

རི་ཚོན

KARMA CHAKME'S
MOUNTAIN DHARMA
VOLUME FOUR



AS TAUGHT BY
KHENPO KARTHAR RINPOCHE

Using this eBook

In addition to the electronic Table of Contents and other features commonly found in eBooks and interactive PDFs, this eBook is enriched with additional features:

1. The Table of Contents on the first pages of the eBook now has links and by clicking/tapping on a title it will take you to the corresponding section of the text.
2. Glossary references are in color and also have links. Simply click/tap on the colored text to jump to the glossary and then click/tap again on the glossary term to return to the page where you left off.
3. Links in color are also used wherever we have a reference to online content, simply click/tap on the colored text to open the website in your browser.

KARMA CHAKME'S MOUNTAIN DHARMA

VOLUME ONE

Entering Dharma's Gate (the four ordinary foundations) • Renunciation • Various Greater and Lesser Vehicles • How to Keep the Three Vows • Taking Refuge • The Generation of Bodhichitta • Protection of the Three Jewels Through Meditation • Dispelling All Obstacles • Purification of Karma, Vajrasattva Practice • Offering the Mandala • Guru Yoga

VOLUME TWO

How to Recognize the Arising of Experience and Realization • Love and Compassion • A Brief Explanation of Geomancy • Instructions on Retreat • Chö Practice • White Tara and Tseringma • Kriya and Charya Tantra • Yoga Tantra for Those Skilled in Ritual and Mudras • How to Purify the Obscurations of the Dead

VOLUME THREE

A Concise Liberation Through Hearing: Introduction to the Bardo • Signs Arising Through Practice • Avoiding Deviations • Dispelling Obstacles and Removing Impediments • Instructions on Improvement to Increase Experience and Realization • Five Poisonous Kleshas

VOLUME FOUR

Instructions on Conduct in Order to Behave in Accord with the Victors' Dictates • Instructions on Benefiting Beings • How the Best, the Intermediate and the Least Practitioners Die • Choosing a Pure Realm • How to Reach a Pure Realm

The restricted chapters, not included in these volumes, are available at Karma Ling Retreat Center with the permission of one's teacher.

For the complete list of contents of Ri Chö, see "*Precious Garland: A List of Contents to Prevent Disorder*"

འཇམ་མགས་

KARMA CHAKME'S MOUNTAIN DHARMA

VOLUME FOUR

As taught by

KHENPO KARTHAR RINPOCHE

Translated by

LAMA YESHE GYAMTZO



KTD Publications

*This book is dedicated to
His Holiness the Seventeenth Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje*

ཨོཾ། འཛིན་སྟོན་ཀུན་གྱི་འཛུགས་ཀྱི་མེ་མཛེས་ཀྱི་སྐུ་
ཐུང་ཚུལ་གྱི་སྐུ། རྒྱུ་འབྱུང་ལ་གཟུགས་ཀྱི་སྐུ་འཁོར་ལ་
ཀུན་པོའི། གསལ་གསུམ་རྟོག་རྟེན་ལམ་སྤྱོད་ཀྱི་སྐུ་
ཅིང་། རྒྱུ་འབྱུང་ལ་སྟོན་ལས་ལྷན་སྐྱེས་དཔལ་འབར་ཤིག།
ལྷུ་ཚུལ་སྐུ་ཐུང་ཐུང་གཞིས་ལ་གསལ་པའི་ལྷུ་ཚུལ་ཚུལ་པོ། རྒྱུ་འབྱུང་། །

OM SWA STI KARMA KA BI DZA YA

From the unchanging, permanent Dharmakaya appears the
magical body of Karmapa.

May your three secrets of body, speech, and mind firmly remain
in the vajra realm.

May your boundless activities be blazingly glorious and
spontaneously accomplished.

Aspiration by the Twelfth Gyaltsap Mingyur Gocha. Mangalam

Published by:

KTD Publications

335 Meads Mountain Road

Woodstock, NY 12498, USA

www.KTDPublications.org

Print edition distributed by:

Namse Bangdzo Bookstore

335 Meads Mountain Road

Woodstock, NY 12498, USA

www.NamseBangdzo.com

© 2010 Karma Triyana Dharmachakra

All rights reserved

ISBN 978-1-934608-07-4

Photo in *Biography of Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche* by Thrangu Rinpoche's attendant, 2002

Ebook edition 2020 by dharmaebooks.org

Dharma Ebooks is a project of [Dharma Treasure](http://DharmaTreasure), which operates under the editorial guidance of the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje.

The proprietary rights of Dharma Ebooks belong to Dharma Treasure Corporation.



正法寶藏
Dharma Treasure



This work is licensed under [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

Contents

Preface

Advice from Khenpo Rinpoche

Introduction

Short Biography of Karma Chakme Rinpoche

Biography of Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche

Karma Chakme's Mountain Dharma volume four

The Practices of the Victors' Children: Instructions on Conduct

Ocean of Activity: Instructions on Benefiting Beings

The Fruit of the Wish-Fulfilling Tree: How the Best, the Intermediate, and the Least Practitioners Die

The Guide on the Quest for Jewels: Choosing a Pure Realm

Riding the Supreme Steed Balaha: Reaching a Pure Realm

Letter of Royal Command: Reminding Practitioners of Their Meditation So They Recognize the Ground Clear Light at Death

The Precious Jewel: Instructions on Dedication

Dedication

Precious Garland: A List of Contents to Prevent Disorder

A List of Mantras

Glossary

Index of Stories Told by Khenpo Rinpoche

About KTD Publications

Preface

The students of Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche wish to express their gratitude to Rinpoche for bringing *Karma Chakme's Mountain Dharma* to us. As always, Rinpoche presents his teaching with infinite generosity, wisdom, and compassion, and we appreciate his confidence in us to receive this teaching.

His Holiness the Sixteenth Karmapa (Rangjung Rikpe Dorje, 1923–1981) indicated that it was his wish that Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche present *Karma Chakme's Mountain Dharma* to Western students. In accordance with this wish, Khenpo Rinpoche began teaching this text in the Year of the Earth Rabbit, February 1999, at Karma Triyana Dharmachakra, the North American seat of His Holiness, located in Woodstock, New York. The teachings took place on weekends over the subsequent four years, concluding in the Year of the Water Sheep, April 2003.

The original text by Karma Chakme Rinpoche was written in 1659. The text that Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche taught from was printed and published at Tashi Jong, Himachal Pradesh, India, and consists of 595 pages in fifty-four chapters. Karma Chakme requested that the text always be copied and presented in its

completeness, thus ensuring that nothing be lost. Because *Karma Chakme's Mountain Dharma* is a complete work of the complete **path**, Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche follows Chakme Rinpoche's instructions in maintaining the integrity of the original text. We also respectfully follow their wishes and instructions; however, due to the length of the text and commentary, we will publish Khenpo Rinpoche's commentary in four volumes, with a separate volume for the Tibetan text.

Rinpoche followed the same order as the original Tibetan text with two exceptions. He began with the namthar (spiritual biography) of Karma Chakme, which in the Tibetan original is placed at the end of the text. Rinpoche also omitted the restricted chapters, which, at some point, will be published separately for use by qualified students. The result of these efforts is that the entire contents of *Karma Chakme's Mountain Dharma* is available in English for the first time.

We would like to express our appreciation and gratitude to our translator, **Lama** Yeshe Gyamtso, to Jeanette DeFries for transcribing the oral teachings as well as for her invaluable support and guidance, to Louise Light and Naomi Schmidt for their technical assistance; to Lama Zopa for his editorial assistance; to Julie Markle for the index; to Wendy Harding for the line drawing of Karma Chakme Rinpoche; to Chojor Radha

for his calligraphy; and to Tenzin Chonyi for his kindness and encouragement.

The editorial and production staff — Maureen McNicholas, Jigme Nyima, Florence Wetzel, and — also wish to thank all the many others who helped in so many ways to bring to fruition the wishes of His Holiness the Sixteenth Karmapa and the wishes of Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche. This would not have been possible without the extraordinary talents and efforts of all. Our most special thank you is

for Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche for his blessings and guidance. Together we have made our best effort to present Rinpoche's teachings as accurately as possible. However, if any parts are incorrect or unclear, we take full responsibility. We hope that, despite our shortcomings, all beings may benefit from these teachings.

Maureen McNicholas and Peter van Deurzen

Advice from Khenpo Rinpoche

The following paragraphs are taken from the Question and Answer sessions that were a part of Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche's teaching on Karma Chakme's Mountain Dharma. During these sessions, Rinpoche personally engaged with his students, answering their questions and offering his advice. Here Rinpoche comments on how the teachings were given to Tsonдру Gyamtso, the uniqueness and value of this text, and how to use the information and practices contained in the book to instruct and support their practice.

Karma Chakme Rinpoche was in lifelong retreat when Tsonдру Gyamtso requested teachings on mountain Dharma. Traditionally, when someone was doing a lifelong retreat, provisions were made for limited communication with the outside. When a practitioner had completed all of the graduated practices of the various yidams and had achieved signs of realization, it was appropriate for them to teach even though they were remaining in retreat. They would speak through a small aperture in the wall, and as in the case of Karma Chakme Rinpoche and Lama Tsonдру Gyamtso, the teachings would be received and written down by a student sitting outside, often in the cold. In some cases a blessing would be given, with the retreatant actually

sticking his hand out and blessing the person. The reason it was appropriate for Karma Chakme Rinpoche to teach while he was still in retreat is that he was in lifelong retreat and he had completed all of the necessary practices.

...

This book is almost unique in its clarity of presentation. The various topics that are dealt with are also to be found in other texts; however, most of these are so long and detailed that it is possible to get lost and not come to any real understanding of the subject. The presentation here is concise and very clear. As Karma Chakme Rinpoche wrote in his introduction, “If you place this volume on your pillow, then you have gotten hold of the one teacher who will never get mad at you.” If people have this text available, then they will truly have an understanding of how to practice and how to approach the many different practices we do. They do not need to use the whole book. They can select the parts that correspond to their particular practice and get a much better idea of the purpose of it.

...

This text is designed as a means of general guidance. It presents the whole path common to any system of practice in which

you might be engaged. For example, when the text explains the preliminary practices, they are presented in their usual sequence. When it reaches the **yidam** practices, they are presented in a general way that can be applied to any major yidam practice, although you would need the **empowerment** for that particular yidam.

...

You need to trust your motivation. You need to have actually thought carefully enough about your own motivation so you are confident that you know what it is. Motivation has to be worked on; you have to work on it until you are sure your motivation for practice is the wish to bring all beings of the **six realms** to the state of **buddhahood**. In order to do that, at the beginning of any practice session, generate that motivation consciously and carefully. Then periodically during the practice session, remind yourself that this is why you are doing it. At the end, dedicate all of the virtue of the practice to all beings for this purpose. If you do that, then your motivation will be pure and will remain pure.

...

It is best if these practices are done by someone who has finished **ngondro** because the function of ngondro, as its name indicates, is to prepare you for other practices. However, there is no rule that says you cannot perform these visualizations until you have completed ngondro. In the case of the practices to benefit others, it is best if you have the seed of empowerment and the required **mantra** recitations, but it is most important that you have compassion.

...

The practices that have been described in this text are a specific type of visualization practice called an application. To do an application connected with the practice of a specific **deity**, you should have received the empowerment of that deity. Strictly speaking, in order to perform an application practice, you must not only have received the empowerment, you must have performed a specific number of recitations of the deity's mantra. This is called being "fit for activity." The usual requirement is 100,000 multiplied by the number of syllables in the mantra. Thus if it is a ten-syllable mantra, it would be 1,000,000, and so on. That is considered the minimum requirement to be "fit for activity." The reason for this is that your faculties have to be empowered and familiarized with the visualization to the point

where the application of that visualization and the benefit of others will actually be affected.

...

I would like to say something about this whole question of signs or indications in practice. Sometimes it happens that practitioners will experience some positive signs in their practice, some indication that the practice is taking effect. They assume that that means they are done, that they have attained the result, and they therefore stop practicing. This is incorrect. Signs in practice do not indicate that you have reached your destination. They indicate that you are heading in the right direction and that therefore you should continue to practice as you have been.

...

You have to understand that the ultimate nature of thoughts is empty, but you nevertheless have to make a choice and attempt to strengthen and reinforce positive thoughts and get rid of negative thoughts.

Ultimately what you want to be able to do is simultaneously accumulate both merit and wisdom. This is the best type of practice, and this is done when you accumulate merit by do-

ing meritorious things such as inviting deities in front of you, prostrating to them, presenting offerings, and so on, and you simultaneously accumulate wisdom by realizing their non-existence. But this is something we usually cannot do. In the beginning, we cannot practice the accumulation of merit and the accumulation of wisdom at the same time. We can only practice them in alternation.

...

Obscurations are not lasting; they are adventitious, not only in the sense that they are not intrinsic to the nature of the mind, but also because they are constantly shifting. For example, a certain amount of the obscurations that an individual has accumulated will be purified through their different activities, such as practicing **dharma** and so on; at the same time, they are accumulating other obscurations that replace those they purified. It is more like fleeting clouds passing through the sky than a block of solid stuff; this is why we think of this whole process as being like a constantly spinning wheel, which is the source for the term **samsara**, which means “spinning.” As each obscuration arises, in reaction to it we develop **mental afflictions**, which become the cause of the next obscuration, which inspires more mental afflictions, which become the cause of further obscuration and afflicted action, and so on.

Introduction

Mountain Dharma, Oral Instructions for Mountain Retreat, by Karma Chakme Rinpoche is, on an outer level, a comprehensive manual for all aspects of practice by the great mahasiddha Karma Chakme Rinpoche. In essence it is a text on how to reveal our own buddha nature. Buddha nature is who we truly are. It is our own genuine nature, and it is absolutely essential that we understand this as the basis of motivation to practice.

Simply knowing that we possess buddha nature, however, is not sufficient to bring about awakening. If we know this but do not practice, it will not change anything. After all, this has always been our nature. We have always possessed buddha nature, or sugatagarbha, but we have not yet attained buddhahood. Just its being there is not enough. This is like the way it is with water in Tibet. It is now evident that there is a lot of water underground in Tibet. We once thought there was a problem getting water, but now we know that if we dig in the ground, we could readily gain access to it. Nevertheless the water just being there does not do us any good unless we actually drill the wells. In the same way, the only point of studying buddha nature is to be inspired to practice Dharma, because it is the practice — not

the knowledge — that reveals our buddha nature and enables us to attain buddhahood.

What we call buddhahood is nothing more or less than the full revelation of our own innate qualities that have always been present. “**Buddha**” is not something external to us. As long as we have not discovered our own buddha nature, we can only regard “Buddha” as external because we have no experience of “Buddha” as something within ourselves. This text, *Mountain Dharma, Oral Instructions for Mountain Retreat* by Chakme Rinpoche, is concerned with every stage and every detail of the process of discovering our own buddha nature. It describes how to remove every type of adventitious obscuration and other impediments that in any way conceal or prevent the recognition of our buddha nature.

Nevertheless it is possible to misunderstand the point of this text. Because the text is called *Mountain Dharma, Oral Instructions for Mountain Retreat*, some people may think that it is only useful for those who are in strict, isolated retreat, but that is not what this title refers to at all. *Mountain Dharma* refers to the fact that this is an allsufficient, single text of **instruction**. Once you have received the necessary transmissions and initiations from a qualified teacher, if you were then to take this text into isolated retreat and had no other resources — no other literature and no living instructor — you would still have access to all of the

guidance and all of the instruction you would need. The reason why this is called *Mountain Dharma* is that it is a text that will give you whatever instruction you need whenever you need it. It contains within it all the tools you will need at different stages of your practice in order to realize your own buddha nature. Therefore this title does not mean that this text is only for those in retreat; rather, it means that it is sufficient for those in retreat.

Furthermore the text is not designed for advanced practitioners only. It begins with the most fundamental aspects of **Buddhadharma** — the vow of refuge and so forth — and continues all the way through the path, explaining everything you need to know and everything you need to practice in order to attain buddhahood. It contains all of the teachings of both sutras and tantras, an explanation of all of the stages of discipline and practice corresponding to individual **liberation** (**Hinayana**), the **bodhisattva** vow (**Mahayana**), and **secret mantra** (**Vajrayana**). Because of its completeness, this text is therefore regarded as superior to almost all other texts of its type.

The historical period in which this text was written was a remarkable and difficult one for our lineage. It was the time of the Tenth Karmapa, Choying Dorje, who because of political circumstances was unable to directly benefit beings in any significant way. He said that Karma Chakme Rinpoche was the

emanation of his activity in upholding the teachings of our lineage and spreading them widely. In addition, based on the vision of the Fifth Dalai Lama, Karma Chakme Rinpoche is considered to be an emanation of the mind of Amitabha. During this era, the time of the Tenth Gyalwang Karmapa and the Fifth Dalai Lama, the writings of Karma Chakme Rinpoche spread like wildfire throughout Tibet, especially in Kham, forever changing the character of our practice.

From Rinpoche's teaching in which he introduced some background to the text.

Short Biography of Karma Chakme Rinpoche

Karma Chakme was born, in accordance with the prophecies of **Guru Rinpoche**, in the Do-Kham area of Tibet in the year 1613. His father was the mahasiddha Pema Wangdrak and his mother, Che Kyong Kye, was a wisdom dakini. At the moment he was born, his father gave him the name Wangdrak Sung and bestowed upon him his first empowerment. As a child he was very accomplished in all aspects of study and Dharma practice, and by the time he was nine years old, he had received many empowerments and had become well known for his supreme intelligence and knowledge.

When he was eleven, Wangdrak Sung met Prawashara, from whom he received many empowerments, transmissions, and pointing-out instructions. When he was thirteen, he began a solitary **Chenrezik** retreat. After completing this retreat, he began to bestow empowerments and give reading transmissions and instructions to everyone who requested him to do so. At the age of twenty he received full ordination vows from the Tenth Karmapa, Choying Dorje, at Tsurphu Monastery, and received the name Karma Chakme. From that time, he diligently served

the **sangha** at Thupten Nyinling, a monastery of the Surmang tradition.

For the next few years Karma Chakme studied with and received many empowerments, transmissions, and pointing-out instructions from His Holiness Karmapa, including **Mahamudra**, **Chakrasamvara**, **Medicine Buddha**, and Dorje Phakmo. He became quite well known and his fame greatly increased with his public examination at the Karma Kagyu Monlam in 1635. Between the ages of eleven and thirty-seven, Karma Chakme entered into solitary retreat for at least a few months every year in order to accumulate root and accomplishment mantras. There was not a single mantra he had not accomplished. During this time, he also received many auspicious visions, **dreams**, and signs of accomplishment of various deities.

At some point Karma Chakme returned to his native region and built a retreat house at Palri. He resolved to accomplish **Gyalwa Gyamtso**, and received the four empowerments in a dream from the Tenth Karmapa, Choying Dorje. Soon after this, in 1650, at the age of thirty-seven, he began a strict thirteen-year retreat, persevering in the practices of Gyalwa Gyamtso and Mahamudra. During this period, he wrote many texts and commentaries including *Ri Chö, Instructions for Mountain Retreat* written in 1659. In the same year Karma Chakme recognized and enthroned the

great **terton** Mingyur Dorje, who gave oral **transmission** lineage teachings for which Karma Chakme was the scribe.

In 1663, at the age of fifty, Karma Chakme ended his thirteen-year retreat. He continued to greatly benefit beings, performing ceremonies and giving empowerments often attended by over four thousand students. Karma Chakme perfected all possible stages of practice and every miraculous deed for the sake of benefiting others.

In 1678, the Year of the Earth Horse, at age sixty-six, Mahasiddha Karma Chakme Rinpoche announced to thousands that the time had come for him to change realms, and he passed away. Many signs occurred at the time of his death, including rainbows, clouds in the shapes of the eight auspicious symbols, and countless images of Gyalwa Gyamtso and Dorje Phakmo embossed on his bones.

*Adapted from the “Biography of Karma Chakme” by Jampal Gyepai Loden, Garland of Immortal **Wish-fulfilling** Trees, Snow Lion Publications, 1988.*

Biography of Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche

Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche was born in Rapshu in the province of Kham in eastern Tibet. He was born at sunrise on Mahakala Day, the twenty-ninth day of the second month in the Year of the Wood Mouse, 1924. On this day, very early in the morning, immediately after Rinpoche's mother went to fetch water from the stream and carried the full vessel of water back by herself, Rinpoche was born without giving any pain to his mother. According to Tibetan tradition, all of these special circumstances indicate a very auspicious birth.

Rinpoche's father was a devoted Manjushri practitioner who constantly recited the Manjushri sutra. He would go to sleep reciting the sutra and when he'd wake up he would simply continue with his recitation. His practice was so strong that he was known to benefit even animals when they died. When Rinpoche was quite young, his father taught him to read and write and to study and memorize Dharma texts.

Rinpoche decided at a young age to follow the path of his older brothers, who were both monks. At the age of twelve he entered

Thrangu Monastery in Tso-Ngen, eastern Tibet. For the next six years Rinpoche studied and practiced at this monastery.

When he was eighteen years old, he went to Tsurphu Monastery to visit the seat of His Holiness, the Sixteenth Karmapa. His Holiness, who was also eighteen, was not yet old enough to give full ordination vows, so the following year Rinpoche received his Gelong vows from the Eleventh Tai Situ Rinpoche at Palpung Monastery.

After the Gelong ordination, Rinpoche returned to Thrangu Monastery and participated in the annual Yarnay (three-month summer retreat). Soon after this, he joined the year-long **Vairochana** group retreat, which was special to Thrangu Monastery. By the end of that retreat, Rinpoche was very enthusiastic to participate in the traditional **three-year retreat**, which he began shortly thereafter.

After completing the three-year retreat, Rinpoche expressed the heartfelt wish to stay in retreat for the rest of his life. He went to his uncle's cabin to begin his lifelong retreat, but after one year the Eighth Traleg Rinpoche strongly advised him to come out in order to receive transmissions from Kongtrul Rinpoche and to join Thrangu Rinpoche and other lamas in the newly formed shedra (monastic college) at Thrangu Monastery, which was under

the directorship of Khenpo Lodro Rapsel. Traleg Rinpoche felt that Khenpo Rinpoche had attained insight and realization in his years of retreat and that this further education would be of great benefit to many students in the future.

The Second Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche, the Eighth Traleg Rinpoche, and His Holiness the Sixteenth Karmapa are Khenpo Rinpoche's main teachers.

In 1954, when Rinpoche was thirty years old and had completed his advanced training, he received the title of Khenpo. For the next four years he was an attendant and tutor to Thrangu Rinpoche. They traveled together teaching, studying, and benefiting others.

By the late 1950s the threat of the Communist Chinese was creating an increasingly dangerous situation for the Tibetan people. In 1958 Rinpoche left Thrangu Monastery along with Thrangu Rinpoche, Zuru Tulku Rinpoche, and the three-year-old Ninth Traleg Rinpoche.

With a few horses and some provisions, the party began their long trek. After two weeks they realized they were surrounded by Communist soldiers. They managed to escape, but for seven days they had to survive without food. During this time the elderly Zuru Tulku Rinpoche fell from his horse, so Lama Sonam

(Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche's younger brother) carried him the rest of the way. Eventually they met a group of nomads who gave them some provisions.

After two and a half months, they arrived at Tsurphu Monastery. His Holiness the Sixteenth Gyalwang Karmapa, with his profound vision, was aware of the dangers and told them they must leave immediately for Sikkim. He provided them with the necessary provisions, and in March 1959 the lamas left Tsurphu.



Thrangu Rinpoche, Traleg Rinpoche, and Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche,
Karma Triyana Dharmachakra, New York, 2002.

The group quickly reached the border between Tibet and Bhutan. At this time the Bhutanese were unwilling to grant passage, and as a result, the party spent one month at the blockaded border until His Holiness the Dalai Lama could secure permission for the refugees to enter India. The rinpoches then traveled to Buxador, located at the border of India and Bhutan, where a refugee camp was set up by the Indian government.

More than fifteen hundred monks were gathered at Buxador. Their vision was to maintain and preserve the Dharma. During this time, due to the heat and unhygienic conditions, disease spread rapidly through the camp, and by the eighth year of residing there, Rinpoche was terribly sick. In 1967 Rinpoche went to Rumtek Monastery in Sikkim, the seat of His Holiness the Karmapa in India, where he taught the monks and performed various rites for the local Buddhist communities. As the state of his health worsened, Rinpoche was sent by His Holiness to teach at Tilokpur, a nunnery in Himachal Pradesh founded by His Holiness and Sister Palmo. After this, Rinpoche traveled to Tashi Jong Monastery, also located in Himachal Pradesh, where he received the Dam Ngak Dzo empowerment, transmission, and teachings from Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche.

Rinpoche's health improved while he was there, but once he returned to Rumtek, his condition worsened once again. His

Holiness then sent Rinpoche to Tashi Choling Monastery in Bhutan. Unfortunately, his health again grew worse, leading to a long and serious hospital stay.

Upon His Holiness's return from the United States in 1975, Rinpoche returned to Rumtek. In this same year Khenpo Rinpoche received the title of Choje-Lama, "Superior Dharma Master," from His Holiness the Sixteenth Gyalwang Karmapa.

For so many years Rinpoche had been ill with tuberculosis and now he was close to dying. He asked His Holiness the Sixteenth Karmapa if he could go back into retreat for the rest of his life. Instead His Holiness requested that Rinpoche go to the United States as his representative to establish Karma Triyana Dharmachakra, His Holiness's seat in North America.

Initially unable to obtain a visa due to his illness, Rinpoche soon acquired a special type of visa enabling him to enter the United States specifically for the purpose of receiving medical treatment. Nonetheless, sick as he was, Rinpoche boarded an airplane in February 1976 to begin a different life as teacher of the Dharma in a culture and environment far removed from his home in eastern Tibet.

When Rinpoche arrived in New York City, he was greeted by Tenzin Chonyi and Lama Yeshe Losal, who had been sent ahead by His Holiness while Rinpoche awaited approval of his visa. Immediately upon his arrival, Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche was taken to a hospital in New York where he spent one month receiving treatment. It would take another year for him to regain his weight and become strong and healthy again. Years later when His Holiness the Sixteenth Karmapa visited the United States, Rinpoche thanked him for saving his life. His Holiness responded by telling Rinpoche that if he had stayed in India he would surely have died. After his initial recovery, Rinpoche, along with Tenzin Chonyi, Lama Losal, Lama Ganga, and Yeshe Namdak, moved into a house in Putnam County that had been offered by Dr. Shen, a devoted student of His Holiness. From there Rinpoche traveled to New York City every week to offer teachings at what was to become one of the first KTC (Karma Thegsum Choling) centers in the United States.

Soon more centers were established and when His Holiness visited in 1977, the search began for a permanent site for His Holiness's seat in America. His Holiness had told Khenpo Rinpoche that he should open the new center on the auspicious day of Saga Dawa in 1978. Early in this year they located a good property and purchased the Mead House located on a mountaintop in Woodstock, New York. The day Karma Triyana Dharmachakra

opened was the very day (the fifteenth day of the fifth Tibetan month in 1978, May 25, 1978) that His Holiness the Sixteenth Karmapa had commanded Rinpoche to do so. Ever since this time Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche has been teaching extensively with a warmth and directness that communicates the compassionate wisdom of the **Kagyu** lineage.

The Venerable Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche is the Abbot of Karma Triyana Dharmachakra in Woodstock, New York, the North American seat of His Holiness the Gyalang Karmapa, head of the Kagyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. Rinpoche is also the retreat master at Karma Ling in upstate New York where he is now leading his fourth traditional three-year retreat.

*For more information about late Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche (1924-2019) please see: **Amrita of Eloquence. A Biography of Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche***

རི་ཚོས

KARMA CHAKME'S MOUNTAIN DHARMA

VOLUME FOUR



NAMO GURU DEVA DAKINI SARVA SIDDHI HUNG

*Karma Chakme Rinpoche begins with homage and supplication to all dakinis, asking them to bestow **siddhi** and spiritual attainment, and pays homage to his own kind **guru**, Chokyi Wangchuk, “the one who is the knower of everything, who is the master of the **mandala**, who is always gazing upon every sentient being with tremendous compassion.”*

The Practices of the Victors' Children: Instructions on Conduct

Conduct means how you live, the kind of lifestyle you employ as the container for practice. This topic is presented at this point in *Mountain Dharma* because conduct or lifestyle is what primarily determines the success or failure of your practice. This chapter deals with how to emulate, in an appropriate way, the conduct of the great bodhisattvas and great yogins of the Vajrayana. For this reason, the title of the chapter is “The Practices of the Victors’ Children.”

The chapter begins with the invocation, NAMO VAJRADHARAYE! “Homage to Vajradhara!” It continues with the statement, “The root of progress in practice is conduct.” Here Chakme Rinpoche means appropriate conduct, conducting yourself or living in a way that is appropriate to your actual situation. Therefore he says, “An ordinary person should not attempt to perform yogic conduct.” An ordinary person, without the realization of a *yogin*, should not attempt to perform the conduct of a yogin; this will only lead to disaster because an ordinary person does not have the qualities that make that kind of conduct natural and appropriate. In the same way, those who

have achieved some level of yogic experience on the Vajrayana path should not attempt to imitate the conduct of a *siddha* because they do not possess the qualities that make such conduct appropriate. Finally, *siddhas* should not perform the conduct of a *buddha*. Those who have attained supreme *siddhi* but have not achieved perfect buddhahood should not attempt to act as though they have.

The problem with all of these situations is that if those at a lower level attempt to imitate the conduct or behavior of someone at a higher level, it is as a fox leaping in the wake of a lion. Foxes who attempt to leap across an abyss that a lion leaps across will not make it; they will fall and break their back. In the same way, if you engage in conduct that is too advanced for you, you are going to break your back.

By the same token, those on the higher levels should not perform the conduct of those on the lower levels. In other words, a *buddha* should not behave like a *mahasiddha*; a *mahasiddha* should not behave like an ordinary yogin; an ordinary yogin should not behave like an ordinary person. If you try to behave like someone on a higher level the conduct is dangerous, but in this case the conduct is a waste of time; it is like an adult behaving like a child. In short, the governing rule surrounding the issue of conduct is appropriateness to your station. You

should honestly appraise your level of body, speech, and mind, and conduct yourself accordingly.

Traditionally there are five types of conduct to be performed by *siddhas*. In this case *siddhas* means those for whom all appearances effortlessly arise as deity, mantra, and wisdom. These are the conduct that is the discipline of awareness; the conduct of total victory; the conduct of dogs and pigs; the conduct of the insane; and the conduct of a lion. At this point, Chakme Rinpoche says, “First of all, because I have no experience myself of these conducts, and secondly, because I see no need to, I am not going to describe them.” When he says he has no experience of these conducts, he is being modest, because he had already achieved the *bhumis* of a *bodhisattva*. The real reason he is not describing them is that very few people had achieved the level where these types of conduct are necessary, so no one else needed instruction in these types of conduct.

Following this, Karma Chakme explains in sequence the types of conduct that we do need to practice. These are the conduct of a prisoner; bee-like conduct; the conduct of a householder; the conduct of a wounded deer; the conduct of an insane person; the conduct of dogs and pigs; the conduct of a swallow leaving its nest; and the conduct of Samantabhadra.

Conduct of a Prisoner

The first type of conduct appropriate for someone who wishes to practice Dharma is called the “conduct of a prisoner”. You take the attitude that you are in a prison from which you wish to escape. If you were imprisoned, you would think of nothing but escaping. In the same way, the basic conduct, the basic attitude, of a Dharma practitioner is the desire to escape. This is what motivates your practice, your gathering the **accumulations**, and dispelling obscurations.

When you first enter the gate of Dharma, you try your best to escape from the ranks of the householders, which means you try to escape from a completely mundane existence and become dharmic. Once you have entered into Dharma practice, you try to escape from the ranks of those who are dharmic in appearance and without Dharma in their minds. This means, for example, being ordained and adopting the appearance of a practitioner, yet having no training, no practice, and no realization. Finally you try to escape from the six realms of samsara. You are escaping to the realm of great **bliss**, namely the realm of **Sukhavati**, or any other **pure realm**. In short, you are trying to achieve a state beyond reversal. These three types of escape comprise the conduct of a prisoner.

Bee-Like Conduct

The second type of conduct, called “bee-like conduct,” runs concurrently with the first type but starts a little bit afterward. This is the conduct you need when you are receiving empowerments, transmissions, and practical instructions. When a bee is trying to get nectar out of flowers in order to make honey, it is utterly impartial toward the flowers; it simply tries to collect as much nectar from as many different flowers as it can. Once the bee has collected nectar from a given flower, it does not hover around that flower but goes on to a different one. While going on to a different flower, however, the bee does not feel any aversion toward the first one.

In the same way, when you receive instruction you should be impartial about the teachers from whom you receive it. The specification here is that you should be impartial toward all spiritual teachers who are not affected by broken samaya; this does not include those with impaired samaya or those who come from a lineage of impaired samaya. Within those parameters, you should try to receive as many empowerments, transmissions, and instructions as you can from authentic and qualified teachers.

The reason for the bee analogy is that, having received empowerment and instruction and so forth from a given teacher, you do

not stay with the teacher out of attachment to them. Instead you move on so that you do not break samaya. The function of the teacher is to teach, to bestow empowerment, transmission, and instruction; the teacher is not there for you to become familiar with. Once you have received instructions from that teacher, you should move on. If you stay there and do not move on, the process of familiarity will cause you to project negativity on that person and will spoil the relationship and the transmission. For this reason the Gyalwang Karmapa has said, “For all who see me, there are no **lower realms**; and for all who know me well, there is no liberation.” Simply seeing a great bodhisattva closes the gates to rebirth in lower realms, but if you become so familiar with them and so used to them that you project your own negativity onto them, you spoil the benefit of their influence and therefore close the gate to liberation. Bee-like conduct is studying eclectically without becoming attached and therefore overly familiar with a particular teacher, but doing so without developing aversion toward any teachers as in the analogy of the bee and flowers.

Next Chakme Rinpoche discusses the issue of teachers with whom you should not study. You should not study with anyone whose samaya is impure or whose transmission comes from a source of broken samaya. Even if you happen to receive empowerments and transmissions from such a source, do not write them

down. “Do not write them down” refers to teachers who keep a record of empowerments and transmissions they receive so they know which ones they are authorized to transmit. You are not authorized to transmit any empowerment or transmission that you received from a defective source, so do not enter them into your record and do not practice them. If you receive empowerments and transmissions from someone who is not authentic, do not practice them and do not spread them to others. Chakme Rinpoche is not saying this on his own authority; this was said by the great tertön Dūdul Dorje. Do not confuse this Dūdul Dorje with the Thirteenth Karmapa because, although they have the same name, they are different people.

Some practices can be done without empowerment. For example, for the practice of Amoghapasha, a Chenrezik practice of the **kriya tantra**, you can do the renewal and **purification practice** even if you do not receive this empowerment. According to Sakya Pandita, even without the empowerment you can recite Amoghapasha’s **dharani**. You can also do the **nyungne** practice of Thousand-Armed Chenrezik without receiving the empowerment. Aside from these, most **sadhanas** of secret mantra must not be done by anyone who has not received the empowerment.

Practicing a sadhana for which you have not received the empowerment is considered equivalent to theft, because you are

using something that you have no right to use. Empowerment is a ceremony that transfers the ownership of the practice to you; it gives you the right to accomplish the body, speech, and mind of a particular deity. The source of empowerment has to be genuine because empowerment is like the current of a river; if this stream is broken at any point, the ceremony will not transmit anything. This is why it is called the “current or stream of empowerment.” Empowerment needs to come from an unbroken lineage without impaired samaya, and you need to actually receive the empowerment. This is why we pay so much attention to enumerating the succession of the lineages; we always chant liturgies naming each individual in succession, one after another, in order to remind ourselves of the unbroken lineage of a given transmission.

If you have not received the empowerment or if the empowerment has come from a broken lineage, then even if you take the self-empowerment, it will not help you. The self-empowerment will not take the place of the empowerment and it will actually be a problem because you will do the practice of self-empowerment and nothing will happen. This will actually cause further degradation of your practice.

The best situation is the complete empowerment and the complete reading transmission for the cycle of practice you wish to do.

“Complete reading transmission” means the reading transmission for the liturgies you will be using, as well as the commentaries on them and all the various related bits and pieces. If this is not possible, the second best is to receive the complete empowerment and the reading transmission for the liturgy. Even if you do not receive the reading transmission for the commentaries and so on, receiving the reading transmission for the liturgy is sufficient for practice. The third best is to receive the empowerment. If you receive the empowerment and not the reading transmission then you are getting the kernel or essence of the reading transmission from the empowerment itself. This is because the description of the deity, which is the central part of the liturgy, and the deity’s mantra will both be recited to you in the empowerment. Thus if all else fails, an empowerment is sufficient for practice.

There may be a situation where you practice the cycle but many of the necessary texts are no longer available. In other words, the books exist but the reading transmissions are not available, such as the original **tantra**, the original Indian commentaries on the texts by the mahasiddhas, various extensions of the basic liturgies, such as applications for the four activities, various stages of instruction connected with sutra, tantra, and so on. If you are genuinely and naturally devoted to this cycle but there is simply no source for the reading transmission because it has died out; if you can understand the meaning of the texts simply

by reading them, which is an indication that you have a karmic connection with them; and if you acquire the texts in an apparently accidental way, not going out of your way to acquire the texts but just coming across them or being given them, then do the following: offer a mandala to the texts, place them on top of your head, and think that the texts are entrusted to you by the dakinis who are the guardians of that particular teaching.

The validity of this practice can be ascertained by the aspirations of Guru Rinpoche and other masters, who frequently state, “May this be encountered by one with **karma**.” In other words, may those with a karmic connection to these teachings encounter them. It is the aspiration of Guru Rinpoche and other masters that the dakinis who guard these teachings make them available to individuals who have a karmic connection to them. This aspiration was principally intended for the treasure revealers who will discover the teachings; however by implication it also refers to practitioners whose situation is slightly similar to that. According to Chakme Rinpoche’s teacher, Drime Kunga, it is acceptable to consider that you have received the reading transmission for a text if it is connected with your yidam practice and it is absolutely necessary for your use; if there is no possibility of receiving the reading transmission from a living individual; if it apparently accidentally comes into your possession; and if it is beneficial and helps your practice. If these

conditions occur, you may consider that you have received that text from the lineage of entrustment of the dakinis. If you do receive a text accidentally and regard this as the dakinis' lineage of entrustment, this is fine for your own practice but you are not authorized to transmit this to others.

This primarily refers to practices that come from the **Nyingma** tradition. If it is a practice of the Kagyu tradition, there is another method of practice. This depends on possessing or using a **thangka** that contains the footprints and sometimes the handprints of the fathers and sons of the Kagyu tradition. In times past, thangkas with the outline of these hands and footprints, which were then filled with gold, were considered more precious than thangkas depicting these teachers. This is because the portrait was not painted by the great guru himself; it was painted by somebody else, so other than being a depiction of the guru, it did not actually embody the guru in any particular way, whereas the footprints or handprints were done by the teacher himself or herself, making it more closely connected to them. These things were therefore greatly treasured.

For the following practice, you can use a thangka like this or, if you have access to it, one that bears the imprint of the Buddha's footprints. These were very much treasured in the past.

Nowadays they are somewhat more commonly available and therefore people seem to have less respect for them.

In any case, set up a thangka with the footprints or handprints and then put offerings in front of it. You regard the thangka as the guru who holds the particular lineage or who is the source of the particular lineage of reading transmission that you wish to receive. Recite a liturgy of invitation, offerings, praises, then offer a mandala and generate the certainty that this guru is actually present. Supplicate for the bestowal of the reading transmission using, for example, the verse used to request teachings and so on. Then, thinking that the teacher, who is actually present, is bestowing the transmission and that you are listening to it, read the text through once. While doing so, think that the words of the text emerge from the mouth of the teacher visualized in front of you and dissolve into you. At the end, place the book on top of your head. Then recite the following aspiration: “Through the truth of the **Three Jewels**, through the blessing of all buddhas and bodhisattvas, through the great mastery of the perfection of the **two accumulations** and through the inconceivable power of the purity of the **dharmadhatu** beyond elaboration, may this be accomplished as I have aspired.” Then recite the Essence of **Interdependence** dharani three times.

This way of receiving a reading transmission is called the “secret practice of the footprints,” and the instructions originally come from the peerless **Gampopa**. An explanation of this was also composed by the Eighth Gyalwang Karmapa, Mikyo Dorje. Both affirm that a reading transmission received in this way can be used for your own personal practice. In addition, Lord Gampopa says you can transmit it to others, whereas the Eighth Karmapa, Mikyo Dorje, says that unless you actually witness the presence of that guru in front of you, unless he or she actually shows up while you are doing this, you cannot pass it on to others. While their opinions seem to differ, in fact they are saying the same thing: you can practice it yourself, and if you generate realization of it, you can transmit it to others.

Another source for this type of ceremony is the *Tantra of the Great Raven*, which is a tantra connected with the four-armed wisdom **protector**. This text says that receiving a transmission in this way is no different from receiving it from your guru. For the same purpose, there is another ceremony, called the “transmission empowerment from the *Lama Gongdu*.” This was composed by Guru Rinpoche and is part of that **terma** cycle. You can use this for any teaching for which you cannot receive the reading transmission. It can be something from either the **New Translation** or the **Old Translation** traditions; it can be something from either sutra or tantra. In any case, place the

book on the right side of a throne, and then to the book's left, on top of eight piles of grain or an eight-petaled lotus made of grain, put an image of the Buddha made of gold or whatever. In addition, it is best if you can do the ceremony in the presence of four fully ordained monastics. If not, then think that four fully ordained monastics, or more, are present.

The actual ceremony begins with performing the common observance *Offerings and Homage to the Sixteen Elders*. You can either perform the complete or extensive ceremony for this observance or, at least, an elaborate consecration of the place where you are performing the ceremony. Then supplicate the Buddha, asking him to bestow the reading transmission on you. Then think that Buddha, with his melodious speech, reads the text to you. If you are doing the ceremony this way, you do not have to read the text aloud. At the end, hold the book on top of your head and recite the Essence of Interdependence dharani three times. Think that the words of the text, which are made of white light, pass out of the mouth of the Buddha, enter the top of your head, and dissolve into your heart. Again offer a mandala, recite liturgies of dedication, aspiration, and auspiciousness, then rest free of focus. Afterwards you should again dedicate the virtue and make further aspirations. In order to reinforce the ceremony, you should do virtuous things to accumulate merit,

such as generosity to the impoverished, the creation or repair of statues, and so forth.

It is said that if you do the transmission empowerment of Lama Gongdu, it is the same as receiving the reading transmission from the Buddha himself, whether it is sutra, tantra, sadhana, commentary, or anything else. This depends on your faith. If you believe that it is the same as receiving the transmission from the Buddha, then it will be. If you are not sure, if you wonder whether it is really working or think that it does not really feel the same as when you receive a lung, then it is not going to work.

If you subsequently generate authentic experience of the practice, at that point you can transmit the lineage of transmission to others. This is of primary importance in the following situation. When learned teachers compose commentaries, it is traditional to reinforce their statements or instructions with quotations. The quotations will be from both Buddhist and Bönpo sources, from sutras, tantras, from the New Translations, the Old Translations, and so on. It is almost a necessity that you fill anything you write with such quotations. After you have written your text, you will give the transmission to another who will pass it on, and in that way the lineage of transmission of your text will be continued. Obviously, if half your text is quotations and you do not have the lineage of transmission for those quotations, there cannot

possibly be a transmission lineage for half of what you have just written. Therefore if you are going to include quotations from texts that you have studied but for which you do not have the transmission lineage, Chakme Rinpoche says you had better do this ceremony first. If you are sure that you have them all, that is fine, but usually this is not the case because the quotations are going to be from all over the place. This ceremony is truly beneficial; Chakme Rinpoche says it is far better than receiving an ordinary transmission lineage from an impure lineage with broken samaya, or receiving it but not being sure where it comes from, because in this case you are receiving it directly from the Buddha. This has been affirmed by both **Buddha Shakyamuni** and Guru Rinpoche, so how can there be any doubt as to its authenticity?

We see this bee-like conduct in the life of Ngoklo Loden Sherap and other scholars of this tradition. They devoted their whole lives to receiving as many transmissions, empowerments, and instructions as possible. In order to do this, you have to accept the fact that not all of the teachers you receive transmission from are going to be of equal level. Lord **Atisha** said that he relied on many teachers who did not possess one-hundredth or even one-thousandth of his qualities, but he relied on them because they held the lineages of transmissions and empowerments that he wished to receive.

For example, the mahasiddha Thangtong Gyalpo had five hundred and fifteen teachers. He relied on all sorts of people from all different social castes: some of them were uneducated, in some cases they were degenerate individuals, and some were widows who in those days were discriminated against, but they all held the lineages he wished to receive. Similarly, if you are going to engage in this conduct, you do not need to be concerned with the personal defects of the various teachers from whom you receive Dharma or with whom you make Dharma connections.

The analogy is that when the bee takes the nectar out of the flower, the bee does not care whether the flower is pretty or not. It merely is concerned with whether the flower has nectar. If the flower has nectar, then the bee takes the nectar. By adopting this approach, which will be disputed and then resolved later in the text, you become rich with empowerments, transmissions, and instructions.

A more recent example of this is Jamgon Kongtrul the Great, who in order to bring together what we now call his *Five Treasuries*, went all over eastern, central, and western Tibet in order to receive all the transmissions and lineages. He would receive them from just about anybody who had them. When it was possible to receive a transmission, he would do so, and when there was

no longer any transmission lineage for a liturgy, he would just write a new one.

The validity of this approach is that even if you receive the transmission from an imperfect human being, this does not affect the authenticity of the Dharma. The analogy for this is that as long as the water gets to the field, it is irrelevant whether the irrigation pipe is clean or dirty, as long as it is not broken. This is the opinion of the great **pandita** Loden Sherab, and we see this type of approach embodied in his life.

There is another opinion, which has been expressed by **Geshe** Drömtonpa the great **Kadampa** teacher, by Tsangpa Gyare of the Drukpa Kagyu tradition, and by Mikyo Dorje the Eighth Gyalwang Karmapa. They as well as others have said that if you take mundane remarks with a grain of salt and do not accept them at face value, carefully scrutinizing and analyzing them, how much more careful should you be with the source of information that is supposed to be your means for accomplishing your ultimate aim?

According to Gyalwang Mikyo Dorje and others, you should not make any dharmic connection without carefully scrutinizing the personal characteristics of the individuals in a lineage and the individuals from whom you are going to receive a transmission.

If you carelessly make dharmic connections all over the place, you are purchasing impaired samaya. This is the same as repairing a rotten, defective rope with a rotten leather cord: you have lengthened the rope, but it is still rotten and it is still going to break. The instructions become like the tsampa of a beggar, which is sure to run out. You become like a boy who wishes to uphold his family, but does not know who his father is. In short, you become unable to actually uphold any lineage because you have no sense of where your lineage comes from. The opinion of the masters is that it is more beneficial to have one teacher; you should choose that teacher without mistake, practice their instructions, and in this way achieve the state of awakening, which is the state of sovereignty of the Kagyu. Examples of this are Lords Marpa, Milarepa, and Gampopa, who all principally relied on one teacher.

These two opinions sound absolutely contradictory, but now Chakme Rinpoche is going to bring them together. Chakme Rinpoche's root guru, the victor Chökyi Wangchuk, said that if you need to know a lot in order to benefit others, you have to study wisely. You need to know the customs of India, the customs of China, the traditions of the great panditas, and the traditions of the siddhas. You need all of that if you are going to become widely educated. In terms of what you actually practice, if acquiring what you practice becomes too complex — by this

he means if it comes from too many different places — then your practice, your Dharma, and your teachers become too indefinite. Karma Chakme quotes Chökyi Wangchuk: “I think there is the danger of becoming the same as a very wealthy person living in the midst of a hurricane.”

Therefore even though you receive a lot of transmissions and instructions from all over the place, the essence of what you practice should come from a pure lineage. Chakme Rinpoche writes that even though you rely on many different teachers, the teacher or guru to whom you pray should be someone you do not have to pretend is the Buddha, but someone you know really is the Buddha, such as the fathers and sons of the Kagyu tradition.

This brings up the issue that you may have no access to such teachers. This was far more the case in the past than it is today; nowadays because of modern transportation, we can actually meet the fathers and sons of the Kagyu tradition. In the old days, if someone met them once or twice in their life, it was a big deal. Even if you do not meet the fathers and sons of the Kagyu tradition, and even if you have never met them and have never formed a personal dharmic connection with them, you can still take any of them as your root guru. If you do so and then supplicate them one-pointedly, you will receive their blessing

and you will give rise to authentic experience and realization. This was affirmed by Lord Gampopa, by the First Gyalwang Karmapa Dusum Khyenpa, and by Lord Gotsangpa in their last wills. They all said that anyone supplicating them, even though they never met them, would receive their blessing. Understanding this point is very important.

Conduct of a Householder

The third aspect of a practitioner's conduct is the "conduct of a householder." This actually means something closer to the conduct of a businessperson, as you will see in the following analogy.

Those who have families and have been immersed in business from the moment they first learned to think until the moment they die are principally concerned with accumulating as much sustenance and wealth as possible. In the same way, those who have entered the gate of Dharma, from the day they received the vow of refuge until the day they die, should never be content with the amount of the two accumulations they can perform. Your Dharma practice consists of the accumulation of merit that is to be sealed with the nonconceptual accumulation of wisdom. Just as the businessperson does whatever he or she can to make

the most profit, as a practitioner you should also do whatever you can to make the most profit, which in this case means the maximum accumulation of merit and wisdom.

Returning to the analogy, a merchant or businessperson will do whatever they have to in order to make a profit. They will travel and enter into business arrangements and contracts, and they will honor these agreements so that their profit is greater. In the context of Tibet, they will travel to India and China, and even travel to Central Tibet (this was written for eastern Tibetans) in order to make a profit. In short, they will do whatever will increase their profit. In the same way, those who have entered the gate of Dharma should do whatever they can and whatever they have to in order to transform their virtue. Here *transform* means to increase, to make profitable, to make any given act of virtue accumulate the most merit it can. This means that in your practice of the four **preliminaries** and your daily recitations, you try to make them count as much as possible.

There are three ways to maximize your profit from Dharma practice. The first is transformation based on an individual, and this means doing something virtuous for the benefit of someone who is a holy field of accumulation. For example, offerings made to someone who is awakened will accumulate more virtue. The second is transformation through place, and this means doing

virtuous actions or practices in places that have been consecrated by holy individuals.

Those two ways are obviously not that easy to arrange, so the third way, transformation through time, is of principal importance. This will be explained here in detail. “Transformation through time” means practicing more, practicing in specific ways, and practicing appropriately at the particular times when such practice will accumulate more merit. Because this third way is the easiest to do, our text says that everybody tries to do this.

Three things will be presented here. The first is times of the month; the second is times of the year; and the third is times of the day. The initial presentation of the times of the month that have special significance is based on the sutra *An Explanation of the World*. According to this sutra, on the eighth day of the waxing phase of the moon and the eighth day of the waning phase of the moon in the **lunar month** — in other words, the eighth and twenty-third days of the lunar month — the servants of the four great kings wander all over the world. They do so in order to observe and record the behavior of human beings. They write down in detail whatever virtuous and unvirtuous deeds are done by everyone, and then they give this record to Indra, the lord of the gods. If their record shows that human beings are more virtuous at this time, the gods are delighted. If their

record shows more wrongdoing, then the gods are disappointed and become depressed. A copy of this record is also brought to **Yama**. You have heard of Yama's little book that tells everything you did during your life; when you are in the **bardo** this book prevents you from lying about your actions. Yama gets this information because it is brought to him by the servants of the four great kings.

The first day that you really have to watch your p's and q's is the eighth day, which means the eighth and twenty-third days of the lunar month. The second day is the fourteenth day in both phases, which means the fourteenth and twenty-ninth days of the lunar month. On the eighth and twenty-third days the servants of the four great kings wander around. On the fourteenth and twenty-ninth days the gods of the four great kings' realms (the lowest of the six desire realms) wander around. These are actual gods of that realm, and not the four great kings themselves or their servants. On the fifteenth day, which is the full moon day, and the thirtieth day, which is the new moon day, the four great kings themselves come to earth and wander around. Not only that, but Indra himself, the lord of the gods, wanders around observing our conduct.

On those days, the eighth, fourteenth, and fifteenth days of both the waxing and waning phases of the moon, whatever you do has

100,000 times as much power as on any other day. For example, if you say one hundred OM MANI PADME HUMs (OM MANI PEME HUNG in Tibetan), it is the same as saying the mantra one hundred times multiplied by one hundred thousand — in other words, ten million recitations of the mantra. If you kill one insect, it is the same as having killed one hundred thousand.

Certain days of the month are connected with specific deities. For example, on the eighth day of the month the Medicine Buddha comes to this world, and therefore Medicine Buddha practice is more effective on that day. In addition White Tara, the protectress Tseringma, the dakini Kurukulle, and the dakinis who guard various realms all appear in this world on that day, and therefore practices associated with them will be more effective that day. On both the waxing and waning tenth days, the tenth and twenty-fifth days of the lunar month, the practices associated with the deities Guru Rinpoche, Vajravahni or Vajrayogini, Tröma Nakmo, Chakrasamvara, the protector Maning (who is the neutral protector), and dakas and dakinis in general will be more effective. The practices are especially effective during the day — in other words while the sun is shining — of the tenth day of the waxing moon. On that day, wherever you are in the world, Guru Rinpoche is supposed to be actually present. Therefore it is recommended that on this day you recite Guru Rinpoche's mantra, do his practices, and so on.

The fifteenth day of the month is the time of Amitabha, therefore Amitabha practice is especially recommended on that day. The three nines — the ninth day, the nineteenth day, and the twenty-ninth day of the lunar month — are the days when the gods and spirits wander around. The nineteenth day of the month is when Shamar Khachö Wangpo, who was instrumental in founding the widespread tradition of the practice lineage, passed away, so his observance is traditionally done on this day.

On the waxing and waning ninth and eleventh days — the ninth day, the eleventh day, the twenty-fourth day, and the twenty-sixth day of the lunar month — Mahakali and her retinue are wandering around, so observances connected with her are recommended. The twenty-eighth day of the lunar month is the day when the Eighth Gyalwang Karmapa, Mikyo Dorje, passed away, as well as the Ninth Karmapa, Wangchuk Dorje, and the Sixth Shamar Rinpoche, Shamar Chökyi Wangchuk. It used to be the custom in Karma Kagyu monasteries to perform what was called the “twenty-eighth day offering ceremony” connected with the parinirvana of these three figures. This includes practice of guru yoga, feasts, and so on.

Also on the twenty-eighth day, all of the yamas, the retinue of the big Yama, wander around. They do not wander around in order to harm beings, but only in order to observe and write

down our virtuous and unvirtuous actions. Just like the servants of the four great kings, they bring all of these records to Yama. In general, using the twenty-eighth day for commemoration ceremonies of your guru is said to be of inconceivable merit. This is taught in many tantras, including the *Mahakala Tantras*.

The full moon day, which is the fifteenth day of the lunar month, is usually used for practices connected with Buddha Shakyamuni. On this day Buddha Shakyamuni, together with the thousand Buddhas of this fortunate aeon, comes to this world. On the full moon day, the new moon day, and the eighth day of the month, the three teachers (which probably means the buddhas of the past, present and future) actually appear. Therefore any virtuous deed has a hundred thousand times more power than it would at any other time. Any unvirtuous deed has the same power as well. This was explained in particular by Lord Atisha and by Songtsen Gampo.

On the twenty-ninth day and the thirtieth day of the lunar month, all of the protectors wander around or appear in the world. This is why additional Mahakala practice is done on a monthly and yearly basis: on the twenty-ninth day of each month and especially on the last twenty-ninth day, which is the twenty-ninth day of the last month of the year. It is said that it is more effective and more beneficial to practice Mahakala

intensely for that one day than to practice it for a year but not on that one day. This was said by the mahasiddha Tsokye Dorje, Guru Rinpoche, and others.

The times of the yearly calendar that have special significance are as follows. From the first day of the first Tibetan month until the fifteenth day of that first month are the days during which Buddha Shakyamuni subdued the tirthikas through the display of miracles. This is the first of the four great occasions in the Buddha's life, known as Chu Dawa. On these fifteen days, anything you do, virtuous or unvirtuous, will be much more powerful. More will be explained at the end of this section.

The fifteenth day of the fourth Tibetan month is the day when the Buddha entered his mother's womb. It is also the day when, twenty-nine years later, he ordained himself, and six years later achieved buddhahood. All this happened on the same day, and therefore this day is called the "threefold occasion." It is also known as Saga Dawa. This is counted as one of the four great occasions, although it commemorates three different events: his entrance into the womb, his self-ordination, and his **enlightenment** or awakening. Although it is true for all the four great occasions, it is especially on Saga Dawa that any virtuous action, such as nyungne practice, performed will be incalculably powerful.

The third great occasion is the fourth day of the sixth Tibetan month, which is known as Chutö Dawa. This is when the Buddha first turned the wheel of Dharma. The fourth great occasion is the fifteenth day of the ninth Tibetan month and the twenty-second day of that same month. This is known as Thakar Dawa. These are counted as one, even though they are two separate days. On the fifteenth day, King Bimbisara and other kings of India who were patrons of the Buddha prayed to the Buddha to return from the **deva realm**, where he had gone to teach his mother. The kings said that the devas were not in a hurry since they were not going anywhere, but humans had uncertain life spans and therefore the Buddha should come back to earth and teach. The Buddha promised to return, and on the twentysecond day of that ninth month, he descended from the deva realm. These two days are considered as one occasion since they commemorate the same series of events.

These are the four great occasions of the Buddha's life: the display of miracles; the entrance into the womb, self-ordination, and enlightenment counted as one; the turning of the dharmachakra; and the descent from the deva realm. At Karma Triyana Dharmachakra (KTD) we always try to schedule a nyungne on these days, because they are of great benefit. How much benefit? In many sutras it is said that anything virtuous you do on those four

days will have one billion times the power it would normally, so these days are considered extremely important.

With regard to the actual designation of the days in the yearly calendar, there has been some disagreement among Indian and Tibetan sources. This explanation is based on the system of the Kashmiri pandita Shakyashri, who brought together as many sources of sutras and tantras as were available and based the dates on them. He composed a shastra that all Tibetans now use to agree on the dates. This is the source for designating that the four great occasions occur on certain days. On these four days or occasions, if one offers a single **torma** it is the same as offering one billion tormas since the first of these occasions lasts for two weeks. If you ask why these days or occasions have such power, it is because they were blessed by the Buddha.

Another issue connected to both the yearly and monthly calendar is the eclipse. Whenever you take an empowerment, you either explicitly or implicitly take a samaya to recite that mantra every day. At best you should do the whole practice, but if not you must recite the mantra. In order to create the most benefit from the repetition of all of these mantras, recitation during either a solar or a lunar eclipse enhances the power. If you recite a mantra during a lunar eclipse, it is one billion times as powerful, so every mantra you recite is worth one billion. If you

recite a mantra during a solar eclipse, it is one thousand times one billion as powerful — in other words, one trillion. This is taught in many sutras and tantras.

It is therefore recommended that on the days of solar and lunar eclipses you try to recite the mantras, even just one mala of every mantra for which you have received empowerment. Complete in an instant of recollection, simply visualize yourself as the deity and recite the deity's mantra for any deities for which you have received empowerment, such as Vajrayogini, Chenrezik, Tara, Vajrapani, and so on. By doing this, by reciting even one hundred of that mantra on those specific days, you complete the requisite mantra accumulation for that particular deity in terms of number. This authorizes you to perform certain functions that require having completed a requisite number of mantra recitations.

For example, to bestow an empowerment, perform a ceremony of consecration, perform a fire offering, or perform any of the four activities, by tantric regulation you must have performed at least what is called a “workable accumulation,” which means whatever that specific practice cycle designates as a workable accumulation of the requisite mantra. Since all scholars have agreed that reciting a mantra one hundred times on the day of an eclipse constitutes performing a workable accumulation, this

is done by all new spiritual friends — in other words, geshees who have just achieved their status and have not yet had time to do many different practices. According to the instructions of the Kadampa teachers, this is called “planting a seed of virtue in the finest soil,” which means that the day of an eclipse is fine soil for accumulation.

The times of the day that have special significance are as follows. Dawn or predawn — when the sky is starting to lighten but the sun has not yet risen — is the time when the Buddha attained buddhahood. This is the best time for practices that involve holding the breath, practices connected with the **channels** and **winds**, and any kind of longevity practice such as White Tara.

From dawn until the sun has warmed the ground — until the sun is shining on everything and making it warm — is the best time for pacification. At this time practices of the peaceful deities and practices specifically designed to pacify sickness and demonic disturbances are appropriate.

When the sun has warmed the ground until midday is the best time for the activity of increase or enrichment. Practices of deities connected with increase or any practices that are designed to increase vitality, merit, and prosperity are appropriate.

From midday until sunset is the best time for practices of power or attraction, so practices of deities connected to and devoted to power or attraction are appropriate.

When the sun hits the top of the mountain until it actually sets is the best time for practices of reversal. Reversal means the reversal of misfortune through various ceremonies and so forth. Sometimes reversal is translated as “exorcism,” but it means reversal of misfortune, not exorcism.

Then from sunset until midnight — once the sky starts to darken a bit until midnight — is the best time for offering tormas and feast offerings since this is when all dakas and dakinis assemble. This is also the best time for reciting **forceful mantras**. Twilight in particular is the time when the Buddha subdued **Mara**, and therefore it is the time when maras attempt to create obstacles. At that time you should perform the repetition of mantras of wrathful deities.

From the middle of the night until the sky starts to lighten in the morning is the best time to grasp the **luminosity of sleep**. Therefore it is most productive — and all this is about productivity or profit — to do those particular practices at those particular times.

Conduct of a Wounded Deer

The next type of conduct is the “conduct of a wounded deer.” A wounded deer will not remain with the herd, but will go into an isolated place. It will hide there and remain isolated from all others until it has healed. In the same way, once you have received the requisite empowerments, transmissions, and instructions, you should enter into retreat, and while you are practicing in retreat you should be totally alone. This means, if possible, not even meeting the person who buys your food or cooks for you. In short, you try to hide completely from everyone.

Conduct of an Insane Person

The conduct of a wounded deer automatically includes the “conduct of an insane person” because when you are in retreat, you will not respond to any requests from outside. For example, if your relatives insistently request that you leave retreat because there is an illness or another important situation in the family, even if someone says, “Come out or we are finished, we will cut off all connection with you,” you will not respond. This lack of responsiveness to the insistence of others is like the behavior of a crazy person.

Conduct of Dogs and Pigs

The “conduct of dogs and pigs” will, in a concordant way, be automatically accomplished when you are in retreat because you do not regard as filthy things that you would normally consider filthy, such as urine, the **drops**, and so forth. You use them for ablution and nourishment as you are instructed by the various practices and liturgies within retreat practice.

Conduct of a Swallow Entering Its Nest

The next type of conduct, called the “conduct of a swallow entering its nest,” is also automatically included in retreat practice. It may not really refer to a swallow, but rather a sandpiper or plover that lives on the side of cliffs; these birds do not build nests, but rather they live in the spaces between rocks. Once they enter this space, they stay put. This conduct is automatically fulfilled when you practice in retreat. Essentially this conduct means generating certainty about the instructions before you enter retreat so that once you enter retreat and start practicing, you have no doubt and can just practice without reservation. You have received empowerments, transmissions, instructions, and guidance, and before you get into retreat, you have thoroughly

scrutinized all of these things so you have really resolved their meaning. Then when you practice, you just practice. You have no doubt, and no confusion about the meaning.

Conduct of Samantabhadra

All of these types of conduct can be a little bit confusing, because sometimes different conducts are referred to by the same name, and sometimes the same conduct is referred to by different names. However all of these are essentially included within one type of conduct, which is normally called the “conduct of Samantabhadra” or the “conduct of brahmacharya.” This is the principal mode of conduct of the Dakpo Kagyu, starting with Gampopa onward. It is principally through this conduct alone that all holders of the Dakpo Kagyu have traversed the various levels and paths.

If you ask what this conduct consists of, it means that externally — in your appearance, what you wear, and in your behavior — you practice the **vinaya**. This conduct is for monastics. It means that you fully adopt and implement all of the regulations of the vinaya externally. This should be done in a way that is neither too tight nor too loose. We need to say this because times have changed since the vinaya was first laid down by the Buddha.

About not being too tight or too loose, Chakme Rinpoche's guru, Chökyi Wangchuk, said you have to be as a tigress carrying her cub in her mouth. Tigresses carry their offspring around in their mouth, but obviously if they squeeze too tight their fangs will kill the cub, which is not what the mother wants. If she does not use enough pressure or tension to hold the cub properly, then the cub will fall onto the ground. In the same way, when you carry your vows, do not be too tight or too loose.

Chakme Rinpoche gives examples of things that he thinks are too tight. If you are a monastic, ideally you are supposed to have one meal a day, at midday. If you are fussy about exactly when it happens and if you worry about this meal starting a few minutes after noon, or if you worry about slight regulations of the vinaya concerning the proper rinsing and consecration of water and so on, and if you treat those issues as though they are as serious as killing, then you are being too tight. You are actually fettering yourself with too many concepts or ideas.

Examples of being too loose are if you drink alcohol, or if you eat in the evening like me. One of the vinaya regulations is that you have to filter your drinking water in order to protect animals by not drinking them and killing them. If you completely ignore this and drink unfiltered water out of bodies of water that have animals living in them, this is too loose. Another example is that

if you abandon your three robes and your begging bowl so that even someone who knows you cannot tell if you are a layperson or a monastic, you are being too loose.

In terms of what behavior is in the middle of these two extremes, if possible you should keep to the one-seat rule, which means that you do not eat breakfast and you do not eat dinner. You can have liquids, such as tea and water, any time throughout the day, but if it is possible, you should stick to the one-seat rule. Exceptions to this are if you are ill, in which case the vinaya authorizes you to eat appropriately at any time, or if there is feast practice. Other than those two situations, do not eat in the evening. Even if you cannot stick to the one-seat rule, at least do not eat an evening meal if you are monastic.

Also, do not eat meat unless it is feast meat. You should eat no other meat, and especially do not eat meat specifically killed for you. If you can avoid meat other than feast practice meat, this is really good. If you cannot do that, or will not do that, at least do not eat the flesh of animals that have been killed specifically for you. For example — and this used to happen a lot in Tibet — a lama would be invited for a meal and so in order to serve the lama and his retinue, people would slaughter a bunch of yaks or other animals. You especially want to avoid this.

Avoid liquor as you would poison. You may and in fact must have liquor when you perform a feast practice because it is required by samaya, but there are very clear guidelines in the tantras as to how much. Typically you are supposed to have a spoonful; this does not mean a ladle, but a little spoon used for this purpose. Alternatively, so you do not worry about overdoing it, simply take as much liquor as adheres to the tip of your finger and put that into your mouth. This is also acceptable; this keeps the vows. At most you should drink an average-sized skullcup and no more than that. The *Samvarodaya Tantra*, which is a Chakrasamvara tantra, clearly says no more than one average-sized skullcup at a feast, no matter who you are.

In the same way, it is acceptable and in fact necessary to eat meat at a feast because it increases the **elements** and especially the drops. This meat should not have been killed specifically for the feast, although it is true that meat killed for a feast is better than meat killed for no particular purpose, because as it was written by Jatsön Nyingpo among others, if an animal's flesh is used for feast practice, this benefits that animal.

In general, you should keep all of the major and minor regulations of the vinaya without denigrating any of them or considering any of them unimportant. For those regulations you do not know about or are unable to keep, and for the various minor

violations and so on that may occur, you should perform renewal and purification every two weeks. If you are in retreat, you will not have the requisite assembly of the sangha to perform the actual vinaya renewal and purification, so you should perform either the blessing renewal and purification or the **tranquillity** renewal and purification.

There are many different subdivisions within the monastic sojong renewal and purification ceremony. There is the part done to avert disaster, the part done to repair infractions, the tranquillity part, and so on. You can do the tranquillity or blessing part on your own. If you have a begging bowl, you should eat your midday meal from this bowl and in that way follow the example of the Buddha. You should precede the meal by offering of a select portion, using a stanza written for this purpose, and follow this by presenting a changbu to Troma as it is done at Thubten Choling and other places. Every day you should do all of the things set out in the liturgical texts for meals.

In order to give rise to and maintain the faculties of carefulness, mindfulness, and alertness, always keep your three robes: the outer upper robe, the inner upper robe, and the lower robe, as well as the sieve or water filter. From time to time, particularly on special days, take the **bodhisattva vow** in its full form. Whatever you do, make sure that you carefully maintain the motivation

of **bodhichitta** and benevolent motivation for all your actions. Remember that everything you do is simply for the principal purpose of benefiting all beings and helping them achieve unsurpassable awakening. Do not stray from that and think you are doing it for any other reason, such as to accumulate wealth or something like that.

As for your actual practice within the framework of that lifestyle, at best it should be the unification, or at least the integrated practice, of the generation and **completion stages**. This means at least the meditation on the deity, and at the end of the session the withdrawal of that visualization, and if possible the meditation on the form of the deity as the unity of appearance and **emptiness, lucidity** and emptiness, and bliss and emptiness. In your practice you should especially emphasize resting in the natural state.

About this type of conduct, the following was written by the victor Chökyi Wangchuk, Chakme Rinpoche's guru, in a short song called "The Dance of Dharma." "The Dance of Dharma" is usually part of the liturgy for the six dharmas of **Naropa**; principally it is used when people get out of long retreat, and they sing it as they perform a certain dance exhibiting the signs of attainment and experience. In that song he says, "Externally, a bhikshu of the **pratimoksha**, internally a bodhisattva, and

secretly a yogin of mantra, as a threefold vajraholder, I am delighted and happy when I think of it.” He is not saying this to brag; he is reflecting on the fact that he has maintained the pratimoksha vows externally, the bodhisattva vows internally, and the samaya vows through his practice. He has made perfect use of his human birth and, reflecting on that, he is filled with joy. The whole song is like that. The refrain, “Thinking of it, I am happy and filled with joy,” is constant throughout the song. He is expressing the satisfaction one achieves through making proper use of one’s life in this way.

With regard to the conduct of Samantabhadra, it should be constant all the time, whether you are in retreat, in a monastery, or in a village or town. You should not maintain this conduct sporadically. In other words, do not maintain careful conduct in retreat and then run wild when you are not in retreat. Chakme Rinpoche says this is not that difficult. It may sound rather difficult, but in fact it is not an extreme lifestyle. He says that in contrast to this, making many promises is a cause for impairment. In other words, committing yourself to things that you cannot fulfill can cause more problems. Therefore it is said, “Have few promises and lots of practice.” In other words, do not promise more than you can do; practice more than you have promised. On the other hand, thinking that you cannot do very much and being indolent or lazy is a cause of impairment as well.

Other modes of conduct can be a source of great attainment or progress if they are practiced at the right time. If they are practiced at the wrong time or under the wrong conditions, they are very dangerous and can be a source of great impediment. “Under the wrong conditions” or “at the wrong time” means when you are unable to do them properly because, aside from the conduct of Samantabhadra, other types of conduct require very specific external and internal conditions. If all of those conditions or factors are not present, then these modes of conduct will not work and will be counterproductive.

Furthermore you can traverse all of the paths and stages through the conduct of Samantabhadra alone, even if you never engage in the other modes of conduct. This has been proven by the Dakpo Kagyu, and this is what the Dakpo Kagyu have left as their footprint: the fact that this kind of conduct can bring you to full awakening. By maintaining the conduct of Samantabhadra, you will benefit the Buddha’s teachings, and you will benefit yourself, because by virtue of keeping the three vows — pratimoksha, bodhisattva, and samaya — you will succeed in your Dharma practice. All of the qualities that you achieve will naturally bring about the most benefit for others. For one thing, you will be a source of inspiration to others, including patrons. In other words, because you are behaving in a way that other people can admire and comprehend, you will not be a cause of other

people developing antipathy and so forth. Therefore you should continually practice that mode of conduct.

Three Aspects of Daily Practice

For your daily practice, there are some general things you should do. If possible, you should perform additional practice, such as offering ceremonies, on the full moon, the new moon, the eighth day of the waxing phase, the twenty-third day (the eighth day of the waning phase of the month), the tenth day of both the waxing and waning phases (the tenth and twenty-fifth days), the three ninth days (the ninth, nineteenth and twenty-ninth), and the twenty-eighth day. These days are connected with additional practice and with specific deities: in summary the fifteenth day; the thirtieth; the eighth; the twenty-third; the tenth and twenty-fifth; the ninth, nineteenth, and twenty-ninth; and the twenty-eighth.

It is best to perform the morning **water tormā** offering daily. If you cannot, then at least do it on the fifteenth day, the thirtieth day, and the eighth day of the month. This is the samaya of the Jambhala practice, because part of the water tormā practice is connected with Jambhala. In the morning before you eat, it is good to perform the tsurupa tormā if you can. Tsurupa is the

mantra in this tormā offering; this liturgy is found in the *Collected Dharma Practices or the Group Practices of the Karma Kagyu*, and it is a very brief tormā offering connected primarily with the practices of Achala and Tara. It is also good if you can do the abbreviated hundredfold tormā offering in the morning.

In the evening, perform the burned offering or **sur** practice, and some form of **chö** practice. It is best if you can do the full practice of chö, with the elaborate liturgy. If not, then at least do the abbreviated form, the *Gathering of the Accumulations* by Kusali.

In addition to the general advice above, there are three aspects of daily practice you should follow. The first aspect of daily practice is the practice of the **generation stage** or mahayoga. Every day you should perform the self-visualization or self-generation of your root yidam. For those who have completed yidam practice, this usually means an abbreviated form of the practice sometimes called the “daily practice” or *jun cher*. If you do this every day, including repeating the deity’s mantra and offering tormā to that deity, this contains the essence of all of the practices of the generation stage, according to the **Sarma** or New Tradition, and the practice of mahayoga according to the Nyingma or Old Tradition. The liturgical styles of these two systems may differ, but in essence they are the same.

In addition, on auspicious days, days of auspicious astrological formations, you should perform more protector practice. Whatever you usually do, just increase it. This means more fulfillment and offering liturgies, and also fire pujas or fire offerings connected with the four activities: pacification, enrichment, power, and force. These vary depending on the day. Some astrological situations are more conducive to pacification, some to enrichment, and so forth. The reason for doing these things is that they bring enhancement or progress to your practice of the generation stage.

The second aspect of daily practice is the following. Continually throughout the day visualize yourself as your yidam and consider your body to be the body mandala of that deity. Therefore whenever you eat or drink, consider it an inner fire offering to the mandala of the deity. In addition, through the cultivation of mindfulness and alertness, recognize the nature of breathing in, retaining the breath, and breathing out as the three vajra-syllables. Since our breathing is constant, thinking of our breathing in this way causes the constant repetition of the three-vajra-syllable mantra. In addition to that, if you have the leisure or opportunity, practice holding the breath and the physical exercises associated with the six dharmas of Naropa. If you lack the necessary resources, such as the necessary privacy, the necessary environment, or simply the time, then by regarding your body as the body of your yidam, all of your physical move-

ments automatically become the physical exercises, the dance, and the mudras. You should regard your physical movements as such. This second aspect of practice includes the essence of the practice of the body mandala according to the Sarma or New Tradition, and the practice of anuyoga according to the Nyingma or Old Tradition.

The third aspect of daily practice is the following. When you meditate on the generation stage, at best you should simultaneously combine it with the completion stage. Here “meditating on the unity of the generation and completion” means experiencing the visualized form of the deity as the unity of appearance and emptiness, of lucidity and emptiness, of bliss and emptiness, and of awareness and emptiness. This is only possible if you have that degree of experience and possibly realization.

If this is not possible, then in addition to doing the generation stage practice, at least diligently foster the experience of the nature of your mind, both in **even placement** and in **postmeditation**. For example in postmeditation, whether you are walking, talking, eating, or whatever, try to recollect as frequently as possible the experience of your mind’s nature — for example, even just during the time it takes to drink a cup of tea. This is done by the frequent reinforcement of mindfulness and alertness, by bringing this up repeatedly. Doing this includes, according

to the New Tradition, the essence of mahamudra practice, or according to the Old Tradition, *trekchö*, “breakthrough.” In addition, if you have received the proper instruction, then you can practice *tögal*, “leapover” by looking at the two rays of the rising and setting sun. These two practices of mahamudra and breakthrough include the essence of all the practices of *atiyoga*, which is the peak of the *nine vehicles*.

Every evening you should especially dedicate the virtue you accumulate on any given day with extensive aspiration and dedication liturgies. By doing so, your virtue will not diminish or degenerate, and it will in fact be increased.

The chapter concludes with the following remarks. “This enumeration of aspects of conduct was written in response to the encouragement of Tsondu Gyamtso. It was written without textual explanation.” Karma Chakme says “an enumeration of aspects” because he talked about many different types or aspects of conduct. *Encouragement* means that Lama Tsondu Gyamtso, who also wrote this text down, asked Chakme Rinpoche what constitutes proper conduct. *Textual explanation* means scholarly arguments and references to scholarship that would constitute a background to this. “Rather than that, it is simply what I have practiced myself.” Chakme Rinpoche is saying that all that he

put in this chapter are things he has validated through his own practical experience.

Then he says, “And therefore I wonder if it might not be helpful to other inferior ones like myself.” Obviously this is somewhat of an oxymoron. You are either like Karma Chakme or you are inferior to him; but you cannot be both. However, as he usually does at the end of a chapter, he is adopting a position of humility, and he is saying he wonders if it might be beneficial to people like himself, which is a polite way of saying it will be. “It was spoken by **Raga Asya** (Karma Chakme) in the break before the evening session on the eighteenth and nineteenth days of the eleventh month in the Wood Snake year and was written down by Guru Virya (which means Lama Tsonдру Gyamtso).

Chakme Rinpoche concludes the chapter with remarks that have something of a hidden meaning. He says, “If those individuals with high view and conduct should happen to see this, please look on this with compassion.” Ostensibly he is saying, “If those of you who possess a high view and profound conduct beyond mine see this text, instead of thinking, ‘What a fool Karma Chakme is!’ simply feel compassion for me in my ignorance and for those who are so benighted that they need this kind of instruction.” Of course, the hidden meaning is ironic and intended to expose arrogance. He continues in the same vein,

“If individuals learned in terminology should happen to see this, please allow it to cause only laughter.” In other words, “Do not get angry at me for my lack of jargon or scholarship, just take it as a joke and let it alone.”

Then he says, “If the unintelligent, like myself, should happen to see it, practice it.” When he uses the word *unintelligent* here, ostensibly he is criticizing himself and others, but actually he is being ironic. He is saying that if you are free of the prejudices of scholarship and supposed profound view and you practice this, this will tell you how to perfect the accumulations and purify obscurations.

He concludes, “May this be of benefit to many extremely benighted or inferior individuals,” in other words, people like himself who lack jargon and a high view. By saying “extremely benighted individuals,” he means people who sincerely want to practice but do not know how. This text will teach them how.

Questions and Answers

STUDENT: Rinpoche, I am a little worried that I do not know what breaking samaya is for an ordinary practitioner and that

I might break samaya and not even know it. It is obvious when a lineage holder, like the Shamarpa, breaks samaya. That is very extreme and very obvious. I am wondering how it applies to an ordinary practitioner.

RINPOCHE: First of all, with regard to Shamar Rinpoche, as ordinary individuals we cannot completely know what exalted individuals or aryas are doing. All we can really say about him is that he is manifesting the appearance of having broken samaya, but beyond that we do not really know what is going on.

For an ordinary person, the only way you can truly break samaya is if you think that Dharma is completely untrue, that the teachers of Dharma are completely without value, that these teachers are not doing anything, and especially if you think there are no results to actions. If you completely and wholeheartedly believe that, not merely thinking about it from time to time, but are completely sure of that, then you have severed your connection. This is essentially what breaking samaya means.

If you simply have doubt from time to time, this is not regarded as surprising because we are, as you mentioned in your question, ordinary people. Through acknowledging the bewilderment of such thoughts and regretting them, this will suffice to fix any problems they might cause.

In order to prevent breaking samaya, simply recollect that what you are practicing is the Dharma, which was properly taught by the Buddha, and this will benefit you in future lives. As long as you maintain that direction, I do not think it is actually possible for you to truly break or violate samaya.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, when you talked about the gods coming down at different times during the month to check up on human beings and their actions, did you mean that literally? In our practices we do not worship them or supplicate them in any way, so I am trying to figure out why they would be so interested in our actions.

RINPOCHE: This is meant literally. These particular gods, such as the four great kings, their retinues, and so forth, come to this world because they are virtuous and therefore they have the **supercognition** and miraculous abilities to do so, and as a result they are concerned with the state of human affairs. Especially their concern derives from the fact that when human beings behave virtuously, the gods become more powerful and the **asuras** less so, and therefore during that time the gods are victorious in their perennial war with the asuras. Conversely, when human beings behave unvirtuously the asuras gain power and the gods lose it. In order to determine these events, the gods come to this world to see what we are doing.

STUDENT: I do not understand how the actions of human beings would determine the victory over the asuras of those particular gods.

RINPOCHE: The gods are encouraged by human virtue, and this causes everything in their realm to improve. This is the same as when you build a fire to heat a room, the room gets hotter. Do not forget it says that rejoicing in a virtuous or a negative action causes you to achieve the same amount of virtue or negativity as the person who performed the action. Rejoicing in our virtue is the way the gods enjoy the benefits of our virtue.

Most of these statements come from the authority of the vinaya. It is not that many people have directly witnessed such things since then, but it is still very much a part of our tradition. For example, when His Holiness the Dalai Lama performs the hair-cutting ceremony, he gestures with the hair that has been cut off and says, “May the offering of this hair cutting please all the virtuous devas.” The reason for this is that whenever people receive the hair-cutting ceremony, take **refuge**, or receive ordination, it plants the seed of their certain future liberation, which is a source of great joy and pleasure to the virtuous devas.

STUDENT: You just alluded to the principle that if one takes joy in another's virtuous action, this benefits them in some fashion. Could you expand on that please?

RINPOCHE: According to the Buddha's explanation in the *Abhidharma* and elsewhere, whenever someone rejoices in, sincerely delights in, and approves of the deed of another, the primary karmic results of that deed are accumulated by the rejoicer as well as by the person who actually did the deed.

For example, according to the *Abhidharma*, if there is a situation of conflict or warfare, then the karma of killing is accumulated not only by the people who kill one another, but also the people who rejoice in the killing or feel it is justified. For example, if one person kills another, but one hundred people rejoice in the killing and approve of it, only the killer creates what is called the "life debt," but the karma accumulated from killing is accumulated by all of the hundred people just as if they had killed the person themselves. Similarly, if one person saves the life of another person and one hundred people rejoice in, delight in, and approve of saving this life, then they all accumulate the same virtue as the one who actually saved the person's life. Therefore if you hear of someone else's virtue and you rejoice in it, free of jealousy or competitiveness, you will accumulate the same virtue as that person.

The most famous instance of this was when the Buddha and the sangha were hosted by King Bimbisara and his queen in the city of Shravasti. The Buddha and the sangha were invited to an elaborate banquet, with elegant service and everything conducted properly. There were two beggars outside the palace who received the leftovers from the sangha's begging bowls. One of the beggars thought, "It is due to the kindness of the King Bimbisara and his incomparable virtue that he has been able to sponsor or host the Buddha and the sangha, and that today I have received this excellent food as a leftover. I rejoice in this! May he be able to do even more virtue than he has today." The other beggar thought, "King Bimbisara is a fool for wasting all of this food and arrangements on the monk Gautama (the Buddha), and his retinue of similar eccentrics! It would be much better if he gave his food and all his wealth to poor people and beggars like me. If I ever get the chance, I am going to decapitate King Bimbisara and his queen."

On these occasions it was customary at the conclusion of the meal for the Buddha to verbally dedicate the virtue that had been accumulated by hosting the event. Normally he would begin with dedicating the virtue of the primary benefactor, and then those who assisted him. This is because it was assumed that the primary benefactor had accumulated the greatest amount of merit, and those assisting in it accumulated merit similar to that.

As the meal drew to a close, King Bimbisara was listening with an attitude of pride and pompous expectation, assuming that he was going to hear his name spoken first, then that of his queen, and then those of the other members of the court. When the Buddha dedicated the merit, he began by dedicating the merit of one of the two beggars outside the palace. Then he dedicated the merit of the king, the queen, and the court. Ananda went up to the Buddha and asked him why he had done this. The Buddha said, “I did it because the beggar had more merit. The king and queen accumulated tremendous merit by hosting us, but their merit was somewhat polluted by their pride because they had the attitude, ‘We are sponsoring the Buddha and his sangha, and this makes us greater than other monarchs.’ The beggar, on the other hand, had no pride whatsoever. He was simply and sincerely rejoicing in the merit accumulated by the king. He therefore accumulated more merit than the king himself.”

At that time the Buddha did not tell the story of what happened to the other beggar, but as a karmic result of his negative thoughts, as he was lying in the road a chariot drove across his neck and decapitated him. The first beggar, the one who rejoiced in the merit, left Shravasti and went into the forest to sleep. In that country, the monarch had just died and left no heir. The people of the kingdom were trying to select a new monarch, and the criterion they determined was that it should be the person in

the country with the most merit. When they saw this beggar sleeping in the forest, they observed that, as the sun moved, the tree under which he was sleeping moved so that he was always in the shade and always protected. They quite rightly determined that he had more merit than anybody else did, and they enthroned him as their king.

The point of the story is that we have to be very careful about our attitude toward the virtuous actions of others, because the easiest way to accumulate merit, the most effortless way, is to spontaneously rejoice in the virtue of others. Also do not forget that our main method for accumulating merit is the **seven branches**, and rejoicing in the virtue of others is one of these.

STUDENT: How or why does the moon affect activity on earth and our practice situations? Does it have something to do with how life evolved on the planet?

RINPOCHE: The usual explanation is that at certain times of the lunar month, buddhas and bodhisattvas, dakas and dakinis, such as Vajrayogini, Tröma Nakmo, and so on, come to the human world and are evident in the human world. I trust that this is the reason. For example, it is said that on the tenth day of the waxing phase of the month, Guru Rinpoche comes to

this world, which means that if one's practice and his advent actually coincide, there will be more power.

STUDENT: I did not get some of the information about the days that were most auspicious to practice. You mentioned the three nines: the ninth, the nineteenth, and the twenty-ninth. What should we be doing on those days?

RINPOCHE: The twenty-ninth, the third of the three nines, is usually devoted to an emphasis on protector practice, such as Mahakala, but there is no specific recommendation for practices on the other two days, except that spirits are on the move on those three days.

Generally speaking, in Tibet those three days were used for the practice of the wrathful deities. This was not cut-and-dry; it did not mean that every ninth, nineteenth, and twenty-ninth day was used for such practices, but those were the days when you would especially emphasize them.

STUDENT: I also had some questions about the times of day. I am not clear about the period from dawn until the sun is warming the ground. Could you go over that again?

RINPOCHE: From mid-morning until noon, you should practice enrichment or increase, which means the increase of prosperity, merit, and so on. Typical practices during this time are those connected with deities specializing in enrichment, such as Jambhala, Ratnasambhava, Yellow Tara, and so on.

STUDENT: There was one other time of the day, from midnight until the first light, when the practices are connected with **luminosity**. Would those be dream yoga practices?

RINPOCHE: This is the time of day when you are probably asleep, and in order not to waste this time, you should attempt to grasp the luminosity of sleep. You need to have practiced the six dharmas of Naropa to do this, so this depends on being trained in that practice.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, this was the first time I recall hearing that Saga Dawa marks the occasion of the Buddha's self-ordination. I had always associated it with his birth, enlightenment, and parinirvana. Where does the self-ordination come in?

RINPOCHE: I was wondering about that myself. As you said, I am used to seeing that the fifteenth day of the fourth month was the day he entered his mother's womb, the day he attained buddhahood, and the day on which he passed away. Passing

away is not mentioned here, but self-ordination is. I assume that means all four things happened on the same day.

STUDENT: I had a bit of trouble with the days of the lunar month. I thought there were twenty-eight days to a lunar month, and we talk about the twenty-ninth and thirty-first days. Where do they come from?

RINPOCHE: The Tibetan lunar month has an uncertain number of days. It manages to stay on track with the moon, but still there are more than twenty-eight and a quarter days, and sometimes there are as many as thirty. Days can be repeated, which means there can be two sixth days or two seventh days, and days can be omitted as well.

In the Gregorian or Western calendar, specific days of specific months always occur about a year after the same day the previous year. This is not true in the Tibetan calendar because it is created yearly based on the consideration not only of the position of the sun and the moon, but also the constellations. If for various reasons a constellation moves faster than the position of the sun, in order to catch up with it a day will be omitted. If a constellation moves slower, then a day will be repeated.

STUDENT: I have a question about doing extra practices on the list of days you gave. I try every day to do as much practice as I can, so I wonder if it is beneficial for me to know about these days? If I am not actually increasing the amount of practice I do, is it beneficial to know that it is an auspicious day and therefore I have an added consciousness to my practice?

RINPOCHE: It is good to pay attention to this simply because, even though you may not be able to increase the amount of practice you do on that day, if you are aware of the day's special significance, you may be more careful, at least mentally, and observe your thoughts and so forth.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, are there any times associated with obstructions to practice? Are there any times, either during the day or during the month, when we should not do certain practices?

RINPOCHE: Not according to Dharma itself. You do find such things in astrology, however.

STUDENT: Is there a small bit we can learn about that part of astrology now?

RINPOCHE: There is a lot of material in astrology such as, "This is an inauspicious day and you should not raise your prayer flag

on this day,” or “On this day one will amass the nine bad omens, nothing will go well today so do not hope for it.” Practitioners do not pay much attention to this.

STUDENT: I have a friend who has been telling me for about fifteen years that she never meditates between 11:45 PM and midnight. She cannot say why, but she carries this superstition and I would like to be able to help her give up this idea.

RINPOCHE: There is definitely no such instruction, although you might consider being asleep at that time.

STUDENT: Is there a possibility that people can fool themselves, for example, save up their practice and say they will practice one day a year when it is auspicious? Doesn't intention count no matter what day it is? In other words, if you have a genuinely pure intention on a day that is not considered special, can it also count as a billion?

RINPOCHE: You need a pure motivation for any of this to work. Still, if you have pure motivation, practice on one of the special days will be that much more powerful than practice with a pure motivation on any other day.

STUDENT: I always say things like, “I just blew the whole month of Saga Dawa.” It seems if one has a daily practice as a discipline, one is bound to have the special days in there. If you just keep a daily discipline, you will be fine. Is that correct?

RINPOCHE: It is better to practice every day because you will automatically practice on all of the special days, plus all the other days.

STUDENT: All the teachings make a lot of sense to me, and I really relate to feeling like a wounded deer as well as somebody who is in prison. Does one need to have a certain karmic propensity to be able to do retreat for your life?

You also mentioned **reversal practices**. It seems I have been given two practices: one is a purification practice, and the other is to just rest the mind. What is the best thing to do to purify oneself of any obstructions to continuing in retreat for the rest of one's life?

RINPOCHE: For those who have recognized the nature of their mind, their main practice should be resting in even placement within that recognition. However, true or authentic recognition of the mind's nature does not occur until the second level of practice, which is called “beyond elaboration.” Until that level

has been reached, you have no choice but to emphasize gathering the accumulations and dispelling obscurations in your practice. Furthermore, when you are doing these practices be sure you are doing them with the motivation of bodhichitta, for the benefit of all beings. Also be sure that when you dedicate the virtue of these practices, you dedicate it selflessly to all beings, with no wish to hold on to this virtue.

STUDENT: About bee-like conduct, I can totally understand this for Jamgon Kongtrul the Great but for an ordinary person it seems a bit shallow because you never form a committed relationship with a teacher. You are just a tourist and maybe even a bit of a collector, from a negative point of view. I see that kind of attitude in myself; it is almost like being busy like a bee without really accomplishing much.

RINPOCHE: What you say is true, especially the first part, that it is essential for someone like Jamgon Lodro Thaye to engage in bee-like conduct because only by receiving so many empowerments and transmissions will these lineages be able to continue.

Nevertheless it is not wrong for an ordinary person to receive many different empowerments and transmissions. You should still rejoice in receiving these things and not feel that you are merely collecting them as some form of self-affirmation. This is

because even if you do not attain awakening through practicing these things in this life, and even if you are not able to spread them further and give them to others, simply by receiving them you have established a habit that will become a cause of your future liberation. You should rejoice in receiving these things and also rejoice in others receiving them.

The key point to bee-like conduct is not that you should be indiscriminate or greedy: it is that you should be free of judgment. The bee is just interested in the nectar and therefore does not judge the flowers. The point is that if you receive empowerments, transmissions, and instructions from different individuals, you should not be concerned with their personal states. Do not think, “This one is better, this one is worse,” and so on. Be impartial. By being impartial, you remain completely open to what you receive from these teachers, and then at an appropriate time you can select one Dharma and practice it. The practice of any one will be enough, but in order to be able to do that, you have to be free of judgment about the sources.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, can you elaborate on the reconciliation of the beelike activity of receiving many luns and transmissions, and the other school of thought that holds you should be very careful and choose your teacher wisely?

RINPOCHE: The way these two are brought together is that you should be extremely careful about the source of what you actually practice. Get the necessary resources for what you are actually going to practice from as pure a source as possible. Then everything else, including other empowerments and transmissions and so on, you can take from more or less whomever you like, out of a nonsectarian respect for the Buddha's teachings.

The difference in attitude is that, when taking teachings from many different individuals, you are taking them out of appreciation for the teachings themselves, so therefore evaluation of the individual is irrelevant. The example used in the text was an aqueduct: whether the aqueduct is made of gold or of clay, it does not matter. Provided the aqueduct is not broken or faulty, the water will still get to the field, and the goal of irrigation will be accomplished. In the same way, the actual character of the person giving you the transmission is irrelevant, provided they have received and transmit an authentic transmission.

STUDENT: Suppose we take an empowerment with someone and did not really have a negative view of it but then later heard some things that made us feel somewhat negative about the whole situation. What do we do to ameliorate the negativity of that?

RINPOCHE: If it is after you received empowerment, transmission, or instructions, you would need to recite the **Vajrasattva** mantra.

STUDENT: If you received the same empowerment later from someone who you felt was more legitimate, does that offset the negativity in any way?

RINPOCHE: That would help.

STUDENT: Is there an attitude we should adopt when we are receiving a lung?

RINPOCHE: It is customary when receiving a lung to visualize the person giving the lung — and it could be anyone giving the lung, the person does not have to be special — as either Vajradhara or Buddha Shakyamuni. Also if you can, visualize the sound of the lung taking the form of the letters or at least white light, and visualize them entering you and filling you.

STUDENT: About the Vajrasattva mantra recitation, do you do it specifically with offsetting the negativity in mind, or just as part of the practice?

RINPOCHE: The most powerful way you could purify this negativity would be by thinking as you recite the mantra that

you are purifying not only the stain of your own antipathy, but the stains of all beings that have ever generated such antipathy. You do this for both types of stains; you do it whether the object of antipathy actually has defects that would justify that antipathy, or the object of the antipathy does not possess such defects and their actions have simply been misinterpreted. If you think that you are reciting the mantra in order to purify all of these stains, then it will be very powerful.

STUDENT: Some of these conducts do not seem contradictory, but I can see where you could maybe do one but not another. For example, I think of practicing like a wounded deer and just going into retreat, but sometimes our life circumstances will not allow this. I cannot imagine anything better, but I wonder if that is simply escapism. I keep referring back to Trungpa Rinpoche's teachings; he really discouraged people who wanted to join communities, become a monastic, or go into retreat if it was simply just escapism.

RINPOCHE: That is very true. The fundamental issue remains motivation. If your motivation is impure, whatever you do is going to be negative, whether it is retreat or any other aspect of Dharma. The main issue is always the motivation.

This is recognized in our tradition. For example, in the words of the Kagyu teachers we find the phrase, the “retreat of napping in secret.” This is where someone goes into retreat in order to be able to sleep all the time. This type of thing can happen, but it does not only concern going into retreat; any kind of Dharma practice has to be properly motivated, because otherwise it is not going to work.

If you have a proper motivation, the advantage of going into retreat is that you will not waste any time; you will not have any distractions and you will be able to practice full-time. Again, it depends on your motivation.

STUDENT: What category was the conduct of Samantabhadra in?

RINPOCHE: Sometimes Samantabhadra conduct is enumerated separately in such lists, which includes the foregoing one. In this case, the tone of the text indicates that it is intended to be the general framework or context for all of these other conducts, such as the conduct like a prisoner, bee-like conduct, and so on. It is the general framework for the structure in which those other conducts occur.

STUDENT: I am having a little trouble with conduct. I have tried several approaches, the bee-like approach, the prisoner

approach, and others, some of them at the same time. None is working for me. I think that the wounded deer does not sound all that bad, but I am not sure what my motivation would be.

RINPOCHE: You need to trust your motivation. You need to have actually thought carefully enough about your own motivation so you are confident that you know what it is. Motivation has to be worked on; you have to work on it until you are sure your motivation for practice is the wish to bring all beings of the six realms to the state of buddhahood.

In order to do that, at the beginning of any practice session, generate that motivation consciously and carefully. Then periodically during the practice session, remind yourself that this is why you are doing it. At the end, dedicate all of the virtue of the practice to all beings for this purpose. If you do that, then your motivation will be pure and will remain pure.

STUDENT: Is there such a thing as a donkey approach? I think I need a carrot or something, some forceful impetus. At this point, I do not have a clue what my motivation is, except that I want to stop hurting.

RINPOCHE: Wanting to stop hurting is a good place to start. The next step is to recognize that in order to stop hurting, you

are going to have to give up the cause of the pain. You cannot just get rid of the pain itself.

STUDENT: I guess maybe this is where I am getting a little confused. I pick a flower and think I killed it. I am deeply confused about where I need to go with this. I am getting scared to death that I am going to have to do the Milarepa approach and go into retreat, and I am afraid it is not going to work. It is going to be tough.

RINPOCHE: That will not happen as long as you work on your motivation. The first thing is to think carefully about motivation. Motivation is just a thought, so it can be influenced and controlled by conscious thinking.

STUDENT: Is Guru Rinpoche the root guru of some of the Karmapas?

RINPOCHE: This is complicated, because sometimes it is taught that Guru Rinpoche is the root guru of the Karmapa, sometimes it is taught that Guru Rinpoche is the Karmapa, and sometimes it is taught that the Karmapa is Guru Rinpoche's guru.

STUDENT: In encountering descriptions of an individual person's consciousness, I've come across the term *la* as a central component

of individual consciousness. Apparently it is a vital, important part, and I wonder if you would be kind enough to explain that.

RINPOCHE: *La* is not part of a person's consciousness. Generally speaking, while a person is alive they have three things in addition to consciousness. These are called "*la*, *tse*, and *sok*." There is no point in translating *la*, because it is just going to be misleading so we will just say "*la*." *Tse* means vitality and literally can mean a time. *Sok* means the vitality that you have during your lifetime; it is biological life.

Now the *la* is not thought of as being the person, himself or herself. It is a kind of protective faculty that is generally understood as being or beings other than the person. Therefore when someone dies, the *la* and the person's consciousness part. The *la* generally stays with the person's body and the consciousness moves on to rebirth. Because of the *la*, there is some importance in burial customs. If the person's burial site is a good one, then the *la* will be comfortable and this will cause prosperity and well-being in the person's survivors. If the burial site is bad, then the *la* will become uncomfortable, and this will cause disasters for the survivors.

This is not only a statement of tradition but is actually known to be true. Customarily, if a family undergoes problems and

these problems are diagnosed as being caused by the improper burial of an ancestor, you reckon the number of years since that person was buried, then you go to the burial site and dig up one cubit of earth for each year and move this earth to a better site under the supervision of an appropriate teacher. When this is done, it actually helps.

There is also a tradition of saying that *la* can be stolen or taken by spirits. This seems to be the case because the uncle of the previous Deshung Rinpoche was a strong *chö* practitioner with experience and realization. In the area from which we come, there was one place renowned for being inhabited by terrible spirits. Of course, he went there to practice. He said that this place had the most spirits and the strongest spirits he had ever seen anywhere.

One of them had a beard and looked like a monk. It came up to Deshung Rinpoche's uncle while he was practicing *chö* and said, "You think you're so tough, we'll see who is tougher." The uncle said to him, "I'll give you everything, my body, just take it. I do not need any of it, take whatever you want, I give it to you freely." The spirit stuck his hand in, and appeared to pull out the uncle's heart and lungs. The uncle actually felt something being pulled out of him. For the whole next day he felt cold and weak and empty inside, at least until he did *chö* again that next night.

Now obviously what was taken out was not his physical heart and lungs but something else, and he thought it was his *la*. The next night, when he did *chö* again in the same place, the same spirit showed up and said, “All right, take them back,” and threw his heart and lungs back into his body. Immediately the man’s sense of physical well-being, vitality, warmth, and circulation were restored. Then the spirit said to him, “I’m only giving them back to you because you didn’t ask and you do not care. If you had wanted them back there is no way I’d give them back to you.” That seems to be an example of what *la* is.

There is a ceremony called the Ransoming of *La*. This is done if one has recurring problems and a divination shows that ransoming of *la* is needed. The ceremony involves dispatching an effigy of the person and a replacement for it. This is done quite a bit by Lama Norlha, who uses various means to appraise the success of the ceremony. For example, he will have a bowl of milk in front of him, and then he throws a white pebble and a black pebble into the bowl. Then another pulls out a pebble, and cannot see the color because of the milk’s opaqueness. If it is a white pebble, it means the ceremony has been successful and the *la* has been returned. In any case he does the ceremony frequently, and he does it every year for my sister and me.

It is said the way the la gets stolen is that at night when you are asleep, your la leaves your body out of the ring fingers; this is when it can be stolen by spirits. In order to prevent that, there is a custom of wearing a ring on each ring finger, made from the iron taken from a knife that killed somebody. If you wear rings like that on each finger, this will keep the la from leaving. I had two such rings, and I used to wear them all the time. When I went to the refugee camp in Buxador, they oxidized and turned orange because of the climate. Also the Geluk monks there kept kidding me about them, saying, “Oh, have you gotten married now?” I do not have them anymore.

STUDENT: I am wondering how deities, yidams, dakinis, and dharmapalas relate to the six realms of samsara and cyclic existence?

RINPOCHE: Yidams are completely beyond cyclic existence and therefore they are not in any of the six realms. Dakinis and dharmapalas are beyond cyclic existence as well, but they may adopt the appearance of a sentient being in one of the six realms.

STUDENT: Were such beings at one time samsaric beings?

RINPOCHE: Yidams were never sentient beings, because yidams are the display of the qualities of awakening. Dakinis and dhar-

mapalas have been sentient beings in some cases, and they are embodiments of primordial awakening in other cases.

STUDENT: What are the three vajra-syllables?

RINPOCHE: The three syllables are OM, AH, and HUM. What is called the “vajra repetition of the three syllables” is to regard every in-breath as the sound of om, the retention of the breath as AH, and the exhalation as HUM. You regard these phases of the breathing as bearing this sound. You do not verbally recite the syllables, nor do you visualize their form. Recollecting this without distraction constitutes what is called “vajra repetition.”

Ocean of Activity: Instructions on Benefiting Beings

The initial invocation of this chapter is NAMO GURU LOKESHVARAYE. Then it begins, as did the other chapters, “Listen, Tsondru Gyamtso. In the benefiting of beings, there are two traditions.” This refers to two aspects of the Buddha’s teachings that have become distinct traditions: scholarship and realization.

Benefiting Beings in the Tradition of Scholarship

The scholarship aspect of the Buddha’s teachings is upheld through study and teaching. Those who have intelligence, diligence, and are interested in this aspect of the Buddha’s teaching rely on many learned spiritual friends. Having done so, they become learned in all appropriate areas of knowledge, which include not only Buddhism per se, but also linguistics, valid cognition, and the specifically Buddhist topics of abhidharma, madhyamaka, *prajnaparamita*, vinaya, and so on. They study all of these things, discuss them with others, and debate their meaning in order to refine their understanding. On top of that, they also have

to learn composition, clarity of expression, expository writing, responding to refutation or argument in written form, and so on.

Although they have learned all of this and have learned how to explain it verbally and through writing, they may not have any realization and experience. It is not absolutely certain they will not have realization and experience, but they probably will not because they study so much and do not have time to practice.

However even if they have no experience and realization, they will understand or know in great detail the nature of the path, from the very beginning of entering the gate of Dharma up to the achievement of perfect and manifest awakening. They will know how to explain in great detail all of the paths and stages, and they will be called “someone who is of boundless scholarship and can hold ten volumes of the Buddha’s teachings in their mind, both the words and meaning, at any one time.”

An analogy for this is if someone like me were to look at a map. Obviously the map would have to be in Tibetan since I cannot read English! If it were a map of some place I had never been to, but I memorized the map in great detail, I could direct someone without ever having been there. However that would not change the fact that I myself had never been to the place depicted in the map.

Those who uphold the **tradition of scholarship** tend to encourage their disciples to be scholars as well. Therefore scholarly teachers will produce scholarly disciples and spiritual friends, or geshe. This is the tradition of the great monastic colleges; this is how they function. About this, Milarepa said that in the four districts of Ü and Tsang, people do not seek meditation on Dharma, they seek scholarship or learning. By implication Milarepa is saying here that people seek position through learning. In any case, there are places and traditions where scholarship and study is emphasized over practice, and this is a legitimate aspect of the Buddha's teaching.

Generally speaking, individuals who primarily cultivate scholarship are not seeking to experience realization in this life. They do not wish for it in the sense that this is not where they put their effort. Of course, if they do practice, their scholarship in no way inhibits their realization. It is just a question of time, and therefore one of emphasis. If members of monastic colleges only study and do not meditate, and therefore do not generate experience and realization in this life, if they nevertheless maintain a flawless moral discipline as they are supposed to, they will be reborn human in every lifetime. The cause of human rebirth is moral discipline, and since they have preserved this discipline, they will be reborn human. In addition, because of their excellent habits of scholarship and learning, in each lifetime they

will become learned and wise. After three uncountable aeons of such rebirths, they will realize emptiness. This path takes that long to accomplish.

While they are principally emphasizing studies and scholarship, they will also receive a wide variety of empowerments and reading transmissions. Because they are scholars, they will understand these things: they will know how to give them, they will understand their meaning, they will know how to explain them, and so on. As a consequence, even though they have no experience and realization, they will transmit these empowerments and reading transmissions to others. This is legitimate and is not a corruption of the lineage, because as a result of their understanding they can actually transmit these things properly and correctly, and can therefore be very helpful to others.

An analogy for this is someone who blows the conch shell but cannot hear the sound it makes. Even though the person who is blowing the conch cannot hear it, other people can. In the same way, even though the scholar has not realized the meaning of what they are transmitting, they can still benefit those with karmic propensity for those teachings. This is what is called the “doctrine of tradition” or “Dharma of tradition.”

Benefiting Beings in the Tradition of Realization

The realization aspect of the Buddha's teachings is upheld through practice and practical instruction. This method is slightly different. Because the benefit for beings does not depend solely on intellectual understanding, it requires the prerequisite experience and realization. In the Kagyu tradition, experience and realization are normally enumerated as four levels: one-pointedness, beyond elaboration, one taste, and no-meditation.

Those practitioners who have realized *one-pointedness*, which is essentially the ultimate achievement of tranquillity, should not attempt to teach regardless of whether they have achieved lesser, intermediate, or greater one-pointedness. If they attempt to provide guidance or instruction, they will not benefit others and they will harm themselves. It will not benefit others since they themselves have not directly realized *dharmata*, they therefore do not have realization they can use as a basis for teaching others. They are still mundane. They will harm themselves because they have to talk about practice, and this will generate more conceptual elaboration, which will obstruct their own growing realization. Therefore when you are on the first level, one-pointedness, it is time to exert yourself and practice, but not time to give instruction.

The second level is *beyond elaboration*. Again, this has lesser, intermediate, and greater levels. When practitioners have achieved the experience and realization that constitute this level, they have some realization and if they give very detailed, careful teachings, it may benefit others. However they will still hurt themselves by impeding their development slightly. The first reason is because at that level there is a great distinction between the state of meditation and postmeditation. What they realize in meditation is not necessarily going to be evident to them in postmeditation. Second, just as with one-pointedness, when explaining practice they have to use language, which generates conceptual elaboration, and this may impede their complete realization of the nature beyond elaboration.

The third level of realization is *one taste*, or “single flavor.” Among other things this is the breakdown of any great distinction between meditation and postmeditation, and even between the waking state and the state of sleep. At this level they can really benefit beings. According to the tradition of practice, the achievement of one taste is really the time to principally benefit others. This is because people at this level no longer harm themselves with the necessary linguistic elaboration employed in explaining practice, and because they carry almost all of their realization into postmeditation, they will be able to benefit others appropriately.

Such an individual will achieve prosperity without any effort; it will just fall on them like rain. This is because of their previous completion of the two accumulations. Such a great being will naturally be seen as worthy of veneration and offerings from others, not because they seek respect, but because their realization is evident in their demeanor and behavior. Therefore they will be respected and heeded by others in whatever they say, because they have achieved freedom of speech and therefore can communicate appropriately. As well, they can bless the minds of others, and therefore they actually cause their disciples to generate experience and realization.

If you have not realized the meaning of something, you cannot transmit realization to someone else, just as if a mold does not have a design, the tsa tsa poured into that mold is not going to have a design either. When you teach and you do not yet have realization, Chakme Rinpoche says, essentially you are giving a reading transmission. You are continuing the succession of the words but not the meaning; this is because you have not truly realized the meaning, and therefore you cannot transmit it.

The fourth and final level of realization is *no-meditation*. Individuals who have achieved this state are not only capable of benefiting others, but this benefit is very easily accomplished. These people do not need to engage in long or complex explanations: when

other people simply see them, simply receiving their blessing, such as what is called a “hand empowerment” where they place their hand on top of your head, can give rise to realization in disciples because of the devotion such beings inspire. In fact even if you do not meet them, but have confidence in them and supplicate them in faith, this can give rise to experience and realization in disciples. This is particularly emphasized in the Kagyu tradition. The original reason for this is a statement by the peerless Gampopa, and later statements by the First Karmapa Dusum Khyenpa and also Lord Gotsangpa, all of whom said that in the future, authentic realized masters will be rare, and even when they appear they will be hard to recognize because we will project our own bewilderment and negativity on them. Therefore if you pray to these masters of the past as your root guru, then even if you have not met them in person, you will receive their blessing and give rise to experience and realization.

Teaching the Two Traditions

In general we say that realization and scholarship are two distinct periods of the teachings of Buddha Shakyamuni. During the Buddha’s lifetime, and during the first period of the flourishing of his teachings thereafter, the individuals involved in it had

already completed the accumulation of merit and so forth during the teachings of the previous Buddha, Kashyapa. As a result they achieved the fruition during the early part of the teachings of this Buddha, Buddha Shakyamuni. Therefore there were many **arhats**, bodhisattvas, and so forth in the early days. It is generally considered that this time of realization has passed. Now — and “now” means when this was written — we are in the midst of the tradition of scholarship, where it is the lineage that is being continued. In more general terms, these are called the “fruition period” and the “causal period” of the teachings of the Buddha.

Those who are involved in his teachings now are those who have not yet completed the accumulation of merit. They are gathering the accumulation of merit during the latter part of the duration of the teaching of this Buddha, Shakyamuni. They will therefore achieve the result of this accumulation, which is awakening, during the early part of the teaching period of the next Buddha, **Maitreya**. It is a little bit like the difference between something that was planted last year and ripens this year, and something that is planted too late in the season to ripen this year, but will ripen next year.

For that reason, the period of realization is over and we are involved in the period of scholarship. Those who uphold the lineage and can merely continue the unbroken transmission of

explanation, the reading transmissions, and so on that make up the tradition are properly upholding the scholarship aspect of the teaching. Even if, because of their emphasis on scholarship, they are unable to inspire experience and realization in their disciples, they do benefit people tremendously. The intelligent people who hear their teachings will be able to further transmit them, and therefore it benefits those individuals who become like their teachers, and it also benefits the Buddhist tradition. Even the unintelligent who hear these teachings, which are primarily about scholarship and understanding, accumulate vast amounts of merit through simply hearing them, so it should not be regarded as a complete waste of time.

Especially, given that the time we are in is the period of scholarship rather than the period of realization, we have to consider it an appropriate amount of benefit for beings for this time. For example, in the early period of the Buddha's teachings, mahasiddhas were not uncommon, and it was not uncommon for a mahasiddha to go to a region and empty it, which means bringing everyone in that region to a state of liberation. We do not hear about such things today; it is simply not that common. Nowadays an acceptable way to benefit beings is to prolong the life of the Buddhist tradition.

There is a difference in emphasis among the Buddhist traditions that have survived in Tibet. Principally the Kagyu (especially the Dakpo Kagyu) and Nyingma lineages emphasize the **tradition of realization**, and principally the **Sakya** and Geluk traditions emphasize the tradition of scholarship. This is not exclusive; this is not to say there are no scholars among the Kagyu and Nyingma tradition and no siddhas among the Sakya and Geluk traditions. In terms of emphasis, however, this distinction is true; therefore the Kagyu and Nyingma lineages are called “practice or accomplishment lineages.”

For both traditions, those of realization and of scholarship, in order to effectively benefit sentient beings it is of great importance that you correctly explain the means through which awakening is achieved. Whether your explanation is extensive or brief, it needs to be correct and unmistaken. Therefore regardless of whether you are attempting to uphold realization or merely uphold tradition, if you teach something that you do not know or understand properly — which at this point means someone like me — you are incurring a fault greater than the fault incurred if you simultaneously killed all sentient beings of the **three realms**. It is said that it is a greater evil for a stupid person to teach Dharma than for someone to kill all sentient beings of the three realms.

You could not possibly kill all beings of the three realms, but for the sake of the analogy let's say that you can. If you succeeded in killing all beings, this would be terrible, but their subsequent rebirth would be a result of their karma and not the killing, and they would not necessarily be reborn in lower states. If you mislead beings, if intentionally or unintentionally you lead them away from the genuine path to awakening, you are directly or indirectly leading them into the three lower states. For example, if you teach that what is virtuous is unvirtuous and what is unvirtuous is virtuous, and if you teach that what is untrue is true and what is true is untrue, you are sending beings to the lower realms, which is worse than killing them. Even if you understand what you are teaching, your motivation has to be unselfish. You must not teach in order to acquire material prosperity, respect, or position. The giving of Dharma must be motivated out of compassion and concern for the recipients, otherwise the selfishness of the action will pollute and destroy the virtue.

The reason to teach is that you know that if beings lack Dharma, they will remain in the six realms of samsara. You do not want them to remain there, and therefore you teach. Assuming that you understand what you are teaching and that you have a correct motivation, the Buddha said that it is of greater merit to explain one word or one line of Dharma verse than to fill one

billion worlds with the seven precious things and offer them to all buddhas. This depends on the motivation: whether your teaching benefits beings or harms them depends principally on motivation, and secondly on your understanding.

Furthermore, assuming that you have no interest in acquiring gold, if disciples offer their body weight in gold in gratitude for your teaching, this would not repay your kindness. It would be even better if they could offer my body weight in gold! This would accumulate merit, and you would not derive obscuration through that — what is called the “obscuration of misappropriation” — because you have not been seeking it. The reason is that your teaching will either directly or indirectly bring them out of samsara. Provided there is no selfish motivation, making offerings is fine. It is therefore said that it is better to offer one body hair to the guru than to all buddhas of the ten directions. By implication, offering one body hair to the guru means something very, very small, so offering something seemingly trivial to the guru accumulates more merit than making vast offerings to all buddhas. Anyone who makes such offerings in that light will become affluent and will finally achieve buddhahood.

However if you teach — that is to say, if you give empowerments, reading transmissions, or instructions — with the motivation of acquiring food, wealth, or other possessions, then you are really

selling the Dharma and consuming the profit. This is said to be worse than raising and feeding animals for slaughter.

Externally, teaching out of compassion and then receiving offerings looks the same as teaching out of a motivation for profit and then receiving offerings. The difference lies in the teacher's intention for teaching, and this of course is very hard to detect.

Four Means of Benefiting Others

In order to actually benefit others effectively, in either the tradition of scholarship or the tradition of realization, you need to practice the “four means of attraction.” “Attraction” sounds misleading here, but you will see what it means. These are said to be the “four means of benefiting others” practiced by bodhisattvas. A summary of these four means is found in a praise of Lord Atisha composed by his disciple, the victor Dromtonpa, which says, “I pay homage to you, who have greatly benefited others through the prosperity of giving what is needed, pleasant speech, being in accordance with the meaning of the world, and benefiting disciples.”

First, when you are practicing in retreat, the world and Dharma are in contradiction with one another. What you are doing in

retreat does not coincide with the way of the world, and any effort to conform with the way of the world will contradict what you are trying to do in retreat. However when you are trying to benefit others, aside from the difference in intention, the world and Dharma are in a state of unity or agreement. When you are benefiting others, you must be in conformity with the world.

Giving What Is Needed

The first of these, giving what is needed, means giving someone what they can actually use and giving it to them for their benefit. This needs to be distinguished from tricky giving, which is giving something small in order to get back something big. For example, if you give the patrons or monks in your monastery something small, like a little bit of food or a little bit of money, so you can get something greater back. That is what the vinaya identifies as improper livelihood and this is a cause of being reborn in lower realms. In colloquial parlance, it is called “giving a fox pelt to get a horse.” A poor person kills a fox and has the fox skinned, goes to the local lord and says, “Your lordship, I have nothing and I entrust my welfare to you entirely. I am impoverished. Please accept this fox pelt as a token of my admiration and fealty.” The

compassionate lord thinks, “Oh, the poor guy,” and gives him a horse. This is not giving what is needed.

Giving what is needed often occurs in situations where there is no possibility of payback. For example, again in a Tibetan context, people often give to pilgrims. People on a pilgrimage might have traveled a great distance from their own region, and they might be both hungry and thirsty. Giving as much food, drink, and so forth as you can is giving what is needed because you are doing it for their benefit. Giving them the means to proceed on their way is also giving what is needed. They are pilgrims; they are not going to see you again, and they are not going to be able to pay you back and give you more in return.

You can give things to patrons as well. The motivation has to be that you are doing it for their benefit, and not just giving them a little thing so they give you many offerings. For example, if you give them protection cords, that is fine provided you do it because it will help them recollect their teacher and therefore help them develop faith. You cannot do it hoping that they will give you lots of money.

If a person is devoted to Dharma and to instruction, giving them paper, pen, and ink is a real act of generosity. This is again in a Tibetan context, because in Tibet usually you could not buy

books. They had to be copied out and people were so poor they did not have paper, pen, and ink, so giving a practitioner paper, pen, and ink was a real act of generosity.

Another way to give is as follows. If retreatants' supplies, such as their food, are running out, they will have to leave retreat in order to beg for or acquire more. If you give them provisions so they can remain in retreat, it is obviously an act of giving what is needed. If you have disciples that are capable of being teachers themselves, then giving them the necessary resources to do so, such as texts, offering materials, empowerment implements, and so on is also an appropriate act of generosity. This is exemplified by the Situ Rinpoches, who in their lifetimes repeatedly and generously gave away books, as well as their own offering utensils and empowerment implements, to those they identified as good teachers.

In order for all of these acts of giving to be authentic, they have to be without any hope of getting something more back, as well as any hope of repayment and any hope of gaining more respect. You cannot do it because you want people to speak of you and say, "Oh, that guru is so kind." Again, there is no apparent difference between giving what is needed without hope of repayment and giving what is needed in order to get more — as we say, giving a fox pelt in order to acquire a horse. The only difference is in the

intention, or motivation. If the motivation is unselfish, then it is virtuous. If the motivation is selfish, if it is giving a fox pelt in order to acquire a horse, then it is unvirtuous, even though it is apparently an act of generosity.

Pleasant Speech

The second means of benefiting others is pleasant speech. This means speaking nicely, politely, and appropriately. For example, if someone has come from elsewhere, you say, “Chak pep nang,” or “Welcome.” If someone is on the point of leaving, you say, “Tuk dam gong pel,” which literally means, “May your realization or practice develop,” but idiomatically means, “Have a nice trip.” To those who are miserable, pleasant speech means being sympathetic and empathetic, cheering them up in an appropriate way. It depends on the exact situation: it could be reminding someone that suffering is the removal of bad karma, or it could be something else.

Pleasant speech also means never denigrating those who adhere to an incorrect system of tenets or a perverted Dharma practice, not denigrating them and instead expressing their positive qualities. The reason you express their qualities rather than denigrating

their obvious defects is because, first, you see the good in everyone and everything, and you are compassionate. You have positive aspirations for everyone. Furthermore, because you see what is good in what they are doing even though it seems messed up, you have the aspiration that it will improve, and therefore you do not denigrate it.

Also included in pleasant speech is not responding unpleasantly when people do not listen to you or when they respond unpleasantly to you. If people talk back to you, you do not get upset. You continue to speak gently, and you strategically or methodically try to lead them gradually in the right direction.

Perverved behavior that is externally indistinguishable from a bodhisattva benefiting beings through speaking pleasantly includes the following. One type of perverted behavior is when you verbally express sympathy for the misfortunes of others, but inside you are delighted by their misfortune. Verbally you say, “Oh, that’s too bad,” but inside you think, “I’m really glad that happened to this person.” Externally you look exactly the same as a bodhisattva sincerely expressing sympathy.

Another type of perverted behavior is when you pleasantly praise those who are doing things that are wrong because you want them to continue and do more wrong things. It is also

perverted when you praise someone for doing something that is praiseworthy, but you do not really mean it. You praise them on the outside, but inside it bothers you that you have to be nice and praise them. Another perverse behavior is when you have a gentle mouth and a furious gut; you are smiling, but it could be threatening or genuine.

All of these behaviors where your motivation is malevolent and you are trying to appear pleasant are causes of rebirth in lower realms. Nevertheless they sometimes appear indistinguishable from the bodhisattva's means of benefiting beings by pleasant speech. The difference between the two is obviously in the intention. The bodhisattva's intention in being pleasant to others is to bring about their immediate happiness and their ultimate well-being. The intention of the imposter or hypocrite is otherwise; they do it to somehow secure their own advantage or convenience.

Being in Accordance with the Meaning of the World

The third means by which bodhisattvas benefit beings is being in accordance with the meaning of the world, in other words, being

in accordance with mundane custom. This also has a genuine form and a perverted form. The genuine form is as follows. If there are people who respect you, for example if you are a teacher or a person with influence, you use your influence with people in an appropriate way. An example is to bring about the resolution of disputes, to promote harmony and peace. Another is to do what you can to benefit those who depend on you, such as patrons and so forth. You do whatever is necessary to dispel adversity such as providing food, clothes, and medicine, or performing ceremonies and so forth.

Fulfilling the needs and wishes of those around you is considered the genuine behavior of a bodhisattva, provided that your motivation is to directly or indirectly lead those under your influence toward Dharma. Therefore a bodhisattva might be surrounded by influential people, people with political or social positions. The bodhisattva might in fact use their influence to establish their relatives and others close to them in positions of influence, but their motivation for doing so is the wish to lead these people to the Dharma. The conduct of a bodhisattva in accordance with worldly custom means they take care of those immediately around them just as everyone in the world does, but their motivation is slightly different because they are doing so without attachment for those particular people.

This can be confused with nepotism, because externally it may appear the same. Nepotism occurs when family members are placed in influential positions, even though they have neither the wish nor the ability to lead these people to Dharma. Even though there is no hope of leading their relatives to Dharma, they still use their influence to establish them in high political and social positions. Through doing so, they further accumulate wealth out of attachment to it. According to King Songtsen Gampo, the karmic result of nepotism is to be reborn as a camel many times. This is because among all the species in this world, camels are characteristically the most attached to their offspring. Therefore if you engage in the excessive cultivation of attachment to family in this way, you will be reborn as a camel. If you promote the interests of your family or those within your organization out of attachment or pride — for example, promoting your monks if you are the head of a monastery — this is definitely a cause for your lower rebirth.

Benefiting Disciples

The fourth means by which a bodhisattva benefits beings is benefiting disciples. This again has a genuine form and a perverted form. Here the perverted form is presented first. This occurs

when out of desire for gifts, respect, and other advantages, you perform ceremonies that are beneficial to disciples, such as reversals (ceremonies where you avert impending disasters), fire pujas, empowerments, and purification ceremonies for the dead. If you give any kind of empowerment, transmission, or instruction with the motivation of acquisition, this is going to cause adversity for you in this life and obscurations in future lives. Such actions are a great impediment to your future achievement of awakening.

If, on the other hand, you recognize all beings as having been your parents in previous lives and feel responsible to benefit those who place their hopes in you, you do what you can for disciples and patrons such as removing impediments in this life or granting learning to those who wish to become learned. All of these will benefit them in this life, and they will benefit both of you in future lives because you have the proper motivation. In this case, just as in the previous perverted case, you bestow empowerments, perform purification funeral ceremonies, teach practices to those who wish to do them, and give the appropriate introduction to experience and states of realization. All of these actions are legitimate because your motivation is legitimate; your actions are motivated by the wish to bring about the benefit of all beings. Because by doing this you bring about the immediate and especially long-term happiness of beings, then

far from being perverted, such actions actually accomplish the root purpose of the existence of Buddhism.

The reason Buddhism exists is to be a **vehicle** for the awakening of beings. This depends on beings being empowered and taught. Therefore if you do these things with the appropriate motivation, this is excellent. The perverted form of benefiting disciples where you do so out of greed, and the genuine form where you do so out of altruism, might look identical externally. The only difference between them is the motivation or intention. It is sometimes very difficult to distinguish between a bodhisattva benefiting disciples out of altruism and a greedy person performing ceremonies and so forth in order to acquire wealth and other things. The only way you can tell the difference is by looking at your mind; in other words, you are the only person who can really see the difference.

With regard to having the role of a leader of a community or being a great teacher, again there are different motivations for doing this. What follows now in our text is a description of a typical incorrect motivation. You could think as follows: “If I manage to surround myself with many handsome and well-dressed monks who can chant well and who sound and look good, I will automatically become a great teacher because it will look good. Wherever I go, I will attract many disciples.” You could think

that and then surround yourself by many impressive young men, and you could think that chanting what looks good and sounds good is the practice of Dharma. In other words, you do not have any idea that the practice of Dharma is the generation and completion stages and so forth; to you Dharma is just impressive liturgy.

As long as people have that kind of motivation, the development of experience and realization, and the proper taming of one's mind, are going to be as rare as stars appearing in the daytime. The object of meditation for people who do such things is profit. They are turning Dharma into a business. Their attachment and aversion, their competitiveness and desire, blaze like fire. They think that service to the living, ceremonies done to prevent illness and other adversities, purification funeral ceremonies, and so on, are made up entirely of liturgy, and as long as you can chant it and look good while you are doing so, this is the real thing and this is worth the money you are paid. People that are so greedy in the acquisition of offerings have no contentment. With regard to vows and samaya, their attitude is that it is fine to break their commitments if they are not caught. As long as the teachers or the monastic discipline master (the chötrimpa) do not see it or hear about it, this is fine. What is the problem if you are not caught? If such a person succeeds in gathering

or creating a community, they are creating a community of charlatans, of con men.

How to Relate to the Sangha

Since it is possible that someone might be incorrectly motivated in creating a sangha, how do we relate to the sangha? How do we view the sangha, since we do not know what someone's motivation is? Since we have just been told that good and bad motivation can appear the same externally, how do we, the viewer, consider this?

There can be all different kinds of sanghas or communities: good ones, bad ones, and mediocre ones. You just have to take the attitude of pure outlook, seeing them as the actual sangha, and think the best of them because even if they merely wear the robes and have no qualities whatsoever, it is said that the opportunity to put on the saffron robes designed by the Buddha does not come in even a thousand lifetimes. As long as there is even the appearance of it, the doctrine has not been totally destroyed, because it is said in the prophecies that at the end of the Buddha's teaching, the remaining monastic robes will be collected by the devas and placed in *stupas* in the deva realm. Not even the appearance of the doctrine will remain.

That being the case, while you have to take an optimistic attitude toward communities, you have to understand that it is unlikely that everyone in a community is going to be equally genuine or on an equal level. If within a large community of monastics only one or two monastics are genuine — if only a few become authentic spiritual teachers who will benefit the teachings, or people who generate real experience and realization, who practice mantra and complete the requisite number of mantras and practices, or who will keep their vows to the end of their days — the entire community is still worth it because those one or two monastics are incalculably precious. When we say “precious,” normally we think of something physical; this is epitomized in legend by the wish-fulfilling jewel, which none of us has ever seen. Such monastics are far more precious than any wishfulfilling jewel, because even if a small part of the sangha is genuine, the whole sangha is worthwhile.

The great vinaya holders of the past left everything they acquired to the maintenance of the sangha. Among whatever offerings they received, in almost all cases they dedicated whatever was left to the support of the sangha after their death. This causes the flourishing of the sangha and therefore benefits the teachings. Within the general context of being genuinely motivated, there are different legitimate things that teachers can do with the offerings that are made to them, based on the different

styles of activity of different teachers. However the single most beneficial thing they can do is leave what they acquire to the support of the sangha, because this benefits the teachings and beings simultaneously.

There have been many great teachers, such as the Drukpa Kagyu teacher Ngawang Zangpo and Karma Tenpel Gyarawa, who never created statues but they dedicated all of their offerings simply to the support of the monastic sangha, and because of this the sangha was able to spread tremendously, from Central Tibet to East Tibet. This was also the custom of the fathers of the Kagyu tradition, such as Lord Gampopa and Lord Phakmo Drupa.

In fact a prediction in the *Lotus Sutra* predicts the coming of Gampopa and predicts that he will do this. When the Buddha is predicting that the bodhisattva Chandraprabhakumara will be reborn as the monk physician Gampopa, he says to him, “You will have five hundred pure disciples,” which means that during his lifetime five hundred disciples will achieve at least the first level of bodhisattva realization, “and you will have five hundred impure disciples.” Impure here does not mean terrible or degenerate. It means that they did not achieve bodhisattva realization during Gampopa’s lifetime. The Buddha’s instruction and prediction was to “treat all of the sangha that surround you equally and adopt the attitude that whether they are attained

or not, all of your disciples are the actual sangha. In that way, serve them and provide for their needs as best you can. By doing so, and by dedicating this to the unsurpassable awakening of all beings, as soon as you die” — in other words, as soon as your life as Gampopa is over — “you will be reborn in Sukhavati and will attain unsurpassable awakening.” In short, it was the Buddha’s prediction that one of the reasons why Gampopa immediately went to Sukhavati and achieved manifest and perfect awakening as a buddha in that realm was because of his impartial sponsorship of the sangha that surrounded him. “It is, therefore,” Chakme Rinpoche writes, “of great importance that we, who emulate Gampopa, should follow his example in this way.”

Again, there is a possibility of the support of the sangha being corruptly motivated. You could attempt to amass a large community out of the desire to become wealthy and respected, or you could create organizations, monasteries, and so on for the benefit of beings and the teachings. Externally these two actions appear identical; only the motivation distinguishes them. Therefore be very careful about your motivation.

Another issue connected with this is the amount of material things a great teacher acquires. For example, in a Tibetan context, it was not abnormal for a teacher to be offered animals, such as horses, mules, and other creatures that provide milk, butter,

and so forth. If you go around collecting offerings of domestic or farm animals out of acquisitiveness, this means two things: in this life you are beckoning enemies, because if you have a large herd you are more likely to be robbed, and in the next life, this will cause your rebirth in a lower realm. If you collect animals with an acquisitive motivation, you are no different from any nomad. You are just doing what everybody does, and there is no reason to consider it religious; it is just business, and therefore the cause of lower rebirth. There is nothing wrong with acquiring animals if you do so for the sake of sponsoring the sangha, no matter how many such animals you acquire — for example, if you promote practice intensives and regular offering observances such as the tenth day, the twenty-fifth day, the twenty-ninth day, and the yearly twenty-ninth day offerings; sponsor retreat practice for individuals by providing for their food, shelter, and so forth; or maintain and sponsor the needs of a monastic sangha. Again, the whole thing depends on your motivation.

When the mahasiddha, the Second Gyalwang Karmapa, Karma Pakshi, was on the point of leaving Tsurphu to travel to China, initially he decided to give away all the animals that had been offered to him. He thought, “I am going on such a long trip, why should all of these things be kept here?” When he had decided to give away all these animals, Mahakali Rangjung Gyalmo appeared to him and said, “You have a lot more to do in this life

so do not get rid of even one of these animals. You are going to need them.” Karma Pakshi kept them, and as it turned out the butter and so forth produced by these animals paid for the great statue of the Buddha that he later built at Tsurphu Monastery, as well as other statues of the victors of the five families, the great statue of Avalokiteshvara, and so on.

There are two entirely different reasons for keeping things. You might keep them in order to make offerings to the Three Jewels and especially to support the sangha, or you might acquire and keep things simply out of acquisitiveness. Externally these would appear identical, but again the difference is simply in the motivation. For a monastic, this is of principal importance because, according to the vinaya itself, those who have taken the novitiate or full monastic ordination cannot accept gold or silver. That means they cannot touch it; it cannot be handed to them. Because of this, traditionally whatever money the sangha had was kept by a layperson who served as the treasurer for that particular community. However the Vinaya says, “If you are accepting this not as a personal possession but as the means of building a temple or supporting the sangha, then even if it is one hundred measures of gold and one hundred measures of silver, you can still accept it. You can still touch it.” In other words, a monastic cannot accept these things as a personal

possession, but they can accept them if they are going to use it for the benefit of the sangha.

Motivation is all-important. Even if what you do benefits others in the long run, if your motivation was not to benefit them but just to provide for your own future, then you still are obscured by the money because of your greed. If your motivation as a monastic is to serve the Three Jewels and especially to sustain or support the sangha — in other words, if you think of the money not as yours but as the property of the sangha as a whole — then there is no defect.

In that case the question arises, what should a monastic consider as their personal possessions? They are the bare minimum of food, clothing, and medicine. This means one bowl of food for today, what you need to wear, and whatever medicine you have to take. You can think of these things as your own personal possessions. If you limit your possessions to these things, then you are in accordance with the vinaya and will have very little obscuration through acquisition. *Very little* means there will be some obscuration, which you will need to purify, but very, very little compared with the obscuration that would arise if you were acquisitive.

Chakme Rinpoche writes that this is a description of what he himself has put into practice and experienced with regard to the bodhisattva's four means of benefiting beings. He concludes this first section of this chapter with this statement because he wants to make it clear that he is not asking anyone else to do something that he has not tried out himself.

Benefiting Others in an Appropriate Way

The next section is on how to benefit others in an appropriate way that is also beneficial to oneself as a practitioner. It begins, "Listen, Tsondru Gyamtso. The method of accomplishing benefit for both oneself and others..." The significance of this is that if you are not concerned with accomplishing benefit not only for yourself but also for others, then you are practicing the path of either a *shravaka* or a *pratyekabuddha*. Even if your principal practice involves being in isolated retreat, you still need to be concerned with benefiting others within that context.

He continues, "When you yourself are immersed in practice," which means by implication some kind of retreat situation, "and through your practice you have generated slight certainty about the generation and completion stage" With regard to the

generation stage, *slight certainty* means clear appearance of the deity, where there is a spontaneously clear appearance of the deity's form, without fixation on its substantiality. With regard to the completion stage, it means some experience within the nonreferential practice of the unity of emptiness and wisdom of your mind's nature. If you have not had these two experiences of the two stages, the following ways of benefiting others are not going to be particularly effective.

If you have acquired these experiences through practice, and there are people who not only sincerely want the Dharma but also place their hopes in you and sincerely want to receive Dharma from you personally, and if you do not fulfill their wishes by providing appropriate general and practical instruction, then you incur the downfall of mentally abandoning sentient beings. Therefore if you are qualified and someone really wants you to teach, you must teach. However if you are too open in giving instruction, this can harm your own practice if you teach just anyone; regardless of whether or not they are sincere, this is going too far, and you will bring about impediments to your own development and practice.

As opposed to the sincere person described above, there are three types of people you should not teach. The first type is those who have no faith. This type may be very clever and intelligent, but

they are very proud and see themselves as better than everyone else. They are focused on themselves and they are concerned with their own qualities; therefore they have no faith in you and no respect for you or for the teachings they are requesting. The way they view receiving instruction is like an act of theft: they receive the teachings with as little effort as possible, and once they have them, they completely sever their relationship with you. Such a person will tend to keep secret the lineage from which they have received teachings. They will try to present themselves as the primary source of the teachings, and they will not mention from whom they got them.

The other thing is that they want to receive instruction from you but they do not want anyone else to know. They are embarrassed or ashamed of receiving instruction from you; they want the knowledge you have to give them, but they do not have enough respect for you to want anyone else to know it. For example, they might be from another tradition and think, “Since I am an adherent of this other tradition, it is embarrassing if I go to a Kagyu teacher for teachings. If I do it, I had better do it in secret.” The person may be very intelligent, but they have no faith and therefore they will not see any qualities in you; they will only focus on your defects. Therefore after they have received whatever instruction they are asking for, they will denigrate you everywhere. They will go around and say, “So-and-so is not

really such a great teacher. I do not really need him. He has this and this fault,” and so on. They may even denigrate the lineage of instruction you have given to them: “There is nothing really special about this lineage. Their instructions are not that profound. It is all pretty commonplace,” and so on. If you teach this kind of person, you are setting yourself up for samaya problems because they will not maintain the commitment that is inherent in receiving instruction.

The second type that you should not teach consists of those who sincerely want Dharma and do have faith, but who lack the intelligence to understand what they are asking you to teach them. They are not going to turn on you, and they are not going to denigrate you after the fact, but the text says that even if you explain the Dharma to them, they will not understand it. They are like a donkey. This means people who are just not going to be benefited by the instruction they are requesting, and so there is no benefit in teaching such a person that kind of thing.

The third type you do not want to teach consists of those who appear to receive instruction simply under the influence of others. They do not have any particularly strong wish to receive the instruction. They just happened to walk in that day, or their friends are going to the teaching and so they think, “Why not?” Such a person has no real interest in what you are teaching, so

nothing is really going to come of it. In fact they probably will not see the process of instruction through. Since they are not committed to it, they might arrive at the beginning and leave in the middle, or arrive in the middle and leave later, and so on. Such a person lacks diligence. In the first case, the person is intelligent but lacks faith; in the second case they have faith but lack intelligence; and in the third case they lack diligence.

It is better to teach one or two people with faith, intelligence, and diligence than to teach a hundred or a thousand of these three types of people. They will be respectful to you and listen to whatever you say because they are sincere and because they take you as their teacher, which makes it appropriate for you to teach them. Even if throughout your whole life you only teach one or two such people, in the end it will be of much greater benefit for beings because something will come of it; these students will generate qualities, and they will generate experience and realization. This is much greater and much more worthwhile.

With regard to the issue of teaching, in the words of the previous Kagyu masters, it is said that there is a style of teaching that is like herding goats or sheep. This means to teach without particularly examining or scrutinizing each and every person that comes for the teaching, based on the understanding that at least some of them will be sincere, and that the others will

at least make some kind of karmic connection with what you are teaching. However because there is not the notion in this lineage that you should teach in the way of gathering of mass assembly or a mass crowd of people just to hear the teachings, this is also called “teaching from the door of your cave or retreat.” This actually refers to, for example, what Chakme Rinpoche is doing in presenting this text to Lama Tsondru Gyamtso, where you have one or two people who are sincerely interested and qualified to receive the teachings. They come to you at the door of your retreat so you do not have to leave the retreat to teach them, but you can still satisfy their needs. In the Nyingma tradition of Katok Monastery, they extol the type of teaching called “single instruction,” which means teaching one person at a time. Because one teacher teaches one student, it is considered the most profound and effective type of instruction.

There are different ways to teach people, whether it is one person or a few people. In large part, the differences depend on the physical proximity of the person. If those of excellent intelligence come to you and are capable of quickly understanding the practical instructions they are requesting, and they are ready to go into retreat right away to practice what they are asking for, then in a couple of days you can give the necessary empowerments and transmissions. During the empowerment process, you should forcefully point out the nature of the student’s mind — this

means you point out the wisdom of empowerment, which is the nature of their mind. If all the resources are present, if they have the necessary provisions for retreat and there is a retreat hut or facility adjacent, then have them enter retreat in a cabin or hut adjacent to your own. You receive a commitment from them to remain there for three years and three phases of the moon. Nowadays we say “three years and three months.” For the first six or seven days, you pass them boards with the necessary instructions written out. The text says “boards” because paper was so rare in Tibet that they would write instruction on planks and erase it afterwards.

When the person remains in retreat along with you — and what is implied here is that the teacher, like Chakme Rinpoche, is in lifelong retreat — then when they have finished the period of retreat, the three years and three phases, they will have completed the approach and accomplishment practices of whatever yidam that have practiced. They will also have generated experience and realization. All three things — the requisite time, the requisite amount of practice, and the requisite experience and realization — will occur and be completed simultaneously. This person will really become a lama.

It is important to understand that the title “lama,” which literally means “higher” or “superior,” does not indicate the number

of years you have spent in retreat. In order to be called a lama, it is not enough to have spent three years, nine years, or even twelve years in retreat if you have no experience and realization. The title “superior” is applied to those who are supposed to have experience and realization that everyone does not have, meaning their experience and realization is superior to that of an untrained person. Only if they have such experience and realization can the title be justly applied.

The second situation is one where it is not possible to place the student in retreat right next to you, but they do have the opportunity to come and receive instruction from you before going into retreat. In that case, before they go into retreat you have to give them all the necessary practical instructions, empowerments, and transmissions, and provide them with whatever necessities or resources they will need for the retreat. Before they go into retreat, you have to earnestly provide the necessary introduction or pointing-out instruction and the other instructions that are required. In addition, you should give them a memorandum or guidance text. *Memorandum* literally means a text where oral instructions are written down. Nowadays it can refer to the short texts of practical instruction for a given practice. If such a guidance text exists, you should provide your student with a copy. If there is no commentary on the practice, then you should write down the instructions and give this to your student.

Even though the disciple is not adjacent to you while they are in retreat, as long as they are in retreat you should perform a daily visualization of dispelling impediments to their practice and also some form of liturgy and visualization causing blessings to descend on them from, for example, all buddhas and bodhisattvas, Guru Rinpoche, and so forth. As long as they are in retreat, you should bless them in that way daily from a distance. Through completing the requisite times and number of practice, such a person will also generate experience and realization. In the first situation, the person is in retreat adjacent to their teacher and in the second, they are not. Aside from physical proximity, these two situations are identical.

Another thing that can happen is when those who have never met you send offerings from a long distance and ask you to send instructions by letter. Since they are sincere, you should respond to their request. You can write them a letter that tells them how to supplicate the guru and give pointing-out instruction in that and related matters. This has historical precedent: the founder of the Taklung Kagyu, Drogon Sangye Önpö, supposedly brought about the liberation of one hundred people who he never met simply through writing them letters of instruction. This means they received the instruction from him in a letter, practiced it, and achieved liberation. This is unlikely to happen nowadays because since then times have degenerated. Nevertheless Chakme

Rinpoche says, “I have proven in my own experience that communication by letter can bring someone’s mind to the Dharma and can point out the nature of the mind to them.”

Other things that you can do for the benefit of others while you are in retreat include, for example, ceremonies of entrustment. A ceremony of entrustment is where something sacred is placed on the person’s head — a book, a statue, a tormā — and the teacher requests the lineage and deities to protect the person from all forms of adversity and to bestow their blessing. You can do ceremonies of entrustment, you can perform purification ceremonies for the deceased, as well as other ceremonies for the reversal of adversity, and you can make aspirations and so on for others. All of these things can be done from within your retreat. Because you are doing these things from within your retreat without having to leave, you benefit both yourself and others: you benefit yourself because you are not forced to leave retreat and are therefore not harming your practice, and you are benefiting others directly.

If there is something you can do for the benefit of someone else that will not harm your retreat and you do not it, this means you are only concerned with your own spiritual advancement and you have therefore deviated from the Mahayana into the lower vehicles. This means that at best your path is directed to

the achievement of the state of an arhat. If you have good and altruistic intentions to benefit others and you simply do the things described above, then even if you only benefit one or two people through performing ceremonies for them, praying for them, or teaching them, this is not of minor benefit for beings — it is of great benefit for beings.

In the *Jataka Tales* of the Buddha's previous lives as a bodhisattva, one of the births he undertook intentionally was as a bird. This is in the tale called "Chariot." The bird only did one thing of note in his whole life: a lion got a bone stuck in his mouth and was in great pain, and through compassion the bird helped the lion pull out the bone. He did nothing else. Yet this life as a bird is still included in the *Jataka Tales*, and this means that even one action that benefits someone else even temporarily is of note and is worthy. Therefore if in your whole life you are only able to pacify the sickness or demonic disturbances afflicting one or two people, or through your influence or instruction a couple of people complete various practices or at best achieve experience and realization, is that not great and excellent benefit for others?

How a Realized Teacher Benefits Others

Whereas the previous section dealt with how to benefit yourself and others at the same time, and was guidance appropriate for someone with some degree of experience and realization, this section pertains to those who have completed their own training by completely perfecting all experience and realization and are therefore principally concerned with benefiting others. This chiefly refers to a situation where a great teacher travels from place to place in a large encampment. These Dharma encampments, such as the great encampment of the Gyalwang Karmapa, which was a principal element in the Karmapa's activity during several lifetimes, had tremendous benefit. Simply through going to a region and temporarily settling there and teaching, he could pacify warfare, bring about great prosperity. Not only were the teachings brought from place to place, but everyone within the encampment, those in the retinue of the Karmapa down to the people who carried the water, were so immersed in Dharma practice that there was not one among them who did not complete at least three hundred million recitations of OM MANI PADME HUM. Also in the Karmapa's Dharma encampment, there was no consumption of meat or liquor at any time.

This section begins, "Listen, Tsondru Gyamtso. If one is principally concerned with benefiting others, one should examine the

outer, inner, and secret conditions or interdependence.” This is going to be an explanation of what resources you need to have in order to benefit others in this way. The external conditions are that the crops must be good and that the region to which you wish to travel be free of warfare. If you go to a region where the crops are bad, everyone is starving and so the people are not going to be particularly receptive to having an encampment and teaching. If you go to an area where there is war, you put yourself and your encampment in danger and are unlikely to be of great benefit.

The inner conditions are that you have the resources for encampment and you have the practice materials. Resources for encampment include things like horses and other pack animals, tents, and all other necessities. Practice materials mean that you travel with all the things you need to perform ceremonies, functions, or especially empowerments. You would travel with a large number of painted mandalas for various empowerments, different types of tormas, empowerment implements of all kinds, and so forth.

Especially important is the secret condition, which is that the teacher possesses the confidence of generation and completion. In the previous section, the person was required to possess what was called “slight certainty” about generation and completion.

Here what is required is complete confidence. *Confidence in the generation stage* does not merely mean faith in it; this means that the teacher has completely mastered the generation stage, and therefore they have complete freedom and complete control over it. *Confidence in the completion stage* means they have achieved perfect awakening through the practice of the completion stage; in other words, they have perfected or fully realized that practice. If the person who is the leader of a vast encampment does not have this level of realization, then regardless of how fancy their equipment is and regardless of how large a gathering they amass, the encampment is not going to be the real thing and it is not going to bring great benefit.

With these resources or conditions present, and with bodhichitta as your motivation for going from place to place, you would then set out on your journey. The first set of visualizations given here should be performed by the teacher while traveling on the road. You, which means the teacher, visualize yourself as the form of Chenrezik called Gyalwa Gyamtso. As you move, visualize the king of garudas soaring directly above you. The reason you visualize yourself as Gyalwa Gyamtso and visualize the king of garudas above you is to overpower the lords of the earth and any strong or aggressive nagas.

When you first get onto your horse and while you are riding it, visualize your horse as a lotus-and-moon-disk seat. Nowadays it would be a car, perhaps a limousine. Visualize the four legs of the horse as the dakinis of the four families, who hold you up and carry you on your lotus-and-moon-disk seat as you go along your way. You can also visualize the four wheels of the limousine in this way.

While you are on your journey, further visualize above you all the gurus of the Kagyu lineage gathered like masses of clouds, and think of them bestowing their blessings on you and your retinue. Behind you, visualize all of the yidams and think that they are following you as your supporters. To your right, visualize a snow lion tossing its turquoise mane. This snow lion is of the nature of warriors or heroes. To your left, visualize a female tiger with very, very beautiful stripes. This tigress is of the nature of the dakinis.

In front of you, leading the procession of the encampment, visualize an elephant: not just any elephant, but a mad elephant, and not just any mad elephant, but a disciplined mad elephant, which means an elephant that might do some damage, but only do the right damage to the right place — in other words, an elephant afflicted by a controlled madness. On the tip of his trunk is a weapon wheel, which is like a spinning buzz saw blade. Way out

in front of the encampment as far as you can see, visualize the protector Vajrasadhu riding a lion as the scout going ahead of the encampment. Visualize hawks and various black birds circling and soaring above him. Think that surrounding him, or led by him, are various other predatory animals such as tigers, wolves, jackals, and so on, and that he is further surrounded by a vast army of tsen (a type of being), all of whom carry spears with red banners on them. As they are marching, they all shout, “so!”, “cha!” and other such things. This is somewhat like nowadays when a dignitary travels by car, and helicopters fly above and police cars with blaring sirens go in front.

Think that this army led by Vajrasadhu dispels all enemies or other problems that might be encountered on the road, and that they accomplish all the necessary harmonious conditions for getting to wherever you are trying to go. As you are traveling — and remember that here you are visualizing yourself as Chenrezik, in the form of Gyalwa Gyamtso — also think that all of the obscurations and wrongdoing of whoever you see are purified simply by being seen by you.

Next is the visualization for setting up camp in the evening. This visualization is to some extent founded on the Gyalwa Gyamtso mandala visualization. When you set up the campsite, think that the ground is a large, hard, stable double vajra or vishvavajra.

Growing out of the center is a huge lotus flower, with petals covering the whole ground. Above that, visualize yourself seated on a lotus-and-moon-disk seat as Gyalwa Gyamtso, and think that as soon as you sit down with your legs crossed in vajra posture, the earth shakes six times, which is what occurred when the Buddha was born. Also think that in the sky there is a tent formed of rainbow light, and there is a rain of flowers. Then visualize that all of the humans, devas, and spirits of that region assemble, prostrate to you, and circumambulate you. While visualizing that, perform a session of **tong len**, or **taking and sending**, and especially think that rays of light coming from your body as Gyalwa Gyamtso transform everyone they strike into Chenrezik. After this transformation, think that all beings resound with the sound of the **six-syllable mantra**.

The next visualization is for those who come to receive a blessing. This is a *chakwang* or “hand empowerment,” which is when you go to a teacher and they place their hand on your head. It is important for us to know about this because otherwise we may wonder exactly what is happening when we receive this type of blessing. Is it simply a gesture or is there more to it? The teacher who is giving the blessing should visualize his or her five fingers as the victors of the five families: the buddhas Vairochana, Akshobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitabha, and Amoghasiddhi. They further think that from those five Buddhas, rays of five-colored

light that are of the nature of the **five wisdoms** emanate and purify all of the obscurations coming from the **five poisons** that otherwise afflict that person. In this way, because the teacher has blessings to give, because they are attentive to the person receiving the blessings, and because of the person's faith, receiving a blessing is effective. It does bring about the receiving of blessing, the purification and removal of obstacles.

With regard to the offerings you receive, if people offer you things that are fit to eat and drink, bless them with the mantra OM AH HUM, see them as an ocean of wisdom amrita, and invite the four recipients, which are the four types of beings to whom offerings and generosity are presented, in the form of the three deities Chenrezik, White Jambhala, and Lomachenma. Visualizing them like that, think that they imbibe the amrita and are pleased by it. Then recite the mantras of these three deities with the KHAHI mantra (which means “Eat, eat” or “Accept, accept”) attached to the end of each one. Then recite the standard liturgy: “May the Three Jewels be pleased by the offerings,” and so forth.

The meaning of this standard liturgy is the following. The first of the four guests are the Three Jewels, who are the recipients worthy of veneration. You make offerings to the Three Jewels so that they will be pleased by the offerings and so that you accumulate

merit. The second set of recipients is those protectors bound by samaya, who are called the “recipients who possess qualities.” Therefore you say to them with regard, “Through receiving these offerings, may those bound by samaya be satisfied and may the agreement between us be fulfilled.” In other words, you ask the protectors to protect you. The third of the four recipients are sentient beings, who are the recipients worthy of compassion. You say, “May the desires of all six types of beings be fulfilled. May these offerings become whatever they wish for, whatever will make them happy.” The fourth type of recipients is your karmic creditors, who are the recipients of repayment. You say, “Through this generosity, may my karmic debts be wiped out, may they be repaid.” Think that each being you have harmed in the past receives whatever will remove the affliction of that harm. Finally think, “Through this immeasurable offering and generosity to the four recipients” — *immeasurable* here means you do not think this takes place in an instant and is then finished, but these offerings persist and are continually presented to the four recipients aeon after aeon — “may I and all sentient beings possess prosperity, complete the accumulations, and quickly achieve buddhahood.” Recite this liturgy of dedication, then rest free of conceptualization.

If the offerings you receive are not edibles, but are things such as uncooked grain or jewels (what are referred to here as “dry

goods”), then with either an elaborate or simple liturgy and visualization, offer what you have received as a mandala. If you receive horses or livestock and other things such as weapons and armor and so on, which was not uncommon in Tibet, then when you get to the fulfillment liturgy — here it says the short fulfillment liturgy, which is in the evening protector practice — visualize these things as fulfillment substances. Through doing this, you will remove obstacles and become prosperous. All of these visualizations regarding what you do with offerings made to you are ways of keeping the obscuration of acquisition as low as possible, and the way you do this is by using everything you receive as an offering to others.

If you are asked on the spot to perform a ceremony involving an inscription for the living or the dead, proceed as follows. In Tibet they did not have photographs, so the inscription was a sheet of paper with a certain thing printed on it and the person’s name written in. The ceremony has two forms: there is one form if you are doing it to remove obstacles to the living, and another form if you are doing it to purify the dead. In either case, the thing is burned, which represents burning up the person’s obscurations and defiled aggregates. If you have to do it on the spot, then when you do the individual dedication for a living person, visualize the person’s aggregates or defilements being consumed by the fire of wisdom. Because you cannot necessarily perform the

whole ceremony for each individual person, you should retain the name sheet, and when you get a chance perform a group ceremony where you put all the name sheets together and burn them all at once. Never forget to dedicate your virtue and make aspirations for all of those with whom you have formed any kind of connection, whether they are living or dead.

At this point I just want to remind you that this book is a complete and unmistakable guide to the entire path, starting from the very beginning and up to its culmination and the achievement of perfect awakening. Therefore the text contains chapters or topics that are appropriate for individuals at different levels of training. Among these, our present chapter is concerned with how a realized teacher can serve or benefit others in a way that does not prevent the accomplishment of their own welfare as well. The present section of this chapter is especially concerned with how a teacher who has thoroughly completed the training of hearing, contemplation, and meditation can best serve or benefit others. Therefore when we encounter this chapter it may seem inapplicable to our lives, since we are not yet in a position to do the things described here. Nevertheless since this book is a complete guide to the path, it is necessary to present such chapters. They also give us an indication as to where we are headed, and also what qualities will ensue on the proper practice of the path.

Teachings with a Command Seal of Secrecy

Next the text discusses what should be taught and what should not, and what sort of environment or setting is needed for different kinds of transmission and instruction.

Empowerments, transmissions, and instructions that have what is called a “command seal of secrecy” placed on them should only be taught to those who have a particular need for such instruction. A command seal can be placed on a transmission either by the deity from whom the transmission has come (such as the particular yidam who is the source and subject of the transmission), by any guru in the lineage, or by one’s own root guru. If you have received a transmission and you possess such lineages of instruction, you should not teach them because such things are not going to benefit beginners; this is why they have a command seal placed on them. They will only be useful to someone who is prepared for them and therefore requires such instruction. Such things include, for example, forceful mantras, which are mantras embodying so much force within them that spirits who hear them will experience their heads exploding. Forceful mantras are potentially harmful to beings and should not be openly taught. Another example is harmful mantras, which are mantras that can be used to avert disaster, subdue

enmity, and so on. Because of the force they embody, they can actually cause harm and so they should not be openly taught.

Someone who possesses such lineages of instruction should hide them and conceal them as carefully as a thief conceals what he has stolen. If a thief steals something precious, he will make sure no one ever knows he possesses it. In the same way, if you receive such a transmission, you should deny its existence and do everything necessary to conceal it, and especially conceal your possession of it. If someone approaches you for these instructions and says, “Can you teach me such-and-such or give such-and-such empowerment?” there are three ways you can get out of it. The easiest way is simply to say, “I have never heard of this.” If that does not work, you can say, “Well, I have heard of it but I definitely have not received it.” If that does not work, your last resort is to say the good old standby, “I do not have the text.” In one of these three ways, you can definitely get out of teaching such things.

Obviously you are lying: you have heard of the transmission, you have received it, and you do have the text. Why is it all right to lie to someone who is requesting Dharma? For the simple reason that if you taught these people what they wanted, it would not help them; in fact it would probably harm them. For their benefit, you must conceal it. Also, if a command seal has been

placed on a transmission and you teach it in violation of the terms of the command seal, then you break your samaya with the deity of the transmission.

Teaching Those Who Are Unreceptive or Have Broken Samaya

On the other hand, there are equally profound teachings that are without danger and bound to be beneficial to anyone in this life and certainly in future lives. If you are qualified to do so, you should propagate, teach, and present these teachings, empowerments, transmissions, and so forth to others regardless of their profundity. You should do so widely in the manner of an unreserved feast, not holding anything back. This means you not only do not conceal the fact that you possess such teachings, but you also do not edit them. When you give them, you give the whole thing; you do not leave out any parts because there is no danger in these things. They are only beneficial, so it is therefore appropriate to give them widely.

With teachings that are beneficial the question remains whether it is important that the teachings be given only to those who are receptive to them and not to those that are unreceptive. When

is it necessary to know exactly who is receiving the teachings and when is it not? Essentially, if you have sufficient realization, then it really does not matter. You will not be harmed even if people receiving the profound teachings are unreceptive to them, and they will still benefit by the connection. You need to have the realization of the boundless purity of all phenomena, where you realize that samsara and nirvana are inseparable. Since you experience everything as immaculate purity, you will not be harmed even if some of those receiving the transmission are unreceptive. It is taught that if a person with such realization bestows empowerments on someone that is unreceptive, there is no fault.

If you lack that level of realization, you need to be more careful in bestowing empowerments and giving instruction. In that case there are two types of people you need to beware of: those who are unreceptive and those who have violated samaya. Unreceptive people of course include those who are incapable of understanding the instruction, but principally it means those who are unreceptive because they have no faith in the teachings. Faith in the teachings of a lineage is what makes a person receptive, so the primary intention here is identifying those who have no faith. This would include those who, for example, approach an occasion of teaching or empowerment out of novelty, curiosity,

or the desire to acquire more knowledge for the sake of their own vanity and reputation. Such people are considered unreceptive.

The other type who should not be taught the profound teachings consists of those who have violated samaya, which means that they have generated a strong antipathy or completely broken their relationship with you or teachers of your lineage. As a result they also have antipathy toward the teachings. Unless you have consummate realization, you should not give empowerments to such a person. If you do not have perfect realization, but you bestow empowerment or profound instruction on the unreceptive and especially on those with severe samaya violation, then among the three types of samaya, you violate the samaya of mind. In essence the samaya of mind is the samaya of secrecy or discretion, which is not to teach something to an inappropriate person or in an inappropriate way. This is also the samaya from among the three roots of the dakinis. If you break this samaya, you will experience what is called the “punishment of the dakinis,” which in this life means all sorts of misfortunes such as sadness, insanity, and various sorts of physical and mental disturbances. Insanity and narcolepsy are specifically mentioned here, but different things can happen, and in your next life you will be reborn in hell. Unless you possess the realization that sees the sameness of samsara and nirvana, you should be careful not to present empowerments to those with violated samaya.

Such a situation can occur with someone who has great influence and is very insistent. In Tibet this might be a local ruler or others who were apt to be sinners and have broken samaya. Let's say a local ruler or another person comes to you, and because of their political position they give you huge offerings or in some way force you to give them empowerment or transmission. If you have to give someone who has questionable samaya and questionable receptivity an empowerment, then avoid any empowerment that has the complete four empowerments of secret mantra, which are profound and have strict regulations with regard to their samayas. Do not do that; do something less than that. Also, if you have to give instruction, do not teach the true Vajrayana; do not teach the profound meanings of Vajrayana. Somehow you must teach something less than that.

Teachings Presented without Reservation

What can be taught or presented without reservation and without concern about who is receiving it? These are the things that are beneficial to everyone, and therefore can be impartially presented. From within the **common vehicle** these include the vow of refuge, the vow of single-day or two-day fasting (the nyungne vow), and other lay vows. From within the Mahayana,

you can give the bodhisattva vow of the lineage of profound view, which is far less strict in its commitments than that of the lineage of extensive deeds. The bodhisattva vow of the lineage of profound view is taught to be without danger and beneficial to anyone who receives it.

Within the Vajrayana, empowerments that can be given and are without danger even if you do not know who is receiving them are the empowerments for the three deities extolled for purification: Bhaishajyaguru (Medicine Buddha), Sarvavid (a form of Vairochana), and the buddha Akshobhya. The empowerments of these three deities, who are primarily connected with purification, are appropriate even for people with impaired samaya because anyone with impaired samaya certainly needs purification. They can be given to anyone because if you are a sentient being, you have obscurations and therefore you can benefit from contact with these deities. Also, empowerments of Vajrapani, as well as those of the longevity deity Amitayus (Tsepakme in Tibetan), such as the nine-deity mandala of Amitayus, can be given without reservation. The empowerments of the various cycles of the peaceful and wrathful deities, such as Emptying Samsara from its Depths, Emptying the Lower Realms from Their Depths, and so on, may all be given, as well as empowerments of Chenrezik, the Great Compassionate One. These can be given to anyone because they have very open

restriction; in other words, there is very little restriction on the dissemination of such empowerments. Those empowerments can be given exactly as they appear because the texts themselves say they are beneficial to all beings.

Teachings and empowerments that are slightly more restricted according to the texts themselves should not be given so openly. Depending on the restriction, they should be given to a more or less restricted group of recipients. For example, we have the custom at KTD of not allowing people who have not received the vow of refuge to take empowerments, and some empowerments may only be given to people who have completed the preliminary practices. Depending on what class of empowerment it is, and therefore what class of restriction applies, there will be a lesser or greater degree of restriction. The reason for these restrictions is that in order to receive the higher empowerments, you need to have had experiences that will make you receptive to them. Especially you must have accumulated the necessary merit to be receptive to these things, otherwise it is as pouring something you are going to drink into a dirty container: before you pour something into the container, it must be cleaned.

All of this, of course, is about great teachers who at least sometimes teach large crowds of people. If you are going to give a series of empowerments to a large gathering, the first empowerment

you should give is Kurukulle, a form of Tara who, as her name implies, encourages beings to practice virtue. Because of this, it is recommended to give her empowerment at the beginning of any series for the sake of auspiciousness. Also at the beginning of any session with a large gathering, as soon as the gathering has assembled and you have taken your seat on the Dharma throne, you should recite the Dharani that Conquers the Forces of Mara, which is found in the *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*. This is because maras dislike the dissemination of profound Dharma, and therefore will do their best to obstruct it. In order to create a perimeter they cannot cross, recite that dharani so they cannot enter the area where the teachings are occurring and cannot obstruct the process of teaching. You can do it just once, but you should do it in a loud voice.

If you are teaching a large group of people, then after the Kurukulle empowerment has been given, you should give the empowerment of Lomachenma form of Tara that protects from contagious illness. This is done to prevent everyone from getting sick from contagious illnesses such as colds and flu. Because you have such a large group of people, at the beginning of each day's teaching you and the whole assembly should recite her short mantra together to prevent everyone from getting sick.

Benefiting Beings Through a Great Assembly

Next the text discusses what is called *drupchen*, or the “great practice assembly.” In recent years this was exemplified by what the Lama of Nangchen, Lama Sangye Tenzin, was doing as a yearly observance. Lama Sangye Tenzin, who recently passed away, convened a great practice assembly where both monastics and laypeople were present in great numbers. Two types of people take part in such assemblies. First you have a core group of practitioners who are trained to some degree in whatever practice you are going to do. They have the liturgy or they have memorized the liturgy, and therefore they can recite it and do the whole practice. Then you have a large number of laypeople, who may not be familiar with the practice, and — in a Tibetan context — may not be literate at all. You need to give them something to do while the core group is going through the stages of the ritual.

First, you should visualize the vast assembly, no matter how big it is, as being within the circle of protection of the mandala that is being celebrated, and within the perimeter established through injunctions to the four great kings and so forth. For those who do not have access to the liturgy and are not familiar with this particular practice, who may in fact not have received

the empowerment but wish to be present for the practice, they can recite mantras such as OM MANI PADME HUM HRI, the bodhichitta mantra of the peaceful and wrathful deities, or other mantras appropriate to the particular practice being celebrated. They can recite these continually, day and night.

A drupchen is usually divided into four or six sessions. Typically there will be six: three sessions during the day, which are attended by all participants, and three sessions during the night, which are attended in alternation. Everyone takes part three times in the day and once at night, and therefore the practice is going on twenty-four hours a day for the duration of the drupchen. The people who are not chanting the liturgy are taking shifts and continually reciting whatever mantra you have instructed them to recite, so there is the constant sound of this large group of people reciting the mantra. The rest of you, the core group of practitioners, are doing the complete practice. The complete practice itself has to be done once a day and then parts of it can be repeated periodically in accordance with the schedule.

The presiding teacher has to generate the visualizations and so on that correspond to the stages of the practice as clearly as possible. They cannot assume that even the core group of practitioners is going to be able to do the whole thing perfectly. The presiding

master is the one responsible for the actual meditation while everyone else does their best according to their ability.

The physical performance of the ritual — the handling of the assembly, and all of the things that are part of this — has to be done in accordance with custom. This means that all the people officiating have seen the ritual done, have taken part in it, and have learned how to do it. In terms of dealing with the disposition of the assembly, this means the regional customs, and in terms of the performance of the particular ritual, this means the lineage customs.

Although you convene a great assembly in this way, you may not be doing it in order to perform a great practice assembly. If you do not convene a great practice assembly, then what you may be doing is giving a public or crowd empowerment. A public empowerment is usually a type of empowerment that can be given to anyone who shows up. For a public empowerment you should teach something general. *General* here means such topics as the results of actions, the defects of samsara, the benefits of liberation, the value of bodhichitta, the special qualities of secret mantra in general, and so on. If during the larger assembly people come to you for more technical instructions, those should be given separately and in private for the few people who wish to receive them.

At the end of the whole assembly, you should give some kind of longevity empowerment, such as that of Amitayus, and conclude it with elaborate liturgies of dedication and auspiciousness. Dedicate the whole assembly to the achievement of buddhahood by all beings, and dedicate it specifically in terms that refer to the practice, such as dedicating it to all beings achieving the state of that particular yidam. By expressing the auspiciousness, you are by implication making the aspiration that until all beings achieve the state of the particular yidam, they possess all necessary resources and are free of mishap.

If it is a great practice assembly or a great assembly in general, even though it goes on throughout the day and night, there are still breaks. During the breaks you should perform additional instruction or empowerment needed by particular groups in private. For example, if people come to you and say, “I would like such-and-such empowerment of Amitayus,” and you have time to do it, then you do it during these breaks.

This way of benefiting people, where you travel with a vast encampment and convene vast assemblies, is called “benefiting beings like a great merchant.” A great merchant is someone who sells all sorts of things you might want. This one merchant has everything you could possibly want, like a department store. Therefore when anyone comes to you to buy something, you

have it. No single person is going to buy everything in the store, but different people want different things, so you have a lot of merchandise. Through doing this the merchant makes money, and so they benefit as well.

The analogy is as follows: just as the merchant carries a wide variety of provisions to be bought by a wide variety of customers, in the same way a great teacher, while traveling in an encampment, carries around the necessary means to give a wide variety of empowerments and transmissions. First, they must have received all of these empowerments, but they must also bring the necessary empowerment implements, the necessary texts, and so on. Then as you are traveling around, you can disseminate empowerments and instructions in accordance with people's individual needs.

The equivalent of the profit made by the merchant in the analogy is the attainments the teacher achieves. The attainments here include the immediate benefit, such as the offerings that are made to them and so on, but especially the long-term benefit of the tremendous merit they accrue through benefiting beings in such a great and generous way.

Chakme Rinpoche concludes this section of the chapter by saying that if you wonder if he is the person who came up with this idea or this analogy, he did not. It is found in Lama Gongdu.

Benefiting Beings in the Manner of a Ferryperson

The next section is concerned with two other ways of benefiting beings, also to be done by realized teachers. The section begins, “Listen, Tsonдру Gyamtso.” The first additional way of benefiting beings is benefiting beings in the manner of the ferryperson, a person who ferries people back and forth across an uncrossable river. A ferryperson remains at their post, at the shore or bank of the river with their boat and oars, and when someone comes along or a group of people comes along, they ferry them across the river that they could not cross on their own.

This analogy represents a teacher who does not travel with a great assembly as in the previous case. There could be many reasons why they choose not to do so. It may be due to age, because when you get to a certain age you no longer want to travel all over the place with a huge encampment; it could be because they wish to remain in a certain establishment or monastery; or it could

be that they do not have the necessary resources for a traveling encampment, such as pack animals, horses, attendants, and so on. The teacher stays at their post, remaining at their residence or seat like the ferryperson who waits at the bank of the river with his or her boat and oars.

Although this teacher stays in one place, they are rich with instruction like the teacher in the previous section. They possess many different empowerments and systems of instruction, all of which are profound. Instead of traveling around to present these, they stay in their residence, which is likely to be either a monastery or a retreat facility. Even though the teacher remains in place, they are still actively benefiting beings. If they are not, then their path has degenerated into the common vehicle.

Like the ferryperson who helps people cross the uncrossable river, this type of teacher helps people cross the ocean of samsara. The people they help wish to achieve liberation and therefore have faith in and respect for the teachings and the teacher, and because they wish to achieve liberation, they are going to be diligent in practicing whatever they are taught. The teacher does not travel to them but remains in his or her place, but when people come requesting empowerments and instruction, the teacher bestows it, satisfying the particular wishes or needs of those individuals. Again, the analogy that this type of teaching activity, like that

of a ferry person, was not invented by Chakme Rinpoche — it was taught by Guru Rinpoche himself.

Benefiting Beings in the Manner of a Monarch

Another way of benefiting beings is in the manner of a monarch. Within this there are two varieties. There is the actual benefit, which as we will see is quite rare, and then the concordant benefit, which within reason can be done by most teachers. The actual monarchlike benefit for beings is really done by great teachers who, because of their position and realization, are able to benefit many beings, not only through the presentation of Dharma but through immediate or mundane benefit as well. In short, they are able to take care of a vast community. Examples of this are the heads of the Drikung and Taklung Kagyu, the head of the Sakya lineage, the Gyalwang Karmapa, and so forth. Actual monarchlike benefit can only be done by such rare individuals.

Chakme Rinpoche writes, “How could this sort of thing be done by people like us?” By “people like us,” he means ordinary monks, teachers, or yogis. However you can benefit others in a way similar to that. The similarity lies in doing everything in your power to benefit others, not only through the presentation of Dharma, but also through giving mundane necessities.

For example, you use whatever you possess and whatever is at your disposal, both in terms of Dharma and material provisions, to benefit those who depend on you and place their hopes in you. Whoever comes to you with need — whether it is need for instruction or material need, whether they are monastics or laypeople, male or female — give them what will help them. This includes things like methods of pacifying illness and demonic disturbances in this life, which could be instruction, performing ceremonies for their benefit, giving empowerments, giving medicine, and so on. Principally you teach everyone who depends on you methods to prevent an inferior rebirth in his or her next life. Doing all of this to the best of your ability, in accordance with your qualifications, and doing it honestly and without deception, is sufficient for an ordinary teacher to accomplish monarchlike benefit.

Honestly here means that your intentions are straightforward. You cannot try to appear altruistic while really doing these things only to gain profit in the future. An example of this is pretending to be a radical renunciate who needs nothing and wants nothing, but in truth you are just trying to impress people so they give you even more. As long as you are honest in your presentation, you are benefiting others in an appropriate way.

This also includes sponsoring others' virtuous deeds, which should be done in accordance with your degree of prosperity. Within this category are things such as making offerings to your gurus, your teachers, and to their monasteries. Normally when you receive offerings, you extract the first and best portion and offer it to your teachers and their monasteries. This can be anything, even down to a needle and piece of thread, as long as it is something that will benefit the people who are receiving it. This also includes sponsoring tea for all of the monks in a monastery, sponsoring the reading of the Kangyur and Tengyur or performing those readings yourself, creating and sponsoring the creation of tsa tsas out of earth or clay, and sponsoring the performance of the water tormas. It includes performing and sponsoring occasional offerings, such as the yearly Mahakala ceremony, which is done on the twenty-ninth day of the twelfth Tibetan month, the monthly Mahakala fulfillment ceremony done on the twenty-ninth day of each month, or performing and sponsoring the tenth day and twenty-fifth day observances of your particular yidam. This also includes giving as much as you can to the impoverished or needy, especially on the occasion of the Buddha's miracles, which is the first two weeks of the first Tibetan month. Feeding birds is also recommended; in Tibet this meant giving them grain that had been ground into flour so they could eat it more easily. Also on the fourth day of the month in which the Buddha first taught the Dharma, which is

the occasion of the first turning of the dharmachakra, feeding ants is recommended. You do this by finding anthills and placing appropriate food where they can find it.

Other things within this category of activity are creating or sponsoring the creation of images, such as images of the thousand buddhas, or of your particular yidam or protectors. These images need not be made of metal or precious metals such as gold, silver, or copper. They can be made of clay, or they can be painted images or thangkas. It is especially recommended to sponsor the writing or printing of the tantras and other texts associated with your particular yidam, protector, and so on. This was highly extolled in Tibet, where printed books were rare.

Another thing is benefiting those for whom you have responsibility, such as the monks in your monastery, in accordance with their needs and their level of training: you teach them everything, starting with the alphabet all the way up to bestowing any empowerments they need. Also included is using the offerings you receive, such as tea, butter, meat, curds, and so on, to sponsor individual or group practices, such as the vase practices or vase accomplishment, as well as the other types of practices mentioned earlier.

As we saw previously, in these practices the people who are not performing the entire liturgy will be reciting the mantra continually, so there will be an unbroken recitation of mantra for the duration of the practice. In Tibet it was also not uncommon for small groups of laypeople, even just one family, to commit themselves to doing one week's uninterrupted recitation of mantra such as OM MANI PADME HUM, Guru Rinpoche's mantra, and so on. Also included in this type of activity is creating means of benefiting people through contact, such as water-driven mantra wheels and wind-driven mantra wheels (in other words, prayer wheels), and setting up prayer flags. It is especially beneficial if you can set up great mantra-wheels, which include one hundred million written repetitions of a mantra, such as OM MANI PADME HUM, Vajrasattva's mantra, Guru Rinpoche's mantra, or whatever.

In short, benefiting beings in the manner of a monarch means doing everything you can to benefit everyone who comes into contact with you, directly or indirectly. Again, this was taught by Guru Rinpoche in the texts that set forth the guru sadhana practices.

Ceremonies that Benefit Others

The next section addresses ceremonies a practitioner can do to benefit others. Like the previous chapters, it is addressed to Lama Tsondru Gyamtso, who has requested this instruction: “Listen Tsondru Gyamtso, although vast benefit for beings may not arise, if a person who possesses the practice of generation and completion performs village ceremonies, that person will still accomplish both the benefit of beings and the enhancement of their own realization simultaneously.” This describes the manner in which the fathers and sons of our lineage benefit beings in an extraordinary way, but then Karma Chakme Rinpoche makes it clear that in this section he will talk about something requiring less realization.

“A person who possesses the practice of generation and completion” is a person who has at best achieved stability in both the generation and completion stages. This means they are at least able to develop a clear appearance of their particular deity’s form, color, scepter, ornaments, and so on, which is the generation aspect, while simultaneously having the proper view of the deity’s nature, its absence of inherent existence, which is the completion aspect. “Village ceremonies” are ceremonies or rituals done at the request of either a family or a group of families in a village or settlement. Ceremonies such as these are requested

when there are problems such as illness within the family or in the region. When this occurred, it was common for the family or group of families to send for an ordinary lama and have them perform a ceremony. By doing such ceremonies in the right way, Chakme Rinpoche says, one will not only accomplish benefit for others, but will be able to accomplish the enhancement of one's own realization.

He continues, “Furthermore the many types of conduct spoken of in the tantras will be accomplished automatically by this.” The previous chapters described many different types of conduct that are necessary to enhance realization, and if you perform the style of benefiting others described in this section, these types of conduct will automatically be included and accomplished. Specifically one will achieve “enhancement through **severance**,” which refers to the practice of chö, the severance or eradication of fixation on the self.

To understand how chö is done, you must understand that some places are inherently dangerous, which the text refers to as “dangerous mountains and dangerous lakes.” This does not mean a mountain that is dangerous because it is precipitous, but a mountain that is known to be dangerous because if people go there and act carelessly — for example, throwing rocks or shouting loudly — bad things happen to them. In the same way, dangerous

lakes are places where mysterious bad things happen if children are playing there and they throw stones into the lake or make a lot of noise. Such a place is appropriate for the practice of chö, and by doing so you automatically accomplish the practice of “wandering in dangerous places,” which is a necessary stage in the enhancement of one’s practice.

The explicit concern of this section is bringing rain. In this Age of Degeneration, appropriate rainfall is rare. Sometimes we do not have rain for a long time, and other times we have rain that serves no purpose and merely brings illness. Because of the lack of appropriate rainfall, even though crops may start to grow, a drought will cause them to dry up when they are still green shoots and stalks. People naturally become frightened and start asking available lamas to perform ceremonies to make it rain. In spite of their concern, the sky remains as blue as a piece of lapis lazuli, and nothing improves. If the drought continues it will get hotter and hotter until the ground and the crops seem to burn up, like a fire at the end of an aeon. Everyone becomes miserable and is constantly staring at the sky, hoping to see clouds. Of course the affluent, who have storehouses of grain, laugh at this, Chakme Rinpoche says, because they can raise their prices. The poor and the indigent quiver with fear — in fact the text says their “aortas shake with fear.” Beggars become profoundly depressed, and everyone starts to think, “This drought

and famine will kill me.” Everyone starts to bemoan and bewail the situation and even the bugs and insects experience the life of a hot hell because they have no water and they burn up.

Karma Chakme continues with a warning, “Do not think that, because of the dramatic nature of the effect of a drought in an agricultural society, you are going to do something about it in order to assert your own superiority or acquire prestige. At that time, do not think that you are going to exhibit your mastery of a special instruction that is more profound than that of others.” In other words, do not be motivated by the desire to show off.

The appropriate way to engage in ceremonies for bringing rain is to regard it as the practice of fourfold generosity. Because your motivation is compassion for all beings affected by the drought, this is the gift of protection for all who would otherwise die, which is the first type of generosity. Second, because you are motivated by love for all beings, it is the gift of love, the second type of generosity. Third, by bringing rain you will be feeding people, especially the impoverished, so it is material generosity. Fourth, because in such ceremonies you proclaim the truth of the Dharma, it is the gift of bringing Dharma to the nagas, devas, and spirits. In short, if you can properly perform one ceremony of bringing rainfall, it is a complete, simultaneous practice of the four types of generosity.

Ending a drought involves a power struggle between human beings and the spirits who control the weather. You are not going to make it rain by being excessively mild in your approach. In fact the ceremonies to bring rain are called the “poison of the nagas and the nails that strike the devas and spirits.” Consequentially when you go to make it rain, you put yourself at risk by picking a fight with local deities. You have to be courageous and at the same time you should realize they might kill you. You think to yourself, “If I die it will be for the sake of the Dharma. After all, it is certain that I am going to die anyway, and one day I am going to have to let go of this body. The best thing that can happen is that I die meaningfully for the sake of the Dharma.” With that resolve you go to one of these wild or dangerous places.

You cannot simply go to a place inhabited by ordinary **pretas** or weak, minor local deities that have mastery of one natural spring or something like that. Such beings do not have enough power to affect the weather in general, and because they are weak they will just run away, which will not benefit the situation. Most of these springs will probably be dried up anyway because of the drought. The ceremony needs to be performed in a place such as a dangerous mountain with many springs on it, or a dangerous lake known to be inhabited by tough **naga** maras.

You go to such a place and you begin by doing the tantric ceremony for bringing rain. No matter what happens, at the end of that ceremony you perform the practice of chö, which is giving your body to the local deities.

Initially things will probably get worse because you have challenged these spirits. You are saying, “Make it rain!”, and their first reaction is probably going to be further drought. Any clouds that may have appeared will vanish like rainbows. The sun will seem to burn hotter than before. Either in meditation experience or in dreams you will see all sorts of disturbing antics.

At this point you may think that you made a mistake by going there, and you will regret having done so. You need to look at the nature of your mind and at the nature of the thought of regret. This is the first phase in this process where real progress is possible, because progress begins when you face your fear and your regret; progress occurs when you want to give up, but then you look at your mind. If through looking at your mind’s nature, the fear, regret, and anxiety dissolve, that in itself is an indication of progress.

Next you continue to raise the stakes. For example, you pick a tree that is particularly prized by the **local deity** and you cut it down. You find a rock that is considered sacred to them and you

smash it. You agitate their sacred lake by throwing rocks and mud into it. You roll stones down the hillside that no human is supposed to walk on or touch. In short, you do all sorts of rough or outrageous things to get their attention. You also do visualizations, such as visualizing yourself as a wrathful deity and threatening them, saying, “Either bring rain or face annihilation!”

Things will get even worse. Before there were no clouds at all, and it was just the drought. Now there may be thick, dark rain clouds in unpleasant shapes, which means you have made the local deities really angry. Then there will be such tremendous thunder that it will feel as if the earth is boiling, and at each thunderclap the earth will shake. It will be so intense that your legs and hips will become numb from the earth’s shaking. The sound of thunder will be so loud you think it will turn your head to pudding. If you are wearing any metal objects they will start to ring in resonance with the thunder, and you will smell the ozone.

Naturally you will become really afraid. Your heartbeat will accelerate, little body hairs will stand up, and you will get goose bumps. At this point you have nowhere to go: you cannot flee because you are at the mercy of the sky. Lightning will come from the sky, and will be answered by electricity shooting up out of the earth, causing the earth to fly up. There will still be no

rain, and it will seem as if all you have accomplished is getting the local deities so mad that instead of rain they are going to send hail, and so in addition to drought the remaining crops are going to be destroyed by hail.

This is the second point where you have to face fear. Do not be afraid and do not try to flee. Rest in the practice of the unity of generation and completion. If you can, it means you will be able to get through the bardo. This is called a “little bardo.” It is not quite as intense as the actual bardo after death, but it is similar to it. If in the midst of all of this activity you can avoid being aggressive and you can remain motivated by compassion for all concerned including the local deities, this will bring enhancement and progress. This is another place where great progress can occur.

If in that situation you rest in practice and in the nature of your mind, then in your meditation experience or in dreams you will see, at least briefly, the local deities prostrating to you and bestowing siddhi. In this case the siddhi they bestow is rainfall. They respect you and give you what you want because they are not mad at you anymore. This is because in spite of the worst they could throw at you, you withstood the test by remaining in the view, with compassion as your motivation. As a result, the lightning, thunder, and hail will vanish like a rainbow into

the sky. There will be an appropriately heavy rainfall, which will satisfy all beings' needs. By doing this you have completed what is called "uprising and completion," which means that when these terrifying events occurred, you were still able to face your fear and remain within the view.

At this point you have made it rain. People will be delighted and say, "Excellent! Excellent!" and they will bring you lots of dairy products. Karma Chakme says "dairy products" here because this is presumably about nomadic communities. You will be satisfied and you will be delighted with what you have accomplished; you will realize you achieved something and actually benefited beings. At that point you will think, "I really have blessings! I really have power!" If you know other people were asked but could not make it rain, then you will think critically of them.

This is the mara of intoxicated delight, the third point where you have to be careful. Look at the nature of that thought of delight, look at the nature of your mind, and through doing so transcend the thought that this is your blessing and you did this. It is actually not your blessing; it is a result of the kindness of all the members of the sangha who got involved in the effort to bring rain to that region, and you should say that to people. When they say you are wonderful because you made it rain, you should say, "I didn't do anything; everyone did it together." Rather

than resting in pride, dedicate the virtue of your actions and make aspirations for the benefit of all. Especially at this time do not hold a grudge against the local deities — after all they did attempt to kill you with lightning and thunder! Instead think of them as patrons who are familiar and close to you.

It also may happen that you cannot bring rain, due to the merit of the beings for whom you are performing the ceremony, or because of the time, the period of history, or the season. Sometimes the earth lords and powerful nagas of a region become ill, and there simply will not be rain. It is not malevolence on their part; they are unable to bring rain because they are ill. Other things may happen, such as you, your attendant monks, or your domestic animals being struck by sickness, or you will see many unpleasant or inauspicious ominous things in meditation experience or in dreams.

At that point you might naturally feel depressed, disappointed, afraid, and embarrassed because you failed to make it rain. You may be completely miserable and guilty about this, a feeling comparable, according to Chakme Rinpoche, to what devas experience prior to their downfall, when they see themselves losing all the good things of the **god realm** and they are falling to a lower state.

When you start to feel bad, look at the nature of your depression and your shame. Through seeing the nature of it, you avoid the pitfall of losing confidence in the deities and instruction. “Deities” here does not mean the local deities; it means the wisdom deities through whose intercession you have been attempting to make it rain. “Instruction” means the instructions you have received and practiced. Recollect that even great holy beings have failed to make it rain at difficult times such as this; it does not necessarily mean that there is anything lacking in you.

In any case, do not remain in one place too long. Travel to many dangerous mountains, dangerous lakes, dangerous springs, and so on. Perform the practice of chö of offering of one’s body. Especially meditate on love, compassion, and emptiness. Perform tantric ceremonies for bringing rain that are convenient and appropriate, whichever ones you know and have the means to perform. Whether or not you succeed in making it rain, this will definitely bring about enhancement and progress for you, and will suffice as the practice of the conduct of “wandering through dangerous places.” Regard as equal in flavor the delight one experiences when one succeeds in making it rain, and the depression and disappointment when one does not.

Wandering Through the Charnel Grounds

The next section is concerned with what is called the “secret practice” or “wandering through **charnel grounds**.” The section begins, “Listen Tsondu Gyamtso. For progress or enhancement of one’s practice there is the tradition of secret conduct, the tradition of Naropa, which involves wandering through charnel grounds or frightening, isolated places. However to go to these places at night, as one must, may bring criticism.”

At this stage the classical mode of enhancement is spending time at a charnel ground in order to experience fear and disgust and to overcome those feelings. Since you are supposed to accomplish this in secrecy, you go to the charnel ground at night. The problem, especially for a monastic practitioner, is that eventually people are going to know you are going out at night. They are going to become suspicious and will say, “That monk is a thief,” or “That monk has a girlfriend.” Chakme Rinpoche says that he has seen and heard a great deal of the trouble that this can cause. For this reason, it is inappropriate to do this practice of wandering off to charnel grounds, as it is classically stated. Instead it is sufficient to do the charnel ground practice as it comes up incidentally, by which he means that in the course of ordinary duties, a lama will have the opportunity to experience and face this fear and disgust.

He presents his teaching again in the context of nomadic communities of East Tibet. When people died — and especially if they died through violence — it was normal to place them in a small tent for some time, together with a lama who was commissioned to remain with them and perform certain ceremonies. The deceased person could have died suddenly, perhaps in a knife fight, or committed suicide by hanging or in some other way. When someone dies violently and suddenly, spirits invade the corpse. Such corpses are frightening; the text notes that anyone who has seen the body of someone who has died through violence knows this. Even hardy young men shake at the sight. Women and children will not go out at night if there is such a corpse outside; even if they need to pee, they still will not leave the house.

A lama performing village ceremonies will have to spend time in a small tent with one of these bodies. No matter how many people are present for the ceremonies during the day, once the sun goes down they will all find a reason to leave, one by one, and finally you and the corpse will be alone for the night. Chakme Rinpoche is saying, in essence, “Believe me, this is good enough; you do not have to look for charnel grounds.” Since the tent where one will perform this is very narrow, the lama is going to be in close company with this corpse and will be sitting by its head. Performing this duty was called “head sitting,” or

“corpse-head sitting,” and the person who did this was called the “corpse-head-sitter lama.”

Being so close to the corpse, the following things are going to happen. Since the person was a nomad, they probably had lice, and as soon as they die and their circulation stops, the lice will leave the body. The lice will all move to you, and you will be infested by the corpse’s lice. You will start to itch; the text says that you will scratch so much that you will wear out your fingers.

If this occurs in summer, the corpse is going to rot and stink. In an East Tibet nomadic community, the corpse was kept in this way for no less than three weeks and if possible forty-nine days, so when a breeze hits the corpse and then hits you, you will be overcome with nausea and the desire to vomit. Then whether it is because of the moral contamination or obscuration of the violence that caused the death, or whether it is because of undigested medicines within it, the corpse is going to swell. As it swells, it will actually start to move about until it is finally the size of a yak’s corpse. The gases that are swelling the corpse will start to come out of its mouth, and it will sound as though the body is breathing or chewing. As the gases and fluids begin to emerge from the corpse there will be further sounds, and blood will spurt out of the orifices.

The obscurations of the corpse cause even the butter lamps to dim, crackle, and become darker and darker. Within each aeon there are upswings and downswings, and depending on which way things go, the corpse may become a zombie. Even if the corpse cannot actually get up and walk around, if the deceased died of violence it will be infested with spirits, and at some point it will look around with its eyes and maybe whistle. If it is on its right side it may turn over to the left, or vice versa. It will perhaps make sounds of being in pain, or actually say terrible things to or about the lama who is there. This is not the dead person, but rather a spirit that has invaded the corpse. “Nowadays, I have seen and heard of this a great deal,” Chakme Rinpoche writes. He says that even if the corpse does not do that, even if the spirits do not actually exhibit possession of the corpse, simply through the power of what happens physically to a corpse as it decays, and through your own strong fear and superstitions that arise as enemies, you will see the corpse move, or you will be afraid that it is going to. You will constantly see the corpse moving out of the corner of your eye. Because of the swelling of the gases, when they actually start to come out the mouth you will hear the corpse breathing raggedly.

You cannot run away because that would be shameful. There is simply no way you can leave. You have to stay there. You have no choice. And if you stay there, you are not going to sleep. This,

says Chakme Rinpoche, is the scariest charnel ground. This is scarier than an empty place with lots of old bodies lying around.

When this happens, you have to cast away fear and disgust. You should reflect on the fact that your body and the body of the corpse are exactly the same. Meditate on impermanence and death, thinking, “If I am afraid of and disgusted by this corpse, then I should be afraid of and disgusted by my own body because they are the same.” In that way, mix the perception of your own body and the body of the corpse. Then mix the consciousness of the departed, the person whose body it is, and your own mind, and look at the nature of that mind. In that way, rest in practice; rest in the vivid and crisply clear experience of mahamudra.

What makes this experience powerful is fear. Probably the fear and disgust will continually re-arise, and at each point you will have to look directly at the nature of fear and disgust. That will cause a brilliant, extremely vivid experience of mahamudra. Experiencing mahamudra under these circumstances, using fear as the fuel, is as vivid as what happens when you light a pool of gasoline. Through doing so, the fear and disgust will vanish like rainbows. You will become relaxed and at ease; you will become drowsy and you will be able to go to sleep. That is known as the “secret conduct of wandering through charnel grounds.”

Viewing Delight and Disappointment with Equanimity

The next section continues to address teachers who go into villages and family homes to perform ceremonies for the benefit of others.

The wider implication of this chapter, and what it really refers to, is something applicable to all of us: the need to view delight and disappointment with equanimity, to avoid becoming excited by the pleasant and the successful, or depressed by the unpleasant and the unsuccessful.

At best, if one can rest in mahamudra when these sensations of excitement or depression arise, this is the most effective. If not, one must at least attempt to maintain one's motivation of bodhichitta throughout these experiences, and to continue to dedicate the virtue of what one is doing with complete impartiality. Through such motivation and dedication you will ensure that, whatever else happens, your actions will be of benefit to others and to yourself. In addition it is important that, in these circumstances, you take the attitude of taking and sending — you intensely aspire that all suffering ripen for you alone and that all good ripen for others. Through taking this attitude of

bodhichitta, you develop a sense that whatever happens is okay. The essential subject of this chapter is how to develop that kind of attitude.

This section begins, once again, “Listen Tsondru Gyamtso. To progress in one’s realization, it is of greater benefit to meditate for one day in a dangerous place inhabited by violent spirits, than to meditate for one year in a normal environment.” From the beginning of the path until you achieve the final result, you are concerned with progress, and you are trying to find ways to constantly improve through your practice. Therefore meditating for one year in one place is obviously tremendous and of great benefit. Nevertheless there will be more actual benefit and improvement from meditating for one day in a dangerous place full of upheaval caused by spirits than meditating for a year in a normal environment. A dangerous place provides so much enhancement because if you can look at the nature of your mind in the midst of intense fear and anxiety, this will be a powerful cause for improvement and progress.

According to Chakme Rinpoche, you do not need to make a special search for dangerous places, because you will find them naturally in the course of your duties, meaning the duties of a village lama. What sort of situations will you find yourself in? When people have little merit or they have somehow angered a

Buddhist or Bönpo magician who is skilled at curses, they are going to have problems, and many bad things are going to happen to them and around them. Those people who anger a local deity by going to a forest or valley dear to the local deities and kill a wild animal regarded as a domestic pet by local deities, or by cutting down a tree sacred to the local deities, there will be an immediate reaction.

Through not having accumulated much merit or through bad relationships in previous lives, people may be afflicted by spirits of anger, samaya-corrupting spirits. It sometimes happens that people are victimized by spirits such as the planetary spirits, nagas, the eight classes of spirits, and so on. In such households one person after another will get sick and perhaps die, there will be one inauspicious sign after another, or there will be all sorts of other sicknesses or things going wrong, because spirits inhabit that household and torment people. When you go to such a place, you will find that if anyone else goes to that home they will not be able to sleep. If those who are ill go to such a place they will lose their senses, and if those who are drunk go to such a place they will go insane.

Those are the sorts of dangerous places to which you will be invited or be sent. You do not have to look for them, because people invite a lama as soon as these sorts of things start to hap-

pen, and as a village lama you will be required to go. They want ceremonies performed: effigy ceremonies, reversal ceremonies, fulfillment ceremonies, chö practice, and so on, because they have put their hopes in available lamas for the removal of adversity.

When you go there to perform these ceremonies, initially things will get worse. It will seem as though the spirits are further empowered by your presence. There will be many different antics on the part of the spirits. Even if there are not any visible performances, you will become very frightened because you know what is going on there. The little hairs on your body will rise up, you will get goose bumps, you will feel hot, and you will start to sweat from fear. You will think that there are demons behind you and you will be afraid to look; you will be so scared that you will crouch down and not be able to look around or behind you for fear of what you might see.

Yet you have no choice but to go there. These people who are afflicted have called for you, and you do not have any choice. Although this is your duty, you do not feel good about it. Because it is a bad situation, you start to think you must have little merit to be caught in this situation, and you worry that there will not be any benefit, that you will not actually be able to help, and you become embarrassed about that. If you have to engage in especially forceful or violent means to clear out the spirits, of

course you are putting your life at risk, so you are also scared that you will die.

When you are involved in such a situation, do not feel regret or resent having to be there. Recollect that this is a great opportunity for progress in your own practice. First, you need to have an attitude of love and compassion — not only for the patrons, the people who have sponsored your presence in the house, but also for the spirits who are afflicting them. You need to practice taking and sending directed at both of them. Whatever thoughts arise, such as terror or anxiety, look at their nature and rest in that. If by looking at the nature of the thoughts you are able to eradicate the thoughts that apprehend the external existence of spirits, this is the best progress and best enhancement you can derive from this type of situation. When you look at the nature of the thought of external spirits and you transcend the apprehension of their existence, this will pacify the demonic problems affecting the family; it will help the sickness that is happening, and of course it is very impressive.

However you cannot expect that the people are going to be grateful to you. You have weakened the spirits by not being afraid of them, but they still have some foothold in the minds of the members of the family. As you start to vanquish them, they will disturb the minds of the others more and more, and

this will make the people resent you. They will not be grateful, they will not be respectful, and they will seem to slightly dislike you and resent your presence in their home, even though they asked you to come and you helped them. They will say things like, “Well, things have gotten better, but I really do not think it is because of anything you did. I think somebody else, so-and-so, must have done such-and-such, and that is really what did it.”

The first critical point here was the fear that arose, and this anger is the second critical point. It is natural to just get mad. You will think, “I took these people out of the mouth of demons, and I saved their lives. Not only are they not being generous, they’re not even being nice.” Then you may think, “Okay, now I know. From now on, even if they call me, I am not going to do anything for this family.” As soon as you think that, you have broken the bodhisattva vow, because you have mentally abandoned a sentient being.

You have to recognize this second critical interval — when you experience the uprising of resentment — as part of this whole experience. You should think, “Oh, they’re not to blame; they are still under the power of these vicious spirits, who are still disturbing their minds. It is the spirits’ resentment of me that is coming through the mouths of the patrons.” You also have to remember that the patrons and the spirits have both been your

parents in many lifetimes. If you expect some kind of gratitude, then you are just an ordinary person, because an ordinary, common person does something nice for someone else and expecting gratitude. It is the custom of bodhisattvas to benefit others without expecting gratitude or personal benefit.

Instead of being resentful, you should make the aspiration that all sentient beings of the three realms, headed by these spirits and these patrons, reach the state of buddhahood. Then you should continue to meditate on taking and sending. By doing that you will finally end the problem — the viciousness or malevolence of the spirits. As a result your patron will then become respectful and pleasant.

Thrones, Position, and Seating Order

The next section concerns position and the height of one's throne. This continues with the same topic of not indulging in being pleased or displeased. It begins, "Listen Tsondu Gyamtso, the quintessence of the mind of the mahapandita Naropa is called the 'six cycles,' or the 'six teachings of equal taste in conduct.' If you can, through your realization, develop equanimity and a view of equal taste toward all things, then that is sufficient to

incidentally (or automatically) bring about the achievement of equal taste.”

As long as you are displeased with an inferior position and pleased with a superior position, you are still involved with the **eight mundane dharmas**: gain and loss, pleasure and pain, fame and disgrace, praise and blame. When people dispute over the seating order and the respective height of their thrones, this is completely mundane and has nothing to do with the Dharma.

The dharmic origin of the custom of having a throne and raised seats is twofold. One is that the victors of the five families, the five **sambhogakaya** buddhas, have five different kinds of thrones. These thrones bear, respectively, lions, elephants, horses, peacocks, and celestial musicians. These indicate the purification of the five poisons. The other source is historical. At Vajrasana in India when the prince Siddhartha achieved awakening and became the Buddha, the thrones of the one thousand-and-two buddhas of this kalpa appeared automatically. Before taking his seat on the fourth throne, Buddha first circumambulated and prostrated to the thrones of the preceding buddhas, and then as the fourth buddha of this aeon he took his seat on the fourth throne. As soon as he did so the other thrones disappeared and became invisible. This throne was not something that anyone constructed or conferred on him through political influence: it

was the result of his having gathered the accumulations of merit and wisdom, and having purified obscurations, over a period of three aeons. That throne, which was the first throne in Buddhism, arose from the Buddha's merit spontaneously.

After Buddha Shakyamuni passed into parinirvana, a throne or raised seat was used for the first time when his teachings, the **Tripitaka**, were recited at a council of five hundred arhats. At the beginning of the recitation, the five hundred arhats took off their fine outer, upper robes and piled them one on top of another. Then the arhat who was to recite the particular teachings took his seat on this throne. Kashyapa the shravaka was seated on the throne to recite the Abhidharma, Upali to recite the vinaya, and Ananda to recite the sutras. As soon as each one finished, they got off the throne and sat back down on the ground with everyone else, and the next one took the seat. Each of them recited their respective pitaka once, straight through, completely from memory. They took the throne in recognition of having achieved a flawless recollection of the Buddha's teachings, and because they needed to sit. While they were on that seat and reciting the Buddha's teachings, they were an object of veneration and prostration for the others. "Aside from that, most of the thrones that we know of," Chakme Rinpoche writes, "such as those established in mundane tradition — for example those of a king or minister, and those that indicate political

or social position through the place you sit in, the height of the throne, and so on — are all completely mundane and not dharmic.” Worrying about these things is therefore indulging in the eight mundane dharmas.

In Tibet thrones indicating position in society rather than position among teachers, originated with the conferral of status by Chinese emperors. The Chinese emperors adopted that position, having conquered half of Jambudvīpa and therefore being what are considered “conquering *chakravartins*” (not someone who spontaneously rules half the world, but who succeeds in conquering it through warfare). Whenever a Chinese emperor took a lama as his guru, that guru was supposed to be the *de facto* guru of all of the subjects of the Chinese emperor. In recognition of this, that guru of the emperor was given a special certificate with a red seal produced by the emperor’s secretary. The guru also had a particular seal to use, and he was allowed to use red silk on his throne. Such gurus had a particular type of throne, and wherever they went they were preceded by the playing of gyalings and decked in white silk and so on. All of these things were conferred by the emperor of China and Jang (Jang is on the border between Tibet and China).

Karma Chakme Rinpoche says that we have no choice but to accept such things as mundane custom; this is just the way things

are. If you look at it from the point of view of the Dharma, however, it is irrelevant. It does not improve the position of people to put them on a throne, nor does it reduce their real position if you do not put them on a throne.

Lords Marpa, Milarepa, and Gampopa, the First Gyalwang Karmapa Dusum Khyenpa, and the protector of the world Jikten Sumgön, were all buddhas in their actual state, yet none of them had this red seal or this red silk throne conferred by the emperors of China. The first Tibetan to receive these things was Chögyal Phakpa, who received this particular social and political status as the guru of the Chinese emperor during the Yuan dynasty. One of the supposed lesser teachers in his retinue was Karma Pakshi, the Second Karmapa, and whereas Chögyal Phakpa, who was one of the five forefathers of the Sakya tradition, received this grandiose position (and this is why he was called Chögyal Phakpa, or “Dharma King Superior” — because he was given the kingship of Tibet), all Karma Pakshi received was a little certificate recognizing that he was sort of a lama, and a little, soft leather seat flat on the ground. However he obviously had far greater wisdom than Chögyal Phakpa, and far greater miraculous ability and supercognition. The emperor of China, who was Kublai Khan, said, “Yes, the guru is the guru, but the minor teacher with him, the little guy with the goatee, he’s really something.” Karma Pakshi was called the “little guy

with the goatee” because he had a goatee and because apparently he was short. This statement has become very famous.

The great teacher Phakmo Drupa, a disciple of Lord Gampopa, had five thousand eight hundred disciples, and many of these disciples were so respected people would hold umbrellas over their heads as they walked. This was not just keeping off the rain; it was a sign of respect. Even when Phakmo Drupa himself was giving empowerments, transmissions, and instructions, he apparently sat on a simple, flat leather seat on the ground. If you have experience and realization, if you have true qualities, there is nothing lacking just because you do not have a throne.

Another instance of this was a controversial teacher of Tsurphu called Jamyang Chenpo, or “the great Manjushri.” He came from an august family lineage and was very learned. In recognition of his learning and his social position within Tibet, the emperor of China sent him a golden throne with a nice backrest. Because he was such a scholar, and therefore arrogant about his scholarship, he was very critical of an emerging tradition within the Karma Kagyupas (which is now the basis of our three-year retreat practice) that came from the Second Shamar Rinpoche, Khachö Wangpo; until then this tradition consisted of secret instructions, so of course he didn’t know about them. He said that these teachings were baseless, and he attempted to

divide Tsurphu Monastery and create a rift. He could not get the support of even one section of the thousands of monks who inhabited Tsurphu Monastery, and because he resented the lack of support for his criticism, he practiced cursing and negative magic, and caused damage to Tsurphu Monastery. His particular teaching lineage died out; he wrote a lot but we do not study or use anything that comes from him.

Another example of contrast between position and worth is the great figure of our lineage Tashi Paljor, who began as the groom of the Fourth Shamar Rinpoche's horses. He was so devoted to his teacher that when he walked in front of his teacher's horse holding the reins in his hand, he would constantly look behind at his teacher. He actually developed a twisted neck from doing this. He was very particular about not being caught in the trap of misappropriation, which occurs when you start to consume things offered to your teacher because you are in the household, and you get karmic obscurations as a result. To avoid this, he would only eat used tea leaves; as a result he actually started to turn blue. If you look at lineage thangkas of the First Sangye Nyenpa, he is shown as blue or purple in complexion. He was called Ngokkyok Nyenpa, which means "blue, crooked-neck Nyenpa." He never had a throne during his whole life; he had no social or political position whatsoever, but he was such a great practitioner that the Eighth Gyalwang Karmapa, Mikyo

Dorje, took him as his root guru and the lord of his family, and that is why he is a great figure in our lineage. As long as the Karma Kagyu teachings remain, Sangye Nyenpa's lineage will be unbroken.

Another story is about Rechungpa. At one time Rechungpa became so thirsty that he tried to go into a Kadampa monastery and get part of the tea distribution (when a monastery convenes an assembly, tea is distributed to all the monks). Wondering if he could get a cup of tea, Rechungpa sat in the last row of the Kadampa monks; he was not a monk so he was not wearing monastic garments. As soon as he was spotted, one of the monks, presumably the disciplinarian, said, "White goats cannot mix with sheep," then grabbed him and threw him out the door. He was so anxious to get rid of Rechungpa that before Rechungpa was completely out of the door he slammed the door on him, and Rechungpa got his foot caught in the door.

Because his foot hurt a lot, Rechungpa started to sing, and his singing was heard by the Lord Jayulwa, a great Kadampa teacher. Realizing that Rechungpa was there, out of faith in him he started to cry, and he managed to secretly take him as his root guru. He had to do it secretly because according to the Kadampa tradition he was not allowed to study with someone who was not a monastic. He had to sneak Rechungpa in or sneak out

himself to study with Rechungpa. The point is the height of your throne or where you sit in the rows really makes no difference.

There is another story like that, which occurred sometime in the past when the fathers and sons of our lineage snuck into the Jokhang dressed as ordinary monks without attendants. They wanted to worship the Jowo like everybody else, and they did not want a big deal made out of it. They sat in the last row because they arrived after all the others, and since no one knew who they were no one paid any attention. However there was a woman in the Jokhang who was a dakini and therefore had supercognition. She was serving tea to all of the monks and she recognized them, so she served tea to them first, which of course created an incident. Although one of the Karmapas and his teachers and students sat in the back, they were not diminished by not sitting at the head of the rows. Their realization and their blessing were not harmed by this.

The origin of the custom of reserved seating in Buddhism is the vinaya. In the vinaya, the basic criterion is seniority of ordination. Whoever was ordained first sits first, and whoever was ordained next sits after them, and so on. This is not the only criterion, and therefore it is not strictly or universally applied. Chakme Rinpoche says that there are two criteria: seniority of ordination, and seniority of wisdom. Even though a monk might

be entitled to the first seat because of seniority of ordination, if he has no realization and no qualities, he is still an infant even if they are one hundred years old. The seating based on seniority of wisdom takes into account their qualities, which means learning or realization. This means a person with outstanding qualities could be placed before someone who had been ordained earlier.

For example, although teachers such as khenpos may be outranked by others in terms of seniority of ordination, they still sit ahead of common monks. It is also taught that if you do not have reserved seating, if you have what is like our “first come, first served” seating, it creates the interdependence for the sangha to flourish. Therefore some great monasteries — and here Chakme Rinpoche mentions one called Ngamring Korde, which was a very large monastery in East Tibet — had the custom of “first come, first served.” Whichever monk entered the assembly hall first would sit at the head, and then seating was just by order of entrance.

In contrast, because there was a lot of dispute over the seating order in the great Sakya monastery in Tsang, the following incident occurred. There was a great scholar called Tsangnak Repa who was an emanation of Manjushri. Whenever he arrived to take his seat at that monastery, he would always be put at the end because the pushy ones would get to the front. One day

he came early into the assembly leading a donkey that he had dressed in the three robes and skirt of a monastic. He led the donkey up to the head of the rows and made it lie down there. When he was asked, “What is this?” He replied, “Since your criteria in seating appear to be a strong voice and nice robes, this animal should come first because he has the nicest robes and the strongest voice in the room.”

In short, if someone who has qualities, learning, or great realization sits at the end of the row in the lowest seat, this becomes the head of the row in the eyes of buddhas, bodhisattvas, yidams, dakinis, dharmapalas, and local deities with supercognition, because they see who has realization and who does not. If someone who sits at the head of the rows has no learning, realization, and pure morality, then in the eyes of buddhas, bodhisattvas, and so forth, where this person is sitting is the lowest seat. Therefore it is a great fault to sit ahead of those with the qualities of learning, realization, and pure morality; it is called the “heavy fault of sitting ahead of the learned or wise.”

The matter of prostrations is the same. If someone who possesses qualities of learning and realization superior to yours prostrates to you, your merit is exhausted. All of the mundane deities that protect you know this, and they will leave. The separation from

these protective mundane deities is worse than being cursed because it leaves you with no defense.

At one point in a previous century, there was a Chinese invasion of East Tibet. The Chinese forces were vastly superior to the forces available in East Tibet in number, training, and weaponry. The invasion reached Chamdo, which was, until 1950, still the major military bastion of the Tibetans in East Tibet. There was no way they were going to be able to defeat the army, so a **tulku** of the region went into the presence of the Chinese general and prostrated to him three times, whereupon the general died and the Chinese were defeated.

The Practice of Equal Taste

The next section deals with the topic of equal taste. It begins, “Listen Tsondru Gyamtso, when many lamas of similar or equal position assemble, and there arises the thought of higher and lower from among the eight worldly dharmas, that is where the practice of equal taste lies.”

Equal taste is the ability to be free of delight and disappointment with regard to different experiences such as pleasure and pain,

achieving a high or low position, acquisition and loss, and so on. It is the normal way of the world that a mundane person would be delighted by pleasure, position, and acquisition, and disappointed by pain, social inferiority, and loss. Delighting in the first and being disappointed in the second are causes of rebirth in the three lower states. Therefore it is necessary for a practitioner to regard these things as equal, and rest in the recognition of their mind's nature when experiencing these things. By doing this, they will not generate elation and depression, and through being free of elation and depression toward such vicissitudes, they are able to maintain an attitude of love that embraces all beings and genuinely aspires for the liberation of all beings.

When many people of roughly the same rank assemble, then there is likely to be some jockeying for position. That type of environment or situation is the perfect opportunity for the practice of equal taste. Chakme Rinpoche suggests that you respectfully allow all of those lamas who wish to assume a high position to sit up front. Do not care about it; just sit at the end of the row.

You may feel depressed or resentful. You may think, "I always end up sitting at the end of the row. He or she always gets to sit at the head of the row, but I never get to sit at the head of the row." It is best if you can avoid this kind of thinking and

simply have pure perception. If the thought of resentment or depression arises, look directly at that thought. The thought, which has no essence, will be cast into the expanse of practice, which means that by looking at its nature you have come to rest in practice. The benefit of doing this, of letting those who want to sit at the front sit at the front, is that those who are concerned with this will be pleased because they get what they want. Also, they are members of the sangha, so you accumulate the merit of venerating and being respectful to the sangha.

You will remember that earlier in this chapter there were several points when you were tested. It is similar here: the first point occurred when you got depressed or resentful, but if you overcome that, the second point occurs with the thought, “I am superior to them because I let them sit up front.” You may think that you are really the better person because you have given victory to another and accepted defeat for yourself. If you think this, you internally denigrate and disrespect the person more than if you had externally argued with them over who sits first.

Allowing yourself to think this way is not the practice of equal taste. You are just practicing an external courtesy, but inside you are still full of thoughts of high and low. You have simply transferred the criterion from a seating arrangement to who is more compassionate. Chakme Rinpoche says that when you

think this way, you have to remember that you have no idea what is going on with the other person. They may appear to have no qualities of learning and realization, but the absence of perception of such qualities on your part is probably your own impure projection. Because you do not have supercognition, you cannot really know what is going on within a person. About this the Buddha said, “Only I, and someone like me, can know and appraise a person.” If you start to think you are better than someone is because you let him or her sit in front, the remedy is to realize that you have no idea what his or her qualities may be.

An example of this occurred one time when an emanated king was at a stupa he had created. In front of the stupa he saw a monk wearing what Chakme Rinpoche refers to as “rotten robes,” which could mean old, tattered, decaying robes, or it could be a euphemism for rotten vows. In this case, it probably means rotten robes. The monk was crawling with lice; he would move his hand over his body and capture some lice, then he would hold them in his fist, throw them into a fire, and burn them alive.

The king was an emanation of Chenrezik and therefore extremely compassionate. He could not just stand there and say nothing, so he went to the monk and said, “You are a monk wearing Dharma robes. It is completely inappropriate for you to be burning these lice.” The monk, who was a mahasiddha, placed

the stupa on the tip of his forefinger and spun it around. The king was surprised by this. He took off his turban, partly as a gesture of respect, but also because doing so revealed Amitabha inside his hair — one of the reasons everyone knew this king was an emanation of Chenrezik was that if you looked inside his hair, you could always see the buddha Amitabha. Then the monk took a hooked knife and cut open his own chest, displaying the nine-deity mandala of Hevajra. The king was really impressed, and took him as his root guru.

The lamas who apparently insist on sitting in front of you, who you assume to be ordinary individuals, may not be. You have no way of knowing. There is a saying, “You never know who is a bodhisattva and you never know who is a thief.” The reason is that neither one will announce themselves. Bodhisattvas do not go around saying, “Hi, I’m a bodhisattva,” and thieves do not go around saying, “Hi, I’m a thief, and I’m going to steal your stuff today.” Both of them try to conceal themselves, and therefore you really do not know.

Furthermore, whether these people are bodhisattvas or not, you have to think in terms of our present-day context. Nowadays it is more wondrous and beneficial for someone to simply wear the Dharma robes than it was for someone to achieve arhatship and fly in the sky during good times. The reason is that when

a flower grows in the summer, no one makes a big deal out of it; but when a flower grows in the winter it is really special. In the same way — and the Buddha said this — it is of greater benefit and more meaningful in the present age when someone can simply rest in the nature of the mind, than in the past when people could display all kinds of unstoppable signs of attainment such as walking through fire, walking on water, and so on. You should think about these things and cultivate a pure perception of others.

Finally the solution to the whole question of jockeying for a position, worrying about it, and so forth is to always view yourself as inferior to everyone else. You sincerely make the aspiration, “Wherever I am, whoever I am with, and at whatever time, may I always view myself as inferior to everyone else. May I sincerely be perfectly respectful to everyone.”

Acquisition and the Absence of Acquisition

The next section concerns acquisition and absence of acquisition, similar to the previous section’s concern with high and low position. Once again the text begins, “Listen Tsondru Gyamtso. Realized yogis wearing rough wool cloaks and carrying a kapala

and a thigh-bone trumpet will wander all over the place, not because they are looking for entertainment or diversion, but in order to practice equal taste by experiencing different things as they travel.” Sometimes they are very hungry, sometimes they are very thirsty; sometimes they experience uncomfortable heat, sometimes they have to sleep outside in the freezing cold. To wander aimlessly in order to cultivate the realization of equal taste is very much respected. People who do this are called a “windblown homeless practitioner.” They are called “windblown” because they do not have any particular aim; they are just like something carried here and there by the wind.

Chakme Rinpoche observes that there is a potential problem with doing this, so he suggests the cultivation of equal taste in another way. If you are a monastic in a large monastery, you are fed, but if it is a small monastery you may not be. Certainly if you are wandering around you do not have any particular control over what you are given because you are begging. Especially if you are wandering around in the southern part of Central Tibet and in the small villages, the chances are that the only thing you are going to get to drink is chang, an alcoholic drink made from fermented barley. These people do not drink tea; they do not have it, and so they do not drink it. Monastics who wander around in those places are given a lot of chang and of course they get drunk because they are not used to drinking it. They

end up falling asleep in the major intersection of town, which Karma Chakme says causes people to question the validity of their practice and does not provide a good example. Drinking chang would be against your vows, and your vows are the root of Dharma: through possessing vows you possess Dharma, and through not having them you do not. Karma Chakme says there is a danger for monastics in southern Tibet to lose their vows by wandering around aimlessly. He says he has seen a great deal of this and heard of a great deal more.

Nowadays, writes Chakme Rinpoche, the chang problem is most common if you are doing ceremonies in small villages in Sikkim where chang is the only thing they have to give you. If you say, “No, I do not drink, please give me a cup of tea,” they think you are rude and strange; they act shocked, as though it is unheard of for anyone to want such a thing. It is even worse if you ask for hot water.

The point here is that without having to put yourself in situations that place your moral discipline at risk, you will still be able to cultivate equal taste, simply because sometimes you will get what you need and sometimes you will not. Chakme Rinpoche then notes that if you have realization, you will not be excited by acquiring something, and you will not be depressed by not getting what you are attempting to acquire. Acquisition and

its absence, just like high and low seats, are two of the worldly dharmas, and therefore they must be equalized like the others.

Traditionally people in lifelong retreat and monasteries would go out in the summer and early fall to beg for the following year's provisions, such as tsampa and so on. If you can regard getting what you need and not getting what you need for the next year equally, this is the best form of conduct. Those who approach the process of begging in this way are called an "equal taste beggar." Chakme Rinpoche notes, "You do not need to go around breaking dogs' jaws." They say this because in Tibet, when you begged for alms, the dog would attack you and so you would kick it, hit it with sticks, and so on. You do not need to go all over the place doing that.

Next he describes two situations that test practitioners. You decide to go to the home of a patron with whom you are well acquainted, someone you know to be kind and appreciative. You decide that you and your retinue of monks will go there, and you think, "They will give to us, and since they are students or disciples it will benefit them too." You get to the home and the only person home is a little boy who is not even wearing any clothing, who is so filthy he is the color of ashes. He comes out the door and says, "My father is not here — he went off somewhere." Then the mother comes out and says, "I had no idea you were

coming, there is no tea; what are we going to do? I do not have anything to give you.” As often happens, it is quite likely the whole village is suffering some kind of deprivation due to drought or famine. You start thinking, “Should we even continue begging? We are not going to get anything anywhere.” Your monks start getting grumpy and having very dark countenances; they start saying terrible things about the patrons under their breath to one another. You do not get your meal, and the monks are very hungry because you have walked some distance to this home.

At this point the facial expressions, the mental dispositions, and the color of the robes are about the same: just getting darker and darker. This is a time for progress, because that depression, that disappointment that you did not get anything, is one of the eight mundane dharmas. When that thought arises, look directly at it and rest evenly within the act of looking.

You can also consider something else. When the Bhagavat Buddha Shakyamuni explained to the sangha the great danger and defect of misappropriating the sangha’s funds or belongings, many monks returned their vows in order to avoid the danger of misappropriation; the Buddha said this was appropriate. Since on this occasion you have not gotten anything, you should be delighted because there is no danger of the sin of misappropriation. Therefore utterly eradicate any thought of dislike toward

those patrons or that village, and perform tong len for them with love and compassion, with the aspiration that they become extremely wealthy and happy in every way.

Chakme Rinpoche's second hypothetical situation involves begging at a village or settlement where you do not know anybody. Your monks are hesitant; they say, "We do not know anybody there, we do not really want to go." You remind them of Milarepa's statement, "Do not beg only at the large tents; do not forget about the small tents." You say, "We are going to go there because it is on the way, even though we do not know anybody."

You go and you arrive at the family home or settlement where you do not know any of the people, and they are very busy. They see that you have arrived with your retinue and so they set out seats for you; soon the air is filled with smoke because they are boiling water to make tea. They say, "Please give us your blessing, and please give us a blessing to remove obstacles. Please bestow empowerment, and please blow on us," meaning you should say mantras and blow on them to benefit them. Then they ask you to perform purification rituals for the dead and dedication prayers. Finally, the whole settlement arrives and the whole space in front of you is filled with things to eat and drink. The people, who you did not know before, have given you the best service and the best treatment. All of you, master and disciples, are

smiling joyfully, because you got what you needed. The people are so respectful that when you are finished drinking your tea they take the used tea leaves and rub them on their eyes and their tongues. They have so much faith it is beyond belief.

When your mind becomes exhilarated in a situation like this, you are experiencing the mundane dharma of acquisition, which is another of the eight mundane dharmas. This exhilaration itself is the problem. Just as before, you need to look at the nature of the exhilaration within your mind and see that it is baseless. Allow it to dissolve into the expanse of its own nature. If you can treat acquisition and the absence of acquisition equally, that is a slight practice of equal taste, and you really will achieve some progress.

The point here is that both suffering and happiness pose problems for us. It is generally easier to deal with suffering because suffering reduces our arrogance and makes us more compassionate. When we become happy, or we experience pleasure or acquisition, we become excessively content, arrogant, and uncompassionate. Both are obstacles, but acquisition can be harder to deal with.

Elation and Depression

The next section is about elation and depression. The text begins “Listen Tsonдру Gyamtso. Sometimes when you are begging for dairy products...” This means that in the summer when you go begging among the nomads for milk, butter, and cheese, you have to walk a long way. You do not have any horses, so you have to walk across very high passes for a great distance. Because of the distance you become hungry, then it starts to rain or maybe even hail, and you become thoroughly soaked. You are anxious because you know there could be robbers or brigands on the way, or you might be attacked by rabid dogs and wolves that travel in groups of up to twenty in order to be able to eat. You do not necessarily get what you are looking for, and you are depressed because you have not gotten what you need. What little you get you still have to carry all the way back, and you are depressed by this burden because it is hard to go there and back again. In short, there is a danger that you will not get what you are looking for, the danger that you will not be able to carry it, and the danger that you will be killed on the way.

You start to think, “It was in order to avoid this type of suffering that I became a monastic and gave up the mundane life of a householder. There is no reason why I should have to suffer

this much. We, master and disciples, have no one to take care of, we just have our own mouths to feed and our own backs to clothe. It should not be this hard to get what we need. Why is it so hard?"

You also remember that you have to go begging like this every year, which is embarrassing. Every year you worry that the people who were generous last year will be tired of giving you food. You think, "It is great that I have entered the gate of Dharma, but having to beg is really hard. I wish I could have just enough wealth so I did not have to beg. Why can't I have just that much?" You end up wishing that you were a rich person.

When that type of depression arises, you should think: "Poor people bear the suffering of not acquiring or possessing what they need. The wealthy suffer from having to protect and maintain what they have. Every human being undergoes one or the other or both of these sufferings." You are not suffering because you entered the gate of Dharma and became a monastic; you are suffering because you were born a human being. You would be going through this same thing even if you were not monastic. Remembering that, look at the nature of the depression that arises. Mix that nature with your suffering, and this will bring progress.

Do not forget that realized people and yogis who intentionally wander aimlessly do so precisely in order to experience this suffering, and in order to gain realization of equal taste. Even though you do not have to go that far, nor intentionally try to undergo deprivation and difficulty, at least be able to mix with your practice whatever arises incidentally or automatically.

Furthermore, according to the Buddha, a beggar who has no attachment enjoys provisions that are without fault. They are without the fault of misappropriation, and therefore are something like the beggar's birthright or inheritance. If you have no attachment to what you receive through begging, you will not be stained or obscured by it. If you do have attachment to it, then you incur the fault of misappropriation.

Here is another scenario. You are begging and you come across a populous settlement, which is affluent. They pile meat, curd, and butter in front of you, as much as you could possibly want. It is a beautiful day and the sun is shining. The mountains and the valleys are filled with horses, sheep, and other domesticated animals that are very pleasant to look at. The sun is warm and there are rainbow clouds, the valley's grass is so green it looks like turquoise, and the fields are filled with flowers of every color. You hear the pleasant summer sounds of bees buzzing and cuckoos calling, and you hear the gentle flowing of small

waterfalls. Your mind becomes elated and you feel good; you want to stay in that valley forever. Carried along by this exaltation, you decide to pray and to sing melodiously.

When that happens, the first thing you must do, Chakme Rinpoche says, is mentally offer all the flowers to your yidam deity. If you do not, if you walk over a flower that has the same color as the deity you have taken samaya with, this is an impairment of samaya. The text says that if you tread on a blue flower, for example, you break the Vajrapani samaya, so by extension this applies to all other colors and respective deities. The way to prevent this is to mentally offer the flowers first to the yidam.

Then put a seat down in the midst of that valley of flowers. Straighten your posture and look directly at the thought of elation and delight. If you can equalize by looking at the nature of the two thoughts of elation and depression, this is a slight practice of equal taste, and it will bring some progress.

Sometimes you will find that you feel physically good, and nothing is bothering your mind. The sun is warm and bright, and you have enough to eat and drink. You think, “I understand the point of Dharma. There is nothing I need to ask anyone. I am not worried about going to the lower realms after I die because I’ve

devoted my life to Dharma.” Thinking this, your mind becomes filled with delight, and you feel relaxed and at ease.

At other times you become ill, perhaps afflicted by different illnesses simultaneously. You think, “Why is this happening to me?” You entrust your welfare to the Three Jewels, and you earnestly search for a solution through ceremonies and so forth. You speculate, “Is this an obstacle caused by maras and samaya-breaking spirits, or is someone cursing me? Is it the ripening of my previous bad karma? What should I do?” You speculate more and more in all directions about the cause of your misery, and you wonder what you should do about it.

If you can equalize these two thoughts of elation and depression or misery within the view, within looking at the nature of them, this is the practice of taking happiness and misery on the path.

The Equal Taste of Fame and Calumny

The next section continues with the same topic, especially focusing on fame and calumny or infamy. It begins, “Listen, Tsondru Gyamtso, we delight in fame and we dislike criticism or calumny, and these are two among the eight things of the

world (the eight mundane dharmas).” He goes on to describe a situation of extreme fame. Imagine that, although you do not possess the great qualities of scriptural learning or realization that would justify such praise, naively faithful patrons regard you as an awakened being. Many of them call you Buddha of the Three Times, meaning that you are the emanation of previous buddhas, present buddhas, and future buddhas. Some of them call you a siddha. Even though you do not know when you are going to die, let alone know things about people, they praise you and say, “He is a great teacher; he possesses boundless extrasensory perception.”

It gets to the point where even the discarded fragments of your clothing are treasured as **relics**. The hair you cut off and your nail clippings are kept by others and burned in order to fumigate and bless their homes. They even collect and keep your urine, which they drink for the sake of blessing. It could get to the point where even people in very high mundane and spiritual positions who would normally be quite proud, such as political leaders and district governors, or great Dharma scholars, incarnate tulkus who have taken birth according to their wish, and so forth, all seek teachings from you, pay homage to you, and request empowerments and instruction. Because of the stories about your qualities that circulate from place to place, people who have never met you have heard exaggerated reports

of your qualities. These are repeated until finally everywhere people who have never met you say, “He is a very great teacher.”

When this happens, you will probably generate pride, simply because you will think, “Well, if everyone says this and if all of these great people show me so much respect, they cannot all be wrong; it must be true. I must be learned; I must have this experience and realization that they all seem to think I do. I must be really good.” This is what is called “respect and fame becoming devaputra mara,” the mara that is the child of the gods. As soon as you generate pride and think, “I must really be something,” you have blocked the possibility of any progress on the path to liberation.

If you consider that the sound or words that make up fame and respect have no more meaning than echoes, you see that regardless of how much you are praised, how much respect you are shown, and how famous you become, your qualities are not increased. Regardless of how little fame you possess, how little respect you are shown, and how little you are praised, your qualities are not decreased. None of it has any meaning. Recognizing that, and recognizing that all of these words of praise, fame, and respect are just empty sounds, cast them into the expanse of the view.

In the course of your duties as a teacher, when you have to sit on a high throne — like myself, for example, who is sitting on a chair when the rest of you have to sit on cushions — or if you receive homage and prostrations from great leaders of the community or great Dharma teachers, remember the following: the only reason you are on that throne, and the only reason those people are prostrating to you, is because of the greatness of the Dharma and the empowerments, and not because of any qualities within you. You need to accept this seat and the prostrations in order to show respect and allow others to show respect for the Dharma and, in the case of empowerments, the greatness of the Vajrayana. This is not about you. Think about it in this way: “How could it be fitting for me, in and of myself, to sit on this high throne or receive the prostrations of others?” Remember that the qualities deserving of respect are those of the teachings and not those of you as an individual. When you have to teach, bestow empowerments, give transmissions, and so on, think of it not as the bestowal of teachings and empowerments, but as the offering of them in the form of a mandala to the recipients. Especially get rid of the wish to be a great teacher and the thought that you are one.

That is one side of bringing fame and respect to the path. The other side of it is calumny. This is when, for example, without your having done anything wrong at all, people meaninglessly and

unnecessarily denigrate you. They may say, “He is an imposter, he is a charlatan, he does not know anything.” Or they may criticize you based on your family, saying, “Look who his parents were; look what his father did; look who his mother was.” They may say, “He just deceives people; he deceives all the men and he confuses all the women.” They may say, “He just collects all of the wealth of this entire community, from the yogurt up to the fat.” In other words, they mean that everything good they have goes to you, and they may get so mad they want to take all of your things.

Furthermore when you teach, or when you give empowerments, transmissions, and instructions, they will say, “He does not have any lineage for these things. They are not even real empowerments; he is making them up as he goes along.” If you teach profound texts of instruction, they will say, “He is just making that up; it is all lies. He is just trying to fool us.” If you perform ceremonies for others that actually benefit them, such as pacifying their sickness or demonic disturbances, they will say, “He has no ability; it is because he is hooked up with some kind of demonic spirit and the spirit’s ability has caused this to happen.” Or if your divinations are accurate, they will say, “Well, it is not him; he is being helped by teurang.” Teurang means “leprechaun,” like the shoemakers of the gods. If many people come when you teach and many people are benefited,

they will say, “It is not because he is a good teacher; it is because he practices black magic and seductive spells to get people to come to his teachings.”

There are all sorts of nasty things people can say about you. When you hear such things, you will probably feel, “Why are they abusing me when I have done nothing? I have never lied; I have never harmed anyone. Why are they so jealous at my having a few students with faith in me?” Thinking that, you will become agitated and disturbed. When that happens, look at the nature of the agitation and disturbance, and relax. Just forget about it. Having forgotten about it, instead put your attention on love and compassion, and practice taking and sending, focusing particularly on your abusers.

Think about it as follows. If you have actually done something wrong, if you possess the faults that people ascribe to you, then it is your own fault and there is no reason to be upset or surprised. If you have not done anything wrong, and if they are saying things about you that are not true, this is wonderful because it is the most efficient way to purify vast amounts of your previous wrongdoing and obscurations. Through patiently undergoing unjustified abuse and calumny, your beginningless wrongdoing and obscurations will be swept away as though by a broom. That being the case, you should think, “How wonderful!

These people are spontaneously assisting me by sweeping away all my wrongdoing and obscurations. What is there in that not to be delighted about?" Then meditate on it with delight and satisfaction.

If in this way you can equalize fame and calumny within the state of realization, this is the great practice, or great achievement, of the equal taste of things. We talk about the "six cycles on equal taste" and so on, but the essence of all of them is included in this. Therefore great enhancement is achieved when you do this.

The Importance of Bodhichitta

The final section of this chapter on benefiting others is concerned with the importance of bodhichitta and altruism as the actual root and source of all true benefit for others. The section begins, "Listen, Karma Tsondru, it is impossible to achieve meaningful benefit for others with a hidden selfish motivation." In other words, even though you do what is normally done for the benefit of others, and you appear to be doing it for the benefit of others, if your hidden motivation is selfish, your deeds will not achieve any real or meaningful benefit.

On the other hand, if from the depths of your heart you have no selfishness and everything you do is motivated by genuine bodhichitta, the true wish to establish all beings in buddhahood, this affects your actions like the alchemical potion that transforms iron and other base metals into gold. Just as that potion causes even the basest metals to become pure gold, this motivation will cause whatever you do to be a factor on the path to awakening. This means that even most unvirtuous actions will become virtuous through the force of your motivation. About this **Nagarjuna** said, “If the motivation is good, the progress through the paths and stages will be good as well.” This means that even though you may act in a way that physically and verbally appears negative, if your motivation is genuinely unselfish and altruistic, it is impossible that what you are doing is negative. This is called the “mere semblance of negativity and the actuality of virtue.”

As far as the effect on you, just as the husks of the crops automatically appear when the crops grow well, if you earnestly endeavor to benefit others and pay no attention to your own benefit, the benefit for you will be spontaneous. For example, from the beginning of Buddha Shakyamuni’s path, he was only concerned with benefiting others, and yet he achieved the greatest possible benefit for himself, namely buddhahood. Now, we have been around for as long as Buddha Shakyamuni

has. Why has he achieved buddhahood and we have not? The difference between the Buddha and ourselves is that ordinary people like us only try to achieve our own aims and only try to benefit ourselves. Yet the more we attempt to benefit ourselves, the less we succeed in doing so. As a result of this selfishness, we fall to lower rebirth. Look at the difference between what happens: when you are altruistic, you experience buddhahood, and when you are selfish, you experience lower rebirth. This was taught by the bodhisattva Shantideva in the *Bodhicharyavatara*.

As long as you do not understand and do not implement the motivation of bodhichitta, even if you practice the unsurpassable secret mantra of the Vajrayana, even if you practice the very apex of these teachings, it is not possible for these things to lead you on the path to awakening. The importance of this was stressed by Lord Gampopa when he called bodhichitta the second of the four dharmas, which in his original formulation was “Dharma becoming Dharma.” Nowadays we usually say “Dharma becoming a path,” but originally it was “Dharma becoming Dharma.” His point was that what makes Dharma the Dharma is the motivation of bodhichitta. Therefore he taught that the generation of bodhichitta is itself a very profound and important instruction.

The chapter ends, “These thirteen little songs were written in response to the request of Tsonдру Gyamtso in the waning phase

of the month Go in the Earth Snake Year, in the evening of the sixth, seventh, and eighth days of the second half of that month. This was spoken by Raga Asya (Karma Chakme Rinpoche), including my own experience, and was written down by Lama Virya Sagara (Lama Tsondru Gyamtso), whose fingers rode the horse of lightning (which means he had to write very fast to take dictation). He wrote this by the light of the moon of that month, having donned the armor of great patience required to actually take this down. For the benefit of future generations, he mounted the good steed of quick diligence (in other words, the ability to write it). He wrote it with ink the color of vaidurya on paper the color of a conch. I hope that in the future, those free of action, like myself, will be able to bring this conduct onto the path in a state free of great fixation on things, achieve many paths and stages and, finally, perfect awakening.”

Questions and Answers

STUDENT: You explained why it can be harmful to oneself to teach others if one has not attained certain stages of realization, and how one gets stuck in conceptualization because obviously one has to use language in order to teach. I was wondering if, for the same reason, we are in danger when we try to discuss

Dharma and our practice among ourselves, which we sometimes do. Some ideas seem to be exotic to us, so we try to find analogies that we know from our Western upbringing. Because we do that, and because we have not attained certain stages of realization, obviously we use language and so we apply certain concepts. If this were the case, would it be better for us to refrain from discussing Dharma among ourselves?

RINPOCHE: Discussion is not going to incur the same problems or dangers because most discussion is actually going to be about the aspect of Dharma that is the tradition of scholarship — in other words, the facts, details and so on, which can be talked about by anyone and can be taught by anyone who knows the facts. As long as your conceptual understanding is unmistakable, there will be no harm.

The only dangerous thing is if those who have not achieved great realization teach the tradition of realization, in other words, if they teach the essence of their experience of practice. This is a problem because if they speak of the essence of their realization of practice, it will not benefit anyone because their realization is not yet strong enough to transmit to others. It will also somehow delay their own refinement of their realization. This is not an issue when you are having a general discussion about Dharma.

STUDENT: Currently in the West there are many Dharma teachers who are really quite famous and they write many books. I really cannot comment on their level of attainment, but my guess is that they probably have not experienced one taste. Is it a problem listening to people like that? There are some people that I feel put an interesting Western slant on the teachings, and others who promote things without really perverting them, but they are maybe not very knowledgeable. How do you feel about that? Should we just forget about seeing such teachers? Is it a waste of time?

RINPOCHE: I do not know how to answer your question for several reasons. The first is that, in the case of written materials, it really depends on what they are writing about. If they are writing about the facts of Dharma, in which case they are basing their teaching or writing on what they have studied, it is probably going to be fine because it is not an expression of realization. It is an aspect of the tradition of scholarship. Provided that they do not make any egregious errors, it should not be a problem, and it should actually be helpful.

However your source for meditation instruction, for the actual guidance of the essence of your practice, should be very specific and not be too widespread. You should have one source that is authentic and reliable. This, however, brings up the issue of an

individual's karmic propensity and merit. Who you encounter and who you feel confidence in, and the style of teaching to which you are attracted, is to a great extent a function of your own karmic propensity. Therefore you might encounter a genuine and authentic teacher and view them as inauthentic, and you might encounter an inauthentic teacher and view them as authentic because your own karmic disposition causes you to perceive things a certain way. Although this choice of a teacher has to be left up to the individual, there is also some uncertainty about what kind of choice the individual is going to make.

STUDENT: With that understanding, what is a person to do?

RINPOCHE: You need to pray to those you have devotion for and leave the rest undecided.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, it sounds very risky to be a lama. I think you said that if a teacher of partial realization gives certain empowerments and transmissions to someone who has violated samaya, he will suffer severe consequences. But if he is only partially realized, how can he know? He cannot see the mind of every person, so how does he know if any of his students have broken samaya?

RINPOCHE: This is true, and there are many stories about this type of thing happening. Many times in the past a powerful local leader who was quite a wrongdoer would go to a teacher and say, “You must give me such-and-such empowerment. I will give you anything you want as an offering, but you must give it to me. I am not giving you the choice.” In some cases the teacher would do it, and if so it often happened that on the day the local leader died, the teacher died too. From one point of view, you could say it was the compassion of the teacher who did not care about his own life, nevertheless when you give an empowerment to someone with broken samaya, you suffer as a result.

It is important to be careful, especially with the more profound empowerments. That is why His Holiness Karmapa and the Venerable Kalu Rinpoche both indicated that teachers and students should mostly rely on the practice of Chenrezik. It is an empowerment that can be given without danger to the recipients or to the giver, and the practice can be done by anyone without danger because the yidam Chenrezik embodies the compassion of all buddhas. This is why we principally emphasize practices like Chenrezik, Tara, Medicine Buddha, and so forth. Some people have criticized us for this and said that we teach only these practices because we do not know the practices of the profound tantras or are incapable of teaching them. This is not

true. We teach the practices we teach because they are the ones that can be taught under these circumstances.

It is important to understand that different aspects of the teachings have really arisen to be disseminated under different degrees of restriction. An example of the most restricted sort of teaching is the following. When Marpa received all of the teachings of Naropa, one of the practices he received was the practice of *drongjuk*, which should literally be translated as “*transference*.” Because we often use the word *transference* to refer to the ejection of consciousness, I will just use the Tibetan because saying *transference* here could be confusing. Literally it means the “*transference of consciousness from one body to another*.” Marpa not only received this; he practiced it to the point where he perfected this ability, and occasionally he would demonstrate this. For example, a yak would die and Marpa would transfer his consciousness from his body into that of the yak, walk it off somewhere, and then come back to his own body. Naropa taught this to Marpa for one reason and one reason alone: in the future it was going to be necessary for Marpa’s son, Tarma Dode, to practice this in order for certain teachings to make it to Tibet.

Marpa’s son was the only person to whom Marpa taught this practice, and when Marpa’s son died, he was able to transfer

his mind into the body of a recently deceased pigeon. In that body, he flew to India and then transferred his consciousness into the body of a recently deceased Brahmin boy. When that boy, who was essentially Tarma Dode, grew up, he became the mahasiddha Tiphupa Drime Shenyen. This mahasiddha received the remaining teachings of Tilopa and Naropa, known as the Thirteen Teachings of the Formless Dakinis, which had not yet been brought to Tibet. It was Tiphupa who taught these to Rechungpa, and in that way they were brought into our tradition.

The purpose of this transmission of transference was accomplished solely through those events. As a result Marpa never taught the practice of drongjuk to any of his four great disciples, and the lineage died out. If the lineage had been continued, the practice would have such great potential for misuse that the possible dangers outweigh the advantages. Obviously an unscrupulous person could use the practice to remove the consciousness from someone powerful and then put their own mind into that body and take their place. To prevent this kind of body thievery, the lineage was allowed to die out. The point is that all sorts of teachings exist, but what is actually taught or given has to be determined by the situation.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, I have taken so many empowerments from you, and many others here have done so too. Everyone

goes for empowerments with different intentions. Is there any harm done to you if someone does not have the best intentions or someone just showed up because their friends came?

RINPOCHE: None of the empowerments that I give have any kind of restriction on them. For example, the series of empowerments that we are giving currently, the *Chik She Kun Drol* or *Knowing One Liberates All* series, was assembled by the Ninth Gyalwang Karmapa through his compassion, and it consists entirely of empowerments that may be given publicly. There is not a single word in any of these empowerments that bears the command seal of restriction.

I have not received any empowerments with such command seals of restriction, and even if I had received them, I would not know how to give them. Even if I did know how to give them, I do not have the necessary qualifications to give them. None of the empowerments I give are dangerous.

As far as your fear that my vitality or longevity might be harmed by giving someone empowerment, evidently not since I am still here and I have now gotten to the point where I am very bald and toothless.

STUDENT: You spoke about when a lama goes to help some people at their request, and about how the negative forces might linger on and turn against the lama who was trying to do good, and the ways to deal with that. What are the general protocols about praying or helping people without request, and what might happen in those cases?

RINPOCHE: As long as your motivation in praying for the other person is love and compassion, any spirits that are afflicting the other person will be unable to attack you, and they will have no wish to.

STUDENT: Not too long ago I was passing by an area where someone had committed suicide, and I had a feeling that something came near me, which dissipated after awhile. Is that an indication that one should be praying for that situation? Are there any situations where one should or should not get involved with anything through prayer?

RINPOCHE: The more you pray for others, the better. There is no restriction; it is never inappropriate to pray for someone.

STUDENT: Why would the nomads keep the corpse around for forty-nine days? What benefit is it? It just seems to put the poor lama through a lot of agony.

RINPOCHE: There is a particular need for this, and it is based on a different understanding or approach to grieving. In Tibetan society you deal with the grief of someone passing by using the circumstances of their death to cause you to perform as much virtue and practice as possible. If the corpse were quickly disposed of, people would tend to swallow their grief and forget about it too soon. If it is around as a visible reminder, then people keep doing virtuous things, and this is of tremendous benefit to the dead person as well as their family.

I have experienced this kind of thing myself. When I was thirty and Thrangu Rinpoche was twenty-one, we were sent with two other monks to a nomad community where the nomads would assemble and have a fair in the summer. They would have athletic competitions, folk dancing, and Thrangu Rinpoche would bestow empowerments and so forth.

When we got there, before Rinpoche had time to bestow the first empowerment, we were told that a nearby family was in great danger and that we were required there at once. We were told nothing more. Immediately we went to the home of this family, which we had been told was a large family, but when we got there the place was deserted. We did not know why, but we started preparing Rinpoche's quarters and tents so he could sleep.

What had happened of course was that the family had become ill. I had to begin making tormas, so I went into the main dwelling looking for tsampa. I went inside one tent and I found a man lying dead. His upper body was naked because he had removed some of his clothes before he died, and he had evidently vomited blood so violently that his face was covered with drying, vomited blood. He had been sitting up, but after he died he had fallen over. I looked around the tent and found lots of tsampa, so I was able to make the tormas. Elsewhere on the property we found four other members of the family who had the same illness. In all, one of them had died and four of them were sick.

After I made the tormas, Thrangu Rinpoche gave them the Amitabha empowerment. While he was giving the empowerment they were already vomiting blood. He performed transference of consciousness for the dead man. The next morning all four members of the family were dead. At this point there were five people dead, and only two members of the family were left, a girl and a boy. The girl had become a nun and the boy was a monk, and they were trying to take care of Rinpoche, serving tea and so on.

For the benefit of the family we invited two more monks from Thrangu Monastery, educated monks who had been in retreat. They began to perform the Vairochana service for the dead. The

first day there one of them became sick and started to vomit blood. He died during the night, and the next day we performed the transference of consciousness and the purification ritual for him. The other one kept on doing the service for the family, and he became sick that day and died in the night.

The two children, the young monk and the young nun who were still alive, died the next day, which brought the total dead up to nine. The one person who had not fled the area because of the illness, an old woman who was living alone, died the day after that, which brought it up to ten. The only people in the area who were still alive were a woman who had worked for the family as a domestic servant and her young son, and neither of them ever got ill.

All in all, we stayed there for twenty-one days, watching people get sick and die one after another, which was frightening. The entire area of course had been deserted by everyone except the family, because everyone was afraid of the contagion of this illness. It was quite frightening. I do not think I derived any enhancement or progress from it — I suppose someone else would have — but I certainly did feel some fear. I can verify from personal experience that the feeling of being part of something like this is similar to what Chakme Rinpoche describes.

After we left, an old lama from Thrangu Monastery was sent there. He piled all the corpses in one tent and stayed in the tent with them. Performing purification rituals, he stayed close enough so he could pour the water from the vases directly over them. He was basically sitting beside these corpses all day long and sleeping beside them at night. He did not get sick, and once the rumor circulated that he was not getting sick, bit by bit people started trickling back into the region and returning to their homes.

The cause of all this illness was supposedly due to a particular incident. Sometime before a **ngakpa**, a lay tantrika with long hair had wandered through the region. He had a very nice donkey with him, and the family suggested they buy the donkey from him. Initially he agreed, but then he reconsidered and said he did not want to sell them the donkey after all. There were many people in the family and they forced him to sell it, saying that he had given his word that he would sell it and they were not going to let him go back on his word.

They forced him to sell the donkey and then threw him out of the area. He must have been someone with some magical power because on the first day afterwards the family dog suddenly jumped into the air and fell down dead. Next the donkey they had bought from the ngakpa started braying very loudly, vom-

ited blood, and died. After that the family themselves starting getting sick. Almost sixty years later, this particular area is still uninhabited; no one will live there.

STUDENT: Was the fate that befell that family a natural consequence of the way they treated the ngakpa, or did the ngakpa actually curse them? If the latter, was it because he was ignorant of karma, or was he willing to take on all that bad karma for the sake of his donkey?

RINPOCHE: I do not know for sure, but it looks as though he really did something to them. As for what his attitude was and his reasons for doing it, there are two types of ngakpas. One type is called a “negative ngakpa.” A negative ngakpa, through practice, has cultivated the ability to naturally kill, and just does it without concern for the consciousness of the other person or his own accumulation of karma. The other type is called a “beneficial ngakpa.” This is someone who can magically kill but also has the ability to liberate the consciousness of anyone killed. I have no idea which kind this person was.

STUDENT: If he was a bad ngakpa, he is not immune to the law of karma, is he? He just does not care?

RINPOCHE: Oh, he definitely is not immune. He accumulates tremendous negative karma.

STUDENT: I have a question regarding books that have a command seal on them, but are sold without restriction. There are quite a number of them now that have been translated that are publicly available in bookstores, like Longchenpa's teachings on **Dzokchen**. I have noticed that most of them are terma that say, "Do not give these books to people who have not had the transmission." They say this either in the introduction or at the end. I am wondering how to handle that kind of thing.

RINPOCHE: Well, if an individual wants to put one of those things into practice, they would need to receive the requisite empowerments, transmissions, and instructions, and then the book would be a valuable resource for them. If someone does not wish to practice it, but has respect for the teachings contained in the book, it would also be excellent if they put the book on their shrine and use it as a basis for the gathering of the accumulations.

STUDENT: I was struck by the section that said if a bodhisattva teacher, an enlightened teacher, is requested to give an empowerment for someone who is really not ready or worthy, they should say, "I don't know what this empowerment is," "I know about it but I don't have it," or "I don't have the text." Why isn't

saying that “You are not ready for this” or “You can’t have this” an option? As a student, and an exceptionally stupid student, I would expect to be told many times in my life, “You cannot have this teaching because you are too dumb or just not ready.” One would feel much more confident with a bodhisattva who would be willing to say, “Not in this life.”

RINPOCHE: The reason is that the person is liable to get angry.

STUDENT: I just want to say that, having experienced this, I felt quite the opposite. I have had the experience of a rinpoche saying to me, “Well, I don’t know” when I knew that he did. I realize that it was a culturally polite way of telling me that he did not want to address it, but this was confusing and difficult. It would have been much more user-friendly for him to say, “Look, I’d rather not talk about this with you now,” “It is not an appropriate time,” or anything like what my mother would have done for me when I was a child. In the same way, I could accept that from a rinpoche.

RINPOCHE: The problem with an honest answer to this kind of question is that if you ask a teacher for an empowerment and they say, “Yes, I possess the lineage of this empowerment and I have the text, but I am not going to give it to you,” then you are going to ask why. If you ask why and they have to tell you, they

may have to get too personal. They may have to say, “I cannot give this to you because you have such-and-such samaya problems” or something else. If you were not angry initially, eventually you are going to get angry, so it is much better if they just say, “I don’t have the text” or “I haven’t received it” or “I have never even heard of it.” Then the whole awkward discussion is avoided.

STUDENT: When you said that there are certain practices like the transference that could be dangerous if it got into the wrong hands, I read a book about that one time that was translated from the Tibetan called *The Prince Who Became a Cuckoo*. It was about how he transferred his consciousness into somebody else’s. Early on, when I first started studying Vajrayana with Trungpa Rinpoche, he always warned us that there were very strong safeguards for going against the teachings or using it for any kind of selfish purposes. I do not know if I have a naive view, but I do not understand how somebody can have any kind of realization and use practices to harm others. It seems contrary to actually having realizations. For example, the teachings say that the moment you realize emptiness, you have compassion. I am wondering how it can happen that someone abuses the practices or teachings?

RINPOCHE: Unfortunately, it is not that simple. If a method is powerful, such as the method of transference, then if someone

applies himself or herself to the practice one-pointedly, the power of the method alone will make it effective, and will give the person ability even though they have no genuine experience or realization, and even though they do not possess the view and so forth. This is why such things are liable to be misused.

This works the same way with things like curses. When out of malevolence or hatred someone curses someone else, it has some kind of power. The power comes from the person's malevolence; the curse is not powerless just because it is a malevolent rather than a benevolent aspiration, or because the person lacks realization. The person who performs a curse certainly has no realization and not even an attitude or aspiration of benevolence. Nevertheless their very malevolence gives the curse power.

Another example is forceful mantras, which do not exist for the purpose of harming others but could be misused in this way. To give you an example, in the region of Nyarong there was a fellow who was sickly and weak from birth. He was born with only one eye and he was abnormally small and weak. He was bullied and picked on by everyone in his district, and there was nothing he could do about it.

One day a lama came by and gave an empowerment for the protector Ganesh, and he received the empowerment and instruc-

tions. He recited seven hundred million of these mantras with the motivation to punish the entire region that had mistreated him. Especially he made the aspiration, “After my death, may I be reborn in such a form that I kill all I see and frighten all who hear of me.” As a result of his obsessive recitation of this mantra, he was reborn as a spirit who is considered to have been responsible for the deaths of many people in that region.

Leaving the question of malevolence aside, even if people have a benevolent and altruistic attitude, they can gain the ability to affect others simply through the power of repeating the mantra, and they can do this without having any realization. This was quite well known in the past, and there were many instances of this. Such people might have no view or realization whatsoever, but through the repetition of the mantra they would have some kind of power.

I have seen examples of this myself. If someone had a wound or swelling that was not going down, there was a person who would take a sword, heat it in a fire until it was red hot, touch it to their tongue, then spit on the wound, and immediately the wound would deflate or the swelling would disappear. This was because this person was reciting certain mantras. The mantras are not the basic mantras you use for yidam practice; they are application mantras associated with the alleviation of certain

illnesses and so on. In any case, this is an instance of the fact that someone who lacks realization can still use profound methods effectively, and this is what makes these profound methods dangerous.

STUDENT: Can you go over the most harmful ways for a student to break a samaya?

RINPOCHE: There are basically two ways of really breaking samaya. One is if you sincerely, unquestioningly, and from the depths of your heart adopt the attitude that Dharma is untrue, that it is just a means of deceiving or controlling people. If you think that, if you really, really believe that — just saying it is not enough, you have to really believe it — then you have broken samaya completely.

The other way is if you have taken someone as your teacher and received empowerments and so on from them, and then you subsequently develop such antipathy for them that you think and say things like, “This person has so many defects, they are so terrible, I was wasting my time studying with them, and they have no qualities whatsoever.” If you do this, then you have completely broken samaya.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, how does a transmission lineage stay intact and pure, and how is it broken or corrupted?

RINPOCHE: It is very hard to tell. In fact it is almost impossible to tell an authentic lineage from a lineage with a broken samaya. This is because you cannot even tell if an individual has broken samaya, and a lineage is made up of individuals.

One of the best examples of this occurred in the nineteenth century when there were two masters active in East Tibet, Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, and Do Khyentse Yeshe Dorje. Both were considered emanations of the same bodhisattva, and both had numerous disciples who achieved great realization. Although they had never met, Do Khyentse Yeshe Dorje would always tell his disciples, and anyone else who would listen, that Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo was a fake. He was not really an emanation of anybody; he was just the son of a rich family. He looked good in his robes, and he played the game well, but he had no realization and he was completely useless and untrustworthy. Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo would always tell his numerous disciples that Do Khyentse was a fake, just a scoundrel pretending to be a tertön and a siddha when actually he was neither. He was a samaya corruptor and just all-around no good.

Early one morning when Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo's attendant came into his room to light the small fire for boiling tea, he noticed that his master was resting in meditation, but he seemed somehow more brilliant and majestic than usual, and it was very difficult to even be in the room or look at him. He was so powerful he was almost frightening. The attendant asked, "Rinpoche, in all the time I have been attending you, I have never seen you look like this. Is something special going on?" Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo said, "Well, that bad Do Khyentse died. The wisdom of his mind dissolved into me and my experience is blazing as a result." You never can tell.

The only situation where one can genuinely say there is a samaya breakage in a lineage is if someone intrinsic to that lineage enters into the lineage, receives the empowerments, transmissions, and instructions, and subsequently turns against it. For this to be a real breaking of samaya, they have to really turn against it and do what they can to persecute, interrupt, or denigrate that lineage.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, did you say that someone with broken samaya, someone who had angered the dakinis, could have a problem with narcolepsy?

RINPOCHE: Nyöpo means insanity, madness, and narcolepsy. Do not forget that some of these terms have more than just a

literal meaning. It may indicate many things, not only the disease called “narcolepsy.”

STUDENT: Someone I know suffers greatly from narcolepsy. In the family, there appears to be a lot of insanity; they are constantly struggling with each other, and they are near death because of almost falling asleep. Is there a way to use the Dharma to help them relieve their suffering? Is there also something in the lineage, some story having to do with someone in the Karma Kagyu lineage that had this?

RINPOCHE: To answer your two questions, with regard to your acquaintance who suffers from narcolepsy and whose family has a tendency toward disturbances, some families just have such things in them genetically. They need a doctor because doctors know about these things and I do not.

As for your second question about specific stories or instances of insanity as a result of the violation of the samaya of mind and so on, there must be many of these stories for the reasons you mentioned, but I do not remember any specific ones.

STUDENT: One of the reasons I bring this situation up is because this person and her family are just exhausting themselves doing so much for so many beings all the time. They are very helpful, but

then when they drive a car or something, they go unconscious. I just thought maybe there was some way in the Dharma to help this kind of person.

RINPOCHE: Tell them to get some sleep!

What may be going on, at least with some of them, is not genuine narcolepsy, but just exhaustion; they may be doing too much. They should have a schedule where they spend a certain amount of their day being active, a certain amount relaxing, and a certain amount sleeping. In one way their situation is actually a good thing, because if they are as benevolent and helpful as you say and they are exhausting themselves through excessive deeds of benevolence, then of course they are very good people indeed. But they need to think of their own physical and mental needs, because otherwise they will not be able to continue to help others for very long, and in the long run they will be able to do less for others than they would have otherwise.

The traditional analogy for this is that when you are walking you have to look far ahead, but you should only walk as far as you can. Just because you can look a great distance ahead does not mean you should try to run all the way in one day.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, you said there were two kinds of people: one with partial realization, and the other with full realization. If we are not on the level of having realization, but still have the desire to benefit beings, how can we prevent ourselves from accumulating negative karma in the process? It seems that even if you have positive aspirations, you still go back and forth until you arrive at a stable point of realization.

RINPOCHE: This is a good question, and it indicates that you have a good understanding of this subject. In this section the text deals with individuals who, in the first case, have stable realization and, in the second case, perfect realization. We may feel that since we do not fit into these categories, we may not be able to benefit others at all. Nevertheless we can be of benefit to others starting right now.

The first thing we need to understand is that all of the qualities arising in the mind of someone with stable — and ultimately perfect — realization are not qualities that are newly acquired at that time or created by the path or the realization. These qualities are innate within all beings and have been so throughout beginningless time. The problem for most of us is that we do not know about the existence of these qualities within us, and as a result we do not exert ourselves in the process that reveals these qualities.

Since to a large degree the ability to benefit others depends on at least partial revelation of these qualities, then until these qualities have been revealed, your practice is your principal means of benefiting others. As I have said many times in the past and will say again now, your motivation is what makes your practice beneficial to others, and in fact what makes it authentic to begin with. If your practice is motivated by the wish to benefit yourself alone, your practice is no good because the motivation is no good. If your practice is motivated by the wish to benefit all beings — not merely in some temporary way, but you wish to establish all beings in perfect awakening — then for the present your practice is the best way you can benefit others. If you practice with that kind of motivation, there is no doubt whatsoever that your innate qualities will gradually become revealed.

We measure practice by time spent in retreat, by numbers of mantras said, and so forth, but if someone spends a long time practicing or says many mantras with an impure motivation, the appropriate results will not be achieved. On the other hand, if someone recites even one hundred OM MANI PADME HUMs with a perfect motivation — that is to say, motivated by the wish to benefit beings — then the virtue they accrue through that recitation will not only last throughout time, but it will automatically increase day after day. Through having that kind

of perfectly motivated virtue, such a person will have a long life, good health, prosperity, and so forth, without having to pray or aspire for these things.

In short, everything depends on motivation. Earlier we discussed how it is possible to conceal the worst of motivations behind a nice facial expression. What makes something truly virtuous is a pure or virtuous motivation, the wish to achieve perfect awakening for the benefit of all beings.

We want to be able to benefit beings directly now, and we can do so in slight or temporary ways, but the principal way we benefit beings is by dedicating to others any virtue we accumulate through practicing, engaging in generosity, and so forth. Anytime you do that, you are benefiting others.

STUDENT: I have been contemplating what my motivation in my practice really is, and I have to honestly say that my motivation is narrower than it should be. If I were to say how I honestly feel about it, I certainly want all beings to reach enlightenment, but I want to reach it too. It is like if we were all in a burning movie theater: I would want everyone to get out, but I would not want to stay behind. I recognize that I have a narrow motivation, but how do I expand that? Intellectually I understand it, and I do tong len practice and try to work on it, but it seems that there

is a bit of a gap between my intellectual motivation and how I truly feel.

RINPOCHE: I have great respect for your question because you are telling the truth. What you say is not only true of you, but of all of us. Throughout beginningless time, we have cultivated the habit of selfishness. That means not for one lifetime or ten lifetimes, but aeon after aeon after aeon. Now we have heard about altruism and we are all trying to develop it, but as you indicated in your question, there is some dichotomy between the purity of motivation we are trying to achieve and our actual motivation.

In fact we will only achieve the complete lack of selfishness of which you speak when we achieve the first **bhumi**, the first bodhisattva level. Nevertheless if we dedicate all of our virtue to the benefit of all beings, this alone will gradually wear away the habit of selfishness and gradually increase the habit of altruism.

The image of the burning building is a very good one because it can also be used to indicate how we are presently unable to benefit others the way bodhisattvas can. For example, having reached the exit ourselves, the best thing we could do would be to yell to the others and try to get them to come out. We

are not able, physically or verbally, to spirit them out of the burning building.

STUDENT: I was wondering if you could make a few comments on the predicament of a beginner like me, who is fundamentally very selfish. If I make an altruistic act, I think how this benefits myself. Of course, this taints the altruism and makes it cease to be of benefit.

RINPOCHE: What you say is very true. In the beginning, it is impossible for one's motivation to be perfectly altruistic. If from the beginning our motivation were perfectly altruistic, this would mean we had already achieved buddhahood and the whole path would be unnecessary. Although our motivation starts out as very imperfect, through simply understanding the idea and importance of altruism, through having some aspiration to achieve it, and through consciously dedicating whatever virtue you accumulate to the welfare of others, your motivation will gradually change and become more and more altruistic.

It is practically impossible to be truly motivated in all of your mundane actions by the wish to benefit others, but at least in your virtuous acts you can attempt to be motivated by the wish to benefit others. In order to reinforce that, you should formulate this intention at the beginning of the action, and

then reinforce it through dedicating the virtue at the action's culmination. By doing this repeatedly, your motivation will gradually be transformed. The very fact that this is mentioned so much, that the importance of an altruistic motivation is so greatly stressed, is evidence of what you say. If we were all not like this, if we did not all have trouble with selfishness, there would be no need for this to be mentioned at all.

STUDENT: Sometimes I think I am being altruistic, but then I look more carefully and think, “Well, is this really for show or is this really because I think this is what my actions should look like from the outside?” Is there a reliable index that will let me know when I am getting closer to an authentic and pure motivation?

RINPOCHE: It is possible that someone's behavior of body and speech could be misleading, and another person could be fooled by their behavior. For example, someone can appear very gentle and altruistic, but in fact are only adopting that appearance in order to deceive or harm someone else. Only the person knows their true motivation.

The only true witness of your motivation is you, and you can serve as that witness. In order to do so, you need to scrutinize your motivation. The exception to this is someone like a buddha

or a bodhisattva, who can observe the motivations of others. Aside from that, an ordinary person has no way to know the motivation of anyone else; they can only know their own.

When you scrutinize your motivation, you probably find that it is very self-directed, self-focused, or even selfish. We have a great deal of concern for ourselves, and this manifests as fear. For example, much of what we do is motivated by the wish to avoid things that we are afraid might happen or the wish for some sort of better state or existence for ourselves. When you detect this kind of limitation of motivation, then acknowledge it to yourself, and recognize that it is nothing more than the presence of a habit cultivated throughout beginningless time.

We have to accept the fact that our progress in the beginning of the path is not perfect. It is going to be full of mistakes. The path in the beginning is very much a matter of two steps forward, one step backward, and so on. It is not much different from any other kind of learning process; in the beginning it is going to be full of errors precisely because it is a learning process. The aspiration to develop a pure motivation will gradually bring about that motivation. Do not forget that all of the extraordinary attainments and qualities of the greatest beings are simply the revelation of the innate qualities within them and within us. As these qualities are revealed, our fear, anger, selfishness, and

so on, will naturally reduce and dissolve, and our wisdom, love, and compassion will naturally increase.

STUDENT: Can you talk about how to stabilize your motivation during difficult times? I find that in my own practice in my daily life, it is so much easier to do it when things are going fine as opposed to when I experience hard times or difficult situations.

RINPOCHE: Initially, the best way to stabilize motivation and gain independence from circumstances is the practice of tranquillity meditation. Then finally you recognize or identify your mind's nature, and then you will see that it does not change in the midst of circumstances.

STUDENT: Speaking of difficult times, I often feel discouraged by seeing what is happening in our world; for instance, I was robbed a few times. Although you pray for others, that does not stop these things from happening. You feel that you still need to protect yourself, and that strong "self" comes out at times. How do you deal with that?

RINPOCHE: Dharma does not teach that you should not protect yourself. You need to protect yourself. The question is the motivation behind doing that. From a dharmic point of view, the valid reason to protect yourself is that you need this life in

order to pursue the practice of virtue. In order not to interrupt your opportunity to accumulate virtue for the benefit of others, you should protect yourself. Ultimately this is not a selfish motivation.

If you are a great yogi with perfect realization like Jetsun Milarepa, then you cannot be concerned with protecting yourself. Then you can take the attitude, “If someone wants to steal from me, they can steal.” If an ordinary person takes that attitude, it is actually harmful. If someone robs you, then you suffer as a result because you lost something, but the robber suffers even more because he or she is reborn as a preta. If someone hurts you, you suffer through being hurt or beaten up, but the assailant suffers through being reborn in hell. For the benefit of others as well, you should protect yourself. Do not think, “I must be free of all selfishness, therefore I must stop trying to protect myself and must not lock my doors anymore.” You should lock your doors, not only out of concern for yourself but for others as well.

The exception to this is someone like Milarepa, who has tremendous realization. At one point, when he was living in one of his practice caves, a thief crept in during the middle of the night. He knew that someone was living in the cave, and he assumed there were provisions he could steal. When Milarepa heard the thief coming in, he laughed and said, “If I cannot find anything

in this cave with my eyes during the day, I do not think you are going to be able to find anything with hands at night.”

STUDENT: If we see somebody suffering a lot, of course we want to stop their suffering, but part of our motivation is to relieve ourselves from the discomfort of seeing them suffer. Is there anything that we can do?

RINPOCHE: The desire to remove the suffering of someone else when you witness it is good in and of itself. You do not have to be too strict in examining the subdivisions of your motivation in such a situation. The biggest problem we have with this situation is that most of the time we are unable to remove the other person’s suffering. We cannot do it physically or verbally, and this exhausts our resources and makes us very sad.

When we become sad in this situation, the sadness means we need more training in the Mahayana, because such sadness is characteristic of shravakas and pratyekabuddhas, and in fact that is why they do not engage in benefiting beings as bodhisattvas do. Shravakas and pratyekabuddhas find that witnessing the suffering of sentient beings and being unable to alleviate it makes them so overwhelmingly sad that they cannot deal with it, and therefore they withdraw from such situations.

Bodhisattvas deal with this by recollecting the fact that even though you may not be able to remove someone's suffering, you can at least make aspirations for them, thereby ensuring that they will be free from suffering in the future. This recollection prevents bodhisattvas from suffering the same degree of discouragement.

STUDENT: In these teachings you spoke about many experiences that seem very far away from my everyday life, and yet in some ways it was helpful to think there is something analogous to the way we live now. Even though these stories seem like a long time ago, I also have a feeling that we are very close. I wanted to see if perhaps this was your intention, if this is what I should be carrying away from listening to this.

RINPOCHE: A certain amount of these teachings can be taken to heart, but as you indicated in your question, the express meaning is primarily for people with extensive experience and realization.

The reason why we study such things, even at the beginning of our practice, is to develop some sense of aspiration, a sense of what we are heading toward. As a result we will have something to emulate, and we can cultivate the intention of developing these kinds of qualities so we can benefit beings in these ways.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, I am puzzled by the visualization of the retinue for perfectly realized beings because it seems so warriorlike. You can visualize all kinds of things to protect yourself, but I had the idea that a realized being does not need to do that because they are protected by the heart of compassion. For example, Shakyamuni Buddha did not need to protect himself from Angulimala.

RINPOCHE: From one point of view this is true, and from another point of view it is not. From one point of view it is true because in a sense the essence of the whole visualization is the teacher himself or herself as Gyalwa Gyamtso, which in essence is a way of meditating on love and compassion for all beings. Through that meditation, the teacher will cause the areas through which they travel to become prosperous and peaceful, the people and other beings in those areas to be loving to one another, and so on.

On the other hand, it is not true, and this is because maras are very strange. Let us not forget that even during Guru Rinpoche's first journey to Tibet, all of the gods and spirits of that country rose up in jealousy and competitiveness and attempted to kill him. He subdued them through displaying a wrathful manner and then led them onto the path. Now they are all upasakas; there are devas that are upasakas, nagas that are upasakas, and

so on. It is simply a fact that some beings are very obscured and yet very powerful, and such beings cannot necessarily be tamed by an overt display of peace.

For the reasons you mentioned in your question, it is quite likely that these maras and so on could not harm the teacher, but they might succeed in harming someone in the retinue, such as an attendant, horses, or yaks. In order to prevent any such harm, it is necessary for the lama to present an attitude that is not simply peaceful.

STUDENT: I also found myself curious about the different faces of Chenrezik. Assuming that the different deities are different facets of a jewel of the whole activity of compassion, I wonder if you can speak about the different deities, like Thousand-Armed Chenrezik, Gyalwa Gyamtso, Standing Red-Armed Chenrezik, and so on. Why are they different and what is their activity?

RINPOCHE: There are basically two reasons for the variety of appearances of Chenrezik. One reason is that Chenrezik, like any deity, will take the particular form and create the particular circumstances that will best tame the disciples or sentient beings to be tamed at that time. Some beings are better tamed by an eleven-faced, thousandarmed form of the deity; some are better tamed by a one-faced, twoarmed form; some by a red form; some

by a white form; and so on. In general the reason deities take different forms is to conform to or correspond to the needs of sentient beings.

Secondly and more specifically, the different forms of Chenrezik correspond to the different levels of tantra. The kriya, **charya**, **yoga**, and **anuttara tantra** forms of the deity essentially correspond to what is appropriate for a beginner, an intermediate practitioner, an advanced practitioner, and a supreme practitioner.

STUDENT: When we do our practices, we try to visualize benefiting beings. How do the beings actually receive benefit from us? Also, I know that when I go to you for something, I receive blessings. How do such blessings come?

RINPOCHE: When you visualize benefiting beings in your personal practice, you are making the aspiration to benefit beings. In essence you are dedicating all of the virtue you have accumulated up to that point to the welfare of others. It is not certain that any or all of those beings are going to be immediately affected or benefited by your act of dedication. They may or may not receive immediate benefit, but it is certain that ultimately they will be benefited, because when you dedicate your virtue in that way, you bring yourself closer to the result of awakening. The virtue you dedicate in that way will never be used up. It

is both the principal cause of awakening and the cause of the beneficial activity that you do for others upon awakening. While the benefit for beings is not immediate, it is definite. As we say, if there is no rain there are not going to be any crops, but crops do not shoot up out of the ground the moment it rains.

In the context of empowerment, the medium for the transmission of blessing is the momentum of blessing itself. The momentum that is carried through time, from teacher to teacher, from generation to generation, is simply called the “momentum or current of blessing.” In spite of the insubstantial nature of this momentum, there are many stories of empowerments where blessings are transmitted to individuals suddenly and effectively, and the individuals develop realization as a result. Even if that does not happen, whatever does happen in an empowerment or blessing occurs because the teacher who gives the empowerment holds the lineage of these blessings, and therefore they can continue it. Because they do so motivated by love and compassion, you become authorized to do the practice through receiving the empowerment. The authorization or empowerment aspect of empowerment is similar to being authorized to own something through a document of transfer, except this is like a transfer a parent might make to their child.

The qualities of the empowerment may not arise within you immediately. What does arise immediately on the completion of the empowerment is the full authorization for you to pursue the practice — to visualize the specific deity, to recite the specific mantra, and so forth. The function of the empowerment is to create a habit or plant seeds. The seeds that are planted are those of the **nirmanakaya**, sambhogakaya, and **dharmakaya**. You do not necessarily attain these during the empowerment, and you do not necessarily attain them as soon as you begin the practice. As you pursue the practice, because it is properly authorized and therefore includes the continuum of blessings, these qualities start to develop.

There cannot be any accomplishment if you do such a practice without empowerment, because there is neither the habit planted by the empowerment ceremony, nor the stream or momentum of blessings transmitted by it.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, you said that people need to have an ability to visualize. Could you speak a bit more about visualizations? To me they have always been kind of a static thing in my mind, but some of the visualizations feel more like full-scale movies because they have so many comings and goings and such a variety of things.

RINPOCHE: The term usually used for a developed faculty of visualization is *clear appearance*. “Clear appearance” means that your mind is workable; you can apply your mind effectively to the task. Workable mind essentially comes from having a stable state of tranquillity or *shinay*. It means that you can apply your mind to whatever you want; you can direct your mind to any chosen object.

It is true that the elaborate visualization described earlier is very much like a motion picture in its elaboration and constant movement. What was being described in that context was not just a meditation, but something that might be perceived as a vision by an enlightened master. Although it is presented here as a meditation, as the teacher travels they actually observe the presence of these protectors, beings, and so on that surround them.

With regard to visualization, it is important that the deities being visualized are not visualized as corporeal or substantial in the conventional sense. Their bodies are vivid appearances made entirely of light — like rainbows. Nevertheless they are not diaphanous: their color, robes, scepters, and so on are vividly clear, like an image on a television screen. Not only are they made of a light devoid of substantiality, but the essence, the essential quality of that light, is wisdom. As it says in a description of

Guru Rinpoche, his body consists of light, of which the essence is wisdom. Visualization of the deity bestows the enhancement of wisdom, and this is because the essence of the deity is wisdom, and the deity is recognized as such.

STUDENT: I am fascinated by your response, particularly when you said that if you could see the essence of wisdom on the subtle level, it would be light — in other words, not like this solid material. What about beings on a subtle level that have their own volition and activity? Does this subtle level have a layer that is confused, just as we are confused on this relative level?

RINPOCHE: The types of spirits seen by those who see spirits do not have the nature of wisdom because these are karmic appearances. The proximate condition for the appearance of spirits to certain people is the structure of their channels, which is why some people see these things and others do not. Because the appearance is produced by the transitory condition of the structure of that person's channels, this is mere karmic appearance and not wisdom appearance. Furthermore the person who sees such things will fixate on them as real, as something that exists “out there,” which is the exact opposite of what was meant by the phrase “body of light, of which the essence is wisdom.”

If practitioners have a stable practice of the generation stage and as a result they have the clear appearance of the deity all the time, then to some extent they will be able to see that the nature of all appearances is like that. This is not how we normally experience things. We could say that on an ultimate level this is the nature of all appearances because nothing transcends its nature, and the dharmadhatu is the nature of all things by definition; nevertheless we do not experience things that way, so from that point of view this is primarily just a description of the visualized deity.

STUDENT: How would you refer to the beings that someone like Guru Rinpoche subdued when he came to Tibet? I am assuming that they were spirits up in the mountains and that type of thing, and did not exist on a concrete level.

RINPOCHE: Those beings are not like that. Because it is not easy for us to see them, we assume that they have some kind of subtle body, but in fact from their own point of view their bodies are as coarse and substantial as ours are. They do not have bodies of light and they certainly do not have the essence of wisdom; they are harmful beings, otherwise he would not have needed to subdue them. Some of the beings that he bound by samaya eventually began the path, and probably some of these beings have achieved those levels now; they have attained awakening

and have achieved bodies of light with the essence of wisdom. But I cannot say for sure where they all are because we do not have a chart.

STUDENT: If all things are empty, is it true that all visionary experience is of the same fundamental nature?

RINPOCHE: Ultimately all appearances have the same nature, so that would include visionary appearances. In terms of visionary appearances themselves having some particular or special nature, they do not. They are just a result of conditions and so they are really not that different from anything else, except that they do not occur for everyone. The fact that they do not occur for everyone also indicates that they are somewhat subjective and conditioned.

The family of Gedje Parma was a well-known family with three sons, one of whom is still alive. One was a tulku named Sapgar Rinpoche, one a monk named Athar, and one a layman who was killed during the invasion. When these three sons would get together, all three could see spirits and they would talk about what they saw. They would say, “Look, there goes one over there,” and the other two would say, “Oh, yes, there it is.” They all saw the same thing.

Once one of them said, “Why is it that we in this family see these things and most people do not?” The tulku of the family said, “I think it is because in our previous lives we were all spirits, and therefore if we pay too much attention to this, I think there is a danger we will be reborn as spirits or ghosts in our next life as well.” I do not know whether this was a definitive or an indicative statement, but it is generally thought that seeing such things is not necessarily that good.

STUDENT: I have a friend that can see little people from time to time, Irish little people; and I do not think that it is from drinking. There are stories about all kinds of things that people perceive. What happens if one perceives a Thousand-Armed Chenrezik in the middle of a room? What would make that happen?

RINPOCHE: It is hard to say whether seeing a leprechaun and seeing Chenrezik is the same kind of seeing, but certainly you are seeing something very different. In one case you are seeing a deity and in the other case you are seeing something demonic.

STUDENT: A lama that used to come to Santa Fe said he was the Dalai Lama’s weather-controller. He did a ceremony in which he rounded up all the weather spirits, put them in a huge frying pan, lectured them about how bad they were, and then liberated

some and ate some. He ended up dying of stomach cancer. You did not mention any specific practices about weather spirits; are there any particular ones that you had in mind?

RINPOCHE: Did he make it rain?

STUDENT: The clouds would come pouring in, but it didn't rain.

RINPOCHE: I do not know about the frying pan procedure. Generally you summon all of the spirits or deities; when you first do this they will be irritated, so you must summon them with somewhat forceful **samadhi**. Once you have summoned them, you placate them by giving them various offerings that will please them. After this you talk to them about the law of karma, you teach them and tell them that if they harm others, the result will be their own suffering in the future. Having done that, you send them home.

As Chakme Rinpoche said in his text, people could damage their health if they rely on the practice of a wrathful deity and their own personal power to do this procedure. I do not know if that is the case in the instance you are talking about, or if the lama you are speaking of simply happened to have that illness.

In my lifetime there was a great drought in China, and because the nationalist government (this was before the Communists came to power) was familiar with Pabongka Rinpoche, he recommended they invite one of the five incarnations of Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, the one who took the seat at Palpung Monastery. They invited Palpung Khyentse Rinpoche to Beijing and were quite stern with him. They said, “We need you to make it rain, and we need you to make it rain enough so this container is filled up to the depth of three feet. It cannot be more than that because too much rain will wash our crops out. If it is less, it will not be enough for the farms, so we need exactly three feet of water. He said, “All right, take me to a spring.” They took him to a spring and he performed the water tormo ceremony that is done daily, then he did a long sur with offerings to all of samsara and nirvana. After doing that, he said they needed to move farther up the hill; they went up the mountainside and he did the sur offering again, and then there was a tremendous rainfall. The government was so pleased they wanted him to remain, but they decided to send him back to Palpung because it was close to the uprising of World War II.

I recall another incident that occurred when I was quite young, before I became a monk. There was a drought in my region; everything was completely dry even in the spring and summer, as though it was winter. The previous Traleg Rinpoche alleviated

the drought by going to a spring and sitting inside the natural water there — just as if it were a spring where people bathe — and that brought the rain.

STUDENT: If I understood correctly, in speaking about Karma Chakme's text, you said that for the nagas and the weather spirits, wrathful means are used. I am curious because you usually say that the Chenrezik practice is best in conditions where there is a difficult spirit, and that we should always be very peaceful with them.

RINPOCHE: It seems you need to exhibit a forceful appearance in order to summon the spirits.

STUDENT: We are in a drought now. In the beginning of the Green Tara practice, it says you should abide in the conduct of ablution and purification before you start practicing. Is that a strict rule? Does that mean full body bath, or is splashing water okay in times of a drought?

RINPOCHE: Fine, no problem.

STUDENT: So wrathful practices have to be done first, and one looks into the nature of one's own fear, followed by bodhichitta?

RINPOCHE: In general that is the way it works, but the sequence is not absolutely definite. As explained in this text, a practitioner is generally going to experience fear in this situation, and they need to look at the nature of it. But there must be some practitioners who are beyond even that, for whom fear never arises.

STUDENT: If you look into the nature of the fear, how does that influence the spirits?

RINPOCHE: It causes their aggression to be naturally pacified. The greater your fear, the more aggressive they will be.

STUDENT: So they become naturally pacified by seeing that you are becoming pacified?

RINPOCHE: Through the pacification of your own fear, you have become compassionate and full of bodhichitta for them. This is what wins them over.

STUDENT: So it is really the compassion that wins them over, that makes them pacified?

RINPOCHE: Yes.

STUDENT: There is a pond fifty meters from the house where I live. When I was in Nepal a couple years back, a Tibetan healing

woman named Lama Dolkar described this pond to me, and she said the pond had an entity in it that was making my dad sick. Now he has since passed on so I am living in this house. The pond is physically contaminated by septic tank runoff and industrial pollutants, and it has a lot of scum on it. Also a sack containing six live kittens was thrown in the pond by my dad. When I am there doing my daily practice, including Dorje Trolo, things generally are not good.

When I was driving up to Tsurphu a few years ago, Lama Tsewang said I needed to stop at a certain place and get some antinaga water, so we stopped. I got a container of this water, I put a little bit in my shrine offering back home after the well went dry, and then the well had water in it. There is a pond, a well that is unpredictable, and all these surrounding things. Do you have any advice or commentary, concerning what to do about the pollution in the pond, the possible spiritual inhabitants, and the dryness of the well?

RINPOCHE: Naga medicine, which is normally poured directly in the water supply, is beneficial. You mentioned that it was used in the offering water for the shrine. Probably it would be more effective to pour it into the pond, except if the pond is disgustingly polluted.

STUDENT: I'm wondering if this being is malevolent or mischievous. I am thinking about your comment that if a place is dangerous and inhabited by such a being, various negative things can happen. Do I live in such a place?

RINPOCHE: No, it is not that sort of dangerous place. Each body of water has beings like that inhabiting it. The mere presence of such beings does not make it dangerous.

STUDENT: What is meant by the protection of the mundane deities?

RINPOCHE: The mundane protective deities are deities that you inherit for the most part from both family lines, from your mother and your father. It is almost like saying there are five deities that come with your genes, then there are the nine that protect you, and so on. Some of these are also local deities that take responsibility for you; they are almost like extra parents, and they try to protect you. All of these are mundane, but being devas they have limited supercognition. If those who are your superiors prostrate to you, they will flee because they cannot stand it. Because they fled you are defenseless, and you have also lost tremendous merit at that moment.

There are many stories about this. One of the best known concerns the mahasiddha Naropa. Based on his lifestyle and appearance you could not tell if he was a Buddhist yogi or a Hindu yogi. Consequently at one point in his life he was living in a community of Hindu yogis. He lived with them and everything was fine, but one day they said to him, “You eat with us and you live with us, but you never, ever prostrate to the image of Shiva.” (They had a big stone statue of Shiva there as the main object of worship.) “Nobody has ever seen you prostrate to Shiva. You cannot live with us and not prostrate to our god.” He replied, “I have no problem with Shiva, but he cannot take my prostration.” They insisted, so finally he agreed, saying that he apologized for any discourtesy to Shiva, and he would prostrate to Shiva’s representation alone. If he had said, “I prostrate to Shiva,” it would have killed Shiva. He prostrated to Shiva’s representation alone, and the huge stone statue exploded.

STUDENT: Why would that happen? What is this power? It seems so negative.

RINPOCHE: It is that he was enlightened, and Shiva was not.

STUDENT: Is there any way to call these family deities back once they leave? Are there other ways that they can leave?

RINPOCHE: If you do really bad things, the more virtuous among them will leave you, and only those that like really bad things will stick around.

These protective devas definitely exist. I have undergone two experiences that make me certain of this. Once was when I was fourteen years old, and I was sleeping in my room. I thought I saw the door to my room open suddenly and loudly, and someone who I could not see said, “The house is on fire!” I got up, and when I looked my door was closed. I went out and went into the kitchen, which was about to catch on fire.

The second time occurred when I was herding our domestic animals. One of them became lost, and I went looking for it. There was a snowstorm, it got harder and harder to see, and it got later and later until finally it was completely dark. I lay down to go to sleep, and as I was lying there half-asleep I heard someone say quietly, “It is going to eat you.” I opened my eyes and looked around, but all I saw was what looked like a slight flutter in the snowfall. I thought it was nothing, and I tried to go back to sleep. Then again I heard, “It is going to eat you!” I looked again, saw the same flutter that stopped, and I tried to go back to sleep. The third time it was loud: “IT IS GOING TO EAT YOU!” I got up, and as I rose I heard a large animal

running away. It was clear that if I had not gotten up, some kind of predatory animal was going to kill me and eat me.

STUDENT: Is it possible that the bad deities will leave if you develop more virtue?

RINPOCHE: Yes.

STUDENT: Should one seek out dangerous or fearful places to meditate or practice?

RINPOCHE: You do not need to search for scary places. If you are active in helping others you will naturally encounter the type of scary situations that provide an opportunity to face your fear. If you have realization then it really does not matter where you are. Nevertheless to this day there is a custom of seeking out dangerous places, typically charnel grounds, and going on pilgrimage from one to another to practice in them.

About thirty-five or so years ago Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche gave the Treasury of Instructions, a series of empowerments and transmissions at Kamtrul Rinpoche's monastery, and my brother and I attended them. We stayed in a small cabin, with an old Karma Kagyu nun in her seventies who was originally from Tsurphu Monastery. When we first met our housemate

she was somewhat stern and a little scary because she was one of those dzokchen types who just constantly looks up into the sky and stares at light and things like that. She sure did not talk much, although when she did talk she had a tremendous voice and great dignity. Of course, we eventually became quite friendly with her, and eventually she decided to call me the “elder son,” and my brother was the “younger son.”

During the empowerments she became ill. Since she did not want to miss any of the empowerments or transmissions, my brother and I had to carry her to the temple, or to support her as she walked. She tried different sorts of medicine but none of it helped. Finally one day she said, “Medicine is not helping, ceremonies are not going to do anything — I better take care of this myself. Tonight I am going to go down to that charnel ground down there,” meaning a small charnel ground adjacent to the monastery. “Young son,” she said, addressing my brother, “if you would escort me down there tonight, that would be nice.” We asked her if she wanted a pillow, blankets, or anything like that, and she said, “I’d only need those things if I were going to sleep.” My brother brought her down to the charnel ground. Once she was settled, she said he could go back up. He started walking back up to where we were staying. It was a moonlit night, and as he was leaving, he saw that she was taking off her clothes — all of them.

The next morning we got up and prepared tea. We were thinking we would go down and bring her a thermos of tea, but she showed up walking by herself, looking perfectly well, and carrying a basket of oranges. Now, oranges were completely unavailable there at that time. They were not in season and you could not buy them. She brought up these oranges and said, “I’ve brought a present for my two sons.” We had breakfast together and then we asked her what was going on. She said, “Someone gave me this basket of oranges. I do not know if it was a human or a spirit, but someone gave them to me and I thought I’d give them to you.” We asked her what she did the previous night, what actually went on. She said, “Well, I practiced chō. I visualized feeding my body to all the spirits, and even though that is a small charnel ground, it is well inhabited by a lot of spirits, and so pretty soon they were grabbing at me and what not.” Then my brother said, “When they grabbed at you, didn’t you draw back and jump?” She said, “No, because if you do that it is over.” She said it actually worked out quite well because she had done this a lot, and she was completely cured. Evidently she was one of those people who made those pilgrimages from charnel ground to charnel ground.

STUDENT: Your descriptions of the extremes of exhilaration and despair reminds me of my sister. She has been trying to take refuge for a couple of years, but her life seems to be one

disastrous event after the next. Two years ago we thought we had everything under control and we had plans for her and her husband to come up here. Then that week their car exploded, she got fired from her job, her husband got fired from his job because he didn't have the car to get to work, the roof collapsed and fell in on the house, some of the plumbing didn't work, and then something happened to her husband where he could not move or speak. They seem to have an obstruction.

RINPOCHE: It sounds like some kind of obstacle. Generally it is said that in order to practice Dharma you need to have both previous accumulation of merit and the requisite aspirations from the past. If these two factors are not present, then things will get in the way of your practicing Dharma. It seems as if this is one of those unfortunate situations where things get in the way.

STUDENT: I said, “Don't worry about it because this kind of thing happens to everyone after you take refuge.” I was thinking, “Goodness, it is happening to her even before.” It was kind of scaring me — if that is what happens to her before she takes refuge, then what kind of upheaval is a person like that going to experience after it, if they manage to even do it?

RINPOCHE: Many Americans say that when they take the **refuge vow** they experience mishaps afterward. Personally I think this

is superstition on their part. I think what is really happening is that they are expecting some kind of dramatic positive occurrence immediately after taking refuge, and when that doesn't happen they perceive what does happen as some kind of terrible mishap.

This was unknown in Tibet. It was generally the case that when people took the vow of refuge, their circumstances would improve. Even if they did not, there was usually no mishap. The only other possible explanation for this, since people do talk about it frequently, is that possibly the gods or deities of this country get jealous.

STUDENT: I knew a ngakpa that used to live in Santa Fe, and he said about people like my sister that sometimes if a person has obstructions of a certain type it can be harmful to the lama. The ngakpa actually said he often did not take certain people for students because they had a harmful obstruction in them or around them. Once he said a certain woman wanted to study with him and he kept telling her, "No, I am sorry, you cannot be my student." He eventually gave in, but when the woman became his student there was something in her, a demon or something, that attacked the ngakpa's eyes. That makes me want to be careful too — I do not want to bring just anybody up here to take refuge with you.

RINPOCHE: It is not usually thought that the obscurations of the disciple will afflict the teacher. Generally speaking, the obscurations of a disciple will have three effects. They may prevent the disciple from understanding the meaning of Dharma, they may circumstantially prevent the disciple from meeting the Dharma, or they may prevent the disciple from believing the Dharma. One of those three things can happen, but there is no tradition of saying that they will actually afflict the lama.

The only situation where a teacher can be contaminated by the obscurations of the student is if the student develops a close relationship of trust with the teacher, and then the student betrays or turns against the lama. Something like that can affect the teacher.

STUDENT: Lastly, about eleven years ago when I was going to this ngakpa in Santa Fe, he had a group of chö practitioners. They would do the chö practice and I would just sit and listen. Afterwards I would go home to do Tara practice. On those occasions when I did that there would always be a naked black dakini standing directly behind me. If I tried to look directly at her, I was not able to see her, but she was there. This happened for several months, and I decided that it was a sign that I was definitely not meant to do chö practice.

RINPOCHE: It was probably just your imagination. But if there were such a thing, it would be very good and not something to worry about.

STUDENT: Karma Chakme's teaching on sitting on thrones was an instruction to those who would sit on them. I am wondering, does there exist an instruction manual or formal protocol in our lineage? As students and disciples, we want to elevate our teachers and put them physically higher, but is there some sort of a pecking order?

RINPOCHE: There is no guidebook to this. In our tradition we are actually not that formal or precise about exactly who sits first and who sits next. In some places and situations in Tibet this was a big issue for some people, and many disputes arose over this. Outside of Tibet, no one is going to expect you to have meticulously itemized reserved seating if you get a large number of lamas of similar rank showing up at the same time. All you need to do is make a sincere effort to set out nice and appropriate seating, and ask one of them whom you know well to make sure everybody is seated according to their rank. They will fall into place. No one is going to worry that much about it in the diaspora situation.

STUDENT: There is a throne being built for this shrine room for His Holiness the Seventeenth Karmapa. Is there a certain tradition that is followed in making such a throne?

RINPOCHE: There is nothing unique about that throne; we're not trying to make it different. It is a fairly standard type of religious throne used in Tibetan tradition. There is no such thing as a unique design for thrones for the Karmapa. We are just using the best materials and trying to make it as beautiful as possible.

STUDENT: If someone sat a lama in a high position, and he or she didn't particularly want to be there, should that lama also treat being seated that way with equanimity?

RINPOCHE: It depends on the lama's attitude. If the lama is completely without pride and generally modest, it will not matter at all where they are put. The lama will understand that if they are put on a high seat or throne, it is out of respect for the Dharma and out of people's good attitude, and the lama will rejoice in their goodness and not be disturbed by it. It becomes a problem if the lama starts to think they are actually worthy of this treatment as an individual.

STUDENT: I do not seem to have too much trouble with superior and inferior situations in themselves, except when someone really

starts treating me like an inferior. That causes me to get upset. I was wondering if we should apply the same kind of techniques that you were talking about before to this kind of situation.

RINPOCHE: That situation is exactly the same. In fact this is when this problem really comes up for most of us. The thing you have to remember is that when someone denigrates you, or acts disrespectfully, their denigration in no way changes who and what you are. Their attitude or assertion that you are in some way inferior to them in no way makes you inferior to them if you are not. It does not make you physically ill, it does not shorten your life or steal your merit, and in fact it gives you an opportunity. Simply by not becoming angry in the face of this type of abuse, you accumulate tremendous merit. We all like praise. By the same token, praise gives us nothing: praise does not improve us, it does not make us better looking, longer-lived, more intelligent, and it certainly does not give us any merit. There is every reason to regard praise and disrespect as equal. If you do regard them as equal, then you have become the noblest type of person in the world, and a fully successful Dharma practitioner. Nevertheless it takes a great deal of effort to do this, because we all have a strong habit of being disturbed by denigration and pleased by praise. If you can regard them as equal, that is called “taking mental afflictions on the path.”

STUDENT: Regarding elation and depression in Dharma practice, would you address any difference in how this advice relates to our joy of practice, as distinguished from elation?

RINPOCHE: The joy that we take in Dharma is not the same thing as the mundane elation that is part of the pair of opposites of elation and depression. Our accumulation of merit makes us receptive to Dharma, and it is appropriate to be joyful because Dharma is worthwhile. It is not regarded as something that needs to be suppressed.

The antithesis to this is when people hate Dharma, as many people do. They just find it distasteful and unpleasant, and that cannot be suppressed either because that is the result of their previous accumulation of negativity.

STUDENT: If one feels despair over encountering the obstacle of lacking belief, how can that despair be utilized? I am talking about occasional lapses in faith, and the despair that comes from a crisis of faith.

RINPOCHE: What you are describing is completely natural. Faith always fluctuates; it is somewhat unstable until you develop some realization, because until you develop realization you still doubt whether this whole thing is genuine or not. You cannot

know until you have realization, so you should never feel bad about fluctuations in faith. If on a certain day you feel, “I’m losing my faith,” this is actually good because it means that you are concerned with the issue of faith; so that feeling is not bad.

You will also have fluctuation in faith toward individuals, of course, because you cannot know what is going on inside them. Therefore you sometimes misjudge them, which also causes that type of fluctuation.

The best way to deal with this is to return to the solid basis of your faith, which is your sense that Dharma and the Three Jewels are trustworthy and infallible. If the fluctuation is so bad that all you can do is repeat those words, then start with those words and apply reasoning and logical analysis to determine the validity of that statement. That will help.

STUDENT: This seems somewhat contradictory. If we are not yet at that point of realization, then we would feel more despair because we are not able to mix this despair with the nature of mind.

RINPOCHE: It is true that when there is no stable recognition, trying to look at the nature of depression will just make you

more depressed. The best thing to do is apply either taking and sending, or some kind of active supplication or prayer.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, do we need to practice equal taste when it comes to hatred and anger versus compassion and loving-kindness? When you look at compassion, it comes from the mind, so in essence it is the same. Since we always try to tell everyone to go toward compassion rather than hate, is there an equal taste?

RINPOCHE: No. The things toward which you attempt to cultivate the perception of equal taste or equal flavor are all forms of mental affliction. For example, we think of delight as something good and depression as something bad. They are equally kleshas. Delight is a form of attachment, and depression is a form of aversion. They need to be equalized because if they are not, they are both negativity.

Compassion and anger, however, are not the same. Anger is an affliction like the others, while compassion is not — it is virtue. You cannot equalize them because they do not have the same nature. If you attempted to even them out, you would end up with a state of mere neutrality, which is not our ethos.

STUDENT: Where is the difference in that nature when you look at it? I know that one is negative and one is positive.

RINPOCHE: If you are speaking about the context of recognizing the nature of one's mind, since the recognition of the nature of mind is itself the principal virtue, then whatever arises from within that state of recognition will be equally virtuous. Therefore in that state of recognition there will be no moral difference between compassion and anger because anger will not be anger as we know it. It will be liberated by the recognition of the nature of mind.

Aside from that special case, relatively speaking and in the ordinary world, compassion is something we want and something we are looking for. Anger is something we need to get rid of.

STUDENT: To me they are similar, in a sense, because they are both from the mind. Whether I am angry, or whether I am visualizing benefiting all sentient beings, they both come from the mind.

RINPOCHE: You can say that they are of the same substance in that they both arise within the mind, but in another sense they are not of the same value or nature at all, because to the degree that you realize emptiness you will automatically have a commensurate degree of compassion. You will not develop a commensurate degree of anger. Compassion is intrinsically pres-

ent when there is a correct realization of the nature of things, and anger is not. That makes them different.

If one were to cultivate the view in meditation that neither virtue nor negativity has any value, and therefore nothing matters, this would be an incorrect view of emptiness, and it would lead to a denigration or denial of cause and result. The cultivation of equal taste is not the cultivation of a state free of affect or feeling, or a state of blank neutrality, where there is no apprehension of things in their characteristics. For example, you learn not to be excessively elated and thereby disturbed by joy, but you do not reject the joy. You do not try to flatten it, or try to get rid of it. You also learn not to be disturbed by depression or aversion and therefore not to act on it; but you do not attempt to expunge the emotion itself.

STUDENT: I have been thinking about and trying to study the two truths, **absolute truth** and **relative truth**. For someone like myself, who is a beginner, it is difficult to use the reason and precision that the two truths demand. Could you please talk a little bit about where this teaching fits into discussion of the two truths? How do we work with these in the beginning?

RINPOCHE: The consideration of relative truth is contemplating that all appearances are unreal and interdependent, and therefore

constantly changing. It also includes contemplating that our actions in previous lives are the causes of what we experience now. The investigation of absolute truth is looking directly at the nature of your mind.

The mode of investigation or analysis does not really change, although the object of analysis may. Here the object of analysis is more narrowly focused than in a generic presentation of the two truths, but the way of thinking is the same.

STUDENT: I had never heard of the two bodhisattva lineages, the lineage of profound view and the lineage of extensive deeds. Could you explain that?

RINPOCHE: Both of these lineages come from the Buddha and both are complete lineages of the bodhisattva vow and the practice of bodhichitta. The difference is that the lineage of extensive deeds was passed by the Buddha to the bodhisattva Maitreya, and by him to Asanga. The lineage of profound view was passed by the Buddha to the bodhisattva Manjushri, and by him to Nagarjuna.

Essentially the meaning of the two lineages is the same, but the words and therefore the structure and organization of the bodhisattva vow ceremonies are quite different. The lineage of

profound view transmission is intended, as its name implies, for disciples who are interested primarily in the profound view of the Mahayana, who have great intelligence and therefore wish for an immediate and direct introduction to the whole Mahayana path. The lineage of extensive deeds transmission is for those who are more attuned to the idea of the gradual and extensive accumulation of merit, which is therefore required in that ceremony. They are also concerned with a more gradual and widespread study of the sutras and tantras. In essence the two lineages transmit the same thing, but they do it in different styles because the lineages are intended for different types of people.

STUDENT: What style did we get from Bardor Tulku?

RINPOCHE: The profound view. Whenever the bodhisattva vow is given at KTD or at the KTCs [the KTD affiliate centers], it is the lineage of profound view. The other one is a really long ceremony. The presentation of the bodhisattva vow ceremony in the corresponding chapter in the *Jewel Ornament of Liberation* goes through it in part, but the real ceremony is even longer than that. The Ceremony of the Lineage of Extensive Deeds is so long that in Tibet (where, do not forget, it was all in one language and so there was no time out for a translator) it took all day from early morning until late night and could barely be finished.

The Fruit of the Wish-Fulfilling Tree: How the Best, the Intermediate, and the Least Practitioners Die

The chapter begins, NAMO GURU VAJRADHARAYE, “Homage to the guru Vajradhara.” In many sutras, tantras, and instructions of both the New and Old Traditions, there are extensive explanations of how the final fruition or result of the path is achieved, what that means, and also how people who have achieved it die. Although a great deal is said about this, Chakme Rinpoche says, “I am going to explain it here in an easily understood way.”

The reason why Chakme Rinpoche needs to write this is because, first of all, the books that explain this topic are too long to read, even if you could find them. Even if you could read them, they are very hard to understand; it would require extensive intelligence to do so. Therefore he is going to put together everything from this mass of different traditions and explain them in one format. Chakme Rinpoche says, “Although I have no experience of this, I am going to explain it here in reliance on the discernment that comes from having heard, or encountered, the meaning of the New and Old tantras.” When he says that he has no experience of this, he means that he was still alive when he was writing

this. He had not achieved a rainbow body, which is what this chapter is about, so he was not talking about something that he had done in that life.

This chapter is concerned with what happens at the time of death and in the bardo or interval that occurs after death. By implication it is also concerned with how to prepare ourselves for these experiences. This is something we definitely need to know, for the simple and obvious reason that eventually we are all going to die, and therefore we are all going to experience these things. We know that if beings have accumulated especially good karma, they will be reborn in a pure realm, and if they have accumulated very bad karma, they will be reborn in a lower state and will have no possibility of avoiding it. One could say that the distinguishing and special feature of the Buddhadharma is a correct understanding of karma, and specifically of what is to be done and what is to be avoided. Therefore understanding these things and living accordingly is the essence of Buddhist practice.

The Achievement of Deathlessness

We will start by explaining what is meant by the term *achievement of deathlessness*. There are different distinct achievements that

Chakme Rinpoche calls the “achievement of deathlessness,” and they are all slightly different. Therefore saying that someone has achieved deathlessness could mean any of these things.

Karma Chakme gives historical examples of each of these states of deathlessness. The first achievement of deathlessness is called the “accomplishment of the undying vajra rainbow body.” If you ask who has achieved this during the era of Buddha Shakyamuni, the foremost example is Guru Rinpoche. His achievement of this is unique, because he will remain alive in his current body for as long as space lasts. Until space itself ceases to exist, Guru Rinpoche will not die; he remains in his present life and present body.

Next are those who, through practicing the integration of mahamudra and dzokchen, have achieved the state of deathlessness that lasts for the duration of an intermediate kalpa. An intermediate kalpa is the amount of time it takes for the human life span to go from eighty thousand years gradually down to ten, and then increase all the way back up to eighty thousand years. This is called an “intermediate kalpa.” Some beings achieve an undying rainbow body that will last for an intermediate kalpa, and this is called the “rainbow body of great transference.” This is not as long as Guru Rinpoche’s deathlessness. The great transference body is exemplified by the mahapandita Vimalamitra, who achieved

it and who still is in the same body. The difference between this state and the accomplishment of the undying vajra rainbow body is that at the end of the specific duration for which the individual wishes to retain this body, it will dissolve into light. At this point this person will be like any other buddha.

Next are those who are so blessed by their yidam that they can live for thousands of years. This is not as long as Vimalamitra's deathlessness, but it is for thousands of years. An example of this is the mahasiddha Mitra the Yogin, or Mitra Joki, an Indian mahasiddha who came to Tibet in the eleventh century CE. This third type of deathlessness is called the “*vidyadhara* with control over longevity” or the “holder of awareness who has mastery over longevity.” Although such a person will continue to inhabit their body, they will probably be invisible to anyone without a karmic disposition to see them. Like the second type, this third type will eventually disappear, and they will not leave a body behind. After several thousand years they will pass into parinirvana.

Another state of deathlessness is when someone transforms this defiled body into an undefiled body and remains in that body for thousands or tens of thousands of years. During that time, he or she is the leader of viras and dakinis' feasts. As with the previous state of deathlessness, most people will not be able to

see their body. Examples of this are the mahasiddha Saraha and the mahasiddha Tilopa. This fourth state is called “departing for the **celestial realm** or the **khechhari realm**.” All of these states are classified as a rainbow body, but they are all slightly different from one another. Within khechhari or celestial realms, this is the lesser celestial realm because it is terrestrial, and in these realms the guru is the leader of the feast of dakinis.

Another state is when someone actually accomplishes their yidam to the point where they essentially become the yidam. Although their nature becomes that of the yidam, they will continue to appear externally as a mahasiddha. For the benefit of others, they will remain alive for however long they wish to, and if you supplicate them, they will bestow siddhi on you. Most ordinary people will not be able to see them because they do not live on an earth. They live in space and reside in a precious palace as the leader of the feasts of dakinis, the same as in the last case. An example of this is the mahasiddha Nagabodhi. This state is described clearly in the commentaries on the *Kalachakra Tantra* and in the biography of Sakya Pandita.

Another such state is where, through the power of the repetition of a wisdom deity’s mantra, a practitioner is able to lengthen their life immeasurably. There are many examples of this. Through his accomplishment of the awareness mantra of the deity called

Great Peacock, who is a form or emanation of Tara, the master Nagarjuna lived for six hundred years. He could have lived longer than that, but he passed away at the age of about six hundred for specific reasons that would benefit others. Another example is his disciple, Aryadeva, who lived for four hundred years, and the great master Asanga, who accomplished the deity Maitreya and lived for two hundred years.

The next state is basically the same as the previous example. This is where those who have practiced a longevity sadhana — such as the practices of Amitayus, White Tara, or Ushnishavijaya — have done the practice to such an extent that their life is lengthened. Such individuals include Yeshe Tsogyal, who lived for two hundred years; Padampa Sangye of India, who lived for five hundred and fifteen years; and Guru Rinpoche's disciple, Nupchen Sangye Yeshe, who lived for one hundred and fifty years. They are a certain type of vidyadhara with control over longevity. Because they have done it through the practice of a wisdom deity and not primarily through alchemical means, they are called a “supreme vidyadhara with mastery over longevity.”

Another type of longevity vidyadhara is exemplified by those who accomplish longevity through medical or alchemical means, or through the intervention of a mundane deity. For example, there was a rishi of the Hindu tradition who, through meditation on

Ishvara, or Shiva, received from that deity the siddhi of being able to live for one thousand years. Unfortunately he demanded more, and as a result he lost five hundred years and only ended up living for five hundred years instead of a thousand. Another example of this is the Buddhist siddha Jarikapa, who achieved longevity through the alchemy of mercury and will remain alive until Maitreya appears. In addition, there is the siddha Vairochana of Tibet, who lived for three hundred years, again through the alchemy of mercury. Eventually he passed away in Tibet, which is significant because he had been exiled from Tibet and therefore could only have come back sometime later. Those individuals have achieved what is called the “common achievement of the vidyadhara with control over longevity.”

Another type of deathlessness is for those who achieve buddhahood in this life and as a result do not leave behind a body. The body simply vanishes like a rainbow dissolving into space. When such individuals pass away and their physical body vanishes, their mind becomes inseparable from the mind of all buddhas, like water poured into water, or space mixing with space. Famous examples of this in India are Garab Dorje and Shri Singha, and famous examples in Tibet are Aro Yönten Jungne and Kharak Gomchung. This achievement is called the “achievement of perfect awakening without remainder” — in other words, without a physical body being left behind when

you pass away. The significance of this is explained extensively in texts of the Dzokchen tradition.

Another type of achievement of buddhahood without remainder that is characteristic of the practice of **mother tantra** is when the five impure elements of the body dissolve into light and become of the nature of the five wisdom lights. This light then dissolves into the area close to the navel, at which point the channels of the navel become the mandala of Vajravaraḥi or Vajrayogini. This then dissolves into the **seed syllable** in her midst, which can be either HRI or BAM, depending on the specifics of the practice, and then that dissolves into emptiness. In this case the person has not gone to another realm; they have not passed away in this realm and then traveled to Sukhavati or any other place. Having dissolved in this way, they pervade all space, and therefore they have no specific location. Therefore they can reappear like a rainbow, and they will reappear for those with a karmic propensity to see them. They will actually show their physical form, even though they previously disappeared, and they will be able to teach. This is the achievement of the celestial rainbow body according to mother tantra, or in the tradition of mother tantra. This is explained in the writings of Machik Lapkyi Drönma.

There is a well-known example of this. A Tibetan lama passed away, and when his body was cremated many relics arose from it, *ringsel* and so on. After he had been cremated, he appeared in the province of Ga and remained there teaching. He appeared to die there, and again he was cremated; again he produced many relics, and then he showed up in Central Tibet in Lhasa. He kept on appearing to die and yet reappearing, apparently posthumously. I do not know when this happened and I did not see it myself, but it is quite a famous story.

Another type of rainbow body is when, through practicing a yidam and meditating on mahamudra and dzokchen, the practitioner transforms this defiled body of flesh, blood, and bone into an undefiled and insubstantial rainbow body. At that point they can display any physical miracles they wish, and for as long as they remain without passing away, they will appear to others as having the same body they had before. Because of the insubstantiality of their bodies, they can also go to any pure realm, such as Sukhavati, and return from it. Examples of this are Rechungpa, Lord Sonam Tsemo, Machik Lapkyi Drönma's disciple Ngompa Khachö, and her disciple Namkhai Gyaltsen.

A well-known example of this is when Jetsun Milarepa appeared to pass away and was being cremated, but he still appeared to various disciples, to Rechungpa and others, and was seen by

many people in many different ways. Sometimes he was seen as himself, sometimes as a swirling mass of light, sometimes as the Buddha, as various deities, and so on. This is the “achievement of the celestial rainbow body in the tradition of father tantra.”

It can also happen that practitioners achieve perfect mastery of the channels and winds and thereby achieve the **illusory body**. When they do so, they will live in a manner called the “conduct of yogic discipline.” This is essentially the enactment of the highest level of equal taste and the actual transformation of conventionally impure or filthy things into purity. They will live in charnel grounds, they will eat human flesh and blood that they have transformed into wisdom amrita, they will go amongst the dakinis and preside at their feasts, and so on. As soon as they eat the amrita that is distributed at dakini feasts, their physical body of flesh and blood is transformed into an insubstantial rainbow body, which is immortal. As with other states of deathlessness, they may appear among people but they will not be visible to those with ordinary perception.

Examples of this are most of the mahasiddhas of India, and the mahasiddha Thangtong Gyalpo of Tibet, who composed the Chenrezik practice. This is also a type of celestial rainbow body, and this is what is referred to when someone says, “He entered the action.” For example, in the biographies of Naropa and Marpa,

it says that Naropa had “entered the action.” This means that he had actually transformed his body into an insubstantial celestial rainbow body so that there was no certainty about where he would live, what he would eat, who he would be with, what he would wear, and so on. Therefore when Marpa sought him out, initially he perceived Naropa in all sorts of different ways and only eventually saw him as Naropa himself.

Deathlessness at the Twelfth Level of Mahamudra

The first part of this chapter concerns the achievement of immortality, and the second part is about achieving immortality but appearing to die. The latter happens when practitioners have achieved perfect buddhahood in a given lifetime and their mind is buddha, but they decide to appear to die in order to benefit others. This means that death does not occur in their experience or in their appearance, but death will seem to occur in the perception or experience of others. Exactly what others see depends on the degree of the purity of their perception. Those with impure perception will see the teacher pass away, probably see their body cremated, and possibly see relics arise.

There are generally two types of relics that arise when an enlightened being is cremated. One is simply called the “remains,” and this is when the bones melt and form into the shape of syllables, deities’ scepters, and sometimes the forms of the deities themselves. The other is the appearance of ringsel or shariram, which are apparently mineral. They do not seem to be made of bone, but they are somehow produced by the body as it is cremated.

These things can be seen by anyone. Those with pure perception may see the teacher appear even though they seem to have passed away. They may see them again, not just as a vision but as actually present. They might receive teachings and empowerments from the teacher, might observe the teacher giving empowerments to others, and so on. When a great teacher passes away, sometimes those with pure perception will see the teacher riding on a lion or a steed and being led to the pure realms by various dakinis. Those with less pure perception will simply see rainbows or a rain of flowers, and those with impure perception will see nothing special at all.

What actually happens to the person who has appeared to die is that death does not occur, and this is because they are awakened. However, they demonstrate the appearance of death in the perception of others. The usual reason they choose to do this is to reverse our misapprehension of things as permanent. In this

situation people will see the teacher's apparent death in many different ways. For example, when they see the teacher they may not see the teacher in a body at all. They may see him or her as a deity or a swirling mass of light. An example of this is when Lord Marpa passed away. His mind arose from his body in the form of a sphere of brilliant light, which was seen at that time by many disciples. Other examples occur in the biographies of Naropa and Milarepa, and Karma Pakshi's writings also describe this. In this situation the person is fully awakened and has achieved perfect buddhahood, so even while they are alive and continuing through death and after death, their mind is equal to the wisdom of all buddhas. In terms of the mahamudra stages, the twelve stages of the four yogas, this means they have achieved the twelfth stage, which is "great no-meditation."

Because they have achieved the final awakening, there is no need for them to rest in samadhi after death, so it is not certain that a teacher who is fully awakened will appear to rest in samadhi. The reason they do not need to rest in samadhi is because they have achieved perfect awakening, great no-meditation; in this state there is no progress needed, and there is nothing for them to purify through resting in samadhi. There is no meditation, nothing to meditate on, and no meditator. This is why the fathers and sons of the Kagyu tradition may not appear to rest in samadhi when they die. When they do appear to be in

samadhi, it should not be understood as the ordinary state of a practitioner resting in samadhi at the time of their death. This is something beyond that.

Usually great beings will leave various sorts of relics for the benefit of others. Generally the reason they leave their bodies without dissolving their bodies is so these relics can appear and serve as a basis for faith and future accumulation of merit. This achievement of buddhahood and the appearance of death is called the “achievement of buddhahood with the remainder of the aggregates.” Previously we saw that the achievement of the rainbow body was called the “achievement of buddhahood without remainder”; this is called the “achievement of buddhahood with remainder.” There is no difference in the quality or level of the achievement from the point of view of the people themselves; the only difference is in how they choose to benefit others.

An example of this is His Holiness the Karmapa. When he passes away his state is not fluctuating. He achieved buddhahood a long time ago and he will continue to exhibit the achievement of buddhahood, for example as the sixth Buddha. He appears to be undergoing some kind of process, but in fact he is not, and he will usually leave his body behind as a basis for the accumulation of merit by others. This is what happens when someone has achieved buddhahood — the great no-meditation,

the twelfth **mahamudra level** — and yet decides to leave his or her body behind and appear to pass away.

Deathlessness at the Ninth to Eleventh Level of Mahamudra

Next the text talks about those who have achieved the ninth, tenth, or eleventh levels of mahamudra. The eleventh level is intermediate no-meditation, and the ninth level is greater one taste. For those who have achieved the ninth, tenth, or eleventh mahamudra level, the experience is as follows. Although they are not fully awakened as those on the twelfth level, their realization is so stable that it is continuous throughout day and night. It does not fluctuate depending on whether they are awake, asleep, or anything else. Their wisdom is like the light of the full moon: when it is present in a clear sky, it prevents any obscurity or darkness. They remain in that state until they stop breathing, and then when they stop breathing, because they have not achieved perfect awakening, the initial stages of the dissolution process occur: the white radiant appearance, **red increase**, and **black attainment**. Immediately after black attainment disappears, the ground **clear light** — the actual clear light — arises at this point as it does for all beings. The difference between these individuals

and ordinary beings is that they recognize the clear light and remain in it. These are the people who will remain in samadhi for three days. Generally speaking, those who remain in samadhi for three days have achieved the ninth, tenth, or eleventh level of mahamudra in the preceding life.

What is happening while they are in samadhi? They are resting in the recognition of the **ground clear light**, and this perfects their realization. During those three days, they achieve great no-meditation, and therefore they achieve buddhahood at the time of death. Because they will remain in samadhi until they achieve the state of buddhahood, great no-meditation, it is uncertain whether they will remain in samadhi exactly three days. They will remain in samadhi as long as they need to in order to become fully enlightened or awakened. This is called the “achievement of perfect buddhahood through the realization of death as dharmakaya.” For those people, the bardo will not appear because the appearances only progressed to the ground clear light, and since they recognized the clear light, nothing will appear after that. They have achieved the state of perfect buddhahood, which is identical to the state achieved by all the buddhas.

In the **Great Perfection** tradition, the corresponding level is the third of the four levels in that tradition called “maturation

of awareness.” When maturation of awareness is achieved, you experience certain appearances because of the Great Perfection practice technique through which that level is achieved. Day and night, without change, you continually experience all things as a mass of rainbow light, which contains spheres or drops of light that contain various deities. These appearances are the maturation of awareness.

For those who have achieved this level — which is the same level as the one taste of mahamudra but appears differently because of the technique or method used to achieve it — as soon as they stop breathing, a ray or tube of light shines from the heart of Vajrasattva in Akanishtha and enters into their eyes. Their consciousness is drawn by that tube of light and dissolves into the heart of Vajrasattva. In that way they achieve buddhahood; there is no bardo for them. Many signs will appear, such as rainbow light being physically visible to others.

In these two cases, a mahamudra practitioner from the ninth to eleventh level or a dzokchen practitioner of the third of four levels, their level of achievement is identical. The difference in how it manifests and their mode of achieving liberation occur differently, based simply on the difference of methods or techniques. In the case of the Mahamudra tradition, the rainbow light, drops, and deities do not appear, whereas they

do in the case of the Great Perfection tradition. The actual level and liberation are identical.

In the next case — moving down, so to speak — if a practitioner has realization but perhaps not as much as in the preceding examples, when the signs of imminent death are complete, they should vigorously practice the ejection of consciousness, also known as **phowa**. In this case they actually apply this technique; they are not just practicing it. Awakened individuals will sometimes do this just to display the technique. For example, before Lord Marpa passed away in the form of a sphere of light that rose into the sky, his last words were, “If you do the ejection of consciousness, do it like this.” After he said that, he shot his mind in the form of a sphere of light upward. He did not need to; but he did so as a demonstration of the path.

A realized yogi will practice the ejection of consciousness as they are dying, and because they have assiduously mastered **vase breathing** and gained control over the winds, they will be able to eject their consciousness before the agony of death arises. They only do this when they are dying and there is no possibility of reversing death; you cannot perform the ejection of consciousness when there is a possibility of reversal, because then it is suicide. When a practitioner ejects their consciousness in this way, they are immediately reborn in a pure realm such as

Sukhavati, and so there will not be any bardo for them either. Signs of those having successfully transferred their consciousness to the realm of Sukhavati are the same as in the preceding examples: the appearance of rainbow light apparent to others, as well as the forms of deities and so on appearing in their bones when they are cremated.

Deathlessness at the Seventh to Eighth Level of Mahamudra

Those who have achieved the seventh or eighth levels of mahamudra practice, which are respectively “lesser and intermediate one taste,” will remain in samadhi for a longer period, probably one or two weeks. The reason why they remain in samadhi longer than the preceding example is because they have that much progress left to make. In some cases the length of samadhi indicates the amount of progress required in order to achieve awakening. Probably in those one or two weeks they will achieve the lesser or intermediate no-meditation; that is to say, the tenth or eleventh mahamudra level. Because they have not achieved the twelfth level, the bardo will appear for them, but they will achieve liberation with the first appearances of the bardo, and so the peaceful and wrathful deities that normally appear later

in the bardo will not appear to them. The whole process is not stopped as early as it was in the case of the previous examples, but it is stopped quite early. At that point they achieve liberation, and then they can be reborn wherever they want to.

Deathlessness at the Fourth to Sixth Level of Mahamudra

Someone who has achieved the fourth or fifth mahamudra levels, which are respectively “lesser and intermediate beyond elaboration,” has a choice whether or not to remain in samadhi after their death. However because the awareness on the second yoga of beyond elaboration is so lucid and sharp, their samadhi is at risk of being disturbed. Therefore at the fourth or fifth level, you have to be very careful not to disturb the samadhi after death. They are like someone who is a light sleeper and can be easily awakened.

In Tibet, when a lama passed away and was resting in samadhi, there was complete silence in the room and its surroundings, no illumination such as butter lamps, and no other disturbance such as incense, because it was thought that anything might disturb their samadhi and therefore obstruct their progress.

Those at this level — that is to say, those who have achieved the yogas of beyond elaboration, one taste, or no-meditation — do not require assistance. In other words, they do not need to be reminded of the nature of their minds in order to rest in samadhi. They will recollect it simply through having been well trained and familiarized with this state.

If those who have achieved the second yoga called “beyond elaboration” enter samadhi, they are likely to remain for a long time. It could be three weeks or even forty-nine days. If they can rest in samadhi for that length of time, they will be able to achieve the seventh or eighth mahamudra levels, which is to say “lesser or intermediate one taste.” Here Chakme Rinpoche says that all of this was explained by his supreme guru, Trungpa Kunga Namgyal. Here explained does not mean “said,” but rather “demonstrated.” It probably refers to the things that happened when Tserlung Kunga Namgyal passed away.

A practitioner who has achieved the yoga of lesser, intermediate, or greater beyond elaboration — in other words, the fourth, fifth, or sixth mahamudra levels — will probably have great control over what happens to them, as long as they are not disturbed when they are dying, if the agony of death is not too severe, and if nothing happens to obstruct their entrance into samadhi. As

soon as they die, when the ground clear light appears they will recognize it and may be able to remain in that for a week.

How Accomplished Practitioners Experience the Bardo

Next the text explains how the various phases of the bardo are experienced by accomplished beings, and how these individuals make use of the bardo state. This is not only about those on the stage of beyond elaboration, but also those who have achieved the higher levels as well. In the case of a practitioner who remains in samadhi for any amount of time, they are immersed in the ground clear light during this period, and through this immersion they make progress. This is the accomplishment of the dharmakaya through resting in the clear light of death. Although they are dead, during that time their consciousness will remain in their body, which is one of the characteristics of samadhi.

At the end of that time, when they decide to arise from the ground clear light, they will allow their consciousness to emerge. It will emerge out of the top of their heads, just as it does when someone consciously performs the ejection of consciousness. In this case they do not need to do phowa; it just naturally happens

through their realization. This is why it is said that the eight gates are the gates of samsara, and the one gate is the gate of mahamudra. This means that if the consciousness leaves through the top of the head, it is conducive to awakening.

As soon as the practitioner's body and mind are separated — in other words, as soon as their mind or consciousness emerges from their former body — they recognize that they are in the bardo. It is when the consciousness departs from the body that the appearances of the bardo begin subsequent to the ground clear light. As a sentient being, we do not recognize that we are dead; we do not recognize that we are in the bardo, and we think that everything is going on as usual. When we subsequently recognize that we are in the bardo, we are horrified. We try to find a place to take shelter from our hallucinations, and we try to achieve rebirth. By contrast, neither of these things happens for these practitioners; they do recognize the bardo, but it does not upset them. As soon as they recognize that the appearances of the bardo are going to begin and that their consciousness has emerged from their body, they meditate on their yidam. Their yidam could be Chakrasamvara, Vajrayogini, Avalokiteshvara, or Tara — it does not matter which one.

Because the bardo body is a **mental body**, it becomes whatever you think of, and so the person at this point is not just meditat-

ing on the deity; they actually become the deity. They perform all of the meditations associated with that deity, all of the visualizations that they have done during their life, such as the radiation of light, making offerings to buddhas and bodhisattvas, and purifying sentient beings. In this case, however, it is not just imaginary because the bardo body is transformed through the power of their training in the generation stage, and they actually become the deity. This is called the “achievement of the mahamudra of the deity’s body.” Those who achieve this are called the “mahamudra vidyadhara,” or the “holder of the awareness of mahamudra.” In this case, *mahamudra* refers to the actual achievement of the deity’s form, so a mahamudra vidyadhara is someone who is utterly transformed into the deity.

Having become the deity, they now possess all of the blessing, compassion, and so on that the deity possesses. This is not imaginary. They will remain in that second state for perhaps another seven days, and then their consciousness separates from their body and so on. This is called “practicing the sambhogakaya as the bardo.” In other words, the first stage was the achievement of the dharmakaya in the situation of death, and this is the subsequent achievement of the sambhogakaya in the situation of the bardo.

The next thing they do is dispatch emanations. Many people wonder how teachers like Jamgon Lodro Thaye, Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, and so forth have produced five contemporary rebirths. They think, “This is impossible; surely one of them must be the real one.” It is possible for such teachers to do this if they wish, and it is done in the following way. They rest in the dharmakaya for however long, then they arise as the yidam and rest in that for however long. In the third phase of their activity after death, they continue to regard themselves as the deity, and in this case they actually have become the deity. They simply remain in that state, with the syllable in the deity’s heart radiating light and collecting the blessings of all buddhas of the ten directions. The example here in the text is of a deity with both a male and female aspect in union, such as Chakrasamvara, but it comes from the heart of whatever deity you visualize. Do not forget that in this case it is not just a visualization; it is really happening. All of those blessings enter into the mouth of the father and mother who make up the deity; they melt into bodhichitta, pass out of the vajra of the father into the lotus of the mother and then, in the case of the first emanation, the emanation of body, all of the blessings of all buddhas are transformed into a white OM syllable. Into that white OM, all of the power of the bodies of all buddhas and bodhisattvas are again dissolved.

Since the person has achieved the sambhogakaya, they have limitless supercognition. Normally when we use the term *supercognition*, we are talking about defiled and limited supercognition, a little bit of extrasensory perception, but here their supercognition is utterly unlimited. Therefore they know who needs what; they observe who needs to be tamed by an emanation of body. Therefore they send the white OM to the right place; they send it into the womb of the parents of an appropriate family, to a situation where the emanation will be properly brought up and so on. As a result, there will appear a body emanation of that teacher.

The characteristics of a body emanation are being physically very beautiful or handsome, impressive, and pleasing to everyone who meets them. This is notable because many body emanations of great teachers were wonderful beings even though their parents were unattractive and unintelligent. This is a sign that they are a body emanation. The activity of the body emanation is to gradually lead to liberation all beings who have any contact with them, meaning all beings who see them, hear them, and touch them.

In the same way, in the form of the deity the teacher will collect the blessings of the speech of all buddhas in the form of a red AH. They will also send this to the right place, and as a result an emanation of their speech will appear. The characteristics of a

speech emanation are harmonious speech that is pleasing to the ear, mastery over words and language, and skill in explaining the Buddha's teachings. As their principal activity, such an emanation will benefit others by teaching the doctrine, the practices, and reflection, perhaps at a monastic college.

In the same way, they will collect all the blessings of mind of all buddhas and bodhisattvas into a blue HUM, which they will then send to the right place. As a result an emanation of mind will appear. Emanations of a teacher's mind tend to be wrathful in personality, and to naturally have very high experience and realization from birth. A famous example of this is one of the Khyentse Rinpoches, Do Khyentse Yeshe Dorje, who I spoke about earlier. He was an emanation of Jigme Lingpa, just like Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo. Do Khyentse was ferocious, fierce, and almost impossible to deal with, but he caused people to generate great realization. When he passed away, he dissolved into Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, who thereupon became so majestic and imposing that his own attendants felt unable to bring him his morning tea. The principal activity of a mind emanation is benefiting the doctrine of practice, which means they will benefit or enhance the doctrine of the actual practice of the teaching.

In the same way, the blessings of the qualities of all buddhas will be collected into a yellow SO or SVA, which will be sent to the right place, causing a quality emanation. The quality emanation will be learned in various mundane and sacred areas of knowledge. Their activity will be to expand the prosperity and welfare of those to be tamed.

The blessings of activity will be sent forth in the form of a green HA, which will become an activity emanation. Activity emanations have tremendous power, and they accomplish very widespread benefit for beings. Because His Holiness the Seventeenth Karmapa is the embodiment of the activity of all buddhas, his benefit is so widespread and his activity so powerful. For example, soon after his birth and recognition in this life, the entire country of China demonstrated respect for him even though he was still very young. In the same way, wherever he goes, he is famous and treated with respect. This is not because he is self-promoting; it just happens naturally.

In this way, the teacher has remained as the sambhogakaya in the form of their particular deity, and they have produced these five emanations. One of two things happens to the source of emanation, the teacher himself: either they dissolve into the deity itself and remain forever inseparable from that deity, or they take the form of a tulku or embodiment who embodies all five

of these aspects — body, speech, mind, qualities, and activity. In the latter case, however, they will be reborn in a pure realm, not in an **impure realm**. The basis of emanation remains either inseparable from the deity or in the form of a tulku in a pure realm, and the emanations return to the **human realm**. This process usually takes seven days, during which time the teacher rests in the meditation of dispatching emanations, which is the production of nirmanakaya.

The emanations can be more extensive than this. They can start out with five emanations, and then each of those emanations can have five; for example a body emanation of a body emanation, a speech emanation of a body emanation, a mind emanation of a body emanation, a qualities emanation of a body emanation, an activity emanation of a body emanation, and so on, in which case you have twenty-five emanations. These are called “emanations once removed.” Then you can have “emanations twice removed,” in which case each of those twenty-five produces innumerable emanations, then emanations of emanations, and so on. This is what happens, for example, when it is said that there are one billion Karmapas and one billion Guru Rinpoches in the one billion worlds. In fact there are more, but this figure of a billion illustrates the fact that from one source of emanation there can be innumerable emanations. This obviously can only be done by those who have achieved at least the **bodhisattva levels** or

bhumis. If you have not achieved a bodhisattva level, you cannot produce emanations.

Instead of experiencing the bardo conventionally, a bodhisattva is able to first abide in the clear light as the dharmakaya, then abide in the actual bardo in the form of the yidam, and then from within this form they dispatch innumerable emanations. Dispatching emanations in this manner is reported in both sutra and tantra. For example, in the sutras it is said that a first-level bodhisattva can dispatch one hundred emanations simultaneously. After dispatching the emanations, they merely rest in the nature of the yidam, and because they are the basis of emanation they do not have to consciously seek rebirth in a pure land or anything like that.

Another type of person is one who has not achieved the bodhisattva levels, and therefore has not achieved the second yoga of beyond elaboration, but they nevertheless have a stable practice of the generation and completion stages. Like the bodhisattva, they will visualize themselves as the yidam in the bardo and remain in that state, but they will be unable to dispatch emanations. After remaining as the yidam for some time, eventually they will dissolve the visualization into emptiness the way they did it in their daily practice while they were alive. They will abide

in that state of emptiness for an indefinite period and then re-arise from that emptiness.

In the practice of a yidam when one is alive, one always re-arises after dissolving the visualization at the conclusion of a session. Sometimes one re-arises as the deity's seed syllable or as their scepter. More commonly, one re-arises as the actual form of the deity, the principal deity alone without retinue. Here in the bardo, after resting in emptiness the person would then re-arise either as the deity's syllable or as their scepter, vajra, and so forth, or as the simple form of the deity, which is the deity without retinue. In any of those three forms, they would go as fast as a shooting star to whichever pure realm they wished. Although this person has not yet achieved the bodhisattva levels, they have this ability to be reborn in a pure realm because of their stability in the generation and completion stages. Probably they would be born in a realm that corresponds to the buddha family of their particular yidam, although this is not necessarily the case. Once born there, they are instantaneously born from a lotus flower, and then they achieve the bodhisattva levels in that pure realm, Sukhavati or whichever one they have chosen. Having achieved the bodhisattva levels, they dispatch emanations from the pure realm the way the bodhisattvas did from the bardo.

Intentional Rebirth

Some people do not choose to be reborn in a pure realm even though they have the opportunity to do so. Instead they choose to be reborn in this world because they wish to benefit others directly and immediately. This does not necessarily refer to bodhisattvas, but rather to individuals with great stability in the generation and completion stages.

In any case, holy beings will not be born randomly. Since they have control over their rebirth, they will not just let themselves be reborn wherever they happen to be. They will choose an appropriate family, one where they will be raised in a way that allows them to continue their activity for the benefit of others. They can also choose their gender: to be reborn male if that is going to be more useful for their purpose, or female if that is going to be more useful.

This is why so much emphasis is placed on the family lineages. In the Tibetan tradition there are renowned family lineages, such as the two Sakya houses and the Mindrolling lineage. In each case the successor to the lineage is a child of the family. This is because ordinary people cannot be reborn in those families. Either you have achieved a bodhisattva level, or you have achieved some degree of accomplishment on the path and are capable of

benefiting beings. Otherwise you will not be able to be reborn in those families. It cannot happen randomly; it is always a case of someone like the practitioner described who can intentionally choose an appropriate birth.

One reason this occurs is that realized teachers of these lineages have made the aspiration, “May only bodhisattvas capable of benefiting beings be reborn in this family.” The other reason is that the enforcement of this aspiration has been entrusted to the protectors of these particular lineages, who will not allow an ordinary person to take birth in these families. The chances are that an ordinary person is not going to randomly be conceived in such a family, and if they are the protectors will ensure that they are not born. This is why all of the members of the two houses of the Sakya lineage, the Drolma Podrang and Phuntsok Podrang, and also His Holiness Minling Trichen of the house of Mindrolling, are considered wondrous beings. It is certain that they are extraordinary beings capable of benefiting others simply through being born in these families, whether they have the name of bodhisattvas or not.

While it is certain that only special beings can be born in these special families, it is by no means certain that all bodhisattvas are born in them. Since bodhisattvas can choose the most effective rebirth, they may not choose to be reborn in such a situation,

but instead choose to be reborn in what would even appear to be a negative family situation. They may choose parents who are great sinners, or who are virtuous but extremely impoverished, in order to change the parents' course of action or in order to benefit them. An example of this is the great master Gyalwa Choyang, who in that life was reborn in a situation of such extreme poverty that initially it was thought impossible that he would ever be able to practice. Nevertheless he became a great teacher.

Another thing that bodhisattvas may do is choose to be reborn as the child of parents who are so negative that one would have to call them maras or demons. In this case, they are probably born there in order to get control of the situation and overcome their parents' negativity. Bodhisattvas can also choose to be reborn in a family where the parents are apparently ordinary but are actually dakas and dakinis. In that case they are born because of the connection between the teacher and those particular bodhisattvas.

Sometimes they will be born as the child of parents who are mantradhara, which means accomplished practitioners of Vajrayana with control over the channels and winds. In that case, they are born in such a family because they will have access to Dharma immediately on being born there. All of these

examples are about individuals who can control their rebirth, which means that this is about individuals who have achieved at least the first bodhisattva level.

An example of this type of birth is the current Dapzang Rinpoche who, according to His Holiness the Seventeenth Karmapa's prediction, has been reborn in the district of Gedje as the child of two people whose names His Holiness supplied. Nowadays there is a record kept of children born in Tibet, so Drupon Rinpoche approached His Holiness with a copy of the census report and they went through it looking for the names of the parents that His Holiness discovered in a vision. They found that there was no record of any two people by those names having a child in the district of Gedje, but His Holiness insisted that those were their names and that it was in that district of Gedje that the Dapzang Rinpoche had been reborn. When they actually searched for the child in the household, they found that the parents did indeed have the names that His Holiness had recognized, but they were not mentioned in the census because although they had eight or nine children, there was no record of any of them because the family was not believed to have a stable residence. In this way, holy beings can sometimes choose to be reborn in impoverished circumstances.

When an ordinary person is conceived, the conditions for the conception are not aspiration, as is the case with a holy being, but the three afflictions of attachment, aversion, and bewilderment. Typically the person will develop attachment, actual desire, for the parent of the opposite gender, a corresponding degree of aversion and jealousy toward the parent of the same gender, and these emotions bewilder them. It is this combination of attachment, aversion, and bewilderment that causes the person to actually be conceived and enter the womb. In order to prevent this, those who have a stable practice — and this is primarily going to be bodhisattvas who accept human rebirth — when they see their prospective parents, must generate bodhichitta, specifically the wish to accept rebirth in order to be of great benefit for beings.

Then they visualize their prospective parents as their deity. Since these persons are practitioners of secret mantra, they will practice the deity with a father and mother form; for example they will visualize the father as Chakrasamvara, the mother as Vajravarahi. Then as they enter the womb, they see the womb as the precious palace of the deity and the substances involved in the conception, the white and red bodhichitta, as the deity's pedestal or seat made of the sun and moon. They enter the womb with the attitude that they are receiving the secret empowerment from their parents. They will visualize their own consciousness as the

seed syllable of their particular deity, whether it is HUM, HRI, or whatever. Once they have entered the womb, they will think that rays of light radiate from this seed syllable and collect the blessings of all buddhas. The light rays will withdraw back into the syllable, which is transformed into the deity's scepter — for example, a five-pronged vajra. Then they think that this scepter is transformed into their body, the body of the deity.

Once in the womb, the bodhisattvas visualize themselves as a deity. Their choice of deity depends on the activities they wish to emphasize in their next life. If they wish to be a great upholder of the teachings in general, they will visualize themselves as Buddha Shakyamuni; if they wish to be a great scholar, they will visualize themselves as Manjushri; if they wish to be of great benefit to beings in general, they will visualize themselves as Chenrezik; if they wish to subdue obstructors, afflicting spirits, and so on, they will visualize themselves as Vajrapani; and if they wish to benefit beings through supercognition and miraculous powers, they will visualize themselves as Padmasambhava. In all these cases, they are visualizing themselves as a specific deity because of and through their aspiration to benefit beings. It is not because they themselves personally wish to acquire certain qualities.

Having visualized themselves as that deity, the bodhisattvas will then visualize the three syllables, OM, AH, and HUM in

the three places: the middle of the forehead, the throat, and the heart. They will think that their body, speech, and mind are protected for the duration of the gestation by these three syllables, which are the essence of the body, speech, and mind of all buddhas. Finally they will visualize that the doors of this palace are closed and guarded by the wrathful deity Hayagriva.

After they have visualized this at the time of conception when they first enter the womb, they simply rest in the state of practice. They will not think of these things again until the body is completed. This may mean that they remain in a state of meditation, or it may mean they become somewhat unconscious — it depends on their exact level. In any case, they are not going to be fully conscious of all of this until gestation is finished.

When gestation is finished, but before birth, some bodhisattvas are able to recollect their previous lives: who they were, what they were trying to do, and so on — not all, but some. As a result, it is quite common that in the later period of gestation, these bodhisattvas will recite the six-syllable mantra OM MANI PADME HUM, speak, and do other things like that, as recounted in the biographies of the birth of His Holiness the Karmapa. Some bodhisattvas do not awake in the womb in this way, and they only recollect who they are and what they are doing after being born. This probably does not happen right at birth, but at

the age when they start to walk. At that point they may recollect who they are, but even at that point they may forget sporadically when they fall down or other things happen to them.

If the momentum of their aspiration and their wisdom is very strong, at a very early age they may be able to spontaneously say who they are, recollect their previous lives, and so on. There are two reasons why they might be able to do this. One is that they are the incarnation of a bodhisattva who is on a particularly high level, and therefore can recollect who they are very early in life. The other is that they made a strong aspiration to be able to recollect their identity very early in life. Most of these reincarnate bodhisattvas recollect who they are, and they speak of it at some point in early childhood, but as they get older they stop having recollections of previous lives. This is because they are obscured by contamination. Here *contamination* does not mean bacteria, disease, or anything like that; it means spiritual contamination. Contamination comes from several sources. If they are given bad food to eat, if they are given dirty clothing or their clothing is allowed to get dirty, this will contaminate their recollection. If a reincarnate bodhisattva is touched by sinful beings, this can also obscure them.

Sometimes it happens that these bodhisattvas do not recollect who they are when they are small children. During their

childhood there is no indication that anything extraordinary is going on, but later on when they practice in retreat, they recollect their identity. In this case the obscuration of birth has been purified by their practice. The obscuration of birth is that, regardless of how accomplished or wise you were in your previous life, when you are conceived you are obscured by the sperm and ovum that are the physical basis of conception. To a greater or lesser degree, that is going to cause you to forget. Therefore most reincarnate bodhisattvas do not have experience and realization from an early age. However because they had experience and realization before, they do not have to use effort to develop them the way ordinary beings do. Simply by being reminded or briefly instructed in these things, they regain their previous experience and realization.

Deathlessness at the Second to Third Level of Mahamudra

We have been going down the line starting with the achievement of immortality, then buddhahood without the demonstration of immortality, and so on. Now we come to deathlessness at the level of those on the second or third mahamudra level. If a practitioner has achieved intermediate or greater one-pointedness, what is

going to happen at death? For those who achieve intermediate or greater onepointedness and if the cause of their death is not too bad — if they do not die suddenly or horribly, if they are not in too much pain as they die, and if there is someone to remind them of their meditative state after death and at the time of death — they may be able to achieve samadhi after death. Although anything from lesser beyond-elaboration upward does not require reminder, the people on the intermediate or greater one-pointedness levels do require reminder. This is because all they have really achieved is a refined state of tranquillity. The yoga of one-pointedness is fundamentally the tranquillity practice of mahamudra; therefore they have not achieved the supramundane state, the bodhisattva levels, and therefore they have not truly achieved what we would call “insight.”

There are many pitfalls and sidetracks possible for such a person because according to its nature, tranquillity is an experience of either **nonconceptuality**, mental **clarity**, or bliss. If they become involved in one or another aspect of these experiences, this will divert them. Therefore in some of the introductions to the natural state found in treatises on the Six Limbs of Yoga in the Kalachakra literature, it is said that there are many pitfalls for those at these two levels. In short, they have experience but no realization. If they are attached to their experience, they may appear to remain in samadhi after death, and their samadhi would be no different

from someone on a high bodhisattva level from the point of view of an observer, but what is really happening is very different. Because they have cultivated a stable state of tranquillity, they may have a stable and very lucid samadhi after death, but if this is the stable maintenance of a state of tranquillity alone, they will be reborn in one of the three realms of samsara, depending on which one they are attached to. If they are attached to the experience of bliss, they will be reborn as a desire realm god; if they are attached to the experience of lucidity, they will be reborn as a god of the *realm of form*; and worst of all, if they are attached to the experience of nonconceptuality, they will be reborn as a god of the formless realm. This is considered the worst rebirth; it is an unrestful state that is a result of being attached to the experience of emptiness devoid of realization. The formless-realm gods are the long-lived gods whose experience constitutes one of the *eight unrestful states*.

How do you prevent this? As is taught at the beginning of the *Great Liberation through Hearing in the Bardo*, you prevent it by putting your mouth close to the ear of the dead person who is in a questionable samadhi and point out the ground clear light to them repeatedly so they break through their attachment. In pointing out the clear light, you are attempting to show them the triviality of the experience to which they are attached. If you succeed it may purify their attachment, and they may come

to see the nature beyond elaboration, in which case they may progress to the first level of beyond elaboration.

Deathlessness at the First Level of Mahamudra

Those at the level of the lesser one-pointedness, the first of the twelve levels of mahamudra, will not be able to rest in samadhi after death at all. The exception to this is if they have a very stable generation stage practice, they may appear to rest in samadhi, but because they have not achieved the superior level, have not achieved realization, this can be good or bad. If they have stable visualization of their yidam, they may rest in that visualization after death with some stability, and to an observer this would appear to be samadhi as well. However there are pitfalls if their visualization of the deity does not incorporate the recognition that the deity's form is emptiness, and the understanding of the visualization as the unity of clarity and emptiness. If their stable generation-stage visualization is solidified, if they visualize the deity as either composed of solid flesh and blood or as something hard and indestructible like a diamond, then according to the tantras there are hundreds of pitfalls. All sorts of bad things can happen to this person.

If they rest in a stable visualization of a peaceful deity but without recognizing the deity's emptiness, this will cause them to either be reborn as a god of the desire or form realm. It will not lead to liberation. Similarly, if they rest in a stable visualization of a wrathful deity, visualizing the deity as fiery, ferocious, powerful, and so on, but without recognizing the deity's emptiness, they will be reborn as a mara or *rakshasa*. If their particular yidam has been a deity with an animal head, and they visualize themselves as that yidam after death, they will be reborn as a flesh-eating demon with an animal head. If they rest their mind on the deity's seed syllable, such as HUM, but they visualize this HUM as very solid, substantial, and unchanging, they will be reborn as a snake. If they have performed extensive tantric practice, such as visualizing themselves as wrathful deities and reciting many mantras, but have not kept the samayas of Vajrayana, then they will definitely be reborn as a demon that has the form of that deity but is in fact demonic. There are innumerable stories of these things happening, especially the latter.

From the point of view of the observer, such a state might seem to be stable samadhi, but in fact it is something else. If there is someone who appears to be resting in samadhi after death but you suspect it is merely a stable and solidified generation stage, then you should read the description of the deity's appearance from the liturgy, describing the deity's color, scepters, and so

on. While this is being read, you should say things like, “Do not meditate on this as solid and substantial; meditate on it as like a rainbow, like the reflection of the moon in water, the unity of appearance and emptiness.” If you remind the person repeatedly in this way, it may prevent their rebirth as a samsaric god or demon, although there is no guarantee. For this to work it is necessary that the person who is doing the reading and reminding is at best a holy being, or at least someone with great love and compassion. Not just anyone can do this.

For those who practiced extensive tranquillity meditation but without clarity, if their practice is nothing more than resting in a state of mental darkness or vacuity as is commonly the case, then although they may appear to be in samadhi after death, the state they are in does not merit the name. It may appear to be samadhi because, through their intense concentration and an inward absorption in ignorance or stupidity, their consciousness will not leave their body for seven days and there may be warmth over the heart. You might think they are in samadhi, but in fact the mere presence of warmth over their heart could indicate absorption in the stupidity of tranquillity. If you suspect this is happening, again the person needs to be reminded by being told things like, “Look at the nature of the stillness,” “It is empty lucidity, nothing whatsoever,” and so on. Here Chakme Rinpoche writes, “I think that if such things are said and such introduction

is given, it might help.” By saying, “I think it might help,” he is saying that it is not definite that one can break through a state of torpid *shamatha* in this way. Again, for this to function, the person doing the reminding has to be a holy being or at least someone with extensive practice of the generation and completion stages as well as great love and compassion.

Death of an Ordinary Person

Up to this point, this chapter has been about the death of practitioners. Ordinary people — that is to say, people who have not been trained in the practice of meditation — cannot possibly be benefited at the time of death by someone pointing out the ground clear light, reminding them, and so on. There is nothing to be pointed out and there is nothing for them to be reminded of because they have no familiarity with these teachings. Other things should be done for such people. The things that need to be emphasized during the first three days after death are the proclamation of the names of buddhas, which helps the dead person because they can hear this, and especially the performance of phowa, the ejection of consciousness.

Although it is customary for phowa to be performed once by a lama who is sitting at the dead person's pillow, it is actually

necessary to perform it repeatedly, starting from the time when the pulse in the neck stops until the signs of successful transference or ejection have been achieved. It should not be done just once a day; it has to be done by the teacher hundreds of times in four sessions a day: early morning, morning, afternoon, and evening until the transference is successful. If the transference is immediately successful, you can stop at that point, but until there are signs of success, you just have to keep on doing it. It may take three days; it may take seven days.

At this point Chakme Rinpoche writes that if you are the person performing phowa, you must not forget that what happens to the dead person depends entirely on what you do at this point. Whether they are happy and reborn in a pure realm, or they are miserable and reborn in lower realms depends on your diligence. Do not think it is enough to melodiously chant an ejection liturgy once by their pillow. That is not going to do it. You have to do it the way you do it when you practice the ejection of consciousness yourself. You do it all day, day after day, until you have mastered it. In the same way, for three days at least — which is usually the duration of time after death when the consciousness remains in the body — you have to keep on doing it until the person's consciousness has been successfully ejected. This is far more important than any other rituals or chanting you could be doing during those first three days. You

do not need to repeat the supplication for the ejection; you do need to repeat the visualization.

After about three days, usually on the morning of the fourth day, the consciousness will leave the body. If this has happened already and the ejection of consciousness was not done, then the time for that has passed; it will not work anymore because the consciousness is already out. You need to do something else. This is a ritual of reversal and purification, such as the purification ceremony of Amitabha, the purification ceremony of Vairochana, and so on.

These should be done, if possible, for “forty-nine days,” which actually means starting on the fourth day after the person’s death and continuing until the end of forty-nine days after the person’s death. Also, if it is possible, the *Great Liberation Through Hearing in the Bardo* should be read in the presence of the dead person for those forty-nine days. At best it should be constant, with people doing it in shifts; one person should read the text repeatedly until that shift is over, and then another person takes over. If not, the whole text should be read at least once a day for the forty-nine days.

For most people, the consciousness leaves the body at the beginning of the fourth day after death, and most people are reborn

the beginning of the fourth week after death. This is not certain, but it is more often than not the case. Therefore at the end of the third week and the beginning of the fourth week, you should especially emphasize showing the way to the pure realms, which is included in the purification ceremony of Amitabha, Vairochana, or whatever it is that you are doing for the person.

Also at that time, you need to explain to the person the defects of samsara, and inspire them to cast aside fixation and cravings for samsara. With meditation that is as clear as possible, you need to cast the person's consciousness into the pure realm you are trying to direct them to. The actual visualization for this, how you visualize the person's consciousness and how you cast it into the pure realm and so on, is contained in the specific ceremony you are using. If phowa was not done or was not effective, the purification ceremony should be done starting from the beginning of the fourth day until the fortyninth day, all day every day, four times a day: early morning, morning, afternoon, and evening. It is to be done one-pointedly and taken very seriously. For example, when purification ceremonies were done at Thrangu Monastery, the long Vairochana practice was done four times every day. This was very, very hard on the monks because it is a very long and complex ceremony, but presumably it is very beneficial for the deceased.

It is not enough, Chakme Rinpoche writes, simply to conduct such ceremonies with the attitude of wanting them to be successful. You really have to concentrate; you need to remain in a clear state of meditation, which is the unification of the generation and completion stages. Furthermore you need to be motivated by intense love and compassion for the person. If these two criteria are met — the ability to meditate and perform the meditation properly, and the genuine motivation of love and compassion — and if the ceremony is done assiduously four times a day for the forty-nine days, then if the person is not too great a sinner, they will be reborn in a pure realm.

If someone has performed any of the five actions of immediate consequence, there is a special problem. The actions of immediate consequence are classically formulated as five: killing your father with malicious intent; killing your mother with malicious intent; causing blood to be drawn from the body of a buddha with malicious intent; killing an arhat with malicious intent; or causing a fundamental schism in the sangha.

These five actions of immediate consequence are so heinous that if you do them in this life, there will be no bardo for you. Immediately after you have stopped breathing, you will go straight to hell, which means that if you have done these things and you are dying, it is an emergency situation.

More common actions than these five can also be included in this category of actions of immediate consequence. For example, destroying a buddha statue with malicious intent, destroying a stupa with malicious intent, or seducing or raping a monastic will cause rebirth in hell immediately after death without any bardo.

In the case of someone who has done these things, if the ejection of consciousness is done successfully immediately after the person stops breathing, they can be saved. It is impossible for someone who has done these things to be reborn in a pure realm, but he or she may be able to be reborn as a human being or with the body of a samsaric god. If you cannot effectively perform the transference of consciousness immediately upon the person's death, their consciousness will go straight out their anus. Remember that you want your consciousness to go out the top of your head. Each aperture of your body corresponds to rebirth in a certain samsaric realm. If your consciousness leaves your anus, you are going to hell and your consciousness will go straight down like a stone cast into the water. You will immediately go to the **hell realm**, and therefore this is called "direct downward." It is direct because there is no bardo; you just go straight down. You will be immediately reborn in the hell realm called Avichi, which is called "downward direct passage."

Other than those two types of people, all other beings who engage in lesser virtue and lesser wrongdoing will experience the bardo, the interval after death. Therefore there is great benefit in a qualified teacher pointing out the nature and distinct phases of the bardo to the recently deceased person. That is the source of the custom of reading the Great Liberation Through Hearing in the Bardo. For this to be effective, the person performing the ceremony must have genuine love and compassion for the deceased person. If they have this, and if the person is successfully contacted and made familiar with the experiences they are about to undergo, they can quite possibly be liberated.

Liberation in the bardo is essentially brought about by the person coming to understand two things. The first is that all appearances, including the appearances of the bardo, are nothing other than the display of that person's mind. The second is that the pure appearances of the bardo, such as the buddhas of the five families and so forth, are nothing other than the embodiment of the aspects of body, speech, mind, qualities, and activity of that person's own buddha nature. If in that way they can recognize that all appearances are the display of the mind and that the appearances of dharmata are the display of their own buddha nature, they can achieve liberation. Because they do not have a physical body in the bardo, because they are just a mind wandering about, recognizing these things at this time

is sufficient to produce liberation. In fact the term *interval* or *bardo* in this context principally refers to the interval between bodies, when one is a mind without a body. It is the period of time starting with the separation of one's mind from one's body, and this period of time lasts until one takes subsequent birth.

If the person is liberated at this point, they will not encounter the court of Yama. Yama is the lord of the dead who is experienced by bardo beings as a judge. Anyone who is not liberated will in one way or another experience the court of Yama. Depending on what they have done, they will experience Yama passing sentence on them, such as sentencing them to a certain duration of time in the lower realms. In spite of the fact that this situation is understood to be a karmic projection and not the experience of an external being, it is experienced by the bardo consciousness as though they were encountering other beings who possess this kind of power over them.

The first thing that happens in the court of Yama is that everything you have done in the preceding life, all virtuous and negative actions, is revealed and openly proclaimed. Traditionally it is said that these things are found in the small print in the scroll or mirror that Yama has in front of his face, where he can see what you have done as though he were watching it on a television screen. Having observed all of this, Yama predicts where

you are going to be reborn and how long you are going to live there. His bailiff or court reporter writes all of this down, and then you are sent forth to your next life.

There is a certain type who live their life in a state of great neutrality, which is to say they do nothing very good and nothing very bad. For those who have led a very neutral life, it is possible in some cases that they will not take rebirth for a long time. They will pass into the bardo and will remain as a wandering mind, a wandering consciousness, for a very long time. There are said to be an inconceivable number of beings who are in this state at any one time. Eventually they will take rebirth, but because none of their actions has created a particularly forceful momentum, it takes a long time for them to take rebirth.

This is similar to beings who are reborn in the formless realm. They also remain as minds without bodies, but the difference is that in the formless realm, the being is a mere continuity of consciousness without coarse recollection or conceptuality. In the case of a being who remains in the bardo for a protracted period of time, they may be coarsely conceptual, and they may be trying to find a place to be born, but because they lack the karma to produce immediate birth, they do not experience it. Those who are born in the formless realm remain without bodies in that state of formlessness for as long as 84,000 aeons

but they are not liberated, and eventually when the karma that produced the formless realm experience (principally the karma of samadhi) is exhausted, their next most prominent karmic imprint will take hold, and they will be reborn and continue to wander in samsara just like everyone else.

All of these situations are examples of rebirths that occur for sentient beings. Although we always talk about the six realms as six external environments where beings are cast, it is important to understand that the six realms are really the six types of rebirths that we experience. In addition, we experience these rebirths as individuals, so even though there are just six realms, each and every birth within samsara is unique.

Liberation, Buddhahood, and the Kayas

The alternative to samsara is what we call “liberation.” Here the term *liberation* is synonymous with nirvana, the transcendence of misery. “Transcendence of misery” means exactly what it sounds like: a state where there is no suffering and there is never, ever going to be suffering again. There are two types of nirvana. *Nonabiding nirvana* is the buddhahood achieved through the Mahayana, and *regular nirvana* is that achieved through the path

of the Hinayana. We call this “regular nirvana” simply because it is the primary reference of the word *nirvana*. The word *nirvana*, when it is not qualified, usually means the state of an arhat, or foe destroyer. Two paths, both considered Hinayana paths, lead to arhathood: the path of a shravaka, or listener, and the path of a pratyekabuddha, or solitary realizer. In either case, the person becomes an arhat in this life by eradicating or utterly conquering their enemy. Their enemy is the kleshas, because the obscuration of the kleshas is the cause of rebirth in samsara. If the kleshas are eradicated, there will not be and there cannot be rebirth in cyclic existence. By implication, this also points out that arhats have not eradicated the other obscuration, which is cognitive obscuration. Cognitive obscuration is a barrier to omniscience and buddhahood, but does not in itself prevent liberation from samsara.

Those who have achieved that state of liberation or nirvana, which is the eradication of all kleshas, have destroyed the foe, namely the kleshas and the suffering that results from them. Therefore they are an arhat, or “foe destroyer.” An arhat can be defined as someone who will never be born again. If they wish to they can produce emanations for the benefit of others, but because they have eradicated the cause of rebirth, an arhat cannot actually take rebirth in samsara.

As an indication of how extraordinary it is to achieve arhathood, it is said that when arhats decide to die and they let go of the perception of this world or this life, they rise into the sky, their bodies produce streams of fire and/or water, and they display other miracles. This is of great importance, especially in the case of a pratyekabuddha. As their name implies, pratyekabuddhas do not teach, so their principal activity for the benefit of others is the display of miracles, especially at the time of death. They benefit others tremendously through this display of miracles, and this is about the only thing they do to interact with others. Finally fire blazes from the heart of the arhat, burning up their physical body, their aggregates. What is left as a remnant is not ashes, but relics like shariram, which will fall down from the sky. At the same time, their robes and begging bowl, which are not consumed by the flames, also fall to earth as a support for the faith and accumulation of merit by others.

At that point the mind of an arhat enters into the state of emptiness, and they rest within the realization of emptiness for as many as 80,000 aeons. They will not be reborn because they have no cause of rebirth. After about 80,000 aeons, a ray of light from the heart of a buddha awakens them from their samadhi of cessation, and it points out to them that although they have achieved something significant, it is not buddhahood. This causes them to generate the intention to achieve supreme awakening,

in other words, bodhichitta. From that point onward, because of what they have already achieved, they complete the rest of the path in an extraordinary way, but now they do so according to the Mahayana. Eventually they achieve the unsurpassable awakening of a buddha. In general, the term *liberation* means liberation from samsara, and this liberation is the state of an arhat. The foe referred to in the term *foe destroyer* is the kleshas and the suffering that results from them.

Whether a person achieves buddhahood by initially becoming an arhat and subsequently generating bodhichitta and completing the path, or through having entered the Mahayana from the beginning, or through having practiced the Vajrayana, the buddhahood achieved is the same. Furthermore the dharmakaya, which is the fundamental nature of any and all buddhas, is identical; it is one. There is no distinction whatsoever in any way that can be made between the nature of one buddha and another. Dharmakaya has no form, appearance, color, substantial entity, or existence of any kind. In order to gather accumulation through veneration of the dharmakaya, it is represented in various ways: as Samantabhadra, as Vajradhara, as the Great Mother Prajnaparamita, and so on. All of these deities represent the same thing. They are various displays of emanations so that beings can gather the accumulations, but what is being vener-

ated through these representations itself is beyond any kind of color, shape, or form.

Just as all buddhas have one dharmakaya, and no distinction can be made between the dharmakaya of one buddha and another, all buddhas have five sambhogakayas. The sambhogakaya of each and every buddha is fivefold. The five aspects of the sambhogakaya are the buddhas of the five families: Vairochana, Akshobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitabha, and Amoghasiddhi. They are the pure nature of the five aggregates. These qualities, the dharmakaya and the five sambhogakayas that are its primary expression, are not newly created when someone achieves buddhahood. They are innate within us. The change that occurs upon the realization of buddhahood is not the creation of these qualities, but rather their full revelation.

At this point Chakme Rinpoche explains the difference between our wisdom, meaning the wisdom that is the nature of a sentient being, and that same wisdom when we have achieved buddhahood. It is said that the wisdom of all buddhas is innate within the continuum or mind of each and every sentient being. Nevertheless while we are sentient beings possessing obscuration, the wisdom of our continuum, the wisdom that is innate within our minds, is constricted. It is like the space contained by a small vase: you cannot really quantify space, but you can

say that the space within the vase is small because the vase is small and it constricts the space. When the vase is smashed, what happens to the space that was previously within the vase? It is no longer distinguishable from the space that surrounds it, because the vase that defined this space no longer exists. Therefore you cannot quantify and separate what you previously called “the space within the vase.” This is what happens to the wisdom of a sentient being when that sentient being becomes a buddha.

The only thing right now that distinguishes you as a sentient being from a buddha is your obscurations. When your obscurations are removed, your innate wisdom and the wisdom of all buddhas are indistinguishable and inseparable. Therefore when any sentient being achieves buddhahood, they achieve the same dharmakaya as any and all other buddhas, and no distinction can be made within that dharmakaya. When a being achieves buddhahood, there is no distinction whatsoever between that being’s newly achieved buddhahood and the buddhahood possessed by those who achieved buddhahood at some point in the past.

Next an analogy is given for a similar lack of distinction between the sambhogakaya of different buddhas. Even if rainbows appear at different times or in different places, the nature of the five-colored light that makes up each rainbow is the same. You can distinguish between one rainbow and another by location, but

not by nature. In the same way, the sambhogakayas of individual buddhas are of the same fivefold nature. Therefore all of the innumerable manifestations of sambhogakaya can be reduced to five, and all are varieties of those five. In spite of the great variety within each of the five in terms of iconography, scepters, costumes, and appearance, these varieties exist only to appeal to different beings and bring them to liberation. In fact there are only five sambhogakaya buddhas.

Another analogy is presented as well. Imagine a large temple or shrine room at night. A thousand butter lamps are lit in the shrine room, but the doors and shutters of the windows are closed tight, and no light comes out. The separate butter lamps are an analogy for nirmanakaya, for the emanation body of buddhas. Nirmanakaya demonstrates the appearance of birth, life, and death, hence at any one time some nirmanakayas will be born, others will be living, and others will be dying. They could be nirmanakayas of one buddha or more than one buddha. Returning to the analogy, while the butter lamps are all separate, their light mixes within the close environment of the room, and you cannot completely separate the combined light of the lamps. This is an analogy for sambhogakaya. All of this light and indeed all of the lamps are contained within the space of that single room, and the space within that room where the light of the individual lamps appears is an analogy for the dharmakaya.

You can use this analogy of the shrine room at night in two ways. You can use it to understand that when sentient beings achieve buddhahood, they are inseparable from all other buddhas. You can also use it to understand that those who previously achieved buddhahood, such as the fathers and sons of the Kagyu tradition and the great lineage holders of the other schools as well, can dispatch or display billions of emanations. For example, when we talk about Buddha Shakyamuni, we normally think of him as one person, but it is understood that while Buddha Shakyamuni was present in this world, he was simultaneously present in a billion other worlds.

Now another analogy is given. The cloudless sky at night is an analogy for the dharmakaya, and the full moon shining within that cloudless night sky is an analogy for the sambhogakaya. The reflection of the moon's image in the many reflective surfaces on the ground, such as pools, lakes, or whatever, is an analogy for the appearance of the reflection of sambhogakaya as nirmanakaya in the minds of those who are to be tamed. These disciples who are to be tamed can be defined as those who have the karma to see or witness nirmanakaya. This is an analogy to enable you to understand how one buddha can simultaneously have a billion nirmanakayas. In fact the figure of a billion is merely indicative since every buddha has many, many more emanations than that.

To continue with the same analogy, if the reflective surfaces stop being reflective, if the water becomes polluted or if the pools dry up, nothing happens to the moon, but obviously it will not be reflected. This is an analogy for the appearance of a nirmanakaya's passing into nirvana. They pass into nirvana, which is by definition merely an appearance of that passing, through the exhaustion (the drying up or pollution) of the merit of their disciples. Therefore you can prolong the presence of a nirmanakaya by increasing your merit and supplicating for their longevity.

This analogy can help you understand that the appearance of a nirmanakaya passing away, being born, living, abiding, and so on, are mere appearances. From the point of view of the buddhas themselves, none of these things are actually happening. These are appearances within the mind of the disciples. In a greater context, the flourishing and diminishing of the doctrine happens in the same way. It is an appearance that arises for the minds of disciples based on the increase or decrease of their merit, principally the merit and behavior of human beings. When human beings are virtuous, Dharma increases. When they are unvirtuous, it decreases, and then nirmanakayas are harder to encounter. If nonvirtue gets really bad, then even if we do encounter nirmanakayas, we feel antipathy toward them.

At this point Chakme Rinpoche says, “I have not proven all of this in my own experience.” This is to be understood as an expression of modesty. He achieved omniscient wisdom so he actually did have these experiences, but since he is adopting the standpoint in this book that he is a sentient being just like any other sentient being, he has to say he has not proven these things in his own experience. All of the sutras, tantras, oral treasures, and New and Old Traditions are in accord with this.

To complete this chapter, Chakme Rinpoche continues, “Through the discernment I have gained through hearing and studying vast explanations of these topics, distinct in many ways in their manner of exposition, I have come to understand these things to some extent. Therefore I have explained them as I thought of them but without any proper sequence.” The literal meaning of what he is saying is that there is no proper order to this chapter. By implication, he is saying that his concern here is to present these topics as direct instruction in a way that is useful, rather than in the type of sequence or progression that would be pleasing to a scholar.

Then he writes, “Being afraid of the amount of writing it would involve, I have left out quotations.” Normally if you were writing a text for scholars, you would include scriptural quotations and references to gloss and support your statements. Here he is writing

for practitioners and so he does not do this. “Although there are slight differences within the explanations of these things found in different places, I do not think they are contradictory, but rather that they are merely different styles of explanation.” In other words, you may be able to find places where things are explained slightly differently, but he thinks that his different ways of describing them are not contradictory. “If you look at the sutras, tantras, and the teachings of the New and Old Traditions, this will be clear.” In other words, he is saying that if you think there are contradictions, you have not studied enough.

“Although it is difficult to put these things into practice...” In other words, at this point, we cannot directly experience the three kayas of the buddhas, the state of an arhat and so on, or the types of liberation described in the earlier part of the chapter. “In order that practitioners understand the distinction within this topic, the monk, Raga Asya,” referring to himself by his own name, “explained this on the evening session break of the eleventh day of the waning phase of the month Trum in the Horse Year and during the morning session break on the twelfth day of the same month. This was written down by the great spiritual friend, Tsonдру Gyamtso, for the benefit of unintelligent new practitioners. And he, Tsonдру Gyamtso, without any reservation about the difficulty of doing so, took this down as dictation, in spite of its length.” Because this topic

is extremely profound and vast, other than great beings with the eye of Dharma, those who are merely learned will not properly understand it. To really understand this material fully, you must have achieved a state of great wisdom; merely being learned in the tradition alone is not enough.

The distinction between wisdom and scholarship is important. For example, when people are close to the time of their death, there is the custom for them to go to a great teacher and request prediction and instruction. In this context “prediction” means predicting where they are going to be reborn and how to avoid it, and “instruction” means what exact type of practice they should do in order to change things. For this to be authentic, obviously the person who is approached has to be able to directly see the dying person’s next life, and to directly see into their minds so they can prescribe the right form of practice or virtuous endeavor for that person to pursue. This is what is meant by “someone with the eye of Dharma.”

Chakme Rinpoche continues, “But those who are merely learned will not fully understand it.” For example, in the *Mountain Dharma* composed by Lord Yanggonpa, there is a great deal of concealed explanation of the vajra body. His explanation of the channels, winds, and drops is based on his direct experience of them. However even though he based his explanation on his own

direct experience and great wisdom, Lord Rangjung Dorje, in his autocommentary on his own *Profound Inner Meaning*, refuted Yanggonpa's statements, saying that "he only understood them in part." This is not necessarily a contradiction. It could be that Rangjung Dorje was saying that because he wished to point out that there was a better way to present the channels, winds, and drops, and the understanding of the vajra body, especially since his concern in the *Profound Inner Meaning* was to present these in a way acceptable to those undertaking scholarship, but also as a basis for the gradual development of experience in practice. "In the same way, there must be things here" (in this chapter) "that I have incorrectly understood or not understood at all, or understood partially, so whatever mistakes there are, I confess these in the presence of those who are both learned and accomplished and who possess the eye of Dharma." In other words, he is not saying, "I confess these things in the presence of those who are only scholars or learned." He is saying, "I confess in the presence of those who are scholars and who have attained and possess the eye of Dharma."

He continues, "This was not written as a shastra." In other words, when Chakme Rinpoche gave this explanation, he was not intending it to be a great teaching of the textual tradition. Therefore he says, "I did not consult sources, and in fact I did not even think about what I was saying. I spoke this in the form

of a spontaneous song. Therefore no doubt I have gotten many things out of order. I request the patience of learned spiritual friends with this.” Here he says that he is requesting the patience of the learned, implying that only those who are learned but not accomplished would care about the order. Then he concludes, “May this blaze with auspiciousness and may that auspiciousness spread throughout Jambudvīpa.”

Questions and Answers

STUDENT: You spoke about lamas receiving teachings from teachers who had died. Do you know if this happens regularly? Does it happen if the teacher is alive but not in the same location as the student?

RINPOCHE: I cannot say whether it happens nowadays or not. I am confident that there are teachers with that degree of realization. What I am unsure about is whether there are disciples with that degree of faith.

For example, in Tibet it was not uncommon for well-known images, both thangkas and statues, to teach and make prophecies. Yet there was no one operating them; there was not someone standing behind the thangkas speaking or someone inside the

statue speaking. It was witnessed by some people because of their own pure outlook.

STUDENT: Did you say that a rinpoche has the ability to transcend death or form themselves into a rainbow body?

RINPOCHE: If by “ability” you mean the potential to achieve the rainbow body and the state of immortality, then all sentient beings without exception, including ourselves, possess this ability. Those who actually achieve the rainbow body and the state of immortality have not generated qualities that were not present before. What has happened is that they have removed obscurations or obstructions that, in the case of ordinary beings like ourselves, prevent those qualities from being manifest. In that sense, all of us have this ability.

As far as rinpoches having this ability, some do, but most choose to demonstrate the appearance of death in order to dispel the misapprehension of things as permanent, and also to produce relics and shariram when their bodies are cremated so others can gather the accumulations. These relics also can protect beings from the lower realms. For example, if you eat a shariram, you will not go to a lower rebirth. Also, when such miracles are produced, it benefits the whole region where this occurs.

Some rinpoches have this ability but do not demonstrate it. Others have great qualities beyond those of ordinary beings, but since they have not achieved perfect realization they do not have all of these abilities, such as producing innumerable emanations and so on. There is no way to know: you cannot look at someone and say, “This person is capable of demonstrating a rainbow body,” or “This person is not.” There is no external way to make this appraisal.

STUDENT: Have you studied alchemical processes?

RINPOCHE: Well, I have accomplished two types of alchemy perfectly. One is the alchemy of obesity because I weigh two hundred and ten pounds, which is excessive for my height. The other one is the alchemy of belly size, because I have accomplished a belly that is big enough for two people. Those are the only kinds of alchemy that I have accomplished — other than that, nothing.

STUDENT: Will you kindly fill us in on the story about Kalu Rinpoche and Situ Rinpoche that you mentioned at one point?

RINPOCHE: I will tell the story, but first you need to understand that after the parinirvana of the previous Karmapa and before the recognition and enthronement of the present Karmapa, the recognition of all tulkus in our tradition was the single

responsibility of His Eminence Situ Rinpoche. In the absence or minority of the Karmapa, he was the person who recognized all tulkus. Therefore he recognized about three hundred tulkus, all of whom are regarded as authentic and correct. In fact his recognitions included those in the Sakya, Geluk, Nyingma, and Bön traditions as well. He recognized so many because so many died during the years when Tibet was invaded and occupied.

After the previous Kalu Rinpoche passed away, Situ Rinpoche was approached by the labrang and asked to determine the circumstances of his rebirth. When the previous Kalu Rinpoche was still alive, the last time that he came to KTD I said to him, “Please come back again and again.” He said, “Well, time’s up and I am all used up.” When he said that, I felt so sad that I started to cry. A couple of days after that, when he was on the point of leaving he said to me, “You are going to come this summer though, right?” I said, “Yes,” and he said, “Well, I will see you then.” As events turned out, he passed away before I ever got there.

In any case, after Kalu Rinpoche passed away, the labrang approached Situ Rinpoche and requested that he recognize the rebirth. He very quickly was able to determine where Kalu Rinpoche had been reborn, but because he was reborn as the son of his own nephew, Situ Rinpoche was concerned that people might think it was merely a convenience in order to

keep the tulku within the family. He was hesitant to speak of his recognition. While he was in that state of hesitation, he had a dream where Kalu Rinpoche appeared to him and said to him, “Don’t you know? My tulku is Gyaltsen’s son. Ha, ha!” He laughed so loudly in the dream that Situ Rinpoche woke up startled. He was completely certain of his recognition, and this was confirmed by the dream. Since that time, no one has questioned the authenticity of this recognition. I understand the dream to have been an instance of the basis of emanation, where the previous Kalu Rinpoche remained in the pure realm and explained where his emanation was appearing.

STUDENT: Regarding your speaking of certain immortal historical personalities, I was wondering if the lamas keep an archive of people they have known who became immortal.

RINPOCHE: There is no such archive, at least not in the sense of an exhaustive one. The people who are mentioned in this account are merely examples of each type of achievement. There are hundreds and thousands of individuals who have achieved each type of achievement exemplified by those people, so there is no complete record of it.

For example, in my lifetime, when I was twenty-four, there was a lama of the Sakya tradition who achieved a rainbow body in

the district where I lived. About seven or eight years ago there was a well-known instance of someone achieving a rainbow body at the Dharma camp of Tsokye in the province of Golok in far eastern Tibet. There probably have been many more. The media in Tibet is limited, so there are probably many that we do not know about. I have not heard of any in the exile community in India.

STUDENT: When a person achieves a rainbow body, do they possess it permanently or is it something they experience only temporarily?

RINPOCHE: When practitioners achieve a rainbow body, it is an indication that they have eradicated all traces and vestiges of any kind of bewilderment of samsara. For that person samsara is completely over, but through their motivation of compassion they will continue to be active for the benefit of others, and they will produce emanations and so on.

STUDENT: My question is related to my study of the refuge tree and thinking about the iconography that may indicate who had achieved rainbow body and who perhaps has not. What are the indicators within the refuge tree, particularly for Ratnamati, the second down from the top, who is a figure I have not heard

anything about. If you could talk about him a little bit, that would be helpful.

RINPOCHE: There is no indication of the exhibition or the non-exhibition of a rainbow body in the iconography of the refuge tree. If you are thinking of some teachers having been surrounded by rainbows and others not, it has nothing to do with that. This is a decision made by the artist, and it is usually done for the sake of what looks good. As for the bodhisattva Ratnamati, he received from Vajradhara what we now call the “long lineage of Mahamudra,” which he passed on to Saraha. Ratnamati himself may or may not have been human. It is uncertain whether he was a human being living in this world, a deva, or something else because there is no precise record of when or where he was born, so not much is known about him.

STUDENT: I feel like there is a truth to some of the teachings because it seems there is a connection between what I hear and what I feel and think. When I hear teachings about rainbow bodies, people who live for thousands of years, and so forth, my first reaction is some sort of fascination about it. Then at one point you said that for some rainbow bodies you have to have a certain sort of realization, or some of your obscurations would have to be cleared in order for you to experience these rainbow bodies. When I hear that, then I feel a lot more distance

between what I hear and what I can have faith in. My question is, how do I relate to this type of teaching? How do I use it for my own practice? How do I work with it? I do not know how to do it because I feel distant from it. I feel like it is a fairy tale that I want to believe but that I cannot believe.

There is also another thing that happens. When I talk to other practitioners, there is a point where I will say, “Somebody turned into a rainbow body,” like I know what I am talking about, but I just say it because there is some sort of faith involved. Then I will go back and I will think, “What am I saying? What am I talking about?”

RINPOCHE: The ability to trust in the existence of things such as rainbow bodies and the achievement of immortality depends on one’s ability to trust in the validity of Vajrayana in general. It is important to have confidence in the effectiveness of Vajrayana as a path. If you have confidence in the Vajrayana path, then you will understand why it is possible for anyone who actually pursues this path properly to achieve these things. Whether any one of us actually achieves a rainbow body or not depends on our own effort, but it is important to understand that if we make that effort, we will achieve it.

There are two reasons why it is fitting to have this kind of trust. The first is the excellence and effectiveness of the Buddhadharma in general, and especially the Vajrayana, the special feature of which is bringing the achievement of buddhahood in one life and one body. The second reason is that buddha nature is the fundamental nature of all beings, and this includes the ingrown presence of all of the qualities of all buddhas. If liberation from samsara consists merely of removing adventitious obscurations that temporarily conceal this buddha nature and its qualities, and if it is indeed possible to remove these, then why would the removal of these not entail something like a rainbow body?

Furthermore there is a great deal of anecdotal evidence, not only of rainbow bodies but also of other related phenomena that are the same. For example, when it is reported, as it has been on many occasions, that teachers or practitioners walk through walls, the ability to do so is tantamount to a rainbow body. In many cases, these people have not perfected their achievement and therefore can only do this when they are in even placement. In any case, the fact that this is possible indicates the possibility of what we call “rainbow body.”

There are many other indications as well. There was a famous teacher called Ngulchu Thokme, who composed the *Thirty-seven Practices of a Bodhisattva*. When he was teaching, his students

would not come close to him because he was crawling with lice. Everybody had lice, but he had more than most people. He seemed to attract them and he was very careful to protect his lice from harm. He had so many that they crawled all over his face while he was teaching. Eventually his students decided that this was a menace to this health. They wanted to convince him to take measures to get the lice out of his clothing, and when they requested his permission to do so, he said, “Oh, no! I do not want to get rid of them. In fact if any of you have any lice, please give them to me. I want them all.”

This went on without any sign of improvement. Suddenly one day he had no lice. His students approached him and said, “What happened to all those lice?” He said, “I am not really sure. They are just all gone. I think it means that the last of my physical obscurations have been purified.”

While it is not reported that he exhibited a rainbow body, he was known to frequently cast no shadow, even when in bright sunlight. His students saw that sometimes the sun would shine right through him. In other words, he would be there and you would see him, but the sun would shine through him and behind him where it should have been in his shadow.

Sometimes teachers will allow it to be evident that their bodies are composed of light. For example, there is the well-known photograph of His Holiness the Sixteenth Karmapa taken at Losar at Samye Ling where you can see what he was wearing, but his upper body is not there. You can see the throne behind him, and you can clearly see the damaru, bell, and so forth on the table in front of him, but he is transparent.

One thing that I experienced myself — and this may merely be an indication of my own impure karma — is the following incident. When I was twenty, I went on pilgrimage to Palpung Monastery to receive full monastic ordination from the previous Situ Rinpoche. About seventy-three monks from Thrangu Monastery went, but somehow I ended up first. With a few companions, I went into Situ Rinpoche's audience room, I saw a group of about twenty monks with khenpos and others among them sitting in rows, and I saw Situ Rinpoche's empty throne at the head of the assembly.

When a couple of my friends arrived, I noticed they all started prostrating to the throne. Although I did not see anyone sitting there, the students were prostrating so I thought I had better do so too. While we were prostrating, I heard Situ Rinpoche say, "Did you become fatigued on your journey?" As soon as I heard him say that, he appeared on the throne, but I did not see him

there before. As soon as I heard him speak I saw him appear in an instant, but before that moment the throne appeared to be empty. Situ Rinpoche was still alive, and he had not passed into a rainbow body, but even so he appeared to me to have been exhibiting the equivalent of it. I do not think this was a mere optical illusion or some sort of hallucination on my part. I think I was witnessing that he is completely without obscuration, and he only exhibits physical form in order to be able to communicate with us, and therefore this form is an expression of wisdom.

A rainbow body is not something that can be figured out through speculation; it is impossible to try and figure out exactly what it is that is happening when someone achieves a rainbow body. The more you speculate about it, the more bewildered you will feel. It is important to develop a basic trust in the validity of such things through having trust in buddha nature and in the benefits of Vajrayana practice.

For the first part of my life, when I heard about rainbow body I thought of it as ancient history, something that may have happened in the past and to people very different from people like myself and the people that I knew. When I was twenty-four, a cousin of the great Sakya master Deshung Rinpoche named Jayang Gyamtso achieved a rainbow body. When I heard that it was still happening, I realized that it was not ancient history at all.

STUDENT: Were you the only person not to see the previous Tai Situpa?

RINPOCHE: I think they all saw him from the beginning. What happened was that I came into the audience room first. I looked around and I could not see Situ Rinpoche anywhere. I saw what was evidently his throne, but it appeared to me to be uninhabited. Then as the others entered the room, I noticed that they were all bowing and preparing to prostrate. As they started to prostrate, I did likewise because it seemed the right thing to do. Nevertheless while I did those three prostrations, as far as I could tell I was prostrating to an empty throne. It was only after I finished the prostrations and Situ Rinpoche spoke that all of a sudden he appeared.

STUDENT: When you talk about ordinary individuals like us attaining enlightenment in the bardo, does that mean the first bhumi?

RINPOCHE: When people pass away and it is said that they achieved liberation or buddhahood at the time of death, the term is often being used very loosely. For example, sometimes a really negative person dies, but because of their good fortune there is a very great teacher close by and that teacher causes their consciousness to be ejected out of the top of their head. In that

case, they will say that through the ejection of consciousness the person achieved buddhahood without meditation. This person has not achieved buddhahood, nor have they even achieved the first bodhisattva level. What they have achieved is liberation from rebirth in the lower states, and because of the direction that their consciousness took, they will be reborn as a human being or a mundane god. This is called “buddhahood” because they will eventually attain buddhahood, and this is the beginning of their upward movement.

Another situation occurs when people recognize the appearances in the bardo as the deities and as the sound of mantra. In that case — and this could happen to an ordinary person — they will be reborn in the realm of that deity, and having been reborn in that realm they will pursue the path, eventually achieve the first bodhisattva level, and long after that achieve buddhahood.

In order to be reborn in a pure realm, if it is a true sambhogakaya realm, you must have already achieved the first bhumi. If it is a nirmanakaya pure realm, you do not need to; you can achieve this afterwards. These teachings we discussed really only concern people who have already achieved the bodhisattva levels.

STUDENT: During a teaching, Bardor Tulku Rinpoche talked about moving through the bodhisattva levels, and he talked

about huge amounts of time that were needed to go from level to level. Is there is an opportunity to skip levels in order to decrease that time?

RINPOCHE: The context for Bardor Rinpoche's explanation was the *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, which is fundamentally an explanation of sutra. It is not unconnected to tantra, but basically it talks about the outlook of the sutras. In the sutras it is taught that starting from the moment when an individual first generates bodhichitta up to the time they attain buddhahood, it takes at least three innumerable aeons, and possibly as many as thirty-seven. This is what is taught in the sutras, which is why this is the implication in the *Jewel Ornament*. In our text the viewpoint is that of tantra and especially the result of practicing the most profound aspects of it, which are the practices of Mahamudra and the Great Perfection. It is through these practices that someone can achieve the states described here, such as buddhahood in this life, buddhahood at the time of death, or buddhahood in the bardo.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, I am wondering how the stages of mahamudra relate with the ten bhumis. Do they correspond at all?

RINPOCHE: Basically it is like this. The common path according to the sutras consists of the five paths. The first is the path of

accumulation; the second is the path of juncture; the third is the path of seeing, which is the first of the ten bodhisattva levels; the fourth is the path of meditation, which is the other nine bodhisattva levels; and then there is the path beyond obstacle, which is the achievement of buddhahood as the culmination of the bodhisattva path.

In mahamudra, these are coordinated with the four yogas and the three stages of each of the four yogas in the following way. The three stages of the first yoga of one-pointedness — lesser, intermediate, and greater — correspond to the first two paths, the path of accumulation and the path of juncture. Therefore the first stage of the second yoga, lesser beyond elaboration, is the same thing as the first bodhisattva level and the path of seeing. The rest of beyond elaboration and the three stages of one taste correspond to the second through the seventh bodhisattva levels inclusively. Then the first stage of no-meditation is equivalent to the eighth bodhisattva level, and the ninth and tenth bodhisattva levels are included in the second stage and beginning of the third stage of no-meditation. The final stage of greater no-meditation is buddhahood.

STUDENT: Over the years, I have accumulated some blessed substances that I really do not know what to do with or even what they are. From His Holiness the Sixteenth Karmapa I have

two ringsel, one white and one black. When Trungpa Rinpoche died, all of his students received a small vial of the salt his body was in. Outside of keeping them sacred, what do I do with them?

RINPOCHE: You can keep these things on your shrine, and by using them as a support for offerings, prostrations, and so forth, you will accumulate great merit. When you die, you will want to eat them all.

There is a difference between a doong, which is thought of as the bone that melts during cremation, and ringsel (shariram), which are apparently minerals that look like calcium or such.

We have all seen ringsel; they are quite common. Doong are actually less common. I had a doong at one point in my life, which I acquired in the following way. Near where I was born and lived, there was a great Drukpa Kagyu teacher called Thapchu Rinpoche who was considered an emanation of Gampopa. He oversaw an abbey of about two hundred nuns, who were renowned for their assiduous and expert meditation practice. This is not a very nice story at the start, but I will tell it anyway. There was a Geluk monastery quite near there, but because of the reputation of the Drukpa Kagyu abbey, the community support that the Geluk monastery was hoping for went to the Drukpa Kagyu, to the teacher and his retinue. This caused the Geluk

monastery to become antipathetic to the Kagyu monastery. As a result, when Tapchu Rinpoche passed away, the monks from the Geluk monastery broke in and stole all of his possessions, all of the possessions of the labrang, and everything that was potentially going to support the nuns after his death.

One of these nuns was a cousin of my father; she had a pronounced harelip, and I remember her quite well. The nuns were allowed to attend their teacher's cremation, but otherwise they were cut off from the place where they had been living. While the teacher was being cremated, my aunt was sitting there praying, and she heard a loud snap. What appeared to be a spark flew out of the fire and landed in her clothing, which was a fur robe. When she looked at it later, she found that what appeared to be a spark was actually a small piece of something — a bone, stone, or mineral that had flown out of her teacher's body as it was being cremated. She gave this to her father, and he wore it along with his other protection amulets in a leather bag around his throat. As was customary in Tibet, when he passed away his protection amulet was placed as an offering to Tara in a place known as the "cave of Tara."

I knew about this relic because of its connection to my family, and I knew where it was. Whether you call it thievery or not, I went there and took it. I opened up the leather bag and saw

all of his protection amulets and so on. In the midst of these, wrapped in paper, was this little round thing, which could have been bone or could have been stone. I kept it and wore it for some time around my own neck, and I can assert that it did produce two types of subsidiary relics, both shariram and **nyariram**. Shariram are spiny-looking little protrusions, and nyariram are more pronounced ones. They look something like spiny little mineral deposits. Later when I left Tibet and went to Bhutan and India, I lost this relic. This was the only time I have ever seen a doong. It was very, very white; it looked like ivory.

STUDENT: Over the years I have also received some dütsi and quite a number of blessing pills. I was instructed to take them but I felt that if I took them, I would run out of them. I still have them and I think that perhaps I should take them. Maybe you can say something about the difference between the two things and whether I should take them.

RINPOCHE: Hold onto most of it and occasionally eat a little bit of it. This is the reason for the custom for wearing a small locket or gau around one's neck, which was very prevalent in Tibet. The reason for wearing it is twofold. First the locket contains the most important relics, samaya substances, and so forth that you have received, and by wearing it around your neck during your life, it protects you. Then when you are about to die, you

open it up and swallow everything in it. If you die suddenly, of course you would not have the chance to do so. Usually if people know they are dying and are about to breathe their last breath, they gesture to the people around them to open up their lockets and dump it all in their mouth.

STUDENT: I seem to recall that the Sixteenth Karmapa had some red pills that might have been like this. Did they contain some form of relic?

TRANSLATOR: To my knowledge, this is the first time that Rinpoche is actually telling anyone what these are because he is the only one who makes them.

RINPOCHE: Some time before his death, the Sixteenth Karmapa had some blood tests run while he was in New York City. We asked the doctors to return the unused blood. His Holiness gathered these vials of his blood together, wrapped them up in a napkin, and affixed his seal to it. Then he handed this to me and said, “Hold onto this for later.” After he passed away, I kept these vials of blood for a long time. Then I thought, “Well, he gave them to me and he told me to hold onto them. It must have been his wish that I do something beneficial with them.” So I began to make pills out of them. I have distributed these pills here and especially abroad in countries such as Taiwan. They

have acquired a reputation for healing sickness and for reducing pain — for example, the pain at the time of death and the pain of terminal illness. A side effect of this has been that people have joked with me about it, saying, “Oh, you have a samaya substance that not even the fathers and sons of our lineage have.” It is true; I am the only one who distributes these because I am the only one who has them and makes them.

I have not distributed these a great deal in America. When I have given them to people, it is mostly when they have given me their gaus and asked me to fill them. In this country I have rarely given the red pills to people to eat because I was concerned that they might develop some kind of attitude about what they were. Once in Ohio there was a woman who was quite ill with cancer who asked me for a blessing pill. I gave her some of these and she ate them. The next day she asked what was in the pills, whether there were chemicals in them, where they were made, and so on. I explained that there were no chemicals in them, that I had made them myself from ground barley, and so forth. I realized that in this country, people are quite worried about what is in such things, so I have not given them to people to eat. In Asia this is not a problem. As long as it is a blessing substance, people are eager to eat them and they do not care what they are made from.

STUDENT: By ingesting this pill that comes from the Sixteenth Karmapa, could this liberate me and cut me off from rebirth in the lower realms? And let's say I have faith that I am cut off from rebirth in the lower realms, but if I then walk out the door and have a fit of anger, have I just thrown that out the window?

RINPOCHE: Sure, that is possible. In fact even though you have done things that would normally ensure that you not be reborn in lower realms, if at the point of death you become angry, you will be. Even if you are a great practitioner, if you get angry as you are dying, you will be reborn in a lower realm, which means that even though you have the karmic seeds to be reborn in a higher realm, those will not be destroyed. They will remain and you will be reborn in a higher realm later, but if there is a negative segue into death, you are going to be reborn in a lower realm anyway.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, how can food and clothing and evil people affect enlightened beings in a negative way? Can the food, clothing, and touch of enlightened beings affect ordinary beings in a positive way?

RINPOCHE: With regard to your second question, yes, it is possible that positive material things can affect us. This is why we go to sacred places, why we consume samaya substances,

why we keep and wear relics, and why we constantly receive the blessings of holy beings. To answer your first question, what usually happens in the situation of contamination is that parents do not recognize their child as a tulku, and they are not careful about whom the child comes into contact with. If they come into contact with a particularly sinful being or are given the bad person's clothing or food, this can have a negative effect. This effect is even more negative if the person broke samaya with their previous incarnation or with the other people in the same lineage. Generally speaking, the effect this has on the young tulku is that they will often become mute, unable to speak.

An instance of this occurred recently in Lama Namse's monastery, where there was a young tulku who died at the age of five or six. In his first few years he could talk, but eventually he lost the ability to speak because of this kind of contamination. He could communicate by writing and making signs and when he communicated in these ways, he exhibited extraordinary supercognition; but he could not speak, and he died very young.

STUDENT: Do we ourselves have to use any kind of protection? Do sacred substances such as blessing pills offer any protection against negative influences?

RINPOCHE: This contamination can happen to ordinary beings as well. However it will only happen to someone who is actively engaged in virtue or accumulating a great deal of merit. It will not happen to someone who is negative because the negative person is not going to be adversely affected by the negativity of others. If an ordinary practitioner is contaminated in this way, the sign will be a sudden loss of interest in practice, a loss of motivation, and the dulling of one's faith. The best way to protect yourself from this is to continually recite the Vajrasattva mantra, the mantra of Vajravidharana, and so forth.

Whether it was our imagination or not I do not know, but certainly where I grew up we were as concerned about this type of contamination as people in this country are about contamination by chemicals and chemical products in foods. There were many things that we did in order to prevent this: going to holy places, circumambulating holy images, and so on. All of these things were supposed to remove the contamination.

STUDENT: In daily life many of us have jobs where we come into contact with all kinds of people. Should we be concerned about this, or should we just accept the situation and dive in?

RINPOCHE: It is very hard to answer your question because you cannot effectively guard yourself against contamination, since

you do not know who to watch out for. Because you cannot see people's inner character, you do not really know who is sinful and who is not. Therefore I think you are better off not worrying about it, because it also seems that the more you worry about it, the more harm this contamination does you.

However there is something to be glad about. In this country, because there are very few people who have undertaken Vajrayana, there are very few people with broken samaya. The samaya breakers are the worst possible source of contamination. In Tibet, while there were many great and holy beings, there were also many people with broken samaya, so contamination was very easily come by. It is less easily come by here.

STUDENT: You spoke about doing phowa and other practices for people who have died, but for ordinary beginning practitioners like us who do not know how to do phowa, my understanding is that when a loved one passes away, the best thing we can do is the Chenrezik and Amitabha practice and dedicate it to them. Is this the best thing we can do as beginning practitioners, or is there more?

RINPOCHE: Yes, Chenrezik and Amitabha practices are the best thing.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, if we are doing a practice like Chenrezik to benefit a particular person, what should we do with the practice to make sure that it is directed to that individual?

RINPOCHE: When you are doing the Chenrezik practice for a specific person, you should first of all one-pointedly supplicate Chenrezik to benefit that person. While you are reciting the mantra, especially think that the rays of light emanating from Chenrezik's body dispel all that person's suffering and the causes of that suffering, just as the dawning light of the sun dispels the darkness of night.

In order for this to be effective you need faith in Chenrezik and compassion for the person you wish to benefit. If these two are present, there is no doubt that the person can be benefited. It is well known that when teachers are asked to pray for someone, there is often evidence that this is effective.

There is a story that one time Jetsun Milarepa was in retreat in a cave and there was such heavy snowfall that his cave was sealed off from the valley below for nine months. His disciples down in the neighboring valley knew that Milarepa did not have many provisions, so they assumed that he must have passed away, and they performed a feast offering directed at him. After the snow melted they went up to look for his remains, and they found out

that Milarepa was fine. When they were talking to him, he asked them what they had all done on such-and-such day. It turned out that was the day when they did the feast offering. He said that he became so full on that day that he was not hungry for months afterwards. It seems evident that a devoted and compassionate prayer can actually affect others when they are alive, and all the more so if they are in the bardo.

STUDENT: When attending after the death of a non-practitioner, the text says that for the first three days we should practice phowa intensively until the consciousness has been ejected. Is there a way of knowing when consciousness has been ejected?

Also, from the morning of day four during the forty-nine days, when we are doing Amitabha or other practices, do we still need to have access to the body at that point? Can the body be cremated or otherwise taken care of?

RINPOCHE: The answer to your first question is that there are external, internal, and secret indications that the ejection of consciousness has been successful. The internal and secret ones are subjective in the sense that they will be experienced or visible only to the lama performing the phowa, assuming they have that degree of realization. The internal one is that the lama will have strong confidence that the person's consciousness has

been ejected, and the secret one will be that, if the lama has the ability to do so, they will have a vision where they see the person being reborn in the pure realm.

The external indications are, in general, that the corpse will suddenly change color. If it is summer, it will suddenly start to smell, and if it is winter, it will suddenly start to get cold and freeze. Especially, the external indications are that the hair at the center of the top of the person's head suddenly falls out (you may tug on the hair a little bit to watch for this), an eruption of blood from the top of the head, or the appearance of a small hole or aperture.

With regard to your second question, in most cases the mind and body have separated after three days and therefore strictly speaking the body is not needed for the purification rituals. If the body is present, the person's consciousness may be summoned back into it for the duration of the ritual. If it is not, as is more common, an image or the written name of the person will be used as the support for the ritual. In any case, the consciousness of the person is summoned by the lama performing the ceremony, invoking the power of that lama's realization, and the power of the ceremony, the mantras, the mudras, and so forth. Once the consciousness has been summoned, the person is taught the Dharma and instructed to go to a pure realm. Then their

consciousness is once again forcibly ejected and sent to the pure realm. There may be signs during this type of ceremony that it has been successfully completed, but I am unaware of them.

The only thing that makes this more complicated is that the threeday rule is not certain. By no means does everyone's consciousness leave the body after three days. For example, we saw in our text that there are people who, because of a strong state of torpor, may remain unconscious and stay in their body for seven days after death.

STUDENT: You talked about signs of imminent death. What are they?

RINPOCHE: There are many, such as analysis of the breathing. The definitive signs of certain impending death are the experience of what is called “radiant **white appearance**,” “red increase,” and “black attainment.” This is when you are dying and you not only feel the sickness or illness of dying, but then everything turns white and then everything turns red. In fact the white and red phases do not indicate that death is necessarily irrevocable because people can experience that and still be resuscitated by medical means. Once the black attainment appears, everything just goes black and there is no longer any experience of external objects whatsoever. Then that is it; it is over.

STUDENT: You talked about eight gates of samsara, eight places where the consciousness could leave the body. What are they?

RINPOCHE: They are enumerated in different ways, but the most common enumeration is the following. Starting from the bottom, there are the three lower apertures. Strictly speaking there are two in men, but they are still considered three because of the three functions. Number four is the navel, number five is the mouth, and number six is the two ears counted as one, or the two nostrils counted as one — it depends on which order you want to go with. Then the two eyes count as one. Those are the eight: the eyes, the ears, the nostrils, the mouth, the navel, and the three lower gates. If your consciousness leaves through any of those, it will be reborn in a corresponding samsaric realm.

The aperture through which you want your consciousness to leave is one that we are not very familiar with, but which nonetheless exists. It is called the “pure aperture,” and it is at the center of the top of your head. It is not toward the front of your skull. If you scratch the very center of the top of your head, you will come across an area that is sensitive. That is it; it is a very small area. If you really press on it too hard, the sensation will vanish; it is just when you first touch it, it somehow does not feel good to touch. Some people say that it is where there is a cowlick

on your head, but that is uncertain since people can have more than one cowlick, or none.

STUDENT: Can one use dream yoga to prepare for the yidam visualization in the bardo?

RINPOCHE: If it is practiced in the context of the greater path, yes. You start with the practice of the generation stage of a yidam, then the practices of tummo and the illusory body. On that basis, if you gain the ability through dream practice to not only dream lucidly (which means recognizing that you are dreaming), but also to engage in transformation and emanation during dreams, this will enable you to recognize and achieve liberation in the bardo.

STUDENT: If all appearances are illusions, why do we also say that everything is the guru?

RINPOCHE: Because everything is an illusion, everything is the guru. Because all appearances are illusion, it is possible for them to appear in accordance with an individual's karma. This is why a hell being will experience a given environment as a ground of burning molten metal and a burning enclosure of iron, a preta will experience the same environment as a swamp of pus and blood, a human will experience it as a human realm, and so on.

Each of these different modes of appearance is possible because appearance is simply karmic projection. For that very reason, if all karmic seeds are purified, then all appearances are seen as being of the nature of the five wisdoms.

Think about it this way. If appearances were real, how would it be possible for different beings to see the same thing in such different ways? If appearances were real, then any sentient being of any of the six realms or an awakened being would see exactly what we see in this room. A hell being, a preta, a deva, and an awakened being would see the human realm. But they do not, and because they do not, it is evident that none of these modes of appearance are objectively existent. For those with purified karma, there are pure appearances; for those with intermediate karma, there are intermediate appearances; and for those with negative karma, there are negative appearances.

For this reason, if we purify the habit of perceiving our body as a corporeal mass of flesh and blood, and if we purify the habit of perceiving the external environment as made of solid substances such as earth and rock, we can achieve the rainbow body. This is why Milarepa could pass through solid matter and float in the air.

STUDENT: I have thought about things appearing as illusions, as a dream. I have the fear that if I wake up from the dream, how will I know that I am not within a dream which is within another dream and so on? This could continue so that I am never really waking up?

RINPOCHE: It is not like a dream within a dream within a dream endlessly. The waking state is just another dream, and you will wake from it when you attain buddhahood. Waking up is a good idea. If we could wake up from this dream, it would be great.

We recognize the dream state as the dream state because we regularly wake up from it every morning. We fail to recognize that what we call the “waking state,” in contrast with the dream state, is merely another dream state. The reason we fail to recognize this is because we have never woken up from it. This greater dream state that we call the “waking state” really consists of bewilderment or ignorance, and when we wake from that ignorance, we will awaken into wisdom.

STUDENT: When I meet someone like a television character in a dream, I do not think anything of it because I think it was just a figment of my imagination, just a self-display of my dream, and I do not give it any significance. Now I am wondering if when you meet a highly realized lama in your dream and you

actually have an interview, is that different? I am wondering if a highly realized lama could be cruising the dream bardo. You could meet him and he would be external to yourself, not just your own self-display.

RINPOCHE: When those who are trained in the practices associated with the dream state dream something, then they always see it as an illusion, and in fact they should probably regard the appearances of both the waking state and the dream state as illusion. In contrast to that, when ordinary, normal people dream, we naturally react to the content of the dream. We are pleased by pleasant or positive dreams, and we are displeased by unpleasant or negative ones. Given that this is the basic structure of how we experience dreaming, when you dream of meeting a teacher, having an interview with them, and so on, if you regard that as being the teacher's compassion, it is a beneficial attitude to take toward the dream, whatever its cause may be.

STUDENT: Do you mean you do this whether it is self-display or an actual encounter with someone external to yourself in the dream bardo?

RINPOCHE: First of all, by definition, any dream is self-display, but that does not mean that it is necessarily devoid of significance. Even though technically all dream states are bewilderment,

nevertheless dreams can have significance. For example, a bodhisattva who is achieving the first or second level will initially know this from signs in dreams. Since that is the case, if you take the attitude that a dream about a teacher is a blessing from the teacher, this is the most helpful way to look at the dream since this attitude will increase your devotion.

STUDENT: I was wondering if it is a peculiarity of human beings that we have to withdraw a little bit from society to receive enlightenment, or is this maybe cultural?

RINPOCHE: First, to practice Dharma effectively you need to be a human being. Beings of other realms cannot practice effectively. For example, animals cannot, pretas cannot, hell beings cannot, asuras cannot, and even gods or devas cannot practice effectively. Of course there is Dharma in the deva realm of Tushita because of Maitreya's presence, but most of the inhabitants of Tushita are too distracted by the pleasures of that realm to be interested in Dharma. Therefore you have to be a human being.

It is the nature of samsara that in order to attain freedom from it, you have to withdraw from involvement in its activities. There is one good thing about samsara: because it is unstable, you can actually change things if you rely on the remedies. You can remove defects and replace them with wisdom.

As for the need for this kind of withdrawal from mundane affairs, this is not specific to a given culture or a given time in history. It is always this way.

STUDENT: Can you comment on mercy killing, where someone sees the loved one is suffering a great deal, and they take their loved one's life? As the loved one, do you watch them and see them suffer until they die, or do you kill them? What is your comment on that?

TRANSLATOR: Are you talking about denying artificial nutrition and hydration and ventilation, as is done legally in this country and with the consent of the dying person, or are you talking about giving them something poisonous? The two things are very different legally and in Buddhism. In the first case, you can leave instructions that you be denied artificial ventilation, hydration, and nutrition, and be allowed to die naturally. That is not really euthanasia. Which one are you asking about?

STUDENT: Giving them poison.

RINPOCHE: It is prohibited in Buddhism for two reasons. One reason is that, although the dying person may be suffering greatly and may be unable to recover, it is unlikely that they are going to be reborn in a pure realm, which means that if you terminate

their life early through poisoning or any means, their karma is not used up. You are going to put them in a situation where they are going to suffer even more. While your intentions may be good, you are actually harming them rather than helping them. As a result — and this is the second reason — the person who does it, even though their intentions may be good, has actually harmed the other person, and they too will suffer more as a result.

STUDENT: I was in the presence of someone who was dying some years ago, and she requested to be taken off her respirator. She was a friend of mine who was a founder of a hospice. She made an agreement with her doctor that he would not allow her to suffer, and that meant he gave her a lot of morphine. The effect of the morphine was to calm her breathing. She was afraid of drowning, and when he observed her struggling with the breath, he gave her more morphine. My feeling about this death is that it was very depressing. I have a concern about the morphine. Since morphine can make people hallucinate, does it create a bardo realm? What do you say about the use of morphine generally — can it be considered a poison?

RINPOCHE: Whether or not strong analgesics and other medicines that reduce mental clarity at the time of death will cause problems in the bardo depends on the person. If the person is a trained practitioner who has developed a sufficient degree

of meditation training and is able to recognize the stages of dying and the emergence of the ground clear light in the bardo as they occur, then the lack of mental clarity would affect what happens to them and would be a problem. Ordinary people will not be able to recognize anything that happens to them, so it is irrelevant whether or not they are doped up.

For example, the year before Lama Ganga passed away, he started to talk about dying in a sort of joking way. He said, “If I have any merit, I do not want to die in the United States. It is okay if I die in India, best if I can die in Tibet.” They asked him, “Why don’t you want to die in this country?” He said, “Because my students will take me to a hospital and in the hospital they will put me on a ventilator and they will prolong my life unnaturally, which will affect what happens to me after I die.” It turned out to be a prediction because the next year he did pass away in Tibet. He died naturally without interference or artificial ventilation, and he remained in samadhi for seven days after his death.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, I have been in the presence of two people when they died where there was a feeling of a clear light in the room when they left their bodies. One of them was my grandmother; I was holding her hand, I was saying a prayer, and I just knew she was going to leave in that prayer. I could feel her leave and I could feel this light. The other lady was an

older woman who I also knew from hospice. In both cases they were not on respiration; they had chosen to go and they were ready. I do not consider either one of these people practitioners as such. Is this a natural sense of how people leave their bodies, or was it because they were not on drugs?

RINPOCHE: It is a good thing because it is a sign that those two people had less anger and less wrongdoing than many people. The pleasant sensation of light was not simply because they died naturally, because people can die naturally and it can be horrible. For those who have spent their lives in wrongdoing or in great anger, their death can be horrific, both for them to go through and for others to witness. It just indicates that although they no doubt had some obscurations, they had relatively few.

STUDENT: I currently live in an apartment where the previous occupant died. He is still present in some sense, and this has been obvious on one or two occasions. His presence is not hostile, it is sad; he is clearly unhappy. I have two questions about this. Is there anything I can do as a practice to relieve the suffering of his presence, and on a more metaphysical level, what or where is this presence or consciousness? It is not something I see, it is something I feel very strongly. Once he threw something, but mainly I feel it.

RINPOCHE: All you have to do, and all you can do, is to try to feel as much compassion as possible for whomever or whatever is living with you. It is not necessarily the consciousness of the departed person. Sometimes when someone dies, another spirit will masquerade as that person's ghost; many ghosts are actually this kind of masquerade. You do not know that this presence is the person who lived there previously, but it does not matter. Whoever or whatever it is, just feel compassion. That is the best thing you can do.

STUDENT: You were saying that spirits can inhabit the bodies of those who die a violent death or commit suicide. I was wondering if that would apply to animals. We see many animals that have died a violent death. I wondered if that is true, and if so is there anything we can do?

RINPOCHE: I have not heard that spirits inhabit the bodies of animals that died through violence or accident.

To clarify, not all the bodies of people who die suddenly are inhabited by spirits. Primarily the bodies of those who have died through the malevolent intervention of spirits are inhabited by spirits, because the spirits have intervened in the person's life and have taken possession of the body.

STUDENT: Recently my father died, and I spent the whole week before he died sitting at his bedside and practicing, and I had a very deep sense that I was actually benefiting him as I did that. I am now experiencing a lot of difficulty because I feel it's so easy to get on with my life and not actually continue deeply benefiting him for the time period that is needed. I am just wondering if you can give me some advice on that.

RINPOCHE: That is natural. That is why in Tibet we kept the bodies around.

STUDENT: I have never really felt very much in tune with spirits and things like that. I know that many people do experience different phenomena and I have always thought that since I do not experience these things, I should just leave that realm alone. I am wondering if that is the proper attitude. Should we cultivate some compassion for these beings and become more sensitive to what they could be or what they are?

RINPOCHE: Do not worry about not seeing them; I have never seen one either. There is nothing wrong with not seeing them, or having no experiential evidence of their existence. Spirits are beings much like us except generally they have accumulated enough negative karma to be fairly unhappy. If you think about them at all, thinking of them with compassion is probably the

best you can do. Aside from thinking of them with compassion whenever they are mentioned or whenever you think about them, you do not need to worry about them or inquire into their nature.

STUDENT: My daughter has a friend whose roommate hanged herself.

Previous to this, there were all sorts of these feelings around the house they lived in. They had not lived there very long, but the woman who hanged herself had. She could feel things and see things around her. The friend described all of these things that they had kind of sensed and felt, and how the person's room just seemed very strange. The friend had actually discovered the body, and when she went into the room she said she opened the door and there seemed to be all of these things around the body. The force was so strong that she was thrown backwards out of the room. Just hearing all this upset my daughter quite a bit, as well as her friend, and I just wondered if you have any advice.

RINPOCHE: The main thing in this type of situation is to have compassion for the person, both for your daughter and for her friend. What they should try to do is replace their fear with compassion. The attitude you take toward these things is really the same whether you actually see them or witness them or not. You try to feel compassion for the person who died.

This is especially important in the case of suicide because the person is in a very difficult and unpleasant position. They will tend to remain in the bardo for what would have been the duration of their natural life, unable to escape it, and unable to take rebirth. During that time they will probably suffer greatly.

There is no reason to be afraid. You should not feel that maybe the ghost or whatever it is will do something to you. If you feel compassion for the person, this will get rid of your fear. If you feel fear about it, then you will just make yourself unhappy for no reason, because from your point of view there really is not anything to worry about. For the benefit of the person who has died and for your own benefit, the best thing would be to recite the Chenrezik mantra, OM MANI PADME HUM.

STUDENT: While speaking with a friend, we got to wondering about the origins of the Kagyu lineage. Is there any earlier name for the lineage that had to do with white or white robes — perhaps during the lives of the previous Karmapas, or before the first Karmapa?

RINPOCHE: If what you are asking about is what I think, it is just that some people have added the letter “r” to the end of the first word and spelled the beginning differently, changing it from “command lineage” to “white lineage.” If so, it is because

of the white garments worn by the repas in the early and even present-day Kagyu tradition. It is not the original name of the lineage, and has nothing to do with previous Karmapas.

The original name of the lineage comes from the four dispensations or four commands that Tilopa received from his principal teachers, so it is an abbreviation of the “lineage of the four dispensations.” The misspelling, and the subsequent understanding of it as a lineage of those who wear white clothes, came much later. It may have come from China because there was the custom in China of identifying different lineages of Tibetan Buddhism by the color of the hats, so some schools would be called “yellow hat,” “red hat,” and so on. That is a Chinese custom, not a Tibetan one.

STUDENT: Can you talk a bit about the primordial buddha?

RINPOCHE: The term *primordial buddha* is also sometimes seen as *dangpö sangye* or “first buddha.” The term refers to the qualities of the ground, which have always been there and are therefore called “primordial.” The term is used to refer to the fact that all of the qualities of buddhahood have always been present as the ground of being within the minds of each and every sentient being. It does not literally mean the first buddha — in other words, the first buddha who ever occurred. There could never

have been a first buddha because samsara and awakening are beginningless.

STUDENT: If sentient beings from beginningless time did not recognize their buddha nature, does that mean we all start out in samsara?

RINPOCHE: Yes. This is why we say that beings' bewilderment and ignorance are beginningless, because they never started. It has always been going on. It will end for each being as they achieve awakening. On the other hand, you should not think of ignorance as a thing that persists through time. It is more like one thing leading to another all the time. The ignorance at any one moment is different from the ignorance of the preceding moment, but the present ignorance is caused by the preceding ignorance.

This is why we call it "samsara" or "spinning," because it has no beginning. We understand samsara as being the process where we engage in afflicted actions, or the accumulation of karma, and we experience the result of that. In reaction to that result, we again engage in afflicted actions, experience the result of that; then in reaction to that, we again engage in afflicted action, and so on. There could never have been a beginning or first moment to this, because if there were, it would mean that there was a time

before any accumulation of karma. Such a thing is impossible, because if that were the case, there would have been no reason for the process of samsara ever to have happened.

STUDENT: I was wondering if you could explain a little bit about refuge, and a little bit about the process of empowerment.

RINPOCHE: As far as going for refuge, in order to achieve the qualities associated with the Buddhist path, it needs to start somewhere. By starting somewhere, I mean there has to be a ground that provides the basis on which the path occurs, just as there has to be a ground in order for forests, houses, and so on to be present. The ground of the path is going for refuge, which means going for refuge to the Buddha, the Awakened One; to the Dharma, his teaching; and to the Sangha, the community. Among these, Buddha is regarded as a lasting refuge, Dharma is how you achieve buddhahood, and the Sangha is those who help you achieve it.

Going for refuge is creating the container for the path, and therefore the vow of refuge holds the path and enables the path to remain. Once that container is present, you can pour the actual substance of the path into it, which is receiving an empowerment, and this can be done on the basis of going for refuge. Because the vow of refuge constitutes such a container for the rest of

the path, it enables all of the qualities that are generated on the path to remain and to increase. In particular, what causes the qualities of the path to increase is the altruistic motivation of bodhichitta. This motivation of bodhichitta functions like conditions, such as water, warmth, fertilizer, and so on, that allow things to grow in the good ground of the vow of refuge.

As for empowerment, if having received an empowerment you recite the deity's mantra and so forth, the deity's qualities can arise in you. If you recite the mantra without receiving the empowerment, these qualities will not arise because the ceremony of empowerment is what empowers or authorizes you to practice relating to a certain deity. It is like, for example, a monarch's empowerment of his or her regent, which authorizes that regent to hold the throne, to make decisions, and so forth. If the regent has not been empowered, then he is nothing more than a usurper. This is a very brief explanation of what is meant by "empowerment," but if you are going to practice, it would be better if you learned these things gradually, bit by bit. Too much of this stuff at one time is not going to fit into your ears anyway.

The Guide on the Quest for Jewels: Choosing a Pure Realm

This chapter describes how to realistically gain the greatest profit from our human birth. As human beings we possess freedom and resources, but if we practice Dharma just to avert temporary disaster or problems, we will not achieve the best result from our practice. If we devote our practice to the achievement of the ends in this life, the benefit is necessarily limited because we are not going to live forever. Even in mundane society we think people are stupid if they think they will live forever.

The best way to get the most profit out of your practice in this life is to devote and dedicate your practice to the achievement of perfect buddhahood for the benefit of all other beings. Even if you have this aspiration, there are many impediments that obstruct or prevent the achievement of buddhahood in this life and this body. Some people achieve buddhahood in one lifetime, but it is extremely rare to effectively overcome all of your impediments in order to achieve buddhahood. The very best outcome of one's practice is to be able, through the view, to overcome all impediments and achieve buddhahood in this life. Since this is unlikely, we should concentrate on what is second best, which

is to achieve rebirth in a pure realm. Practically speaking, the best use we can make of our practice is to dedicate it to rebirth in such a pure realm. That is the subject of this chapter.

The chapter begins with the words *e ma ho*, an expression of wonderment. It continues, “Intelligent child, Tsonдру.” Karma Chakme is again addressing Lama Tsonдру Gyamtso, who is identified here as intelligent. He is identified as intelligent because he asked the question that inspired this chapter. “You have asked how we can make the greatest possible use of this life that which will bring us the greatest benefit at the time of our death, with the understanding that no matter how long our lives may be, they will certainly not exceed one hundred years.” The first thing we need to remember is that we are not going to live forever. We are probably not going to live one hundred years, and we are almost certainly not going to live longer than that. Therefore from this moment on we need to think realistically about what is going to happen to us at death, and what we want to happen to us at the time of death. Lama Tsonдру Gyamtso’s question to Chakme Rinpoche was, “What is the best and most effective thing I can do to prepare myself for my death?” Chakme Rinpoche continues, “The answer to this question is of the greatest importance to all practitioners.” In other words, in answering the question, he is going to explain

something that is of the greatest importance, not merely for Tsonдру Gyamtso but for everyone.

The gathering of accumulations and the purification of obscurations that we perform in this life, through acts of generosity, spiritual practice, prostration, **circumambulation**, and so forth, are like a good horse that has its saddle, bridle, and reins properly secured. After properly saddling a horse, it must be steered in the right direction. The way you steer the horse of your merit is by grasping the reins of aspiration and dedication. In other words, the key point to achieving the right rebirth is correctly dedicating the virtue you have accumulated so it will steer your virtue in the right direction. With such a resource of virtue, you can succeed in being reborn in whichever pure realm you wish. That is the basic point of this chapter.

What is a Pure Realm?

The next question is, “What exactly is a pure realm?” If we do not know what a pure realm is, we will not aspire intensely to be reborn in one. Making a vague aspiration to be reborn in a pure realm about which you lack certainty is like shooting an arrow while blindfolded.

There are innumerable realms, both pure and impure, which result respectively from the manner of appearance of buddhas and from the manner of bewildered appearance of the six types of sentient beings. These innumerable realms are not different places that are inherently pure or impure. It is not the case that some places are objectively pure and everyone will experience them as pure, and some places are objectively impure and everyone will experience them as impure. The reason why there are innumerable realms is that there are innumerable beings, and each of these beings has their own individual karmic perception. As a result, each perceives their environment in a unique way. Therefore pure realms are the experience of buddhas that have no obscurations, and impure realms are the experience of sentient beings that have obscurations.

The first and greatest pure realm is the Akanishtha Dharmadhatu, or the “highest realm that is the nature of all things.” This realm is all pervasive. The extent of this realm is the extent of space: wherever there is space, it is part of the realm of Akanishtha. Therefore those who have pure perception, those who have purified all karma that corrupts or obscures perception, experience any environment as pure, as the palace of the deity. They experience all the contents of that environment — that is to say, they experience any sentient being — as their deity. They experience things this way because all places in their nature

are part of Akanishtha. The Vajrayana explains this extensively, especially in the Dzokchen teachings, where such phrases as “boundless purity,” “consummate primordial purity,” and so on are often used.

The point is that if things are experienced as they are, they are a pure realm and there are deities. Therefore for those with perfectly pure perception, there is no samsara to be experienced. Their experience does not even have the word suffering. Therefore one can say that all of space and all that is pervaded by space is pervaded by the body, speech, and mind of all buddhas. This can also be understood in terms of distinct realms of body, speech, and mind, but in essence these realms of body, speech, and mind have the same nature. This is called the “secret of body, speech, and mind”; that is to say, the allpervasive body, speech, and mind of all buddhas. “All-pervasive” means it pervades all phenomena. This is explained in the *Sutra that Explains the Secrets*.

Not only is the totality of space pervaded by pure realms, but there are innumerable pure realms within these pure realms. On top of each tiny particle, there are as many pure realms as there are tiny particles in existence, and therefore the number of pure realms is inconceivable and uncountable. In each of these pure realms, victors and their children are turning the dharmachakra. When we try to imagine as many pure realms as there are particles

on top of each existing particle, among other things we imagine that these pure realms must somehow obstruct one another, that it must be very crowded, but it is not like that at all. The reason we find this sort of thing inconceivable is because we fixate on the apparent reality of substantial appearances, but things have never been as we experience them. From the very beginning, things have been empty form, and therefore they do not in and of themselves obstruct one another.

For example, it is quite possible that the billion worlds that make up this billion-world system could be contained within one mustard seed, without the mustard seed being larger than it is, or the billion worlds being smaller than they are. This is like the famous incident of Jetsun Milarepa seating himself inside a yak horn without being in any way cramped. This is inconceivable to us because it seems to violate the way we experience the world. What it violates is our fixated perception on the apparent substantiality of appearances. This is the miraculous nature of all buddhas, and in this way all of space and everything that is pervaded by space is densely filled with pure realms. This is like an open sesame pod: when you open a sesame pod, you get lots and lots of seeds. In the same way, space is filled with pure realms. They have no number; you cannot say there are this many pure realms and no more. In each of these pure realms, there are victors (buddhas) and their children the bodhisattvas. Because the

pure realms are innumerable, the buddhas and bodhisattvas are likewise innumerable. This is how buddhas experience the world.

The Samsaric Realm of Sentient Beings

As for how we sentient beings experience the world, we experience it in an individual way that depends on our karma. There are six ways that sentient beings experience the world and these constitute the six types of sentient beings. For a sentient being of any one of these six types, those of the same type experience both the environment and suffering in a similar way. In this context, it is important to understand that the experience of the environment and the experience of suffering by beings in the hell realm, the preta realm, and the **animal realm** are at least as solid and substantial as our experience in the human realm. Because we cannot perceive these realms, we imagine them to be somehow dreamlike or insubstantial; but they are not dreamlike at all. If anything they are even more intense, more solid, and less changeable than our realm. This is because the bewilderment and karma that causes the perception of these realms is more intense. The degree of the appearance of solidity and unpleasant intensity of a realm corresponds to the karma that causes that perception. For beings in the hell realm and for pretas, their

environment is just as real, just as solid, and apparently just as objectively real as the human world is to us. In the perception of a sentient being of any of the six realms, their realm and their experience appear utterly solid and objectively existent, but they do so only through the power of their karma.

Right now, for human beings within this billion-world system, of which our world is a part, our aeon appears to be in decline. An aeon is the duration of such a billion-world system, and in this aeon there is a period when the worlds have not yet come into existence, a period of development, a period of abiding, a period of decline, and a period of destruction. Our aeon now seems to be in the declining phase, but for some sentient beings this realm appears to be finished. These billion worlds already appear destroyed, already appear empty of existence and beings. For other beings, they perceive these billion worlds as coming into existence. Some beings perceive what we perceive as earth as space, and what we perceive as space as earth. This does not mean that they simply perceive things upside down. It means that the actual quality of the substantial and the insubstantial is reversed for them. As well, there are beings who perceive what we perceive as down as up, and what we perceive as up as down. In that way, the individual varieties of perception corresponding to the karma accumulated by individual beings are innumerable and inconceivable in their variety. In each case, what that being

perceives appears to be real, and within the context of their perception, you could say it is real. It is real to them as a result of their karma, and it will remain real to them until the karma that causes them to perceive things in that way has been used up. This is explained in greater detail in the *Piled Jewel Sutra*, or *Ratnakuta Sutra*.

Within this particular billion-world system, all the humans in this particular world basically experience things in the same way. We do so because all of us have accumulated similar karma in the past, leading to our rebirth in the same species with the same type of perception. What we perceive as earth is basically perceived by all human beings as earth, what we perceive as stone is basically perceived by all human beings as stone, what we perceive as space is basically perceived by all human beings as space, and so on.

Pure Realms in the East, South, and North

The previous sections explained the two types of realms: the nirvanic realm, or pure realm, and the samsaric realm, or impure realm. What follows is predicated on the context we have just established. In other words, the explanation of directions, placement, and so on is within the context of our perception.

To the east of this world where we are, there is a pure realm called Manifestly Joyous, or Abhirati. That pure realm is presided over by the buddha Akshobhya. Akshobhya has many names: sometimes he is called Vajrasattva, sometimes he is called the Undisturbable, sometimes he is called the Immovable, or Akshobhya. In any case, these names refer to the same buddha. To the east of this place is a realm called Radiance of Lapis. That realm is presided over by the Medicine Buddha. You will note that there are eight Medicine Buddhas; the other seven also have their own individual pure realms, which are generally believed to be in the east near the pure realm of the principal Medicine Buddha. These are not the only pure realms to the east, but these are the most famous ones.

To the south is a pure realm called Glorious, or Possessing the Splendor and Enjoyment of Glory. This realm is presided over by the buddha Ratnasambhava, who is also called Precious Peak. To the north of here is the realm called Glorious Completion of Activity, which is presided over by the buddha Amoghasiddhi, who is also called the Full or Great Blooming of Flowers. Considering them as directions, as the east, south, and north, those are three types of pure realms; that is to say, they are pure of suffering and kleshas. In terms of their specific classification, they are usually called “lesser sambhogakaya realms,” which really means that they are greater nirmanakaya realms. You can think

of them as lesser sambhogakaya realms because they are pure and therefore classified as sambhogakaya, or you can think of them as greater nirmanakaya realms because in that case *greater* means pure as well.

In any case, to be reborn in any of these eastern, southern, or northern realms, you must have achieved the first bodhisattva bhumi. You cannot be reborn in them unless you have generated bodhichitta, passed through the first parts of the path, and achieved the first bodhisattva level. This was explained by Machik Lapkyi Drönma, which is in accordance with the Buddha's statement in the *Sutra that Explains the Realm of Akshobhya*.

Densely Arrayed

Another sambhogakaya pure realm is the one normally thought of as the highest sambhogakaya realm. It is called Densely Arrayed, and it is generally thought of as being directly above us, in the center. This pure realm is of immeasurable extent; you cannot say it comprises a certain amount of space and no more. It is called Densely Arrayed because it has so much ornamentation, richness, and adornment. In the midst of that realm is a precious palace, and like the realm, this palace is immeasurable;

you cannot say exactly how big or small it is. In the midst of this palace, seated on a lion throne, lotus, sun, and moon, is the body of all buddhas — in other words, the buddha Vairochana, who in this context can also be thought of as the sambhogakaya aspect of Avalokiteshvara, or Chenrezik.

Somewhat unlike the previously mentioned three realms, this is a full sambhogakaya realm, which means it possesses the five certainties. *Five certainties* means five things that are always true with such a realm.

The first certainty is *certainty of place*. This realm is the highest sambhogakaya realm, the Akanishtha that is Densely Arrayed. It never changes, never becomes anything else. The second is *certain body*, which means that the buddha Avalokiteshvara-Vairochana, who presides over this realm, possesses the marks and signs of physical perfection. The third is *certain duration*, which means that this realm will continue to exist until samsara is over. The fourth is *certain retinue*, which means all beings born in that realm are bodhisattvas on one or another of the ten bhumis. (Later the text will be more specific. It will say that to be born in that realm, you have to have achieved the eighth bodhisattva level.)

The fifth certainty is *certain Dharma*. The Dharma taught in that realm is always the unsurpassable vehicle of the Mahayana.

Furthermore, it is not taught orally or verbally; it is taught through symbol. In general, this is explained by saying that the bodhisattvas in that realm come to understand the meaning of the Mahayana merely by seeing the form of the buddha presiding in that realm. This implies that meaning is communicated through seeing the appearance, scepters, and so forth of that buddha. It actually means that the wisdom of the Buddha communicates itself in that realm spontaneously through the mind and innate wisdom of those bodhisattvas. This type of communication or transmission is what the Dzokchen teachings describe as the “lineage of the wisdom of the victors” and the “lineage of symbol of the vidyadharas.” There are innumerable nirmanakaya realms within each of the pores on the skin of the buddha within this central realm. In each of those nirmanakaya realms there is a nirmanakaya emanation of that buddha, who benefits the beings within those realms. This central sambhogakaya realm is called a “great sambhogakaya realm.” All of this is explained in the *Tantra on the Manifest Awakening of Vairochana*.

To correlate that realm with ours, the primary implement held by the buddha Vairochana in that realm is a begging bowl. Growing within and out of the begging bowl are innumerable lotus flowers, and on each of these flowers there are many realms. On one of the stalks growing out of the center of his begging bowl there are twenty-five flowers blossoming one above the

other. On top of each of these twenty-five flowers there are many realms. In particular, on top of the thirteenth lotus, on top of the stamens in the center of the flower, there are many world systems. On top of or inside one of the stamens in the middle of that particular flower, there is the billion-world system of which our world is a part.

A *billion-world system* means a billion Mount Merus, each of which is surrounded by the four continents. A billion-world system is the field of activity of one nirmanakaya. Therefore in this billion-world system, there have appeared a billion Shakyamuni Buddhas, just like the one that appeared in this world to teach the sutras, and a billion Padmakaras, just like the one that appeared in this world to teach the tantras. For example, Guru Rinpoche appeared in India and benefited beings there, went to Tibet to conceal his treasure teachings, established a pure lineage, and so on, and while that was going on here, he was simultaneously doing that in the rest of the billion worlds of this system. This is the source for our understanding that there are one billion Karmapas. There is a Gyalwang Karmapa in each of these billion worlds, just as there is a Gyalwang Karmapa in this one.

In spite of the fact that in some sense our realm is contained within a pure realm, it is not a pure realm itself, and therefore anyone can be born here. The greatest among us, those who are

pure of defilement, can be born here, and the worst among us can also be born here. All of this is explained in the *Sutra of the Arrangement of the Stalks*. In Tibet it was principally explained by King Songtsen Gampo and Guru Rinpoche.

We have focused in on our world system in the midst of this pure realm. Now let us go back to the central pure realm itself. This central pure realm, the Densely Arrayed, can only be experienced by eighth, ninth, or tenth-level bodhisattvas. Even among bodhisattvas, you must have achieved the eighth level in order to be born there. This was also explained by the wisdom dakini, Machik Lapkyi Drönma. Her explanations are in accordance with the usual understanding of the achievement of the paths and stages in the Mahayana by bodhisattvas. In other words, in a Mahayana context it makes sense that first-level bodhisattvas can be born in the other three realms, and only eighth-level bodhisattvas can be born in this one.

Charnel Ground of Blazing Mountains of Fire

This pure realm is very closely related to the central pure realm Densely Arrayed. It is explained mostly in two places: the tantras that teach the Great Perfection or Dzokchen, in which case it is called the Charnel Ground of Blazing Mountains of Fire, and it

is also explained in the Mahakala tantra *Thrakso Kholma*, in which case it is called the Glorious Charnel Ground of Vairochana. In either case, the way this particular pure realm is explained is as follows. It is located in the sky in front of Vairochana. The ground or earth in that realm is utterly poisonous and gives rise only to poisonous and thorny plants. Throughout the day, a wind like a hurricane or tornado is constantly blowing, and at night it is filled with mountains of flame, hence its name. All of the mountains in that realm are mountains of human bones, of piled skeletons. All of the trees and forests are weapons; that is to say, all of the leaves and fruits of these trees are like razors and so on. All of the water in streams and lakes is filled with blood and pus, and agitated with lots of waves. The realm is filled with predatory animals that wander about. In the center of this realm is a palace made of human skulls, and the appearance and arrangement of this palace is exactly what you visualize when you do the practice of a wrathful deity.

The buddha that presides over that realm is called Shönnu Pawo Topden, which means the Youthful Powerful Hero. In essence he is the supreme heruka, Chemchok Heruka, with his retinue of the five herukas of the five families. He is further surrounded by wrathful deities and dakinis. In that realm he always teaches the unsurpassable dharmachakra of secret mantra; he never teaches sutra. Like the realm Densely Arrayed that is located

beneath this realm, Charnel Ground of Blazing Mountains of Fire is changeless; it will always remain.

To be born in that realm, you must have achieved one of the four levels of a vidyadhara; that is to say, through the path of secret mantra, you achieve one of the stages of achievement of secret mantra. It is impossible to be born there not only for ordinary beings, but also for any practitioner of mantra who has not achieved any of the four levels. Even though they are practitioners of mantra, if they saw that realm for an instant, they would be terrified, lose consciousness, and try to flee. Especially nowadays, those who are born in that realm have achieved the state of vidyadhara and specialize in the liberation of beings through force and wrathful means. In this realm they engage in the further practice of secret mantra. This is the realm of great vidyadharas. All of the wisdom and activity of dharma protectors live in that realm; this is where their bases of emanation are present.

There are places in our world that are somewhat connected to the Charnel Ground of Blazing Mountains of Fire. It is usually explained that these places have been struck by rays of light from that realm. This includes Shitavana and the others among the **eight charnel grounds**. Because they are indirectly reflections of that realm, they partake of the characteristics of that realm

to a minor degree. Therefore the emanated protectors abide in our world within these charnel grounds. Their bases of emanation abide within the Blazing Mountains of Fire realm, but the emanations abide here.

Those who practice secret mantra properly and intensely, but still violate samaya to some degree, tend to be born in the retinue of the protectors who live in the eight charnel grounds or in Shitavana. Sinners who are liberated through the activity of the protectors who cannot be born in pure realms because of their karma, but will not be reborn in the lower realms through the blessing of the protectors, are born in the charnel grounds in the retinue of the emanation protectors. This is clearly explained in one of Guru Rinpoche's predictions, which is called the *Command Seal Prediction*.

Tushita

Up to this point there has been a basic description of pure realms. The completely pure realms that have been described so far are those to the east, south, and north, as well as the central pure realm, the Densely Arrayed, and the pure realm called the Charnel Ground of Blazing Mountains of Fire. It is almost impossible for an ordinary person to be reborn in them; it is

good to know about them, but one should not necessarily aspire to rebirth in them.

Now we come to a description of various realms that we might succeed in being born in. In the context of this billion-world system, the fourth of the desire god realms from the bottom up is called Tushita, or Joyous. Although strictly speaking Tushita is within the desire realm, it is also the residence of the bodhisattva Maitreya, who is the regent and successor of Buddha Shakyamuni. Before Buddha Shakyamuni was born in this world, he resided in Tushita, and when he left he appointed Maitreya as his successor. Maitreya is still there and will remain there until he is born in this world and becomes the fifth Buddha.

Those who have pure moral discipline and samaya, and who principally exert themselves in hearing and contemplation rather than in meditation practice, tend to aspire to rebirth in Tushita. Those with completely pure moral discipline and the habit of hearing and reflecting will be reborn in Tushita if they make the intense aspiration to be reborn there. As soon as their breathing ceases at the time of death, from between Maitreya's eyebrows a beam of white light will emerge and plant itself in the very top of the dying person's head like a rainbow. This light will envelop the person's mind or awareness and lead it to Tushita, where the person will be born on a lotus pedestal or within a lotus, in the

midst of a divine palace within that realm. Once born there, for the duration of your time there you will be continually served by no less than seven goddesses, and of course, Lord Maitreya is continually teaching Dharma in Tushita.

So far, so good, but there are some problems with this realm. The first problem is that in spite of Maitreya's presence, it is a desire god realm. It is full of fun, and since you are constantly attended by these seven goddesses, you tend to be distracted by pleasure and the party atmosphere, all the singing, dancing, and playing around. If you are someone who previously attained realization and chose to be reborn there, this will not be a problem for you; but if you merely had pure moral discipline and learning but no realization, you will probably become so distracted that you will not spend much time, if any, listening to Maitreya. While he is present there, you will be more interested in having fun.

Nevertheless because you were born there as a result of your aspiration in connection with Maitreya, in the future when Maitreya is born in this world, you and all others who were born in Tushita through the aspiration to be born there will once again be born as human beings. You will once again take monastic ordination, you will hear teachings from Maitreya, and through the habit of hearing and reflecting, and the force of your moral discipline — because moral discipline is the single

cause of human rebirth — you will be reborn again and again as a human being in this world for the duration of Maitreya's doctrine. You will uphold his doctrine throughout all of those lifetimes.

You will continue to be born as a human being in this world throughout the teaching periods of each of the thousand Buddhas of this aeon. You will meet each of them, hear their teaching, and continue to be reborn human again and again. After the thousand buddhas of this aeon have passed away, in the future during the aeon called Arranged Stars, or Spread-Out Stars, you will be reborn again in the place or the world of that aeon, and you will meet each of the eighty thousand buddhas that will appear in that aeon. You will see each of them and hear their teachings, and you will uphold the teachings of each one of them. During that aeon, you will start to proceed substantially on the path, and eventually, long after that, you will achieve perfect awakening.

The reason for all of this is that the force behind the aspiration to be reborn in Tushita is the merit of moral discipline, which causes the person to continue to be reborn human, and the habit of hearing and reflecting on the teachings. Eventually you will start to actually practice them, but the shift from simply learning into practicing will happen very gradually. That is why

it will take the teaching period of eighty thousand buddhas for you to progress on the path.

Within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, the aspiration to be reborn in Tushita is mostly cultivated by Gelukpas. This is because they emphasize moral discipline and learning, and therefore they aspire to uphold the teachings as a monastic lineage holder of all future buddhas. Since the aspiration to be reborn in Tushita will lead to this ability as well as to the achievement of tremendous benefit for beings, most practitioners of that tradition customarily make this aspiration.

To make this aspiration, usually you chant the *Aspiration of Maitreya*, which is included within the collection called the *Five Great Aspirations*. This will lead to tremendous benefit for beings, but it will take you an extremely long time to attain buddhahood. If you are willing to undergo innumerable births and deaths as a human being in order to uphold the teachings of the various buddhas in this world, if you are not afraid of that, then you should make the aspiration for rebirth in Tushita. In order to ensure that rebirth, you should chant the *Aspiration of Maitreya*, every day without fail. As for where this information comes from, it comes from the *Sutra Predicting Maitreya*. Many people do aspire to rebirth in Tushita in this way.

At this point, Chakme Rinpoche comments, “I did this for seven years, but then I thought about it, and seeing the suffering of samsara and realizing that I was really bothered by the thought of undergoing so many births and deaths, I stopped chanting the *Aspiration of Maitreya* and I started chanting the *Aspiration for Rebirth in Sukhavati*.” What he is saying is that if you are not bothered by endless births and deaths, then chanting the *Aspiration of Maitreya* is fine. If you are concerned about this, you might want to choose something else. In terms of classification, the realm of Tushita is classified as a lesser nirmanakaya realm because of Maitreya’s presence. Earlier we saw that the lesser sambhogakaya realms — those to the east, south, and north, for example — are classified as greater nirmanakaya realms because they are completely pure. As this is part of the desire realm, it is classified as a lesser nirmanakaya realm.

Glorious Copper-Colored Mountain

Another realm that you might aspire to is found to the southwest of our current place, directions being based on the passage of the sun through the sky in this world. It is the island called Chamaradvipa; it lies to the west of Jambudvipa, so it is a satellite island of Jambudvipa. In the midst of that island, and

predominant in its topography, is a mountain called the Glorious Copper-Colored Mountain. On the peak of that mountain is a palace called the Palace of Lotus Light, which is the abode of Guru Rinpoche. He lives there surrounded by hundreds of thousands of vidyadhara, dakas, and dakinis. Just as most Geluk practitioners aspire to rebirth in Tushita, most Nyingma practitioners aspire to rebirth in Chamaradvipa. The reason they do this is obvious: they are devoted to Guru Rinpoche, and because of their intense faith in him they want to go where he is. Here Chakme Rinpoche mentions, “Out of their great faith in Guru Rinpoche, many of my own teachers have been reborn there. Therefore when I was young I aspired to be reborn in the Glorious Copper-Colored Mountain.”

It is very easy to be born in this realm. It is even easier than being reborn in Tushita, so if you want to be born in this realm, do not doubt if you will succeed. It is not like those pure realms to the east, south, and north. “However,” Karma Chakme says, “when I thought about this carefully, I realized that there are two types of births or two circumstances of birth that you might take there. The better of the two is to be born as a vidyadhara, as a daka or dakini.” For example, most of the tertons and siddhas in the Tibetan tradition tended to be born there. If you are born as a daka or dakini in that realm, then for you it is a pure realm. Your body is always adorned by the six bone-ornaments

and the charnel-ground costume, you have almost unlimited miraculous ability to satisfy every need, you are in the retinue of Guru Rinpoche, and you are one of his attendants. The dakas and dakinis in his retinue are invisible to ordinary people because they do not have substantial bodies. Their bodies are bodies of wisdom, bodies of light. If you succeed in being born there in this way, then you continue your practice of secret mantra and within secret mantra its apex. Chamaradvipa is extremely pleasant because for you it is a pure realm, and while you are there you very quickly attain buddhahood. If you succeed in being born there as a male or female vidyadhara, as a daka or dakini, then that is fantastic.

There is another thing that might happen. It is easy to be born there, which means that you do not have to have attainment to be born there. If you do have attainment and are born there, you are born as a male or female vidyadhara. If you are born there simply out of faith in Guru Rinpoche and you do not have realization, you are not going to be reborn as a daka or dakini. You are going to be reborn as an ordinary citizen of Chamaradvipa. The inhabitants of Chamaradvipa are rakshasas, who are carnivorous, unpleasant beings.

Regardless of your mental afflictions in this life — and you obviously had some since you did not attain buddhahood — rakshasas

are even more afflicted. Their five poisons are very strong, and the genetic inheritance of being born as a rakshasa means you will be full of mental afflictions. On the good side, you will be in Chamaradvipa, so you will have some contact with Guru Rinpoche. You will see him and you will hear at least some of his speech. Because you are a rakshasa, you will not recognize him as a buddha or a mahasiddha; you will think of him merely as your monarch.

This occurs because when Guru Rinpoche went to Chamaradvipa, he took the place of the monarch of the rakshasas, whose name is Raksha Thukching Sarab. This is the form or appearance that Guru Rinpoche has in that realm. If you are born as a rakshasa, you will not really know he is Guru Rinpoche; you will just know him as the king of the rakshasas. Therefore you will not have much devotion for him. You will consider him a somewhat dictatorial monarch, and you will probably disobey his commands and his laws because his laws forbid most of the things that rakshasas like to do. You will go against his laws and then you will be punished legally, which you will obviously resent. You will feel rebellious and so you will lose any faith in him that you might have had. Furthermore, because Chamaradvipa is a satellite of Jambudvipa, the variation in circumstances such as affluence, pleasure, and longevity are the same as here.

Those are two of the three possible outcomes, one that is great and one that is not so great. The third, Chakme Rinpoche says, supposes that you have more than just faith in Guru Rinpoche. You have some real receptivity to the teachings, which means that you have practiced intensely and you have kept samaya flawlessly. Then you might be born there and actually experience Guru Rinpoche as a teacher, not just as a king, and you will receive his blessing and empowerment. Then something else might happen. He might order you to go back here. It has been known that he has told historical figures who have succeeded in being reborn there, “Now, do not remain here. Go back to Tibet (or wherever) and practice Dharma; it will be of more benefit to beings.” In that situation, even though you want to remain there, you cannot. You have to come back to Jambudvīpa.

At this point, Chakme Rinpoche says, “I am so bothered by all of this birth and death that I do not aspire to rebirth there because of that possibility of either becoming a rakshasa or being sent back anyway. If you” (addressing Tsondru Gyamtso, and by extension everyone else) “are not bothered by the possibility of many births and deaths and you have great faith in Guru Rinpoche, and you are certain that you will obey his commands if you are born there, even if you are born as a rakshasa, then by all means make the aspiration to be reborn in the Glorious

Copper-Colored Mountain.” As for its classification, it is a lesser nirmanakaya realm like Tushita.

What finally happens to beings born in Chamaradvipa through aspiration is that after living and dying there, they will continue to be reborn anywhere their karma takes them for the duration of this kalpa. They may follow Guru Rinpoche’s emanation from place to place in their rebirth, or they may be blown about by their karma. That will last for the duration of this kalpa. Finally they will be reborn in Sukhavati, because Guru Rinpoche is a mind emanation of Amitabha. The final destiny of people born in Chamaradvipa is Sukhavati, but only after many intervening births and deaths.

The source of this information, Chakme Rinpoche says, is the secret biographies of the tertons, the siddhas, and Guru Rinpoche, as well as the questions and answers by Langdro Lotsawa. Usually these questions are referred to by the name of the questioner, so these are probably questions Langdro Lotsawa asked Guru Rinpoche.

Potala

Another pure realm many people aspire to rebirth in is the Potala, which is considered the realm of Chenrezik. The people who aspire to rebirth in the Potala are Chenrezik practitioners, people who emphasize in their personal practice the recitation of the six-syllable mantra OM MANI PADME HUM. They make the aspiration for rebirth in the Potala because it is often taught in the liturgies of practice. For example, in the Chenrezik practice with which many of you are familiar, there is the repeated refrain, “May we be reborn in the realm of the Potala, may they be reborn in the realm of the Potala.”

Potala is Sanskrit; in Tibetan it is Riwo Drudzin, which means Mount Drudzin. It is actually a mountain, and therefore Chakme Rinpoche says it is not in fact a pure realm at all. It is merely a mountain in this world in South India. If those with pure perception go to the peak of that mountain, they will see a precious palace. Inside this palace, seated on a lotus, sun, and moon disk, they will see the bodhisattva Chenrezik surrounded by vidyadharas, dakas and dakinis, as well as devas and nagas. On the side of the mountain, halfway up, they will see another palace where the deities Tronyerchenma and Hayagriva abide. At the base of the mountain, in another palace, they will find White Tara, Green Tara, and so forth.

If those with impure perception go there, they will see a sandy mountain with some sandalwood forests on its side, and at the peak a self-arisen stone temple (which probably means a cave). Inside that they will see a self-arisen image of the bodhisattva Chenrezik in his form Khasarpani looking like an eight-year-old boy, and behind that a blue rock-mountain (the text says it is a mountain of vaidurya) on which the self-arisen form of the six-syllable mantra appears as though made of silver. Chakme Rinpoche says you can actually go there on pilgrimage and you will see whatever can be seen with impure perception; but if you have pure perception, you will see this place as pure. The evidence of this is in the biographies of the *upasaka* Chakkyi Kangpachen and the tertön Rinchen Lingpa.

Terrestrial Pure Realms

Another realm within this world that practitioners of Chakrasamvara and Vajravarahi tend to aspire to rebirth in is Uddiyana, which is in the west. Even today, such practitioners aspire to rebirth in Uddiyana. This is also not a pure realm; it is simply a place in the mountains. If you have pure karma and you go there, you will see a charnel ground and a palace, and in the center of that a Chakrasamvara father and mother, surrounded by hundreds

of thousands of dakas and dakinis. If you have impure karma, you will see a self-arisen stone temple that contains the tantras taught by the Buddha in the form of concealed treasure, because this is where the tantras were actually discovered by the various siddhas. It is said to be populated entirely by women; there are not supposed to be any men living there at all. It is also said that all of these women are dakinis. Like Chamaradvipa, there are two types of birth you could take there. If you have attainment, you take a pure birth and are reborn as a daka or dakini in the retinue of Chakrasamvara and Vajravarahi; otherwise you would just be reborn in that place.

Practitioners of Manjushri tend to aspire to rebirth on Wutai Shan in China, the mountain that is considered the abode of Manjushri. Those connected with the Chakrasamvara practice aspire to rebirth in Tsaritra on the border of Tibet and India. Some people also aspire to rebirth in the realm that is Mount Kailash. If you have pure perception, then all of these places are pure palaces with deities, dakas, and dakinis inside them. If you are born in a pure way, then you will be born as a daka or dakini and remain in one of these places for the duration of this aeon at the longest, and at least for the duration of the teaching period of the Buddha in whose time you are born. You will be reborn as a daka or dakini with a rainbow body. These are classified as lesser khechari realms. “Khechari realm” means

a celestial realm, a realm that is pure and connected with secret mantra. These however are lesser khechhari realms because they are still connected with terrestrial locations.

Most of those who have attained siddhi through the practice of secret mantra, such as the famous mahasiddhas and others, are reborn in such places as dakas and dakinis. If those with impure karma go there, they will not see any of the deities. They will just see forests or, in the case of Mount Kailash, a mountain covered with snow.

“It occurred to me,” Chakme Rinpoche says, “to go to some of these places on pilgrimage, but in doubt of whether I would actually see anything pure or not, I decided I have no wish to go there or be reborn there.” What he is saying is that all of these things are risky. Karma Chakme Rinpoche is saying what he wants is to be reborn somewhere where there is the certainty both that he can be reborn there and that it will be worthwhile. He wants something that will be safe, quick, and easy.

Therefore at this point he says to Tsondu Gyamtso, “You, Tsondu Gyamtso, what do you think?” In other words, which of these realms do you think it is worthwhile being born in?

Another realm that people aspire to is the realm of Shambhala in the north. Karma Chakme says that really it is just a foreign country, like India; in other words, it means a country that is not Tibet. From the point of view of Tibetans, it is just another country in the world. It is true that it has an unbroken lineage of emanated kings, one after another, and that the Kalachakra teachings are prevalent there, but the longevity and uncertainty of individual circumstances such as the fluctuations in affluence, happiness, life span, and so on are the same in Shambhala as anywhere else in this world.

Another realm to which some Tibetan practitioners of the Bön tradition aspire is Shangshung, the source of the Bön teachings. Chakme Rinpoche identifies this as a hidden valley or hidden region behind or past Mount Kailash. He says that Bön teachings are prevalent there, but variations in life span and other circumstances are just like everywhere else in the world. The Bön teachings may have been prevalent when he was writing, but we would have to question whether that is true nowadays. Most of these terrestrial places and pure realms are now Moslem.

He concludes this section of the chapter by saying, “Do not mistake which realm to aspire to.” When he says this, he is referring to two things that should be clear. There are realms that are completely pure, like the eastern, southern, northern,

and central pure realms, but those are impossible to be born in unless you are a first-level bodhisattva, or in the case of the central one, an eighth-level bodhisattva. There is no point in aspiring to that. Then there are realms that are lesser, semi-pure realms, like Tushita, Chamaradvipa, Shambhala, and so on, but they are risky because you may take an impure birth there and so it may not be worthwhile at all.

Rebirth in Sukhavati

Is there an alternative to the pure realms discussed above? There is. You will remember that we talked about the eastern, southern, and northern pure realms, but not the western one. At this point, Chakme Rinpoche directs us to aspire only to rebirth in the western pure realm of Sukhavati (*Dewachen* in Tibetan). He says, “To the west of this place, as many worlds away as there are grains of sand in the river Ganges...” This is an example of something uncountable. Many worlds away from here, slightly elevated above the level of this world, is the realm of Sukhavati, or the Blissful. As its name implies, it is full of excellent, complete well-being. Unlike other realms, where there can be variations in circumstances such as life span and so on, everyone in Sukhavati has exactly the same circumstances; everyone enjoys the same

benefits and enjoyments. In that realm, there are not even the words *unvirtuous action* or *suffering*.

Sukhavati is like this because of Buddha Amitabha's aspiration when he first generated bodhichitta. Sukhavati is a completely pure realm, a lesser sambhogakaya or greater nirmanakaya realm like the eastern, northern, or southern realms; but unlike those other realms you can be born in Sukhavati due to the power of Amitabha's aspiration. Not only can you be born there, but you will be born there if you sincerely aspire to that rebirth.

Only two things prevent rebirth in Sukhavati: committing one of the five actions of immediate consequence, or abandoning the Dharma. If you have committed one of the five actions of immediate consequence, then as soon as your breath stops and you die, you go straight to hell; you cannot go to Sukhavati. If you have abandoned the Dharma, you have also abandoned the aspiration to be reborn there, which cancels out any possibility of rebirth in that realm. Aside from those two sets of circumstances, anyone who aspires to rebirth in Sukhavati will be born there. Anyone means any human being of either gender, of any culture, or any social position. This is definitely considered to be true. Tibetans have a colloquial expression for that which is true: "the words of the Buddha." That expression is applied to this type of statement about rebirth in Sukhavati.

What causes rebirth in Sukhavati? There are four conditions that need to be present for this rebirth to be certain. The first is the cause of rebirth, which is the generation of bodhichitta. Therefore the first cause is taking the bodhisattva vow. The second cause is the path of that rebirth, which is gathering the accumulation of merit through performing the ten virtuous actions, as well as through any other means. The third cause is what steers you toward that rebirth, which is to dedicate the virtue you accumulate, through whatever virtue you perform, to rebirth in that realm. The fourth is to consciously aspire to rebirth in that realm with an undistracted mind of one-pointed faith and devotion. Chakme Rinpoche says if you recite the *Aspiration to Rebirth in Sukhavati* with that type of attitude as few as ten times in this life, you are assured of rebirth there.

If you want to be reborn in Sukhavati but you doubt it is possible because it sounds too good to be true, what will happen? Because you have accumulated the cause of that birth, you will be reborn there, but for five hundred years after your birth the lotus flower where you are born will not open up. You will be stuck in the lotus flower. This is not such a bad thing; it is still Sukhavati, so naturally you have all necessary conditions of well-being and happiness, and even during those five hundred years you will be able to hear the speech of Amitabha. Because you doubted whether it was possible to be reborn there and see

Amitabha's face, you will not be able to see Amitabha for five hundred years. This is called the "defective delay." Doubt will affect your aspiration by causing a delay in seeing Amitabha's face, but it will not prevent you from being reborn there. Therefore Chakme Rinpoche says, "Cast away all doubt and make the aspiration to be reborn in Sukhavati."

Although there are many fully pure sambhogakaya realms, and many semi-pure nirmanakaya realms, with one exception it is impossible for an ordinary person to be born in the fully pure realms. In order to be born in one of the pure realms, you must have achieved at least the first bodhisattva level. Because the semi-pure nirmanakaya realms are not fully pure but rather a mixture of purity and impurity, you can succeed in being born in them, but it is questionable how worthwhile this is. For example, the realm where we live is the nirmanakaya realm of Buddha Shakyamuni. The Buddha appeared here and his teachings exist, so if you have the necessary karma, you can encounter innumerable bodhisattvas and Dharma teachings in this realm. At the same time, given the way we experience this realm, we could not call it a pure realm. There are many beings in this realm and in this world who do not hear Dharma; or if they do hear Dharma, they do not trust it, or they even see it as harmful.

It is clear that we want to be born in a fully pure realm, not in a semi-pure realm. It has been said that there is only one fully pure realm where an ordinary person can be reborn, and that is the realm of Sukhavati, Amitabha's realm. It is a realm that is fully pure; it is without any suffering whatsoever and without any obstacles to the achievement of awakening, and anyone who sincerely prays to be born in this realm can be born there. In fact it is definite that those who sincerely pray to be reborn in Sukhavati will be born there. It is superior to all other realms because once you are born there, you will definitely achieve buddhahood without rebirth in any impure realm.

Having explained these things, Karma Chakme Rinpoche says to his disciple, Lama Tsonдру Gyamtso, "You, at the time of your death, direct your attention (your awareness) to that realm. When you are dying, do not think of anything else. Think only of being reborn in Sukhavati." By implication, Chakme Rinpoche is actually speaking to people of the future, not particularly to Lama Tsonдру Gyamtso. He continues, "If you have doubt of this, then you can find what I have said in the following sources."

Chakme Rinpoche goes on to cite the sources, such as the chapter of the *Ratnakuta Sutra* that expounds the realm of Sukhavati. Other sources cited are the *Amitabha Sutra*, the *Sutra of the Realm of Sukhavati*, the *Lotus Sutra*, the *Sutra of the Buddhas Who Abide*

in the Present, and the *Dharani of Glorious Immortal Drumbeat*. These sutras give more detail about the realm of Sukhavati and the effectiveness of praying for rebirth there than Chakme Rinpoche has given up to this point. Therefore he says, “Look carefully at those books.”

The point is that right now, through the power of aspiration, we have the freedom to choose where we are going to be born. It is extremely important for us to choose carefully and choose well. We must choose rebirth in a realm where we can be born and where we would wish to be born.

Then he says, “Prepare the provisions for the journey.” In Tibet, one brought food along when one went on a journey because there were no stores or restaurants on the way. Here the provisions are the four causes that lead to rebirth in Sukhavati, of which the principal one is the accumulation of merit. The first is to bring the realm to mind, which means to consider the realm, to imagine it and imagine the buddha Amitabha with the bodhisattvas Avalokiteshvara, Vajrapani, and the other members of his retinue. The second cause is to gather the accumulations and purify obscurations by performing the seven branches, directed at the imagined realm of Sukhavati. The third is to generate bodhichitta in the specific form of making the aspiration to bring all beings without exception to rebirth in Sukhavati. The fourth

is to dedicate all of the virtue accumulated through the seven branches, bodhichitta, and so forth to rebirth in Sukhavati. The accumulation of these four causes is like taking careful aim: you aim your practice in the right direction, just like taking careful aim before you shoot an arrow from a bow.

The Qualities of Sukhavati

The last section of this chapter concerns the actual qualities of the realm. It begins with the Sanskrit expression E MA HO, which is an expression of awe or wonderment, and then HEH HEH, which is an expression of amusement. The wonderment or awe refers to Karma Chakme Rinpoche's recollection of the qualities of the realm. The expression of amusement refers to his reaction to the idea that anyone could wonder if the realm has any qualities. Therefore he begins, "Son, monk Tsondru Gyamtso, you ask me, 'What are the qualities of that realm?'" The remainder of this chapter will be the answer.

It is said that if you took the contents — that is to say, all of the glory and all of the arrangements, the majesty, beauty, and qualities — of eighty-one billion billion **buddha realms** and combined them into one, it would be far less than the qualities of Sukhavati. If every sentient being, one after another, were

to achieve buddhahood, and on achieving buddhahood were to describe Sukhavati, it would take them longer than an aeon; and even after all sentient beings had become buddhas and had spoken of Sukhavati for longer than an aeon, they would still not come close to exhausting or completely describing its qualities. Chakme Rinpoche says, “So how could I be able to describe it here?”

The realm of Sukhavati exists, so we must accept that at some point it appeared. It is, however, indestructible. Normally realms appear and eventually are destroyed. Sukhavati is different; it did appear, but it will not be destroyed. Up to now innumerable buddhas have appeared in that realm. At present, it is presided over by the buddha Amitabha. The realm itself is non-fluctuating and unchanging. It does not have periods of prosperity and poverty, of things getting better and things getting worse. Its size is immeasurable; you cannot say that you could fit a thousand, or a billion, or a billion billion of our worlds into that realm and think that this will exhaust it, because its size is well beyond that.

All beings born in that realm are born fully free; that is to say, there is no being in Sukhavati who experiences any of the eight unrestful conditions. In fact not only are the eight unrestful conditions not present there, but they are completely unknown. As a result there is no suffering whatsoever in Sukhavati: none of

the beings born and living in Sukhavati ever experience anything that corresponds to what we call pain, suffering, or misery. Because of the nature of the realm, it is actually impossible that someone could feel these things while there. The experience of being in Sukhavati is a continuous and long-lasting experience of unimaginable well-being, which is why it is called “Sukhavati, the blissful.”

Birth in Sukhavati occurs when the consciousness of the being born there takes its place in the center of a lotus flower. In an instant, the body of that being, the body they will retain for the duration of their life in Sukhavati, is fully accomplished. That is to say, there is no gestation period; it is instantaneous birth. Not only is there no gestation, but you are born fully grown, not as an infant who cannot walk or talk. You are born as a youth, someone who is fully grown and developed, but not headed downhill yet.

Physically each person in Sukhavati has exactly the same type of body. Each person has the thirty-two marks and eighty signs of physical perfection, which in our world only appear on the body of the Buddha. They have the crown protuberance, or the ushnisha, the wheels on the soles of the feet and palms of the hands, and so on; everyone born there is identical and equal in this way. They are golden in color and their clothing is the three

robes of the monastic. Once you are born in Sukhavati, you immediately possess fivefold supercognition, which are degrees of supercognition beyond our experience, and you have no mental afflictions. At the same time, the process of birth in Sukhavati is the achievement of the first bodhisattva level; this means you have conquered the mental afflictions, and you never give rise to the three poisons.

Since there is no gestation, there is no suffering of birth; there is also no aging, no sickness, no suffering of death, and no death as we know it. The life span is innumerable aeons. Essentially you remain in Sukhavati from the moment of your birth until you are about to achieve buddhahood. There is no untimely or accidental death in Sukhavati. You pass away from Sukhavati when you are about to achieve buddhahood, and this is because when you achieve buddhahood, you accomplish your own buddha realm. If you choose, it can be within Sukhavati, but it can also be somewhere else. That is the only way that you die and leave Sukhavati; you do not die as we know it. There is no process of physical degeneration and death. The appearance of the realm of Sukhavati simply vanishes, and the appearance of the realm of your buddhahood subsequently appears. Aside from that, once you are born there, you will never again be reborn in samsara, in the realms of humans, devas, and so on. Once you are born in

Sukhavati, it is impossible that you will not achieve buddhahood there or, if you choose, in a realm of your choice.

Having been born there, you may take rebirth in an impure realm through the force of aspirations and the wish to benefit beings, but you will never be compelled to do so. You will not have the common cause of such rebirth. This is because you have exhausted the kleshas, which are the cause of rebirth in samsara.

The dwelling where beings in Sukhavati live is called an “immeasurable palace.” This is nothing like the mundane palaces in this world, or even the palaces in the realms of the devas. It is called “immeasurable” or “inestimable” because, like the mandalas of deities such as Chakrasamvara and Vajravarahi, it is literally immeasurable. It is always spacious enough to contain all those within it, and it is never too big for those within it. It has no actual fixed dimension. In the same way, the food and drink in that realm are not like what we know in this world. You might speculate, “What is the food like in Sukhavati? Is it American food or Tibetan food? I hope it is Chinese food.” It is actually none of these. It is amrita, which appears spontaneously in whatever form and whatever taste you wish, simply through your wishing for it. It does not have to be grown, bought, or cooked; it just appears. The food is always satisfying and always expands your vitality and vigor. It is different from ordinary food; the food

leaves no deposits that require excretion, so in that realm there is no urination or defecation.

There is no gender in Sukhavati. This is because there is no birth as we know it. Currently we have gender, male and female, because it is required in order to be born in this world and in this realm. Because there is no such birth in Sukhavati, there is no gender; everyone is the same. You could conventionally say that the offering figures that appear are goddesses, but no beings born in Sukhavati have gender. While you are there, you are served by immeasurable offering goddesses who are beautiful and adorned with jewels; they are emanated naturally and spontaneously, and they are the embodiment of the merit you accumulated in order to be reborn there. In other words, they are not external beings.

While you remain in Sukhavati, you are always inseparable from the buddha Amitabha; you always have access to him. Amitabha is always teaching, and he simultaneously teaches each resident of the realm the Dharma teaching that each personally wishes and needs to hear. Whenever you wish to, you can make immeasurable offerings to him simply by wishing to do so. These offerings appear in the palms of your hands as soon as you think of wishing to offer them.

Previously in this chapter we mentioned the nirmanakaya realm of Chamaradvipa, which is the realm of Guru Rinpoche. In fact there are one billion of them. There are a billion worlds like this one, each containing a Chamaradvipa. In each of those Chamaradvipas is a Guru Rinpoche. In Tibet there have appeared twenty-one principal incarnations of the buddha Amitabha. All of these boundless emanations, the billion Guru Rinpoches, and all the Amitabha emanations, are merely emanations of Amitabha. The true Guru Rinpoche, the source of the emanation, is Amitabha himself. All other aspects of Guru Rinpoche are emanations of that. Therefore if you want to be around Guru Rinpoche, go to Sukhavati.

Furthermore there is the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, who has his own nirmanakaya pure realm, the Potala, and also many emanations such as King Songtsen Gampo, His Holiness the Gyalwang Karmapa, and His Holiness the Dalai Lama. In addition, the thousand buddhas of this fortunate aeon are likewise considered emanations of Avalokiteshvara. All of those emanations of Avalokiteshvara, the one that presides at the Potala, and the buddhas and great teachers, are all emanations of the Avalokiteshvara who stands to the right of Amitabha in Sukhavati. If you wish to be around any of those teachers, go to Sukhavati.

The bodhisattva Vajrapani has his own pure realm, which is called Changlochen. He has further emanations within our world, such as Gyalsap Rinpoche, of whom there are equivalents in each of the billion worlds. The source of emanation of all of these aspects of Vajrapani is the bodhisattva Vajrapani, who constantly abides to the left of Amitabha in Sukhavati. If you wish to be around any of those teachers, go to Sukhavati.

Many beings have been born in Sukhavati. Historically the most famous within the Buddhist tradition are Arya Nagarjuna, who achieved the first bhumi in this life and was reborn in Sukhavati; Lord Gampopa, who after achieving awakening in this life, demonstrated manifest awakening or buddhahood in the realm of Sukhavati immediately after his parinirvana; Lord Khyungpo Naljor of the Shangpa Kagyu; Lord Sonam Tsemo of the glorious Sakya tradition; Lord Khachö Wangpo; Namkhai Gyaltzen; and Ngorpa Dorje Chang, also of the Sakya tradition. These are the most famous individuals from our world who Buddha Shakya-muni predicted would be reborn in Sukhavati along with the seventy-two billion billion bodhisattvas. For example, the Sixth Gyalwang Karmapa, Tongwa Donden, predicted that after his parinirvana he would send an emanation of himself to Sukhavati. This emanation is still there surrounded by a retinue of hundreds of thousands of monks. To conclude, Karma Chakme Rinpoche

says, “Son, Tsonдру Gyamtso, resolve without doubt that when you die you will be reborn there for all of these reasons.”

You might think, “Isn’t being reborn in Sukhavati a dereliction of my duty to propagate the Buddha’s teachings by reincarnating in this world?” Addressing that question, Chakme Rinpoche says, “Think about this very carefully. It need not be said that the sufferings of the lower realms — the hell realm, the preta realm, and the animal realms — are inconceivable. We cannot conceive of them. If we could, we could not stand it in our minds. The pleasures of the so-called higher realms of gods and humans are really of no more worth than a dream. They are insubstantial, especially in the period we live in, the period of the degeneration of the doctrine. You could, through aspiration and through very careful conduct, succeed in being reborn human again and again, but it is very risky.”

There are so many circumstances in this world that can cause untimely and sudden death. You may aspire to be reborn in this world in order to practice and teach, but think about what a human life really consists of. The first ten years of life you cannot really think, so these years will not be used to practice and teach. Then as you grow up, you are totally concerned with survival, with what you are going to eat, what you are going to wear; and if do you have enough material things, then you are occupied

with distractions. You spend almost half of your life sleeping, and the human life expectancy is decreasing. Chakme Rinpoche says, “It is forty years and it is decreasing steadily. Don’t you see that there is no assurance that if you are born here, you are going to have the opportunity or leisure to practice Dharma?”

As time goes on, people’s mental afflictions become coarser, and those you benefit often respond with abuse and betrayal. Nowadays people denigrate the holy, the learned, and the accomplished; they call them liars and fakes. People are only diligent in the accomplishment of the ten unvirtuous actions, devoting all their exertion, energy, and imagination to finding ways to engage in unvirtuous actions. You may think that you wish to benefit such beings, but if all of the emanations of buddhas who appear in this world, such as the aforementioned emanations of Amitabha, Avalokiteshvara, and Vajrapani, have a difficult time benefiting beings in the present day, you are not going to do any better. You are just going to make yourself miserable.

You may think, “I want to be reborn here because there are people who I love, my family, my relatives, my friends, my disciples, the other monks in my monastery.” They are not going to last much longer than you are. Many of them are probably going to die soon after you, so even if you are reborn here they are not going to be around. Do not forget that even if they are around,

you will not know them because you do not remember your previous lives.

In contrast to that, Amitabha will remain alive and teaching in Sukhavati for a very long time. The life span of Amitabha is usually measured as a hundred thousand billion billion aeons, with an aeon being the duration of the universe. At the end of his teaching period, Amitabha will demonstrate parinirvana. Because Sukhavati is a pure realm he is not actually going to die, but he will disappear from Sukhavati. His teachings will survive in that realm for two times as many aeons as there are grains of sand in the river Ganges. During the period after Amitabha's parinirvana, for the duration of his teachings the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara will preside over the realm as Amitabha's regent. Having been born there, throughout that period you will continue to practice Dharma, and because immediately on your birth you gained unstoppable miraculous ability, throughout that time you will go to any realm you wish.

Previously in this chapter, it was stated that you cannot be reborn in the eastern, southern, northern, or central sambhogakaya realms, and you do not want to be reborn in the nirmanakaya realms because the circumstances are uncertain. Once you are born in Sukhavati, however, you can go to any of those realms, remain as long as you wish, and return whenever you wish. You can go

to Abhirati (Manifestly Joyous) and the realm of the Medicine Buddha, both of which are in the east. You can go to Glorious in the south or to Complete Activity in the north. Because of your miraculous ability, you can go to the realm of the Potala, the realm of Chamaradvipa, or the realm of Uddiyana just by thinking of them. In those realms you can present offerings to the presiding buddhas, receive empowerment and instruction from them, and immediately return to Sukhavati. Therefore if you are born in Sukhavati, you have access to all of them whenever you wish so it is no different from having been born in all of these realms at once. If you wish to come to this world in order to see what is going on, you can do that at any time. Furthermore, when each buddha appears in this world (for example, the fifth Buddha, Maitreya; the sixth Buddha, Lion; or any of the thousand buddhas), you can come to this world, make offerings to them, receive their teachings, and immediately return to Sukhavati.

After the parinirvana of Amitabha, his teachings will remain under the direction of the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. At the end of that period, the teachings of Amitabha will disappear one night. The next morning at dawn, Avalokiteshvara will attain buddhahood. His name as a buddha will be King of Glorious Piled Rays of Light. His life span will be ninety-six hundred thousand billion billion aeons. For the duration of his life after his buddhahood, you will remain his disciple and continue to

practice. After he passes away, his teachings will remain for a period of six hundred million plus thirty thousand billion aeons. After the parinirvana of Avalokiteshvara, for the duration of his teachings, his teachings will be upheld by Vajrapani, who will be his regent.

If you have been born in Sukhavati during this time, you will perfect your samadhi and conquer the final obscurations. Simply through being born in Sukhavati, you have conquered the obscuration of the coarse mental afflictions. For the rest of your time in Sukhavati, you gradually purify the subtle mental afflictions, especially the cognitive obscuration and the obscuration that is habit. During that period you begin to completely purify these obstructions.

As with Amitabha's teachings, this period will end one night when Avalokiteshvara's teachings disappear. The next morning at dawn, Vajrapani will attain buddhahood. His name will be King of Qualities of Piled Jewels, and his life span and the duration of his teachings after his parinirvana will be the same as those of Avalokiteshvara. You will continue to practice for that period, and during that time you will completely gather the two accumulations.

When it is time for you to attain buddhahood, one of two things will happen. If you wish to, you can demonstrate manifest awakening, perfect buddhahood, in the realm of Sukhavati. You can do so in another realm if you wish to, in which case the realm of Sukhavati will disappear from your perception and you will be born in the realm of your buddhahood. This is not death as we know it. Everyone who is born in Sukhavati is a bodhisattva in his or her final birth. The bodhisattva in their final birth is a bodhisattva who, in their life or during the birth immediately after the present one, will demonstrate perfect awakening. Everyone born in Sukhavati will remain in that life until they are about to achieve buddhahood. Therefore everyone in Sukhavati is a bodhisattva in his or her final birth.

Keep all of these reasons for aspiring to be reborn in Sukhavati in mind. Karma Chakme Rinpoche says, “Make the aspiration for rebirth in Sukhavati your principal practice; make Amitabha and Avalokiteshvara your principal deities.”

This was spoken by Chakme Rinpoche in the evening practice break of the eighth day and the morning practice break of the ninth day on the waning days of the month or moon called Trum in the Year of the Horse, and was written down by Lama Tsondru Gyamtso.

Questions and Answers

STUDENT: Could you elaborate on the pure realms? Is this planet earth considered a pure realm, and was it ever at one time a pure realm, something like the Garden of Eden? Is there a Buddhist tradition that one day the earth will return to a condition like that? Also, do you know how long human beings have been on this planet?

RINPOCHE: As I indicated when we were discussing the nature of realms in general, for samsaric sentient beings this world is an impure realm. For buddhas, it is a pure realm. You cannot say as an objective fact that this world is either pure or impure. You cannot say it is pure because to some beings it appears impure, and you cannot say it is impure because to some beings it appears pure.

To give a traditional example, all of us here see this room, and we would all agree on the materials with which this building and this room are constructed. We all see wood, plaster, paint, and so on. No one could argue with us; we see this room, and so no one can say to us that this room is not constructed of wood, plaster, and paint. A deva would not see what we see. Devas are inhabitants of the god realm, the highest of the six samsaric realms, and therefore they possess slightly less deluded

perceptions than those in the human realm. Devas would never see ordinary wood or plaster here; they would see this room as constructed entirely out of jewels, precious metals, and so forth. Just as no one could argue with us and say that this room is not made of wood and plaster, no one could argue with a deva about this room being composed of jewels, because that deva would actually see what they saw. In the same way, if a hell being were in this room, they would see what we see as wood, plaster, and so on as burning hot, molten metal. The room would have the characteristics of molten metal, and it would burn them and make them suffer. Again, no one could argue with them about what they were experiencing.

Since anything can be perceived in so many different ways, it is clear that the objective basis of perception, in this case the room or building, does not truly exist as any one of these things. Therefore we cannot say that this world is inherently pure or impure.

As for when our species first appeared in this world, it is traditionally said that we began to appear here during the formation of this system during this aeon, but exactly when that was, I do not know. Of course there are many different theories about exactly how human beings came to be present in this world.

STUDENT: When you said “this system,” did you mean the solar system or the galaxy?

RINPOCHE: I meant this system of a billion inhabited worlds, including this solar system, but much more than that.

STUDENT: We have been told that the different realms are projections of our minds, but that they also have physical locations. If I were to go out in space and go to the location where a pure realm is supposed to be, would I be able to experience the realm if I had that karmic predisposition?

RINPOCHE: No, and this is because of exactly what you said, which is that a pure realm is a confluence of two things: it is pure karmic perception and it is a specific locality in external space. If the external location were reached without an alteration in karmic perception, you would not perceive a pure realm.

Let us imagine that we have the technology to actually go to the pure realm, to go that far out in space. If we did this and reached Sukhavati, then if any of the scientists or astronauts had achieved the first bodhisattva bhumi, they would see Sukhavati as it is. Those who had not would just see an ordinary place of earth and stone much like this world. This is because no matter how far you go in physical space, you are still within the same

karmic environment produced by your karmic projection. Even if you go to the place where Sukhavati is, you will not see Sukhavati, you will see something else. This is why it must be accepted that even when an ordinary person is born there, they become a first-level bodhisattva.

STUDENT: As I understood it, you said that when an arhat passes out of this realm, he or she is not reborn in samsara. Then aeons later, when the ray of light from the Buddha wakes up the arhat and they travel the bodhisattva path, does the arhat enter samsara at this point?

RINPOCHE: After an arhat has generated bodhichitta and reentered the path, they take up residence in a pure realm. They can dispatch emanations into this world, but they cannot take birth here even if they wish to, because they have utterly eradicated mental afflictions, which are the cause of birth.

Bodhisattvas do not completely eradicate these afflictions until much later; they retain a subtle form of it so they can take rebirth here. This enables bodhisattvas to proceed on the path more rapidly, because once they have intentionally taken birth, they can directly engage in the deeds of a bodhisattva. Arhats can only do this indirectly, through emanations.

STUDENT: What sort of realm are the arhats in before they are woken up?

RINPOCHE: After the achievement of cessation at the time of the arhat's death, there is no remainder; they have physically died, their body is gone, they do not have any kind of embodiment whatsoever, and therefore they cannot be ascribed to any particular location. You cannot say whether or not they are in such-and-such realm, and so forth.

The samadhi where they abide, the samadhi of cessation, is characterized as an undefiled samadhi, which means it will not degenerate into further rebirth in samsara. This is one of the differences between the samadhi of cessation and the samadhis of the formless realm: although there is a great profound immersion in samadhi in the formless realm, it is degenerative or defiled. In other words, it will eventually wear out and degenerate into coarser rebirth in samsara, whereas the samadhi of cessation does not.

STUDENT: I have heard something about arhats being in pure abodes.

RINPOCHE: That is not where they abide. The realms you are talking about are the *tsang ne nga*, or the “five pure abodes.”

These are not pure realms. It is better to say the “five clean abodes.” They are the five highest realms of the seventeen realms of form, and they are contained within the highest of the four meditative stabilities of the realm of form, but they are only inhabited by arhats and bodhisattvas. Arhats go there, but they go there while they are still alive. This is not what happens to them after their death.

In fact both bodhisattvas and arhats enter through their samadhi, from the bottom up, the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth levels of the realm of form. Bodhisattvas, however, do not enter these five clean abodes, which are the thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth levels of the realm of form. This is because those abodes are characterized by an extremely subtle mental continuum, and bodhisattvas do not allow their mental continuum to become this subtle because they maintain the mental activity of love and compassion. This characterizes the eight distinctions between the meditative stability of bodhisattvas and that of arhats.

STUDENT: I have some questions about Guru Rinpoche’s pure land. Before Guru Rinpoche died. . .

TRANSLATOR: He did not die.

STUDENT: Well, when he was saying good-bye to his students on earth in Tibet, I wonder how he decided where to go. Was there trouble in the rakshasa world and that is why he decided to go there?

RINPOCHE: At the time he left Tibet, the rakshasas were preparing to invade Jambudvipa. At that time it was the worst, most warlike place, and there was a danger that the rakshasas would invade Jambudvipa and succeed in consuming the human world, rather literally. He went there in order to control them, which he did by liberating the consciousness of the king of the rakshasas into the pure realm, and then taking his place. The king of the rakshasas at that time was said to be a very powerful being with nine heads; Guru Rinpoche took on his appearance. Most rakshasas still believe he is that old king; they do not know he is Guru Rinpoche. Therefore they sometimes feel a little bit rebellious because the laws and customs have obviously changed. Guru Rinpoche changed many things, and he made laws forbidding all the kinds of things that rakshasas would like to do. They are somewhat disgruntled; most of them do not quite understand who he is or why he changed so much.

STUDENT: If there had not been trouble with the rakshasas, do you think that because Guru Rinpoche is a mind emanation of Amitabha, he might have just retired to Sukhavati?

RINPOCHE: He is a mind emanation of Amitabha sent to tame this world, in particular countries like Tibet and the land of the rakshasas, but because he has the body of great transference, he would not go back to Sukhavati. He would remain.

STUDENT: Do you mean that he would always make emanations that come back to our world?

TRANSLATOR: No, Guru Rinpoche will stay.

STUDENT: Here?

RINPOCHE: His state is called the “rainbow body of great transference.” In his case he will remain in this body until samsara is over. He is not going anywhere.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, in the Karma Pakshi practice, in the supplication one asks to be reborn in the buddha field of Vajrayogini, which is called Khachö Shingkhām. How does that place relate to these other realms?

RINPOCHE: The khechari realm, the celestial realm, is in that case the realm of Vajrayogini, so in that context you are aspiring to the superior form of birth in that realm, where you are born as a daka or dakini with a rainbow body. Just as with the pure realms, if you have great devotion, faith, and the necessary

requirements, you can be born in these other realms, such as those of Vajrayogini and Guru Rinpoche. If you dedicate the virtue and merit of whatever Dharma practice you do, whether it be the Karma Pakshi practice or any other practice, to rebirth in Sukhavati, you will be reborn there.

STUDENT: I am trying to understand how all the realms relate according to time and space, especially when referring to the directions, and I am wondering how they are labeled as being east, west, south, especially if they are not on this planet.

RINPOCHE: It is based on the position of our sun, so the direction the sun rises from is the east, and the direction the sun sets in is the west.

STUDENT: When you were talking about Guru Rinpoche's abode, it was referred to as an island or like a satellite to Jambudvīpa. In this case is a satellite like what we would think of as a moon?

RINPOCHE: Yes, it sounds as though what it is actually talking about is some kind of extraterrestrial satellite.

STUDENT: What would a being who is Guru Rinpoche's attendant or in Guru Rinpoche's retinue do for him? What would their role be?

RINPOCHE: In this context, the retinue and attendants indicate two different ranks of superior rebirth within the Glorious Copper-Colored Mountain. Those who have tremendous experience and realization are reborn in the close retinue of Guru Rinpoche. Those who do not, but still have the karma to achieve the superior type of rebirth in that realm, then they would be reborn as what is called an “attendant.” In this case *attendant* does not mean servant; it does not mean that you have to carry water around or sweep the floor. There are no such activities in that realm.

STUDENT: What would a being in the retinue do? How would they relate to Guru Rinpoche?

RINPOCHE: Again, it would not mean a body servant. You would not have to do things like make his bed, change his linen, and so on, because he has a rainbow body and he does not need those things. It means you receive his teachings and uphold them, protect them, record them, and so on.

STUDENT: I have some questions about the different realms. First, is there a downside to Sukhavati?

RINPOCHE: There is no downside to Sukhavati. That is why it is called Sukhavati, which means the “blissful.” The closest

thing to a downside that I can think of is that if you doubt you will succeed in being reborn there, then your lotus does not get unpacked for five hundred years. But that is not too bad.

STUDENT: Do you stay there permanently? How do you live out your bodhisattva vows there? Does your realization develop and continue to deepen?

RINPOCHE: To answer your third question first, when an ordinary being — that is to say, a being who has not achieved the first bodhisattva level — is born in Sukhavati through the force of their aspiration to be born there, at the moment of their birth they achieve the first bodhisattva level. From that point onward, they continue to pass through the paths and stages expeditiously until they achieve buddhahood, which usually happens in that realm.

Once you are born in Sukhavati, you can go anywhere you want. You can go to any other pure realm at will, even the ones you could not have been born into, and you can go to impure realms as well. In these places you can receive teachings from any and all buddhas, such as the thousand buddhas who will appear in this world during this aeon, and also from the buddhas that preside in other pure realms. Because you achieved the first bodhisattva level when you were born in Sukhavati, you have supercognition

that enables you to observe the experiences and difficulties of others, for example, your former relatives, friends, and so on.

Having taken birth in Sukhavati and possessing the abilities you gained there, you are in a far better position to assist other beings than you are now. It is said that once you are born in Sukhavati you will never return to the world. This means you will never be born in an impure realm through karmic compulsion. It does not mean that you cannot dispatch emanations that benefit beings in this realm.

STUDENT: When we do the Chenrezik sadhana, we pray that we and all other beings be born in Potala. When we do Amitabha, we pray to be born in Sukhavati. If we are equally diligent in both these practices, does some confusion result? How do we ultimately direct our aspirations?

RINPOCHE: There might seem to be a contradiction, but in fact there is not. If you should succeed in being born in the Potala, you will eventually pass into Sukhavati, just as we saw that if you are born in the Glorious Copper-Colored Mountain, you will eventually pass into Sukhavati. This is because a connection with an emanation always leads to the source of the emanation.

STUDENT: For Maitreya's pure realm, you described a beam of beautiful white light coming out from Maitreya's forehead and enveloping the mind of the person who is going to Maitreya's pure realm. Does Sukhavati work the same way? If Amitabha was sitting here, and we all died right now, would beams of white light come out of his forehead, envelop our minds, and bring us to Sukhavati?

RINPOCHE: Although I don't know any detailed accounts describing it exactly that way, it probably works the same way. I say this principally because when we practice the transference of consciousness in order to achieve rebirth in Sukhavati, we visualize Amitabha above the top of our heads and we dissolve our consciousness upward into his heart.

STUDENT: In terms of cultivating the five different buddha wisdoms, can you give some illustrations of the relationship between the aggregates and the afflictions and the six realms?

RINPOCHE: This brings up the difference between the perception of aryas and the perception of sentient beings. What we perceive as the five aggregates are the five buddhas, what we perceive as the five kleshas or afflictions are the five wisdoms, and what we perceive as the six realms are in fact pure realms. The reason we say that these things are their pure nature rather than their

impure appearance is because the perception of aryas is more authentic, and so we regard it as unbewildered.

We perceive the six realms as states of varying degrees of misery: utterly miserable, slightly less miserable, sometimes miserable, sometimes more or less okay, and so on. Those with pure perception see what others see, in the sense that they are directly aware of how others are seeing things, but they do not see it that way themselves. In other words, those with pure perception know exactly what we are seeing, but what they see is pure. Because they know what we are seeing, they have continuous love and compassion, but because they are without bewilderment themselves, their perception of things is unbewildered and pure.

From the point of view of such pure perception, even the six realms of samsara are no different from the dharmadhatu itself. Beings of pure perception however, also know that the six realms are different types of bewildered experience, caused by the different degrees of karmic obscuration of the beings that inhabit or experience those realms.

To give you an analogy for this, a sane person looks around them and sees what everyone else sees, more or less. An insane person who is in the grip of psychotic hallucination sees things that nobody else sees. They see an environment that may be

extremely threatening; they see people who are trying to help them as enemies, and so on. When we are around people like that, we know that their perception is deluded. In the same way, the buddhas and bodhisattvas know that our perception of things as impure is deluded.

When I was living in Buxador, a monk in the camp went mad. He became convinced that people were coming to kill him with weapons such as sticks and rocks, and so he hid under the bed. Khenpo Ngedön, a respected teacher who was in the camp, performed a banishing ceremony, and immediately the monk recovered his sanity. That kind of thing happens, and it is an analogy for all of our perception.

It is true to say that what we perceive as the five aggregates are really the five buddhas, what we perceive as the five poisons are really the five wisdoms, and what we perceive as the six realms are really pure realms. Although this is true, until we can actually experience things that way through the eradication of our obscurations, simply saying this is not enough because we continue to suffer from the aggregates, the poisons, and the realms.

STUDENT: The teachings say that in the bardo the mind experiences various things as projections of its own karma. How do

these experiences, these projections in the bardo, differ from our experiences when our minds are here in our body?

RINPOCHE: The difference is that while you are alive you are in a situation of ripened karma, where previous actions have ripened into a certain body and realm — in our case, a human body in the human realm. For the duration of your life, as long as the karma that produced that birth is not exhausted, you will continue to experience things in this consistent way, and your body and mind are mixed together. They are combined.

When you die, you lose your body; you no longer have it. You are in an interval between karmically ripened situations, so you are a mind without a body. From your point of view, you will probably seem to have a body, but that body is actually just a mental replica produced by your habit of having a body. Because you think you have a body in the bardo, you get terrified. You think this body is going to be destroyed or harmed in some way. It actually cannot be destroyed because it does not exist, but you do not know that.

The appearances of the bardo are like the dream state. The dream body — the body with which we seem to act and experience in dreams — is not a real body, and dream events are not physical reality. Nevertheless as long as you do not know you are dreaming,

the body and the events seem to be real. The bardo is like that, except that when you wake up after a dream, you are back in your old body, whereas the bardo hallucinations continue until you take subsequent birth.

STUDENT: Is it possible for us humans to be in the same room together but to be in different realms? I have a friend who is very sick with cancer and who has had extensive surgery. She is a very kind, generous, sweet person, but recently she has become very angry, obnoxious, and aggressive due to the illness, and I feel as though I hardly know her. Is she in a different realm?

RINPOCHE: The beings that we perceive as human beings are in fact human beings. The shared perception of human beings — which is to say, seeing one another and perceiving the environment in much the same way — is a function of our shared karma. To be born as human beings, we all have to have accrued the karmic causes of that birth. Yet within the general category of human beings, each person's perception, experience, and so forth is distinct.

Beings of other realms perceive humans in a different way from the way we humans perceive ourselves. For example, buddhas and bodhisattvas see humans and other beings as dakas and dakinis. Beings of particularly negative karma actually perceive

other beings of almost any type as the messengers of Yama, as demonic and so forth.

In the case of your friend, she is in the human realm. She is not in any other realm. Because of her previous accumulation of good karma, she was born a human being. She has become so discouraged by her illness that she has lost all patience. Having lost all patience, naturally she is very angry and resentful. In this type of situation it is beneficial to be a practitioner, because if you are a practitioner you recognize that serious illness is the ripening of previous negative actions or karma. You accept the illness because you recognize that had it not arisen, the karma would not have been purified, and it would have resulted in great harm over a series of lifetimes. This great harm is now being replaced by her illness.

To accept illness in this way, it is not enough merely to be Buddhist; you have to be a good practitioner. If you take the cause and result to heart, this will help you deal with such situations. People who lack that type of resource feel that their illness is unfair, and they feel victimized. Feeling that way, they naturally become angry, and they respond to others with some degree of enmity. This happens because people lack belief in karma.

STUDENT: Because my friend obviously does not have an understanding of karma, is it best for me to say nothing about this to her, since it would probably just make her worse?

RINPOCHE: It is unlikely that she is going to be receptive to an explanation of cause and result. You might attempt to tell her about the benefits of reciting mantras and the names of buddhas. You can simply say that reciting such things will help alleviate some of her suffering. If she seems like she might be receptive to this, you can say that, although we change bodies when we die, we do not change minds. Our minds continue, and therefore if she recites these mantras now, benefit will result and accrue in the future.

Whatever you choose to say to her, make sure you say it in a calm, pleasant, and respectful way. Also be very attentive to her reaction, because even the mildest of remarks of this nature may cause her anger to blaze up like a fire.

STUDENT: I have to be very careful because I did try to bring up that there were some very beautiful practices she could say if she were dying. She said that she thought that was hogwash and she did not believe in anything after death.

RINPOCHE: Then the most beneficial thing would be for you to cultivate love and compassion for her, but not bring up these things. Discussing these things with her is not going to help her.

STUDENT: I am the interfaith chaplain at a big hospital in Boston, and I am often called to the bed of a dying person to give spiritual or emotional support. Do you have any suggestions about how I could give care to the dying patient if the patient is a Buddhist? Are there any special blessings or any special words to say? Is there any encouragement I can give to the nurses I work with?

RINPOCHE: First, you may not be able to know or find out if the person is really Buddhist or not. You cannot always present the Buddhist doctrine to your patients, because you may not know what their beliefs really are. It is possible that the situation referred to in a previous question can arise, where you present Buddhadharma and the person is irritated or even angered because they believe it is not true. Therefore they feel that you are trying to manipulate or trick them. You have to be very careful about that.

With regard to people in general, there are many people who have a kind of simple faith in some sort of higher power, and they may not have any particular ideas about the identity of

that deity or higher power. In a case where a person has that kind of unformed faith, you should encourage them to reflect on their faith in that deity or higher power. If their faith is formed, you should phrase your encouragement in accordance with their particular concept of a higher power, depending on how much you know about it. Encourage them to aspire to being welcomed by that higher power, to being reborn in that higher power's realm.

Another thing you can tell people is that death is not the death of the mind; it is only death of the body, and that their minds will continue. If they are receptive to Buddhist ideas, you can explain a little bit about rebirth and so forth. If the person is actually Buddhist, in other words they really believe in it, then you should try to inspire their faith in the sources of refuge, in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. That will help tremendously.

Again, you have to be careful. There are many people who may have some degree of involvement in Buddhism, but they do not actually believe in this and so they might get angry. If you anger the person while they are dying, not only does it not help them, it actually harms them tremendously. If the person actually believes in the Three Jewels, then encourage them to reflect on the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, to supplicate them, and especially to consider that they are present above their own head.

Direct their mind to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha present above their heads in that way. This will help them tremendously to have a good rebirth.

Other than that, I cannot say too much about what you should do, because the attitudes, beliefs, and opinions of people in the West vary so much. As for the nurses, you should encourage them by reminding them how wondrous it is that they have undertaken the responsibility of alleviating the suffering of the dying, and encourage them to continue in a way that is kind and without resentment. Other than that, I do not have much to say in answer to your question, because I have no experience of this kind of interfaith chaplaincy myself.

STUDENT: Although I have a certain understanding and belief that karma exists, I persist in having many, many negative behaviors, which I am sure are generating negative karma all the time. If I thoroughly comprehended and had a clear-cut sense of karma, I would stop doing that. I think that part of the problem is that because my attention span is so short and karma takes such a long time to ripen, I do not see karma actually happening. Could you comment on ways that we can enhance our cognition or understanding of karma?

RINPOCHE: What you are describing is very true, and not just for you but for most of us. We believe in the results of actions, but we have very strong habits of behaving in certain ways, and just believing in the results of actions is not enough to overcome the habit. It is like the situation of an alcoholic, who knows that continuing to drink is going to cause physical illness, unhappiness, upheavals, and disasters of all kinds, but they simply cannot stop because of the addiction. In the same way, we are addicted to unvirtuous actions.

The simple fact that you believe in the results of actions is tremendous, and this is an excellent start. All you need to do now is apply mindfulness and remind yourself continually of the consequences of actions. When you feel that you are about to do something that you do not want to do, remind yourself of what the consequences will be. You can also scold yourself for any failure to emulate the bodhisattvas of the past.

Sometimes experiencing upheavals or disasters can help as well. In Tibet, and no doubt in other countries as well, it was very common for people to turn their minds to the Dharma after a great upheaval in their life. In any case, if you start gently or start small with the application of mindfulness, you will eventually be able to overcome any habits.

STUDENT: Sometimes when I am in the grip of very painful delusions or experiences, I call out to the Buddha and I do experience relief. What are the workings of grace in the practice?

RINPOCHE: The mechanism for receiving blessings is like our ability to see. If you open your eyes a little bit, you will see a little bit; if you open them halfway, you will see quite a lot; and if you open your eyes wide, you will see clearly. In the same way, you receive blessings through the compassion of buddhas depending on your degree of faith. If you have great faith, you will receive great blessings; if you have a little bit, you will receive a little blessing; and if you have no faith, you will not receive blessings. The blessings are always present; it is our own faith that gives us access to them.

For example, the Buddha's half brother, Lekpay Karma, who was his attendant for many years, had no respect for the Buddha whatsoever. He regarded him merely as an elder sibling who was in a superior position because he was older and because he was (as Lekpay Karma perceived him) arrogant. Because Lekpay Karma had no respect or faith in the Buddha, he received no blessings. It depends entirely on your faith.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, you have said many times that buddhas pervade all space and that sentient beings pervade all space.

Therefore it seems like buddhas and sentient beings are inseparable. In that sense, although they are inseparable, how is it that buddhas help sentient beings, and does our inseparability with the buddhas benefit us in body, speech, and mind? Why is it that for me I am fortunate enough to have Dharma, but my parents, friends, or relatives do not have Dharma? How does Buddha help them through the inseparability of buddhas and sentient beings?

RINPOCHE: It is true that the dharmakaya, which is the essence or nature of all buddhas, is at the same time the nature of all things, and therefore it can be said to pervade all space. It is also true that space is filled by sentient beings. Although the words pervade and filled here are actually the same in Tibetan, the meanings are quite different.

When we say that the dharmakaya pervades everything, we mean that the dharmakaya is omnipresent. This is not true of sentient beings. Sentient beings are not omnipresent, nor are they an indistinguishable mass. When it is said that space is filled by sentient beings, it simply means that there is nowhere where there are not sentient beings. Everywhere that is somewhere is full of them, but this is not the same as the omnipresence of the dharmakaya. It is simply indicative of the great number of sentient beings.

Nevertheless as you indicated in your question, the medium for buddhas to benefit beings is the equality of the nature of a sentient being's mind and a buddha's mind of wisdom. This is why we say that buddha nature is the nature of a sentient being's mind. Nevertheless sentient beings do not constitute an indivisible mass; they are distinct. The dharmakaya is all pervasive, but sentient beings are not pervasive in that way.

It is excellent that you practice Dharma, and that in itself will be of some benefit to your family. If you find that your family is unreceptive to Buddhadharma and they do not appreciate your involvement in it, you must be patient and remember that their lack of appreciation or receptivity is simply because they do not know the qualities and validity of Dharma. The most important thing, more important than what you say, is your behavior. If you behave well, and if your behavior improves over time, they will judge Dharma accordingly. They will determine its validity based on its effect on you. In the past, and to some extent nowadays, people expected that someone involved in Buddhism would become marginal or even mad in their behavior. If they see that, to the contrary, your life becomes more and more together, and your behavior becomes better and better, then this observation will create a habit of appreciation for Dharma within them. Eventually this habit can ripen into curiosity and even faith; and in fact this has happened many times. Regardless

of what they say and how they act toward your involvement with Buddhadharma, you need to maintain love and compassion for them, and you need to be patient.

STUDENT: I also was wondering how, if buddhas benefit all beings, they can affect people like my parents who are not really into Dharma. I know I am connected, but they are not, and they may never be in this lifetime.

RINPOCHE: I will give you an analogy. Imagine a place where there is strong rainfall lasting many days. All of the vessels, bowls, containers, and so forth placed outside upright will be filled whether they are large or small. The vessels that have been placed upside down are not going to be filled no matter how much rain falls. This is not because of any receptivity or preference on the part of the rain; it is just the nature of the position of the vessel.

In the same way, although as you indicated in your question, buddha activity is all pervasive, in order for it to affect the life of a sentient being, this being must have some kind of receptivity or faith. The conditions for benefiting from buddha activity are twofold: there must be buddha activity from the side of the buddhas, and there must be faith from the side of the sentient beings. Without both of these, nothing can happen.

STUDENT: Is the Buddha's mind always inseparable from sentient beings?

RINPOCHE: When the sentient being in question is liberated from all bewilderment, at that point their mind is inseparable from the mind of all buddhas. As long as they have bewilderment, this bewilderment separates them from all buddhas.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, is reciting the long Dewachen prayer the best thing for us to do?

RINPOCHE: You can either recite the long one or the short one. The point is to mean it.

STUDENT: Is that the best way for us to help people in the long run?

RINPOCHE: Yes. For beings like ourselves, this is probably the best thing we can do. For those who have already achieved bodhisattva levels, they may require other avenues of activity.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, why does Amitabha get some offerings and Amitayus other offerings? To me they are almost the same.

RINPOCHE: Because Amitayus is in the sambhogakaya form, the inner and secret offerings are given to him, and because Amitabha is in the nirmanakaya form, he gets the outer offerings.

STUDENT: When we visualize ourselves as Chenrezik during the practice, do we always visualize Amitayus on the top of our head for the whole practice until a certain point?

RINPOCHE: No, when you are visualizing yourself as Chenrezik in the context of the Amitabha practice, you do not visualize Amitabha above your head. Amitabha is the principal figure in the front visualization and you also visualize a replica of a complete Amitabha mandala inside your heart, but you do not visualize him above your head.

STUDENT: There was one point in the sadhana where the HRI goes out from the Amitabha, then the empowerment of the five buddhas comes and this supposedly gives you the empowerment as Amitayus is on top of your head.

RINPOCHE: That is actually not you. That is empowering the front visualized Amitabha, who thereafter has Amitayus above his head.

STUDENT: In the front visualization after that point, is the Amitayus always on top of the Amitabha?

RINPOCHE: Yes.

STUDENT: Regarding the part where we repeat the HRI and Amitabha is in front of us, when the red HRI goes into his mouth and comes around, at one point it says a mantra circle goes out of the light to the pure realm of Amitabha. Is that circle the mantra or the red coral HRI that is produced by the light?

RINPOCHE: The circle in that case means the continuous chain of HRIs in between you and Amitabha.

STUDENT: During the Amitabha practice, normally the mantras — the HRI with the mantra OM AMI DEWA HRI — are always white, and Amitabha's mantra is always red. Is that right?

RINPOCHE: In the main visualization for the Amitabha practice, the mantra garland and seed syllable within your heart are red as well, because they are within the wisdom Amitabha who is inside your heart. In the long commentaries there are other visualizations connected with the lower tantras and so on, but that is the principal visualization.

You need to make a distinction between doing the Amitabha sadhana and the Chenrezik practice. If you are doing the Amitabha sadhana, visualize yourself as Chenrezik but with Amitabha and his retinue in your heart, and a red HRI and Amitabha's red mantra in their heart and in the heart of Amitabha. If you are just doing the Chenrezik practice, visualize yourself as Chenrezik, but the mantra inside your heart is OM MANI PADME HUM.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, what are ordinary siddhi and supreme siddhi?

RINPOCHE: Common or ordinary siddhi are the achievement of such things as longevity, freedom from sickness, and prosperity, as the results of practice. Because these things are mundane and because they are temporary, these are called "ordinary attainments." The supreme attainment is the achievement of realization. This does not degrade; it is permanent, and therefore it is supreme, better than everything else.

Riding the Supreme Steed Balaha: Reaching a Pure Realm

This chapter gives instruction for reaching a pure realm even if one dies suddenly. The methods given are directed at those who have knowledge and some limited experience of the generation and completion stages, but have not achieved stability in either. Those who have achieved stability in the generation and completion stages will immediately pass to a pure realm after their death, and so the methods provided in this chapter will be unnecessary. For those who have not achieved such stability, some kind of method is needed.

The chapter title refers to a legendary emanation of the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, a horse named **Balaha** that rescued people from dangerous places and safely escorted them wherever they wished to go. The method taught in this chapter is equivalent to this.

The chapter begins with the invocation NAMO AMITABHAYA, “Homage to Amitabha.” Then the introduction says, “You, my son Tsonдру Gyamtso, said this to me, the old monk Raga Asya.” Chakme Rinpoche is responding to a request posed to him by his disciple, Lama Tsonдру Gyamtso. Then he presents what

Tsondru Gyamtso said to him: “It is impossible to live more than one hundred years. Definitely at some point during that length of time we all die. At the time of our death, what form of generation and completion practice should we engage in? Really, what I am asking is what sort of transference instruction should we practice? How can we send our mind, our awareness, to a pure realm? At the time when we are suffering so much because our physical body and our mind are being separated, how at that time can we reverse the suffering of death? By granting instruction, please answer these questions.”

In essence, Tsondru Gyamtso is asking for the most practical and effective way to ensure rebirth in a pure realm when we find ourselves dying and in great pain. The answer is as follows: “Listen son, Virya Sagara,” (Sanskrit for Tsondru Gyamtso) “nowadays the limit of life is usually forty years. Is it even possible for someone to reach the age of one hundred? Most of the people who are alive right now will not be on this earth tomorrow. The end of birth is always death.” In other words, it is absolutely certain that if you are born, you are going to die. Then Chakme Rinpoche says, “I know no way or method to avoid experiencing death.” When he says he knows of no way to avoid it, by implication he is saying that there is no way to avoid it.

Death, Dying, and the Bardo

There are three phases to what we call death: dying, death, and the bardo after death. Dying is an experience of great suffering. Depending on the specific cause of death, there is going to be greater or lesser suffering. Generally speaking, because dying is the destruction of your physical body, the separation of your body and mind, it is usually the most painful experience you undergo in your life.

The second phase is death. Death happens after what we call “dying.” Dying can go on for a while, but death occurs in an instant. It is the actual moment when you go from being alive to being dead, the moment when your mind and body separate. The experience of death is very different from the experience of dying. Whereas dying is painful, the experience of death is neutral because it is an experience of unconsciousness.

After death comes the interval or bardo. The usual experience of the interval immediately after death is one of great fear and even terror. Some methods have been taught in order not to experience this, various ways one can avoid the bardo through recognition and transformation, but most people cannot apply these methods. Most people who have entered the gate of Dharma — people who are actively involved with Dharma

practice, not people who have no connection with it — do not develop sufficient stability in the generation or completion stages to apply the methods that enable you to avoid the bardo.

When Dharma practitioners are young, they have to study a great deal, and they are distracted by the process of studying. Although they may have received a great many empowerments, transmissions, and instructions, they leave most of these in their books, or at best as objects of understanding. In other words, it is far more common to receive instructions than to practice them. If someone fully understands the instructions of the generation and completion stages, but has not achieved stability in these practices, these practices will not withstand adversity, especially the adversity of dying.

Usually when people die they are struck by great agony, and in the midst of that agony it is very difficult to apply meditation practices that you have learned but not mastered. In Tibet, people would often try to reverse the death process through magical ceremonies, but these not only did not work, they also produced more anxiety and made the experience of dying worse. “When your attending physician observes that you are certainly going to die, they sneak away like foxes.” In Tibet when physicians observed that there was no hope, they would just somehow disappear. “Everyone around you, those that love you such as

your disciples, your monks and so on, start to cry. If you are a practitioner you have probably spent your whole life consuming the offerings of others.” This refers to someone like me, who is supported by the offerings of others, which is considered to be a problem at the time of death.

Your disciples want you to display something impressive as you die. They say, “In order that others not lose their faith, he must abide in samadhi after death.” The problem is that you cannot do it because you have not achieved stability in the generation and completion stages. You have no idea whether you are able to rest in samadhi, and you are concerned about what will happen if you just leave an ordinary rotten corpse, a corpse that starts to decompose as soon as you die. Even though you are dying and in great pain, you are still concerned with the impressions and attitudes of others and you are therefore still pretentious. You announce pompously, “I will not abide in samadhi. I am going to apply the profound instructions of transference.” Through this announcement, you try to cover up your inability to remain in samadhi.

Applying Ejection of Consciousness at the Time of Death

With regard to the application of the personal practice of transference or ejection of consciousness at the time of death, the *Commentary on the Chaturpitha Tantra* says, “You have to perform the ejection before the death agony begins. You will not be able to do it once the agony has begun.” Chakme Rinpoche says, “Because that is said, I think that it is self-deception and the deception of others to announce that you are going to perform the ejection of consciousness yourself when you are already in the midst of your death throes. For this reason, other instructions are clearly needed at this time. Instruction that is beneficial in this context was taught by Lord Gampopa. Because I have not yet died in this life, I cannot validate the effectiveness of this instruction through my own experience; however, some Dharma siblings of mine, similar to me in their degree of experience, through applying these instructions at the time of their death, demonstrated the achievement of great benefit. Therefore hold these instructions in your heart.”

In every chapter Chakme Rinpoche attempts to reinforce the validation of the instructions he gives by stating his own personal experience of them. Here he says that he has to admit that

when he is giving these teachings in this life, obviously he has not yet died, but he has observed the deaths of others who did apply these instructions, and he is convinced they are effective and beneficial. When he says he does not really mean that they are similar to his actual state, he means they are similar to the state that he is pretending to have. In other words, do not be discouraged when he says, “similar to me.” It does not mean you have to be like Chakme Rinpoche to apply this.

“For the sake of ease of understanding, I am not going to give a lot of scriptural quotations.” Often when techniques are presented, there are quotations from various tantras stating the sources. He is not going to do that here. “I am going to cast aside linguistically oriented explanation.” Another thing that accompanies instruction is long-winded expositions of the linguistic origins of the terms used. He is going to leave that aside as well.

If the meaning of these instructions is reduced to its essence, it is as follows. First of all, this is to be applied when you are definitely dying. This does not mean when you have an illness that is reversible, but rather when it is certain that death itself is irreversible. Visualize yourself as the deity Gyalwa Gyamtso; this refers to a Chenrezik like the one you are familiar with, but in this case he is red. Visualize your body as Gyalwa Gyamtso, as the unity of appearance and emptiness, and more particularly

as completely hollow, like an inflated balloon or a tent of red silk. In the midst of that hollow body, visualize the central channel, the avadhuti, like a single column in the midst of an empty house. The avadhuti is the only channel visualized in this practice because it is the single path to liberation. The bottom of the avadhuti ends just below the navel and is sealed or closed, like a section of bamboo. The color of the avadhuti is white on the outside and red on the inside. “Red on the inside” means that it is a hollow tube that has a red inner wall or surface, and a white outer wall. It is completely empty. The upper end of the avadhuti meets or ends in the aperture at the center of the top of your head, and the end of that channel is flared. It is like a skylight, so just as you could have a skylight in a building, in the same way the upper end of the avadhuti is like an opening in the top of your body.

One cubit above the top of your head (about a foot and a half), visualize the buddha Amitabha seated on a thousand-petaled lotus and moon disk (you do not need to literally visualize exactly one thousand petals); visualize embodied as one in the form of the lord Amitabha all the gurus in whom you have faith, such as the fathers and sons of the Kagyu lineage, the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, and all the sources of refuge. This means that you visualize your guru as embodying the Three Jewels in the form of Amitabha. He is bright red like a ruby, and he is adorned

with the marks and signs of the Buddha. He wears the three monastic robes, his legs are fully crossed in vajra posture, and his hands rest in the gesture of meditation, holding a begging bowl filled with amrita.

Visualizing him in that way, reflect on the fact that ultimately the form of Amitabha above your head and the form of Amitabha present in Sukhavati in the west are inseparable and of the same nature. This means, for example, that although the sun in the sky and the reflection of that sun in a pool of water are distinct, they are not different. We can say that they are distinct because we can look at them separately, but they are not different because when the sun disappears from the sky, it also disappears from the reflection in the pool of water. In that sense the sun in the sky and the sun in the water are neither identical nor fundamentally different. In the same way, the Amitabha above your head should not be thought of as different from the Amitabha in Sukhavati.

Having visualized this, if you can still speak you should recite the refuge vow three times. If you cannot speak, do this mentally. Then generate bodhichitta by saying and thinking, “For the benefit of all sentient beings, those in the six realms, all of whom have been my mothers, I will now purify death into the dharmakaya. I will arise after that in the bardo as the sambhogakaya, such as the experience of the hundred peaceful and wrathful deities

and so on. After that, I will transform birth into nirmanakaya by being instantaneously born in Sukhavati. Having done that, I will make offerings to Lord Amitabha, and when I have achieved through that gathering of accumulations the ten bhumis, I will dispatch one billion emanations for the benefit of beings, just as Guru Rinpoche, Avalokiteshvara, and other deities have done. In this way, I will lead all beings of the six realms, who have all been my mothers, to the state of liberation. May I in this way be no different from the deity Avalokiteshvara.” Sincerely recite this form of generation of bodhichitta three times; recite it verbally if you can, but mentally if you cannot. The essence of this method is the generation of the intention to achieve the dharmakaya, sambhogakaya, and nirmanakaya at the time of death, bardo, and rebirth for the benefit of all beings.

Then mentally summon together all you possess and all of the virtue you have ever accumulated, and offer it as a mandala to Buddha Amitabha. Especially you should consciously offer anything you are attached to. Attachment to things is an aspect of devaputra mara, the mara that is the child of the gods, and this is the greatest obstacle to liberation. In order to remove this obstacle, it is important to give up attachment, and the most effective way to do that is to offer the things to which you are attached to the sources of refuge, here embodied as Buddha Amitabha.

The issue here is not how much you possess. You can be an attached rich person or an unattached rich person, an attached poor person or an unattached poor person. The issue is not what you are attached to, but how much you are attached to it. Therefore you should consciously bring to mind anything you are attached to and offer your wealth, your possessions, perhaps even your offering vessels or books. It could be the place where you have lived or those in your surroundings; if you are a teacher it could be your patrons, your disciples, your monks; or for ordinary people it could be your family, friends, and so forth. In short, mentally offer to Buddha Amitabha everything you are attached to and everything you possess, embodied as a mandala. If you can speak, then at this time you should recite the mandala offering stanza three times.

Having offered these things to Amitabha, then like a patron who has offered something to a teacher and hereafter no longer owns it, think that you have given these things away and so they are no longer your concern. Have an attitude of abandonment and think, “I have given these things away to the deity, so now whoever wants them can take them.” The reason for this is that while you are dying, it will be harmful if you have any attachment to the things you are leaving behind.

There is a story told in the Geluk tradition about a very good geshe who, as is customary in that tradition, made the aspiration as he was dying to be reborn in the realm of Tushita. Because he was a good monk, he had no big attachment to anything. The only thing he was attached to was a very nice cup. As he was dying, he found that he was becoming more and more obsessed with what was going to happen to that cup after he died. Fortunately one of the teachers attending him said to him, “You know, there are much better cups in Tushita.” Through bringing this thought to mind, he was able to relinquish his attachment to his cup, and he succeeded in being reborn in Tushita. The point is that it is essential to eradicate all attachment and fixation on anything you are going to leave behind.

After offering to Amitabha everything you are attached to, visualize in the central channel at the level of your heart a red HRI syllable with the visarga (the two circles or dots). Next think that emanating one after another from this HRI are other HRIs, which go to specific places on your body in order to close possible gateways through which your consciousness might leave, and through which you do not want it to leave. These HRIs shoot out from the HRI in the heart like bullets being shot from a gun. The first three close off the three main gateways to rebirth in the lower realms. These are the anus, the urethra, and the genital opening. These three are closed off in

that order, one after another, by these HRIs. The HRIs are made of light, but at the same time they are solid, so you feel sure that they actually seal the openings and nothing can get out of them. The main gateway to rebirth as a preta is the urethra, and the mouth is the second gateway to a preta rebirth, so the fourth HRI closes or blocks the mouth. Those first four HRIs block the gateways to rebirth in the hells, as a preta, or as an animal.

The next three HRIs block rebirth as a human, an asura, and a god of the desire realm. The first one blocks the navel, blocking rebirth as a human. The next one blocks the left nostril (the right nostril is not specified; I do not know why), which blocks rebirth as an asura. The third one blocks the right ear, which blocks off the gateway to the desire realm.

The next three HRIs block rebirth as a chakravartin among humans, as a drulbum (a type of nonhuman being), and as a god of the form realm. These are the right eye, the left eye, and the left ear. At this point, Chakme Rinpoche says that he knows there is a great deal of disputation about exactly which gate corresponds to which realm, but he says to forget about that, because it does not matter. He advises us to take this teaching as it is presented and cast aside doubt.

There are three more gateways connected with rebirth as a god of the form realm and as a god of the formless realm that are blocked by these HRIs. These are between the eyebrows, the aperture toward the front of the head (the one that is open in infants, not the one at the center of the top of the head), and the point at the base of the skull and the top of the vertebra. Each of these HRIs is red and made of light but also very, very solid and indestructible. You have a feeling that it completely fills or blocks that gateway, like a cork in a keg, or as we say in the traditional Tibetan analogy, like binding the opening of a wine sack with a cord.

Next you visualize what is going to be ejected. Start inside the central channel at the level of the navel, which is the place where your body starts when you are first developing, and the place where life ends when you are dying. Just below the navel, four finger-widths below, visualize a four-petaled red lotus inside the central channel. On top of the center of that four-petaled lotus, visualize a tiny moon disk. Resting on top of that, visualize your consciousness, which here includes all of your essential being, your wind and mind, your merit and all of your qualities, and so forth. All of this is visualized as embodied in one entity: a pea-sized, completely round sphere of white light. It is white, but it radiates a red gleam. Just as you visualized the HRIs as made of light but solid, visualize this sphere of white and red light as

made of light, but also ready to fly up at any moment, as though the slightest disturbance could cause it to shoot right up. Next visualize that it shoots up like a shooting star, straight up the central channel and out of the top of your head, like something shooting out of a skylight. It shoots up right into the heart of the buddha Amitabha. Having visualized that once, visualize another one of these spheres of light below the navel, and again think that it shoots up into the heart of Amitabha.

This is different from what you do when you practice the ejection of consciousness before your actual death. If you practice the ejection of consciousness when you are not dying, visualize one sphere that shoots up, and then visualize bringing it back down; then it shoots up again, and you bring it back down again. At the moment of your actual death, you never bring it back down. Each time one shoots up, you leave it there, and then you visualize another one. It is going one way, not two ways.

In some techniques for practicing ejection of consciousness when you are not actually dying, you do not visualize this sphere leaving the top of your head. Visualize that Amitabha is seated in a chair in the fashion of Maitreya; his feet block the top of your head, so this is as far as this sphere of light gets. At the moment of your actual death, visualize this sphere shooting all the way up and out, straight into the heart of Amitabha.

Visualize this repeatedly, like shooting stars going one after another, or successive bullets being shot out of the same gun. You should do this ejection phase of the visualization no less than twentyone times. If you do it less than that, you will not create enough momentum to cause your consciousness to leave through that opening.

The next phase of the meditation is to again clarify the visualization of yourself as Chenrezik, as Gyalwa Gyamtso, and especially to generate the confidence of actually being the deity. In addition, apply the following instruction. First, reflect on the fact that everyone dies. There is no place you can go to avoid death. Dying does not mean there is something wrong with you, nor are you in any way unfortunate to be dying; death is not a misfortune, it is normal. In fact no one is better off than you are; you have these profound instructions and this great opportunity, and you are doing fine. You are in very, very good circumstances.

The next profound instruction is to cast aside all discouragement and sense of misfortune, and to replace that with confidence. Be confident that you are very fortunate, and be confident as you clarify the visualizations that you are actually the deity. It is always important in yidam practice to cast aside the sense of despair and misfortune, and replace it with confidence and joy, but this is of utmost importance in the process of dying.

While you are still visualizing yourself as Gyalwa Gyamtso and remaining confident that you are actually the deity, in the center of your body at the level of the heart, on a six-petaled lotus and moon disk, visualize the syllable HRI surrounded by the six-syllable mantra OM MANI PADME HUM. Think that light from the HRI, like rays of sunlight, fills your entire body and causes your body to become radiant and brilliant. Even if you are someone who never recognized the nature of your mind, or someone who was never able to recognize the nature of your mind, or someone who was never even instructed in looking at the nature of mind, if you can practice this technique of visualizing the HRI in the heart and the light from the HRI filling your body as Chenrezik, this will cause very stable samadhi after death.

The proof for this is the many spiritual friends who have not only never recognized the nature of mind, but never even learned to recognize stillness and occurrence within the mind, yet have remained in samadhi after death. They had such a strong samadhi that for days after their death, their corpse had a better complexion and looked more alive than they did when alive, and they accomplished this simply through resting their minds on the seed syllable at the heart of the deity. It is certain that these people only did this technique; they had no other instruction than that. It is therefore certain that at the time of your death

you can bring about these benefits by directing your awareness to the seed syllable HRI in the heart of yourself as Chenrezik.

If you have some instruction or experience in looking at the mind's nature, then after doing that, just rest without meditating on anything, and simply look at whatever arises in the mind. In either case, as you die the stages of dissolution of the elements and so forth will appear. Subsequent to that, there will be the final stages of dying, which are the subtle dissolution of white appearance, red increase, and so forth. A great deal has been taught about the details of how all this appears; however it all happens very, very quickly, and it is unlikely that you are going to be able to recognize each stage successively. It is also unnecessary to keep track of the stages of dissolution, because everything you experience as you are dying is just displays of your mind. Therefore if you can rest while looking at the nature of whatever arises in the mind, it does not matter what appears or exactly what stage you have reached.

Aspiration During the Dying Process

This phase of the dying process culminates when the breathing stops. As soon as the breathing stops, physical sensations

connected with your body, such as tactile sensation, will cease. From that point onward, you will not feel anything because your mind is becoming disconnected from your body's nervous system. At the same time, the third stage of subtle dissolution, black attainment, will occur. This is simply your mind lapsing into unconsciousness; your mind will become completely dark, without content. This is the point where it is most important that the body of the dying person be left alone and undisturbed. There is no set period for the duration of this stage of unconsciousness.

To some extent, the duration of the period during which the consciousness remains within the body but is separate from the body and unconscious, depends on the person's aspiration and intention while they are dying. The mind of the dying person has tremendous power. In a similar way, the attitude you go to sleep with has great power to determine when you are going to wake up, but your attitude is even more powerful when you are dying. What happens in the final phase of death when you are unconscious corresponds to your intentions and final thoughts before you lose consciousness. For this reason it is important not to have anything in the environment of the dying person that will make them angry. It has happened that people have been very good practitioners, but because some circumstance during their dying process made them angry, they have been reborn as demonic spirits. The power comes from their practice, and the

negative aspiration from their anger. For example, if as you are dying you are reviled by those you love, your children or your disciples or whomever, and you feel betrayed by them and you are angry, you may make the aspiration to harm them. If you make that aspiration as you are dying, you may become a spirit that can and will inflict such harm. Therefore at this point it is important not to get angry.

Another instance of the power of aspiration is that sometimes when practitioners are dying, if their last thought was that they did not get to harvest what they had planted the previous spring, this harvest becomes incredible, much more than would normally be expected. This is considered an instance of the power of the dying person's aspiration. If you go to sleep at night with the thought that you must arise at dawn or at the shining of the dawn star, you will wake up at that time through the momentum of your aspiration. In the same way, if you generate the intention as you are dying that you will remain in samadhi for a set number of days, you probably will. Chakme Rinpoche says, "I have seen this proven in experience," which means that people would say to him that they would like to remain in samadhi for so many days, and they would do so.

Those who do the practice explained here and can rest within it one-pointedly will be able to remain in samadhi immediately

after death for as long as they intend to. In order to facilitate that, as soon as the person's body has been properly supported, which means it is bound or otherwise placed so that it will remain upright, someone attending should say to the person, quietly and respectfully, "Be undistracted in samadhi," and in that way remind them.

In general, at the time when the person is in samadhi, the **eight consciousnesses** are not functioning. The person is experiencing the basic or fundamental mind, the ground clear light. At that time the nature of their mind will appear in an unobscured or direct way, naturally from within. Those who have previously recognized the nature of their mind will be partially familiar with this and will therefore be able to recognize their fundamental mind and rest within it. The person will remain in that state for the duration of their samadhi, and this duration will depend on the person's intention. Natural sounds, such as the sound of thunder and so on, should not disturb the person because their sense consciousnesses are no longer functioning. It is possible for them to have some slight awareness of these things and for slight thoughts to arise, but these will be mild and will not disturb them.

About this period after death, the Great Liberation Through Hearing in the Bardo says, "Once the person has died, until the

signs that their consciousness has departed from their body arise, again and again point out to them or remind them of what is happening, placing your mouth almost touching their ear.” This refers to the practice of pointing out each phase of the experience, saying for example, “This is the first day. This is the second day. Now you will be seeing these deities. Now you will be seeing those deities,” and so on. This is also taught in the Six Limbs of Yoga tradition of the Kalachakra. Chakme Rinpoche says at this point, “I have proven the benefit of this in my own experience.” This means that he has performed this service for others when they have passed away.

Signs of Genuine Samadhi

Next the text discusses how you can tell when the samadhi is over. This is more subtle than you might think, because many of the things that we associate with those remaining in thukdam or samadhi after death really depend on their physical condition before they died. Therefore we need to understand the distinctions among the unmistakable signs of samadhi, the signs of the end of samadhi, and what could be something else.

Many people believe that if the body remains sitting up, this is a sign of samadhi. Do not forget that if the attendants and monks

are very good at supporting the body, even if the person is not in samadhi or even if the samadhi ends, the body is not going to fall over. If the attendants are not very good at supporting the body, if they do not do it properly, then the body could fall over even if the person remains in samadhi. Chakme Rinpoche says that he has seen this many times. In itself, that should not be taken as the primary indication of the duration of samadhi. “You have to be very careful and precise in determining whether or not the samadhi has ended.”

If the person was not emaciated and had been eating and drinking until the time of death, there still could be fluid coming out of the mouth, nose, and other orifices, even during samadhi. This is mentioned because sometimes people say that samadhi ends when fluids start coming from the mouth and nose. On the other hand, if the person was emaciated, had not been eating for some time before death, and had been taking very little fluids as well, then even though samadhi ends, it is possible that no fluids will issue from the mouth and nose. In this case, you might mistakenly think that they are still in samadhi.

In general, for those whose experience is between these two extremes, lymph or mucus will come from the nose and mouth when samadhi ends. If the person has achieved a very high level of the path, then the fluids may be ringsel, which are spherical

relics. In some cases lymph will emerge from the top of the head when samadhi ends. For those in samadhi who were unable to urinate during the end stage of their illness, the emergence of urine from their body will signal the end of their samadhi. Chakme Rinpoche says that he has also seen this happen many times.

The more certain signs, taught in both the Old and New Traditions and in both the Oral and Treasure traditions, the signs that do not really depend on the cause of death or physical condition of the person, are as follows. If a person enters samadhi, because they have recognized and are resting in the ground clear light, the body will probably retain its posture and they will remain sitting up. The principal external sign is the weather. If the person actually grasps the ground clear light, the sky will be clear and cloudless, and even if it is autumn there will not be any frost. This refers to the fact that in Tibet, a cloudless sky in autumn would often bring an early frost that kills the crops, but in this case an early frost will not occur. The internal indication of samadhi is that the dead person's complexion looks healthy, the same as that of a living person, and this will remain for the duration of the samadhi. The secret signs are only evidenced after the person has been cremated. These signs are syllables, such as AH or HUNG, and ringsel, the round relics, which will emerge from the person's remains.

It is important to support the person properly so they do not fall over, but the complexion is the only physical sign that you can use as a reliable indication of whether they are in samadhi and when they leave samadhi. As we said above, if a person is in samadhi, they retain the complexion of a living person. Consider a situation where the person was very ill before they died and had a terrible complexion. They may have been extremely infirm or aged, and they may have had no appearance of vitality whatsoever. Chakme Rinpoche points out that after such a person dies they are not going to suddenly appear in the pink of health, but if they are in samadhi, they person will look slightly better than whatever they looked the same as before they died. If they looked terrible before they died, they will look less terrible. If they were young and apparently healthy when they died, then they will look even better afterward. Therefore you should adjust your expectation of the complexion's appearance to fit what the person looked the same as before they died.

Another indication is that their eyes will remain half closed, and their mouth will appear to be smiling. Their nostrils will not cave in, their ears will not close or flatten out, and the veins in their forehead will still be visible. Another important indication is that if you grasp their flesh and pull it, their skin will still have elasticity and will spring back to where it was. Even if it is summer, the body will not attract flies because it is not yet

rotting and even if it is winter, the body will not freeze. Another definite indication that the person is in samadhi is that anyone who practices meditation in the presence of the deceased will have clear meditation experience. This is one of the reasons why there is the custom of meditating in the presence of the deceased.

For the first week after the death of those who are in samadhi, do not make noise or disturb them. Do not burn incense in their room, play musical instruments, or chant loud ceremonies. For the first week, the only thing you do in their presence is simply meditate. If ceremonies are done, they are done at some distance from the person in samadhi.

After the first week, it does not matter. You can make as much noise with the ceremonies as you like. We like. We can explain this by analogy: When you first start a fire, it is just a small flame or a few sparks, and it could be blown out very easily. Once it is going, the wind is not going to harm the fire, but instead just augments it. In the same way, when the person first enters into samadhi, the strength of their samadhi of the clear light may not be strong enough to withstand external conditions, but after a week it certainly will be. The wisdom of the clear light will have developed to the point where it cannot be disturbed by ceremonies. Chakme Rinpoche says that he has seen this proven through his experience.

The one thing you must avoid, even after the first week, is allowing someone to see the body who has an unresolved quarrel with the deceased or who has violated samaya with them in a strong, serious way. Allowing such a person in can cause samadhi to end. Otherwise, after the first week anyone can view the person's body and it is not a problem. Usually the door is guarded for the first week, and only a select few are permitted entrance.

One thing that can be very easily mistaken as samadhi, although it is something quite different. When people who are especially sinful and have no recognition of their mind's nature die, sometimes after death their body will remain sitting up and their complexion will look quite good, as though they were in samadhi. People will think, "This person seemed like such a great sinner; I did not realize they were a holy being." In fact they are not a holy being. What is happening is that their consciousness has already departed from their body, and their body has been possessed by a spirit, a gandharva. This is not a good situation. The deceased person has moved on, and it is not their consciousness still inhabiting the body, but rather someone else's. This is like when someone is a medium who goes into a trance, except in that case the medium is still alive and their consciousness is still in their body. In the situation we are describing, the body is serving as a medium, but the person's consciousness is no longer in the body. If things get bad enough, if the spirit is strong

enough, then the person can become a zombie. This is rare, but there is a danger of it happening. The consciousness of another being is temporarily making use of that body, and sometimes in these cases the corpse will speak, whistle, or whisper. This is clearly explained in the long texts on the six dharmas of Naropa. Chakme Rinpoche says that he has also seen this proven many times in his own experience.

Getting back to the issue of genuine samadhi, for those who are emaciated at the time of death and enter into samadhi, the end of samadhi will not be indicated by fluid coming from their body, since in their case their body is dry and there is not much fluid. The sign of the end of their samadhi will be the diminishment of their complexion; their nostrils will close and their eyes will become sunken. If it is summer, flies will start to gather around the body, and if it is winter, the body will start to freeze. These are all signs that their samadhi is over.

Cremation of a Great Teacher

Before a teacher is cremated, which is obviously done only after his or her samadhi is over, there needs to be a ceremony requesting the deities to depart. Although the teacher's mind

departed at the end of the samadhi, their body has been consecrated and therefore there are deities within the body, especially those deities that were invited into the teacher's body when the empowerment was received. Before the body is cremated, there should be offerings and praises made to those deities, and the deities should be requested to depart.

In the context of a Vairochana cremation ceremony, the teacher is visualized as Vairochana; visualize them just as the principal deity alone, the samayasattva. The wisdom deities will be invited into the body again. Then you affix the syllables that represent the bodhisattvas of the ayatanas and so forth to the appropriate places: the eyes, the ears, and so on. If you do not request the deities to depart before you cremate the person, you are destroying the mandala that was present within their body. This is a wrongdoing, and in particular it creates the conditions for the teachings to diminish in strength.

The exception to this is if the teacher is of such an august nature that they are not cremated as an offering to a mandala, but as a recipient of the mandala. In this case the teacher's body and the deities' bodies are considered inseparable, and the other offering substances are offered to them as well. There is no harm in doing this, and it is of great benefit.

Generally after a cremation ceremony, the cremation stupa is sealed for several days until the embers are completely extinguished. After that period, visualize in the cremation place the mandala of the teacher's principal yidam. You perform the ceremony for three days: you invite the deities, you make offerings including tormas offerings, and in this case you do not request the deities to depart because you are dissolving them into the cremated teacher's relics that are left behind. You do the descent of blessing with as much fanfare and music as possible, circumambulating the relics every day. Then you complete the consecration with the Essence of Interdependence mantra. For example, the Second Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche performed this ceremony after the passing of the previous Traleg Rinpoche. Having expressed the auspicious, open the door of the stupa and before doing anything else offer ablution to the relics using a mirror. This way the images that may spontaneously appear in the person's relics can appear without obstacle.

For example, in the case of most of the Traleg Rinpoches, TAM, the seed syllable of Tara, appears. In the case of the First Traleg Rinpoche, Traleg Nyima Tashi, there were between twenty and thirty distinct images that appeared on his skull, images of Jetsun Milarepa, Machik Lapdrön, and so forth.

Although images may appear when a great teacher is cremated, sometimes the images may not be the ones you expect. For example, if the teacher has been known to emphasize a given deity and mantra in their personal practice, you may find when you examine their remains that there are images of deities and mantras, but not that particular deity and not that particular mantra. Do not be too surprised by this. It could indicate that they have a karmic connection with this other deity from previous lives; in any case, it indicates that all deities are of the same fundamental nature.

If the teacher did a great deal of yidam practice, it is likely there will be many images of deities and seed syllables of mantras appearing in the bones that survive the cremation. If they devoted their practice time to meditation on emptiness, emphasizing this more than meditation on deities, their bones may not have images of deities or anything like that, but instead a cloudless sky will appear after their death.

Chakme Rinpoche says that some people try to fake this process; they carve images of deities into the teacher's bones so the patrons will not be disappointed. He says this is a terrible deception, and it puts the person who has died in the position of unwillingly becoming a charlatan. If the people who colluded in the deception had any vinaya vows, they will lose them because they

have engaged in the defeat called the “pretense of superhuman qualities.” Karma Chakme says do not do this.

Types of Ringsel

Ringsel is one of the most common relics of a cremated teacher, which are spherical little things, like bits of calcium. There are gradations among ringsel: the best, the intermediate, and the worst. Chakme Rinpoche relates the methods for detecting the type of ringsel obtained from the teacher’s remains. The best appear in the remains of those who have definitely achieved the state of an arya. The ringsel of an arya will be very hard, almost unbreakable. You can distinguish this ringsel from other types by putting it into an iron mortar and grinding it hard with an iron pestle. If it is the ringsel of a buddha, a pratyekabuddha, or an arhat, not only will the ringsel not be crushed, but it will actually dent the iron pestle or leave an impression on it. Ringsel are often said to be white, but they can be different colors, chiefly white, yellow, red, green, or blue. These are called, in order, shariram, churiram, meriram, nyariram, and pancharam; the names refer to the five colors. Often we say “shariram” for all of them, but they actually have different names. Those five types of ringsel are of great benefit; they benefit anyone who

sees them or touches them, which is why we commonly place them in supports such as statues.

There are also black ringsel. According to Chakme Rinpoche, it is commonly said that contact with black ringsel causes rebirth in hell. There is also dark red ringsel, brown ringsel, and smoke-colored ringsel, and contact with these is said to cause rebirth as a mara or rakshasa. He says that this may be true in general, but it is not absolutely certain. For example when after the cremation of Lord Atisha, who was certainly a great bodhisattva, many of the ringsel that emerged from his remains were black; therefore you should not assume that black ringsel are negative.

The second level of ringsel may be any one of the five colors. They tend to be small, perfectly round, and shiny, but unlike the first type they fragment if you grind them, so if you acquire this kind of ringsel do not grind them. The way to test for the second level of ringsel is by putting them on a little plate, then put the plate in direct sunlight. Then take the ringsel and touch it to a statue made of the alloy *lima*. Do this while the statue is in direct sunlight. If the ringsel will stick to the *lima* statue as though it were magnetic, then these are ringsel with blessing of the second degree. If they do not stick, they are either fake, namely made by someone, or they are mineral deposits from a holy place. Some holy places produce calcite ringsel; if the place

is authentically holy, these ringsel are still worthwhile, but they will not stick to the statue. Lima is now very rare, which makes this test difficult to carry out

There are also very bad ringsel that you do not want any contact with. These generally arise from the cremation of someone who has engaged in any of the five actions of immediate consequence. It is also said that someone who was a very negative person, an emanation of Mara, may produce ringsel. When the body of such a person is burned, the spirit Pehar the King will scatter a fistful of ringsel that look like louse nits. The problem with these ringsel is that if you venerate them under the impression that they are the relics of a holy person, you will be reborn in lower realms.

It is also said that if a being is born seven times without interruption as a chicken, pig, or fish, their body will contain ringsel. In fact, Chakme Rinpoche says that it is true that if any being is born in the same species seven times in a row, their body will have ringsel of one kind or another. If you eat the flesh of a pig from the body of a being that was born as a pig seven times in a row, Chakme Rinpoche says that it is well known that you will be reborn in hell. Therefore be careful with pork. For the same reason, those that have been reborn as human beings — a precious human existence with freedom and resources — seven

times will have a special type of ringsel, and such ringsel is of some benefit.

Positive Relics in General

Returning to the issue of positive relics in general, when there are self-arisen images of deities, syllables, and mantras on the bones of a teacher, and if it is certain that these were not faked, Chakme Rinpoche says they are truly self-arisen and can only be positive. These types of relics will not occur for any other reason. If the entire skull survives intact and is marked by a clockwise-swirling conch, as was the case with Lord Gampopa's skull, this is a great sign. This is an unmistakable sign that means the person achieved the supreme state.

Chakme Rinpoche says that when the heart, tongue, and eyes survive the cremation, these occurrences are very famous and people talk about it. There are two possible reasons why this happens. Sometimes the cremation is carried out to completion, and as a result of the person's attainment their heart does not burn, their eyes do not burn, their tongue does not burn. Sometimes people in the retinue are so anxious for this to happen that they put the fire out too early. As a result the heart, which has a great deal of blood in it, will not burn, and then the

cremation attendant can say that the heart did not burn as a result of the teacher's attainment. Therefore Chakme Rinpoche cautions that one must take care in distinguishing between a genuinely miraculous survival of the heart, eyes, or tongue, and mere cleverness on the part of the cremation attendant. The person attending the cremation has to be conscientious, and they must be intelligent enough to know that they should leave the fire burning and not try to affect the outcome. Karma Chakme says, "Nowadays all of this talk about the hearts, the tongues, and the eyes is a big source of confusion."

There are genuine cases of organs surviving cremation. When the teacher Drukpa Tapchu was cremated, the ceremony was carried out by people other than his own disciples. His body had been commandeered by the monks of a local Geluk monastery, and when they cremated him his heart survived, which displeased them. They cut the heart open, assuming that it survived because it was full of blood; they planned to drain the blood and throw the heart back in the fire, and then they would not have to tell Drukpa Tapchu's nuns that he was a great person. When they opened the heart, they found it was filled with ringsel. At that point they had no choice, and they surrendered the heart to the nuns.

After the cremation is completed, but before the relics are collected, it is important that the ablution using the mirror and the consecration be performed. If these are not done, then even though there may initially be images and syllables evident in the relics, they may disappear through contamination. There may have been many ringsel, but those can disappear as well. On the other hand, if the ablution and consecration are properly performed, the relics can increase. It sometimes happens that when you first look at relics there is one image, perhaps an image of one deity, but then after the ablution is performed, the images may increase. You may find an image of Tara as well, and then an image of Buddha Shakyamuni. In the same way, when these bits of bone and so forth are worn in a reliquary around the neck by someone with faith and samaya, the images can increase, and there can also be an increase in the number of ringsel. For the same reason, if someone who has violated samaya with the deceased teacher wears the relics around his or her neck, the relics can actually disappear.

If you think about it, this is wondrous. It is an indication not only of the authenticity of self-arisen images, but of the seriousness of samaya. Chakme Rinpoche concludes this section by saying, “I have been able to validate most of this in my own experience.”

Recognizing the Clear Light and Amitabha in the Bardo

The next section concerns what happens after death to someone who experiences the bardo, and what happens if someone grasps the clear light. It also deals with how the attending lamas should attempt to assist the deceased person, the function of the ejection of consciousness, and so on.

The section begins with the words E MA HO, which is an expression of wonderment, implying that the text will describe how to achieve a state of wondrous liberation. Then it begins, “If a stable samadhi is not achieved...” This is the stipulative use of the term thukdam, customarily translated in this context as “samadhi,” which means remaining in a state of meditation after death. The state of thukdam is achieved if at the last moment of the dying process you recognize the ground clear light, and then you rest in it. If this does not happen, then you will become unconscious and you will remain unconscious; you are dead, but your mind is still within your body. You will remain unconscious and within the body, usually for about three days until the rising sun warms your body or the rays of the sun strike your body on the fourth day.

At that point you will arise from the state of unconsciousness, and your consciousness will leave your body. When it leaves the body, the next major event is that your consciousness takes the form of a mental body. We will come back to that in a minute. A bit of a gap occurs in between reawakening from being unconscious for three and a half days and the subsequent generation of a mental body. In that gap there is a second opportunity for grasping the ground clear light. At that point the luminous mahamudra once again appears nakedly before you, and even though you did not recognize the ground clear light immediately after your death, you might recognize it at this time when your mind leaves your body. If you do this and then rest in the ground clear light, this is called “grasping the second clear light.”

If the second clear light is not recognized, or if it is recognized but not stably enough so you can rest within it, then as we said a moment ago, your mind will arise in a mental body. This is called “instantaneous birth in a mental body in the bardo.” It is not true birth because you are not yet being born in any of the six states, and your body is purely mental. This is not a substantial body made of flesh and blood; it appears just like your body when you are dreaming, and it appears for the same reason, namely because you have the habit of having a body, and therefore you experience yourself as having a body even though you no longer do. This bardo body cannot be destroyed

because it is a mental body and not really anything, but since you do not know this, you are afraid and anxious that this body is going to be destroyed.

At this point your mind has separated from your body; you are conscious and you appear to exist in a mental body. At this point you do not know that you are dead and you do not quite know what your state is, so you try to return to your previous habitation and surroundings. You try to communicate with your loved ones or previous companions. Over the next several days, the various peaceful and wrathful deities, Vairochana and the others, start to appear one after another. This may not happen for someone who has recognized the ground clear light; it also may not happen in this gradual way if someone has committed extremely unvirtuous actions.

If the person grasped the ground clear light earlier, then it is possible that the peaceful and wrathful deities will not appear because the person has already achieved liberation. If they slightly grasped the second clear light, then the buddha Amitabha will appear among the deities on the eighth day. If they did not grasp the second clear light, he will appear on the seventh day. This does not seem like much of a difference, but the difference is slightly significant. When the *Great Liberation Through Hearing in the Bardo* talks about Buddha Amitabha and his retinue

appearing before you, and in the *Amitabha Sutras* when it talks about Amitabha appearing before those who will be reborn in Sukhavati, they are talking about exactly the same thing. In one case it is from the point of view of tantra, and in the other case from the point of view of sutra, but they are describing the same thing. This happens if there has been any recognition of the ground clear light, and it happens on the eighth day. This is why it is recommended that those who can remain in samadhi after death do so for seven days, because then they emerge from their samadhi simultaneously with the appearance of Amitabha. Chakme Rinpoche says this is the best way to organize your samadhi. If you have the ability to remain in samadhi after death, it is recommended you do so for a week, and then when you emerge from it you can encounter Amitabha.

Through the intense aspiration that you make during this life, you will be able to recognize Amitabha when he appears. There are external signs that someone has recognized the appearance of Amitabha and has therefore been liberated in the realm of Sukhavati. The external sign that can be seen by survivors is a certain type of rainbow. It is not literally a rainbow because it is not one that appears when the moisture left over from rainfall dissipates in the sky. It is a type of rainbow or rainbow-like phenomenon that occurs when you have white clouds close to the sun, and the rays of sunlight filtering through the clouds

cause the light to be refracted within the clouds and emerge from them, which causes a rainbow effect. If such a rainbow appears and its primary color is red or orange, this especially indicates that the person has been reborn in Sukhavati. Chakme Rinpoche says he has proven this as a valid test or indication in his own experience.

Someone who achieves liberation in this way, through encountering Amitabha on the eighth day of the bardo and being reborn in Sukhavati, is among the twenty-one types of people called the “intermediate people of lesser capacity.” There are people of greater capacity, intermediate capacity, and lesser capacity, and there are seven subdivisions of each, from the greatest of the greatest capacity down to the worst of the lesser capacity. Liberation is possible for all twentyone types, but in different ways.

Preparing to Remain in Samadhi after Death

All of the steps that are involved in preparing yourself to remain in samadhi after death — such as combining visualizing yourself as a deity and performing the ejection of consciousness — are very significant, and make it possible to remain in samadhi. We will go through them again one by one.

The first step, of course, is going for refuge. Going for refuge, in this case especially to the buddha Amitabha, is very important because it provides an excellent support for your passage through the bardo. Support in this case means literally having the sources of refuge as supporters, guiding you or pushing you through the process.

Second is the generation of bodhichitta, which in this case means especially making the aspiration that all beings without exception be reborn in Sukhavati. This is essential because it establishes the affect and intention with which you go about the creation of your mental state.

The third step is offering as a mandala all of the possessions that you are leaving behind. This is very important because you must have no attachment to anything you are leaving behind. Such attachment can impede your rebirth in a pure realm, so you have to completely disregard what happens to the things you leave, like someone who properly offers something and then has no concern with what is done with the offering. They do not try to watch what the recipient of the offerings does with it in order to tell if the offering is worthy or not. In general when you offer something, you have to have an attitude of disowning the offered item. You have to think, “Well, now that I have given it to so-and-so, whatever they want to use it for is fine.” For

example, when you offer a butter lamp and its oil is eventually exhausted, you do not think, “Where is all that oil going, why is it disappearing like that?” You know perfectly well that it is gone; you have to completely disown whatever you leave behind by offering it as a mandala.

Then you will remember that the next step was blocking the nine orifices with the syllable HRI, thus preventing you from heading in the wrong direction when your consciousness leaves your body. Then you perform the visualization of the ejection of consciousness. This is beneficial whether or not you remain in samadhi. If you are able to remain in samadhi after death, the ejection-of-consciousness visualization is not going to obstruct you. If you cannot remain in samadhi or if you are disturbed and shaken out of your samadhi, blocking the orifices and practicing the visualization of the ejection of consciousness will cause your consciousness to leave only through the aperture at the top of the head and not through other orifices. Therefore you will not be reborn in inferior states.

The next practice, as you will remember, was visualizing yourself as the deity Chenrezik, and especially directing your mind one-pointedly to the HRI syllable in his heart. By doing so you create the basis of a stable samadhi that is hard to shake, and therefore sounds, smells, and so on will not disturb you. You will

remember it was said in the context of that instruction that most of the samadhis achieved by geshes, for example, are achieved based on their ability to direct their minds one-pointedly to the seed syllable in the deity's heart.

The stability of samadhi is important. As we mentioned before, in the first few days of someone's samadhi, customarily the surroundings are protected. No one is allowed into the room, no incense is burned, and the room is kept very, very quiet. This is because sharp sounds or smells can shake you out of samadhi; however if your samadhi is especially stable, this will not make any difference.

In order to achieve samadhi, your motivation of course has to be altruistic. You cannot be in samadhi with the wish to become posthumously famous. On the other hand, if you do remain in samadhi, it is a good testament to the value of practice. It causes your patrons to increase their faith, and it is very encouraging to your students or disciples. Whenever anyone manages to remain in samadhi, it benefits the teachings because it is another source of proof of Dharma's power and effectiveness.

When we were in the refugee camp at Buxador there were about thirteen hundred monks there. There were all sorts of monks, good ones and bad ones. As can happen in those circumstances

and in such crowded conditions, one of the monks knifed another one in a fight and the person who was knifed died. This caused the people around us, the Indians and so forth, to feel very disappointed with the conduct of Tibetan Buddhist monks. They said, “You people have no virtue. If you are killing one another, what kind of monastics are you?” Soon after that a man in his seventies who was the tutor of a young tulku called Gha Lhatong Tulku passed away. He remained in samadhi for seven days, and although it was very hot at that time of year, he appeared just as he did when he was alive: his body did not start to smell at all for seven days, and there were no flies or other insects surrounding his body. Word of this spread, and the attitude of disrespect that the people in the area had developed toward us changed to an attitude of great devotion and respect.

The circumstances of his death were quite remarkable. On the evening he passed away, he said to the monks who were attending him, “Just leave my meditation hat and robe here beside me and bring me my evening tea. I do not need anything else. I have finished onehalf of my daily recitation. Make sure that the tulku does the other half later.” They did not think much of what he was saying. Then he passed away, and sure enough his recitation book, which was on his table in front of him, indicated that he had gone through the first half of it and the second half was left to do.

As was mentioned earlier, if you are able to remain in samadhi, if possible you should do so for seven days. Emerge from it on the eighth day, and you will encounter Amitabha, which is the most beneficial for you because you will be able to be reborn in Sukhavati without difficulty. This is also convenient for your attendants, monks, and students: if you remain in samadhi for a shorter time than that, it is not quite as dramatic a testament to Dharma's effectiveness, and it does not give them enough time to perform all sorts of ceremonies in front of your body that they might wish to. On the other hand, if you remain much longer than that, it becomes inconvenient because they have to keep on performing these ceremonies of worship every day in front of the body, and they cannot begin the cremation and so forth until you have left samadhi. One week is beneficial both for you and for your attendants.

You will notice that the technique that was taught earlier and that I am reviewing again is a combination of how to rest in samadhi after death and the transference of consciousness. Normally you might think that these two are exclusive: either you eject your consciousness at death or you remain in samadhi. In fact Chakme Rinpoche says that some people of little learning and intelligence have scorned this ejection. He says, "I have heard them denigrate this type of practice, saying, 'But samadhi and ejection are contradictory.'" Chakme Rinpoche says that first of

all the ejection of consciousness has three varieties: dharmakaya, sambhogakaya, and nirmanakaya transference. Dharmakaya transference is exactly the same as samadhi; it is resting in the dharmakaya or the ground clear light. Therefore the Karma Kagyu ejection of consciousness liturgy says, “This renunciate, for whom there is nothing to be ejected and no one ejecting it, recognizes that, other than inexpressible mahamudra, that wisdom that abides within my body, there is no other buddha. In that way, may I accomplish the self-liberated state of the Dakpo Kagyu.” That point in our ejection of consciousness liturgy is exactly concerned with this.

The second type of transference, the sambhogakaya transference, is meditation on a deity. You might say, “Well, the dharmakaya transference is nonconceptual, and the sambhogakaya transference is conceptual because it is deliberate meditation on a deity.” These two are not contradictory. If you think that visualization of a deity and resting in the natural state are contradictory, and if you have doubt based on that belief, this means you have neither the practice nor even a basic understanding of the unity of the generation and completion stages. According to Chakme Rinpoche, the point is that you need one unified practice to be able to get through this life, prepare for the next life, and pass through the interval in between. That practice has to have all the necessary elements in order to get you through all of this.

This is the practice that was explained earlier, which he again reiterates.

Therefore as you are dying, visualize Amitabha above your head. Do not think of yourself in your ordinary flesh-and-blood body; visualize yourself as Chenrezik. Especially visualize the seed syllable HRI in the center of your heart; direct your mind one-pointedly to that, and rest in the nature of your mind. This practice, which is the integration of generation and completion, is the best way to die, so die within that state of mind. This is the most profound instruction for effecting the ejection of consciousness and the achievement of samadhi at once.

Doing this practice when you are dying might not be as easy as doing it right now when you are sitting comfortably. Even if you are someone with a good practice who can visualize clearly, rest your mind, and so on, there is a saying: “You cannot wave your hand in water as easily as you can in air.” In the same way, all kinds of things may happen as you are dying that will prevent you from doing visualizations and other practices that were quite easy for you during your life. You could be in great pain, you could become deranged, or you could be so heavily sedated that your mind is unclear. If due to any one of these conditions you are unable to perform the practices of generation and completion during the death process, then you require the following

instructions. This is how the lowest of the twenty-one types of faculties gets liberated.

The first opportunity for liberation is at the time of death, when the ground clear light appears. If you are not liberated then, and you are not liberated during the second opportunity, which is when the ground clear light appears as you enter the bardo, then you require this method, which makes certain that you will be reborn in a nirmanakaya realm, such as Sukhavati.

This can be applied no matter what happened while you were dying. For this instruction to work, it does not matter whether the transference of consciousness was performed at the time of your death, whether you grasped the ground clear light, or whether you recognized the peaceful and wrathful deities. This method is to be applied approximately three weeks after your death; traditionally this is considered the second most important time during the forty-nine days after someone's death to pray for them and perform ceremonies for them. The first time is on the fourth day after their death, for reasons that were already mentioned. The second time is the end of the third week. Here the text says after two-and-a-half weeks, so it is two-and-a-half weeks plus the first three-and-a-half days, which means twentyone days after the death.

Directing Yourself to an Appropriate Rebirth

It is often at this time that you finally realize you are dead. Up to this point, this thought did not occur to you. Then you started to wonder what was wrong, and you were not sure what was going on. By this point you should be certain that you are dead, and this gives you the motivation and the ability, or potential ability, to direct yourself to an appropriate rebirth.

At this point, you have extremely vivid defiled supercognition. “Defiled supercognition” means a kind of imperfect ESP. You can see a great deal of the past, a great deal of the present, and a little bit of the future, but it is extremely vivid. At the same time, however, your mind is unstable because you are disembodied. You do not have a physical body, but you do have a mental body. This means that whenever you think of a place, you go there instantly. For example if after death someone like me remembers Tibet, all of a sudden I would be there. If I then thought of India, I would be there, and if I remembered the United States, I would be back here. In a sense you have unobstructed miraculous ability to travel.

This makes it sound as if you are in control, but it is the opposite: you are at the mercy of your thoughts. Every time you think of something, you find yourself there. Furthermore, because you

realize you are dead, you are absolutely miserable. You miss terribly all of the people you were attached to, whom you can no longer communicate with. Because of this supercognition, you remember everything you ever did wrong, and you are full of regret and guilt. Because you know you are dead, you are terrified about what is going to happen to you; you are terrified of the messengers of Yama and so forth because you are now recollecting all the terrible things that you did. In addition, you intensely regret all of the virtuous things you did not do, such as the fact that you did not practice Dharma more than you did, and so on.

Through the force of these regrets, the mental suffering you experience at this point is much worse than anything we experience now. At our most depressed and miserable, we do not experience one percent of this intense pain. If you did not carefully sever attachments before your death, you are plagued by strong, excessive attachment to the places, people, and possessions you left behind. You yearn to be with your relatives and loved ones and to communicate with them, but you cannot.

At this point, you actually have the ability to be reborn in a pure realm because you can go anywhere simply by thinking of it. The main obstacle to liberation at this point is your attachment to the things you left behind. Another problem is a kind

of timidity that thinks, “I cannot go that far.” Even though you find yourself in a place simply by thinking of it, you are trying not to move around much. You are trying to stay where you lived and stay close to the people you knew, and this keeps you from going the distance to a pure realm. You think, “I cannot go that far” because you could not do so while you were alive due to the tremendous distance, but now you can.

Remember the story I told earlier of the lama who was passing away, who was terribly attached to one cup, and how this attachment was going to impede his rebirth in Tushita until someone reminded him that Tushita had much nicer cups. This kind of thing can be a big problem at this time. If you remember even one of your possessions or loved ones and you are attached to them, you are not going to be able to go a pure realm.

At this point, people often think, “I wish I could take a human birth in this area.” You want to be reborn as a human where you were living before because you are so attached to this place. Then you will often say to yourself, “At that time I will practice Dharma really well.” You also want to be reborn human as quickly as possible. You think, “I can’t wait to be reborn. I don’t want to wait; I have to find a womb immediately.” One reason for this is that you are terrified that the messengers of Yama are after you; you are afraid they are going to catch you and lead you

into Yama's presence, and when your wrongdoing is revealed and compared to your much smaller degree of virtue, you are going to be reborn in a lower realm. You worry; you recount all of your deeds, which you are actually able to remember, and you try to think about whether you did more good things or bad things. You go through this repeatedly obsessively, all the time trying to find a way to be conceived as a human being immediately. You try to find places to hide, sticking yourself into stones, between stones, into the earth, and so on. At that time, you need to recollect these instructions, which are going to help you much more.

Instructions for Rebirth in Sukhavati

The instructions start with “KYE MA!” This is an exclamation of sadness, and here you are sad because you recognize the workings of samsara. Then you say, “KYI HÜ!”, which is an expression of horror at the suffering you are undergoing at this moment in the bardo. You say to yourself, “Throughout innumerable aeons, life after life, I have failed to be liberated from this samsara and I am about to continue it, prolonging it once again. Innumerable buddhas have appeared in the past, and one after another they have taught how to achieve liberation, and yet I am still

unliberated. I am about to do it again. In that way, I am afflicted by terrible karma. I have undergone so many births and deaths that they are beyond number and yet, with my rotten heart, I am not sick of it yet. I am trying to be reborn yet again. If I fall into lower states, the suffering is inconceivable. Even if I succeed in being reborn in a higher state, the well-being of those states is impermanent, of no more lasting value than a dream. Especially nowadays at the end of the Buddha's teaching, the times are evil, and if I succeed in being reborn human, I have bought my human body with the price of great suffering. If it is hard nowadays even for buddhas to effectively benefit beings, what point is there in my being reborn human for the supposed benefit of others, when more likely I will cause myself to be reborn in lower states through my deeds? Therefore I will not return to samsara. I will, I must, be reborn in the realm of Sukhavati, a place of perfect well-being without any suffering." You reason with yourself in that way.

Then you supplicate all of the deities with whom you have a particular connection, such as your root guru, all of the gurus in whom you have faith, your particular yidam deity, all of the deities you practice, and any particular dakinis and dharmapalas that you have been practicing as well.

Supplicating all of them, you say, "Do you not see that I am wandering in the bardo? If you have compassion, if you are committed to

my welfare, now is the time to show it. Lead me to the realm of Sukhavati now.” Using such words, call on your deities, those in whom you have the greatest faith, and your gurus.

In order to be reborn in Sukhavati, it is important to have the aspiration to be reborn there, but any of the deities you practice can lead you there. For example, if your practice is centered around the Medicine Buddha, the *Sutra of the Seven Brothers of the Medicine Buddha* teaches that the eight bodhisattvas in the Medicine Buddha’s retinue will appear before you in the sky after death and lead you to Sukhavati. This is true with protectors as well. If you have meditated on the Four-Armed Mahakala or the protector Shingkyong, they will appear before you and lead you to Sukhavati. This is taught in the *Piled Hooked Knife Tantra of the Four-Armed Mahakala* and the *Vitality Tantra of Shingkyong*.

If you have violated samaya subsequent to your practice of these deities, this problem can obstruct you here. If you have samaya violations, when you are in the bardo you will not be able to see those deities who come to show you the way to Sukhavati. You might need deities to show you the way, because you go to Sukhavati by going to the west from wherever you are. The sun and moon do not appear in the bardo, and normally we know where the west is by watching the sunset. Since there is no sunset in the bardo, you have no idea which direction is west.

You might think, “How do I know which way to go?” According to the instructions on finding the way to Sukhavati found in several funeral ceremonies composed by Guru Rinpoche, such as the one from the Chenrezik practice from Lama Gongdu, if you fervently call the realm of Sukhavati and Amitabha to mind and then simply go, you will definitely reach Sukhavati. You do not have to worry what direction you are going in, provided you go with the realm in mind. In other words, as was mentioned earlier, you actually go to the realm merely by thinking of it, and nothing else is necessary.

You might say, “But it is so far! If I have lived here and died here, how can I get to Sukhavati if it is billions and billions of worlds beyond this one?” There is no doubt that you can get there because the whole notion of distance, of proximity, and of going slowly or quickly, are all functions of having a physical body, of how we move now. With a mental body your mind moves simply by thinking; simply by thinking of Sukhavati you are there, because there is not any distance to traverse.

The key point to getting there is having no attachment to what you are leaving behind, having no doubt that you can be reborn in Sukhavati, and having no doubt that you can get there from here. You should go as a vulture freed from a snare. From the time the vulture’s legs are tied together in the snare until it gets

free, it is constantly trying to break free. As soon as it succeeds, it travels as fast and as high as it can, and gets as far away as it can go. Like a vulture freed from a snare, go to Sukhavati as fast as you can by keeping it clearly in mind as soon as you recollect it in the bardo. Karma Chakme uses the example of a vulture because at that time in Tibet a vulture was the fastest thing moving through the sky. Nowadays we have airplanes and other things that are much faster, but you get the idea.

Although the distance between wherever you died and Sukhavati is immaterial for the mind in the bardo, there may seem to be something holding you back. On the way to Sukhavati, you may find what appear to be your parents, your relatives, your loved ones, your friends, whomever you are attached to. They will call you and say, “It is me! Don’t go, don’t abandon me, come here!” These are not really those beings; they are projections caused by your habit of attachment. If you experience this, understand that it is mara. This is the greatest obstacle to liberation.

You have to deal with them the same as the Buddha did in his previous life in the story of the steed Balaha: Do not look back at them. Do not answer them. Ignore them completely, and just keep going. In short, once you are in the bardo and you have recollected the realm of Sukhavati, do not think about anything or anyone other than the buddha Amitabha. Do not

think about any type of pleasant thing other than the well-being or bliss of Sukhavati, because even if you think for a minute, “I had such-and-such nice things when I was alive,” this is enough to cause you to be reborn in samsara. You have to completely sever all attachment and think only of Sukhavati. If you do so, it is certain that you will be reborn in Sukhavati.

If you recollect the instructions that are the basis for this chapter and implement these instructions, you will definitely be reborn in Sukhavati. This is fundamentally caused by your merit; by your recollection of the happiness or well-being found in Sukhavati, and therefore your intense desire to be born there; and by your associated renunciation for samsara, your recognition that there is no value in being reborn again in samsara. On the other hand, if you doubt the validity of this or if you do not put the instructions into practice, there is no certainty that you will be reborn in Sukhavati.

Through recollecting Sukhavati in the bardo, you immediately find yourself — that is to say, you find your mind — in the realm. You see the buddha Amitabha, who is always present in that realm and always teaching. He is radiant with light and like a mountain of ruby in size and color. You see his face and immediately rays of light from his body strike your mind, and these rays purify most of the karma and kleshas that obscure

you. This is how even ordinary beings born in Sukhavati become first-level bodhisattvas, because all of their coarse obscurations are removed. At the same time, you see the bodhi tree that is behind him, and innumerable qualities appear in your mind simply by seeing that.

The next thing you see is many lotus flowers, some of which are closed. As you look at them, you find yourself powerfully attracted to one of them. You identify with it and you think, “This lotus is mine.” As soon as you think that, your mind is drawn into the lotus flower, and you are instantaneously born. Up to this point your mind has been present within the realm, but you have not actually been born there. Instantaneous birth is exactly what its name implies: your body is complete, fully developed in an instant, without a process or period of gestation. In the same way, when those who were instantaneously born die, their body just disappears.

In the case of Sukhavati, instantaneous birth is of course something wondrous, but instantaneous birth can also occur in the lower states. For example, hell beings are born instantaneously. When a hell being dies and passes out of that hell realm, they just disappear. As soon as you are born in Sukhavati, your body is complete and it is adorned with the marks and signs of physical perfection. If you have enough merit, aspiration, and so forth to

be reborn in Sukhavati, but you doubt the possibility of being born there, once you have taken up residence within your lotus, it will not open for five hundred years and you will remain inside. You will be comfortable; you will not feel anxious, unhappy, or scared. You will still be able to hear Amitabha's voice, but you will not see him for five hundred years. If you have no such doubt, then as soon as your mind has been drawn into the lotus flower and your body has been generated, the lotus flower will open up and you will emerge from it.

From that point onward, you are free to venerate and make offerings to the buddha Amitabha, and to hear his teachings. When he teaches you, he will prophesize your future awakening. He will say in what aeon you will attain buddhahood, how many disciples will be in your retinue, what your activity for the benefit of beings will be, and so on. Once Amitabha has given this prophecy, its outcome is certain. Nothing can change it. In the same way, once you are born in Sukhavati, there is no possibility of downfall. It is not like a samsaric god realm where you are born because of your merit, but having been born in a god realm, you do not continue to accumulate much merit, and so once the merit is exhausted you die and are reborn in a lower state. Once you are born in Sukhavati, you continue to accumulate tremendous merit, and therefore your state never degenerates.

Although you have been born in Sukhavati, you are still able to benefit those you left behind. For example, if you are a spiritual teacher, people have relied on you and established a connection with you through making offerings, sponsoring you, or whatever. You have established a connection with many beings, and you are able to benefit those beings through the miraculous powers you acquire when you are born in Sukhavati. Although you are unable to be born in the lower states and thus never will be, you can go to them miraculously in order to benefit beings. When those to whom you are connected are in the bardo or reborn in hell, you can actually go to these realms, communicate with these beings, and lead them out of these situations.

As we discussed earlier, there are two types of people who cannot be reborn in Sukhavati. The first are people who have abandoned Dharma, and the second are those who have committed any of the five actions of immediate consequence. Strictly speaking, the second could still be reborn in Sukhavati if they confess and purify their deeds. The ones who really cannot are those who have abandoned Dharma, because by abandoning Dharma, by developing a strongly seated or deeply rooted antipathy toward Dharma, you naturally have no aspiration whatsoever to be reborn in Sukhavati; you do not believe it exists and therefore there is no possibility of your being born there. On the other hand, it is still possible to be born in Sukhavati even for those

who engage in great wrongdoing, if they subsequently confess, accumulate merit, and so forth.

The Four Causes for Rebirth in Sukhavati

As we discussed earlier, in general there are four causes of rebirth in Sukhavati. The first is generating the intention to attain supreme awakening for the benefit of others, in other words, to generate bodhichitta. The second is making a repeated and heartfelt aspiration to be reborn in Sukhavati. The third is having one-pointed faith, which means having undivided faith in the buddha Amitabha, and bringing him frequently to mind. The fourth is to have engaged in at least slightly more virtue than wrongdoing in this life. It is impossible not to engage in any wrongdoing, but in order to be reborn in Sukhavati, your virtue needs to slightly outweigh your wrongdoing. If these four conditions are met by any person, they will definitely be reborn in Sukhavati through the force of the aspiration of Amitabha.

As was seen earlier in this chapter, it is not possible for such a person to be born in any of the other pure realms. You have to have achieved at least the first bodhisattva level, and in some cases an even higher level, but Sukhavati is unique because you

do not need to have achieved any of these levels. If these four conditions are present, the person can and will be born there. Especially if you possess the instructions presented in this chapter, and in addition you possess the four causes, there is no doubt whatsoever that you will be reborn in Sukhavati. The four causes and the methods described here ensure that immediately after this life, you are reborn in Sukhavati.

If you possess these instructions but do not possess the four causes — if you have not sincerely generated bodhichitta, if you do not really make the aspiration to be reborn there, if you do not have onepointed faith, and if your unvirtuous actions outweigh your virtuous ones — you are not going to be reborn in Sukhavati in the next life. Obviously those who have not entered the gate of Dharma will not be reborn there; they will not have the aspiration to.

Sometimes you will find references that anyone who hears suchand-such name, encounters such-and-such prayer, and so on will be reborn in Sukhavati, but this means that these beings will eventually be reborn in Sukhavati. Someone who receives empowerment — for example, from the fathers and sons of the Kagyu tradition, His Holiness Karmapa, or Situ Rinpoche — someone who hears the names of buddhas, someone who hears of the benefits of these things, someone for whom such aspirations

are made will eventually be reborn in Sukhavati. Nevertheless that in itself is not going to cause them to be reborn there after this life.

This is clearly set forth in the section called “Sufficient Through Connection,” which is a lineage supplication contained within the *Guru Yoga of Four Sessions*. The end of that lineage supplication says that anyone in whose hearing this is read will be reborn in Sukhavati. This means they will be protected from rebirth in lower states and eventually will be reborn in Sukhavati, and therefore for them samsara will have an end. It is not certain that they will be reborn in Sukhavati immediately after this life. You have to understand the difference between saying, “Through these four causes you will be reborn in Sukhavati immediately after your death,” and saying, “Through simply saying this or hearing this, you will eventually be reborn there.” Whenever it is said that someone with even a tiny bit of virtue will be reborn in Sukhavati, understand that this means “eventually.”

This chapter was spoken by Chakme Rinpoche in answer to the question with which it began, posed by Lama Tsondru Gyamtso. It was spoken by the monk of the Shakyas, Raga Asya, on the eleventh day of the waning phase of the month Trum in the Horse Year. It contains the quintessence of all the statements and methods found in the sutras, tantras, and esoteric

instructions concerning this matter. Chakme Rinpoche says he just spontaneously spoke these teachings without consulting any books. They were taken down as dictation by the spiritual teacher Tsondru Gyamtso.

Chakme Rinpoche says, “As there are no mistakes in this, there is no need for me to confess them, but through the virtue of this, may all who hear, see, recollect, or touch these teachings, without any other life intervening be immediately, instantaneously born in the realm of Sukhavati, and venerate the protector Amitabha or please the protector Amitabha with their offerings.”

Questions and Answers

STUDENT: Are these teachings for people who are not at an ordinary level? I translate the bardo teachings as “go for the white light and hope for the best,” which is something I could probably remember. Is this something that regular people should try to think about practicing?

RINPOCHE: There is little benefit if you understand the generation and completion stages theoretically, but do not practice them at all. This is a little bit like carrying around a prescription for medicine and never filling the prescription or taking the

medicine. The particular instructions that come down from the peerless Lord Gampopa are designed to be workable by any practitioner. Therefore anyone who receives these instructions can practice them, but as you indicate in your question, you need to have a context for this practice.

The necessary context is that you have some degree of experience, which means that you are used to doing the deity meditation of Chenrezik. If you are used to that practice, you can perform this method quite easily. You simply have to change the color of the deity from white to red. Then you need to study and familiarize yourself with the meditation on the channels as well as the various visualizations, and you need to practice them to some extent during your life. You cannot just leave this unstudied and unpracticed and expect it to work on your deathbed. Aside from that, this method is designed to be beneficial to and applicable by anyone who receives it.

STUDENT: How does a person know when they are dying? You can have different levels of sickness and the doctors can say that you are dying, but is there any way that you know deep inside without fooling yourself?

RINPOCHE: If you suddenly become extremely ill or you are in some kind of accident, then you will not know until it is almost

too late. With most illnesses, although it is sometimes difficult to admit to yourself that your illness is life threatening, you can get to the point where you can be satisfied, based on your diagnosis and your own experience, that this is the illness that will lead to your death.

STUDENT: I have a question about the purpose of shooting the pea-sized spheres up into Amitabha's heart. Does this require having a tremendous amount of merit as well?

RINPOCHE: The more merit the better, certainly. In order for this technique to work, the principal prerequisites are that you are able to concentrate on it while you are doing it, and that you have a strong aspiration for rebirth in Sukhavati.

STUDENT: I have a question about the sequence of the practice. I think you said that you do the ejection of consciousness, then you establish a relationship with the deity, then you rouse confidence in yourself. It seems that it would make more sense if you rouse confidence in yourself, then establish the relationship with the deity, and then eject your consciousness.

RINPOCHE: The order I discussed is what was stated in the text. Although you do visualize yourself as Chenrezik from the beginning, including the visualization of the ejection, you

reinforce that visualization after the ejection of consciousness. This is because when visualize yourself as Chenrezik for the purposes of ejection, you are trying to eject or separate your mind from your body, and so at that point you are identifying your flesh-and-blood body, from which you are preparing to escape, with the deity. Having done the ejection of consciousness and ejected your mind into the heart of Amitabha, you again identify yourself with the bodhisattva, but now you are identifying your mind as the deity, and the confidence you are generating is the confidence that your mind is truly the deity.

STUDENT: You were talking about attachments and letting go of attachments before you die. If you do not let go of attachments before you die, do these become the terrifying illusions that you experience in death?

RINPOCHE: Indirectly this is true, because attachments close the road to liberation or rebirth in the pure realm, and since this road is closed, you become subject to terrifying hallucinations and possibly to rebirth in a lower state. It is as if you have to leave somewhere quickly or an enemy is coming after you, but you do not leave at once because you are trying to gather up your possessions, and therefore you do not get out in time.

A story from the sutras that describes Chenrezik's activity illustrates this situation. A group of Indian merchants went on an ocean journey to find an island of jewels. Their leader was presumably an expert in both recognizing jewels and getting to this particular island across the ocean. Accompanying him were five hundred merchants (these stories always seem to say "five hundred," so you do not have to take the number literally). The ship was lost because of rough winds, and the merchants had no idea where they were. Eventually the ship foundered and broke apart. The merchants were floating amidst the timber leftover from the wreck of the ship, which was eventually driven to the shores of an island that was unknown to them.

When they arrived on the island's beach, they found it was inhabited by many beautiful and friendly women, who were actually rakshasis. The women were delighted with the arrival of the merchants, and each of the women brought one of the merchants home. They were so friendly and so welcoming that the leader of the merchants became suspicious. One night he walked out of the town where the women lived. He came across an iron building from which he heard the sound of humans wailing. When he went to the building, he saw that it was filled with men like him and his crew. Those men told him that they also were merchants who had been driven to the shores of the island. They had been welcomed into the homes of the women and had

led a very happy existence until this recent band of merchants arrived. As soon as the new bunch arrived, they were all taken captive by the women, put in prison in this iron building, and every day one of them was eaten because rakshasis eat people. The men were utterly unable to escape.

The leader of the merchants asked the man if there was any way off the island, and he was told that on the full moon day of the fourth month of the Asian calendar, an emanation of Chenrezik called the Supreme Steed Balaha, who was a huge flying horse, would land on a certain beach on the island. Balaha would circle the beach three times and then land, asking, "Is there anyone who wishes to escape from the island?" If you get on his back as soon as he says that, then no matter how many of you there are, he will fly off and escort you to safety. When Balaha lifts off, the rakshasis will come to the beach and start crying, "Come back! Do not leave us! We love you so much! Do not go!" If you listen to them, you will fall off his back.

After this conversation, the merchant chieftain went back to the home of the rakshasi who had taken him home. Because he had been walking some distance at night, he was cold. She felt his skin and said that he felt very cold. She asked him where he had been and what he had been doing. He said that he had a stomachache and so he went for a walk, which made him feel

better. She said that as long as it only happened that once, she would believe him. When she said that and began to be a little more intimidating, he realized that everything he heard was true, and he was sure that this was in fact an island of rakshasis.

Secretly he gathered together all of his companions and told them what was going on. On the appointed day, they all left the houses where they were staying and assembled on the beach. Balaha came just as they had been told he would. The merchant chieftain sat just behind Balaha's head between his ears, and the rest of them sat on his back. Then Balaha took off. As soon as Balaha rose into the sky, all of the rakshasis ran to the beach and started yelling, "Do not go, do not go! These are your children, this is your son, this is your daughter. How can you go?" The merchant chieftain paid no attention to this. They flew away and eventually they landed somewhere else.

When the merchant chieftain got off Balaha's back, he noticed that he was the only one left. He asked Balaha what had happened to his five hundred friends. Balaha told him that they had all listened to the cries of the rakshasis, and they all fell off his back. They landed as bloody masses on the beach and were immediately consumed by the rakshasis. Attachment is like that.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, sometimes death is instantaneous or almost instantaneous, such as when a person has a massive stroke and is not conscious for several days before death. In these situations could someone do this practice and eject the person's consciousness upward toward Dewachen? If you do this practice regularly in preparation for death, and if you regularly have the aspiration that upon death you want to be reborn in Dewachen, will this practice and aspiration be sufficient in and of itself?

RINPOCHE: This is why it is important to practice this method throughout your life, because it is quite possible that death will come without warning. If you practice this assiduously during your life, then the momentum and habit of your practice will assert itself when you regain consciousness after your death. This will cause you to be reborn in Sukhavati. This is why the *Chaturpitha Tantra* says, "Do not think that you can begin to practice ejection of consciousness amidst the agony of death. You must prepare for that beforehand."

STUDENT: I was wondering if this practice was meant to be done exclusively on one's own, or if a spiritual friend might be of assistance while you are actually dying, perhaps during the death and bardo process.

RINPOCHE: The main thing, the most important thing, is that you practice it yourself before dying. In addition to that, the very best situation is that you also have a spiritual friend present at your death who can perform the ejection of consciousness for you.

STUDENT: You mentioned the possibility of recognizing the mind's nature, which was at a specific point with the mantra. Is that correct?

RINPOCHE: It was not actually that the meditation on the seed syllable and mantra garland would lead to recognition of the mind's nature. It was that if you could rest with an undistracted and one-pointed mind on that during the death process, this seems to be sufficient to produce samadhi after death.

This is accepted because many individuals who have only practiced the generation stage and have no experience of their mind's nature have been able to achieve samadhi through the undistracted maintenance of this visualization during the death process.

STUDENT: When you were talking about the opportunity for recognition, I was thinking that this was similar to the moment when your mind separates from your body. My understanding is that this is a major opportunity, but it seems that perhaps this is not quite in that same vein.

RINPOCHE: Well, it is not entirely unrelated. It is not clear in the text that this leads to recognition of the ground clear light at the moment of separation, but it seems to be related to it because it produces a similar state of samadhi after death. The implication of the text is that the one-pointed focus of the mind creates a state where distraction is absent, which may allow for that recognition when that moment occurs.

STUDENT: At the point when you are resting your mind on the HRI, which is on the six-petaled lotus at the heart surrounded by the MANI mantra, is that HRI still red in color?

RINPOCHE: It is not specified, but it should be because the deity in this case is Red Chenrezik or Gyalwa Gyamtso.

STUDENT: Does the mind always have to go unconscious at that point?

RINPOCHE: Yes, no matter who you are.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, is the first thing that one visualizes in the central channel the HRI from which one shoots out HRIs in order to block the gates? Also, when these HRIs later shoot up from the lotus, what happens to that initial HRI? I realize

that it is probably insubstantial, but is it still there and are you shooting through it?

RINPOCHE: No, you do not continue to visualize the HRI in your heart. It served its purpose by emanating the HRIs that blocked the other gates.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, I am confused about something. Some of the sutras state that the mind abides nowhere. Yet in this case, it seems as if we are talking about the mind in relationship to the body, in closing the gates so that the consciousness can leave through a certain space. Is the mind within the body?

RINPOCHE: When you analyze the mind, you do not find any location for it. In other words, through analysis you cannot find a specific place where the mind is. In the same way, when you analyze the mind you cannot find any substantial characteristics. Thus when we subject it to analysis, we find that the mind does not have a specific location within or outside of the body, and it does not have specific substantial characteristics to which it can be reduced, such as color, shape, size, substance, and so forth.

Nevertheless the mind exists. If the mind did not exist, we would not experience it. Therefore while we cannot say that the mind exists substantially, neither can we say that the mind

is absolutely nonexistent. Because the mind has no inherent location and no substantial characteristics, it can be sent to pure realms at will simply by directing your awareness there. If the mind had an inherent location, this location would be unchanging; if the mind had solid or substantial characteristics, these characteristics would be immovable. If these things were true, we could not send the mind anywhere. It is because the mind is without location or substantial entity that it can be sent to pure realms.

On the other hand, if we were to assert that because the mind is without inherent location and substantial characteristics, it must therefore be utterly nothing and nowhere, this would not be true either because this violates our experience. The very fact that we experience the mind is proof that the mind is not just nothing. The mind has great power and great ability. After all, all of our experience is indicative of the mind's power and ability to experience. Nevertheless when we analyze this mind that has this power and ability, we do not find anything substantial whatsoever.

STUDENT: I agree. I am just confused by the relationship of the mind to the points in the body, such as why the consciousness going out a specific orifice leads to a specific rebirth. I was wondering about this because I did not know if this was a

particular practice that we are going to be doing. I do not know because I have not gone this far.

RINPOCHE: To answer the first part of your question, although the mind has no substantial existence, the body does. The body is apparently substantial, therefore when the mind thinks of going in a certain direction within the body, this is the start of taking a certain direction in general. That is why these specific orifices correspond to certain types of rebirth.

To answer the second part of your question, yes, this is a part of practice that is done in order to prepare for death.

STUDENT: In regard to ejection of consciousness as a practice before death, I think everything was rather clear except for the part regarding the actual ejection of consciousness. Would we just have the sphere of light go up one time and then have it come back one time? Or how would we do that?

RINPOCHE: I mentioned this briefly, but to explain it in greater detail, there are two differences between the way the practice is performed when it is done in preparation for death, and when it is done at the time of death.

The first difference is that when you are practicing it beforehand, do not visualize Amitabha seated with his legs fully crossed as usual. Visualize him seated as though he were sitting in a chair, so that the bottom of his legs hangs over the lotus, and his two big toes, which are beside one another, cover the aperture at the top of your head.

The second difference is that when you perform the ejection visualization, you stick with one sphere of light, which you send up. It stops at Amitabha's toes and does not go any further. Therefore it stops at the top of your head and then descends back down. Rather than having a new sphere of light each time, just have the same one going up and back down. That is how you do the practice repeatedly.

Normally when we practice ejection of consciousness, certain sounds are made, usually either HIK or PHET during the ejection, and usually KAH during the return. In this text the sounds are not specified. The implication is that this is directed at those who are unable to vocalize at the time of their death, and therefore it is uncertain whether making such sounds is necessary during the preparatory practices. Here the emphasis is on the visualization itself rather than the use of sound or wind.

STUDENT: In terms of sequence, after we have the sphere go up and come down, would we do that several times before we went to the mantra garland?

RINPOCHE: It does not matter. You perform the ejection visualization as many times as you want. If you do it as a daily practice, you would do it perhaps three or seven times. When you are doing it as a preparation and not as an application, after you complete the initial part, think that Amitabha melts into light and becomes a golden double-vajra that blocks the aperture at the top of your head.

STUDENT: In terms of visualizing a double vajra on the crown of your head to prevent accidental ejection, is accidental ejection a real problem? What would happen if you accidentally eject? Would you be able to get your consciousness back into your body?

RINPOCHE: I do not know from my own experience, but only from the observation of what happened to my mother. My mother had a teacher who every year would convene one hundred nyungnes, and at the end of that he would conduct a seven-day phowa retreat for older people. It was said that anyone who attended his phowa retreat gained the ability to eject his or her consciousness. My mother did this and afterwards she was fine in normal situations, but if she were in the room when a lama

performed chö, as soon as he did the ejection of consciousness part of the chö practice, she would faint. She did not die; she would come back every time, but she would faint every time anyone would perform any kind of phowa around her.

I have never heard of a story of someone dying accidentally from practicing phowa. I think the tradition of visualizing the golden vajra on top of the head is to guard against the possibility of loss of vitality or shortening of life, in case you are worried about that happening from practicing phowa.

STUDENT: Just to clarify the previous question regarding the double vajra, how is that different from using the two big toes to block the aperture? Where does that apply instead of the double vajra?

RINPOCHE: The difference is that Amitabha's toes are very warm and they feel better, whereas the golden vajra is metal so it is rather uncomfortable!

In postmeditation, the visualization of the golden vajra blocking the aperture is especially necessary if you start to develop the signs associated with the ability to eject your consciousness. As long as those signs have not appeared, it may not be necessary, but once those signs have appeared, there is a slight danger

that you could accidentally eject your consciousness. In order to prevent that, visualize something of the utmost solidity blocking that aperture.

STUDENT: That raises the question, what are the signs?

RINPOCHE: There are many signs of success, both in the application of the ejection of consciousness at death and in the training where you gain the ability to do this. As I have never developed these signs myself, I am not that familiar with them. Based on what I have been told, if the ejection of consciousness is done for those immediately after they have died and it is successful, their complexion should change dramatically, much more quickly than it would naturally as the result of the end of circulation. Also the body should start to smell very quickly.

The clearest sign for the person performing the ejection is that they feel a sudden rush of warmth or heat emerging out of the top of the dead person's head. In the best cases there will actually be an eruption in the skin, a small hole from which lymph and blood will erupt. If the ejection is successful and the person for whom the ejection is being done has hair on the top of their head, either the hair will fall out or you should be able to pull the hair out quite easily.

As for the signs of successful training in the ejection of consciousness, they include such things as an eruption or aperture at the top of your head that is deep enough so a stalk of kusha grass can be stuck in and will stand up. The most common sign is extreme itching or irritation at the opening, from which eventually there will be some swelling as well as the emergence of lymph and clear or bloody fluid.

STUDENT: Do we perform the practice described until we achieve signs of success, and then stop?

RINPOCHE: You are supposed to practice it assiduously until the signs of the ability to eject the consciousness have been achieved. After that you practice it daily, but for a brief time. If after the signs have been achieved you stop practicing ejection altogether, then what you have done will be reversed; it will vanish. You need to continue this as a brief daily practice for the ability to remain.

STUDENT: I find it confusing that a sign of successful ejection of consciousness is an immediate corruption of the body. Earlier you said that a successful transference results in a rosy complexion and noncorruption of the body for a week or two.

RINPOCHE: These two states are very different. The statement that after death the person's complexion would improve was not describing the result of successful transference. It was describing samadhi, which means that the person is resting in even placement after death. While the body is no longer alive, the consciousness has not left it, which is why there is a healthy complexion.

On the other hand, when the ejection of consciousness is performed successfully, exactly the opposite happens. The consciousness is forcibly removed from the body, and therefore the vanishing of signs such as circulation and so on happens even more quickly. Both are methods, but they are very different.

STUDENT: In a situation where a person is also practicing chö, the ejection is a little different. Why is there a difference? Why does one leave and the other does not?

RINPOCHE: The reason is that in the practice of severance, the separation of mind and body is essential for the rest of the visualization to occur. After your consciousness is ejected, it becomes Vajrayogini, who proceeds to dice up your body and serve it to the recipients. That requires an actual separation. At the end of the practice, your consciousness, in the form of a small Machik Lapdrön, reenters the body of yourself as Vajrayogini.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, if one is successful in ejecting their consciousness at death, does that mean they are guaranteed to go to Sukhavati?

RINPOCHE: It depends on the degree of clarity of visualization, and especially the degree of trust or faith. Generally it is said that there are three results from the successful ejection of consciousness: the best result is rebirth in the pure realms, the second best result is rebirth as a deva, and the third is rebirth at least as a human being. If the ejection of consciousness is successful, what is certain is that you will not be reborn in the three lower realms.

STUDENT: I have two questions about the ejection of consciousness. First, I thought I understood that you said that if a practitioner practices ejection of consciousness perfectly, the practitioner's consciousness would end up with Amitabha in Sukhavati. If the practitioner practices it imperfectly, their consciousness will end up in either the deva realm or the human realm. In either case, it will close the door to the lower realms. Is this true?

Second, is the deva realm in the samsaric god realm? That would be a wonderful rebirth while it lasts, but the consequences of being born in a god realm is that you use up your good karma

and then you go to the hell realms. This does not seem to be such a good outcome, or have I misunderstood the deva realms?

RINPOCHE: First, this was not about one's own practice. It was about what results could be expected if an ejection of consciousness is performed by a teacher.

There is a reason why a distinction is made among the best, intermediate, and least results. Concerning those who are such great sinners that they are definitely going to be in the hell realm without this intervention, if a teacher gets to the person as soon as their breathing stops, the teacher can actually transfer the person's consciousness to a higher realm and at least delay the experience of the lower realms. It is unlikely that a great sinner will be reborn in the pure realms regardless of who performs the intervention. It is possible that an extraordinarily great teacher could achieve that for them. Generally you hope you can cause the person to be reborn as a human being, where they will have access to Dharma and be able to improve gradually; or if not that, that they are reborn in some temporarily pleasant situation.

Second, your remark about the long-term uselessness of rebirth in a deva realm is correct.

STUDENT: For those who have been assisted into Sukhavati and would not have achieved this rebirth on their own based on their merit, purification, and perhaps aspirations, what happens to their mind stream? Does it have a dormancy state or does it immediately become interested in the Dharma and then flourish in its practice?

RINPOCHE: First, taking rebirth in Sukhavati through the power of another can only occur through the performance of the ejection of consciousness by an extremely powerful lama or teacher. This seems to be the only way someone else's power can get you to Sukhavati. Whatever the condition is for rebirth in Sukhavati, whether it is the individual's own accumulation of the four causes or someone else's intervention, once you are born there, the qualities you achieve simply by birth in that immaculately pure realm are equal. Everyone who is born there is equal in all ways.

The only exception to this is if those who were born there had doubts about their ability to be born there. This can result in a delay in the opening of the lotus flower where they are born, which will delay their seeing the face of Amitabha.

STUDENT: You spoke about how once you arrive in Sukhavati, whatever you wish for will appear. How do these appearances relate to our current visualizations of deities?

RINPOCHE: It is very different. When you have been born in a pure realm like Sukhavati, whatever you wish for is actually present and actually accomplished; it is there simply through your wishing for it. You actually find it in the palm of your hand. You actually see the buddha of that realm. For example, if you were in the eastern realm of Abhirati, you would actually see the buddha Akshobhya. You can also make whatever offerings you wish to make, because simply by thinking of the buddhas, they would appear, and you can actually present offerings to them.

STUDENT: Are there aspects of Sukhavati here and now around us that we can acquaint ourselves with and try to learn to recognize?

RINPOCHE: It is impossible to say definitively whether Sukhavati is or is not present here, in part or in whole. We cannot definitely say that an aspect of the realm of Sukhavati is present in this world, with the exception of the teachings of that realm, which are definitely present. For example, the *Sukhavati Sadhana* or *Amitabha Sadhana* of the Namchö tradition, which was bestowed by the buddha Amitabha on the nirmanakaya Mingyur Dorje, is present here and is practiced. This is an aspect of Sukhavati

because these teachings come directly from Sukhavati. There are many similar teachings, such as the teachings on Sukhavati found in the sutras, in the Oral and Treasure traditions, and so forth.

As far as the relationship between Sukhavati as a realm and this world as a realm, it is difficult to say. If you look at it from the point of view that the true nature of all appearances of all phenomena is boundless and is utter purity, then you would say that the nature of this realm and the nature of Sukhavati are identical. If on the other hand you are talking about our point of view, which is what we experience in the midst of the context of our bewilderment, then this realm and Sukhavati are fundamentally different.

STUDENT: Sukhavati as described sounds marvelous, wonderful, and too good to be true. Are there ways of cultivating trust that it does in fact exist?

RINPOCHE: What you say is very true. Since our beginningless habituation with samsara, the context of our entire experience is characterized by fixation on the reality or truth of what we experience. Given that this is the only context we know, it is indeed very hard to believe in things such as pure realms because they so directly contradict our context.

The first step in being able to consider the existence of such things as pure realms is to recognize the whole context of your experience as bewilderment, as fundamentally incorrect or deceptive. If you understand that what you have regarded as the actual nature of things is in fact merely bewilderment, then you will be able to entertain and understand the possibility of something beyond that, such as a pure realm.

Without thoughts and kleshas, and the karma accumulated by kleshas, there would be no appearances of samsara. Without the negative karma that produces these appearances of samsara, there would be nothing other than what we call “pure appearances.” Because we have never experienced that state, it seems utterly alien, and therefore it is inconceivable to us.

I will give you two analogies for our situation. First, imagine people who have been ingesting hallucinogens for their entire life. The only reality they ever experienced was full of hallucinations. Not only that, but they had never been told that about the hallucinogens in their diet. If you talk to that person and explain that they have been experiencing hallucinations, unreal experiences, and you explain that you experience something authentic, something more real than their experience, the person would have no reason to believe you because the hallucinations were all they had ever experienced. These hallucinations are real

to them, and not only are they real, but they are the only reality they have ever known. Therefore these people have no reason to question their reality.

In such a case you would have to convince the person that they experience things the way they do because they have been ingesting hallucinogens since birth, and that if they manage to stop consuming these things, their reality will change and improve. If the person came to believe that what they experienced was a result of taking hallucinogens, then even before they stopped taking them and before they actually directly experienced a different reality, they would be able to infer that what they experienced was not real, and therefore something completely different could be experienced. At that point, they would know it as an inference, but they would not know it directly because they would still be taking the hallucinogens. When they actually stopped taking them, the hallucinations would stop, and they would directly experience a different reality.

This is what we are like at this point. If we understand that the basic context of our experience is bewilderment and that we experience things the way we do because of that bewilderment, then we can infer that there is a very different way to experience things, a way not governed by bewilderment. For us at this point, this is simply an inference. It is simply a matter of

belief or acceptance, which involves belief in the validity of the Buddha's teachings. The starting point of gaining this belief or assurance is to understand that all appearances are a function of the karmic imprints of the perceiver, and therefore if all karma is removed there will be no bewildered appearances and things will be experienced as pure.

To give you a second analogy, when we are dreaming and until we awake from that dream, we believe that we are experiencing reality, what we would call "daytime reality." Only when we wake up from this dream do we realize that what we were dreaming did not really exist. On the other hand, a practitioner skilled in **lucid dreaming** will know, even while they are dreaming, that the dream is not real. Although this practitioner sees the same things another person would see if they were having the same dream, the practitioner is not fazed by it. If they dream of a fire, they stamp on the fire and walk through it, because they know there is no fire that can burn them; if they dream of a tiger, they might jump into the tiger's mouth, because they know there is no tiger that can eat them. This is called "stamping on dream appearances." This is an analogy for someone who, while still experiencing a bewildered reality, is certain that it is the product of bewilderment. This knowledge must start with inference, and only when the imprints of bewilderment have been eradicated can there be direct experience of a pure realm.

STUDENT: I have a question regarding the removal of impure karma and bewilderment. In the Chenrezik visualization practice when the light shines on you and removes your impure karma and bewilderment, at that point are you experiencing the pure land of Chenrezik, the Potala?

RINPOCHE: What actually happens at that point in the Chenrezik meditation depends on who is doing it. For practitioners like ourselves, we are essentially trying to imagine what it would be like if all of our obscurations were removed in an instant, and we are imagining the experience of a pure realm. Obviously not all of our obscurations and bewilderment are removed at that instant, and therefore we do not directly experience the pure realm, but we bring it to mind through imagination.

If a bodhisattva were to perform that meditation, they would already be experiencing things that way, so for them that phase of the meditation would merely be an acknowledgment of how things are. They really only make this acknowledgement for the sake of others; it is superfluous for them because they are already experiencing things that way.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, the ability that people have after they have died in the state of meditation and samadhi, as well as the ability to produce ringsel, is that something that happens

naturally to anyone who has attained that state, or is that just something done to increase faith and devotion in practitioners and nonpractitioners?

RINPOCHE: In some cases it just happens naturally as a result of the person's practice, but in most cases it is done intentionally in order to demonstrate the effectiveness of the instructions as practiced by the teacher's disciples.

STUDENT: I understood that for a person in samadhi the eight consciousnesses are no longer functioning. It seems you can speak to someone by getting as close to the ear as possible. How does this work? How does sound get to a consciousness if the eight consciousnesses are not working?

RINPOCHE: In the first instance where the ground clear light appears, the functions of the eight consciousnesses have ceased. In fact they actually ceased in the moment before that, which was the unconsciousness called the "attainment." The appearance of the ground clear light is the first emergence of cognition from that unconsciousness. It is not any of the eight consciousnesses, and therefore the eight consciousnesses are still in abeyance when the ground clear light first emerges. If the person apprehends the ground clear light and remains within that apprehension,

which is the process of samadhi, then a subtle form of the eight consciousnesses does gradually reemerge.

Therefore if you speak to the person when the ground clear light first arises, they probably cannot understand because there is no ear consciousness. According to the *Great Liberation Through Hearing in the Bardo*, they actually have a greater understanding. They can understand more clearly and use the reminders to further their recognition of the ground clear light. This is why from that point onward you point out each phase of the bardo experience in detail, such as saying, “This is the first day, and this is what you will see,” “This is the second day,” and so on.

STUDENT: In that case, if the body is actually dead at that point, the ear facility cannot be working but the ear consciousness is there. Then what is actually doing the hearing?

This leads to another question. From what I have read, it seems that everything we experience comes from the eighth consciousness, which is our karmic imprints, and the very fact that we can hear something when we are in the state of samadhi is all due to our karmic imprints. It gets very confusing.

RINPOCHE: To answer your second question first, the reason why there can still be karmic appearances for the dead person is that

the eight consciousnesses, including the all-basis, are dormant. They have not ceased. The eight consciousnesses only cease at buddhahood, and the person has not attained buddhahood in a case such as this. What has happened is that the consciousnesses are dormant or in abeyance, and this dormant all-basis can still produce habits.

The organ used by the dead person's consciousness to hear is actually the ear of their corpse. Provided they are in samadhi, they are still able to hear through that, even though their body is not biologically alive. After that, when the ground clear light ends, either it is recognized and the person remains in samadhi, or it is not recognized and the consciousness becomes separated from the body. At that point, the bewildered appearances of the bardo begin, and the person hears, sees, and so forth with their mind alone. There is no physical support, but they can hear, see, and so on much more clearly and with much more vividness and intensity than we can during this life.

As far as the person's ability to understand what is said, quite a bit of attention is paid to this. For example, when you perform the ejection of consciousness for another person, you are talking to them and guiding them through the process. There are visualizations that you perform, visualizations that they perform, and visualizations to be performed together. You are informing

the person of these as you go along. At the beginning of this whole process, you get the person's attention by waking them up. You wake them up by visualizing that the white vowels of the Sanskrit alphabet flow out of your right nostril and enter into the person's heart, the red consonants of the Sanskrit alphabet flow out of your left nostril and enter the person's heart, then your mind or compassion in the form of a blue HUNG enters the person's heart, and this wakes them out of the unconsciousness, which is the last stage of dying. By implication, this is evidence that it is possible for the person to hear what is said to them.

STUDENT: I thought you could enter a samadhi type of meditation and be alive, that it was a very high form of meditation, and in that state you could heal yourself because you entered the clear light. Is there another name for what I am describing?

TRANSLATOR: This is a translation question. The custom arose in the 1970s or 1980s of translating the word *thukdam*, which is honorific for "samaya," as "meditation," which is a general term. Here it is the term used for meditation after death. For some reason the custom arose of translating that as "samadhi," possibly because it was a Sanskrit word that people would recognize. It is a stipulative use of a general term.

You are right when you say that the word *samadhi* most commonly refers to a meditative state engaged in while someone is alive. *Thukdam* is the actual term used in Tibetan for this meditative state after death, but *thukdam* can also mean many things. It can mean a *yidam*, it can mean *samaya*, it can mean many different things depending on the context. Therefore neither word is actually specific.

STUDENT: So in the context of this teaching, it refers to the state of someone who has died, specifically when a teacher has died and that teacher wishes to display qualities for his students in order that they have greater faith?

RINPOCHE: Yes, in this specific case, but the word *thukdam* can be used in many different ways. For example, some people call the Mahakala practice “*thukdam*.”

STUDENT: Rinpoche, you said that when a being attains buddhahood, they generate their own pure realm. Do they generate an impure *nirmanakaya* realm as well?

RINPOCHE: In general there are three types of realms. There are *dharmakaya* realms, *sambhogakaya* realms, and *nirmanakaya* realms. *Dharmakaya* and *sambhogakaya* realms are always pure. A *nirmanakaya* realm can be pure or impure, depending on

those who are to be tamed by it. You can say that each buddha manifests its own realm.

From the buddha's own point of view, it is always pure because they do not experience impurity. Whether those to be tamed by that buddha perceive it as a pure realm or an impure realm depends on their karmic state.

STUDENT: I have found the negativity that arises in me when I have a small wound or feel even a little sick is enough to bring negative and destructive thoughts. I think that actually losing my body or dying would be overwhelming since it seems to be uncontrollable even in small cases. In the instructions something is said at the very end about abandoning despair and feeling joy just before you try to step into the other realm. Is it possible that in the time leading up to this point we will be able to collect our thoughts in the face of the negativity we will probably feel?

RINPOCHE: The best way to prepare for death so that you do not become agitated by the process of dying is to constantly recollect impermanence, thinking that everything is constantly changing. Today will not last, tomorrow will not last, yesterday did not last. All of the things that we cherish and cling to, all of our possessions and even our own bodies, are impermanent

and constantly changing. We are definitely going to come to the day of our death, and we have no idea when that is going to be.

You have to remember that no matter how much you may cherish the things of this life, your body, your possessions, and so on, you cannot keep any of them. What makes our bodies different from our other possessions is that they do have temporary usefulness. While our minds inhabit our bodies, we can meditate, cultivate love and compassion, recite mantras like OM MANI PADME HUM, perform meditation, perform tong len, and so on.

As far as dealing with lesser experiences of illness or physical pain, the best way to deal with them is to practice tong len. Doing tong len is not going to get rid of the pain, but it does get rid of the struggle with the pain that brings about a great deal of the suffering. Normally when we experience sickness or pain, we engage in a struggle to get rid of it. If you practice tong len, not only do you not try to get rid of it, you try to take on the sickness of all beings at the same time. While this does not cause the physical sensation of discomfort or pain to vanish, it makes you less preoccupied with the pain so that you no longer suffer quite so much.

Sensations that often lead to the cultivation of kleshas can instead become an opportunity for gathering the accumulations. A

great deal of the suffering that we experience when we undergo adversity is because of the struggle, the attempt to get rid of it. If the adversity, the sickness and so forth, is karmic in nature, the struggle is going to be fruitless, and this will lead to further frustration and anger. The best thing you can do is constantly recollect impermanence, cultivate as much virtue as you can, dedicate that virtue to the awakening of all beings, and practice taking and sending.

For those that know how to view the nature of their own mind, this is the supreme method, because when sickness arises you look to see exactly where and what the sensation is. You cannot find it, and although this does not make the pain diminish or disappear, it brings less suffering. It is taught that if you become fully trained in this method, even the greatest physical suffering is no longer a problem. I have no experience of this, but this is the instruction traditionally given.

STUDENT: If you have an experience that takes you to another reality that is better than the one you usually experience, can you offer that back to the deity that gave you that experience? Can you make it an offering, such as offering your compassion?

RINPOCHE: It is possible for the compassion and blessing of a guru and the devotion of their disciple to coincide and cause

the disciple to experience various things, including some aspects of pure reality. In that context, it is possible for the disciple to use the opportunity, the experience of purity or sacredness, as a basis for making mentally emanated offerings, and dedicating the virtue of it to the awakening of all beings. In these ways, the disciple furthers their own gathering of the accumulations.

STUDENT: In the Amitabha sadhana that we do, why is Vajrapani not like Green Tara, since she is good with obstacles as well? Why is she not there?

RINPOCHE: The reason is that Amitabha was short of attendants, so he had to borrow one from the eastern pure realm of the vajra family! That is a joke.

This is an instance of the fact that the designation of deities within buddha families and the notion that they are actually different from one another is ultimately misleading. All buddhas are of the same nature in their wisdom. While they may appear to us as very distinct and different, this is just a mode of appearance that conforms to our needs as individuals at the time.

For example, you said that Tara is of the padma family. That is not necessarily so, since sometimes she is of the karma family. Vajrapani's being of the vajra family in no way prohibits him

from presiding over the realm of Sukhavati. These families only appear different to us because they are concessions to our needs; ultimately, all buddhas have the same nature.

This came up earlier when it was mentioned that a teacher could devote his or her life to meditating on one deity and then leave selfarisen images of a different deity on their skull. For example, if the teacher's yidam was Gyalwa Gyamtso, then you would expect to find images of Gyalwa Gyamtso and HRI syllables on their bones, but you might find a completely different deity and a different seed syllable. This would either indicate that the teacher had meditated on the other deity in previous lives or simply that these deities have the same nature.

STUDENT: You said Amitabha's realm will dissolve and then Chenrezik's realm will be prevalent. Then there will be Vajrapani's realm. We have heard that His Eminence Tai Situpa is an emanation of the next buddha. If we have free will and we work hard to get to these different places, how is this all decided, written, and laid out? Who decides the timing? Is there free will or is there predetermination?

RINPOCHE: These descriptions of the orders of the buddhas that appear in this world, the length of time of various events in Sukhavati, and so on were all taught by buddhas. The teachings

that we have about these things are from the present buddha, Buddha Shakyamuni, and these things have also been taught by buddhas in the past.

Buddhas can predict these things so precisely because they are omniscient, which means they know everything that has ever happened and everything that will ever happen. Buddha Shakyamuni predicted these things: for example, the appearance of the thousand buddhas of this fortunate aeon was described by him in the *Sutra of this Fortunate Aeon*, and the information about Sukhavati is found in the *Amitabha Sutra*, the *Lotus Sutra*, and other sutras that describe that realm. These things have also been described by previous buddhas.

STUDENT: You said that human life begins and ends at the navel center. What is meant by that?

RINPOCHE: It is said that the nirmanachakra, the wheel of emanation at the navel, is the site of the start and the end of human life. It is said to be the start of life as is taught in Dharma, although I do not know what scientists would say about this. It is taught that the first part of the body to develop is the nirmanachakra. That is the first channel that develops. This is called the “site of ending” because you die when the breathing

stops, and what stops the breathing is the cessation of the breathing function from that chakra.

For example, the connection of a fetus to the mother, the source of oxygen and nutrition, is at the navel. It is also taught in Dharma that as you age, and especially as you age greatly, the functioning of the nirmanachakra ceases gradually, so one by one the channel spokes dry up and cease to function. When the whole chakra is nonfunctional, you stop breathing.

STUDENT: Why do Tibetans believe that the mind resides in the heart center?

RINPOCHE: It is true, as you indicated in your question, that Tibetans commonly tend to think of their mind as being seated in the heart, much the way Westerners tend to think of their mind as being seated in their brain. Both are equally mere conventions, images, or assumptions about the way the mind is connected to the body. If the mind was a solid substantial thing, it could have a specific location or seat, but because it is not solid and substantial, it does not have an exact location.

As far as how the mind functions through the body, it functions within the entire body. Just as the body is pervaded by the channels, winds, and drops, which are the connection between the

mind and body, it is also pervaded by the nervous system. For example, if I stick a needle into my finger, I feel pain. What feels the pain? It is my mind, finally, that feels the pain. Clearly my mind is therefore somehow present or connected to that finger.

STUDENT: Why should there then be one central channel that is used by the mind?

RINPOCHE: Because it is the main channel, and all the other channels that fill the body branch off from it. All the channels through which we experience well-being, suffering, and so on stem from the central channel.

STUDENT: In the past you have mentioned that everything is the guru. When you visualize Amitabha being red and wearing three robes, Amitabha's essence is the guru, the Karmapa. Later when you make offerings to Amitabha, Amitayus, Chenrezik, and Vajrapani, you are supposed to visualize all of them in their usual form, but in essence as the Karmapa. Every time I make that offering, is it still the same?

RINPOCHE: Throughout all phases of the practice, you need to constantly identify the figures with the guru. This is because all of your access to Dharma and the wisdom of Dharma, all of your acquisition of knowledge and receipt of instruction, and so forth

come from your guru and not from the deities themselves. It is said that since you have direct access to the guru, the guru is more significant than the thousand buddhas are. In that sense, the guru is of greater practical or direct kindness to you than even the thousand buddhas. This is why it is necessary to identify the deities you are meditating on with the guru.

STUDENT: When we practice the first part of ngondro, at the end when all the lights dissolve into the practitioner, what happened to all those beings in the visualization? We practice in order to benefit all beings, but in the end only we get the light.

RINPOCHE: If you can imagine that the refuge tree, the sources of refuge, dissolve not only into yourself but simultaneously into each and every sentient being, then you are welcome to visualize it that way. The reason why it is taught to dissolve the sources of refuge into yourself is that you are the practitioner; you are the one doing the meditation. Moreover, you need this power in order to be able to benefit others.

Letter of Royal Command: Reminding Practitioners of Their Meditation So They Recognize the Ground Clear Light at Death

This chapter concerns what you need to say to those who are dying to remind them to implement the instructions that were given in the previous chapter. The chapter begins with the invocation, NAMO GURU MAHAKARUNIKAYE! “Homage to the guru inseparable from the Great Compassionate One, Chenrezik!” Then it says, “Chenrezik the Protector, who leads to liberation all beings of the six states, regard with your compassion all of those beings within the six states. The spiritual friend, Tsonдру Gyamtso, has asked what kind of reminder or instruction is needed at the time of death. In answer, I say the following.

“First of all, it should be tailored to fit to the individual practice of the individual person. Therefore in a specific sense, the instruction has to correspond to the details of that person’s practice, for example, reminding them to visualize themselves as whatever deity they have emphasized. If I answer your question briefly and in a way that is appropriate to everyone, so that it

is not individually tailored but can be used for anyone, I would say the following.”

Clarification at the Culmination of the Dying Process

Essentially there are three parts of this clarification or reminder: the clarification at the culmination of the dying process, the clarification at the moment of death, and the clarification of the bardo.

The first of these, the clarification at the culmination of the dying process, is as follows. The “culmination of the dying process” means the point when it is certain that the person is going to die that day, and they have finished their last will and testament and their final communication with those around them. The following should be read to them, at best by one of their teachers, but if not by a Dharma friend with harmonious samaya. Samaya is very important here. It is said that if this is read by someone who has broken samaya with the dying person, it is worse than not being read at all because it will be disturbing to the dying person. At the very least, this should be read by someone who can read.

The instructions begin, “KYE MA,” which is an expression of sadness. Then you say, “This is the time when you are going to die and experience the bardo. First of all, abandon all attachment and fixation for anything. Having abandoned those things, remain undistracted in listening to my clear instructions.” After that you read a quotation from the *Root Verses of the Bardo*, which comes from the literature associated with the *Great Liberation Through Hearing in the Bardo*. You say, “Transfer self-awareness, which is unborn, into the expanse of space. It is about to separate from your composite flesh-and-blood body. Remember that this body is impermanent, like a magical illusion.”

Then the actual instructions say, “Visualize yourself as your yidam, the Great Compassionate One.” If the person had a particular yidam, it is fine to remind them to visualize themselves as that deity, but the Great Compassionate One, Chenrezik, can be used for anyone at this point because he is the embodiment of all yidams. “Then block the eight orifices, the gateways to impure samsaric birth, with HRI syllables, including visargas.” Visargas refers to the two dots beside the HRI. Again, this is an abbreviated reminder of the instructions that were given in the last chapter.

“Then, continuing to visualize yourself as Chenrezik, visualize that the inside of your body is completely empty and hollow;

your form is like an inflated balloon. Within that hollow enclosure or empty body, visualize at its center the central channel present like a single column in an empty room. The lower end of the central channel stops below the navel, where it is sealed. Inside the central channel, above its bottom end, is a red lotus flower on which lies a moon disk. Resting on this disk is your wind and mind and consciousness, inseparable in the form of a sphere of white light that looks as though it is about to fly upward at any moment. Visualize the upper end of the central channel as flared, and think that it ends at the very top of your head where it is open. This is the gateway to liberation. It is open like a skylight open to the sky.

“Directly above that, one cubit in the space above it, is a thousand-petaled lotus flower on the center of which is a moon disk. Seated on that is your root guru, the embodiment of the Three Jewels in the form of the buddha Amitabha, who is bright red in color, adorned with the marks and signs, and wearing the three robes, with his legs fully crossed in vajra posture, and his hands in the gesture of meditation, holding a begging bowl filled with amrita. Think that as his name — Amitabha, Boundless Light — implies, the rays of light that emerge from his body, like the light of a hundred thousand suns, are boundless.” In other words, the light that comes from Amitabha radiates everywhere.

“Further, reflect on the fact that the entire realm of Sukhavati is completely present within the body of Amitabha above you, and that he is the inseparable unity of the samayasattva, the visualized deity, and the jnanasattva, the actual deity. Having visualized Amitabha above your head in that way, next go for refuge to him. Then generate the intention to transform the experience of death into dharmakaya for the benefit of all beings.” In other words, you transform the experience of dying into something you willingly undertake for the benefit of others. “In that way, generate the bodhichitta that is the intention to accomplish perfect buddhahood for the benefit of others.

“Next completely eradicate all attachment to and craving for anything you are leaving behind, your physical body, your possessions, your wealth, your family, and so forth.” When the text says, “completely eradicate all attachment,” it means to regard these things as beneath your concern. For example, when you go to the bathroom, after urinating or excreting you do not spend time wondering what will happen to the urine or excrement you have released. You do not really care what happens to them; the fact that they are gone is sufficient. When you are dying, this is the attitude you need to take toward all your possessions. Remember that even if you are attached to something, you do not have the ability to hold on to it. They are lost to you now;

let go. Remember that they are impermanent, like a magical illusion or the contents of a dream.

“Then, think that the sphere of light at the navel, which is your mind, shoots up out of your body and into the heart of Amitabha. Do this repeatedly. Then visualize in the center of your heart, on a lotus and moon disk, the seed syllable HRI. Visualize it as brilliant and yet empty of existence, vivid like a crystal ball. After resting your awareness on that for a short time, do not meditate on or imagine anything whatsoever. Simply look at the nature of whatever arises in your mind.” In other words, at this point you are instructing the person to meditate on mahamudra, or the Great Middle Way or the Great Perfection.

Then you remind the person, “Meditating in this way now for an instant is more powerful than meditating like that for months or years when you are well. If you do not exert yourself in this practice right now as you die, your having entered the gate of Dharma will become meaningless. Therefore be courageous and exert your awareness. There is no problem if you cannot maintain any physical posture.” No one has ever failed to be reborn in Sukhavati because he or she could not sit up when dying. “You may adopt the posture adopted by Buddha Shakyamuni when he passed into parinirvana, the lying posture of a lion. Lie comfortably and look at the nature of what arises. If you feel

pain, look at the nature of the pain and make the aspiration, ‘May my pain serve instead of the pain of all beings.’”

Coarse and Subtle Dissolution

Next guide the person step-by-step through the final phase of the dying process, which consists of the coarse dissolution of the elements and the subtle withdrawal of consciousness. You say, “When your limbs fall to the ground,” in other words, when you are no longer able to move your arms and legs, “that is a sign of the dissolution of earth into water.

“At that time, as an object of mind, you will see the appearance of yellow. By looking at the nature of that perception of yellow, you see it is empty in its nature. When you see that, you attain the body of the great mother, Buddhalochana, who is the true and pure nature of the element earth.” *Object of mind* means that you will seem to see this yellow appearance physically, but it is actually appearing before your mental consciousness. Because it is such an intense mental-consciousness impression, your mind may translate it into a seemingly visual perception.

“Next your mouth and nose will dry up, and your tongue will stick in the back of your mouth. It will shorten and you will be

unable to move it. This is a sign that water is dissolving into fire. At that time, white will appear as an object of mind. By looking at it and seeing that the nature of the whiteness is empty, you attain the body of the great mother, Mamaki, the pure nature of water. When fire dissolves into wind, your physical warmth will withdraw from the tips of your fingers and toes inward through the limbs, withdrawing into your trunk. As an object of mind, red will appear. Look at the nature of that and you achieve the body of the great mother, Pandaravasini, the pure nature of the element fire. Finally wind will dissolve into consciousness, at which time you will breathe your last external breath.” In other words, breathing as we know it, coarse breathing in and out, will stop. “As an object of mind, green will appear. Look at its nature and you will attain the body of the great mother, Samayatara, the pure nature of wind.” That concludes the coarse dissolution of the elements.

At this point when wind dissolves into consciousness, the fundamental wind, which is called the “vitality wind,” ceases to function and withdraws into the heart. It has kept the fundamental physical constituents of the body, the **white drop** we receive from our father and the **red drop** we receive from our mother, in place at the top of the head and below the navel respectively. As this wind is withdrawn into the heart, these drops move from the seats they have had throughout our life,

and this constitutes the process of subtle dissolution and the actual immediate condition for death.

The Four Wisdoms of the Dying Process

As the wind continues to withdraw into consciousness, first the drop of white bodhichitta at the top of the head descends downward. As an external sign or indication, which is more of a sensory experience, the person will see a brilliant whiteness engulfing everything. As an internal sign, which is more of a mental experience although they seem to also be seeing it, they will see smoke and something like a mirage.

At this time, the thirty-three types of thoughts that have the nature of aversion, including anger, aggression, and hatred, all stop. It is not that the person has conquered the obscurations; it is that they become dormant. Because all thoughts of aversion stop, the dying person experiences a state of wisdom that is the first of the four wisdoms they will experience during the dying process. This first wisdom is the *wisdom of joy* or the *first moment*. This wisdom is the natural reaction when angry thoughts or thoughts of aversion stop. Although the dying person experiences this, it happens very quickly, and they may not recognize it unless they have trained in the recognition of the four joys. At that time,

they should rest without distraction in the nature of the wisdom of joy. This is the cessation of aversion as we know it; it is the pure nature of aversion, which is the bhagavat Vajrasattva. If the dying person recognizes this, they will accomplish vajra body.

After that, the drop of red bodhichitta that they received from their mother rises up from below the navel. The nature of this drop is Vajravarahi. As it rises up toward the heart where the white drop has come to rest, the external sign is a bright redness like the bright light of the sun. The internal sign is seeing tiny flashes of red light, like fireflies. At that time the forty types of thoughts that have the nature of attachment, desire, and so on, will stop. As a result the dying person experiences the second wisdom, the wisdom of supreme joy. If they recognize this, they should rest in its nature. Its nature is the pure nature of attachment or desire, which is the bhagavat Amitabha. Through recognizing this second wisdom, they will definitely achieve vajra speech. At this point, when the red drop is rising toward the heart and the thoughts of attachment cease, those who have assiduously practiced meditation on the channels and winds, such as people who are well trained in the six dharmas of Naropa and so forth, can achieve liberation.

When the wind finishes dissolving into consciousness and the outer breathing has stopped completely, and when the white

and red drops come together at the heart, capping or surrounding the seat of consciousness, everything turns black. All the eight consciousnesses become dormant; they temporarily stop functioning. This is the point when attendants will say, “She is gone.” This is the point where an observer will perceive that the person has died. At this point the person no longer sees or hears. They will have no control over their physical position; they will just lie there or remain in whatever position they were in. Their jaw will drop. Their external experience will be one of utter darkness, like the night sky on the twenty-ninth day of the month. Their cognition will be like a butter lamp burning inside a vase; it is dormant but continuous.

At that time, the seven types of thoughts that have the nature of bewilderment, stupidity, and ignorance will all stop. Therefore the person’s consciousness is caught and wrapped up between the white and red drops that have met at their heart. Because of the cessation of all types of stupidity, they experience the third wisdom, the wisdom beyond joy. If they recognize this, then they should rest in it without distraction. If they can recognize this third subtle stage and rest within it, they will prolong it and achieve vajra mind, which is the pure nature of bewilderment, the bhagavat Vairochana.

As the white and red drops come together in the heart, those of impure karma may perceive these drops as their future parents. They may have a brief perception of their next parents and a brief understanding of where they will be born. Those with pure perception will see them as the father and mother aspects of their yidam, and according to Lord Atisha and Machik Lapdrön, at this point many peaceful and wrathful deities will appear. Whereas the second part of this process, the radiant red increase, was the time of liberation for those who meditated on the channels and winds, the third moment, black attainment, is the time of liberation for those who have meditated on the generation stage.

At this point you say to the person, “Meditate on the generation stage of your yidam, and especially direct your awareness to the seed syllable in the deity’s heart.” Because the person has lost control over their physical position, this is when the attendants need to correct the person’s physical posture. In other words, the attendant would place them in whatever position they want the deceased to stay in for the duration of their samadhi, should they achieve it.

If the person does not recognize these stages, the white appearance, red increase, and black attainment, the stages will happen one instant after another. If they are recognized, then they will be prolonged, especially the third, the black attainment. In any

case, when the external breathing, the breathing as we know it, has stopped, and when the white and red drops have mixed inseparably at the heart surrounding the person's consciousness, this is the best time for the ejection of consciousness to be performed by a lama.

If the person does not recognize these stages and cannot rest in them, and therefore cannot prolong them, and if the ejection of consciousness is not performed at that time, the white and red drops will again separate and they will continue their journey. That is to say, the white drop, which has descended from the top of the head as though it is heavy and substantial, will continue downward from the heart. The red drop, which has ascended from below the navel as though it is light, will continue upward. When the red drop reaches the top, it will emerge from the nostrils, especially the left nostril, in the form of blood and lymph. After the consciousness is initially enveloped by the drops and the moment of blackness, but before the drops separate, the ground clear light appears for the first time to the dying person.

The experience of the ground clear light is like an utterly clear sky, like the dawn before sunrise when there is some light in the dawning sky. This is not a sensory experience; it is more of a cognitive experience. It is a state of lucid cognition with no conceptuality; there is no conceptualized apprehension because

the eighty types of thought have become dormant. This is an experience of the fourth wisdom, the wisdom of co-emergent joy, which is the state of mahamudra.

Assuming that these things are not recognized — as they usually are not, and never by untrained people — they happen one instant after another. They do happen, so even untrained people will experience this fourth wisdom and the ground clear light, but because they have not familiarized themselves with the ground clear light during their life, they will not recognize it. If the ground clear light is recognized and the person rests in it, this is the transformation of death into dharmakaya, which is called “lesser buddhahood.” It is called “buddhahood” because it is the achievement of awakening; it is the achievement of the supreme state that is the wisdom vajra, the spontaneous presence of the trikaya. It is called “lesser” because it is not the demonstration of perfect buddhahood, as in the case of the twelve deeds of Buddha Shakyamuni and so forth.

This is the point where liberation can be achieved while dying. You say to the person, “When we get to that point,” because you are still introducing all of this earlier in the stages, “I will remind you of this again. Try to recognize that and rest in its nature.”

Everything up to this point has been introducing, reminding, or instructing the person on the process of dying that leads up to the actual moment of death, which is the ground clear light. At this point during the final part of the dying process, the attending teacher or Dharma friend has been reminding the person of what they are and will be experiencing. The text says this should be done not once, but three times slowly. The purpose of this is so the person will be able to understand the stages and therefore have more of a chance to recognize the ground clear light and rest within it.

Checking the Pulse

When dissolution culminates with the state of black attainment, which occurs just before the ground clear light, the death process is generally irreversible, and the breathing stops. Usually people will breathe out and then not breathe in again. At this point the pulse in the two arteries in the throat should be checked.

Three different things can happen. In some cases, the last outbreath and the cessation of the pulse in the throat happen simultaneously. In some cases, the pulse stops just before. In most cases, after the last out-breath there will be one or two more pulsations

in the throat. In any case, after the person breathes their last breath, if you are the attendant, you should put your finger on these arteries and feel when the pulse stops.

If the pulse has not stopped, do not press down on it; just feel it. As soon as the pulse stops in these two arteries, press on them forcefully for just a short time. This will cause the winds in the side channels, the rasana and lalana, to reverse and go back into the central channel. This is probably not of great importance with an untrained person, but if the person is trained in the practices of the channels and winds, this will facilitate their recognition and liberation. This is said to be a profound technique that makes it impossible for the person not to achieve recognition and samadhi, but it depends on the person having some experience with the channels and winds.

The *Great Liberation Through Hearing in the Bardo* teaches this as follows. As soon as the pulse ceases, press briefly on these two arteries. The great teacher Sakya Pandita wrote that as soon as the pulse stops, wrap a khata tightly around the person's throat. You do this for the same reason that you press the pulse, to cause the side-channel winds to reverse. Nowadays in Bhutan people have a khata blessed by an eminent teacher before passing away. They have the teacher tie two knots in the khata at the correct distance apart, and then when the person dies and the pulse

stops, the khata with the two knots can be tied tightly around their throat. The term used for a khata or other cloth used in this way is *gulching*. You would translate it as “necktie,” but it is really an honorific term meaning, “something put around the neck of a vase.” The person of course is not a vase, but the writings say that even though they are not a vase, they still get the vase-neck decoration! In any case, it does not matter if you press on the arteries with your fingers or with a khata: simply pressing on the arteries is sufficient.

In the case of dealing with a teacher who is likely to remain in samadhi, as soon as the breathing has stopped, you should quickly arrange their body into the position you want it to remain in. This is when you put on the meditation hat and the outer robe, and cross their legs into vajra posture, straighten them up, and so on. After that you do not touch them again.

General Advice on Pointing Out the Ground Clear Light

The previous section explained the reminders during the stages of dissolution, which are given while the person is dying in order to prepare them for what they will experience. Now we come

to what to say to them after their breathing has stopped, when they are presumably experiencing the ground clear light. At this stage you actually point out the ground clear light to them.

After the black attainment has subsided and the ground clear light is appearing, they will again become aware. If you go close to them and speak to them in a normal tone of voice, not too loud and not too quietly, they will be able to hear you. In all cases, do not start by addressing them by name. This is because we all have the habit of listening whenever our name is called, but this can cause the person's consciousness to depart through their ears, and this is one of the gates you do not want their consciousness to depart from. Therefore do not call them by name initially.

There are four different ways to point out the ground clear light. In the first one you begin by saying, "The ground clear light is now appearing to you. Rest in the state of practice." In other words, rest in the meditation on the nature of mind with which you are already familiar. This obviously presumes that the person has some familiarity with the nature of mind. Say this three times before you address the person by name. Then gently call their name three times.

After this comes the main body of the introduction. “KYE MA! For you, the appearances of this life are over. They are no longer appearing. It is therefore time for you to transform death into the dharmakaya. The nature of your cognition, your awareness, is simply emptiness, utter emptiness, pure emptiness, with no substantial existence or characteristics such as color and so forth. It does not exist as anything whatsoever. This is the buddha Samantabhadra, father and mother.

“Your cognition, your awareness, in that way is empty in its nature: however, while it is utterly empty, it is not just empty. Although utterly empty, it is nevertheless not nothing, because it is brilliant or intense in its cognitive capacity. It is clear and it is obvious, which means it is not something you have to search for. It is just your awareness. It is just there. This brilliant, clear, and obvious cognition is your self-aware wisdom, mahamudra. It is empty in its nature and does not exist as anything whatsoever, but in its characteristic as being a cognition, it is unceasingly lucid, and the display of that lucidity is vividly obvious. In other words, it is not hidden from you. It is just what you experience. It is all these things inseparable: emptiness, lucidity, and unlimited display. That is the dharmakaya buddha. Self-awareness, this luminous inseparable cognition and emptiness, is the primordial buddha Changeless Light. Because your mind itself has been buddha from the very beginning, simply look at it naturally, which means let

it look at itself. There is no looker separate from that which is looked at. Rest in that looking. If you can remain that way for a long time, it is taught that you will achieve buddhahood as the dharmakaya at this time.”

The text says you say this either once or three times, but really it should definitely be said three times. For this to have any benefit whatsoever, even if the attending person lacks realization, they must at least have genuine love and compassion for the person who has died. It also presupposes some degree of experience with the mind’s nature on the part of the person who has died.

You repeat the pointing out for several days. The person who has died will not know what day it is; you want them to know, so each day you will say, “The ground clear light is appearing to you. Remain undistracted in samadhi.” They are in samadhi, so you remind them each day to remain undistracted. Then you respectfully call them by name or title, depending on who they are, and then you remind them. You say, “Such-and-such number of days has gone by since you died. Please continue to remain in thukdam, in samadhi, as you have been.” In this way you give them a daily reminder of where they are. You do this because they may have the intention to remain in samadhi for a certain number of days, and you need to tell them what day it is.

The instructions just given are a general clarification of samadhi, or introduction to the ground clear light. *General* here means that it is actually designed for those who are likely to remain in samadhi, who have some kind of powerful practice. Three other variations on this are now given for three different types of individuals.

Pointing-Out Instructions for Someone with Strong Devotion

If someone is dying or has just died who did not have great experience or realization but had very strong devotion and faith, you should take a slightly different approach. You should sing to them the way Milarepa's songs are sung: "KYE MA, fortunate child of good family." You call them this to acknowledge that they have met with Dharma, have encountered teachers, and have generated great devotion for them. "In your heart, in the dharmachakra," the dharmachakra is the chakra or wheel of channels at the heart, "in the midst of your heart like a jewel, on a lotus, sun, and moon-disk seat, is your kind root guru in the form of Vajradhara with complete costume." You are instructing the person to visualize their root guru in the form of Vajradhara, just like in the preliminary practices. "He is ornamented by

the marks and signs, and blazing with light and rays of light. He is the embodiment of all buddhas. He is your guru, the dharmakaya Vajradhara. Your mind itself is inseparable from this dharmakaya. They are now mixed.” In this way, you instruct the person to identify their guru, visualized as Vajradhara, with the nature of their mind.

Then you say, “With your mind, look at your mind. Its empty nature is the dharmakaya guru. Its characteristic lucidity is the sambhogakaya guru.” This is what is represented by the marks, signs, and so on in the visualization of Vajradhara’s appearance. “Its unlimited variety of manifestation is the nirmanakaya guru. Those three things are not three different things. They are one thing. This is the inseparability of the trikaya, the essence body, or *svabhavikakaya*. That is your mind, your guru, the precious guru.” You are putting three things together in the person’s mind: their mind, their root guru, and Vajradhara, the embodiment of all buddhas. “The guru, the precious buddha, is inseparable from you; you are one. Through understanding the point of devotion, the blessings of the guru have entered your mind. Now your mind and his mind are mixed. Like a cloudless sky, the ground clear light is appearing to you. Rest in it without distraction. That famous and exalted thing we call “buddhahood” you are about to attain. No one is happier or better off than you, fortunate one.” This is sufficient pointing-out for a devotional person.

Pointing-Out Instructions for Someone with Strong Generation Stage Practice

The following instructions are for practitioners who have no experience or realization. It is for those who, having a clear visualization of themselves as their deity, have a good practice of the generation stage but who have not practiced the completion stage. For them begin by saying, “KYE MA! Listen, fortunate child of good family. Because the enemy, the Lord of Death, Yama, is so powerful,” in other words, there is nothing we can do to stop dying, “through impermanence you have passed from this life. Now your awareness has not left your body.” Remember that there are two different stages of death: the first stage is where the person is dead, but their consciousness is still in their body. Their consciousness is not biologically seated the way it is during life, but it is still in their heart. “Now your awareness has not yet entirely separated from your body.” This means that when it separates, the mental body arises in the bardo. This has not happened yet, which is why you are pointing this out.

Now is the time for the person to visualize themselves as their yidam. If they can do this before the mental body arises, then the mental body will arise in the form of the yidam, as you will see. “Visualize yourself as your deity with complete ornamentation, costume, and scepters, for example, like a clear reflection in a

mirror.” You are telling the person to visualize themselves as their deity as clearly as possible but without inherent existence, like a reflection in a mirror. “Visualize the deity as vivid and distinct.” In other words, they should get the details as clearly as possible. “Visualize the body as devoid of any solidity or substantial existence; for example, visualize it like a rainbow in the sky, vivid but insubstantial. Do this not merely as an act of imagination.” In other words, they should not just think they are pretending to be the deity but they should generate the pride of actually being the deity. During your life when you do a yidam practice, you know that you are imagining it, but you try to develop the attitude of actually being the deity. This attitude is extremely important in order for what follows to actually work.

You further instruct the person, “In your body, in the center of the palace of your heart, on a lotus, sun, and moon-disk seat, is your mind, the seed syllable of the deity.” The person should visualize their deity’s seed syllable, whether it is HRI, AH, HUM, or whatever. “For example, it is like a lamp flame not exposed to the wind, brilliant and not moving. It is very bright; but while it is so bright and clear, it too is empty in its nature, like the reflection of the moon in water. Direct your awareness one-pointedly to that syllable, and by doing so, when your mind and body separate,” in other words, when your consciousness leaves your body, “before the mental body appears in the bardo,

your body will become the body of the deity.” This means that as soon as the mind leaves the body, the mental body arises based on habit. If you maintain the visualization of yourself as the yidam in samadhi until this point, you will not arise in the form of your habitual ordinary body, but in the form of the deity. “In that way, you will attain buddhahood inseparable from your deity. Really you will achieve the state called a ‘mahamudra vidyadhara.’ Therefore remain in this samadhi for a long time.”

Sing this to the person three times, melodiously but clearly so they can understand. This will definitely give those trained in the generation stage, but not in the completion stage, the ability to remain in samadhi and be liberated. By doing this every day, you prevent the possibility of their straying and forgetting.

Pointing-Out Instructions for an Ordinary Mahamudra Practitioner

The following are instructions for practitioners who have practiced mahamudra but have not reached any of the exalted levels. In other words, of the four yogas, they are still practicing the first yoga of onepointedness, which is essentially a state of tranquillity. This is not actually a state of insight, because from

the mahamudra point of view, true insight is only achieved with the first bodhisattva level, which in mahamudra terms is called the “lesser beyond-elaboration.” In this case, you have a problem because whatever they may have called their practice, they were basically practicing tranquillity. As a result, they cannot possibly be free from attachment to their experiences, and simply pointing out the nature of their mind may not be enough. You have to dispel their fixation on the experiences of bliss, lucidity, and nonconceptuality. What follows is a way of pointing out the ground clear light and preventing straying or error.

Begin by saying, “Be undistracted in your samadhi. KYE MA! Listen, fortunate child of good family. Child, you have passed from this life. It is therefore time now for you to take hold of thukdam or samadhi. With your mind, look at your mind. Your mind is empty. It has no form or color. It is not nothing because it gleams. Its lucidity is vivid. It is like a sesame-oil lamp unbuffeted by the wind. In that way, placing your mind in this state, rest your mind in one-pointedness.” When the person rests their mind in one-pointedness, they experience a state of intense well-being. For this to work, the person has to have actual, real tranquillity training. Whenever you rest in a state of tranquillity, there is an experience of intense well-being, which will now occur to the person, and therefore you have to deal with that. “The experience of great well-being within your mind: do

not be attached to that. Do not crave it. Look at its nature.” If you do not say that, and if the person becomes attached to the well-being of tranquillity, then they have strayed.

“What you will see when you look at it is the unity of that wellbeing, that bliss, with emptiness, which is mahamudra. As well, your mind is lucid awareness, but that awareness is empty, and its emptiness is naked.” In other words, you do not have to search for it. It is right there. “Nevertheless the lucidity is glaring,” (the text literally says, “loud” or “obvious”) “but do not hold this to be supreme.” Because the person is still a beginner in terms of the whole path, they fixate on experience and think their experience is supreme. You are telling them not to hold this as supreme. “Look at its nature. What you will see is the unity of lucidity and emptiness, which is mahamudra.”

At this point, you have dealt with two possible ways this person might cling: to the experience of bliss and to the experience of lucidity. Now you deal with the third: “Your mind does not exist as anything whatsoever. It is empty. Cut through all attachment to the apprehension of your mind as emptiness and rest your mind in the present without alteration, simply resting in whatever arises. Remain in this samadhi for a long time and you will come to realize emptiness. Tomorrow, or in the future, when your body and mind separate, you will have control over

where you are born.” Again, say that three times, and by doing so you will cut off the possibility of them deviating from the path.

Pointing-Out Instructions for an Advanced Mahamudra Practitioner

In the case of a mahamudra practitioner who has achieved any of the higher yogas, beyond elaboration, one taste, and so forth, no such pointing out is necessary because when you achieve beyond elaboration, you achieve the first bodhisattva level. In other words, until you achieve the first bodhisattva level, you have not achieved beyond elaboration. There is nothing that needs to be pointed out to a person who has already achieved the higher yogas of mahamudra. All you need to do is say every day, “Be undistracted in your samadhi.” Basically you are telling them, “Carry on,” and then they take care of it.

Pointing-Out Instructions for Someone with No Practice Experience

For those who have no practice experience and are not going to be able to remain in samadhi, you should not give any of the

above instructions. You should recite the names of buddhas and perform the ejection of consciousness. This will be far more beneficial for them because they are not going to be able to remain in samadhi.

What to Do with People Who Remain in Samadhi

People sometimes remain in samadhi and show no signs of leaving it, which can be inconvenient for the attendants. His Holiness the Sixteenth Karmapa remained in samadhi after he died, but the day before the flight that was supposed to transport his remains, he still showed no sign of emerging. Tenzin-la became somewhat anxious that they were going to miss the plane, and he asked Kalu Rinpoche if there was anything they could do. Kalu Rinpoche said, “Don’t worry, the fathers and sons,” in other words, His Holiness and the lineage holders, “are in complete control of their samadhi. He will take care of it and make sure you do not miss the flight.” Sure enough, His Holiness emerged from samadhi at just the right time, and they made the flight.

The text says that when a samadhi goes on too long, there are those who think it is inconvenient and try to shake those people out

of samadhi by playing musical instruments or burning incense, both of which are to be avoided when someone is in samadhi, as you will remember. This can cause innumerable problems, and it is an obstacle to liberation. If it is someone who is already enlightened, it does not really matter, but for those who are in between you do not want to mess up their samadhi because it is not simply a state of tranquillity. They are resting in a state of mahamudra, and if they can do so long enough they can achieve buddhahood. Rather than trying to shake them out of samadhi, you should perform the ejection of consciousness for them. This will not cause any problems; it is only beneficial. It is like placing a bridle on a good horse: in other words, if a person's samadhi is good, you are simply handing them a bridle. There is nothing wrong with that.

This is an important remark on Chakme Rinpoche's part because it is somewhat controversial. What do you do with those who remain in samadhi too long? Chakme Rinpoche makes it clear: perform the ejection of consciousness rather than attempting to shake them out of samadhi through physical means. In general, if you need to move on and if someone has been in samadhi for a long time, or if you are not sure whether the samadhi has ended, or if you are not even sure the person has entered into samadhi, the best thing to do is the ejection of consciousness.

This was spoken by Raga Asya, Chakme Rinpoche, in the break before the evening session on the second day of the month Thakar in the Horse Year, and was taken down in dictation by the meditator, Karma Virya Sagara, Lama Tsonдру Gyamtso.

Questions and Answers

STUDENT: Rinpoche, how is this practice of ejection different from the ones you explained in earlier chapters?

RINPOCHE: Well, there is no real difference in the ejection of consciousness itself. The technique presented in the previous chapter and expanded on in this one is distinct because it places equal emphasis on the ejection of consciousness and on the preparation for the stages of dying that are clearly pointed out. Therefore this prepares the person not only to eject their consciousness, but also to rest in samadhi after death.

STUDENT: Is it necessary to be aware of the stages in order to do this practice?

RINPOCHE: If you are going to practice this, you do need to learn about the various stages. This is because you cannot be sure if there is going to be someone at hand to remind you of these

stages when you die. It is best if you can learn about them and keep them in mind so when they actually happen to you, you will recollect them.

In Tibet there was a woman in my region who was renowned as a strong meditation practitioner. In her will she actually directed that someone, a good lama, be present when she was dying, and she specified exactly what he was to say to her on each day for the first twenty-one days after her death. She knew the stages of death so well that she knew exactly what was going to happen, but she did not know whether she would be able to recognize these on her own or not, so she wanted someone to point out the stages on each of the days.

STUDENT: Can you eject the consciousness at any of those stages, or is it better to eject at the third stage?

RINPOCHE: If the person actually ejects their consciousness or it is ejected for them, it is done right after death. If certain signs appear to indicate that the consciousness has been ejected, then reminders and instructions are not necessary.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, you talked about the recognition of the ground clear light. Is that an awareness of awareness? The question really is, what does it mean to recognize the ground clear

light, and is the answer that it is the same type of recognition as when we are aware of our thinking?

RINPOCHE: There is a tremendous difference between the type of selfawareness that is merely an awareness of your own experience, an awareness of what thoughts are arising and passing through your mind, and what is called “self-aware wisdom,” which is not an awareness of the contents of mind but an awareness of the nature of mind. The self-awareness that recognizes the ground clear light is the second type of awareness, and it is therefore very different in nature and characteristic from the self-awareness that is merely mindfulness of the contents of mind.

For one thing, the self-awareness that is mindfulness of the contents of mind is still dualistic and conceptual. Normally when we attempt to familiarize ourselves with the nature of our minds, we are working with this kind of conceptual or mere self-awareness, not self-aware wisdom. However those who reach higher paths and stages will actually generate self-aware wisdom.

Most practitioners attempt to familiarize themselves with the ground clear light by familiarizing themselves with something that is a similitude of it. The development of experience of a similitude of the ground clear light is called the “development of example or analogous wisdom.” What you experience at your

death when the actual ground clear light is experienced is called the “meaning wisdom.”

Familiarizing yourself with something that is merely a similitude of the ground clear light is effective for the same reason that if you wish to recognize a person you have never met, you can familiarize yourself with a photograph of the person and then you will recognize the person when you actually meet them. When that happens, it is called the “child leaping into his or her mother’s lap.” The child refers to the example wisdom, and the mother to the meaning wisdom.

STUDENT: This seems like a Catch-22, because when we are actually in meaning wisdom, no one is telling us that this is the real thing. It seems to be kind of a bind.

RINPOCHE: If the experience with example wisdom is limited to the level of language and is completely conceptual, then what you say is true: without experiencing the meaning wisdom in this life, the example wisdom by itself does not guarantee, or necessarily even make likely, the recognition of the meaning wisdom at death.

There are many different degrees of familiarization in preparation for death, all of which we could consider degrees of example

wisdom. You can train assiduously in example wisdom, and develop the certainty that example wisdom is a starting place for you to recognize the meaning wisdom — in other words, you keep in mind that example wisdom is just example wisdom, whereas meaning wisdom is beyond all elaboration. If you approach it this way, it is quite likely you will be able to recognize the meaning wisdom, the ground clear light, when it arises. In fact countless beginners have been liberated by doing exactly that.

Furthermore, whether meaning wisdom is recognized or achieved in this life or at the time of death, it always depends on preparation for it through the cultivation of example wisdom. For example, if someone has the nature of mind pointed out, and based on that pointing out and familiarization, recognize meaning wisdom, which is the actual wisdom, then what is recognized at the time of pointing out is merely example wisdom. Nevertheless it is sufficient as a basis for progress.

Everyone who has ever recognized actual or meaning wisdom has begun by familiarizing himself or herself with or cultivating example wisdom. Achieving the first bodhisattva level, which is the meaning or actual wisdom, is a spontaneous happening; you do not seek it out, instead it just appears before you.

STUDENT: Do all the practices that we do cultivate example wisdom, or is there a specific practice we have to do to experience example wisdom?

RINPOCHE: I would not want to say that we could limit the purpose of all practices to simply generating example wisdom. In a slightly broader way, one could say the purpose of all practices is to gather the accumulation of merit and the accumulation of wisdom, which makes it possible to generate example wisdom.

STUDENT: In this life we have never experienced having a mind that is not biologically seated in our body. Even when we are dreaming, although our experience is to some extent divorced from physical reality, we are still biologically alive. We have never experienced a state of being or cognition without a physical biological support.

Another thing is that although it is said that the body in the bardo is merely a mental projection, yet it seems real to the consciousness that generates it. Since our only reason for believing in the existence of this physical body is that it seems real to us, what grounds are there really for calling the one more physically real than the other?

RINPOCHE: If you ask this question from the ultimate point of view, then it would be reasonable to say that these two bodies are equally illusory because they are equally interdependent phenomena. Our understanding is that anything that is interdependent or a function of interdependence is mere appearance, and does not inherently or truly exist. From that point of view, as you implied in your question, the one is not more real than the other is.

Within the limited context of how things appear, they do have different characteristics. In the context of relative truth, their characteristics are sufficiently different, and while we would not want to give either one a superior ontological status objectively, we can make reasonable distinctions between them based on the type of experience we have. The physical body that we inhabit during our lives is a genetic product. It carries the inheritance of our parents, and it was produced by the union of our parents. This is not true with the mental body, which is merely a projected replica of the previous physical body based on the habit of having possessed it. When you die, your mind and body are separated. Your physical body rots away, or is burned or eaten. Your consciousness produces a replica of that body based on the habit of existing in that body. The mental body is not produced in the same way as the physical body.

Furthermore, although our physical body is a relative truth, it is an objective relative truth. A person's physical body can be seen by anyone who is in a position to see it. This is not true of the mental body, which is largely a purely subjective experience of the bardo cognition.

As you indicated in your question, to the person in the bardo, the mental body appears to be an actual physical body. They seem to be experiencing this body with the senses, although in fact they are not because they do not have any senses. In that sense, it is very much like what we experience in dreams. While we are dreaming, we are still biologically alive, but what is happening in the dream does not happen to our physical body. It is just happening to our mind. If we dream of fire, we are afraid of being burned; if we dream of a cliff, we are afraid of falling off; if we dream of water, we are afraid of drowning; and so on. Our feeling of physical danger or the potential for physical danger, which in fact does not exist in that context, lasts until we wake up. When we wake up we say, "Oh, it was just a dream. I was in no danger at all." As long as we have not woken up from that dream, we experience fear and possibly pain.

Those who have cultivated the practice of lucid dreaming — for example, a yogin who has practiced the six dharmas of Naropa — will know while they are dreaming that they are dreaming.

When the same dream images such as fear, water, or a cliff arise for them, they experience no fear, no water, and no cliff. They experience no fear because they realize that these things have no physical reality, and that the body in the dream that appears to be threatened by these things also has no physical reality.

The experience in the bardo is the same. As long as you do not recognize that the bardo body is a mental body, as long as you think it is real, you experience fear and the perception of danger. If you recognize that the bardo body is merely a mental projection, this creates the possibility for liberation because if you recognize this, you realize that this body is not subject to the limitations of a physical body, and therefore you are free to go to a pure realm and so forth. As long as you do not recognize it as a mental body and think that you still inhabit a physical body, you will feel limited by that and you will not proceed to liberation. This is why the practice of lucid dreaming, as practiced in the six dharmas of Naropa, is done largely as preparation for the achievement of liberation in the bardo. By gaining the facility to dream lucidly, you gain the facility to recognize the bardo as it occurs.

When you recollect that the bardo body is just a mental body, then you can take advantage of that mental body's unique ability. As I mentioned earlier, because it is a mental body, simply by

recollecting a place you will find yourself there. That includes going to a distant country or even a pure realm. No means of transportation or process of transportation is needed. Therefore once you recognize the nature of the mental body as such, you can immediately take yourself to a pure realm like Sukhavati. Furthermore, and in answer to your question, the fact that the mental body in the bardo can immediately go to a distant place makes it very different from the physical body that we inhabit in this life.

STUDENT: When I go to sleep at night, I never remember any dreams. I am sure I dreamed, but I do not remember them. I have no awareness at all when I fall asleep. Is there anything I can do so I can be more aware?

RINPOCHE: There is nothing in particular that you need to do right now, but the essential method is based on practicing Chenrezik and Amitabha in the evening. When you go to sleep at night, visualize yourself as the deity in your principal practice. Especially visualize the seed syllable in your heart as you are going to sleep. If it is Chenrezik, it would be white; if it were Amitabha, it would be red. In either case it is HRI. As you go to sleep, think that the light of that HRI fills your body as Chenrezik or Amitabha, as well as the surrounding area.

There are two issues here: one is remembering the dreams you have dreamed, and the other is lucid dreaming. Lucid dreaming, which is recognizing you are dreaming while you are dreaming, does not come easily or spontaneously for most people. It usually requires a conscious and persistent effort to achieve it, including the wish to achieve it, and the application of the technique that I just described.

As for remembering when you wake up that you dreamed and what you dreamed, it really does not seem to make much difference. Some people, for one reason or another, tend to remember their dreams and other people do not; it is not better or worse either way.

STUDENT: From the perspective of the eight consciousnesses, which consciousness experiences the bardo, if it is relevant at all to speak about those eight in relation to the bardo?

RINPOCHE: The source of the appearances in the bardo is the eighth consciousness, because the habits or imprints planted in the eighth consciousness are what arise in the bardo. They are unrecognized by the seventh consciousness, and they are fixated on by the sixth.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, you spoke about the importance of having harmonious samaya with the attendant, and the fact that if there were a broken samaya with the attendant, it would be worse than having no guidance at all. Is that because there is actually some kind of transmission going on mind to mind, or is it because the mind of a dying person is more sensitive?

RINPOCHE: If there is a samaya breakage between the two parties, the dying person and the attendant, then the person's presence and what they say will not be helpful but will actually be harmful. Because the actual benefit of the reminder depends on harmonious samaya, then even if the attendant does not have great realization, what they are saying to the dying person or the recently dead person will benefit them powerfully through the force of the harmony of samaya.

Here *broken samaya* means a situation where two people have practiced together in the same community, but have developed a profound antipathy and enmity for one another. This is not talking about the normal situation where there are always ups and downs in people's personal dealings; this means a deep-rooted enmity, like a feud. No benefit will accrue in this kind of situation, where the feud is strong enough so the person thinks, "I will never help this person." That is what is called "breaking samaya with the vajra siblings."

STUDENT: It is the samaya between the two people that is broken?

RINPOCHE: Yes.

STUDENT: Is it the same situation if the student is dying and has broken samaya with their teacher and that teacher is attending them? Even if the teacher is pure?

RINPOCHE: There is no way that can be beneficial.

STUDENT: Does the awareness of wisdom have anything to do with recognizing one's own buddha nature?

RINPOCHE: It is the same thing. The terms nature of mind and buddha nature are synonymous.

STUDENT: During the teaching Rinpoche, you talked about the four requirements for taking rebirth in Sukhavati. One of them is having one-pointed faith in Amitabha, and another is doing phowa and the one-pointed visualization of HRI. How do you achieve this one-pointedness?

RINPOCHE: One-pointed faith in Amitabha is the resolution, without doubt, that Amitabha is a valid source of refuge, and that through his aspirations it is possible to be reborn in Sukhavati. In a sense this is connected to the one-pointed focus on the

seed syllable in the heart, because you need to understand that Amitabha and Chenrezik are of the same single nature, with distinct appearances merely for the benefit of beings.

Furthermore when you visualize yourself as Chenrezik and visualize the syllable HRI in your heart, you should remember that HRI not only represents and embodies the mind of Chenrezik, but also Amitabha. By concentrating one-pointedly on that seed syllable, you protect your mind from distraction, and you are also focusing your mind on the mind of Amitabha or Chenrezik.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, approximately one month ago my mother passed away. Since then, my three sisters have been very distraught, and one of them is actually on the verge of a mental breakdown. My mother and my three sisters are practicing Catholics. My mother had a very strong faith, and she mentioned to me many times that she was not concerned about dying. She knew where she was going. I do not feel that my sisters have faith as strong as my mother had. Is there something I might say to them to ease their minds?

RINPOCHE: In this situation, it is hard to know what the best approach is. There are several things you can point out that may help your sisters. The first thing is that the basic nature or characteristic of everything is impermanent, which means that

death is the natural conclusion of life. Death is a part of life itself, and it should not be regarded as a tragedy. If they have some degree of faith in whatever tradition they practice, then they can bring that to mind. You can bring that up and remind them of your mother's state as she passed away.

I do not know very much about the Christian descriptions of the afterlife because I do not read English, but the Christian concept of heaven is well known. If they are Christians and believe in heaven, you should remind them of that. Furthermore there must be things in their tradition that they can do to benefit your mother's soul, such as praying, in which case you should encourage them to do these things. If they have some faith in such practices, this will also alleviate some of their distress and grief. Not knowing the tradition in detail, I cannot really give you much more advice than that.

You can also remind them they are going to die one day as well. Although it sounds harsh, it sometimes helps people put the death of a loved one in perspective. Also remind them how extraordinary it was for your mother to pass away without fear through the force of her faith.

STUDENT: My father is not doing well either; I am sure he is fairly close to death, and that he realizes this. He was also raised

as a Catholic, although he does not practice. At this point I know he is concerned with shortcomings of his life. Is there anything I might say to him, or something he could do as his death approaches to help him with a better rebirth?

RINPOCHE: Again, I cannot advise you in detail because I do not know enough about the general tenets of Christianity, nor your father's particular views. In such situations, it is often helpful to return to something that is very general, something you can communicate without investing in one or another system of tenets. In Buddhist terms, we would say that fundamentally everyone has buddha nature, which is their basic being, and everyone also has obscurations. We all do things that are wrong, and therefore we obscure our buddha nature. To purify ourselves of obscurations, it seems necessary to regret the things we have done wrong. If you can communicate this to him in a non-denominational way without using Buddhist terms, then he can feel less conflicted about the regrets he has and see them as a healthy part of preparing for death.

Ultimately, of course, what will benefit people the most is preparing them to recognize their own nature, as it is revealed to them at the time of death. This is the recognition of the self-aware wisdom that is intrinsic to us. This recognition depends fundamentally on a conviction or firmly resolved belief in the

existence of one's own fundamental buddha nature. Beyond that there are the specific methods we have been discussing in this teaching, but I cannot recommend giving those to your father because they do not really work outside of a particular context.

STUDENT: When I speak of my mother or think about her, I am still brought to tears. I have a hard time with my emotions because I have such a feeling of love for her. Is that the feeling that we should have for all beings?

RINPOCHE: Yes. If someone can feel that type of love for all beings, this is tremendous, and this is what we are aiming toward. Just by itself, simply having that kind of love and concern for others is of great benefit. In addition, we want to go even farther than that and do things with our bodies and speech that benefit others practically and immediately. When you do such things, and you find yourself concerned with or missing one person in particular, you can dedicate the virtue of any virtuous action to all beings, using in this case your mother to represent all beings.

STUDENT: My mental concept of Amitabha is tainted because I lived in China twenty years ago as an exchange student, and there Amitabha was synonymous with the word *buddha*. Whenever they were talking about any buddha, they would always use the name "Amitabha." Amitabha was always portrayed in a comical

light, and people who supplicated or had devotion for Amitabha were always comical. To this day, my concept of Amitabha is really tainted and I don't know how to overcome that.

RINPOCHE: You were exposed to many lies and many distortions at that time because the influence of Communism was well established. This influence produced a distortion of Dharma in order to discourage people from practicing it. Fundamental to the tenets of Communism is discouraging people from practicing religion, so they have to try to make sacred things appear ridiculous. A great deal of effort is put into this; if they cannot defame something by claiming that it is harmful, they make it seem silly and ridiculous, and that is what you were exposed to. You are not to blame for having that association. Your first association with the name of Amitabha is an unfortunate one, but you will eventually wear that out.

There are even worse things than that. My sister told me that in China they were saying that the meaning of the words OM MANI PADME HUM was, "I lie to you, you lie to me." In Tibetan deceiving someone is literally to "spin their head." In China they were saying that the symbolic meaning of the prayer wheel was "spinning the heads of everyone," in other words, deceiving everyone, and that was what was being cultivated. That is the kind of thing that Communists say about Buddhism.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, why is it that thoughts of aversion and ignorance stop at particular stages?

RINPOCHE: This happens because the consciousnesses that generate those thoughts temporarily cease functioning, and since those consciousnesses are not functional, the thoughts cannot arise.

There is a distinction, however, between a state of dormancy and a state of purification. These kleshas are not purified at death. If they were, there would be no results of actions. The imprints are stored and so are still present, but the appearance of the kleshas temporarily ceases. The kleshas become dormant because the consciousnesses that cause them to function are temporarily dormant.

STUDENT: An ordinary person would not see that as they die because it occurs too quickly?

RINPOCHE: They experience something, but they do not recognize what is happening to them. This is why it is beneficial to study these things, because then you are able to understand what is happening to you at that time and how to use it beneficially. If you try to explain these things to those who have no background

in this as they are dying, it would not make any impression on them because they would have no context for understanding it.

STUDENT: Why is it that the best time to eject is when the drops meet?

RINPOCHE: Because when the white and red drops meet at the heart, all of your winds and mind are concentrated in one place.

STUDENT: And the red drop goes up to the nose. Why doesn't it go all the way up when they split?

RINPOCHE: I do not know in detail. I suspect it might have something to do with the two side channels, the rasana and lalana, but that is not clearly stated in this context, so I do not know for sure. This definitely happens if a good teacher or practitioner remains in samadhi after death. When they depart from samadhi, the blood and something that looks like mucus or lymph will definitely come out of the nostrils.

STUDENT: In terms of example wisdom, is it a good idea to meditate on an empty sky before dawn?

RINPOCHE: Well, there is no particular custom of doing so as a preparation, and this is because you are speaking of a cogni-

tive experience, not a sensory one. They are not really the same thing. What is beneficial is to keep the analogy in mind so that after your death when you experience a cognitive state that is like a cloudless predawn sky, you will be aware that this is the ground clear light.

STUDENT: In an earlier teaching, something was said regarding the four manams, I think that turning to the guru as the Buddha was the same as relating to the guru in the aspect of mahamudra as svabhavikakaya. Is it correct to look at it that way? Is there a direct correlation between the four manams and the four empowerments in guru yoga?

RINPOCHE: In the Ma Nam Zhi Kor supplication, when you say, “I supplicate the guru, the precious Buddha,” the words of the supplication themselves do not overtly refer to the svabhavikakaya. Since you do not refer to any specific aspect of buddhahood, by implication you are referring to the whole thing, and because the whole thing is the svabhavikakaya, it is acceptable to regard that line as a supplication to the svabhavikakaya.

As for correspondence between the four lines of that supplication and the four empowerments, there is a correspondence because the four empowerments correspond individually to the four kayas, or bodies. In a sense, you can think of the four empowerments

as individually bestowing on you the blessings of each of those kayas or aspects of buddhahood, and by doing so they dispel the particular obscuration that inhibits the achievement of that particular kaya.

In the context of the bardo, the four kayas of the guru are mentioned because what you are trying to recognize in the bardo — known as the ground clear light, mahamudra, or the nature of mind — is the actual four kayas. When this is experienced in the bardo — when you encounter your mind's emptiness, lucidity, unimpeded or unlimited manifestation, and the inseparability of those three — you are encountering the actual four kayas. The reference to the guru's four kayas is made so that you can use devotion to make yourself receptive to that encounter.

STUDENT: What is the source of this type of bardo teaching?

RINPOCHE: I do not really know what the original scriptural source is. It seems that most of the instructions that Chakme Rinpoche gives are from the *Great Liberation Through Hearing in the Bardo* and literature related to that, but it may also have applications from many other sources that are not always identified. If you pursue the sources of the sources and so on back to the beginning, you can say the sources are the tantras taught by

the Buddha that are in turn the sources for the two traditions of the six dharmas of Naropa and the Great Perfection.

STUDENT: Would a tulku or reincarnate lama necessarily be able to remember their experiences through the bardo?

RINPOCHE: I would say that probably most do. My reason for saying this is that in many autobiographies you find descriptions of their recollections of the bardo. I would not feel comfortable saying that all of them definitely do; I believe there is some difference in the degree of realization among tulkus, and so presumably there is a corresponding difference in their degree of recollection. I have no idea how much they all recollect.

There is another reason for saying they must remember these things. A custom from Tibet that exists to this day is when older people, such as people my age, go to a respected teacher and say, “Where am I likely to be reborn, and what virtuous deeds do I need to do to prevent it?” The teacher will say, “Well, if you do such-and-such and such-and-such, you will not be reborn in the three lower states, you will be reborn as a human being,” and so on. In order to be able to say these things, they must be able to detect the questioner’s karma. If they can do that, they surely must be able to recollect their own experiences in the bardo,

but they will not admit it in person. It is not customary for someone to say, “Yes, I remember being in the bardo,” and so on.

STUDENT: When Trungpa Rinpoche was cremated in 1987, I was there in Vermont. It was a relatively clear summer day, and after he was cremated a rainbow formed around the sun. Is that a sign that he went to Sukhavati? If so, does that imply that the person who is now his reincarnation is some sort of emanation from him from Sukhavati?

RINPOCHE: I cannot say whether the reincarnation, the rebirth Twelfth Trungpa Rinpoche, is a direct emanation or an indirect emanation. From our point of view, ultimately speaking there is not any difference.

I was also there at the cremation. I was part of the crew doing the Gyalwa Gyamtso practice on one side of the cremation stupa, and I also saw that rainbow. I think it is an indication that initially he definitely went to a pure realm. Whether the source of emanation remained in that pure realm and dispatched an emanation from there, or whether the actual source of emanation took rebirth in this world, it is impossible to say. As I said, from our point of view, there really is no difference.

STUDENT: I think it has been said that even the Buddha cannot liberate a person. I take this to mean being able to take control of somebody's mind or consciousness. That leads to a question about phowa: it may not be exactly gaining control of someone's consciousness, but it seems like there is a sense of gaining control over it. Why does it work in this case and not in others, and what is the connection that makes this happen?

RINPOCHE: In a sense you are correct; in the best cases of the ejection of consciousness, it is possible for the person to be liberated. The reason why the Buddha said such things are impossible is because he was talking in the context of his presentation of the **four noble truths**, which was an entirely sutric presentation. In that context he did not talk about the extraordinary methods of tantra or mantra, such as the ejection of consciousness.

The reason why the Buddha made this statement was to clearly differentiate his Dharma from theistic tradition, where an omnipotent creator has your destiny in his hands: if the creator is pleased you benefit, and if they are displeased you are cast down. The Buddha made it clear that he was not responsible, and could not be responsible, for people's fate. He did this in order to show that what is important is our own actions, and not the disposition of an external omnipotent being. He had to make that clear in his basic formulation of the Dharma.

Another sense in which what he said is true is that as long as a specific sentient being has not made a karmic connection with an enlightened being through having faith in them and so on, they cannot do much to liberate them. Even an omniscient enlightened being like the Buddha cannot just remove obscurations; there has to be a karmic condition for their doing so. In the case of ejection of consciousness, the mechanism through which that is effected is the coincidence of the power that resides in the deity, mantra, and samadhi of the performing individual. The Buddha was certainly aware of this when he made that statement.

STUDENT: Both *Mountain Dharma* and the Dewachen monlam say that when we go to Dewachen, we can help others with whom we are connected go there as well. When Kalu Rinpoche passed from this world in 1989, I was told that he was preparing a place for all of his disciples, and that eventually everyone would be with him. If one just thinks of Dewachen in a conceptual way, it is a little hard to grasp, but when one thinks that it is like moving to a neighborhood where you have many friends, it is a lot easier to make intense aspirations to be born in Dewachen. I suppose what I'm saying is that it can be hard to conceive of a buddha because his realization is inconceivable, but Kalu Rinpoche I knew.

RINPOCHE: That is one way it works. There are many accounts of teachers passing away into parinirvana, and then seeming to wait, as they predict they are going to, for all of their disciples in that life to die one by one; as each student dies, the teacher leads them to Sukhavati. When you think about it in a conventional way, you assume that in order to be present in the bardo to lead each being to Sukhavati whenever they happen to pass away, the lama would have to remain in the bardo indefinitely, which of course they do not do.

Nevertheless in these cases when people die, they do see their teacher leading them to Sukhavati. The conditions enabling them to see this are their own faith and devotion, as well as the commitment of their teacher to be present for them in that way. In those cases, the connection of faith and devotion on the part of the disciple is the condition that leads that person to Sukhavati.

Even though it is the teacher's commitment that makes this happen, the force behind the whole process is still Amitabha. It is the intercession or aspiration of Amitabha that the enlightened teacher invokes in order to lead their disciples to Sukhavati. Even people who do not have connection with such a teacher will be reborn in Sukhavati if they possess the four causes of rebirth in

Sukhavati. The best possible situation is to possess both the four causes of rebirth and a connection with such a teacher.

STUDENT: How does the attendant classify the dying person? Do they ask the person what their level of practice is? The person is obviously dying, so maybe they are unable to speak. They could rely on hearsay, but since realization can be hidden, even a person's best friend might not know.

RINPOCHE: This is another reason why attendants have to be a close Dharma friend or Dharma companion, that have practiced their whole lives with the dying person. They have received the same instructions together, so they know what degree of pointing-out instructions the person has received and is familiar with. They know how much and what kind of practice the person has done.

In general, reminders of the bardo are offered even to great masters when they pass away. In that case, you use the reminder designed for those with high realization. When you are dealing with ordinary people, as Chakme Rinpoche indicates, you usually do not do this; you just say the names of buddhas and then perform the ejection of consciousness. Untrained people do not have the ability to remain in samadhi after death.

Chakme Rinpoche gives all these variations, which depend on the person's practice, but within our context they are all variations of a very advanced level of practice. Practically speaking, you are probably never going to have to worry about it. If you are present at someone's death, your best bet is to recite the names of buddhas, and mantras such as OM MANI PADME HUM and OM AMI DEWA HRI.

STUDENT: It seems that the Dharma friend should be someone who would be similar to a classmate in school, who went through school with you in the same class, received instruction at the same time from the same teacher, and followed the same curriculum. We are not currently set up that way, so it does not seem we really have that. We are laypeople and we practice alone at home, so there is nobody that we are really in class with us at the same time. I can see how that would work in a monastery, but what do we do as laypeople?

RINPOCHE: In the situation of laypeople who are starting to study Dharma, such kinds of introductions are not going to be functional. In this kind of situation, it is necessary to say buddhas' names, recite mantras, pray, and do virtuous things like circumambulation for the other person. For a beginner the question of knowing what type of introduction to give does not

really come up, because the person is not at the level where they can give any kind of introduction.

STUDENT: Is the ejection of consciousness and going to Dewachen mainly for those of us from the human realm, whereas those from other realms cannot get to Dewachen? Also, in the other five realms, do they see Amitabha in the same kind of humanoid form that we see him?

RINPOCHE: This is quite a meaningful question and of some importance. Holy teachers who have gained mastery over the ejection of consciousness not only perform this for humans, but also for animals. When they are performing the ejection of consciousness for animals, they do not instruct the animal to visualize Amitabha and so on, since animals will not understand this and also because they cannot meditate. The issue of whether animals need to imagine Amitabha as similar to themselves in form does not arise.

If the ejection of consciousness is successful to the point where the animal is reborn in Sukhavati, they experience it exactly the same way a former human being would. If in their former life they were frightened of bipeds, they will not be frightened in Sukhavati because they have adopted the same sort of body

that we get when we are reborn there. The fact that they were an animal in their previous life is no longer an issue.

Sukhavati is actually experienced the same way by all beings, regardless of what species they were beforehand. It is possible for bodhisattvas to appear as a member of any species because they generally adopt the species of the beings they are attempting to benefit. They do this because the more karma they have in common with those beings, the greater their possibility of access, communication, and effective activity. There are innumerable stories of this, the best known being the *Jataka Tales*, which recount the previous lives of the Buddha. In these tales the Buddha took birth as animals, birds, and so on.

Furthermore, when it is said that any nirmanakaya buddha is simultaneously active in a billion worlds, they are always active in what constitutes the human realm in that world, but we should not assume that these human realms in different worlds are actually the same species. They might be very, very different from one another.

STUDENT: Basically all beings of all realms have the possibility of going to Dewachen from the realm they are in?

RINPOCHE: To be frank, human beings with strong antipathy toward Dharma, or who have great doubt about dharma, cannot be reborn in Sukhavati even if a realized being intercedes. Animals, of course, do not have antipathy toward Sukhavati nor any doubt about it, and this is because they have never thought about it. Nevertheless they are obscured by their bewilderment.

In any case, for any being to be reborn in Sukhavati, they must have accumulated a great store of merit.

STUDENT: When we do the Amitabha practice, we visualize all beings as Amitabha. It makes me feel that all beings have that opportunity and ability. Then after listening to this, I feel like the chances are slim.

RINPOCHE: The chances of being reborn in Sukhavati are slim for the majority of beings at any one time. The conditions have to be present. The reason why you do that visualization, which is the great accomplishment phase from approach and close approach, and accomplishment and great accomplishment within the Amitabha practice, is so the practitioner gathers the accumulation of merit and transforms their outlook. You should not think that just through visualizing all beings as Amitabha they will all automatically be reborn in Sukhavati. It affects the person who visualizes it far more than it affects the other beings.

STUDENT: In Thrangu Rinpoche's book, *Transforming Consciousness into Wisdom*, he describes the sense faculties using analogies. For example, he says that the eyes are similar to a flax flower. What happens to these faculties during death?

RINPOCHE: These descriptions, which come from the common abhidharma, describe the physical organs. They are attempts to describe through analogy what makes these organs so unique, and why they are therefore physical avenues for specific faculties. The term *indriya* (Sanskrit) or *wangpo* (Tibetan), which means the power to see, to hear, and so on, and which we translate as "faculty" refers to the unique ability these organs have to perform their physical function. It says the eyes are similar to a flax flower, the ears are similar to a knot in birch bark, the nose is similar to copper needles, the tongue is similar to a split moon, and a body is similar to a bird that has feathers on the inside and the outside (this means you can feel both what is inside and outside your body.) As far as how these faculties are connected with the physical organs, you should think of these descriptions as descriptions of the flesh-and-blood organs themselves.

For sense experience to occur, three things have to be present: a faculty, a cognition, and an object. Object is form, sound, smell, and so forth. The cognition means that the mind or consciousness of the person can function via the avenue of that organ

and faculty to generate a corresponding sense-consciousness, and the faculty depends on a biologically functioning organ of that specific sense.

Therefore when you die, your mind separates from your body, and the organs no longer function. Because the organs are not functioning, the faculties no longer exist. The faculties are not destroyed and they do not go anywhere; they just no longer exist. For example, although a corpse has eyes and ears, and there are external forms that could be seen, and sounds that could be heard, the corpse does not hear or see. It has the organs but not the faculties, and this is because the organs are no longer functioning as faculties.

STUDENT: After a person dies and they are a corpse, those sense faculties are no longer present. Yet until the twenty-first day after death they have supercognition, so what is it that hears someone reading or speaking to them? How does that work?

RINPOCHE: As was explained in the detailed explanation of the dying process, when you are dying the consciousnesses are withdrawn inward, and this causes the dissolution of the faculties. Then at the period of black attainment, there is a state of unconsciousness; when the person re-arises from this state, the ground clear light appears.

After the ground clear light appears, they are conscious and can hear. They are not actually hearing through their ear faculty because they are not biologically connected with it, but they can hear. They hear with their mind the same way that later on in the bardo when they have a mental body, the senses they appear to possess are just functions of mind and not true sense faculties. Yet despite the fact that these are not true sense faculties, the person can nevertheless perceive.

STUDENT: With that in mind, is it possible for a highly realized being to speak to the mental consciousness or the mental body of a deceased person without physically being present with them?

RINPOCHE: It is possible. Holy beings have the ability to communicate with bardo beings, and that is why we have purification rituals where the bardo being's consciousness is summoned into the inscription. Then they are given an empowerment, they are taught, they are nourished, and then they are shown the way to Sukhavati. The validity of this, which comes from the Buddha's teachings, essentially lies in the power of the presiding holy being to produce it. Therefore, we can be certain these ceremonies are effective because they were taught by the Buddha, but it is hard to say whether they are 100 percent effective, whether every time they are performed every being is benefited.

STUDENT: When you said that they hear with the mind, does that mean mental consciousness? Does it make sense to speak of disembodied sense consciousnesses?

RINPOCHE: In the case of those in a mental body in the bardo, the perceiver is the mental consciousness. They do not have the sense consciousnesses because they do not have a body, which is the support for the sense consciousnesses. Therefore when that person sees or hears, it is like seeing or hearing in a dream. The mental consciousness and the mental faculty are doing the perceiving, not a sense consciousness and a sense faculty. For example, those who have lost their sight will still have dreams where they see things in the same way as when they could see.

The Precious Jewel: Instructions on Dedication

After the last chapter there are nine chapters concerned with protector practice. These are intended only for those who have finished the approach and accomplishment phases of yidam practice. Just as I omitted the inner and secret yidam practices earlier in this text, I am going to omit these nine chapters here. I hope at some point to teach the restricted chapters in the three-year retreat but there is certainly no benefit in or need to present them to the public. [Editor's note: Rinpoche taught the restricted chapters of Mountain Dharma, Oral Instructions for Mountain Retreat at Karme Ling Retreat Center in 2007, thus completing the entire text.] They will not help you because you cannot make use of them at this point, and it will actually be harmful to speak of them because it constitutes the downfall called the "inappropriate proclamation of the secret."

Now we move to the final actual chapter in the text, which begins with the invocation NAMO SHAKYAMUNIYE!" "I pay homage to the omniscient sage of the Shakyas. Instruction for the profound technique of dedication is as follows." First of all, the reason why we sentient beings wander in samsara is that

we have not gathered the accumulations. From time to time we do gather the accumulation of merit. For example, people often do generous things like sponsoring images of the Buddha and so on. Although we all do innumerable meritorious things over many lifetimes, we never dedicate this merit to the achievement of full awakening for the benefit of all beings, and the result of our merit is that we are born as a god or a human, which is only temporary well-being. Once our merit results in that type of rebirth, it is used up, and therefore we once again fall from that state into the lower realms. Undedicated merit leads to a result that is the same as eating food: when we eat food it is used up, and it cannot be used any more.

On the other hand, if you dedicate your virtue and the merit you accumulate to supreme awakening, then even though you will still experience the pleasant results of that merit as abundant well-being in life after life, it will not be used up until the principal aim of your dedication, which is supreme awakening, has been achieved. Therefore dedicating your merit is the way to make your merit and virtue inexhaustible.

Although you might do many virtuous things in your life, if you do not know how to dedicate your virtue properly, it is like unfired clay pots: very fragile and easily destroyed. It is said that the virtue accumulated through one hundred aeons

of generosity and morality can be destroyed in one moment of uncontrolled anger. Not only that, there is also the situation called “spoiling your own virtue,” which is when you boast of whatever virtuous things you have done; for example, you say, “I have been in retreat,” “I have completed the preliminary practices,” and so on. If you have accomplished virtue through material means and you thereafter regret it out of parsimony or greed, this also destroys your virtue. If you dedicate your merit, if you seal it by dedicating whatever virtue you accumulate, it will not be destroyed or impaired even by anger, spoiling your own virtue, or regretting generosity. Therefore dedication is the most profound thing you can do to protect your virtue.

Furthermore, undedicated virtue does not increase itself; it does not earn interest; dedicated virtue does. Day after day, the amount of virtue that was initially accumulated increases, and therefore dedicating even small amounts of virtue can make that virtue tremendous. For example, the *Sutra of Twenty-five Thousand Stanzas* says there is more virtue and more power in dedicating a small or insignificant virtuous action to full awakening than there is if you sponsor this entire world filled with arhats and pratyekabuddhas for their entire lives, but do not dedicate your virtue.

Concordant and Nonconceptual Dedication

Among dedications, the best and perfect dedication is called the “dedication free from threefold conceptualization.” In comparison, dedication that involves conceptualization of the three aspects is called “poisonous dedication” and is less beneficial. It is said that a poisonous or afflicted dedication can only lead to the well-being of mundane states of gods and humans; it cannot be a direct cause of achieving the state of an arya, which is a supra-mundane state, simply because a defiled cause cannot produce an undefiled result. On the other hand, the true dedication free from threefold conceptualization is only possible for someone who has already realized emptiness — in other words, an arya who has direct realization of emptiness. An ordinary person cannot make such a dedication.

How do you do it? In order for an ordinary person to do this, you must do what is called “concordant dedication.” This means that in your dedication, you make reference to the perfect dedication of buddhas and bodhisattvas. First you call all buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions to witness your dedication, and then you say, “Please cause this dedication to be free of threefold conceptualization.” In that way, you respectfully supplicate them. Then when you dedicate the virtue, think, “I dedicate this virtue in emulation of the manner of dedication of all buddhas

of the past, present, and future, and the wise bodhisattvas such as Samantabhadra, Manjushri, and so forth. May my virtue be dedicated like theirs. May my virtue become like theirs.”

Concordant dedication, which is imagining or bringing to mind nonconceptual dedication, is the way the sutras teach dedication of merit. You can clearly see evidence of this in the *Aspiration to the Conduct of Excellence* and in the *Confession of Downfalls*, which is also known as the *Thirty-five Buddhas*. In concordant virtue, you dedicate the virtue without any concept of the true or inherent existence of the dedication, the beings to whom the virtue is dedicated, and the virtue that is being dedicated. You see all of these things as being like magical illusions or dreams. If you do this, it is a concordant dedication because although you are not actually realizing emptiness, you are adopting the attitude or the belief that these things are empty. This was taught by Lord Atisha, and it can be clearly seen in the original book of the Kadampa tradition.

There is some dispute about this issue of nonconceptual dedication, who can actually do it and who has to do a concordant dedication. The Kagyu tradition and generally both the Mahamudra and Great Perfection traditions assert that realized practitioners, those who have generated the realization called “beyond elaboration,” performing their dedication within the state of practice

is not merely concordant, but an authentic dedication free of conceptualization of the three aspects. According to the Kagyu tradition, as was mentioned in the last chapter, this is because the realization of beyond elaboration, the second of the **four yogas of mahamudra**, is the direct realization of emptiness.

The protector of beings, Sakya Pandita, disputed this. He said, “You say that the realization of beyond elaboration is the direct realization of emptiness and you accept, as we do, that the direct realization of emptiness is and must be the achievement of the first bodhisattva level. You must also accept, as you accept the Mahayana sutras, that a first-level bodhisattva can, in one instant, in the time it takes to extend and withdraw their hand, produce one hundred emanations. These emanations go to one hundred pure realms, encounter one hundred buddhas, hear one hundred different Dharma teachings, and dispatch one hundred emanations in one hundred impure realms, each of which benefits one hundred sentient beings and can, in that same amount of time, cause one hundred worlds to shake. If you have attained what you call ‘beyond elaboration,’ and if you say that you have directly realized emptiness thereby, and you accept that you have therefore attained the first bodhisattva level, then why can’t you do any of these things? Why don’t you have the qualities that must, according to Mahayana Buddhism, pertain to the level you claim to have achieved?”

The Kagyupas standard answer to that criticism, which is essentially an argument against our equation of the first bodhisattva-level with the lesser beyond-elaboration yoga, is that a garuda chick in the egg already has its wings, but until the egg breaks, it cannot fly. Similarly, a lion fetus in the womb already has the natural potential for abilities far beyond those of other animals, but it cannot actually demonstrate them until it is born. In the same way, even though yogis who attain the yoga of beyond elaboration have directly realized emptiness, they did so while still inhabiting a fully matured or karmically ripened physical body, so until the seal of that body is broken, these signs of bodhisattva abilities will not be evident. These signs do become evident when such a yogi enters the bardo. This is why our Kagyu tradition teaches that a teacher has greater blessings just after they have died than while they are alive; they are not limited by their physical body and therefore can demonstrate all of the deeds of buddhas and bodhisattvas.

When that response was submitted, the learned Sakya Pandita said, “You are trying to deceive me with your foolish argument, which is as ridiculous as saying that the sun rises today but its light does not appear until tomorrow.” In response, the protector of beings, the Kagyu master Jikten Sumgön, said, “Look, it is definite that those who display those signs, the twelve hundredfold abilities, have achieved the first bodhisattva level,

but you will not find a statement in the sutras anywhere that says if they do not have those signs they have not achieved it. If you can find in any authentic sutra or tantra such a statement, then please produce it.” Of course, since that time no one has ever discovered any statement by the Buddha to that effect.

This issue also comes up in the *Sutra Predicting Maitreya*. The reason this sutra was taught by the Buddha is as follows: During the time of Buddha Shakyamuni, the bodhisattva Maitreya was present in this world as the bhikshu Ajita, or “Unconquerable.” We use Ajita, or Mipham, as a synonym for Maitreya, but that was his name as a monk among the Buddha’s retinue. He was part of Buddha Shakyamuni’s retinue and it was known that the Buddha had predicted this monk would be the next Buddha, the fifth Buddha of this aeon.

Most of the Buddha’s disciples found this difficult to believe. They said, “This monk shows no signs of imminent buddhahood or uncommon qualities. He is a monk, but he is an ordinary monk. He has not transcended the kleshas. How would it be possible for this person to become the fifth Buddha?” While they were all thinking that, the Buddha was aware of their thoughts, and he gave the talk called the *Sutra Predicting Maitreya*. It is clear in this sutra that even though some people may not display evident signs or qualities, you cannot be sure they have not realized

emptiness. Therefore in the Mahamudra and Great Perfection traditions, it is accepted that when those who have realized beyond elaboration or, of course, one taste or no-meditation, if they dedicate within the state of their meditation practice, this is an authentic dedication free of threefold conceptualization.

Rejoicing in the Virtue of Others

In connection with dedication, it is extremely important to consciously rejoice in the virtue accumulated by others. Especially in concordant dedication, it is important to rejoice in all of the virtue of all buddhas, bodhisattvas, shravakas, pratyekabuddhas, and ordinary individuals. This is because when you rejoice in someone else's virtue, you gain the same amount of virtue. Similarly, if you resent someone else's virtue, you destroy an equivalent amount of virtue within yourself. Anytime you dedicate your virtue, dedicate the virtue you have accumulated, and also rejoice in the virtue of others and dedicate all their virtue combined into one, including the virtue of buddhas, bodhisattvas, and so on, as well as the virtue of the patron if you have one.

The Five Steps of Dedication

There are five steps to the best type of dedication. Any one of these is excellent on its own, but the best is to do all five.

The first is to summon all virtue, your own, the virtue of others, and the virtue of the patron, into one. First dedicate this virtue as a cloud of offerings to all buddhas, second dedicate it to the flourishing of the Buddha's teaching in this world, third to the longevity and expanded activity of the upholders of the teaching, fourth to the happiness and prosperity of the world, and then finally to the achievement of perfect awakening by all beings. Each of those five aspects of dedication can transform a tiny virtue into a huge one. This is taught in the *Sutra of the Vajra Peak on Dedication* and in other sutras as well.

After doing those five things, again summon all of that virtue together and dedicate it to the principal object of dedication, which might be a living patron or someone who has passed away if you are performing a ceremony for a deceased person. Dedicate it to their happiness in all their lives and their achievement of buddhahood. This is how you should perform a dedication when an ordinary person has passed away or when you are performing a ceremony on behalf of an ordinary patron.

Dedicating Offerings to the Deceased

There are two ways to dedicate offerings to deceased people. The way you choose really depends on the state of the person. The intermediate dedication is when you do this for those who are ordinary people. You dedicate the offerings to their achievement of the dharmakaya for their own benefit, to their subsequent display of the sambhogakaya so they can teach Dharma through symbol in all pure realms for those of pure karma, and their subsequent emanation of billions of nirmanakayas so they can benefit beings in billions of worlds and bring them all to a state of perfect awakening. Also dedicate so that all obstacles are pacified and the lineage flourishes, which can refer to a Dharma lineage, a family lineage, and so on.

The supreme dedication is when you dedicate a ceremony that supplicates or venerates a deceased enlightened being, like a great teacher. In that case, first gather all of the virtue together, then emanate it as an offering cloud to that guru, who is a perfect buddha abiding in the trikaya realm. Emanate it as the eight auspicious substances, the eight auspicious marks, the seven articles of royalty, the sixteen offering goddesses, and so on, which you imagine filling all space. Further think that this offering cloud remains until samsara ends, then dedicate it to

the complete accomplishment of the intention of the deceased teacher. Think that by offering this virtue to them, they are further encouraged to regard their disciples with compassion, and to intentionally produce an emanation who will take rebirth among us. In that way, you dedicate to their benefiting beings.

If it is a lesser teacher, then usually the dedication is done within the community. The teacher who is leading the dedication recites it, and everyone responds by saying, “May it be accomplished in that way,” and so on. When an assembly performs a dedication ceremony and there is a great teacher presiding, sometimes they will recite the first several stanzas alone and then the community will recite the rest in concert. If it is a minor teacher, this is not the custom; instead everyone chants everything.

This instruction on the dedication of merit was spoken by the monk Raga Asya on the completion of *Mountain Dharma* on the fifth day of the waxing phase of the month Thakar in the Horse Year, and was written down by Lama Tsonдру Gyamtso.

Karma Chakme's Final Words

The final words in the text, written down by Tsonдру Gyamtso, are remarks made about the text by Chakme Rinpoche. “For

the benefit of individuals in the future who are living in retreat practicing both sutra and tantra and therefore need a text that reveals all the difficult points in the practices of sutra and tantra and combines the wisdom of both the New and Old Traditions. With such a text they will be able to benefit themselves and others. Remember that all of this is complete within this *Mountain Dharma Instructions for Retreat*. Even if you were to meet me in the future, there would be nothing that I would have to say that is not in this book.

Therefore any who wish to write out, copy out, or print this book, this volume, do not print only part of it. Do not separate the chapters. Do not divide it. Print it or write it always in its completeness, the way you would the collected songs,” for example, like the collected songs of Milarepa and so on, “as one nice volume.” This will ensure that none of this is lost. Otherwise the chapters people want most would survive and the others could be lost. Karma Chakme’s instructions ensure that none of this is lost. “I think it will produce much greater benefit for those of lesser intellect.”

He further said, “Within this book, the instructions on the channels and winds and the instructions on the dharmapala practices should not be taught to those who have not received the requisite empowerments and instructions, and who are not

going to put these things into intensive practice in retreat. They should be kept secret from those who are merely curious about them.” In other words, those chapters should only be taught when there is a specific need for them to be taught. This was also written down by Lama Tsonдру Gyamtso.

This completes my presentation of *Mountain Dharma Instructions for Retreat*. I have presented it from the beginning to the end completely, with the exception of the chapters that Chakme Rinpoche just mentioned should not be taught in public.

I understand that a book is going to be made out of my talks and I hope that this will be done soon because I think it will be of great benefit to many people in the future. I would like to thank everyone involved from the depths of my heart, including the translators and those people who have made both audio and video copies, as well as those who are transcribing and editing the book. And that's it.

Questions and Answers

STUDENT: Rinpoche, what does it actually mean to dedicate merit?

RINPOCHE: Let's use, for example, the evening Chenrezik practice. When you are on your way to the practice, you should think, "I am going to go to Chenrezik tonight because I wish to pacify the suffering of the six types of beings; I wish to liberate them from that suffering." This is the reason to do the practice. Then when you begin the practice, and during the practice, you should think, "I am meditating on this deity and repeating this mantra in order to bring about the liberation and awakening of all beings." Finally at the end of the practice, clarify that motivation again and recite the dedication and aspiration. Think as you recite it, "Tonight what I have done by meditating on this deity, reciting this mantra, and resting in even placement constitutes virtue. I dedicate or direct all of this virtue to the alleviation of all of the adversities that affect all beings, and the achievement by all beings of the state of perfect awakening." Then reflect on the fact, "First of all, I have done something virtuous by meditating on the deity, repeating the mantra, and resting in even placement, and second, I have dedicated or directed that virtue to the benefit of others." You take satisfaction in that. All of that is included in what is called "dedication of virtue."

STUDENT: The concordant offering of the threefold aspect of nothing to be offered, no one offering, and no one to offer to is one way to look at the offerings in mandala practice. This was always so difficult for me because it seemed so impossible

to attain that sort of attitude. This morning you brought up in the dedication chapter that this is why we do the Manjushri-Samantabhadra dedication. It is almost like there is an absolute dedication and a relative dedication. Until we reach the first bodhisattva level, the best we can do is what I am calling the “relative dedication.” Am I interpreting this correctly?

RINPOCHE: To answer the second part of your question first, concordant nonconceptual dedication is the best thing we can do at this point, but the first part of your question somewhat qualifies that. The practices we do that involve the accumulation of merit, such as the mandala offering, work primarily with body and speech from among our three faculties of body, speech, and mind, or the practices are on the levels of body and speech, such as visualizing deities and so on. As ordinary people, we cannot do these without some degree of conceptualization or reification, and this is because ordinary people cannot simultaneously conceptualize and not conceptualize. Therefore while offering mandalas, do not try not to conceive of an offering substance, one who offers, and recipients of that offering. The way you make up for this is primarily in the dedication, so at the conclusion of a session of such practices, recite the stanzas that you mentioned with the others so your dedication refers to the manner of dedication of Manjushri, Samantabhadra, and so on.

At the same time, there is another aspect to our practice, which is the completion stage. For example, at the conclusion of a session of offering mandalas or any other endeavor that gathers merit, after you dissolve the visualization you rest without concept. Initially this is also concordant. Although it starts out as concordant, the concordant effort of resting without concept becomes the basis of and the avenue to actual nonconceptuality. When the wisdom of true nonconceptuality is first achieved, at that instant all of your previous conceptual and defiled accumulation of merit is transformed into an undefiled, nonconceptual accumulation of wisdom.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, of the liturgies commonly available to us, which are considered extensive aspiration or dedication liturgies?

RINPOCHE: There are many such liturgies. You can use the aspirations found at the end of the Chenrezik practice. Those are very powerful. You can also use the *Aspiration for Rebirth in Sukhavati*, or you can simply use the stanzas of aspiration recited at the end of teaching sessions. Although they are brief, they are complete, and you can use them in that way.

STUDENT: When we describe them as “extensive,” is it more the content rather than the length of the liturgy?

RINPOCHE: If you know any of the really long ones, they are wonderful. The point is to do a daily dedication and aspiration. There is far less difference between the power of practicing a long or short liturgy than the power of practicing with a properly or improperly motivated mind.

STUDENT: Relating this to group practice, when a group comes together to do a practice and they dedicate the merit, what quality does the merit have? Is it the average, the highest, or the lowest common denominator?

RINPOCHE: If you take what the group creates as a whole, the quality would necessarily be the average of the group. If more members of the group are virtuous, it will be more virtuous, and if more members of the group are less virtuous, it will be less virtuous.

For any individual within that group, the virtue they accumulate will still be unique to them. If you are in a group with people who are improperly motivated and you alone are properly motivated, you will still accrue the full virtue of your proper motivation. If you are in a group of people who are properly motivated and you alone are improperly motivated, you will still not accrue the virtue of proper motivation.

STUDENT: Would it follow then that if you have poor-to-middling motivation, but continually practice with virtuous people, your motivation could be elevated?

RINPOCHE: Yes, because in order to be willing to practice they must be open to the idea of that kind of improvement; they are already open to virtue to some degree. Nevertheless an individual is still going to be prey to the limitations of their own concepts.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, it sounds like one's individual merit is one's individual merit, so what is the benefit of group practice? Is the benefit for all those for whom you are dedicating the merit? Is there no individual benefit to meditating in a group?

RINPOCHE: The benefit of group practice will be greater if the motivations of all individuals are coordinated.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, I am wondering about when you are doing a lot of practice and you start to have aspirations that just arise in your mind as you become more aware. It is nothing connected with a liturgy, it is just that suddenly you think, "Through all my lives, may I never cause harm through bad speech toward another," or "May I never slander another or may I never impoverish another." I wonder where that would fit in one's daily

practice? Is it all right to have one's own individual aspirations, or is it better to just follow a written text?

RINPOCHE: That is fine because it is a virtuous aspiration. You do not need to restrict virtuous aspirations to what you find in liturgies. If you wish to reinforce your aspiration, you can also speak it aloud or sing your own words.

STUDENT: Once you have formed an aspiration, is it good to repeat it daily?

RINPOCHE: It would be best to do so.

STUDENT: As you are practicing, different things do arise, so sometimes you might make one aspiration, and then another day you make another aspiration. Is it okay to do that, to keep changing or adding on more aspirations?

RINPOCHE: It is hard to say in general because all different kinds of thoughts can arise. Provided that the aspiration is entirely healthy, virtuous, and beneficial to both oneself and others, then you could just spontaneously formulate anything included within that category. You do not want to invest energy into thoughts or aspirations that are not entirely healthy.

In general the types of aspirations that are the most beneficial are the ones that arise spontaneously from whatever problems you are facing. If you can make the aspiration, “May neither I nor any other sentient being ever have to experience such-and-such problem again,” and you do this because you have experienced the desperation or discomfort of the problem, it is going to have more force.

STUDENT: Someone within my family died suddenly and very young a few months ago. I was wondering if I could dedicate an offering to him.

RINPOCHE: There are two aspects to this. There is the virtue that you engage in that you dedicate to that person, and how you dedicate it. You have many options concerning the kind of virtue you pursue for the benefit of that family member.

There are physical virtues, verbal virtues, mental virtues, and so on. Physical virtuous actions that can be dedicated to someone’s benefit include simple things such as prostrations, circumambulation of images or temples, and simply the reaction of faith when you see something sacred. You can save the lives of those who are certain to be killed; for example, you can buy a bucket of baitfish and release them. Verbal virtues include reciting the refuge vow, or simply the Chenrezik mantra, OM MANI PADME

HUM. There are also many other things you can do, such as giving generously to people or animals in need, or making offerings to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. If you want to dedicate specifically to a person, you need to do something specific that you have designated from the beginning as being done for their benefit. You need to have something specific to dedicate.

When you do the virtuous action and dedicate it, keep in mind that your ultimate aim is to bring all beings without exception to a state of perfect happiness, a state without any suffering whatsoever. From the beginning of the action think, “I am doing this virtuous action so I can bring this person, and by extension all other beings, to a state of complete and perfect happiness, freedom from any suffering, a state equal to that of the Buddha.” By engaging in virtue and dedicating in that way, you will actually benefit the person who has passed away, and you will also benefit yourself tremendously. As I said, from the beginning there must be a specific action that you have designated to be dedicated to their benefit.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, should we try to purify our negative thoughts as soon as they arise, and then afterwards dedicate this purification as soon as possible?

RINPOCHE: Yes, this is the best thing to do, because the easiest time to purify the habit of a negative thought is when it starts. Catching it immediately is the best solution. As for dedicating the virtue of purification, you can do it right away. That is excellent.

Also don't forget that any virtue, no matter how large or small, can be dedicated repeatedly. You can dedicate the same virtuous action thousands or millions of times if you want to, because when you dedicate the action, you increase the virtue. Therefore there is always more virtue to be dedicated.

STUDENT: Why is it increasing? Is it because it is like a seed? Why does it accumulate so much energy?

RINPOCHE: Dedication increases the dedicated virtue because when you dedicate virtue, you are dedicating it to the buddhahood of all beings. You are saying, "May this virtue be used as a force to bring about the perfect awakening of all beings without exception." By implication, this dedication refers to a time when all beings will have achieved buddhahood. When that happens, the purpose of that virtue will have been achieved. It is something unimaginably far in the future. We could even say it is impossible, and therefore you are directing your virtue toward an unending aim.

Furthermore the scope or focus of the virtue is unlimited because you are not dedicating it to the awakening of a set number of beings, but to an unlimited number of beings. In this way, the virtue is stretched into the utmost profundity and vastness, in terms of both time, duration of aim, and extent or number.

To give an analogy for what such dedicating does to the virtue, if you have a drop of water and you want to retain it indefinitely, it is eventually going to evaporate if you hold it carefully in your hand. If you pour the drop of water into the ocean, you cannot say either that the drop of water dries up or that it does not. Its fate is somehow tied in with the whole ocean. Therefore you can more or less say that until the ocean dries up, this drop of water remains and is indestructible. In the same way, by dedicating your virtue to this unlimited aim or project of liberating all beings, the virtue becomes unlimited.

STUDENT: I can understand rejoicing in the merit of others, including enlightened beings, but I do not understand how we can dedicate the merit of all the enlightened beings or even just fellow students.

RINPOCHE: You do not really do this. When we speak of dedicating your virtue and the virtue of all others gathered throughout the past, present, and future, this really means that each of us

should dedicate our own merit gathered throughout the past, present, and future. You can really only dedicate your own virtue, but while you are doing that, you also remember that at the same time other people are dedicating their own virtue.

STUDENT: When we are dedicating our merit, is it all right to think that we are pooling our merit so that it is of larger benefit for beings?

RINPOCHE: The ocean does not represent the pooling of the merit of different individuals. It is your own merit. The ocean represents the immeasurable quality of your aim, that which you are dedicating the merit to, and also the unsurpassable or unfathomable supremacy of that aim. Therefore the ocean is meant to convey the idea of vastness and depth.

Dedication

*I pray that the Lama's life be excellent,
That his supreme life be long,
And that his activity increase and spread,
Bless us that we remain inseparable from the Lama.*

*By this merit may all become omniscient,
From this attainment, after defeating evil faults,
Through the endless storm of birth, old age, sickness, and death,
May we liberate all beings from the suffering in the three worlds.*

Precious Garland: A List of Contents to Prevent Disorder

A Table of Contents for Each of the Fifty-Four Chapters in The Retreat Manual

CHAPTER 1. The Precious Garland: A List of Contents to Prevent Disorder

CHAPTER 2. To See It Is to Smile: An Introduction to Mountain Dharma Serving to Guide Ordinary People into Dharma's Gate

CHAPTER 3. Putting Away the Dice: How to Abandon the Paths of Samsara and Generate Stable Renunciation

CHAPTER 4. Gandi of the Nobles: A Clarification of the Practices of Individuals Immersed in the Various Greater and Lesser Vehicles

CHAPTER 5. Disk of the Sun: How to Keep the Three Vows Easily, Having Received Them in Sequence

CHAPTER 6. Protection from All Danger: Instructions on Taking Refuge in Order to Be Protected from All the Dangers of Samsara

CHAPTER 7. The Main Path to Awakening: Instructions on the Generation of Bodhichitta in Order That All One Does Be Brought to the Path of Awakening

CHAPTER 8. The Cooling Shade of Compassion: Placing Oneself and Others under the Protection of the Three Jewels Through Meditation

CHAPTER 9. Dispelling All Obstacles: Visualizations for Practice Sessions Used to Help the Weak, the Sick, and So On

CHAPTER 10. A River of Amrita: Instructions on the Purification of the Karma, Wrongdoing, and Obscurations Accumulated Throughout All One's Lives

CHAPTER 11. A Mountain of Merit: Instructions on How to Easily Complete the Accumulation of Merit by Offering the Mandala

CHAPTER 12. A River of Blessings: Guru Yoga, Practiced in Order to Receive Blessings and Increase Experiences and Realization

CHAPTER 13. The Traveler's Song: The Result of Long Experience, Recounted So That Beginners Can Recognize the Arising of Experience and Realization

CHAPTER 14. The Armor of Love and the Breastplate of Compassion: How to Protect from Obstacles Using the Buddhas' Truth

CHAPTER 15. All Jewels Included: A Brief Explanation of Geomancy, Since One Must Know What Places Are Good for Retreat

CHAPTER 16. The Good Path to Freedom: Instructions on Retreat, Easily Practiced by the Unintelligent

CHAPTER 17. The Axe That Cuts Through Self-fixation: Giving Away One's Body in Order to Gather the Accumulations and Bring Sickness and Spirits to the Path

CHAPTER 18. The Conjunction of Life and Fortune: The Generation of Life and Prosperity in Order to Prolong the Lives of Gurus, Friends, and Patrons

CHAPTER 19. The Melody of Brahma: The Practice of Kriya and Charya Tantra, for the Youthful Who Want Austerities

CHAPTER 20. Closing the Door to Lower Migrations: The Practice of Yoga Tantra, for Those Skilled in Ritual and Mudras

CHAPTER 21. Showing the Path to Freedom: Visualizations for the Southern Gate, in Order to Purify the Obscurations of the Dead

CHAPTER 22. A Concise Liberation Through Hearing: An Introduction to the Bardo, So That Recognizing It One May Be Liberated

CHAPTER 23. Shade of the Ashoka Tree: How to Avoid Robbers and Death While in Retreat

CHAPTER 24. All Connection Has Meaning: How to Burn a Living Inscription in Order to Purify the Obscurations of the Wealthy Faithful

CHAPTER 25. Hook of Compassion: How to Guide the Dead, So That All the Deceased Connected to One May Reach Pure Realms

CHAPTER 26. Thunder of Mantra: The Outer Practice of a Yidam According to Maha Yoga, Emphasizing the Generation Stage

CHAPTER 27. The Hero's Roar: The Inner Practice, for Those Who Assemble Offering Tormas, Accomplishment Substances, and so on

CHAPTER 28. The Wisdom Dakinis' Song of Yearning: The Secret Practice for Those with Extremely Clear Generation Stage Visualization

CHAPTER 29. A Multicolored Jewel: A Homa for Those with Few Resources Who Are Diligent in Practice

CHAPTER 30. The Supreme Blaze of Great Bliss: The Very Secret Practice of the Anu Yoga Tantras

CHAPTER 31. Boundless Purity: The Just-That practice of the Ati Yoga Tantras

CHAPTER 32. The Wish-Granting Jewel: The Combined Practice, for Those with Powerful Samadhi Who Dislike Elaboration

CHAPTER 33. Gold from Jambu River: The Root Words on the Physical Exercises for Establishing Interdependence in the Body

CHAPTER 34. The Magic Mirror: An Essay on Indications Enabling One to Determine Whether or Not One Has Accomplished the Three Roots

CHAPTER 35. Showing the Unmistaken Path: Avoiding Deviations, So That One Remains on the Flawless Path to Awakening

CHAPTER 36. A Rain of Amrita: Instructions on Removing Outer, Inner, and Secret Impediments

CHAPTER 37. The Wish-Fulfilling Jewel: Instructions on Improvement, So That Experience and Realization Increase Like the Waxing Moon

CHAPTER 38. The Great Peacock That Conquers Poison: Supporting Instructions on Abandoning the Obscuration by the Five Poisonous Kleshas

CHAPTER 39. The Practices of the Victors' Children:
Instructions on Conduct, So That One Behaves in Accord
with the Victors' Dictates

CHAPTER 40. Ocean of Activity: Instructions on Benefiting
Beings, So That One Accomplishes Great Benefit for the
Teachings and for Beings

CHAPTER 41. The Fruit of the Wish-Fulfilling Tree: How the
Best, the Intermediate, and the Least Practitioners Die

CHAPTER 42. The Guide on the Quest for Jewels: Choosing a
Pure Realm, So That One Knows Where One Is Going

CHAPTER 43. The Steed Balaha: How to Reach a Pure Realm
If One Dies Without Leisure for Meditation

CHAPTER 44. Letter of Royal Command: Reminding
Someone of Their Meditation So They Recognize the Ground
Clear Light at Death

CHAPTER 45. Great Waves of Activity: the Practice of
Protectors in General, So That the Buddhas' Teachings
Flourish

CHAPTER 46. Hailstones in a Blizzard; Accomplishing All Activity: The Quick Accomplishment of the Protectors' Activity

CHAPTER 47. Sumeru of Hala: How to Control Shadow-Spirits, So That No Obstacles Arise for Any Practice

CHAPTER 48. Like Flies to Rotten Meat: How to Attract the Protectors to Oneself or Others by Using Their Soul-Stones and Support Materials

CHAPTER 49. Jewels of the Gods: Writings About Tormas, So That All Obstacles Be Dispelled and Whatever One Wishes for Be Accomplished

CHAPTER 50. The Mother and Protector United, the Special Dharma of Karma Pakshi: the Integration of Textual and Oral Instructions

CHAPTER 51. The Wealth Practice of the Protector, the Special Dharma of Drogön Rechen: For the Automatic Increase of Prosperity and Position

CHAPTER 52. The Protector Instructions from Lhodrak:
Accomplishing All Activity Through the Channels and
Winds

CHAPTER 53. The Precious Jewel: Instructions on
Dedication, So That One's Virtue Is Buried as an
Inexhaustible Treasure

CHAPTER 54. Enumeration of Dharmas, the Upadeshas
of the Single Lineage: So That Secret Mantra Not Be
Broadcasted, and Retain the Richness of Blessings

A List of Mantras

The following list is alphabetized according to the transliterations.

ॐ

AH (*Skt.*)

བ

BAM (*Skt.*)

ह

HA (*Skt.*)

ཧེ་ཧེ།

HEH HEH (*Tib.*)

ཧིཀ

HIK (*Tib.*)

ॐ

HRI (*Skt.*)

ॐ

HUM (*Skt.*)

HUNG (*Tib.*)

ཀ

KA (*Tib.*)

ནམ་མཁེ་ཏ་ལྷ་ཡ།

NAMO AMITABHAYA (*Skt.*)

ནམ་གུ་ལུ་ལོ་གེ་ཤ་ར་ཡ།

NAMO GURU LOKESHVARAYE (*Skt.*)

NAMO GURU LOKESHORAYE (*Tib.*)

ནམ་གུ་ལུ་མ་རྒྱ་ཀ་ལྷ་ཀ་ཡ།

NAMO GURU MAHAKARUNIKAYE (*Skt.*)

ན་མོ་གུ་བྱ་བཟླ་རྒྱ་ར་ཡེ།

NAMO GURU VAJRADHARAYE (*Skt.*)

NAMO GURU BENZADHARAYE (*Tib.*)

ན་མོ་ཤཱ་ཀྲ་མུ་ནེ་ཡེ།

NAMO SHAKYAMUNEYE (*Skt.*)

ན་མོ་བཟླ་རྒྱ་ར་ཡེ།

NAMO VAJRADHARAYE (*Skt.*)

NAMO BENZADHARAYE (*Tib.*)

ཨོྃ

OM (*Skt.*)

ཨོྃ་ཨུཾ་ཧཱུྃ།

OM AH HUM (*Skt.*)

OM AH HUNG (*Tib.*)

ཨོྃ་ཨ་མི་དྲེ་ཤ་ཧྲིཾ།

OM AMI DEWA HRI (*Skt.*)

ཨོཾ་མ་ཎི་པདྨེ་ཧཱུྃ་ཧྲིཿ

OM MANI PADME HUM HRI (*Skt.*)

OM MANI PEME HUNG HRI (*Tib.*)

ཕཎ

PHAT (*Skt.*)

PHET (*Tib.*)

སྐ

SVA (*Skt.*)

SO (*Tib.*)

ཌྞ

TAM (*Skt.*)

Glossary

ABHIDHARMA (Skt.) [Tib. chos mngon pa] Phenomenology. One of the three baskets (collections of teachings) comprising the tripitaka, containing enumerations and explanations of phenomena. See also **TRIPITAKA**.

ABSOLUTE TRUTH (Tib. don dam bden pa) The ultimate nature of reality, in which all phenomena are beyond arising, abiding, and ceasing. This absolute truth is emptiness, directly experienced by a superior being in even placement. See also **EMPTINESS**, **RELATIVE TRUTH**.

ACCUMULATIONS See **TWO ACCUMULATIONS**.

AFFLICTIVE EMOTIONS See **KLESHA**.

AGGREGATES (Skt. skandha) [Tib. phung po] The five categories of phenomenal constituents that comprise an individual being's continuity of experience: forms, sensations, perceptions, formations, and consciousnesses.

ALL-BASIS CONSCIOUSNESS (Skt. *alayavijnana*) [Tib. *kun gzhi rnam shes*] In the eightfold enumeration of consciousnesses, this is the undifferentiated continuum that underlies the other seven. The all-basis is the repository for all previously accumulated karmic imprints and habitual tendencies. See also **EIGHT CONSCIOUSNESSES**.

AMITABHA (Skt.) [Tib. 'od dpag med] “Boundless Light.” One of the five dhyānibuddhas, he presides over the pure realm of Sukhavati and is lord of the padma family. Rebirth in his pure realm guarantees complete awakening in one lifetime. See also **SUKHAVATI**.

ANIMAL REALM See **SIX REALMS**.

ANUTTARA YOGA TANTRA See **TANTRA**.

APPEARANCE, INCREASE, AND ATTAINMENT (Tib. *snang mched thob gsum*) For a dying person, this threefold subtle dissolution normally follows the coarse dissolution of the elements and precedes the direct experience of the ground clear light. During the experience of *white appearance*, outer appearances subside and become a uniform bright whiteness; during *red increase* everything becomes a uniform field of

red; and during *black attainment* external appearances cease altogether. See also **CLEAR LIGHT**, **LUCIDITY**.

ARHAT (Skt.) [Tib. dgra bcom pa] “Foe destroyer.” An arhat is one who, having exhausted all mental afflictions, achieves liberation from cyclic existence and passes into nirvana. Arhathood is the fruition achieved by shravakas and pratyekabuddhas. See also **PRATYKABUDDHA**, **SHRAVAKA**.

ASURA REALM See **SIX REALMS**.

ATISHA (982–1054 ce) An illustrious master from Vikramashila monastic university in India. In later life he was invited to Tibet, where he founded the Kadam tradition and wrote his most influential work, the *Beacon for the Path to Awakening* (Skt. *Bodhipathapradipa*), which teaches the gradual approach to buddhahood.

ATIYOGA (Skt.) [Tib. shin tu rnal ‘byor] The highest of the inner tantras, the summit of the system of nine vehicles according to the Nyingma classification; also a synonym for Dzokchen, the Great Perfection. See also **DZOKCHEN**, **NINE VEHICLES**.

AVALOKITA, **AVALOKITESHVARA** See **CHENREZIK**.

AWAKENING (Skt. bodhi) [Tib. byang chub] The state of buddhahood, characterized by the perfection of the two accumulations, the removal of the two obscurations, and the achievement of twofold omniscience. It can also refer to the lesser realization of arhathood.

BARDO (Tib. bar do) “Interval.” Generally this term can refer to any of six different intermediate states of existence: life, dreams, meditation, the moment of death, dharmata or suchness, and approaching rebirth. Most often it refers to the period between death and subsequent rebirth, which is generally considered to last about forty-nine days.

BHALAHA, BALAHA (Skt.) A legendary emanation of the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, who appeared as a horse that rescued people from danger and safely escorted them to wherever they wished to go.

BHUMI See **BODHISATTVA LEVELS**.

BILLION-WORLD SYSTEM (Tib. stong gsum gyi stong chen po'i 'jig rten gyi khams) In abhidharmic cosmology, one world system is comprised of a flat plane with a central mountain encircled by an ocean in which there are four major continents. One thousand such worlds comprise a thousand-

world system. A thousand of these comprise a million-world system. A thousand of these comprise a billion-world system, which is one universe, and the field of activity of one supreme nirmanakaya buddha such as Shakyamuni. In a billion-world system, a billion such buddhas appear simultaneously, one in each world.

BLACK ATTAINMENT See **APPEARANCE, INCREASE, AND ATTAINMENT**.

BLISS (Skt. sukha) [Tib. bde ba] Pleasure, happiness, well-being, comfort.

BODHICHITTA (Skt.) [Tib. byang chub kyi sems] “Mind of awakening.” The awakened mind inherent in all sentient beings. Relative bodhichitta is the aspiration to accomplish, and the actual training in, the six **perfections** in order to attain buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings; absolute bodhichitta is immediate insight into the emptiness of phenomena. See also **BODHISATTVA, SIX PERFECTIONS**.

BODHISATTVA (Skt.) [Tib. byang chub sems dpa'] One who has generated bodhichitta and dedicates their existence throughout all rebirths to the attainment of buddhahood in order to liberate other beings who are suffering in samsara.

The bodhisattva ideal is in contrast to the way of shravakas and pratyekabuddhas, who attain nirvana solely for their own benefit. See also **BODHICHITTA**.

BODHISATTVA LEVELS (Skt. bhumi) [Tib. sa] The series of stages in a bodhisattva's development on the path to buddhahood. These levels may be enumerated as either ten or thirteen.

BODHISATTVA VOW (Tib. byang chub sems dpa'i sdom pa) The commitment to preserve bodhichitta, a mind that sincerely wishes to benefit all beings, not merely to alleviate their temporary suffering, but to bring them all to a state of perfect and complete awakening. The bodhisattva vow is received from a master who has maintained the vow without breaking it. See also **BODHICHITTA**, **BODHISATTVA**.

BÖN (Tib. bon) The religion of pre-Buddhist Tibet, believed by its adherents to have been introduced by Shenrap from an area located in what is now Persia. Today Bön reflects many aspects of Tibetan Buddhism, but still retains a distinct identity.

BREAKTHROUGH See under **DZOKCHEN**.

BUDDHA (Skt.) [Tib. sangs rgyas] Perfectly awakened and developed one; a being who has relinquished all defilements, obscurations, and afflictions; revealed wisdom and all perfect qualities; and fully realized all objects of knowledge in a state of total omniscience. One of the Three Jewels in which one takes refuge. See also **BUDDHA SHAKYAMUNI**, **THREE JEWELS**.

BUDDHADHARMA (Tib. sangs rgyas kyi chos) Buddhism, the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha; also can refer to the unique attributes of buddhahood. See also **BUDDHAHOOD**, **DHARMA**.

BUDDHAHOOD (Skt. buddhatva) [Tib. sangs rgyas nyid] The state of consummate perfection of a buddha. See also **BUDDHA**.

BUDDHA NATURE (Skt. sugatagarbha, tathagatagarbha) [Tib. bde gshegs snying po, de bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po] The inherent potential to attain awakening, which all beings possess. The essential nature of mind. See also **BODHICHITTA**, **CLEAR LIGHT**.

BUDDHA REALM See **PURE REALM**.

BUDDHA SHAKYAMUNI (Skt.) [Tib. shakya thub pa] Sage of the Shakyas. The historical buddha of this age was born

as Prince Siddhartha Gautama of the Shakya clan in the fifth century bce. After demonstrating the attainment of awakening at Vajrasana in India, Buddha Shakyamuni taught the dharma for forty-five years. See also **BUDDHA**.

CELESTIAL REALM (Tib. mkha' spyod kyi zhing khams) Pure realm of the khechari, or “sky-farers”; said to be the abode of vidyadharas.

CHAKRASAMVARA (Skt.) [Tib. 'khor lo sdom pa, 'khor lo bde mchog] One of the principal yidams belonging to the anuttara tantra set of the New Translation school. He is associated with practices for mental purification and the transformation of obstacles, and his consort is Vajrayogini. See also **TANTRA**.

CHAKRAVARTIN (Skt.) [Tib. 'khor los sgyur ba'i rgyal po] A wheel-wielding monarch who rules an entire world and propagates the dharma.

CHANNELS See **CHANNELS, WINDS, AND DROPS**.

CHANNELS, WINDS, AND DROPS (Skt. nadi, prana, and bindu) [Tib. rtsa, rlung, thig le] The channels of the subtle body are the paths through which the winds or subtle energies flow,

and subtle essences or drops ride the winds moving along these channels.

CHARNEL GROUND (Tib. dur khrod) A place where bodies are disposed of, either by cremation or burial. See also **EIGHT CHARNEL GROUNDS**.

CHARYA TANTRA See under **TANTRA**.

CHENREZIK (Skt. Avalokita) [Tib. spyan ras gzigs] One of the eight principal bodhisattvas; also, the personification of the compassion of all buddhas, and the patron deity of Tibet. His Holiness the Gyalwang Karmapa and His Holiness the Dalai Lama are considered to be emanations of Chenrezik.

CHÖ (Tib. gcod) “Severance.” A meditation practice in which one makes an offering of one’s own body in order to overcome the false belief in and attachment to the self. The practice was widely taught by Machik Lapdrön, who received it from the Indian master Padampa Sangye.

CIRCUMAMBULATION (Skt. pradakshina) [Tib. skor ba] The act of moving oneself in a clockwise direction around a sacred person, place, or thing. This practice was taught

by the Buddha as a means to accumulate merit and purify wrongdoing, especially physical wrongdoing.

CLARITY See **LUCIDITY**.

CLEAR LIGHT (Skt. *prabhasvara*) [Tib. 'od gsal] Also translated as “luminosity,” “clarity,” “lucidity.” The essential nature of the mind on the subtlest level, which can be considered synonymous with buddha nature. See also **DHARMAKAYA**.

COMMON VEHICLE See **HINAYANA**.

COMPASSION (Skt. *karuna*) [Tib. *snying rje*] Active concern for the suffering of all sentient beings and the wish that they be free from this suffering. Chenrezik is the embodiment of the compassion of all buddhas. See also **LOVE**, **LOVING-KINDNESS**.

COMPLETION STAGE (Skt. *sampannakrama*) [Tib. *rdzogs rim*] The second of two Vajrayana or tantric stages of yidam meditation. In this stage the meditator dissolves the previously established visualization and allows the mind to come to rest in its natural state. See also **GENERATION STAGE**.

DAKA See **VIRA**.

DAKINI (Skt.) [Tib. mkha' 'gro ma] “Sky-walker.” Female tantric deity who fulfills buddha activities and protects and serves the teachings and practitioners. Dakinis transmit secret teachings to select practitioners when the time is ripe.

DEATHLESSNESS (Tib. 'chi med) A state of immortality and imperishability.

DEITY See **YIDAM**.

DEVA REALM See **SIX REALMS**.

DEWACHEN See **SUKHAVATI**.

DHARANI (Skt.) [Tib. gzungs] “Retainer.” A type of mantra associated with the sutras that holds essential meaning and increases knowledge. They may be recited like awareness or secret mantras but are typically longer. See also **MANTRA**.

DHARMA (Skt.) [Tib. chos] The teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha; one of the Three Jewels in which one takes refuge. It is also a term that variously denotes “phenomenon,” “doctrine,” “attribute,” etc. See also **THREE JEWELS**.

DHARMACHAKRA (Skt.) [Tib. chos kyi 'khor lo] “Wheel of dharma.” Metaphor for any of the three main cycles of teachings given by Buddha Shakyamuni, and by extension the transmission of those teachings by successive lineage holders.

DHARMADHATU (Skt.) [Tib. chos dbyings] The all-encompassing expanse, unconditioned and without beginning, in which emptiness and interdependent origination are inseparable. See also **EMPTINESS**, **INTERDEPENDENCE**.

DHARMAKAYA (Skt.) [Tib. chos kyi sku] “Dharma body.” The noncomposite, nondual, primordially pure essential nature of the awakened mind. It is beyond all defilements, obscurations, or conceptual limitations, and is completely clear and unimpeded in its manifestation.

DHARMAPALA (Skt.) [Tib. chos skyong] “Dharma protector.” Fierce and powerful, dharma protectors are bound by oath to guard the dharma and its practitioners. There are two types of dharmapalas: wisdom protectors, who are emanations of buddhas or bodhisattvas; and mundane protectors, who are virtuous samsaric beings.

DHARMATA (Skt.) [Tib. chos nyid] The true nature of reality; the inexpressible and fundamentally perfect purity of all phenomena. Generally synonymous with absolute truth and emptiness. See also **ABSOLUTE TRUTH**, **EMPTINESS**.

DREAM (Skt. svapna) [Tib. rmi lam] An advanced yogic meditation practice, one of the six dharmas of Naropa. Primarily aimed at utilizing the dream state as a means to recognize the illusory nature of appearances, especially as preparation for the interval experience. See also **SIX DHARMAS OF NAROPA**.

DROPS See **CHANNELS, WINDS, AND DROPS**.

DRUPCHEN (Tib. sgrub chen) “Great accomplishment.” A form of intensive group practice that establishes the environment as the pure realm of a deity, and evokes the pure perception of this world as a sacred realm.

DZOKCHEN (Tib. rdzogs chen) [Skt. mahasandhi] Initially taught by Garap Dorje of the Nyingma tradition, the practice of Dzokchen is the ultimate way to achieve direct realization of the clear and lucid nature of mind. Dzokchen can be divided into two main sections: trekchö (Tib. khregs chod), or breakthrough; and tögal (Tib. thod rgal), or leapover. The

former emphasizes primordial purity (Tib. ka dag) and the latter spontaneous presence (Tib. lhun grub).

EIGHT CHARNEL GROUNDS (Tib. dur khrod brgyad) On a literal level, these eight great cemeteries have physical locations in India, such as the Laughing Charnel Ground at Bodhgaya. They are also used to represent the eight consciousnesses. See also **CHARNEL GROUND, EIGHT CONSCIOUSNESSES**.

EIGHT CONSCIOUSNESSES (Tib. rnam shes tshogs brgyad) The five sense consciousnesses are those of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. The sixth is the mental consciousness; the seventh is the afflicted consciousness; and the eighth is the ground or all-basis consciousness. See also **ALL-BASIS CONSCIOUSNESS**.

EIGHT MUNDANE DHARMAS (Tib. 'jig rten gyi chos brgyad) Also known as the “eight things of the world,” these are four pairs of opposites: gain and loss, pleasure and pain, fame and disgrace, praise and criticism.

EIGHT UNRESTFUL STATES (Tib. mi khom pa brgyad) Being born 1) in the hell realms, 2) as a hungry ghost, 3) as an animal, 4) in a primitive or uncivilized place, 5) as a long-

lived deva, 6) with wrong views, 7) in a place where no Buddha has appeared, and 8) deaf, dumb, blind, or mentally deficient.

ELEMENTS (Skt. bhuta, dhatu) [Tib. 'byung ba, khams] The basic constituents of all material and phenomenal experience. The four basic elements and their respective qualities are: earth (solidity), water (cohesion and liquidity), fire (heat and digestion), and wind (respiration and movement).

EMANATION See **NIRMANAKAYA**.

EMPOWERMENT (Skt. abhisheka) [Tib. dbang bskur] Empowers and authorizes students to engage in a specific Vajrayana practice. It must be conferred by a Vajrayana master who embodies the lineage from which the empowerment comes. See also **INSTRUCTION**, **TRANSMISSION**, **VAJRAYANA**.

EMPTINESS (Skt. shunyata) [Tib. stong pa nyid] The absence of true existence or identity of all phenomena. Emptiness is the natural state of mind and reality. Direct realization of emptiness is the perfection of prajnaparamita, marking the entrance of a bodhisattva into the bodhisattva levels. See also **INTERDEPENDENCE**, **PRAJNAPARAMITA**.

ENLIGHTENMENT See **AWAKENING**.

EQUAL TASTE (Tib. ro mnyam) The ability to be free of delight and disappointment toward different experiences such as pleasure and pain, high or low status, or acquisition and loss. See also **EIGHT MUNDANE DHARMAS**.

EVEN PLACEMENT (Tib. mnyam par bzhag pa, mnyam bzhag) Formal meditation or absorption in samadhi in which the mind remains one-pointedly without distraction. See also **POSTMEDITATION**.

FEAST (Skt. ganachakra) [Tib. tshogs kyi 'khor lo] A tantric ritual form of practice in which offerings of food and drink are consecrated as wisdom elixir, then offered to the yidam deity as well as to the mandala of one's own body. Feasts are performed in order to purify breaches of sacred commitments and gather the two accumulations.

FIRE PUJA, FIRE OFFERING (Tib. sbyin sregs) Ritual offering of a large quantity of specific substances tossed into a fire. One purpose of the fire puja is to burn off or purify mistakes incurred during retreats.

FIVE POISONS See **KLESHA**.

FIVE WISDOMS (Skt. panchajnana) [Tib. ye shes lnga] Five aspects of fundamentally pure awareness that are innate within all sentient beings. When obscured by karmic defilements and bewilderment, the five wisdoms manifest as the five poisons. The five wisdoms are 1) the wisdom of the expanse of reality, 2) mirror-like wisdom, 3) the wisdom of equality, 4) the wisdom of discernment, and 5) the wisdom of accomplishment. Each of the five is closely associated with one of the five buddha families.

FORCEFUL MANTRA (Tib. drag sngags) Type of mantra that belongs to wrathful deities, and is used to dispel demonic forces that obstruct the Buddhist doctrine or the welfare of beings. See also **MANTRA**.

FORM REALM, FORMLESS REALM See under **THREE REALMS**.

FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS (Tib. ‘phags pa’i bden pa bzhi) The Buddha’s first teaching, given at Sarnath, India. The four truths are the truth of suffering, the truth of the causes of suffering, the truth of the cessation of suffering, and the truth of the path leading to the cessation of suffering.

FOUR YOGAS OF MAHAMUDRA (Tib. phyag chen rnal ‘byor bzhi) The progressive levels of realization in the context

of mahamudra: One-pointedness (Tib. *rtse gcig*); beyond elaboration (Tib. *spros bral*); one taste (Tib. *ro gcig*); and no-meditation (Tib. *sgom med*). Each may be divided into lesser, intermediate, and greater, resulting in twelve stages altogether.

GAMPOPA (Tib. *sgam po pa*) The fifth major Kagyu lineage holder (1079-1153 ce) and foremost disciple of Milarepa. Gampopa combined the Kadam teachings of Atisha with the Mahamudra tradition that originated from Tilopa and Naropa.

GELUK (Tib. *dge lugs*) One of the four main lineages of Tibetan Buddhism and the most recent of the New Translation schools. The Geluk lineage was founded by Tsongkhapa (1357-1419 ce).

GENERATION STAGE (Skt. *utpattikrama*) [Tib. *skyed rim*] The first of two stages of Vajrayana or tantric meditation in which the meditator establishes and maintains visualizations of a yidam and its corresponding mandala. See also **COMPLETION STAGE**, **YIDAM**.

GESHE (Tib. *dge bshes*, *dge ba'i bshes gnyen*) [Skt. *kalyanamitra*] “Spiritual friend.” In general, a renunciate

teacher who provides qualified guidance and support for an individual student's progress. Also, an academic degree for monks, especially emphasized in the Geluk lineage.

GOD REALM See **SIX REALMS**.

GREAT LIBERATION THROUGH HEARING IN THE BARDO (Tib. *bar do thos grol chen mo*) Commonly known in the West as *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. A treasure text composed in the eighth century ce by Guru Rinpoche, and later discovered in the fourteenth century ce by Karma Lingpa, it is a compendium of knowledge and instruction pertaining to the interval experienced between death and rebirth.

GREAT PERFECTION See **DZOKCHEN**.

GROUND CLEAR LIGHT See **CLEAR LIGHT**.

GURU (Skt.) [Tib. bla ma] A master of a particular lineage from whom the student receives direct transmission of knowledge and experience. In the strictest sense of the word, a fully qualified guru must possess direct realization, compassion, extraordinary learning, morality, and the skill to guide disciples. Such qualified masters are said to be few. See also **ROOT GURU**.

GURU RINPOCHE (Tib. gu ru rin po che) “Precious Guru” refers to Padmakara or Padmasambhava, the “lotus-born” master of Uddiyana, who brought the Vajrayana teachings to Tibet in the eighth century ce. He subdued the negative forces in Tibet, founded the Nyingma tradition, and concealed terma (treasures) that are still being discovered as the need arises for the benefit of future generations.

GURU YOGA (Skt.) [Tib. bla ma'i rnal 'byor] The fourth of the four uncommon preliminary practices of the Vajrayana; the practice of devotion to the guru culminating in receiving his blessing and becoming inseparable with his mind. See also **NGONDRO**.

GYALWA GYAMTZO (Tib. rgyal ba rgya mtsho) [Skt. jinasagara] “Ocean of Victors.” A red form of Chenrezik considered to be the embodiment of all sources of refuge. A principal yidam of the New Translation schools, especially of the Karma Kagyu.

HELL REALM See **SIX REALMS**.

HINAYANA (Skt.) [Tib. theg pa dman pa] The “lesser vehicle” consists of the vehicles of shravakas and pratyekabuddhas. These systems are based on the first dharmachakra in which

practitioners closely observe the vinaya and contemplate the four truths with the aim of achieving individual liberation from the suffering of cyclic existence. See also **PRATYKABUDDHA**, **SHRAVAKA**, **VEHICLE**.

HRI (Skt.) Seed syllable of Amitabha and Chenrezik. See **SEED SYLLABLE**.

HUMAN REALM See **SIX REALMS**.

ILLUSORY BODY (Skt. mayadeha) [Tib. sgyu lus] One of the six dharmas of Naropa, this advanced practice describes the experience of arising in a form resulting from the realization of the inseparability of the three kayas (dharmakaya, nirmanakaya, sambhogakaya). This is based on authentic recognition of the illusory and dreamlike nature of all phenomena. See also **SIX DHARMAS OF NAROPA**.

IMPURE REALM (Tib. ma dag pa'i zhing) Any of the six realms of samsara. Impure realms are the experience of sentient beings that have obscurations. See also **PURE REALM**, **SAMSARA**, **SIX REALMS**.

INSTRUCTION (Tib. khrid) Directions from one individual to another — written, oral, or otherwise — on how to

apply a technique in Buddhist practice. Instruction should come from a qualified individual, but more importantly it should be a transmission from an unbroken lineage. See also **EMPOWERMENT**, **TRANSMISSION**.

INTERDEPENDENCE (Skt. *pratityasamutpada*) [Tib. *rten cing 'brel bar 'byung ba*, *rten 'brel*] The manner in which phenomena exclusively arise in dependence upon causes and conditions. See also **EMPTINESS**.

INTERVAL See **BARDO**.

KADAM (Tib. *bka' gdams*) A tradition that emphasizes the gradual path, which was brought to Tibet from India by Atisha around 1043 ce.

KAGYU (Tib. *bka' brgyud*) One of the four main lineages of Buddhism in Tibet and one of the three main schools of the New Translation tradition. The Kagyu traces its lineage of teachings and practices back to the mahasiddha Tilopa, who received the teachings directly from Vajradhara. The Kagyu are particularly known for their many great yogins as well as the monastic tradition that began with Gampopa. See also **KARMAPA**.

KALACHAKRA (Skt.) [Tib. dus kyi 'khor lo] “Wheel of time.” A deity manifested by Buddha Shakyamuni at the request of the king of Shambhala. Kalachakra is an anuttara yoga tantra, and receiving the empowerment is thought to guarantee rebirth in Shambhala.

KARMA (Skt.) [Tib. las] “Action.” The principle of cause and result, or causality, which entails the inevitable experience of the results of one’s own positive and negative actions. Karma refers to actual actions themselves as well as to their corresponding accumulated imprints and propensities.

KARMA KAGYU (Tib. karma bka’ brgyud) The principal Kagyu sect under the leadership of the Gyalwang Karmapa. It was established in the twelfth century ce by the First Karmapa, Dusum Khyenpa (1110-1193 ce), one of Gampopa’s students. See also **KAGYU**, **KARMAPA**.

KARMAPA (Tib. karma pa) The Gyalwang Karmapa is the supreme head of the Karma Kagyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. The present Karmapa, Ogyen Drodul Trinley Dorje (1985-), is the seventeenth in an unbroken incarnation lineage that began with Dusum Khyenpa (1110-1193 ce). The Gyalwang Karmapas, who embody the activity of buddhahood, were prophesied by both Buddha Shakyamuni

and Guru Rinpoche. Regarded as human manifestations of Chenrezik, they are pure examples of wisdom and compassion, and have revealed their realization as scholars, yogins, artists, and poets. See also **KAGYU**, **KARMA KAGYU**.

KHECHARI REALM See **CELESTIAL REALM**.

KHENPO (Tib. mkhan po) [Skt. upadhyaya] Title indicating completion of advanced Buddhist studies. Can also refer to a monastic preceptor who confers vows, or to the abbot of a monastery.

KLESHA (Skt.) [Tib. nyon mongs, dug] Mental afflictions, or poisons. The three primary kleshas are attachment (desire), aversion (anger), and apathy (bewilderment). Along with pride and jealousy, they are collectively referred to as the “five poisons.”

KRIYA TANTRA See under **TANTRA**.

LAMA (Tib. bla ma) [Skt. guru] Term for a fully qualified or realized spiritual teacher. In colloquial language it is sometimes loosely used as a polite way to address a monk.

LEAPOVER See under **DZOKCHEN**.

LIBERATION (Tib. thar pa) [Skt. moksha] Authentic freedom from suffering and compulsive rebirth in cyclic existence; synonymous with nirvana. See also **SAMSARA**.

LOCAL DEITY (Tib. yul lha) A nonphysical being who resides in or presides over a particular area or feature of that environment.

LOVE, LOVING-KINDNESS (Skt. maitri) [Tib. byams pa] The unconditional wish for all beings to attain happiness. On the bodhisattva path, one trains in loving-kindness and compassion, and many great masters teach that these qualities are the essence of the Buddha's teachings. See also **COMPASSION**.

LOWER REALMS (Tib. ngan song) "Bad migrations." The hell realms, preta realm, and animal realm. See also **SIX REALMS**.

LUCID DREAMING (Tib. rmi lam bzung ba) Lucid dreaming is knowing, while dreaming, that you are dreaming. It is the first step in gaining control over the dream state.

LUCIDITY (Skt. prabhasvara) [Tib. gsal ba, 'od gsal] In *Mountain Dharma*, the term *lucidity* refers to the aspect of the mind's nature that accommodates the unimpeded display of

appearances in their vivid clarity, which arises inseparably as emptiness. The genuine realization of lucidity-emptiness is synonymous with mahamudra. See also **CLEAR LIGHT**.

LUMINOSITY See **LUCIDITY**.

LUMINOSITY OF SLEEP (Tib. gnyid dus kyi 'od gsal)
Recognizing the nature of mind while asleep. See also **DREAM**.

LUNAR MONTH (Tib. tshes zla, zla ba) The average duration of time required for the moon to pass through one complete waxing and waning cycle, equal to approximately 29 solar days, 12 hours, and 44 minutes. A cycle of twelve lunar months is a lunar year.

MAHAKALA (Skt.) [Tib. nag po chen po, mgon po nag po] The principal dharma protector appearing in various forms as a wrathful manifestation of Chenrezik; his essential quality is awakened compassion. See also **CHENREZIK**.

MAHAKALI (Skt.) Female dharma protector. See also **MAHAKALA**.

MAHAMUDRA (Skt.) [Tib. phyag rgya chen po] “Great seal.” A system of meditation practice particularly emphasized in the

Kagyu tradition. Mahamudra is the direct experience of the empty, luminous, and unlimited nature of mind.

MAHAMUDRA LEVEL See **FOUR YOGAS OF MAHAMUDRA**.

MAHASIDDHA (Skt.) [Tib. grub thob chen po] “Great accomplished one.” A highly realized master in the Vajrayana tradition. Also refers specifically to any of the eighty-four great and eccentric adepts who lived in India between the eighth and twelfth centuries ce, and who reached great spiritual attainment through the diligent practice of tantra. See also **SIDDHI**.

MAHAYANA (Skt.) [Tib. theg pa chen po] “Greater vehicle.” The teachings of the second dharmachakra in which emptiness and compassion for all beings are emphasized. The Mahayana includes the sutra-based approach of perfecting characteristics as the causes of awakening, and the tantra-based approach of taking the resultant fruition of buddhahood as the path. See also **BODHICHITTA**, **BODHISATTVA**, **VEHICLE**.

MAITREYA (Skt.) [Tib. byams pa] One of the eight principal bodhisattvas, and the Buddha of the future. At present he

resides in the heavenly realm of Tushita, from where he produces emanations in other realms.

MANDALA (Skt.) [Tib. dkyil 'khor] The celestial abode of a particular deity with its surrounding retinue and specific characteristics. Also, any symbolic or physical representation of such an abode. The mandala offering, the third of the four uncommon preliminaries, perfects the accumulation of merit through offering the entire universe to the sources of refuge. See also **NGONDRO**.

MANJUSHRI (Skt.) [Tib. 'jam dpal] One of the eight principal bodhisattvas, and the personification of the infinite knowledge and wisdom of all buddhas. His purpose is to explain the limitless teachings of the Buddha to all sentient beings until samsara is completely emptied.

MANTRA (Skt.) [Tib. sngags] Sacred sounds that symbolize and communicate the nature of specific deities and their speech, as well as certain functions or qualities. OM MANI PADME HUM (Skt.), the mantra of Chenrezik, is among the most widely practiced in Tibetan Buddhism. See also **SEED SYLLABLE**.

MARA (Skt.) [Tib. bdud] Generally, anything that obstructs the practice of dharma and leads to involvement with mundane or harmful activities. When capitalized, <Mara> refers to the antagonist who repeatedly appeared to the Buddha, attempting to disrupt his demonstration of awakening as well as his subsequent activities and teaching career. Also refers to certain types of demonic or malevolent entities.

MARPA (Tib. mar pa) The renowned Tibetan translator (1012-1097 ce) credited with the transmission of many Buddhist teachings from India to Tibet, including the teachings and lineages of Vajrayana and Mahamudra. A disciple of the great Naropa, Marpa was also Milarepa's teacher, whom he famously subjected to extreme austerities in order to help Milarepa attain realization.

MEDICINE BUDDHA (Skt. bhaishajyaguru) [Tib. sangs rgyas sman bla] The buddha renowned for his healing powers, both on a physical level and for the inner sicknesses of desire, hatred, and bewilderment.

MENTAL AFFLICTIONS See **KLESHA**.

MENTAL BODY (Tib. yid lus) The subtle body experienced by beings in formless states of existence.

MILAREPA (Tib. mi la ras pa) This famous yogin (1040–1123 ce) is one of the most celebrated figures in Tibetan Buddhism. Despite having accumulated heavy negative karma in early adulthood, he became the disciple of Marpa and attained full awakening in one lifetime. His disciples include Gampopa and Rechungpa.

MOTHER TANTRA (Tib. ma rgyud) In the New Translation school, one of the three inner anuttara yoga tantras; mother tantra emphasizes the completion stage. See also **TANTRA**.

MOUNTAIN DHARMA (Tib. ri chos) Refers to intensive retreat practice, especially solitary retreat in the mountains. The essential point of mountain Dharma is to abandon all concerns of this life and undertake solitary retreat with the intent of experiencing the nature of your mind.

MOUNT MERU (Tib. ri rab lhun po) The supreme mountain; the central axis of a four-continent world system according to Buddhist cosmology.

MUDRA (Skt.) [Tib. phyag rgya] “Seal.” Non-verbal mode of communication consisting of hand gestures; used in tantric practice to evoke and symbolize specific ritual functions or deities.

NAGA (Skt.) [Tib. klu] Powerful serpentlike beings who inhabit watery or subterranean areas and are often the custodians of treasures, either texts or actual material wealth.

NAGARJUNA (Skt.) [Tib. klu sgrub] A preeminent Buddhist master who lived in India in the second century ce. Nagarjuna is renowned for his interpretation of emptiness, from which developed the Madhyamaka (Middle Way) school, and for composing many important texts, including the *Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way* (Skt. *Mulamadhyamakakarika*).

NAROPA The great Indian pandita and mahasiddha (1016–1100 ce) who underwent severe austerities under his guru Tilopa and later achieved the state of Vajradhara. One of his principal disciples was Marpa. See also **SIX DHARMAS OF NAROPA**.

NEW TRANSLATION SCHOOL (Tib. gsar ma) The New Translation school, which includes the Kagyu, Geluk, and

Sakya lineages, originates from the period of the second wave of Buddhism's transmission into Tibet. See also **NYINGMA**.

NGAKPA (Tib. sngags pa) [Skt. mantrin] An individual who has received Vajrayana empowerments, who practices, and who holds samaya. In popular usage, it refers to a lay Vajrayana practitioner.

NGONDRO (Tib. sngon 'gro) The preliminary practices of Tibetan Buddhism through which the practitioner begins the Vajrayana path. The common preliminaries consist of contemplation of the four thoughts that turn the mind: precious human existence, impermanence, karma, and samsara. The uncommon preliminaries consist of the accumulation of 100,000 repetitions of refuge prayers and prostrations; 100,000 Vajrasattva mantras; 100,000 mandala offerings; and 100,000 guru yoga practices. See also **GURU YOGA**, **MANDALA**, **REFUGE**, **VAJRASATTVA**.

NINE VEHICLES (Tib. theg pa dgu) The traditional enumeration of Buddhist systems according to the Nyingma School. The first three vehicles are the cause-based vehicles of the shravakas, pratyekabuddhas, and bodhisattvas. The other six are result-based vehicles. Three correspond to the outer tantras: kriya yoga, upa yoga, and yoga tantra. The final

three vehicles are the inner tantras: mahayoga, anuyoga, and atiyoga. See also **TANTRA**.

NIRMANAKAYA (Skt.) [Tib. sprul pa'i sku] The body of emanation, through which buddhas manifest spontaneously and usually physically in accord with the diverse needs and dispositions of limitless sentient beings. See also **TULKU**.

NIRVANA (Skt.) [Tib. mya ngan las 'das pa, myang 'das] “Transcendence of misery.” The state of authentic liberation from cyclic existence, which results from the extinction of the causes of suffering. See also **SAMSARA**.

NONCONCEPTUALITY (Tib. rtog med, dmigs med) A state devoid of all discursive mental activity or conceptual reference points.

NYARIRAM See under **RINGSEL**.

NYINGMA (Tib. rnying ma) The Old Translation school, which represents the Buddhist teachings as they were first translated into Tibetan from Sanskrit and other languages. This school began in the eighth century ce with Guru Rinpoche, who buried terma (hidden treasures) to be discovered at the appropriate time in the future by

tertons (treasure revealers). Dzokchen is the highest system of meditation practice in the Nyingma tradition. See also **DZOKCHEN**.

NYUNGNE (Tib. smyung gnas) The fasting and purification ritual of Thousand-Armed Chenrezik, the great bodhisattva of compassion.

OLD TRANSLATION SCHOOL See **NYINGMA**.

OM MANI PADME HUM (Skt.) om mani peme hung [Tib.] The well-known mantra of Chenrezik, the great bodhisattva of compassion.

PANDITA (Skt.) [Tib. mkhas pa] Great scholar. One who is highly learned and skilled in debate, the sciences, and Buddhist knowledge.

PARAMITAS See **SIX PERFECTIONS**.

PARINIRVANA (Skt.) [Tib. yongs su mya ngan las 'das pa] “Final nirvana.” The highest nirvana, which is entered at death by those who have achieved complete awakening. See also **NIRVANA**.

PATH (Skt. *marga*) [Tib. *lam*] The way that leads to awakening. In all vehicles, the successive paths to be traversed are the path of accumulation, the path of juncture, the path of seeing, the path of meditation, and the path beyond learning.

PERFECTIONS See **SIX PERFECTIONS**.

PHOWA See **TRANSFERENCE/EJECTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS**.

POSTMEDITATION (Tib. *rjes thob*) “Subsequent attainment.” Any virtuous activity or period of time outside of even placement in formal practice sessions. See also **EVEN PLACEMENT**.

PRAJNAPARAMITA (Skt.) [Tib. *shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa, sher phyin*] The sixth of the perfections, discerning knowledge. The Mahayana teachings on the cultivation of insight, resulting in the direct realization of emptiness. See also **EMPTINESS**, **SIX PERFECTIONS**.

PRATIMOKSHA (Skt.) [Tib. *so sor thar pa*] “Individual liberation.” The seven or eight levels of self-liberating precepts that constitute the basic moral commitments available to a lay disciple, novice monastic, or fully-renunciate monastic.

PRATYEKABUDDHA (Skt.) [Tib. rang rgyal, rang sangs rgyas] “Solitary victor.” Individual who contemplates the four truths and the twelve links of interdependence in pursuit of individual liberation from samsara in the form of pratyekabuddha arhathood. See also **ARHAT**.

PRELIMINARIES See **NGONDRO**.

PRETA (Skt.) [Tib. yi dvags] Also known as “hungry ghosts.” Of the six classes of beings in samsara, pretas are creatures and spirits of various types who are endlessly tormented by hunger, thirst, and intense misery. See also **SIX REALMS**.

PROTECTOR See **DHARMAPALA**.

PURE REALM (Tib. dag pa'i zhing khams) A dimension manifested by a buddha or great bodhisattva in which beings may abide and progress toward awakening without danger of falling into lower states. Also, any place viewed as the pure manifestation of spontaneously present wisdom. See also **IMPURE REALM**.

PURIFICATION PRACTICE Methods that aid in the removal of obscurations, including negative karma accumulated through physical, verbal, and mental wrongdoing.

RAGA ASYA (Skt.) [Tib. karma chags med] Sanskrit for Karma Chakme.

RAINBOW BODY (Tib. 'ja' lus) The experience of a highly accomplished practitioner who entirely transcends the limitations of physical form at the time of death. Outward evidence of such attainment may take the form of visible rainbows and the remaining presence of hair or fingernails following dissolution of the deceased's physical body.

RAKSHASA, RAKSHASI (Skt.) [Tib. srin po, srin mo] A vicious type of demon, either male or female, respectively, that thrives on killing and consuming human flesh.

REALIZATION (Tib. rtogs pa) Unchanging, authentic insight into the true nature of reality, which may be either fully complete or partial in degree.

RED DROP (Tib. dmar cha) The residual seed essence of the mother's ovum, obtained at conception, which remains present in the center of the body below the navel for the duration of a person's life. See also **WHITE DROP**.

RED INCREASE See **APPEARANCE, INCREASE, AND ATTAINMENT**.

REFUGE (Tib. skyobs pa) Safety sought from the perils of cyclic existence, which can only be found in those sources that embody the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Taking refuge (Tib. skyabs 'gro) is also the first part of the uncommon preliminaries. See also **REFUGE VOW**, **THREE JEWELS**.

REFUGE VOW (Tib. skyabs 'gro'i sdom pa) Formal statement of one's intent to take Buddhist refuge, usually done in a ceremony accompanied by liturgy. The vow of refuge must be received from a qualified preceptor who has himself maintained it without breakage. The vow of refuge marks the beginning of the Buddhist path, and constitutes a foundation for all other vows. See also **REFUGE**.

RELATIVE TRUTH (Tib. kun rdzob bden pa) “Deceptive truth.” The way ordinary beings perceive and experience interdependent phenomena, which is considered to be true on a conventional level. See also **ABSOLUTE TRUTH**.

RELIC (Tib. sku gdung) Remains from the cremation of a highly realized being. These may consist of bone or skull portions, the heart, brain, or even the salt used to pack the body. Bone relics may bear self-arisen images of deities, syllables, or mantras. Among the most common types of relics

are ringsel, which are small pea-shaped deposits of various colors. See also **RINGSSEL**.

REVERSAL PRACTICE (Tib. bzlog pa) Ritual performed to avert obstacles and disaster.

RINGSSEL (Tib. ring bsrel) Small pea-shaped relics that appear in the ashes or elsewhere following the cremation of a highly realized being. Most are white, although they can emerge in various colors. They also have the ability to grow and multiply. Five types of ringsel may be identified: shariram, churiram, meriram, nyariram, and pancharam, although sometimes all five are collectively referred to as “shariram.” See also **RELIC**.

ROOT GURU (Tib. rtsa ba'i bla ma) According to the anuttara yoga tradition of the Vajrayana, the root guru is the embodiment of all buddhas because the mind of the guru is the dharmakaya, the wisdom of all buddhas. Since the guru is the source of dharma, the speech of the guru is the embodiment of all dharma. The body of the guru as the foremost member of the sangha is the personification of the entire sangha. The qualities of the guru are what manifest as the yidams and other deities, and the activity of the guru is

what manifests as dakinis and dharma protectors. See also **GURU**.

SADHANA (Skt.) [Tib. sgrub thabs] “Means of accomplishment.” A Vajrayana liturgy and method of practice generally emphasizing the generation stage. The sadhana format usually includes chanting, visualization, and mantra recitation.

SAKYA (Tib. sa skya) One of the four main schools of Tibetan Buddhism, and also one of the New Translation schools. Headed by His Holiness Sakya Trizin, the lineage is passed from father to son. The Sakya lineage emphasizes Lamdre (path and fruition) teachings and Buddhist logic.

SAMADHI (Skt.) [Tib. ting nge ‘dzin] Meditative absorption. A one-pointed mental focus in which there is a nondual experience of the object of meditation and the meditating subject.

SAMAYA (Skt.) [Tib. dam tshig] Sacred word or vow. Vajrayana commitments are made primarily to one’s root guru and to specific practices, but also extend to the sangha.

SAMBHOGAKAYA (Skt.) [Tib. longs spyod rdzogs pa'i sku] The body of complete enjoyment, through which buddhas appear to bodhisattvas abiding on the bodhisattva levels.

SAMSARA (Skt.) [Tib. 'khor ba] Cyclic existence, in which ordinary beings compulsively take rebirth endlessly in the six realms, thereby experiencing endless suffering. See also **NIRVANA**.

SANGHA (Skt.) [Tib. dge 'dun] “Aspirants to virtue.” The community of practitioners and teachers who practice and transmit the Buddha’s teachings. One of the Three Jewels in which one takes refuge. See also **THREE JEWELS**.

SARMA See **NEW TRANSLATION SCHOOL**.

SECRET MANTRA See **VAJRAYANA**.

SEED SYLLABLE (Tib. yig 'bru, sa bon) A visualized Sanskrit letter or syllable, often associated with a specific mantra or buddha family. In the generation stage, serves as an essential element from which the visualized form of a deity arises. See also **MANTRA**.

SEVEN BRANCHES (Tib. yan lag bdun pa) A complete preliminary practice consisting of seven elements: 1) veneration through prostration, 2) making offerings, 3) confession of wrongdoing, 4) rejoicing in the virtue of all, 5) requesting that the buddhas teach, 6) praying that the buddhas not enter nirvana, and 7) dedication of merit.

SEVERANCE See **CHÖ**.

SHAMATHA See **SHINAY**.

SHARIRAM See under **RINGSEL**.

SHINAY (Skt. shamatha) [Tib. zhi gnas] “Calm abiding.” Tranquillity meditation in which the meditator develops a calm and focused mind, using techniques such as following the breath.

SHRAVAKA (Skt.) [Tib. nyan thos] “Hearers.” Early disciples of Buddha Shakyamuni who practiced meditation by relying on the Buddha’s words, through both listening to teachings and communicating them to others. The shravaka contemplates the four truths in pursuit of individual liberation from samsara in the form of shravaka arhathood. See also **ARHAT**.

SIDDHA (Skt.) [Tib. grub thob] One who has gained accomplishment through the practice of the Vajrayana. See also **MAHASIDDHA**, **SIDDHI**.

SIDDHI (Skt.) [Tib. dngos grub] “Accomplishment.” Spiritual powers attained by advanced practitioners. Common siddhis demonstrate mastery of the mundane world, and the supreme siddhi is complete awakening.

SINGED OFFERING See **SUR**.

SIX DHARMAS OF NAROPA (Tib. na ro chos drug) Naropa taught Marpa these tantric practices, which form an important part of the Kagyu teachings and are a standard practice in the traditional three-year retreat. They consist of chandali (Tib. gtum mo), illusory body (Tib. sgyu lus), dream (Tib. rmi lam), clear light (Tib. ‘od gsal), interval (Tib. bar do), and transference of consciousness (Tib. ‘pho ba).

SIX PERFECTIONS (Skt. sat paramita) [Tib. pha rol tu phyin pa drug] “Six transcendences.” The main trainings that constitute the path of the bodhisattva are the perfections of 1) generosity, 2) morality, 3) patience, 4) diligence, 5) meditation, and 6) prajna or discerning knowledge.

SIX REALMS, SIX CLASSES OF BEINGS (Tib. 'gro ba rigs drug)

Six spheres of cyclic existence as depicted in the wheel of existence. The *deva* or *god realm* is the highest of the six realms, and in this realm beings are dominated by pride, and suffer because they will eventually fall to lower realms. In the *asura* or *demigod realm*, beings are dominated by jealousy, and suffer as a result of their constant conflict. The *human realm* is especially characterized by desire and attachment, but although humans suffer due to their unending struggles, it is the best samsaric rebirth because one has the ideal opportunity to practice dharma. In the *animal realm*, beings are dominated by ignorance and stupidity, and suffer from constant fear. In the *preta* or *hungry ghost realm*, beings are dominated by greed, and suffer terribly from hunger and thirst. The lowest realm is the *hell realm*, where beings are dominated by hatred and aggression, and suffer inconceivably.

SIX-SYLLABLE MANTRA (Tib. yig drug) The six-syllable mantra of Chenrezik: om mani padme hum in Sanskrit, and om mani peme hung in Tibetan pronunciation.

STUPA (Skt.) [Tib. mchod rten] A reliquary monument that contains the relics of the Buddha or other realized teachers. The stupa symbolizes the dharmakaya, the wisdom mind of

the Buddha, and can range in size and design from miniature reliquaries to very large and elaborate structures.

SUKHAVATI (Skt.) [Tib. bde ba can] The pure realm of Buddha Amitabha, located in the west. See also **AMITABHA**.

SUPERCOGNITION (Skt. abhijna) [Tib. mngon par shes pa] Paranormal faculties or powers of perception that are gained through advanced meditative accomplishment.

SUR (Tib. gsur) Singed offering. A ritual accompanied by liturgy in which consecrated herbs, barley, and other substances are singed, which particularly benefits beings in the bardo.

SUTRA (Skt.) [Tib. mdo] Discourses of the Buddha. Derived directly from the Buddha and subsequently redacted and canonized by his disciples. One of the three baskets (collections of teachings) comprising the tripitaka, the Buddhist canon. See also **TRIPITAKA**.

SVABHAVIKAKAYA (Skt.) [Tib. ngo bo nyid kyi sku] “Body of essential nature,” which expresses the ultimate unity of the dharmakaya, sambhogakaya, and nirmanakaya. See also dharmakaya, sambhogakaya, nirmanakaya.

TAKING AND SENDING See **TONG LEN**.

TANTRA (Skt.) [Tib. rgyud] “Continuum.” Textual and practical instructions of the Vajrayana taught by the Buddha while manifesting in sambhogakaya form; bestowed as a powerful means to overcome the obstacles of degenerate times. The tantras do not abandon the other vehicles, but build upon them by using skillful means that swiftly bring about awakening. The fourfold classification includes *kriya tantra*, which emphasizes the external performance of rituals; *charya tantra*, which emphasizes the importance of both internal meditative states and external ritual; *yoga tantra*, which emphasizes inner meditation on the deity; and *anuttara tantra*, the highest level of transformative practice and identification with wisdom deities. See also **VAJRAYANA**.

TARA (Skt.) [Tib. sgrol ma] A completely awakened being who had previously promised to appear after her awakening in the form of a female bodhisattva for the benefit of all beings. Her two most common aspects are green and white.

TERMA (Tib. gter ma) “Treasure.” These concealed treasures have included texts, ritual objects, and relics, which were hidden mainly by Guru Rinpoche and Yeshe Tsogyal to

be discovered at the proper time for the benefit of future students. See also **TERTON**.

TERTON (Tib. gter ston) A revealer of hidden treasures that were concealed primarily by Guru Rinpoche and Yeshe Tsogyal. See also **TERMA**.

THANGKA (Tib. thang ka) A Tibetan scroll painting depicting buddhas, bodhisattvas, and other deities; used as a religious object.

THREE JEWELS (Skt. triratna) [Tib. dkon mchog gsum] “Three rare and supreme ones.” The precious Buddha, the precious Dharma, and the precious Sangha. See also **REFUGE**.

THREE REALMS (Tib. kham s gum) The three spheres of existence are the desire realm, the form realm, and the formless realm. The desire realm (Tib. ‘dod kham s) is inhabited by all six classes of beings, and is characterized by coarse mental afflictions. The form realm (Tib. gzugs kham s) is inhabited by devas, and is a subtler level of existence devoid of anger. The formless realm (Tib. gzugs med kham s) is the subtlest level of existence, also devoid of anger as well as location, and characterized by the absence of the form aggregate.

THREE-YEAR RETREAT (Tib. lo gsum phyogs gsum) A traditional retreat curriculum, particularly emphasized within the Kagyu schools, which spans three years, three months, and three days. During this retreat one receives, learns, and practices the principal yidam and meditation practices of the lineage, such as Vajrayogini and the six dharmas of Naropa. See also six dharmas of Naropa, Vajrayogini.

TIRTHIKA (Tib. mu stegs pa) Non-Buddhist religious and philosophical teachers and their followers.

TÖGAL See under **DZOKCHEN**.

TONG LEN (Tib. gtong len) “Sending and taking.” Any form of meditation that employs a sending-and-taking technique. Often specifically refers to meditation in which one considers the suffering of others while breathing in, and then breathes out in order to mentally exchange this suffering for happiness.

TORMA (Tib. gtor ma) “That which is scattered or thrown.” Ritual cake used in tantric ceremonies that derives its name from the practice of casting it outdoors after use. The inner meaning is the discarding of attachment connected with such offerings.

TRADITION OF REALIZATION (Tib. rtogs pa'i bstan pa) All Dharma can be summarized in two aspects: realization and scholarship. The tradition of realization emphasizes practice and practical instruction. See also **TRADITION OF SCHOLARSHIP**.

TRADITION OF SCHOLARSHIP (Tib. lung gi bstan pa) All Dharma can be summarized in two aspects: realization and scholarship. The tradition of scholarship emphasizes study, contemplation, and teaching. See also **TRADITION OF REALIZATION**.

TRANQUILLITY See **SHINAY**.

TRANSCERENCE/EJECTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS (Skt. samkranti) [Tib. 'pho ba] Also known as “phowa.” The practice of transferring the consciousness of a recently deceased being to a pure realm such as Sukhavati.

TRANSMISSION (Skt. agama) [Tib. lung] In addition to empowerment and instruction, hearing the text read aloud (“reading transmission”) authorizes one to engage in a specific Vajrayana practice. It must be conferred by an individual who has previously received that same transmission. See also **EMPOWERMENT, INSTRUCTION**.

TREASURE REVEALER See **TERTON**.

TREKCHÖ See under **DZOKCHEN**.

TRIPITAKA (Skt.) [Tib. sde snod gsum] “Three baskets.” The Buddhist canon. The three baskets are the sutra-pitaka (discourses of the Buddha); the vinaya-pitaka (ethics and discipline); and the abhidharma-pitaka (phenomenology). See also **ABHIDHARMA**, **SUTRA**, **VINAYA**.

TSONDRU GYAMTSO (Skt. Virya Sagara) [Tib. brtson ‘grus rgya mtsho] The disciple who requested Karma Chakme to teach about mountain Dharma.

TULKU (Tib. sprul sku) [Skt. nirmanakaya] “Emanation body.” A reincarnate master. This title is customarily reserved for individuals who have been recognized as accomplished meditators in the previous life and demonstrated signs of control over the process of death and rebirth, which is only possible for those who abide on the bodhisattva levels or higher. Such beings may be either an emanation or a direct rebirth. See also **NIRMANAKAYA**.

TWO ACCUMULATIONS (Tib. tshogs gnyis) Refers to the accumulation of merit and the accumulation of wisdom,

which together lead to awakening. Merit is the positive karmic accumulation resulting from virtuous actions. Wisdom is the knowledge and realization that results from the purification of afflictive and cognitive obscurations.

UPASAKA (Skt.) [Tib. dge bsnyen] Male lay Buddhist who holds one or more lay precepts. See also **PRATIMOKSHA**.

VAIROCHANA (Skt.) [Tib. rnam par snang mdzad] The principal sambhogakaya buddha and lord of the sugata or buddha family. Also, a great scholar and translator who lived during the time of King Trisong Deutsen; one of the main masters responsible for bringing the Dzokchen teachings to Tibet.

VAJRA (Skt.) [Tib. rdo rje] “Indestructible,” “adamantine.” The legendary weapon of the god Indra that is said to be absolutely indestructible. The vajra is used in the Vajrayana primarily as a symbol of the mind’s unchanging nature. It also represents stability, power, and the masculine principle of skillful means.

VAJRA BODY (Tib. rdo rje'i lus; sku rdo rje) Describes the manner in which the subtle channels of the human body resemble the structure of a vajra. See also **VAJRA**.

VAJRADHARA (Skt.) [Tib. rdo rje ‘chang] “Vajra Holder.” The dharmakaya buddha of the New Translation school.

VAJRAPANI (Skt.) [Tib. phyag na rdo rje, lag na rdo rje] One of the eight principal bodhisattvas. He personifies the power and the wisdom mind of all buddhas.

VAJRASATTVA (Skt.) [Tib. rdo rje sems dpa’] Sambhogakaya buddha of purification. Vajrasattva meditation and mantra recitation constitutes the second of the four uncommon preliminary practices, which is intended to purify obscurations and wrongdoing. See also **NGONDRO**.

VAJRAVARAHI See **VAJRAYOGINI**.

VAJRAYANA (Skt.) [Tib. rdo rje theg pa] “Indestructible vehicle.” The Vajrayana is part of the Mahayana and shares the same philosophical base, but differs in practice because it takes the result or fruition as the path. The Vajrayana also has additional teachings based on the tantras, which emphasize deity practice using visualization, mantra, and mudra. See also **TANTRA**, **VEHICLE**.

VAJRAYOGINI, **VAJRAVARAHI** (Skt.) [Tib. rdo rje rnal ‘byor ma, rdo rje phag mo] The embodiment of wisdom, she is one of

the principal yidams of the Kagyu lineage and the consort of Chakrasamvara. She represents the transformation of ignorance and desire into emptiness and compassion.

VASE BREATHING (Tib. *rlung bum pa can*) A specialized technique for manipulating the subtle energy winds, which is used in certain restricted practices. See also **CHANNELS, WINDS, AND DROPS**.

VEHICLE (Skt. *yana*) [Tib. *theg pa*] System that metaphorically brings the practitioner to awakening. The three main yanas are the Shrivakayana, Pratyekabuddhayana, and Mahayana. The first two are collectively known as the “Hinayana” or “common vehicle.” Another popular approach identifies the three main vehicles as the Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana. See also **HINAYANA, MAHAYANA, VAJRAYANA**.

VIDYADHARA (Skt.) [Tib. *rig ‘dzin*] “Awareness holder.” A being of high attainment in the Vajrayana.

vinaya (Skt.) [Tib. *‘dul ba*] “Taming.” One of the three baskets (collections of teachings) that comprise the tripitaka, the Buddhist canon. The vinaya contains the Buddha’s teachings on moral discipline and conduct. See also **TRIPITAKA**.

VIRA (Skt.) [Tib. dpa' bo] Male counterpart of the dakini. See also **DAKINI**.

WATER TORMA (Tib. chab gtor, chu gtor) The ritual offering of torma in the form of water and food substances. Based on the instructions of the Buddha, this practice generates incalculable merit for oneself, alleviates the sufferings of beings in the lower realms, and pacifies one's karmic creditors. See also **TORMA**.

WHITE APPEARANCE See **APPEARANCE, INCREASE, AND ATTAINMENT**.

WHITE DROP (Tib. dkar cha) The residual seed essence of the father's sperm, obtained at conception, which remains present in the center of the body inside the crown of the head for the duration of a person's life. See also **RED DROP**.

WINDS See **CHANNELS, WINDS, AND DROPS**.

WISH-FULFILLING JEWEL, WISH-FULFILLING TREE (Tib. yid bzhin nor bu, dpag bsam gyi shing) A fabled jewel or tree that fulfills all desires and intentions; found in the realms of the gods or nagas.

YAMA (Skt.) [Tib. gshin rje] Lord of Death, the personification of impermanence.

YIDAM (Tib. yi dam) [Skt. ishtadevata] A tantric meditation deity, in male or female form, representing different aspects of buddhahood. Yidams may be peaceful, semi-wrathful, or wrathful in appearance. See also **TANTRA**.

YOGA TANTRA See under **TANTRA**.

YOGIN, YOGINI (Skt.) [Tib. rnal 'byor pa, rnal 'byor ma] Male and female tantric practitioners, respectively.

Index of Stories Told by Khenpo Rinpoche

King Bimbisara and the queen give banquet for the Buddha
with the rejoicing beggar

Deshung Rinpoche's uncle, the chö practitioner

Khenpo Rinpoche at Buxador

Jataka tale of Buddha as a bird

“Yes, the guru is the guru, but the minor teacher with him,
the little guy with the goatee, he's really something.”

A controversial teacher of Tsurphu called Jamyang Chenpo

Sangye Nyenpa, Ngokyok Nyenpa, eat used tea leaves

Lord Jayulwa hears Rechungpa singing

Donkey seated first at the Sakya monastery

The tulku who prostrated to the Chinese general

The emanated king and the monk with “rotten robes”

Khenpo Rinpoche and Thrangu Rinpoche at the nomad community where there was great sickness

The sickly man from Nyarong and his misuse of forceful mantra

Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo & Do Khyentse Yeshe Dorje

Sapgar Rinpoche and his brothers seeing spirits

Palpung Khyentse Rinpoche alleviates the great drought in China

The previous Traleg Rinpoche alleviates the great drought in Kham

Naropa and prostrations to Shiva's image

Rinpoche is warned about the fire

While herding animals, Rinpoche is warned of danger

Rinpoche, his brother, and the chö practitioner

The lama who kept reappearing producing rinsel

The story of Jetsun Milarepa after death

Celestial rainbow body

Situ Rinpoche recognizing tulkus (his dream about Kalu Rinpoche)

Ngulchu Thokme and the lice

Not seeing the transparent Situ Rinpoche (previous)

Tapchu Rinpoche, his nunnery, and the doong relic

The red pills that Rinpoche makes

Lama Ganga death

Milarepa inside the yak horn

Guru Rinpoche and the rakshasas

The monk at Buxador that went mad

Buddha's half-brother, Lekpay Karma

The cremation of Drukpa Tapchu

The samadhi of the tutor at Buxador

The 500 Indian merchants and the Steed Balaha

Rinpoche's mother and the power of chö

His Holiness the Sixteenth Karmapa staying in samadhi



About KTD Publications

KTD Publications, a part of Karma Triyana Dharmachakra, is a not-for-profit publisher established with the purpose of facilitating the projects and activities manifesting from His Holiness's inspiration and blessings. We are dedicated to “gathering the garlands of the gurus’ precious teachings” and producing fine-quality books.

KTD Publications

Woodstock, New York

www.KTDPublications.org

May All Beings Be Happy!