have an attitude of patience and forbearance, going along with the difficulties with endurance. Bear the hardships in that way because if you don't, then there is no benefit and you will only think and talk about the fact that the roads are awful.

There are differences that you find between traveling in the West and traveling here. In the West, when you are traveling along the road, you stop at the service station, you go to a nice clean bathroom, you wash your hands and face nicely afterwards. Here, they don't have anything like that and you don't have any choice because it is a poor country which hasn't developed and prospered as countries in the West have. However, our purpose in doing this is with regard to the dharma. So, the main thing to think about is the dharma, to turn one's mind toward the dharma. We therefore take on this hardship voluntarily. Whether the country is poor or rich doesn't matter; this is the country in which the Buddha appeared and taught and therefore there is a great blessing. When we travel on pilgrimage, we supplicate, make aspiration prayers and undertake

this joyfully; then there is a real benefit. If we just complain about the road, then there is no purpose.

Despite the fact that the situation is the way it is, despite the fact of being in a country where the environment is difficult, nevertheless we are going about it in the best way possible. If you just look and see how most people travel, the sort of buses and trains they go on and the restaurants where they eat, they are filthy. I didn't see any point in our doing it that way. We have taken a good bus, we went on the best roads we could find, we eat at clean restaurants and truly for a poor country where conditions aren't splendid, our situation is good. We are very fortunate, so I would request you to please have an attitude of contentment.

Lumbini & the Excellent Dharma

The Three Principles of the Excellent Dharma

The reason we go on pilgrimage is that we wish to bring to mind, to become mindful of and think about the exalted activity of the Buddha. The Buddha engaged in meaningful and exalted activities of taking birth in this world, achieving enlightenment, turning the wheel of dharma and passing into nirvana. And our purpose of going on pilgrimage is that we are subsequently calling to mind and thinking about what he did. This sort of activity is not just a worldly activity; we are speaking about the good qualities of the Buddha's body, speech and mind. Among teachers, the Buddha is unsurpassed, the unsurpassable teacher, and that is because he taught the genuine path that leads to liberation.

The Buddha himself said to his students, "I am teaching you the means whereby you can become liberated from samsara." And he said further, "Whether or not you achieve liberation depends upon

you. So make effort." That is to say, our achievement of liberation does not depend upon the Buddha, rather it is through practicing and following the way he taught that we can achieve liberation. If we do this, then we can achieve liberation. There is no reason for us to think that we would not be able to do so. If, on the other hand, we do not practice the teachings the Buddha gave,we will not achieve liberation. So our achievement of liberation or our failure to do so depends only upon ourselves.

In order that we could practice and achieve liberation, the Buddha taught the paths that lead to liberation. Those paths are called the excellent dharma. When we make supplication, we say "the unsurpassable protection is the excellent dharma:" that is to say, the excellent dharma actually protects us from suffering. And it is the dharma that we need to practice. As for the dharma that was taught by the Buddha, it was extremely vast. We speak of 84,000 skandhas, 84,000 collections of dharmas. However, Buddha himself abbreviated it very precisely as three principles:

(a) Not engaging in harmful activity

Do not perform ill deeds, that is to say, do not engage in activities that are harmful for oneself and harmful to others such as killing, stealing, or any of the injurious and non-beneficial activities of body and speech that cause one to accumulate bad actions or bad karma.

(b) Engaging in beneficial activity

The second principle is to engage in marvelous activity or virtue such as generosity, discipline, or ethics. In that way, one enters into the activity that accumulates the roots of virtue.

(c) Thoroughly taming the mind

The main method whereby one could practice these first two points, not engaging in harmful activity and engaging in beneficial activity, leads mainly back to one's own mind. So the third essential point that the Buddha taught was to thoroughly tame your mind.

Those three are the Buddha's own condensation of the dharma into its very essence. Those are the paths that he taught.

As for taming one's own mind, all of us without exception have minds that are covered over by the fault of afflictions, the kleshas. And those kleshas can be extremely powerful, therefore, we need to engage in the method or upaya for pacifying the afflictions, we need to exert ourselves at that.

When I was teaching at Sarnath on the topic of the four truths and I reached the topic of the truth of the paths, I indicated that there were four different points that I wanted to cover, but I only got to three of them because we ran out of time. I talked about the methods for abandoning the kleshas through the practice of the Hinayana, the Mahayana and the Vajrayana. I did not reach the

topic of how one (translated literally) "presses down the head of the afflictions" and so suppresses them. I want to talk about that now because I think it is an important topic. All of us, whoever we are, have the difficulty and hardship of desire, hatred, pride, and so forth and, therefore, if we can abandon them, if we can set them aside, if we can diminish them, suppress them, it is very helpful. People frequently ask questions about that, so this is what I am going to talk about now.

Abandoning the Afflictions

If we are talking about methods for dealing effectively with the kleshas and if we take hatred as a point, then it is the case that people don't like to be angry and full of hate, nevertheless, they naturally and helplessly fall into it, without having the independence not to. And yet, when one becomes hateful and angry, the effect to which that leads is helpful and beneficial neither for oneself nor for others. We understand that and know it is the case, but helplessly and without having the independence to do otherwise, we fall under the sway of hatred or anger. Recognizing that, people look for a method that would enable them to deal effectively with anger and hatred. Many people look for a method. For instance, sometimes in some of the disciplines of psychology it is said that one should act it out. So we take a stick and beat up a pillow or something like that. And they say that if you were to just stop or prevent the hatred,

it would create a mental and emotional problem for you, that it would actually create an injury in your mind. Generally speaking, what they are saying is good but it is not very skilled in method.

By contrast, in the Buddhist way we speak about the methods of setting the afflictions aside with force, without having come to the point of exhibiting them, by coming to the very root of the matter, which is by realizing selflessness. Maybe we can come up with a good word for this. For instance, Shantideva offered a manual for those who wish to practice the way of a bodhisattva and said, "One should recognize afflictions and faults as faults. One needs to see clearly, accurately, and with certainty that afflictions are problematic situations. If one thinks that they have good qualities and are beneficial, then one will not be able to abandon them. If one understands that the afflictions are harmful to oneself, one will recognize them as one's real foe." Well, we tend to think most of the time that somebody else is harming us and consequently think that that person is our enemy. As a result, we get angry at that person. Hating that person, then we harm him or her and also ourselves. The truth of the matter is that it is the klesha or affliction which is harmful and the harm that it does is extensive and lasts for a long time. That is the situation that has to be seen clearly.

The Extensive and Long-Lasting Harm Done by the Afflictions

Let us speak a little more extensively about what it means to say that the harm done to oneself by the afflictions is both extensive and long-lasting.

First of all, if we consider it in terms of time, if one is harmed by another person, then the harm that person does to oneself can last for a period of some years and that is all. The harm that is done to oneself by the afflictions is that they have kept one in the suffering of cyclic existence from beginningless time; they bind one in cyclic existence up to this moment now and they will keep one in cyclic existence forever, without any end whatsoever, until one gets rid of them. Furthermore, they throw us into the bad migrations where we have to undergo all kinds of suffering for along period of time. If we consider the harm done by the afflictions in terms of their extent and compare that to the harm done by an external foe, then the most an external foe can do is to do harm to our possessions, our bodies and our lives. He can only do that once, that is, for just that lifetime. However, the harm done by the afflictions lasts for a long time; it throws one into painful and difficult lifetimes such as the hell realms and lower realms of migration. The suffering that one undergoes there cannot be comprehended; it is inconceivable. So, if we consider that perspective, then we can recognize that it is

the afflictions which are our real enemies. We need to realize that our actual foe resides right within our own minds.

Let us consider the contrast between a person whom we take as our enemy and our afflictions. Which one are we going to take as a friend and which one are we going to take as an enemy? If another person harms us and if we go home and practice patience,if we bear that suffering and don't harm that person in return,rather we benefit that person by helping him, then later our foe may well become our friend; someone who harmed us becomes someone who helps us. If, on the other hand, we treat our afflictions with the same sort of affection, no matter what we do for them, they will never become our real benefactor, rather they become stronger and stronger; they never actually become something that accords with our own purpose and practice.

Similarly, if we succeed in harming somebody who has harmed us, somebody we take to be an enemy, and we steal everything they have and banish that person to another land, then later when they have recovered from the wound we have inflicted and their power has increased again, then they again come back with renewed force. If we kill one enemy, then that does not solve the problem because that person's relatives and friends will gather together and come against us. Eventually, no matter how much harm we do to an enemy, they regain their capacity and they come back to harm us again. The afflictions are not like that. If you actually abandon

them, if you actually tame your mind, having done so, they are naturally pacified and pass away; they don't come back again once you have tamed your mind. They don't have the capacity to revive later and to do harm to oneself. They don't have the capacity to gather friends, relatives and allies and come back. When you have tamed your mind, then you have tamed your mind.

So, in brief, one needs to recognize that the afflictions are harmful to oneself and others and that they are a fault; they do not bring benefit to oneself, and if one can abandon them, if one can tame one's mind, then one can be free from the afflictions altogether and forever. By contrast, through being friendly with the afflictions, through relying upon them, the only thing that comes to oneself is hardship and suffering. If one understands that and thinks about it again and again, contemplates that again and again, then one will be able to suppress, diminish, put down the afflictions.

(Translator:) I was just expressing this question about translation to Rinpoche and he replied that there are two different ways to deal with the afflictions. One is to tear them out from the root so that they are gone forever. The other one has to do with temporary antidotes, so that one is not able to uproot them altogether, rather one engages in the methods simply to reduce their force. What we were talking about here was the methods to reduce the force of the afflictions rather than what we discussed previously: that is, the

realization of selflessness is the method of uprooting the afflictions permanently and forever.

Questions & Answers

You said that the afflictions do not have the power of being friends and do not gather together to attack you in revenge. What about the Maras?

That is not a symbolic representation. In other words, the attack of the Maras was not an attack of the Buddha's afflictions. It actually referred to demonic beings who, seeing that the Buddha was about to achieve enlightenment and achieve the means for establishing innumerable sentient beings in liberation and enlightenment, didn't like it and attacked Buddha in warfare.

Does that mean that in our personal path of trying to attain enlightenment, struggling to attain liberation, the Maras are going to attack us in different ways?

For the time being, we need not worry about it. Should it happen that we reach the point of being about to achieve enlightenment, we will be able to deal with it. It is just to say, the Buddha established a limitless number of Maras even in the path of liberation and omniscience.

He established?

Well, set them on the path. He tamed even horrific, malicious beings and put them on the path leading to liberation and enlightenment. In particular, he tamed the very kings and rulers of the families of these demonic beings, the very lords of the world, and entered them in the path of the dharma. What was left for their followers was to do similarly. That was the story of the Buddha. For our own situation, we are not people who have great capacity. They were upset by the fact that someone was about to achieve great capacity. We are not people who have arrived at that level and, therefore, we are not people who are going to arouse that sort of opposition from demonic forces in the universe. When we reach the point of being about to achieve enlightenment, then we will be able to deal with that; we will have the power to deal with such demonic forces.

May I ask another question? Maybe it is not Maras that we run up against, maybe it is something less powerful, but it does seem that there is a sense of overcoming obstacles that occur on the path.

Yes, we have obstacles. What is the question?

If there are external agents.

If one is able to reduce the force of one's own internal afflictions, then external agents will not be able to harm one very much.

By what method would one be more clear and which affliction is to be addressed in any moment?

I am not clear about what you mean. Can you talk about it a little more?

Perhaps anger is not clear in the mind. Perhaps there is desire and this is not clear in the mind. Are there methods to clarify that?

I express your question in this way: Sometimes it happens that one simply feels ill at ease and is not quite sure what it is all about, this feeling of discomfort and unhappiness, not quite sure whether it is anger or desire, not quite sure what one is angry about, who we are angry at or what it is we want, but there is just this feeling of discomfort. What can we do to clarify that and to see what is actually going on? Rinpoche said, at that time it will not help a great deal to look outside, trying to figure out something based upon the external. What will help is simply to look within one's own mind and to engage in the methods of looking into one's own mind. Look inside and carefully and slowly contemplate, seeing what is in one's mind. Then it will become clear. Do you want to pursue that further or is that enough to think about?

I will think about it.

If in following the path with devotion and exertion, afflictions arise, particularly in a form of desire and passion that overwhelm one and upset the balance of one's practice, is there a way of bringing those afflictions, particularly desire and passion, on to the path so that you can continue with them?

Rinpoche refers to the points he made so far about the three different ways in which one can abandon the afflictions right from the root. They are expressed in terms of the Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana practice. Fourth, there is the topic we discussed this morning, of temporarily reducing and diminishing the afflictions through understanding that the fault is not beneficial but rather is harmful to oneself and to others: recognizing the afflictions as harmful in that way, they naturally become pacified.

The Practice of Increasing the Good

1. The Four Immeasurables

First of all, turn your mind toward being enlightened for the sake of all sentient beings. Generally speaking, whether one is practicing or listening to the dharma, at all times and in all ways one's motivation is extremely important. In the light of that, it is very important that you now turn your mind towards supreme enlightenment for all sentient beings and listen with that attitude.

I spoke about the various methods for diminishing the force of the afflictions that are presented in the text known as *The Entrance into the Activity of a Bodhisattva* or *Bodhicharyavatara* by the great master Shantideva. Having diminished the force of afflictions, it is important to turn one's mind toward the good, helpful, and pure way of thinking and then, having established one's mind in that, it

is important to increase whatever good thought one has. Within the tradition of the secret mantra Vajrayana, there is a way of practicing known as "the four immeasurables," which are a method for increasing whatever good thought one has. Generally speaking, the practice of the four immeasurables is common to all the traditions of Buddhist meditation.

Now principally speaking, if we are going to talk about the practice of the four immeasurables, let us consider first of all the way in which one cultivates love and compassion, which are the antidote to their opposite, hatred.

Generally speaking, all religious traditions recommend an attitude of love and compassion. All of them regard this as important; the Buddhist tradition and other traditions all say that love and compassion are extremely important. However, in the Buddhist tradition there is a way of cultivating and meditatively developing love and compassion that is an uncommon way of going about it. If one had the practice of love and compassion without the particular feature that is distinctive and uncommon as it is taught in the Buddhist tradition, it is good but there is a fault. In the way that it is taught in the Buddhist tradition, it is said that there is no one who is utterly without love and compassion; everyone has love and compassion and it is with that in mind that the Buddha said, "All sentient beings have the sugata-essence, the essence of the one gone to bliss." The way in which this is done within the secret mantra Vajrayana

tradition is unusual. So, even though all sentient beings do have the sugata-essence,it is not the case that everyone has the particular essential and distinctive height of compassion that is taught in the Buddhist tradition. For that reason, the way in which one develops love and compassion limitlessly within contemplative meditative practice, the distinctive Buddhist way of going about that is extremely important.

What then are love and compassion? Everyone has love and compassion but not everyone has limitless love and compassion. One has love and compassion for one's own son and daughter but not for others, or perhaps one has love and compassion for those who are on one's own side and close to oneself and not to others. One might have love and compassion for everybody who is a part of one's own country but not for those of other countries. Some people have love and compassion for animals but not for humans. Some people have love and compassion for humans but not for animals. There are many ways of going about it. Generally speaking, when that is the type of love and compassion that a person has, having it for one class of sentient beings but not for another, then the love and compassion that you have is mixed with attachment and you have a harmful attitude toward those for whom you do not have love and compassion; you sort of wish that suffering comes to them. Although it is very good to have love and compassion, if the type of love and compassion you have is partial, if it extends to one and

not the other, then the nature of it is that it is not terribly beneficial. In fact, it brings harm to both oneself and others.

The distinctive feature of love and compassion as taught in the Buddhist tradition is the feature of limitlessness. When one makes a division between those for whom one has love and compassion and for those for whom one has no love and compassion, then one has drawn a limit or measure. The measure that one has drawn is that one has compassion just for those who fall on one side of the line, just for those who are one's class, up to that point, but not for those who fall on the other side of the line. If one has compassion for humans but not for animals, then one has drawn a limit, one has measured off how much love and compassion one is going to have; one goes that far and no further. That sort of love and compassion is not a fully qualified, fully endowed love and compassion and that is why the love and compassion that the Buddha taught is called immeasurable. That is to say that one has love and compassion for all sentient beings, whoever they are, whatever sort of sentient being they are; humans, animals, one's own side, the other side are all the same because all sentient beings without exception want happiness and the causes of happiness and all sentient beings without exception do not want suffering and wish to be free of suffering and its causes. So the sort of love and compassion that is taught in the Buddhist tradition doesn't have the fault of benefiting one and harming others, rather one seeks to benefit all and harm

nobody. From that point of view it is called immeasurable. Thus, immeasurable love and compassion are very important.

(a) Equanimity

We have been speaking about love and compassion from among the four immeasurables. We have spoken about love and compassion first of all. When it is set out and you name the four, it begins with love and compassion in that order. However, the method of practicing and developing the four immeasurables as explained in the oral instructions does not begin with love and compassion but rather by cultivating equanimity. The reason for that is that if one does not begin by cultivating equanimity, then one will not be able to extend love and compassion to all sentient beings. Rather, it is said that if one starts out with love for one's friends and rejects those who are one's enemies, if one increases the force of the love one has, the hatred for one's enemies will remain. You have to begin by a loving ground with an equal attitude towards everyone. Having an attitude of equanimity towards all sentient beings means you are free of attachment to one and rejection of others, so that one's mind settles down, is sort of comfortable, relaxed, not tight, free of attachment, free of rejection, sort of subtle, calm and spacious.

(b) Love

Having become accustomed to equanimity, one begins to develop love for others. Love is the wish that others have happiness, and one wishes that those who do not have happiness achieve it. The unusual way one cultivates love in the Buddhist tradition is that one not only wishes that others have happiness but one wishes also that they have the causes of happiness. If we were to think about setting others, placing, and establishing others in happiness,first of all we have to realize that we don't have the ability to do that and that secondly they would still suffer. There are all sorts of different kinds of happiness that one wishes to have and all sorts of different kinds of suffering from which one wishes to be free. Basically, there are the suffering of body and the suffering of mind, the two types of suffering one would like to be free from. But simply wishing that one is free of suffering, whether physical or mental, is not sufficient and one is not able to be separated from suffering just by wanting it. One needs to have the causes of happiness and one needs to separate from the causes of suffering. What are the causes of happiness? Pure thought, exerting oneself at the practice of that which is beneficial and virtuous. If one does so, then happiness will be achieved naturally, it will come about by its own force. Therefore, what one needs in particular is to have the causes of happiness.

(c) Compassion

Similarly, when one begins to cultivate compassion for others, that is, wishing that others be free of suffering, one needs to cultivate the wish that others are not only free of suffering but that others be freed from the causes of suffering. The causes of suffering are actions that are not beneficial, non-virtuous actions, ill deeds of whatever sort, and afflictions. Thus, compassion has the aspect of the wish that all sentient beings be free of suffering and its causes.

The main feature of love is wishing that others have happiness and the main feature of compassion is wishing that they be free of suffering. That, of course, is the case, but when it comes down to practice, it is not the case that one can directly have happiness and straight off be free of suffering. In order for that to come about one needs to have the causes of happiness and one has to be freed from the causes of suffering. Therefore, when it comes down to practicing love and compassion, what is important is exerting oneself at the causes of having happiness and at the causes of being free of suffering.

(d) Joy

Generally speaking, when one sees somebody who is suffering, one feels compassion and feels somewhat discouraged. That is the sort of experience that one has because one realizes that one cannot actually do much for them. You would like to free them from

suffering, you would like to set them in a happy situation but you are not able to do so and, therefore, feel somewhat discouraged. So considering that you might think that compassion is itself a type of suffering. However, in the way the Buddha is speaking about love and compassion here it is not just a painful state of mind, because even though one realizes that one is not able to establish others in the state free from suffering, in happiness right away, one also takes heart, is encouraged and has the strength of one's intention. You can establish them in the practice of the causes that lead to happiness and you can enable them to separate from the causes of suffering. So when you see somebody suffering, although you know that you cannot do anything to liberate them from suffering right on the spot, nevertheless, through establishing them in the causes of happiness and through enabling them to separate from the causes of suffering, you know that they will be able to separate from suffering, will become free of suffering and will have happiness. So, from that point of view, you are tremendously encouraged, you feel heartened. Therefore, the effect of such love and compassion, the fruition of that is referred to as "measureless joy": the measureless joy of knowing that you can enable others to achieve happiness and to become free of suffering. Establishing them in the practices of accumulating the causes of happiness and separating from the causes of suffering, in that way, the effect of measureless compassion and measureless love is measureless joy.

Sometimes people say to me that bodhisattvas must have inconceivable and measureless suffering, the reason being that they see the suffering of all sentient beings with compassion. Since they see all sentient beings and they see all the suffering that sentient beings have, since the suffering is measureless, similarly, the suffering of bodhisattvas must also be inconceivable. People ask me about this, but it is not that way. The reason it is not like that is because when a bodhisattva sees someone suffering, he or she knows at the same time that he or she possesses the resources to separate the person from suffering and help them to achieve happiness. A bodhisattva knows himself or herself to be are sourceful person; he or she knows that there are methods for other people who are suffering to become free. A bodhisattva knows that there is the capacity and potency for this to come about. So knowing that he or she can clear away and eliminate another person's suffering, a bodhisattva feels extremely joyful and delighted. From that point of view, rather than having measureless suffering, a bodhisattva has measureless joy.

Those then are the practices of the four immeasurables. If we were to consider these, we could describe them in this way. We could say that equanimity is a preliminary practice of the four immeasurables, that love and compassion are the main body of the practice and that joy is the fruition, the final fruit of the practice of the four immeasurables.

2. Bodhichitta

That is a general discussion of love and compassion, of the four immeasurables. We could also consider the way in which they are the basis for the mind of enlightenment, Bodhichitta, the way in which they are formed by Bodhichitta.

There is a particular feature that is lacking within love and compassion as we have been discussing these so far, and the feature that is lacking is the prajna, the very clear and sharp knowledge that is a characteristic of Bodhichitta or mind of enlightenment. This is to say, the love and compassion which we have been speaking about so far, the wish to establish others in happiness and to free them from suffering, is thus far concerned only with temporary happiness and not with final happiness. One indeed wishes to benefit others but that only goes up to a certain point or only lasts so long, without taking into mind the perspective that is the characteristic of Bodhichitta, the mind of enlightenment, the way to establish all sentient beings in enlightenment. Without taking that sort of perspective in mind, without Bodhichitta forming one's practice of the four immeasurables, then the benefit one can bring is only for a temporary period; it is not something that would go from lifetime to lifetime to lifetime. It is not something that would establish others in a lasting happiness so that they would not have to endure suffering at all. What one really would like to do is to put others in a state so that the situation is transformed and they need

not undergo suffering at all and they have happiness lifetime after lifetime. But the truth of the matter is that the only happiness that is of that nature is the attainment of Buddhahood, the level and rank of Buddhahood. So one further educates and forms these four immeasurables by conjoining them to this practice of Bodhichitta, which is the attitude of establishing others in the causes of achieving complete liberation and enlightenment so that they would not have to experience any sort of suffering at all, ever again.

When the four immeasurables have been conjoined with that kind of *she-rab*, *prajna* or "intelligence," then they have become the mind of enlightenment, Bodhichitta.

If you have any questions, please ask.

Questions & Answers

I was wondering how a bodhisattva feels when he sees suffering and that such a person cannot open himself for the dharma so he cannot do anything to help?

A bodhisattva's joy does not depend upon one individual person; his perspective is to consider all sentient beings throughout all of space. Even if at that particular time a bodhisattva is notable to establish a particular sentient being in happiness and freedom from suffering, he would not become discouraged and feel disheartened. A bodhisattva has a much wider and longer-term view of things.

It may not be the appropriate time for that particular person to be tamed by the dharma, however, there will be a time in the future when that person can be tamed by the dharma. In the meantime, there are a limitless number of sentient beings whom can help now, establishing them in the paths of liberation and enlightenment. In the future there will be a time when that person who is not presently to be tamed by the dharma can be tamed by the dharma.

There is a very important verse in the *Madhyamakavatara*, which states: "Compassion is the cause of bodhisattvas," and, I think, "bodhisattvas are the cause of becoming a Buddha." You talked about the last point when you said that you need to connect love and compassion with prajna. I wonder if you would expand on that?

I think indeed there is a relationship between the point I was trying to make about bringing that kind of perspective into one's practice of the four immeasurables, bringing that kind of prajna to the four immeasurables, and transforming into the very entity, the very nature of Bodhichitta. In the opening verse of Chandrakirti's *Madhyamakavatara*, he speaks about, "the union of compassion and a non-dual mind as being the cause of the Buddha's offspring," an epithet for bodhisattvas. What is being spoken about in that verse is first of all compassion. And secondly, when it speaks of non-dual awareness, non-dual mind, what is being referred to is

prajna. When one first achieves those together and thus directs them toward the achievement of enlightenment, then that is Bodhichitta itself. Bodhichitta is the actual cause of achieving Buddhahood. So I think that what I was trying to say and the meaning of the verse from the *Madhyamakavatara* are the same.

From the perspective of the time-scale and the breadth and vision of a bodhisattva and those beings who are not ripe to enter the dharma at this time but in some future time and undergoing degrees of greater or lesser suffering until that time, can that suffering then be looked upon from the viewpoint of that bodhisattva's time-scale, depth and vision? Could this suffering be viewed so as to enter into the dharma?

Yes, I think that what you described is indeed the case. In particular, there is a verse from Shantideva in the *Bodhicharyavatara* where it says, "Even if you are someone who harms a bodhisattva, you will achieve enlightenment as a result of that." This is to say, although someone might actually inflict injury on a bodhisattva, then because of that bodhisattva's suffering, nevertheless, because of that bodhisattva's aspiration prayers, that bodhisattva's vision,that action of harming a bodhisattva is actually establishing the relationship such that eventually, in the end, he will enable that person to enter into the dharma, that person who harmed the bodhisattva to enter into the practice of dharma. From that point of view, considering

the longer perspective, it establishes the possibility for that person to enter the dharma, to practice the dharma and to achieve the fruition of the dharma.

In that verse it says, "Compassion is the cause of the sons of the conquerors." It seems to be that there are two causes there. Compassion is the cause of the bodhisattva. If he is the son of the Buddha, then what is the cause of the bodhisattva? There are two causes. Can you explain the relationship? Why is the bodhisattva called "the son of the Buddha?" What is the relationship between the two causes?

I translated by emphasizing a part of the question: What does it mean to say that a bodhisattva is a son or offspring of the Buddha and how does that fit with Rinpoche saying that there are other causes? What Rinpoche said was, when we talk about a bodhisattva being the child or offspring or son of Buddhas, there are many different things to consider, which is a distinction between what we refer to as the causes of a bodhisattva and other factors which we call conditions. For instance, if we are talking about growing something out of the ground, planting something, a sprout, what are the causes of that sprout? The seed is the cause of the sprout and other things such as water, fertilizer and the sun are conditions that contribute.

Similarly, if we apply that same way of thinking about things to a bodhisattva, compassion, love and prajna are like the seed; they are the causes of a bodhisattva in that it is through a compassionate, non-dual mind, and aspiration for enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings that one becomes a bodhisattva and then a Buddha. If we were to talk about the conditions of that bodhisattva achieving enlightenment, then we would have to say that the Buddhas have taught the methods for developing and increasing compassion, bodhichitta and so forth; these are conditions that enable someone to become a bodhisattva in the first place and then to continue on the path and to achieve enlightenment. So, in terms of the Buddha having taught the path and having taught the methods for developing and increasing compassion, prajna and bodhichitta, we speak of a bodhisattva as being a son of the Buddha.

There is also another common way in which a bodhisattva is regarded as literally "a son of the victorious one, a son of the conqueror." The way it is explained in those commentaries is to speak about "the non severance of the final lineage, the continuation of the lineage of the family." For instance, if someone is born as a prince, as a son of a king, then eventually, having been trained and matured, that prince will take up all of the work that his father did; whatever the king has done, similarly, that prince eventually will do. From that point of view one can say that the family lineage has not been severed, that it continues. Similarly, having been taught the paths

of prajna, compassion, Bodhichitta and so forth by the Buddha, if a bodhisattva trains himself or herself and eventually takes up the role that the Buddha had in whatever activities that the Buddha performed, that bodhisattva will in the future perform similarly. From that point of view we say that the family lineage is not severed.

Could you expand on what you mean by non-dual? What that has to do with prajna?

There are two different meanings to the term non-dual. One is: free from something looked at and something looking at it; the other is: freedom from conceiving existence and conceiving non-existence.

Buddhist Pilgrimage Sites
by Kai Jensen

Introduction

For 2000 years pilgrims from all traditions of Buddhism have traveled to India and Nepal to visit places of significance in the life of Buddha Shakyamuni. After the Buddha's cremation, the ashes and relics of his body from the funeral pyre were divided into eight parts, and were placed in memorial stupas at the major sites of pilgrimage: at places such as Lumbini, where the Buddha was born; Bodhgaya, the place of his enlightenment beneath the Bodhi tree; Sarnath, the site of his first teaching of the dharma; Rajgir, where the Buddha stayed most often and many of his teachings were given; and Kushinagar, the place of his paranirvana. The great Buddhist emperor of most of India, Ashoka, raised stupas and memorial columns at these places and other sites where the Buddha had visited and taught. Chinese pilgrims to India in the fifth and

seventh centuries CE wrote of the splendors of the monasteries and temples clustered at the pilgrimage sites. Great universities stood near places such as Rajgir, institutions where monks received advanced training, and interpretations of the dharma were refined.

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, however, the sites of Buddhist pilgrimage in northern India were overrun by Moslem invaders. Monasteries and temples were burnt, and Buddhist universities such as Nalanda and Vikramashila were destroyed. The pilgrimage sites were neglected and in many cases lost to knowledge for the next 600 years under Moslem and Hindu rule, until they became an object of study for British archaeologists in the nineteenth century. The excavations uncovered inscriptions and relics that confirmed the location of the key sites.

From the early twentieth century figures such as Anagarika Dharmapala and U Chandramani worked to restore and preserve the Buddhist pilgrimage sites. Today the major sites are again surrounded by temples and monasteries, and guesthouses for the thousands of pilgrims who visit them each year. Arising from the work of the archaeologists, many sites include museums displaying the statues, carvings, and inscriptions that have been recovered.

For students of Tibetan Buddhist traditions, the range of pilgrimage sites in India and Nepal is wider, and even the sites from the life of the Buddha have additional resonance, as they are also associated

with the tantric mahasiddhas whose teachings form the foundation of Tibetan Buddhism. Masters such as Atisha, Dharmakirti, Shantideva, and Padmasambhava studied and debated at the Buddhist universities of Nalanda or Vikramashila. Sites that are not part of the historical record of the Buddha's life have deep significance for the Tibetan tradition: Amravati, where the Buddha taught the Kalachakra tantra after his paranirvana, or Sankyasha, where he descended to earth after teaching his mother in the Tushita Heaven. The lake of Tso Pema was formed miraculously from the fire in which soldiers attempted to burn Padmasambhava, and it was from there that he set off to bring Buddhism to Tibet. The great stupa at Swayambunath was originally the flower of a lotus discovered by the bodhisattva Manjushri; the hill beneath it was the stalk on which the flower grew. The stupa at Boudhanath contains relics of Kashyapa, the Buddha who lived and taught before Shakyamuni. For Tibetan Buddhist students, also, India is a place where we can encounter living bodhisattvas and receive their blessings and teachings: His Holiness the Dalai Lama and His Holiness the Karmapa reside in Dharamsala.

Central to Buddhism is the objective of overcoming attachment to the things of this world through contemplation of suffering and impermanence, coupled with meditation to reveal the nature of the mind. Pilgrimage to the great Buddhist sites may seem like a form of attachment to the physical traces of the Buddha's life. On

the other hand, to go on pilgrimage is to be detached for a time from the pilgrim's home and everyday concerns; it is an opportunity for sustained contemplation of the Buddha's own struggle to find a solution to suffering, and of his generosity in sharing that solution with so many students over many decades. The destruction that was visited on these sites, their loss and recent restoration, is a powerful teaching on impermanence. Pilgrims may also benefit from recognizing their own insignificance, their interchangeability with countless others who have walked among these stupas and shrines for thousands of years. Thus pilgrimage, if it is undertaken without pride, can help us to break down our egotism and develop a joyful humility, a sense of connectedness with other beings.

According to a commentary by the First Dalai Lama on the Vinaya Sutra, known as 'Lung-Treng-Tik' in Tibetan, the Buddha is said to have emphasized several times the importance of pilgrimage.

> *Bhikshus, after my passing away, all sons and daughters who are of good family and are faithful should, as long as they live, go to the four holy places and remember: here at Lumbini, the enlightened one was born; here at Bodhgaya he attained enlightenment, here at Sarnath he turned the wheel of Dharma; and there at Kushinagar he entered Paranirvana. Bhikshus, after my passing away there will be activities such as circumambulation of these places and reverence to them. Thus it should be told to them, for they who have faith in my deeds and awareness of*

> *their own will travel to higher states. After my passing away, the new Bhikshus who come and ask of the doctrine should be told of these four places and advised that a pilgrimage to them will help purify their previously accumulated karmas or actions.*

The following sections provide key points of information on the main sites of Buddhist pilgrimage in India and Nepal. For safe traveling and information on accommodation, food, routes and fares, pilgrims are recommended to consult current editions of the main travelers' guidebooks such as the Lonely Planet or Rough Guides.

Eight Major Sites

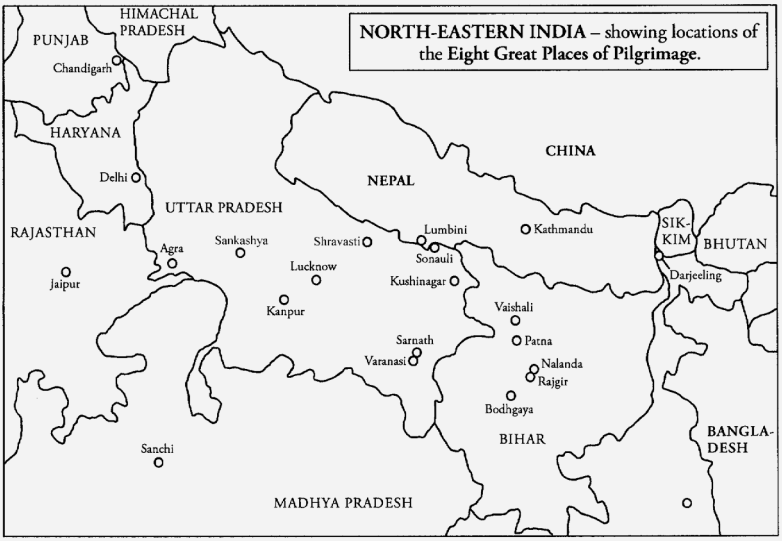
1. Lumbini – Birthplace of the Buddha

The birthplace of Prince Siddhartha, who became Buddha Shakyamuni, is Lumbini in Nepal. The Buddha's mother Mahamaya (Mayadevi), queen of the kingdom of Sakya, was traveling from Kapilvastu to her parents' home to give birth. She had dreamt that a white elephant pierced her side with its tusk. Stopping her journey to rest and bathe in a garden at Lumbini, the queen felt the birth coming on. Holding the branch of a sal tree for support, she gave birth to the baby who was later named Siddhartha. According to legend, the baby emerged from the queen's side, took seven steps and announced that this was his last rebirth. At each step lotuses

bloomed beneath his feet. Queen Mahamaya died a few weeks after her son was born.

The Buddhist emperor Ashoka erected four stupas and a stone pillar at Lumbini in 249 CE, and it was visited by the Chinese pilgrims Fa Hien and Huien Tsiang in approximately 399-414 CE and 635-640 CE respectively. With the destruction of Buddhism in India the site was lost and overgrown, but the pillar that Ashoka placed there was rediscovered by archaeologists in the late nineteenth century. Today Lumbini, in the Terai region of Nepal, is a sacred precinct comprising eight square kilometers of gardens, temples, museums, and historical sites.

The site identified as the actual birthplace of Buddha is within the Sacred Garden at the southern end of Lumbini. A marker stone inside the Mayadevi Temple is said to mark the exact spot. Pilgrims enter the temple chamber to circumambulate this stone. The temple also contains a stone frieze of the birth dating from the third or fourth century CE. The Ashokan pillar stands beside the temple, and just to the south is the water tank Puskarni where Mahamaya is said to have bathed before giving birth, and where the baby Siddhartha was washed – a pool described by Huien Tsiang as "clear and bright as a mirror and the surface covered with a mixture of flowers." A number of ruined stupas and temples stand near the pool.



North of the Sacred Garden are many modern temples and shrines built by both Mahayana and Theravadan Buddhists, including an international nuns' center named after the Buddha's stepmother and first nun, Gautami. The temples and centers include Burmese, Chinese, Nepalese, Indian, Japanese, Thai and Tibetan Buddhist traditions. There is also a museum with material from the various excavations in the region on display, together with religious manuscripts and sculptures, and a research institute with an impressive library. At the northern end of Lumbini stands the forty-one meter tall Peace Stupa.

1. **Lumbini**—birthplace of the Buddha
2. **Bodhgaya**—site of Buddha's enlightenment
3. **Sarnath**—first turning of the Wheel of Dharma
4. **Rajgir**—second turning of the Wheel of Dharma, 1st Buddhist Council
5. **Shravasti**—teachings in the Jetavana Grove
6. **Sankashya**—where Lord Buddha descended from Tushita Heaven
7. **Nalanda**—site of the great monastic university
8. **Kushinagar**—where Buddha entered mahaparanirvana

2. Bodhgaya – Site of Buddha's Enlightenment – and Gaya

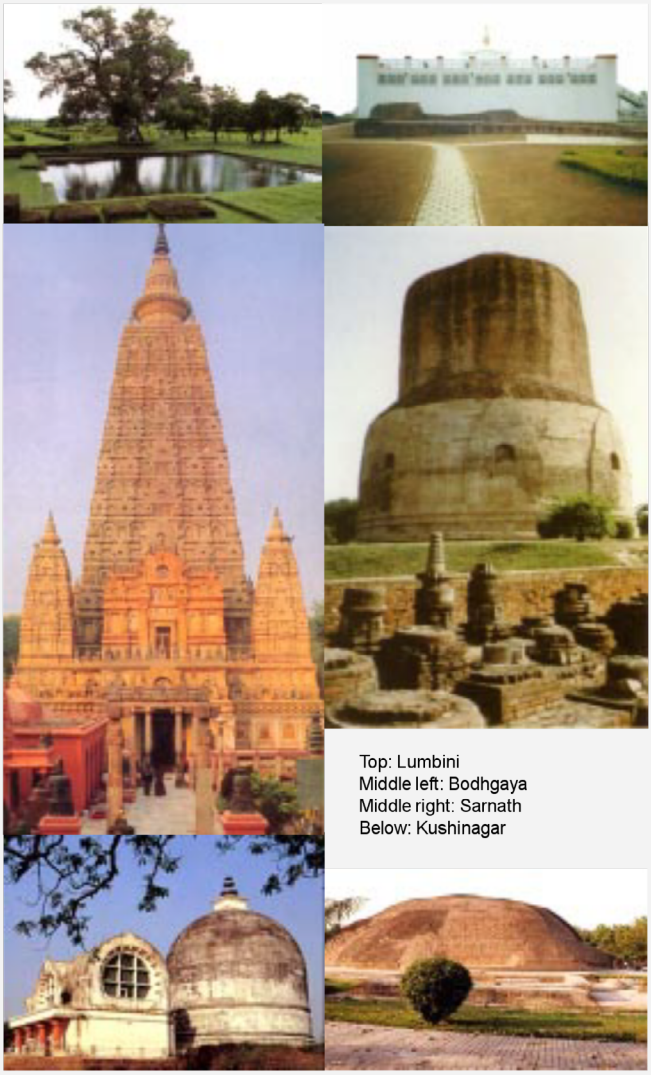
The holiest of all Buddhist sites is Bodhgaya, the place where the Buddha attained supreme enlightenment more than 2,500 years ago, sitting beneath a pipal or bodhi tree, on a cushion of kusha grass. Here he resisted the assaults of the forces of Mara, the evil one, trying to prevent him from finding the path to liberation. The Buddha gently touched the fingers of his left hand to the ground, calling the earth to witness the countless rebirths that had prepared him for this, his greatest deed, in his final incarnation. Many statues of the Buddha reproduce the *bumispara* (touching the earth) mudra.

The ornately carved Mahabodhi temple, with its beautiful golden Buddha statue, marks the spot where the Buddha is said to have sat; at one time a pillar erected by the emperor Ashoka stood on this spot. Sprouting beside the base of the temple is a bodhi tree that is a descendant of the original tree. The Mahabodhi temple was built some time between the visits to Bodhgaya of the two Chinese pilgrims whose detailed accounts have survived: Fa Hien in the early fifth century CE, and Huien Tsiang early in the seventh century. It has been repaired and restored repeatedly over the centuries, often through donations from pilgrims, and most recently, in the nineteenth century, by the King of Burma. The restoration was part of the work of restoring Bodhgaya from a state of neglect, led by Anagarika Dharmapala (see the entry for Sarnath) in the

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1949 the Bodh Gaya Temple Act established a committee of four Buddhists and four Hindus to manage the temple and its grounds.

The temple precinct is marked off by stone railings that date from the second century BCE, and devout pilgrims over the centuries have erected a number of small stupas within and around this. The Buddha is said to have remained near the bodhi tree for another seven weeks after he attained enlightenment. A marble walkway marks the place where he performed walking meditation for seven days afterwards, and a stupa, the spot where he sat for a week, gazing at the tree in gratitude.

Entry to the gardens surrounding the central precinct is free, but visitors pay a small charge to leave their shoes at the gate. Outside the entrance to the gardens is a lively and colorful strip of eating places and shops selling pilgrim memorabilia. The whole area is continuously busy during the day with groups of pilgrims,Hindu as well as Buddhist. Hindus regard the Buddha as an incarnation of Vishnu, and often visit Bodhgaya as part of a pilgrimage to the Hindu pilgrimage site at Gaya, fifteen kilometers to the north. Gaya is one of the seven holy cities of India. The Buddha visited it, and it was there that he taught the Fire Sermon to which the poet T. S. Eliot refers in *The Waste Land*.



Top: Lumbini
Middle left: Bodhgaya
Middle right: Sarnath
Below: Kushinagar

As with the other major Buddhist pilgrimage sites, Bodhgaya contains many temples and guesthouses erected by the various traditions of Buddhism. Pilgrims can obtain good quality accommodation here at moderate rates. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has a number of times delivered the Kalachakra initiation at a large open area near the sacred gardens.

3. Sarnath – First Turning of the Wheel of Dharma

Some weeks after he attained enlightenment, the Buddha first gave teachings – turned the wheel of the dharma – in the deer park at Sarnath, near modern-day Varanasi. This is why a symbol of the dharma in many Buddhist traditions is the dharmachakra,a wheel flanked by two listening deer. The Buddha gave his first discourse, on the Four Noble Truths, to the five followers who had abandoned him when he renounced asceticism to follow the path of moderation, the Middle Way. Sarnath is also the place where the Buddha first ordained monks, and where he first held a meditation retreat through the monsoon season. The Buddhist emperor Ashoka built a temple and meditated here, and set up one of his carved columns. The capital of the ruined column – four lions roaring the news of the dharma in the cardinal directions – has become the state symbol of modern India, and is kept in the archaeological museum at Sarnath.

The oldest surviving structure at Sarnath is the weathered Dharmek Stupa, made of huge bricks with residual carvings. It was first built

in the second century BCE, and its current form dates from the fifth century CE. The stupa marks the place where the Buddha gave his second discourse, on non-self. The Dhammarajika Stupa, marking the site of the first discourse, was dismantled in 1794 on the orders of the local rajah: its materials were used to construct a market in nearby Varanasi. Between these stupas lie foundations and columns of monasteries that were razed by the Muslim invaders who drove Buddhism from India in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries CE. Only a mound remains of the stupa that is said to mark the spot where the Buddha approached his former followers, and where, although they had intended to ignore his approach, they spontaneously rose to their feet in respect because of his radiant appearance.

These ruins stand in a peaceful park; along the nearby roads are temples built by a number of Buddhist traditions. Sarnath as a peaceful precinct for Buddhist pilgrims was largely made possible by the activities of the Mahabodhi Society in the early twentieth century. This society was founded by Anagarika Dharmapala, who made it his life's work to restore and cherish the Buddhist holy places of India. A few hundred meters east of the Dharmek Stupa stands the Mulagandhakuti Vihara, the temple completed by the Society in 1931. Anagarika Dharmapala was cremated nearby, and his ashes are housed in a small stupa behind the main shrine of the temple; the shrine itself contains relics believed to be those of the

Buddha. A bodhi tree nearby is another descendant of the original tree at Bodhgaya.

4. Rajgir – Vulture Peak Mountain, First Buddhist Council

Of all the sites for Buddhist pilgrimage, Rajgir is perhaps most evocative of the Buddha's work after his enlightenment, as a teacher and leader of a growing monastic movement. Walking among the hills and ruins of Rajgir the pilgrim can visit many places where events of the Buddha's life occurred, and where he gave important teachings.

Rajgir was the capital of the Magadha Kingdom, and the largest city in the central Ganges valley in the Buddha's day. While he was still a wandering ascetic, Siddhartha met Bimbisara, King of Magadha, and declined his invitation to join his court, but promised, once he discovered the path to liberation, to return and teach it to the king and his subjects. After he attained enlightenment at Bodhgaya and began teaching at Sarnath and Gaya, the Buddha returned to Rajgir, accompanied by 1000 monks, to fulfill this promise.

King Bimbisara gave the Buddha and his monks a warm welcome, and the king and many of his senior courtiers became devoted followers and patrons of the dharma. The king donated a park, the Veluvana or Bamboo Grove, to the Buddha as the site fora monastery. Long afterwards, the mahasiddha Asanga, who received teachings

directly from the Lord Maitreya, is said to have built a small temple in the Veluvana and lived here for several years.

With such support from King Bimbisara and his court, the Buddha spent much time in Rajgir: in particular he stayed here for the second, third and fourth rainy season retreats after his enlightenment, delivering many of his best-known discourses in the Veluvana and Jivakambavana. His disciples Shariputra and Moggallana were citizens of Rajgir who joined the growing monastic community.

The king's personal physician, Jivaka, would treat the Buddha when he became ill. Jivaka donated a mango grove to him, just outside the city walls, building huts and pavilions there for the accommodation of the Buddha and his monks. This complex, the Jivakambavana, was excavated by archaeologists in the mid-twentieth century CE, and visitors can trace the layout of a typical monastery of the Buddha's time.

A winding path leads from the Jivakambavana to a small hill, the Gijjhakuta or Vulture's Peak Mountain, which was a favorite place of the Buddha's for solitary meditation. He also delivered some of his most important teachings here, including teachings on the Prajnaparamita – the perfection of wisdom – and the Lotus Sutra, which makes clear that Buddha nature is inherent in all beings – that we will all eventually attain enlightenment. This is also the place where Avalokiteshvara, through the blessing of the Buddha, spoke

the Heart Sutra. A cave on Gijjhakuta called the Sukarakhata or the Boar's Grotto is said to be the place where Shariputra attained liberation.

King Bimbisara had a road constructed to make it easier for him to visit the Buddha on the heights of Gijjhakuta, and this still remains: two stupas are said to mark the place where the King would dismount from his chariot to continue on foot, and the place where he would require his attendants to wait while he went on to meet the Buddha alone.

As well as these many positive events, Rajgir also reminds us of the obstacles and resistance encountered by the Buddha and his followers. Some of the Buddha's own disciples, including his cousin Devadatta, split away from the Buddha's sangha and even attempted to kill him, by rolling a huge stone down on him from the heights of Gijjhakuta, and by setting a fierce elephant, Nalagiri, loose where the Buddha was known to be walking. Only the Buddha's foot was injured by the stone, and the Buddha tamed the elephant by his powers and calm presence.

King Bimbisara also encountered ill fortune: he was imprisoned and starved to death by his own son, Ajasattu, who wished to become king. A heap of stones within the old city walls is said to be Bimbisara's jail, where the old king was solaced in his slow death by looking up to the peak of Gijjhakuta, knowing that the Buddha

was meditating there. Ajasattu later repented his cruel treatment of his father, and became a firm supporter of the dharma. After the Buddha's paranirvana, one eighth of his relics were given to the king of Magadha, who built a stupa over them. The site of the stupa, which long ago fell into ruins, is still marked by large stones and pillars, outside the walls of 'new' Rajgir, the later of the two abandoned cities on the site. The Buddhist emperor Ashoka also built a stupa nearby.

One other event of great importance in the history of Buddhism occurred at Rajgir. The first Buddhist Council was held here, within a few months after the Buddha's paranirvana, in the cave known as Sattapanni. This can still be visited, on the slopes of Vaibhara's Hill, to the east of old Rajgir. King Ajasattu is recorded as having erected a splendid meeting hall for the council, which was attended by 500 arhats. The Buddha's faithful follower Ananda attained liberation just in time to be allowed to participate in the council, which was led by the senior monk Mahakashyapa. Ananda, who had a superb memory about the exact wording of the Buddha's teachings expounded the Sutras, Upali, an expert on monastic discipline, expounded the Vinaya, the Buddha's rules for the community of monks, and Mahakashyapa expounded the Abhidharma. In this way the council clarified the complete canon and chanted them together to fix them in the monks' memories. These works have come down

to us today as a central collection of the dharma, supplemented by the commentaries of the great masters of later days.

5. Shravasti – Teachings in the Jetavana Grove (rainy season retreat)

Shravasti (formerly Savatthi, the wealthy capital of ancient Kosala) is renowned as the retreat of the Buddha during twenty-four rainy seasons. The merchant Sudatta met the Buddha in Rajgir and,overjoyed with his presence, invited him to spend the next rainyseason at Shravasti. Buddha asked for a peaceful place with facilities suitable for his monks. Sudatta decided to purchase a park belonging to Prince Jeta, whose original price was that the park be covered with gold pieces. Sudatta, now known as Anathapindika (incomparable alms giver) began to lay out the gold, and Jetarelented, helping to build a huge monastic complex, described in the Vinaya, which was given the name Jetavana Anathapindikarama.

Today pilgrims coming to this beautiful grove pray in the remains of the two favorite dwelling places of the Buddha. The larger of these, Gandhakuti, the Fragrant Hut, recalls the offerings of sandalwood and flowers made to the Buddha. It was probably originally a wooden building, described in the *Sumangalavilasini* as having a small internal room, a bathroom, a terrace outside where the Buddha would walk in the evening, and a 'jeweled staircase' leading up to it where talks were given to the monks. Today's ruins (dating from the

fourth to seventh centuries CE) comprise a brick pavilion, terrace, stairs and a shrine. Further to the south is the smaller Kosambakuti, Buddha's other dwelling for sleeping, meditating, and talking to visitors. Like the Gandhakuti, today the Kosambakuti consists of brick ruins and encloses a shrine. Still further to the south, closer to the monastery itself, is a Bodhi tree which some say comes from a seed of the original Bodhi tree, others from a cutting of the daughter Bodhi tree in Sri Lanka. Here pilgrims would leave their offerings in homage to the Buddha when he was away from Shravasti.

Closer to the main road are monastic ruins probably dating from the twelfth century and built over an earlier sixth century construction. There are twenty-one cells for monks, one containing a brick bed with a raised pillow. A number of statues and household implements were found here in the course of excavations. Also in the Jetavana Grove are stupas, said to commemorate revered monks across the centuries and important events in the Buddha's life,and other monastic ruins. Because the Buddha stayed at Shravasti for so much of his time, most of his discourses, including the Metta Sutta, were given in the region, and many of these talks would have occurred in these monasteries. Thus it is a fitting place to read the words of the Buddha and perhaps imagine them being spoken for the first time.

Several famous stories from the Buddha's life originated at Shravasti. It was here that the murderer Angulimala, wearing his necklace of

severed fingers, met Shakyamuni and repented of his wrongdoing. His decision to become a monk and his eventual enlightenment are said to have been marked by the stupa Pakki Kuti, a little to the north of the park.

The Buddha banned his followers from performing miracles. When the Buddha himself, however, was challenged to a competition by a group of non-believers, he agreed and performed miracles, reported in the *Divyavadana*. The king of Kosala had built a hall with thrones for the competition, in the process cutting down the surrounding mango grove. As the Buddha approached, he was offered a mango by a gardener: after he ate it, the seed was planted and a fully grown and fruiting mango tree sprang up. Some versions also report the Buddha flying into the hall. On the next day, the Buddha performed a miracle by rising into the air, standing on a rainbow bridge (or maybe a thousand-petaled lotus) spanning from one horizon to the other; from his shoulder came flames and from his feet streams of water. In the second miracle, known as *mahapratiharya*, the Buddha divided himself into multiple bodies so that everyone present had his or her own Buddha to talk with. Not surprisingly the Buddha won the competition, confounding the skeptics.

Over the centuries the fortunes of Shravasti waxed and waned but it remained an important center of Buddhism. The emperor Ashoka is said to have built pillars twenty-one meters high in the grove. When the Chinese monk Fa Hien visited in the early fifth century

CE, he described a luxuriant grove, with a pool and a monastery. By his account the original Jetavana temple was seven stories high and hung with rich silks with continually replenished offerings of flowers and lamps. There was also a famous sandalwood statue of the Buddha. One day a rat ran away with a burning wick in its mouth and set fire to the building, and everyone was saddened to think that the statue had been burnt. However, some days later, a small temple door was opened and the statue seen unscathed in this new position. So the monastery was rebuilt, this time two stories high, and the statue was moved back to its original place in the temple. By the time the pilgrim Huien Tsang arrived in the 630s CE, he found only ruins. These were restored soon after, and the monastery flourished until the twelfth century. The site was identified by the English archaeologist Cunningham in 1863, and since then archaeological excavations have unearthed a number of buildings.

More recently Buddhist temples and monasteries have been built at Shravasti by Sri Lankans, Japanese, Thai and Chinese, and a stupa by Tibetan monks. There is also a Jain temple, as Shravasti is venerated as the birthplace of two Jain Tirthikas. The shrine in the Sri Lankan temple contains excellent contemporary Buddhist paintings, representing scenes from the life of the Buddha and events in Buddhist history.

Shravasti is accessible by train from Lucknow (which has an airport); the nearest station is Balrampur, seventeen kilometers away,

from which pilgrims can proceed to Shravasti by bus or taxi. Many statues and objects from the Jetavana excavations are now housed in the museum in Lucknow. Some of the temples at Shravasti offer accommodation to pilgrims.

6. Sankashya – Where Lord Buddha Descended from Tushita Heaven

Both the great Chinese Buddhist pilgrims, Fa Hien in the fifth century CE, and Huien Tsiang in the seventh century, found substantial monastic communities at Sankashya. They identified this as the place where the Buddha had descended from the Tushita Heaven after spending a rainy season retreat there, teaching the Abhidharma to his mother, Queen Mayadevi, who had died shortly after his birth and had been born in Tushita as a male god. The emperor Ashoka erected one of his pillars here, topped with an elephant capital.

The British archaeologist General Cunningham identified Sankashya as a place near a village west of Farruhabad, above Kanpur, on the Ganges. It remains a relatively neglected site.

7. Nalanda – Site of the Great Monastic University

The great Buddhist university of Nalanda Mahavihara was built beside the stupa containing the ashes of Shariputra, one of the Buddha's most devoted followers. Only eleven kilometers from Rajgir, the village of Nalanda is said to have been Shariputra's birthplace, and

the Buddha often stayed, meditated and taught in a mango grove there. The monastic university of Nalanda, however, did not arise on this site until almost 1000 years later.

The university did not yet exist when the Chinese pilgrim monk Fa Hien passed this way in the early fifth century CE: he noted only the stupa of Shariputra and a temple erected there by the Buddhist Emperor Ashoka; there is no mention of a center of learning. Two centuries later, however, when Huien Tsiang, another traveling Chinese monk, came to Nalanda, he found a great university with libraries, colleges, towers and temples, famous throughout Asia for the learning of its graduates.

Thus the university of Nalanda appears to have been founded by the Gupta emperors of northern India in the fifth century. It grew and flourished until in the ninth century it is said to have housed 8500 monks and 1500 teachers. Nalanda played an important role in the spread of Buddhism to Tibet. Three teachers who taught Buddhism to the Tibetans had studied at Nalanda: Kamalashila, Shantarakshita and, above all, Padmasambhava. Many of the great Indian Buddhist masters – Dignaga, Dharmakirti, Dharmapala and Shantideva – also studied or taught here.

In the Tibetan Buddhist tradition the six ornaments (great masters at Nalanda between the second and tenth centuries CE) were Nagarjuna, Asanga, Gunaprabha, Aryadeva, Vasubhandu, and

Sakyaprabha. If we add Dignaga and Dharmakirti they become the eight ornaments. (It should be noted that in the historical record Nalanda was not founded until some centuries after the lifetimes of Nagarjuna and Aryadeva.)

Nalanda appears to have been an institution for advanced scholars: students were only admitted if they satisfied a rigorous test of their knowledge of Buddhist texts and philosophy, administered by the scholar who kept the gate. Debate on the Buddhist texts and their concepts was the main activity of the institution, supplemented by secular topics such as logic, grammar, astronomy and medicine; there were lay students as well as monks. The university had not one but three libraries. Sanskrit was the language of instruction of Nalanda, but many other languages were spoken there, as the students came from all the Asian countries.

Nalanda was the foremost of several great Buddhist universities of the time; there were others at nearby Odantapuri, and at Vikramashila. Nalanda was funded partly by lay students' fees, partly by the revenue of feudal villages donated by the emperors for its support, and partly by other donations. The university's learning was famous throughout Asia, and its degrees were seen as a qualification for a range of careers in the royal courts. Indeed, Nalanda's reputation was so high that people sometimes forged copies of its degrees for their own advancement.

As with many other holy Buddhist sites in northern India, Nalanda was destroyed by the Moslem invaders early in the thirteenth century CE. The Tibetan monk Dharmaswamin was a student at Nalanda when it was first raided, and helped the aged abbot of the university into hiding nearby. They returned for awhile, but had to flee the area in the face of further raids.

On any given day at Nalanda 100 classes would be delivered, and in the afternoon and evening devotional services would beheld in each college. There would be annual holidays when the monks would visit the pilgrimage sites such as Rajgir, and Bodhgaya, 80 kilometers to the south-west. For a modern pilgrim it is enriching to think of the monks who lived in the now ruined colleges, visiting the same pilgrimage places as oneself.

Like many other Buddhist sites, Nalanda was excavated by British archaeologists in the 1860s; it was definitively identified when the official seal of the university was discovered. Today, for a modest entrance fee, pilgrims can wander through the ruined colleges and temples, and circumambulate the huge ruined stupa of Shariputra. The site is easily reached by bus or taxi from Patna or Gaya, or from the nearest railway station, at Bhaktiyarpur.

Most Westerners are conscious only of the European university tradition that started in medieval Bologna. Nalanda is a monument

to the older intellectual tradition of Buddhism, with its searching analysis of the nature of human consciousness.

8. Kushinagar – Where Buddha Entered Mahaparanirvana

At Kushinagar, in his eighty-first year, the Buddha lay down and waited for the passing that he had predicted was approaching. At the nearby town of Pava, the Buddha had accepted an offering of food from the metal smith Cunda, containing meat which had gone bad. Afterwards, as he lay, the Buddha sent his follower Ananda to reassure Cunda that, far from being a negative thing, offering the Buddha his last meal was a highly auspicious act.

At Kushinagar the Buddha lay in the lion posture (on his right side, resting his head on his hand), between two tall sala trees. Prior to his passing Buddha gave teachings to a wandering ascetic named Subhadda, and ordained him as a monk. As a result of this Subhadda subsequently attained liberation. In his last moments the Buddha said his final words to his followers: 'Now monks, I say to you, all conditioned things are subject to decay – strive on with diligence.'

Kushinagar is smaller and more peaceful than the better-known pilgrimage sites of Bodhgaya and Sarnath. Archaeologists have found the remains of ten monasteries here, dating from the fourth to the eleventh centuries CE. The place is believed to have been a thriving pilgrimage site in the third through fifth centuries CE, and

emperor Ashoka built a column and a great stupa here. By the time the Chinese pilgrim Huien Tsiang visited it in the seventh century, however, it was all but deserted. He saw a shrine containing a magnificent large statue of the reclining Buddha.

The decline of Kushinagar continued, and archaeologists believe it ceased to be a site of pilgrimage even before the Islamic invasion of the twelfth century. The name itself was lost, and British archaeologists in the nineteenth century had a lengthy scholarly debate before the village Kasia was confirmed to be Kushinagar at the end of the century. The Buddha Mahaparanirvana shrine was unearthed from between a huge mound of bricks surrounded by thorn trees. The reclining Buddha statue had been broken in fragments, and had to be pieced back together.

In the 1900s a Burmese monk, Venerable U Chandramani, visited Kushinagar as a pilgrim and decided to stay there. He built a temple and guesthouse where he began to host other pilgrims. The Burmese center is the oldest of the monasteries; Japanese, Korean, Thai and Tibetan temples have since been built. In 1956, to commemorate the 2500th year of the Buddhist Era, the Indian Government erected the new Buddha Mahaparanirvana Temple. The reclining Buddha statue is today covered in a layer of gold leaf pressed on it by the hands of pilgrims.

Top: Shravasti, the remains of Jetvana Monastery (Jeta's Grove)
Right: Nalanda
Below: Jetvana Grove
Bottom Left: Rajgir
Bottom right: Sankashya (Sankassya)

The large stupa immediately behind the temple contains, at its center, pieces of charcoal and blackened earth, thought to be from the Buddha's cremation pyre. A kilometer to the south, the ruined Rhambar Stupa, a weathered mound of bricks fifteen meters high, marks the spot where the Buddha's body is said to have been cremated.

This is also the place where an enormous statue of Maitreya, the future Buddha – some 150 meters high – is to be constructed.

To reach Kushinagar, visitors should go by train to Gorakhpur, and then catch a bus or tempo for the remaining 51 kilometers (asking to be let out at the Buddha Dwar gate). There are several moderately expensive hotels at Kushinagar, or pilgrims can make donation to stay in the Myanmar Buddhist Temple and Guesthouse.

Additional Sites

1. Kapilvastu – Home of Buddha's Family

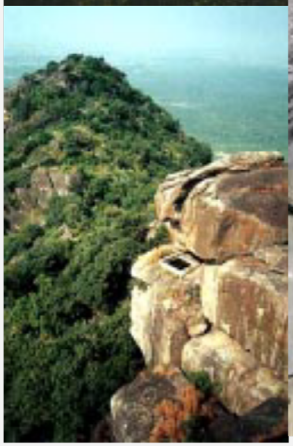
Kapilvastu was the capital of the Sakya kingdom, where the young Prince Siddhartha grew up, married, and became the father of a son. In the palace at Kapilvastu his father Shuddhodana tried to shelter Siddhartha from life's harsh realities, fearing a prediction that the prince would give up his position as prince and heir to the throne, to become a spiritual leader. Despite the king's care, however, the prince encountered an old man, a sick man and a corpse, and in-

ferred the extent of life's suffering. To search for away by which all people might escape from this suffering, he left his father's palace, his wife and child, and took up the life of a wandering ascetic. After his enlightenment he returned to Kapilvastu to visit his family and give teachings; and his stepmother, Gautami, and son, Rahula, became members of the Buddhist sangha.

Both India and Nepal have claimed to contain the site of the historical Kapilvastu. It appears more likely that the Indian site, near Piprahwa, about thirteen kilometers from Lumbini, is the correct one. In 1898 a soapstone casket was unearthed in a stupa there, with an inscription that is the earliest decipherable writing ever found in India. The most likely translation is that the burnt bones contained in the casket are relics of the Buddha, placed there by his Sakya relations. Further excavations in the 1970s unearthed seals with the name Kapilvastu, a strong confirmation of the site's historical identity. Claims for the Nepalese site, Tilaurakot, are less specific: they are based on evidence that it was a fortified settlement dating back to the Buddha's period, and that it is near Lumbini.

The main stupa at Kapilvastu was first built in the fifth century BCE, then built over with a second stupa about 150 years later; a third and larger stupa was built later, and this is the one visible today. The oldest of the stupas contained caskets that held fragments of charred human bones, very likely relics of the Buddha.

Above: Vaishali
Right: Vikramasila ruins
Below right: Ellora Cave 16
Below: Amaravati Stupa
Bottom left: Gurpa
Bottom right: Ajanta Cave 19



The ruins of a large monastery stand a little to the east of the stupa, and here a seal was found with the words 'Kapilavatthu Bhikshu Sangha'. The remains of two other monasteries and a public hall are nearby. The actual town of Kapilavatthu stood about a kilometer south of the stupa and monasteries.

2. Pragbodhi – Where Buddha Practiced Austerities

The mountain Pragbodhi near Bodhgaya is said to be the last of the places where the Prince Siddhartha practiced as an ascetic for six years until shortly before he attained enlightenment. The mountain, today called Dhungeswara, can be reached on foot from Bodhgaya, or by taking the bus along the old Gaya road, alighting at the village Kiriyama and walking from there. According to tradition, Prince Siddhartha stayed in a small cave halfway up the mountain.

3. Kaushambhi

The Buddha visited Kaushambhi, in Uttar Pradesh, twice, in the sixth and ninth years after his enlightenment, and gave several teachings here, such as the Kosambiya Sutra. At that time the city was a major center of trade and communications in northern India. The emperor Ashoka erected a pillar here to commemorate the Buddha's presence. Sculptures and other antiquities discovered at Kaushambhi are now in the collection of the museum at nearby Allahabad.




Top left: Kosambi
Top right: Tso Pema
Above: Swayambunath
Right: Dhauli Hill
Below: Nagaruna Konda
Below Right: Kesariya
Bottom left: Pragbodhi
Bottom right: Kapilvastu




4. Kesariya

A massive stupa was raised at Kesariya (formerly Kessaputta) to commemorate an incident near the end of the Buddha's life, when he gave his begging bowl to persuade a group of people to stop following him and return to their homes. The Chinese pilgrims Fa Hien and Huien Tsiang visited this stupa, which can still be seen today, with its five terraces of different shapes. Kesariya can be reached by turning off the Musaffarpur-Motihari road at Pipra.

5. Hajipur – Where Ananada's Ashes were Enshrined

Hajipur is a small village situated in the state of Bihar, about 10 km from the capital city of Patna. In ancient times it was known as Ukkacala and was the first village one came to after crossing the River Ganges at Patna. Hajipur is known as the venue of the Cula Goplalaka Sutra, a Middle Length Discourse taught by the Buddha and also for housing some of the ashes of Ananda, the close disciple and personnel attendant of the Buddha.

It is believed that Ananda, after realizing that his life was drawing to an end, headed north from Rajgir. Hearing this, King Ajasattu, escorted by his entire staff, went after Ananda with the intention of requesting him to stay. Meanwhile the people of Vaishali, upon hearing the news, started gathering at the banks of the River Ganges

to welcome him. When King Ajasattu caught up with Ananda, he was already in the middle of the river.

The people of Vaishali on one bank and King Ajasattu and his entourage on the other, each requested Ananda to come over to their side. In order to avoid disappointment and possible conflict, Ananda rose into the air and disappeared into a ball of flames with his ashes falling on both banks of the river. On either bank a stupa was built at the same spot where the ashes fell. With the river changing its course over time, the stupa on the southern bank got washed away. The one on the northern bank is now a grassy mound which a Hindu temple known as Ramchaura Mandir built over it.

6. Gurpa – Where Mahakashyapa Waits for Maitreya

The mountain Gurpa stands some thirty-three kilometers from Gaya (near Bodhgaya), beyond Fatipur on the Fatipur road. From the village of Gurpa, paths lead up to the mountain beyond the railway line. This is said to be the place where Mahakashyapa, who led the monastic communities after the Buddha's paranirvana, went at the end of his own life. He is said to have opened and entered a cavity in the rocks where he remains to this day, deep in meditation. It is said that when the future Buddha, Maitreya, appears in the world, he will go to Gurpa and awaken Mahakashyapa so he can receive the Buddha's robe from him. It is also said that Asanga spent many

years meditating here before he received teachings directly from Maitreya.

7. Vikramashila – The Great Buddhist University

The ruins of the Buddhist university of Vikramashila has been partially excavated at the village of Antichak in the Bhagalpur district of Bihar. The university was reputedly established by King Dharmapala (783-820 CE), and the mahasiddhas Atisha and Naropa are said to have been gate-keeper scholars there. The ruins comprise the pillars of a gate house and a quadrangle with a temple in the center, surrounded by buildings that contained monks' cells.

8. Vaishali – Second Buddhist Council

The Buddha made many long visits to Vaishali and gave numerous teachings there. It was the place where he gave his last discourse before his paranirvana. A century after the Buddha's passing, the second Buddhist council took place at Vaishali.

Following the Buddha's enlightenment and first turning of the wheel of dharma at Sarnath, he stayed for a prolonged period at Rajgir, the capital of King Bimbisara, where he first ordained monks. From Rajgir, he then went to Vaishali, the capital of the Licchavis, on the north bank of the Ganges not far from the modern Patna. This is the place where the Buddha was eventually persuaded to ordain nuns.

The city is said to have had three lines of walls with gates with towers, and to have been very prosperous and grand. It is said that King Bimbisara had the road from Rajgir to the Ganges improved to make it easier for the Buddha to visit. The Buddha stayed at Vaishali several more times.

It was in Vaishali that the Buddha eventually experienced the sickness that led to his passing, and gave his last public teaching. From here he set out for Kushinagar, where his paranirvana took place. It is said that the Licchavis persisted in following him on his last departure from the city, and did not return home until the Buddha had given them his alms bowl, and frightened them with the illusion of a flooded river.

A temple was built in Vaishali to house the Buddha's alms bowl, but the bowl was later taken away to Peshawar by King Kanishka after he conquered Vaishali in the second century CE. Over the next 800 years Chinese pilgrims visiting northern India reported seeing the bowl there. The Islamic invasion of northern India resulted in the destruction of the temple where the bowl was kept in Peshawar, but the bowl itself survives and today is housed in a small Muslim shrine at Kandhara in Afghanistan.

Some of the best known events of the Buddha's life took place in Vaishali. The Buddha's foster mother, Mahaprajapati Gautami, made a pilgrimage to Vaishali from Kapilvastu with 500 other women

of the Buddha's own people, the Sakyas. The Buddha three times refused their requests to be ordained, but they persisted, shaving their heads and putting on orange monastic robes, until eventually he agreed to ordain them as nuns.

It was in Vaishali, too, that the Buddha during his first visit stayed in a mango grove belonging to the famous and wealthy courtesan Ambapali. She was inspired by his teachings, and invited the Buddha and his retinue to visit her home the next day to share a meal with her. The Licchavi nobles also wanted to entertain the Buddha the next day, but Ambapali said she would not give up the honor of hosting him for 100,000 gold coins. After the meal she gave the Buddha her mango grove, which became the site of a famous monastery. Ambapali later became a nun and composed a poem about the loss of her beauty in ageing – one of the earliest Indian poems by a woman to survive.

Because Vaishali was an important center of the Buddha's activities, after his cremation an eighth portion of his relics were entrusted to the Licchavis, who raised a stupa to house them. The remains of this stupa can still be seen near the large rectangular tank (or pond) called Kharauna Pokhar, believed to have been used in the coronation of rulers of the Vajjian Confederacy, of which the Licchavis were a leading tribe.

About 110 years after the Buddha's paranirvana and the First Buddhist Council at Rajgir, in the year 376 BCE, the Second Buddhist Council is said to have been held at Vaishali. Accounts of the background of the council vary, but it appears to have been convened to debate proposals by monks in Vaishali that ten precepts for monks should be relaxed or introduced: among others, that monks should be permitted to store away salt, to eat after the noon hour, to use bedding, mats and robes that departed from the prescribed size, to drink beverages that had been forbidden, and to accept gifts of gold and silver. The last proposal was the most controversial.

A group of elder monks, meeting in a garden in Vaishali, branded these requests the 'Ten Unlawful Things' and condemned them. They convened a gathering of 700 monks for a group recitation of the sutras and rules of discipline.

In response to this rejection, however, the Vaishali monks then held a council of their own, of 10,000 monks, who referred to themselves as the Mahasanghika or "Members of the Great Order." This appears to have resulted in divisions in Buddhism between this group and the Theravadan or 'Teaching of the Elders'.Over the next 100 years further sects arose within these two broad divisions. Some scholars argue that this prefigured the division of Buddhism into Hinayana (Theravadan) and Mahayana – between an emphasis on monastic withdrawal, and an emphasis on compassionate engagement.

After the main stupa at Vaishali was rediscovered in 1958, archaeologists' excavations confirmed that it is very ancient. Originally made of rammed earth, it was repeatedly enlarged with layers of brick over the next few hundred years. King Ashoka is said to have opened the stupa and to have removed nine tenths of the Buddha's relics from it, so these could be placed in the stupa she was building in other parts of his empire. He restored a small portion of the relics to the Licchavis' stupa, however, and they remained there until archaeologists removed them: they are now stored in the Patna Museum.

A little way north of the Licchavis' stupa are the remains of another large stupa, constructed by King Ashoka, and next to it a statue of a lion on a tall pillar, similar to the columns raised by King Ashoka at many pilgrimage sites, but in a different style. It is thought to have provided the model for the Ashokan columns.

Because the site of Vaishali has often been flooded by the nearby Gandak River, little of the remains of the once great city survive. A small archaeological museum contains some of the sculptures and artifacts that have been recovered.

9. Patna

The city of Patna, capital of Bihar, was visited several times by the Buddha; he passed through it on his final journey to Kushinagar. There is an excellent collection of Buddhist art in the Patna Mu-

seum on Buddha Marg. The remains of a Mauryian period palace at Kumrahar are said to have been the palace of the great Buddhist emperor Ashoka.

10. Amravati – Where Buddha Taught Kalachakra

Amravati is considered the most sacred site of Buddhist pilgrimage in South India. To students of the Vajrayana, it is revered as the place where the Buddha, shortly after his paranirvana, first delivered the Kalachakra root tantra, at the request of the King of Shambhala, King Suchandra (Dawa Sangpo).

Amravati is also of importance to other Buddhist traditions, however, as a place where a great stupa was erected over relics of the Buddha, reputedly by the Buddhist emperor Ashoka. There was a large Buddhist monastic community here well before the start of the Christian era, and some foundations of the monasteries can still be seen.

Of the stupa, only the foundation mound has survived, although archaeologists have gained a good idea of the former structure from its fragmentary remains. The stupa was the largest in South India, with a dome made of pale green limestone that stood about eighteen meters high; the stupa as a whole would have been about thirty meters high. The upper part of the dome was probably decorated with plaster garlands. A beautifully carved railing surrounded the base of the stupa, with four gateways, one in each of the cardinal

directions. One of the gateways has been reconstructed, and visitors can admire its carvings of scenes from the Buddha's heroic life. The gateways were guarded by sculptures of lions.

The small archaeological museum contains some fine carvings from Amravati's long history of Buddhist activity (ranging from the third century BCE to the twelfth century CE). As well as early statues of the Buddha and other symbols of the dharma (lotuses, a stupa, the bodhi tree), they include statues of Tara and the bodhisattva Padmapani from the settlement's later history as a center of Mahayana teachings.

Amravati is now a small, peaceful village, to which come a stream of pilgrims and other visitors. It stands on the banks of the Krishna River in Andra Pradesh. To get there, pilgrims can travel by train to the nearby city of Vijaywada, though this is a fairly grueling journey from Delhi (two days). From Vijaywada, the most reliable route is to go by bus to the smaller city of Guntur (an hour's journey or less), and then take a second bus from thereto Amravati (a further one and a half hours); the site and museum are about a kilometer from the bus stand. During the monsoon, when the river is high, boat tours also run frequently to Amravati from Vijaywada.

11 & 12. The Ajanta and Ellora Caves

The Buddhist caves of Ajanta are 107 kilometers northeast of the city of Aurangabad. These magnificent caves, cut in the wall of a gorge,

were begun in the fourth century CE, and have been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The twenty-nine caves comprise both shrines and monasteries, and are decorated with elaborate sculptures and paintings.

The Ellora caves, just outside Aurangabad, comprise Hindu and Jain caves as well as Buddhist caves, and thus reflect the religious tolerance of India in the period from the fifth to tenth century CE, when the caves were carved. The Buddhist caves were the earliest made.

13. Dhauli Hill

Dhauli Hill, some eight kilometers from the city of Bhubaneshwar in Orissa, is reputedly the place where the emperor Ashoka turned away from war to embrace Buddhism. Edicts of the emperor are inscribed on a rock on the hill; a Shanti Stupa (peace pagoda) was built on the opposite hill by Fuji Guruji, a Zen Buddhist priest.

14. Nagarjunakonda

The settlement of Nagarjunakonda, in the Nalgonda district of Andhra Pradesh, is believed to have been the largest Buddhist center in South India in the early centuries of the Christian era. The site is believed to take its name from its association with Nagarjuna, who lived in the second century CE, and who developed the concept of emptiness (*shunyata*). Nagarjunakonda was the capital of the Ishvaku dynasty (225-325 CE), who were Buddhists and spon-

sored the building of monasteries and temples. The importance of Nagarjunakonda as an early center of Buddhism was established by English archaeologists who excavated the site in the years 1927-1931, discovering the remains of more than thirty monasteries. The archaeological evidence suggests that the settlement had links with Buddhist centers in Bengal, Ceylon and China. The original site was flooded by damming of the Krishna river to create a reservoir for irrigation in 1960, but archaeologists moved the remains of Nagarjunakonda to the top of a hill in the lake, where a museum now stands.

15. Tso Pema

Tso Pema or Rewalsar, near the town of Mandi in Himachal Pradesh, is one of the holiest sites for Tibetan Buddhists in India. The dark lake, ringed by monasteries, high in the Himalayan foothills, is sacred to Padmasambhava or Guru Rinpoche, the great master who brought Buddhism to Tibet. It is also a place of pilgrimage for Hindus and Jains.

The lake is said to have been created by Padmasambhava in the eighth century CE, in the following way. Mandarava, daughter of the King of Mandi, yearned to become a nun and follow the dharma, but her father wanted her to marry a prince. She tried to disfigure her face to avoid marriage. Padmasambhava, the lotus-born, had by this time developed miraculous powers through the teachings

he had received from great masters, and his mind-training and meditation. Looking down from the heavens where he was then abiding, Padmasambhava took pity on Mandarava. He liberated her from her father, and took her as his spiritual consort to a cave above the village of Rewalsar.

Mandarava's father was outraged by this apparent dishonor to his daughter, and sent soldiers to capture Padmasambhava and burn him alive. Padmasambhava did not resist, but allowed himself to be placed on a pyre in the town. Instead of dying down, the flames grew enormous and burned for a week. On the eighth morning the soldiers awoke to find a lake of crystal-clear water where the fire had been, and at the center of the lake a single lotus flower. In the open bloom sat Padmasambhava in the form of an adolescent boy.

The king repented and offered his kingdom as a mark of his devotion, but Padmasambhava asked rather to continue teaching Mandarava, who was in fact a dakini. They continued their tantric practice in the caves above the lake. It was from Tso Pema that Padmasambhava departed for Tibet to spread the dharma at the request of the Tibetan king Trisong Detsän.

Rewalsar is reached by local buses that frequently leave the bus station in Mandi. There are excellent guest-houses near the lake; several, run by monasteries, are almost on the water. The calm, sheltered lake is conducive to contemplation; it is said that if you

stand on the shore and one of the floating islands of reeds drifts towards you, you are being visited by Padmasambhava's spirit.

A small community of monks and nuns live and meditate in caves and huts, festooned with prayer flags, on the ridge high above the lake. A local bus leaves for the caves each morning from the main street of Rewalsar. Prayer flags mark the main cave, where Padmasambhava and Mandarava are said to have meditated, and which is now a public shrine. The cave is divided into three sections. The first contains many Buddha images in a glass-enclosed altar. The second holds an enormous golden statute of Padmasambhava himself. The third section holds more small Buddha images and *tsatsas* (small devotional stupas molded from clay). Visitors to the caves can make a donation to the Padmasambhava project, which aims to construct a huge seated image of Guru Rinpoche in a temple sited above the lake. If you miss the return bus, which leaves early in the afternoon, it is more pleasant anyway to walk down the paths and flights of steps that lead back to the lake, through farmyards and gardens.

16. Dharamsala

When Buddhists refer to Dharamsala they are generally thinking of McLeod Ganj or Upper Dharamsala, the suburb of Dharamsala perched on the crest of a ridge high above the rest of the town, where a substantial Tibetan community has sprung up around the residence of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. His Holiness the

Seventeenth Karmapa also resides only ten kilometers along the Kangra Valley from Lower Dharamsala, at Gyuto Tantric University. Numerous other Tibetan Buddhist monasteries are situated in the Kangra Valley within a few hours' drive of Dharamsala, so McLeod Ganj is an excellent base for a student of Buddhism wishing to attend teachings and learn Tibetan. McLeod Ganj has many excellent guest-houses, several of them run by monasteries, while for a long-term stay a student can rent rooms in a Tibetan household at a modest rate.

The Kangra District was annexed by the British in 1848, and Dharamsala was founded as the base of a native regiment in 1849, and became the administrative center of the district in 1852. Because of its altitude (lower Dharamsala is at about 1200 meters, and McLeod Ganj at 1700 meters), the town became popular as a hill station, to which British households would retire from the plains during the hot summer months. A huge earthquake in 1905 largely destroyed the town and nearby Kangra, killing approximately 20,000 people. After this the summer capital of the British Raj was moved to Shimla.

When Tenzin Gyatso, the fourteenth Dalai Lama, fled Tibet at the time of the Tibetan uprising in 1959, Prime Minister Nehru allowed His Holiness to settle in Dharamsala in 1960 and set up the Tibetan Government in Exile. Over the years thousands of Tibetans have settled in the town, which contains numerous important Tibetan

political and cultural institutions, including the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts, the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Tibetan Children's Villages, and the residence of the Tibetan State Oracle.

His Holiness's residence stands on a point of land jutting out from the ridge of McLeod Ganj, beside the main gompa of the community, and many residents circumambulate the residence each day. The Lingkor circuit is a paved track with lines of prayer wheels and large individual prayer wheels in several places, and is set with stones carved with Om Mani Peme Hung and other mantras.

His Holiness's busy schedule of visits and teachings in other countries and elsewhere in India means that he is away for much of the year, but each year he also gives teachings in Dharamsala, and it is still possible to meet him briefly in person: pilgrims must first go through a security clearance process. It is not certain how much longer this will be possible, however, as spokespeople for the Dalai Lama have indicated that he is considering retirement, which may involve moving to a remote monastery in the Himalayas.

A visit to Dharamsala also offers the opportunity to attend teachings by His Holiness Orgyen Trinley Dorje, the Seventeenth Karmapa. His Holiness resides at Gyuto Tantric University in Sidbhari, about ten kilometers from Lower Dharamsala, and gives daily public audiences including teachings on Wednesday and Saturday when

he is in residence. These audiences are generally held at 2.30 pm, though it is advisable to arrive early, allowing time for the security checks. Buses to Gyuto Tantric University leave frequently from the bus station at the bottom of the main street of Lower Dharamsala.

As well as the chance to see and hear these great teachers, Dharamsala offers students the opportunity to deepen and enrich their knowledge of Buddhism by attending courses, learning Tibetan and associating with the Tibetan community. Beginners' and advanced courses in Buddhism are offered at the Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies and at some monasteries in McLeod Ganj. Visitors can enroll in formal courses in Tibetan language, or receive private tuition at modest rates. Gu-Chu-Sum, the center for Tibetan refugees who have been political prisoners, welcomes the assistance of westerners who are willing to provide one on one tuition in English to the center's residents.

Although McLeod Ganj offers every amenity, pilgrims should take care for their safety, particularly when walking outside the town or at night.

17. Boudhanath Stupa

There are a variety of accounts as to who founded the great stupa at Boudhanath in the Kathmandu Valley and when, and what relics it may contain. It is one of the largest ancient stupas in the world,

and the main center of Buddhist pilgrimage and Tibetan Buddhist culture in Nepal.

The stupa is said to house relics of Kashyapa, the Buddha who achieved enlightenment and taught the dharma before Buddha Shakyamuni. Others believe that the dome contains a fragment of bone from the cremation of Shakyamuni. The stupa is also said to have been constructed in the time of the Tibetan king Songsten Gampo (c. 600 CE), one of whose wives was the Nepalese princess Bhrikuti. Other accounts associate the raising of the stupa with the Tibetan king Trisong Detsän (755-797 CE). Some Nepalese sources attribute its foundation to the Licchavi king Sivadeva (c.590-604 CE), others to King Manadeva (464-505 CE). As with other ancient stupas, the very large mound we see today probably covers smaller, older stupas on the same site: the current stupa was built after the invasions of the Mongols in the fourteenth century CE.

As with the stupa at Swayambunath, the base of the Boudhanath stupa is a massive white washed hemispherical mound topped by a square stone *harnika* painted on all four sides with the awareness eyes of the Buddha. Above the harnika are thirteen levels symbolizing the stages of the path to enlightenment, with above that the gilded metal spire; the total height of the structure is thirty-six meters. The structure and surrounding buildings are strung with hundreds of prayer flags fluttering in the Himalayan winds. The base of the stupa mound contains 108 niches in each of which

stands an image of Buddha Amitabha, and at most times of day there are people circumambulating the mound and turning the prayer wheels at its base.

The stupa stands on an ancient trade route between Nepal and Tibet, and is traditionally a place where those traveling over the Himalayas make offerings either at the start of the journey, or at the end of it to give thanks for their safe passage. The original trade route passes the Boudhanath stupa and continues to the smaller and almost certainly older stupa of Chabahil, also referred to as 'Little Boudhanath', some three kilometers to the west. The Chabahil stupa is said to have been raised by Charumati, the daughter of the Buddhist emperor Ashoka. It dates from the Licchavi period – the fifth to eighth centuries CE.

With the crushing of the Tibetan uprising against the Chinese invaders in 1959, many Tibetan refugees settled at Boudhanath, eleven kilometers northeast of central Kathmandu. The place became a center for the renaissance of Tibetan Buddhism outside Tibet and the study of Vajrayana Buddhism by western students. Boudhanath today has some fifty gompas and study centers, many of which offer teachings and meditation courses, and large numbers of guest houses to accommodate the transient population of tourists and serious students of Buddhism.

1. **Kapilvastu / Kapliavatthu**—home of Buddha's family
2. **Pragbodhi**—where Buddha practiced austerities
3. **Kaushambi / Kosambhi** 4. **Kesariya**
5. **Hajipur**—where Ananda's ashes were enshrined
6. **Gurpa**—where Mahakashyapa waits for Maitreya
7. **Vikramasila**—great Buddhist University
8. **Vaishali / Vesali**—2nd Buddhist Council
9. **Patna**—3rd Buddhist Council
10. **Amravati**—where Buddha taught Kalachakra
11. **Ajanta Caves** 12. **Ellora Caves**
13. **Dhauli Hill** 14. **Nagarjuna Konda**
15. **Tso Pema** 16. **Dharamsala**
17. **Boudhanath Stupa / Swayambunath Stupa**

18. Swayambunath Stupa

Along with the great stupa at Boudhanath, the Swayambunath stupa is the other main site of Buddhist pilgrimage in Kathmandu. It is splendidly situated on a hill two kilometers to the west of the Thamel district of Kathmandu, beyond the Vishnumati River, with views out over the city and, on clear days, the mountains. Most visitors choose to approach the stupa by climbing the great stairway from the base of the hill, which was built by King Pratap Malla in the seventeenth century CE. The King also made the giant stone *dorje* (vajra) at the top of the staircase and the two *shikaras* (towers) that flank the approach to the stupa. Pilgrims who cannot manage this climb can be driven to the stupa precinct.

The ascent of the stairway may involve interactions with the monkeys who inhabit the hill (Swayambunath is often called 'the monkey temple'): it is best not to carry food, as the monkeys will try to snatch it.

According to legend, the Kathmandu Valley was once a lake, out of which a lotus flower grew. (Geology confirms that the valley was a lake and that the Swayambunath hill may have been an island standing in it.) The bodhisattva Manjushri saw the lotus in a vision, and traveled to the lake; a giant footprint near the start of the staircase is said to be Manjushri's or else Buddha Shakyamuni's. To enable other pilgrims to reach it, Manjushri cut a passage through

the mountains around the valley, which drained the lake; the lotus in its center became the hill on which the stupa (formerly the lotus flower) stands. Another account has it that the stupa was built over an eternal, self-created (*svyambu*) flame – hence its name. The Buddhist emperor Ashoka is said to have visited Swayambunath. Moslem invaders broke open the stupa mound in the hope of finding gold in 1346.

A partially obliterated stone inscription found at the site indicates that the stupa was founded by King Vrsadeva at the beginning of the fifth century CE, and that work was carried out on the site by his great grandson King Manadeva (464-505 CE). Hindus as well as Buddhists revere Swayambunath – it has been maintained by a long series of Hindu kings of Nepal including King Pratap Malla in the seventeenth century – and the stupa precinct includes several Hindu shrines, most notably a small pagoda style temple to Hariti, the goddess of fertility and smallpox.

As with Boudhanath, the pilgrim visiting Swayambunath has the opportunity to participate in a vibrant community of practice, either by joining the circumambulation of the stupa at dawn, or by staying for the daily puja at around 4.00 pm.

Glossary of Terms

Abhidharma. (Tib. *chö ngön pa*) The Buddhist teachings are often divided into the Tripitaka: the sutras (teachings of the Buddha), the Vinaya (teachings on conduct,) and the Abhidharma, which are the analyses of phenomena that exist primarily as a tradition of commentary on the Buddhist teachings.

Alaya vijnana. (Tib. *kün shi nam she*) According to the Chittamatra school this is the eighth consciousness and is often called the ground consciousness or storehouse consciousness.

Anuttarayoga tantra. (Tib. *nal jor la na me pay ju*) There are four levels of the Vajrayana and anuttarayoga tantra is the highest of these. It contains the Guhyasamaja, the Chakrasamvara, the Hevajra and the Kalachakra tantras.

Arhat. "Free from four maras." The mara of conflicting emotions, the mara of the deva, the mara of death and the mara of

the skandhas. The highest level of the Hinayana path. Arhat is male and *arhati* is female.

Bodhichitta. (Tib. *chang chup chi sem*) Literally, the mind of enlightenment. There are two kinds of bodhichitta: absolute bodhichitta, which is completely awakened mind that sees the emptiness of all phenomena,and relative bodhichitta which is the aspiration to practice the six paramitas and free all beings from the suffering of samsara. In regard to relative bodhichitta, there are also two kinds: aspiration bodhichitta and perseverance bodhichitta.

Bodhisattva. (Tib. *chang chup sem pa*) "Heroic mind." *Bodhi* means blossomed or enlightened, and *sattva* means heroic mind. Literally, one who exhibits the mind of enlightenment. Also an individual who has committed him or herself to the Mahayana path of compassion and the practice of the six paramitas to achieve Buddhahood to free all beings from samsara. These are the heart or mind disciples of the Buddha.

Bodhisattva levels. (Skt. *bhumi,* Tib. *sa*) The levels or stages a bodhisattva goes through to reach enlightenment. These consist of ten levels in the sutra tradition and thirteen in the tantra tradition. The ten are: 1. Overwhelming Joy, 2. Stainless, 3. Radiant, 4. Luminous, 5. Difficult to Practice, 6. Obviously Transcendent,

7. Far Gone, 8. Unshakeable, 9. Excellent Discriminating Wisdom, 10. Cloud of Dharma.

Bodhisattva vow. The vow to attain Buddhahood for the sake of all beings.

Buddha nature. (Tib. *de shegs nying po*) The essential nature of all sentient beings; the potential for enlightenment.

Charya tantra, is a combination of the meditative practices of the Yoga tantra with the ritual ablution of Kriya tantra.

Chittamatra school. (Tib. *sem tsampa*) A school founded by Asanga in the fourth century, usually translated as the Mind-only school. It is one of the four major schools in the Mahayana tradition (the others being the two Rangtong – Svatantrika and Prasangika – and Shentong) and its main tenet (to greatly simplify) is that all phenomena are mental events.

Completion stage. (Tib. *dzo rim*) In the Vajrayana there are two stages of meditation: the generation/development stage and the completion stage. Completion stage with marks is the six doctrines. Completion stage without marks is the practice of essence Mahamudra, resting in the unfabricated nature of mind.

Daka. (Tib. *khandro*) A male counterpart to a dakini.

Dakini. (Tib. *khandroma*) A yogini who has attained high realizations of the fully enlightened mind. She may be a hu-

man being who has achieved such attainments or a non-human manifestation of the enlightened mind of a meditational deity. A female aspect of the protectors. It is feminine energy which has inner, outer and secret meanings.

Definitive meaning. The Buddha's teachings that state the direct meaning of dharma. They are not changed or simplified for the capacity of the listener, in contrast to the provisional meaning.

Dharmadhatu. (Tib. *chö ying*) *Dharma* is "the truth" and *dhatu* means, "space free from a centre." The all-encompassing space, unoriginated and without beginning, out of which all phenomena arises. The Sanskrit means "the essence of phenomena" and the Tibetan means "the expanse of phenomena," but it usually refers to the emptiness that is the essence of phenomena. Dharmadhatu and dharmakaya are essentially the same; they are two indivisible aspects of the same thing. The dharmakaya emphasizes the wisdom aspect while dharmadhatu emphasizes the emptiness aspect.

Disturbing emotions. (Skt. *klesha*, Tib. *nyön mong*) Also called the "afflictive emotions," these are the emotional afflictions or obscurations (in contrast to intellectual obscurations) that disturb the clarity of perception. These are also translated as "poisons."

They include any emotion that disturbs or distorts consciousness. The main kleshas are desire, anger and ignorance.

Dzogchen. (Skt. *mahasandhi*) Literally "the great perfection." The teachings beyond the vehicles of causation, first taught in the human world by the great vidyadhara Garab Dorje.

Emptiness. (Tib. *tong pa nyi,* Skt. *shunyata*) A central theme in Buddhism. It should not lead one to views of nihilism or the like, but is a term indicating the lack of any truly existing independent nature of any and all phenomena. Positively stated, phenomena do exist, but as mere appearances, interdependent manifestations of mind with no limitation. It is not that it is just your mind, as mind is also free of any true existence. This frees one from a solipsist view. This is interpreted differently by the individual schools.

Father tantra. (Tib. *pha gyu*) There are three kinds of tantras. The father tantra is concerned with transforming aggression, the mother tantra with transforming passion, and the non-dual tantra with transforming ignorance.

Four Noble Truths. (Tib. *pak pay den pa shi*) The Buddha began teaching with a talk in India at Sarnath on the Four Noble Truths. These are the truth of suffering, the truth of the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the path. These truths are the foundation of Buddhism.

Generation stage. (Skt. *utpattikrama*, Tib. *che rim*) In the Vajrayana there are two stages of meditation: the generation and the completion stage. The generation stage is a method of tantric meditation that involves the visualization and contemplation of deities for the purpose of purifying habitual tendencies and realizing the purity of all phenomena. In this stage visualization of the deity is established and maintained.

Hevajra tantra. (Tib. *kye dorje*) This is the "mother tantra" of the Anuttarayoga tantra, which is the highest of the four yogas.

Hinayana. (Tib. *tek pa chung wa*) Literally, the "lesser vehicle." The first of the three *yanas*, or vehicles. The term refers to the first teachings of the Buddha, which emphasized the careful examination of mind and its confusion. It is the foundation of Buddha's teachings focusing mainly on the four truths and the twelve interdependent links. The fruit is liberation for oneself.

Kalachakra. A tantra and a Vajrayana system taught by Buddha Shakyamuni.

Karma. (Tib. *lay*) Literally "action." The unerring law of cause and effect, e.g., positive actions bring happiness and negative actions bring suffering. The actions of each sentient being are the causes that create the conditions for birth and the circumstances in that lifetime.

Kriya tantra. (Tib. *ja way gyu*) One of the four tantras, this emphasizes personal purity.

Madhyamaka. (Tib. *u ma*) The most influential of the four schools of Indian Buddhism founded by Nagarjuna in the second century C.E. The name comes from the Sanskrit word meaning "the Middle-way" meaning that it is the middle way between eternalism and nihilism. The main postulate of this school is that all phenomena – both internal mental events and external physical objects – are empty of any true nature. The school uses extensive rational reasoning to establish the emptiness of phenomena. This school does, however, hold that phenomena do exist on the conventional or relative level of reality.

Mahakala. *Dharmapala.* A protector of the dharma and dharma practitioners.

Mahapandita. (Tib. *pan di ta chen po*) *Maha* means great and *pandita* Buddhist scholar.

Mahasiddha. (Tib. *drup thop chen po*) A practitioner who has a great deal of realization. *Maha* means great and *siddha* refers to an accomplished practitioner. These were particularly Vajrayana practitioners who lived in India between the eight and twelfth century and practiced tantra. The biography of some of the most famous is found in *The Eighty-four Mahasiddhas*.

Mahayana. (Tib. *tek pa chen po*) Literally, the "Great Vehicle." These are the teachings of the second turning of the wheel of dharma, which emphasize *shunyata*, compassion and universal Buddha nature. The purpose of enlightenment is to liberate all sentient beings from suffering as well as oneself. Mahayana schools of philosophy appeared several hundred years after the Buddha's death, although the tradition is traced to teachings he gave at Rajgir, or Vulture Peak Mountain.

Mandala. (Tib. *chil kor*) Literally "centre and surrounding" but has different contexts. A diagram used in various Vajrayana practices that usually has a central deity and four directions.

Mara. (Tib. *du*) Difficulties encountered by the practitioner. The Tibetan word means heavy or thick. In Buddhism mara symbolizes the passions that overwhelm human beings as well as everything that hinders the arising of wholesome roots and progress on the path to enlightenment. There are four kinds: *skandha-mara*, which is incorrect view of self; *klesha-mara*, which is being overpowered by negative emotions; *matyu-mara*, which is death and interrupts spiritual practice; and *devaputra-mara*, which is becoming stuck in the bliss that comes from meditation.

Mother tantra. (Tib. *ma gyu*) There are three kinds tantras: *the father tantra*, which is concerned with transforming aggression;

the *mother tantra*, which is concerned with transforming passion and the *non-dual tantra*, which concerns transforming ignorance.

Nirvana. (Tib. *nyangde*) Literally, "extinguished." Individuals live in samsara and with spiritual practice can attain a state of liberation in which all false ideas and conflicting emotions have been extinguished. This is called nirvana. The nirvana of a Hinayana practitioner is freedom from cyclic existence as an arhat. The nirvana of a Mahayana practitioner is Buddhahood, free from extremes of dwelling in either samsara or the perfect peace of an arhat.

Sometimes it is categorized as three types: nirvana of naturalness, which is ground nirvana; nirvana of cessation, which is path nirvana; and non-abiding nirvana, which is the reward or fruition nirvana.

Pandita. A great scholar.

Paramita. "Transcendental" or "Perfection." Pure actions free from dualistic concepts that liberate sentient beings from samsara. The six paramitas are: generosity, moral ethics, patience, diligence, meditative-concentration, and wisdom-awareness. The ten paramitas are the above six and, skillful means, aspiration, strength, and primordial wisdom.

Prajna. (Tib. *she rab*) In Sanskrit it means "perfect knowledge" and can mean wisdom, understanding or discrimination. Usually

it means the wisdom of seeing things from a high (i.e., non-dualistic) point of view.

Prajnaparamita. (Tib. *she rab chi parol tu chinpa*) Transcendent perfect knowledge. The Tibetan literally means, "gone to the other side" or "gone beyond" as expressed in the Prajnaparamita mantra, "Om Gate Gate Paragate Parasamgate Bodhi Svaha." The realization of emptiness in the *Prajnaparamita Hrdaya* or Heart Sutra, made possible by the extraordinarily profound dharma of the birth of Shakyamuni Buddha in the world and the practices that came from it, such as the Vajrayana tantras, which make use of visualization and the control of subtle physical energies.

Prajnaparamita sutras. Used to refer to a collection of about 40 Mahayana sutras that all deal with the realization of prajna.

Provisional meaning. The teachings of the Buddha which have been simplified or modified to the capabilities of the audience. This contrasts with the definitive meaning.

Rangtong school. The Madhyamaka or Middle-way is divided into two major schools; *Rangtong* (empty of self) and *Shentong* (empty of other). Rangtong is from the second turning of the wheel of dharma and teaches that reality is empty of self and beyond concepts.

Sadhana. (Tib. *drup tap*) Tantric liturgy and procedure for practice, usually emphasizing the generation stage.

Samsara. (Tib. *kor wa*) "Cyclic existence." The conditioned existence of ordinary life in which suffering occurs because one still possesses attachment, aggression and ignorance. It is contrasted to nirvana. Through the force of karma motivated by ignorance, desire and anger one is forced to take on the impure aggregates and circle the wheel of existence until liberation.

Sangha. (Tib. *gen dun*) "Virtuous One." *Sang* means intention or motivation and *gha* means virtuous. One with virtuous motivation. One of the three jewels. Generally refers to the followers of Buddhism,and more specifically to the community of monks and nuns. The exalted sangha are those who have attained a certain level of realization of the Buddha's teachings.

Secret mantra. (Tib. *sang ngak*) A name for the Vajrayana.

Shastra. (Tib. *tan chö*) The Buddhist teachings are divided into words of the Buddha and the commentaries of others on his works, the shastras.

Shentong school. The Madhyamaka or Middle-way is divided into two major schools, *Rangtong* (empty of self) and *Shentong* (empty of other). Shentong is from the third turning of the wheel of dharma and explains that ultimate reality is emptiness and luminosity inseparable.

Shravaka. "Hearer"; corresponds to the level of arhat, those that seek and attain liberation for themselves through listening to the

Buddha's teaching and gaining insight into selflessness and the four truths. These are the Buddha's speech disciples.

Siddha. (Tib. *drup top*) An accomplished Buddhist practitioner.

Siddhi. (Tib. *ngodrup*) "Accomplishment." The spiritual accomplishments of accomplished practitioners. Usually refers to the "supreme siddhi" of complete enlightenment, but can also mean the "common siddhis," eight mundane accomplishments.

Skandha. (Tib. *pung pa*) Literally "heaps." The five aspects which comprise the physical and mental constituents of a sentient being: physical form, sensations, conceptions, formations and consciousness. These can also be seen from the perspective of the five basic transformations that perceptions undergo when an object is perceived. First is form, which includes all sounds, smells, etc., everything that is not thought. The second and third are sensations (pleasant and unpleasant, etc.) and their identification. Fourth are mental events, which actually include the second and third aggregates. The fifth is ordinary consciousness, such as the sensory and mental consciousnesses.

Skillful means or upaya. (Tib. *thabs*). Generally, *upaya* conveys the sense that enlightened beings teach the dharma skillfully, taking into consideration the various needs, abilities, and shortcomings of their students. Upaya is an expression of compassion. In the bodhisattva's discipline, it corresponds to the first five

paramitas and to relative bodhichitta. By prajna alone, without upaya, the bodhisattva is fettered to a quietistic nirvana. By upaya without prajna, one remains bound to samsara. Therefore the practitioner must unify them.

In Vajrayana, upaya arises from shunyata. It is joined with prajna and represents the male, form aspect of the union of form and emptiness.

Spiritual song. (Skt. *doha*, Tib. *gur*) A religious song spontaneously composed by a Vajrayana practitioner. It usually has nine syllables per line.

Sutra. (Tib. *do*) Sometimes "sutra" is used to cover all of the teachings given by the Buddha himself. But correctly it means one of the three sections of the dharma called the Tripitaka or Three Baskets. In the Tripitaka there are the Sutras, the Vinaya and the Abhidharma. The sutras are mainly concerned with meditation or samadhi; the Abhidharma is mainly concerned with the development of wisdom and understanding; and the Vinaya is mainly concerned with discipline and the rules of morality and conduct.

Tantra. (Tib. *gyu*) Literally, tantra means "continuity," and in Buddhism it refers to two specific things: the texts (resultant texts, or those that take the result as the path) that describe the practices leading from ignorance to enlightenment, including

commentaries by tantric masters; and the way to enlightenment itself, encompassing the ground, path and fruition. One can divide Buddhism into the sutra tradition and the tantra tradition. The sutra tradition primarily involves the academic study of the Mahayana texts and the tantric path primarily involves practicing the Vajrayana practices. The tantras are primarily the texts of the Vajrayana practices.

Three sufferings. These are the suffering of suffering, the suffering of change, and pervasive suffering (meaning the inherent suffering in all of samsara).

Torma. (Tib.) A sculpture made out of *tsampa* and molded butter, used as a shrine offering, a feast offering substance, or as a representation of deities. There are traditional designs for each of the many types of torma.

Tushita paradise. (Tib. *gan dan*) This is one of the heaven fields of the Buddha. Tushita is in the sambhogakaya and therefore is not located in any place or time.

Vajrayana. (Tib. *dorje tek pa*) Literally, "diamond-like" or "indestructible capacity." *Vajra* here refers to method, so the method *yana*. There are three major traditions of Buddhism (Hinayana, Mahayana,Vajrayana). The Vajrayana is based on the tantras and emphasizes the clarity aspect of phenomena. A practitioner of the method of taking the result as the path.

Vinaya. One of the three major sections of the Buddha's teachings showing ethics, what to avoid and what to adopt. The other two sections are the Sutras and the Abhidharma.

Wheel of dharma. (Skt. *dharmachakra*) The Buddha's teachings correspond to three levels which very briefly are: the first turning was the teachings on the Four Noble Truths and the teaching of the egolessness of person; the second turning was the teachings on emptiness and the emptiness of phenomena; the third turning was the teachings on luminosity and Buddha nature.

Yidam. (Tib.) *Yi* means mind and *dam* means pure, or *yi* means your mind and *dam* means inseparable. The yidam represents the practitioner's awakened nature or pure appearance. A tantric deity that embodies qualities of Buddhahood and is practiced in the Vajrayana. Also called a tutelary deity.

Yoga tantra. (Tib. *naljor gyi gyu*) Literally, "union tantra" and refers to a tantra that places emphasis on internal meditations.

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