

**HOW TO LOOSEN
THE GRIP OF
EGO-GRASPING
BY UNDERSTAND-
ING DEPENDENT
ARISING THE
BEST METHOD
FOR REALIZING
EMPTINESS**

KADAMPA

CENTER RALEIGH

NC VEN. ROBINA

COURTIN

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Picture: Lama Yeshe in the aspect of Lama Tsongkhapa
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**1. PREPARE FOR EMPTINESS BY
UNDERSTANDING KARMA, AN
EXAMPLE OF DEPENDENT
ARISING**
VEN ROBINA COURTIN

**KARMA: FUNDAMENTAL TO
BUDDHISM**

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

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

So, this law applies – runs – in the mind. In the mind, for the Buddha, is where things happen. The mind is where the workshop is, as Lama Zopa Rinpoche

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

WHERE DO I COME FROM?

Think of your mind as a river of mental moments – your thoughts and feelings of now, in the simplest linear sense of cause and effect, come from the previous moment of your thoughts and feelings. And your thoughts and feelings of the previous moment come from – guess what? – the previous moment of your thoughts and feelings. You track it back to ten years ago, twenty years ago, in your mothers’ womb. “Well, maybe I began a month before conception.” Well, no. If my mind existed then, it must have come from a previous moment of my mind. Then clearly you get back to the first moment of conception, when we all assume we began. If you’re Christian, God put a soul there, in the egg and sperm; and if you’re a materialist, you are only the egg and sperm.

Well, the Buddha has this third option. The egg and sperm come together, but what causes them to stay together and

multiply is the entry of consciousness, your consciousness.

“Well, I must have begun then.” Well, yes, relatively speaking, this package called “Robina” began then, but where did the body come from? Mummy and Daddy. Where did your mind come from? Previous moment of itself. So your mind is its own continuity of mental moments.

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

YOUR MIND IS YOURS

And so the experiential implication of Buddha’s view is that your mind is *yours*. And that means the contents of it are yours. And so what are the contents of your mind? All the love and the kindness and compassion and wisdom and contentment and anger and jealousy and fear and paranoia and rage – all of this.

This is the contents of your mind. So all of these, being contents of your mind, they too come from previous moments of that particular quality in your mind.

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

We come into this life fully programmed with all of our tendencies, with all of our characteristics. It's a big surprise to us. I mean, we accept we come fully programmed, but we think the programming comes from mother and father. It doesn't, Buddha says. Tendencies in the mind are mental and

mind is not physical and it comes from previous moments of itself, not from the external condition, which is called the brain.

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

KARMA MEANS INTENTION

This is the essential idea of karma. Karma is a Sanskrit word, that is translated as “action,” really simply. Which implies reaction. Action-reaction, in this meaning: cause and effect. Seed-fruit, you know.

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

future in that consciousness as your experiences.

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

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

Of course, it's not evident to us. So we take it as our working hypothesis. Buddha's saying basically: we are the creators of ourselves. It's a very simple point. Whatever's in your mind is there because you put it there, not because Mummy and Daddy did something to you. This flies in the face of the assumption that we all have that's the basis of our lives, and is, as Buddha would say, a misconception. That, you know, I am angry because my father was angry. I am jealous because my mother was jealous. I am depressed because I have certain hormones. We always put an external

reason to it, you know. Which sort of, for us, is a way of saying, “It’s not my fault.”

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

ACCOUNTABILITY

One has to know one’s mind, because that’s the one we can change. Yes, certain people’s external conditions make it quite tough – if you’re in a prison and you can’t open that door; you can say “Well, I can’t help being angry, I’m surrounded by mean people.” You might say that. But the ones who are really practicing don’t say that. They know that this is their physical condition, and this is indeed the result of

their karma (and we'll talk more about that in a minute), and so they will adapt themselves to that condition and still work on their minds.

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

And that's the view of the materialist world, you look. It's an assumption of ego. "I didn't ask to get born, did I? It's not my fault. My mother made me. My father made me." We don't want to blame God, however.

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

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

FOUR WAYS THAT KARMA RIPENS

There are four ways in which our actions from the past lives – you know, before we even entered into this present womb of our mother – there are four ways those past actions ripen in the present. Or indeed, there are four ways in which our present actions leave seeds in the mind that will ripen in the future as one’s experiences. It’s a constant process, ongoing. Every microsecond of everything that goes on in our mind, and the things we do on the basis of those thoughts with our body and speech, this is the karmic process. This is constantly occurring. This is the natural process of cause and effect, constantly in play.

1. FULLY RIPENED RESULT: A REBIRTH

The first, main one – they call it the Fully Ripened Result – is the type of rebirth we get born into. So, you know, if we’re materialists, or if we’re Christians, for example, we both agree on one thing at least – that someone else made us. I was made by God. I was made by Mummy and Daddy. They’re the same principle, aren’t

they? That you're made by someone else. Which means it's got nothing to do with you.

Whereas the Buddha says, "Everything to do with me. " We are accountable. Our past actions are the main cause of why my mind found its way to my present mother's human womb. Why blame your parents? They're just lying there having fun and you come along. So Buddha puts us right in the centre. Which is kind of an interesting concept – who thought that you were the main cause of who you are? Big surprise!

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

coming together. So this is a very simplistic explanation of it.

We've programmed ourselves, basically – in a very major way – with past practice of morality, of goodness, in the context, no doubt, of a spiritual path, which then ripened at the past death when the consciousness got to the subtle level and eventually left the body, which is when you're dead. Then it would have been on autopilot, basically, programmed, and then in a few weeks or could have been a much shorter time, after having been in the intermediate state, as they call it, like a dream state but out of the old body, then our consciousness found its way very precisely into our present mother's Fallopian tube and joined the egg and sperm there.

The main cause of this is our past morality. Your father and mother having sex is just a co-operative cause. They did not make you, they did not create you. They merely had sex. Your consciousness had very strong karmic connection with them from past history with those particular parents. I mean, it's a highly complex scenario, you know, but simply

speaking that karma ripened at the time of your death and then caused your mind to go on autopilot to find its way into our particular mother's human womb.

One lama said that at the time of a male and female human having sex, billions of consciousnesses that are recently passed away – and that's obviously not just from the human realm, Buddha would assert a whole spectrum of possibilities of types of consciousnesses existing in different realms – that at the time of the male and female having sex, billions of consciousnesses are all hovering around trying to get in. Well, we got in. From Buddha's point of view, we should be weeping in delight every day at how fortunate we are, getting such an extraordinarily fortunate life. Human life – so few of those, obviously – we have more mosquitoes in one summer in the backyard than you have humans at any one time.

So, clearly it's easier to get a mosquito birth, dog birth, giraffe birth – maybe less giraffes, not so many of them – fish, who knows how many fish, plenty of fish – the vast majority – anyway, billions and

trillions of other consciousnesses, we can see this. So, we got the human one.

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

2. ACTIONS SIMILAR TO THE CAUSE: OUR TENDENCIES

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

“Why are you good at piano, Robina?”

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

“Why are you good at anger, Robina?”

“Oh, well, it’s my father’s fault!” No accountability whatsoever! We love being accountable for our being good at music, or math or being a gymnast, you know, but not emotional stuff. We have this different set of laws when it comes to emotional stuff, which I find most fascinating – no logic at all.

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

Our mothers and fathers – this is a big shock to us – they’re not the main cause of this. The absolute default explanation in the materialist world is it’s all in the DNA and the genes. That’s why we always in our minds go back to the parents, to check why I am what I am. No, we don’t need to.

Yes, my mother was good at music. Everyone says, “Yeah, Robina’s good at music because her mother was good at music.” No – Robina’s good at music because she practised it before. So has my mother, and we happen to come together. And then she encouraged my music by teaching me. It doesn’t come from your parents, Buddha said – it’s a very simple point.

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

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

The third way that your karma ripens, your actions from the past ripen in the present, is called Experiences Similar to the Cause, and that’s all the stuff that happens to you. The people you meet, the parents you get, the teachers, the abusers, the ones who are loving to you, the ones

who rape you, the ones who give you a million dollars, the ones who are kind to you, the ones who steal from you, whatever it might be. The way you're treated and seen in the world. The main cause? Your past actions.

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

4. ENVIRONMENTAL KARMA

And fourth, they call it Environmental Karma. Environmental karma, which is the very way the physical world impacts upon us. So that could mean – so here we

are, sitting in this room. It's quite pleasant, isn't it? It's quite peaceful, pleasant view out there, it's quiet, you know – the walls aren't dripping with mold. It's pleasantly painted. It smells nice.

Don't take this for granted – this experience of a pleasant environmental experience is the result of our collective virtue. If suddenly the building explodes, or a gunman comes in, this is due to our collective non-virtuous karma.

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

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

So the four ways your karma ripens: the very fact that you're this human being, with this very particular family and friends and people who harm you and people who help you – whatever those experiences are. All your tendencies and even the way the physical world impacts upon you – where you were born, the way the physical world is, all of this – our actions in the past are the main cause of this. Buddha puts us absolutely in charge. “We are the boss,” Buddha says.

I'M THE BOSS

So if I am the boss of my own present experiences, if I am the cause of it, then indeed I can be the cause of my future experiences – which is why you should then check up, do I like this life, do I like people punching me in the nose? Do I like having people being angry at me? Do I like being depressed and angry and jealous and poor and living in an ugly environment and all polluted or horrible?

No, I don't. Then, okay, there must be causes of this; what were they? You check up; well, do I like this? No. Well, guess what, what's the solution? Don't do it again, baby! It's pretty simple.

This is Buddhist practice. Not complicated. It's just that we fight mightily against this because it sounds like blame, "Oh you mean it's my fault – I must go and kill myself." because we're used to this dualistic view of "poor me," "victim me," "not fair," "life is done to me, I didn't ask to get born, it's not my fault." That is the default mode of ego.

FOUR WAYS THAT KILLING, FOR EXAMPLE, WOULD RIPEN

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

So, as a result of killing in the past – those four ways I described – if it ripens at

the time of your death, and it becomes the main karma, it would program your consciousness to cause you to get born in a very suffering type of life like an animal realm or a spirit or something like that. Okay. So we can deduce in our case, it was morality that ripened because we got a human life. And the Buddha would say that in general, getting a human life is the result of morality ripening.

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

The third way killing ripens is called as an experience – which is you get killed or you die young, or you get sick. So anything that's an experience of where – the opposite to health, or the opposite to the length of life, or the opposite to that, that's the result of harming or killing. Do you understand? So, generally speaking, sickness – the elements not working

properly, food not being digestible, things harming us instead of nourishing us, this is the result of past killing, in general.

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

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

In the Second Noble Truth, the Buddha states the causes of suffering. And he narrows it down to two main causes: karma and delusions. And they subsume down to the one: delusions. Delusions are

the main cause of suffering: because of these we do negative actions, we harm others.

So, in relation to the two causes of suffering, karma and delusions, there are two levels of practice. The most immediate, the most urgent, as Rinpoche puts it, is in relation to the delusions: at the very least refrain from creating more negative karma in day-to-day life. So, if someone punches your nose, you at least protect your mind to not create more negative karma. And that's our ongoing, everyday practice, watching our body, speech and mind like a hawk every minute.

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

COLOPHON

*Teachings given at Osel Shen Phen Ling,
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2. PREPARE FOR EMPTINESS BY UNDERSTANDING MIND AND THE DELUSIONS THAT ARE DRIVEN BY EGO- GRASPING

VEN. ROBINA COURTIN

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

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

With this skill, we can plumb the depths of our own mind, go beyond the conceptual and sensory levels of consciousness, our own cognitive process

– not the brain; we’re not discussing the brain –to degrees of subtlety that we in the West don’t even posit as existing. Why? To rid the mind of the ego-based states and develop to perfection the goodness within us.

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

BUDDHA’S OWN EXPERIENTIAL FINDINGS

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

It’s shocking to hear this. If I go to my therapist and ask them to please give me

methods to get rid of all ego, all fear, all jealousy, all anger, all attachment and develop infinite love and infinite compassion for all beings, I think they'd be seriously worried about me. But this is the view of Buddhist psychology.

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

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

BE OUR OWN THERAPIST

We really begin to practice when we learn to be our own therapist, as Lama Yeshe puts it: seeing our mind, noticing the anger, the attachment, the fears, and learning to work with them and change them. That's the real immediate practice to do. And this is what's so difficult. Of the two causes of suffering this is the main one; these delusions impel us to create negative karma, the second one (see chapter 1).

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

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

it's a bit backward isn't it? If you learn how to drive, you can avoid the crashes.

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

SENSORY CONSCIOUSNESS

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

that part of our consciousness, mind, that functions through the medium of our ear, through the drum and all that business, in order to perceive sound.

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

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

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

We're living in a sensory universe now.
Buddha calls it the desire realm.

THE WORKSHOP IS IN THE MIND

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

NEGATIVE, POSITIVE, AND NEUTRAL STATES OF MIND

According to the Buddhist model of the mind, we divide the contents of our mental consciousness into three categories; there's no fourth. There are the

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

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

In the long-term we need to use the single-pointed concentration technique that hones concentration, mindfulness,

alertness and the rest to an incredible degree of brilliance and clarity, and with these we learn to unpack and unravel our delusions and eventually rid our minds of them.

NEGATIVE STATES OF MIND HAVE TWO MAIN FUNCTIONS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

KNOW OUR OWN MIND

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

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

Therefore, we need to know our mind because what goes on in our mind is the

main source – *the main source* – of our happiness and suffering; and because we need to rid the mind of these causes of suffering. That’s what Buddha means by “nirvana”.

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

WHAT ARE DELUSIONS?

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

Its main voice is attachment. So let’s look at attachment because effectively, in

the four noble truths, attachment is the main cause of all our suffering.

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

NEGATIVITY IS NOT INNATE

To give ourselves the confidence to even start, we need to think about how the negative states of mind are not at the core of our being, they do not define us, they are not innate, and thus can be removed. This flies in the face of our deeply held assumption – one that's reinforced by all contemporary models of the mind – that the positive and negative have equal status; that they're natural; they just are

who we are. If you ask your therapist for methods to get rid of all anger, jealousy, attachment and the rest, they'll think you're insane!

We can be forgiven for thinking the negative, neurotic, unhappy emotions are at the core of our being: they certainly feel like it! We identify totally with them, follow them perfectly, truly believing this is who I really am. This is the irony of ego.

NEGATIVE STATES OF MIND ARE DISTURBING AND DELUSIONAL

So, if the negative, neurotic emotions are the source of our pain and the positive ones the cause of our happiness, then we'd better learn to distinguish them. This is the very essence of the job our being our own therapist.

What are negative states of mind? They have two main characteristics (which the positive ones necessarily lack) and these are indicated by two commonly used synonyms: “disturbing emotions” and “delusions.”

Disturbing Even though we can see that anger is disturbing to oneself – just look at an angry person: they're out of

their mind! – we fiercely live in denial of it; or we deflect it, so determined are we to believe that the external catalyst is the main problem. My friends on death row in Kentucky told me that they receive visits from an old Catholic man who, after thirty years of grief and rage after his daughter was murdered, finally realized that the *main* reason for his suffering wasn't his daughter's murder but his rage, his anger.

Delusional The other characteristic that these unhappy states of mind possess is that they're delusional. We'd be offended if someone accused of that, but that's exactly what Buddha is saying. The extent to which our minds are caught up in attachment, anger and the rest is the extent to which we are not in touch with reality. He's saying that we're all delusional, it's just a question of degree.

In other words, anger, attachment and the rest are concepts, *wrong* concepts. It seems like a joke to say that these powerful emotions are based in thoughts, but that's because we only notice them when they roar up to the surface as emotion.

Perhaps we can see the disturbing aspect of them, but rarely the delusional.

They are distorted assessments of the person or the event that we are attached to or angry with; they're elaborations, exaggerated stories, lies, misconceptions, fantasies, conceptual constructions, superstitions. As Rinpoche puts it, they decorate on top of what is already there layers upon layers of characteristics that are simply not there. Bad enough that we see things this way; the worst part is that we *believe* that these stories are true. This is what keeps us locked inside our own personal insane asylum.

Understanding this is the key to understanding our negative states of mind and, therefore, how to get rid of them.

EGO-GRASPING: THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM

At the root of this, as Buddha calls it, is ignorance: *marigpa* in Tibetan: unawareness: a fundamental unawareness of how we actually exist. The function of this “ego-grasping,” as it’s appropriately called, is to isolate and concretize this universe-big sense of self, a deluded sense

of I, a totally fabricated sense of I, whose nature is fear: paranoid, dark, cut off, separate, alienated, and overwhelming.

This instinctive, pervasive sense of an independent, self-existent, real, solid, definite me, totally pervades everything – there is not an instant when it is not there. It's at the deepest level of assumption, beneath everything. It is always there, informing everything we think and feel and say and do and experience – and the root even of existing in samsara in the first place.

THE MAIN VOICE OF THE I IS ATTACHMENT

Ego-grasping is the root but the delusion that runs our lives is attachment. The irony of ego is we actually feel empty, bereft, and that neediness, that bottomless pit of yearning, that hunger: that's attachment. And it's the main voice of ego. From eons of practice we come into this life with a profound sense of dissatisfaction, neediness; a primordial sense that something is missing, of being bereft, lonely, cut off. It's just there, *all the time*, in the bones of our being.

This attachment, this desire, being a misconception, makes the mistake of believing, a million percent, that that delicious person, that gorgeous taste, that lovely smell, that nice feeling, that idea – that when I get *that*, when I have it inside me, then I'll feel full, then I'll be content. That is what desire thinks.

This is so hard to see how desire is deluded. And it is not meant to be a moralistic issue. As soon as we hear these words we feel a bit resentful, “What do you mean – I'm not allowed to have pleasure?” That's how we feel. But as Lama Yeshe has pointed out: we're either completely hedonistic, and grasping and shoving everything in, or we're completely puritanical. And the irony is that they are both coming from a misunderstanding of desire; they both come from ego-grasping.

Buddha is not being moralistic. He is not saying we should not have pleasure – the reality is he is saying we *should* have masses of pleasure, joy, happiness, but naturally and appropriately, and, incredibly, without relying upon anything external. This is our natural state when

we've depolluted our minds of the neruoses, in fact.

Right now, because of the misconception that desire has, and because of the ignorance that drives it, we have got the wrong end of the stick. They think that the delicious chocolate cake, that gorgeous thing is *out there*, vibrating deliciousness, demanding that I eat it – nothing coming from my side at all. As Lama Zopa Rinpoche points out, we don't think out mind plays any role at all. We think that it's all happening from the cake's side, all the energy is coming from the cake.

OUR MIND MAKES IT UP

And the thing is that we don't see this process! The fact is we are making up the cake – attachment has written a huge story about cake and what it will do for us. It is a complex conceptual construction, an invention, an elaborate view, an interpretation, an opinion.

We're like a child, as one lama said, who draws a lion – and then becomes afraid of it. We invent everything in our reality, and then we have all the fears and the paranoia

and the depression and the grasping.

We're too much!

But we make up that cake, we make up the enemy – we made them up ourselves. This sounds pretty cosmic, but it is literally true. This doesn't mean there is no cake there – there is. And it doesn't mean that Fred didn't punch you – he did. We need to distinguish between the facts and the fiction: that's the tricky part.

It is hard to see this, but this is the way delusions function. And basically they are liars. What attachment and ignorance are seeing is simply not true. What they're seeing simply does not exist.

There is a cake there, but what we think is cake and what cake actually is are hugely different. This is interesting. And because this is hard to understand indicates how ancient it is within us.

What we're seeing or experiencing, what we are grasping at – delicious cake from its own side that will make me happy – is a total lie. It doesn't exist like that at all. There is a cake there, it is brown, it is square: that's valid. And this is what's hard to distinguish – the facts and the fiction. What is actually there and what is

not there. That is the job we need to do in knowing the way delusions work and therefore how to get rid of them and, finally, to see emptiness.

ATTACHMENT IS THE VOICE OF THE VICTIM

Another characteristic of attachment is that it is the voice of the victim. We truly feel we have no control – cake is this incredible powerful thing, and I just have to have it. What choice do I have? That is attachment talking. Attachment gives all the power to the outside object. Which is why we feel like a baby. That's the victim mentality. And victim mentality, the one of hopelessness, the one of no control, that's the voice of attachment. Literally. That's exactly how attachment functions. Attachment is giving all the power to that object. It sees this truly delicious divine thing, which in reality our mind has made up, and then we believe it and then blame it.

ATTACHMENT IS NOT A FUNCTION OF THE SENSES

“We make the body the boss,” as Lama Yeshe would tell us. We totally follow what the senses feel. We assume the delicious cake is an object of the senses – of course, it is; but what we think we see isn’t what’s there. What appears to the sense of sight, for example, is not a delicious cake but simply the shape and colour of the thing. “Delicious cake” is a story made up by the mental consciousness, specifically attachment. This is a crucial point.

Let’s analyze. What is being experienced in relation to that cake? What are the states of mind? One of them is the senses indeed – we smell it in the kitchen, so there’s our nose sense. Then there’s the touch, the sight, we see the shape and color when it comes to the table; then we touch it, the hand feels it, then there’s the taste consciousness, the one we’re wanting the most. So four of the five senses are involved in the experience of that cake.

The senses are like dumb animals. Our tongue doesn’t experience the hunger for the cake, it doesn’t leap out of our face and grab the cake desperately; even our hand

doesn't, although it looks like it. The hand goes out to the cake, but not from its own side. So what does? It's propelled by the neurotic need to get the cake in the mouth. The mental consciousness, in other words. The thought. It is the story about what is chocolate cake, and I need chocolate cake, all the stuff about chocolate cake that is chattering away in the mind. That is where the delusions exist. Attachment is not a function of the taste. It is simply not possible. How can it be? Our tongue doesn't feel neurotic. Our tongue doesn't feel grasping, our tongue doesn't feel, "I want to have more cake," and our tongue doesn't stop functioning when we give up attachment. It is just a doorway through which this bunch of thoughts, these concepts, this ego-grasping grasps at the experience, isn't it? That is all. So the senses do not experience attachment. It is a logical fact.

WE ARE ALL JUNKIES

So of course for eons we have had the mistaken assumption that satisfying the senses is the way to get happiness. So right now, we are totally dependent on sensory

objects. We are all junkies, it's just a question of degree. We can't imagine having pleasure unless we get that fix. That fix is any one of the objects of the five senses. Which makes it sound quite brutal.

But unless we can start to look into this and cut through this whole way of working, we will never break free of suffering, we'll never become content, satisfied, fulfilled. Ever. Which is why, the basis of practice, the foundation of all realizations, is morality. Discipline. It means literally practicing control over the senses. And it is not a moralistic issue; It's a practical one. The aim is to get as happy as possible. This is the aim.

This happiness, this pleasure, is not deluded. If pleasure were deluded, we might as well give up now. Pleasure, happiness, joy are totally appropriate.

So where's the problem? Why do we suffer? Why are we frantic and anxious and desperate, fantasizing about the cake before it's even there, then shoving two pieces in when it comes, and then being depressed when we eat too much? Why all this rubbish? Because we have these delusions. Suffering doesn't come from

pleasure, it doesn't come from the senses. It comes from neuroses in the mental consciousness. But right now it's virtually impossible for us to have pleasure without attachment.

ATTACHMENT TO A PERSON

It's the same with people. Let's look at the person we are attached to, the person we are in love with – even more dramatic. Again, this soup of emotions, which we never analyze, never deconstruct.

I can say, "I love you." That means I wish you to be happy. Totally appropriate. Unbelievable, virtuous. The more of this the better. We will only get happiness if we keep thinking that. "I want you not to suffer," that's called compassion. Generosity, maybe you'd like to give the person something. Generosity, in its nature is a virtue, necessarily the cause of happiness.

So, love doesn't cause suffering, compassion doesn't cause suffering, the senses don't directly cause suffering, happiness can't possibly cause suffering – so what does? The cause of suffering is the attachment, first of all, the neurotic sense

of an “I,” a hungry “I” that sees this person, grossly exaggerates their value to me, gives too much power, puts the power “out there” in that person, just like the cake, which implies that we are devaluing the power of ourself. We’re giving all the power to this person, like it’s all out there, this person, vibrating, so delicious, so gorgeous, this is exactly how it feels. So attachment is hungry and empty and bereft and lonely. And is completely convinced that having that person is going to make me happy.

What attachment does is exaggerate the beautiful qualities of the person, it is exaggerating our sense of an “I” that needs that person, because attachment thinks that if I don’t get that person then I am not happy; because we don’t believe we can be happy inside, we have to have an object. Attachment then starts to manipulate this person, expects massively that this person will give me happiness.

It’s the same with the person we loathe. We really believe that that person, from out there, from their own side, independently, definitely, is an awful person, as if ugliness is coursing in their

veins along with their blood. We hear their name, it appears awful, we see their face, it appears awful. The discomfort in our mind is huge. We think the discomfort, the unhappiness, the hurt, the anger, the pain, we actually think and believe they are doing it to us.

But it's a lie. It's our own anger that causes the person to look awful, the anger that makes us so miserable.

GOING BEYOND ENEMY, FRIEND, STRANGER

Usually the only person we wish to be happy – that's the meaning of love – is the person we are attached to. And the only person we are attached to is the person we love. So we assume because they come together, they're the same thing. It is just not accurate. We need to start going beyond those limits, which is so scary.

When we start practicing equanimity, we analyze: enemy, friend, and stranger – we try to cut through this narrow self-centred view of attachment, ignorance and aversion.

Right now we assume it is normal that when a person is mean to me, I don't like

them. So we call them enemies. And we assume it is normal that when a person is nice to me, we call them friend. And when a person is doing neither, they are called stranger. That's the reality of the entire universe, isn't it? We need to go beyond this one.

WHAT IS ANGER AND WHAT IS ANGER NOT?

A perfect question. And the perfect answer, which I heard from a lama, is: "Anger is the response when attachment doesn't get what it wants." Attachment and aversion are utterly linked. Being a fantasy, attachment is not sustainable; the bubble has to burst, and it has nowhere to go but aversion (or ignorance, which manifests as boredom, indifference, uncaring).

In our never-ending efforts to keep the panic at bay, we hungrily seek the right sounds, smells, tastes, feelings, thoughts, words, but the split second we don't get them, aversion arises, exploding outwards as anger or imploding inwards as depression, guilt, hopelessness, self-hate.

We have a lot of misunderstanding about what anger is. So, what is it not?

Anger is not physical. Anger is part of our mind, and our mind is not physical. It exists in dependence upon the brain, the genes, the chemical reactions, but is not these things.

When anger's strong, it triggers huge physical symptoms: the blood boils, the heart beats fast, the spit comes out the mouth, the eyes open wide in panic, the voice shouts. Or if we experience aversion as depression, the body feels like a lead weight; there's no energy, a terrible inertia. And then, when we boost our serotonin, the body feels good again.

But these are just gross expressions of what, finally, is purely thought: a story made up by our conceptual mind that exaggerates the ugly aspects of the person or event or oneself.

Recent findings prove what is explained in Tibetan Medicine: that what goes on in the mind affects the body.

Anger is not someone else's fault. This doesn't mean that the person didn't punch me; sure they did. And it doesn't mean that punching me is not bad; sure it

is. But the person didn't make me angry. The punch is merely the catalyst for my anger, a tendency in my mind. If there were no anger, all I'd get is a broken nose.

Anger does not come from our parents. We love to blame our parents! Actually, if Buddha is wrong in his assertion that our mind comes from previous lives and is propelled by the force of our own past actions into our mother's womb; and if the materialists are right in asserting that our parents created us, then we *should* blame them. How dare they create me, like Frankenstein and his monster, giving me anger and jealousy and the rest! But they didn't, Buddha says. (Nor did a superior being – but we dare not blame him!). They gave us a body; the rest is ours (including our good qualities).

Anger is not only the shouting. Just because a person doesn't shout and yell doesn't mean they're not angry. When we understand that anger is based on the thought called aversion, then we can see we are all angry. Of course, if we never look inside, we won't notice the aversion; that's why people who don't express anger experience it as depression or guilt.

Anger is not necessary for compassionate action. His Holiness the Dalai Lama responded to an interviewer who suggested that anger seems to act as a motivator for action, “I know what you mean. But with anger, your wish to help doesn’t last. With compassion, you never give up.”

We need to discriminate between good and bad, but Buddha says that we should criticize the action, not the person. As Martin Luther King said, it’s okay to find fault – but then we should think, “What can I do about it?”

It’s exactly the same with seeing our own faults, but instead of feeling guilty we should think, “What can I do about it?” Then we can change. Anger and guilt are paralyzed, impotent, useless.

Anger is not natural. Often we think we need anger in order to be a reasonable human being; that it’s unnatural not to have it; that it gives perspective to life. It’s a bit like thinking that in order to appreciate pleasure we need to know pain. But that’s obviously ridiculous: for me to appreciate your kindness, you first need to punch me in the nose?

Anger is not at the core of our being. Being a delusional state of mind, a lie, a misconception, it's logical that anger can be eliminated. If I think there are two cups on my table, whereas there is only one, that's a misconception. What to do with the thought "there are two cups on my table"? Remove it from my mind! Recognize that there is one cup and stop believing the lie. Simple.

Of course, the lies that believe that I'm self-existent, that delicious objects make me happy, that ugly ones make me suffer, that my mind is my brain, that someone else created me – *these* lies have been in my mind since beginningless time. But the method for getting rid of them is the same.

What's left when we've removed the lies, the delusions, is the truth of our own innate goodness, fully perfected. That is what's natural.

PRACTICE IS PAINFUL

Real practice is painful – real practice. Until it is painful, it is not practice, we're just playing safe. We're just keeping our nice comfort zone. Practice has to threaten something – it has to feel painful. Just like

when we are overweight, we decide we are going to get thin and beautiful, and we start doing push-ups. It has to be painful at first. We know that if the second we start feeling pain from doing pushups we stop, we will never benefit from doing them. We can always pretend “Oh I did my pushups this morning,” but if the second they started being painful, we stopped, we know that if our muscles don’t hurt, they will never get strong – it is logic. Giving up attachment is like that – it has to be painful.

Until then, we are just being in our comfort zone – we’re playing safe, thinking that being spiritual means smiling and being holy and having a pleasant manner. It is just not so. Until we stretch, until we go beyond our limits, we won’t get better at doing anything. We really get our body strong when we go beyond our limits every day. How do we become an accomplished pianist or anything? We have to go beyond our limits. That’s what spiritual practice is – we have to stretch our limits.

This means we have to be facing our attachment every day, feeling the pain of

it, seeing it. And then, the second we start to do that, somehow we become fulfilled, satisfied. That is what is interesting. When we start to give up being a junkie, we start to become happy. We begin to taste our own potential. As long as we continue to follow attachment, which is so deep, we will never be happy.

PRACTICE STARTS WITH MOTIVATION

So how to begin? It all comes from motivation. We can start the day by deciding we will begin, be very courageous. It starts from the thought. We tend in the West to dismiss thoughts. We say, “It’s only in the mind,” we give no value to the mind, even though we are caught in it. We give no value to just thought.

The point is, that if we really understand this fundamental, and easily provable, truth that every thought programs us into what we will become, we would be so happy to have positive thoughts, and be content with them. Because of two things; first, everything that we do comes from the thought that we think. If I am going to

get up and walk out the door, what is the first thing that has to happen? My legs don't just jump up and walk out, my mind has to say "I want to walk out that door." So what does that mean? How do we walk out a door? The first thing is to think "I want to walk out that door."

So every day, you're saying "I want to be compassionate, I want to be beneficial." You're aspiring, and then you'll act. It is no mystery. That's how we become pianists, footballers, a cook – or a happy, beneficial person. It starts with the thought, the motivation, the aspiration.

So we just start our practice with powerful sincere motivations. We are sincere, after all; we do want to be these things, loving, compassionate, etc. Genuinely wanting, seeing the reasonableness of having a compassionate thought, seeing the reasonableness of turning around a negative thought. Not thinking that thought doesn't matter. What we are is the product of our thoughts. It is simply a fact. This is what karma is saying. No one else made us into anything, we made yourself. As Lama

Zopa says, we can mould our mind into any shape we wish.

Practice is, in the beginning, every day, is motivation, motivation, motivation. I want to do this, I am aspiring to that. When we start every day, we wish “May I be useful, may I not shoot my mouth off to too many people,” etc. Even this is so profound. We have to value the thought, value the mind, it is so powerful. Like the Dalai Lama says, we are then on the right track for the rest of the day. Don’t underestimate that. If we really got that, we would be so content, knowing we were sowing the seeds for future crops of happiness. It is like we had a big open field, and we are sowing seeds for the future. That’s practice. That’s how we start.

We shouldn’t fret, “I’m hopeless, I’m useless.” We are too concrete in our thinking. So we start with the motivation, start with the thoughts, and we go into the day, and bring that awareness with us. Watch our mind, be careful of the rubbish, try not to shoot our mouth off too much, try to be a bit useful, rejoice in the good stuff. At the end of the day, we look back,

we regret our mistakes and rejoice in our efforts, and then go to bed with a happy mind. That's one day of practice. One day at a time. It is organic, and it's humble. We start one day at a time, and slowly, something develops.

**3. NOW, UNDERSTAND
EMPTINESS BY THINKING
ABOUT HOW THE SELF AND
EVERYTHING ELSE IS
MERELY LABELED BY THE
MIND, THE SUBTLEST LEVEL
OF DEPENDENT ARISING**
LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE

**THE I CANNOT BE FOUND IN
THIS BUILDING**

The “I” is a concept. First of all, there is the I that is merely imputed by the mind, because there is the base, the aggregates, the association of body and mind (if elaborated, there are five aggregates). When the body is here in this building, let’s say – the mind is dwelling within the body – the mind simply labels, merely imputes, “I am in this building.” The mind merely imputes that, then believes it. Simply by imputing that, the mind believes, “I am here in this building.”

In reality, if you analyze, there is no real I *here* that is in this building. In

reality, there is no real I here, because that I, which appears to us as real, as existing from its own side, and is believed in, doesn't exist at all.

That I doesn't exist at all; nowhere can you find it. Neither the body is I, nor the mind is I. If you analyze more, you will find that each of the aggregates is not that I. Even the collection of the five aggregates is not the I. That real I also cannot be found *on* the aggregates, which is the base. It cannot be found from the tip of the hair down to the toes. It cannot be found either outside the body or inside the body. It cannot be found. It exists nowhere, neither in the sky, nor in the ground; nowhere. It cannot be found.

You can see by scientifically checking that it cannot be found – “scientifically checking” means using reasoning. With wisdom, scientifically, what you realize after analyzing is that the I is totally non-existent, it is totally empty. By logical reasoning, it cannot be found. And that emptiness is the ultimate nature of the I, the very nature of the I, the reality.

HOW THE MIND PROJECTS

How does labeling happen? For example, if you ask yourself, “What am I doing?” you think, “I am sitting,” or “I am talking,” or “I am meditating” – sleeping, eating, whatever.

First, the mind sees the aggregates and sees what action the aggregates are doing – the body is doing the action of sitting, the mind is doing the action of meditating – then, according to that activity, the mind makes up that label.

Then, second, right after that, because of the subtle negative imprint in our mind of grasping at true existence, the mind projects, decorates. Even though “I am sitting” is merely imputed by the mind, the next second, when what the mind has merely imputed appears back to us, it does not appear as merely labeled by the mind; it appears as *not* merely labeled by the mind, as something real in the sense of existing from its own side. Then we believe it. It is not only that our mind labels it, we *believe* it.

First there appears a *real* I that is *really* sitting, talking, sleeping, meditating. Then the mind imputes “I am sitting,” etc. And then the mind immediately decorates, projects true existence onto the action – not only the I appears as real, the action appears as real as well. The mind makes it real in the sense of existing from its own side.

In reality, the I is empty, the aggregates are empty; the senses, the objects of the senses, actions – everything is totally empty. There is no such thing as these phenomena. They don’t have true existence at all. They don’t have the slightest atom of true existence. All this is projected, false, a total hallucination. All this is totally non-existent.

This emptiness of true existence is the ultimate nature of all phenomena.

WE CREATE OUR OWN WORLD

It is like this for all phenomena: the aggregates in general, each of the individual aggregates, the senses, the objects of the senses, etc. Everything is made real because of the subtle negative

imprint of grasping at true existence in our minds. The defilements project all this dual view.

Basically, we create your own world. In relation to attachment to a person's body, let's say, you believe that it exists from its own side. But that is totally wrong. If the beauty existed from the side of the object, not projected by your own mind, that person's body should be seen as beautiful by everybody, by every living being.

When you compare different bodies, you will say that one is more beautiful than another; or this one is ugly compared to that one. This makes it very clear that "beautiful" and "ugly" come from your mind, they don't come from the object's side at all. If ugly and beautiful existed from their own side, every human being should have the same view, everybody should have the same appearance. But they do not.

WE LABEL THINGS, THEN BELIEVE IN THEM

Let's make this point a little bit clearer. When you were a child, before you were

taught the alphabet by your school teacher, you saw what was written on the blackboard as a drawing or a design; you didn't see that this is A, this is B, this is C, etc. You didn't see those designs as those letters. At that time, all you saw was just a design. Once your teacher introduced you to A, B, C, D, your mind imputed A, B, C, D on those designs, then you believed in those labels. Only after that was there the appearance of A to you; only then did you see A. Your mind labeled A, then you believed in it.

Now you can see that the A that you are seeing came from your mind. Your mind imputed A and believed in it. It started with that. The whole process started with that; it came from your mind.

But when this A appears to you, right after the mere imputation by the mind calling it A, it appears as if it is *there* on those lines. Why is that? That is the big question. Why does it appear *there* on those lines – in other words, why does it appear as existing from its own side, as existing truly? Because of the imprint of

past ignorance grasping at true existence.

**THE LINES ARE NOT THE “A”;
THEY ARE THE BASE OF THE
LABEL “A”**

Each line of the design is not A. Even all the lines together are not A, because all the lines together are the base upon which your mind imputes A. If that base, those lines, were already A, then the very first time you saw that design, before you were introduced to A, you would know that it is A. But the first time you saw it, you didn't see A, you just saw the lines. Only after you were introduced to it, and your mind made up the label A, called it that, only then was there the appearance of A – then you saw A. That very clearly proves that the whole design is not A. It is the base to be labeled A.

The question is whether it is labeled by mind or not. Yes, it is labeled by mind. Without the mind labeling A, A doesn't exist. A is labeled by mind, and what is called A is a name, and the name has to come from the mind. The name has to be imputed by the mind. Right from the

beginning, what was the cause of seeing A? What caused your mind to label A? You have to have seen some design first, then your mind labeled A.

**THE AGGREGATES ARE NOT
“FATHER”; THEY ARE THE BASE
OF THE LABEL “FATHER”**

Before you label “father” you have to see those particular aggregates, that particular shape of body, that face, etc. By recognizing those aggregates, then, next, your mind labels “father.” You don’t label “father” before seeing those particular aggregates – that shape of the body that performs the function of father for you; you don’t say, “Oh, father is coming into the house” unless you see those aggregates. First you see that particular body, that connection to you, then you label “father,” and only after that do you see “father.”

It is very clear, then, that you don’t see father before seeing the base, the aggregates. You don’t label “father” before seeing those particular aggregates, which are the base.

Nor do you label “father” at the same time that you see the base. Believing that it happens at the same time is totally wrong. This is already proved by experience. In order for your mind to label “father is coming into the room,” you have to first see the aggregates coming into the room. You see “father” only after seeing the base, the aggregates.

**YOU LABEL THE BODY
“BEAUTIFUL” AND THEN YOU
BELIEVE IT**

It is exactly the same with the body of the person you’re attached to – you are seeing a body as beautiful. The evolution is exactly the same. Your mind labeled “beautiful” and then believed in it. If your mind did not label it as beautiful and then believe that it is beautiful in the first place, there would be no appearance of beauty, you wouldn’t see beauty. It is clear with this explanation. It all starts from your mind.

THE BASE AND THE LABEL ARE NOT SEPARATE, BUT THEY ARE DIFFERENT

So, same with the A. *First* you see the design, *then* your mind labels A, *then* you see A. Therefore, that design is not A. Rather, it is the base upon which we label A.

This point is very important. The base is not the label; they are different phenomena. The base and the label do not exist *separately*, but they exist differently. It is extremely important to differentiate the label and the base. Seeing the base and the label as indifferentiable – *that* is the object to be refuted. That is the wrong view. That is the false A. That is not the reality. Meditate on that.

You can see very clearly that you can't find the A on this base, on those lines. Not one part of the lines is A, nor is one of the lines A, even the whole group of lines is not A. You can't find A on those lines. If you look for it, you can't find it. This should be very clear. This is the reality.

NEVERTHELESS, THERE IS “A” – A MERELY-LABELED “A”

Now, here is the point; you have to really pay attention here. Through this analysis, even though you cannot find A on the lines, it doesn't mean there is no A. There *is* A existing. Yes, there *is* A – because there is this design there on the blackboard, because there are these lines. There *is* A – but it is a merely-labeled A. It's merely imputed by your mind.

You cannot find the merely imputed A on the lines, but A *can* be found – it can be found on the blackboard, because there is the base: the lines on the blackboard.

But an A that is appearing to you *on* those lines, as findable – which has the same meaning as a *real* A, in the sense of existing from its own side – that is completely false. That is the object to be refuted as described in the philosophical texts. When we realize that *that* A is totally non-existent, empty as it is empty, then we are realizing the ultimate nature of the A, that which is emptiness.

**THERE IS A MERELY-LABELED
BODY, BUT IT, TOO, IS NOT
FINDABLE**

It is exactly the same with the beautiful body. The beautiful body appears *there*, as if it is there on the base, the aggregates, after the mind has imputed it. It appears as a findable, real one, in the sense of existing from its own side, not merely labeled by mind. It even appears as if it *never* came from your mind, had nothing to do with your mind.

**THE NOT MERELY-LABELED
BEAUTIFUL BODY DOES NOT
EXIST**

The subtle wrong view is seeing it as appearing not merely labeled by mind. That is the subtle object to be refuted, according to the Prasangika Madhyamika view. One of the four schools, the Madhyamika, has two sub-schools, the Svatantrika and the Prasangika, and it is the Prasangika view of the object to be refuted that we're discussing here.

Seeing the beautiful body as not merely labeled by mind is totally wrong,

totally false. If you look, you cannot find it there on the base, the aggregates – that beautiful body not merely labeled by the mind. If you look for it, you cannot find it there on the base, nor anywhere. It is exactly the same as the analysis of “A.”

So, seeing the body as *there*, appearing above the base, is totally false. In reality, if we analyze, we will realize that that is totally non-existent, empty right there. And that is the realization of the ultimate nature of the body. The same for the person, for everything.

Now you can see there is no beautiful body existing that is not merely labeled by the mind. There is no real person not merely labeled by the mind. There is no such thing there. It is totally empty.

Mind exaggerates “beautiful this and that” and then attachment grasps on to it. But there is no such thing.

Lama Tsongkhapa explained in the *Lamrim Chenmo* by quoting *Four Hundred Stanzas* by the great Indian pandit, Aryadeva:

On the basis of what ignorance holding
true existence exaggerates,
The mind exaggerates, ‘This is
beautiful.’
Then attachment arises on that.

This also applies to anger. On the basis
of the person’s body and so forth
appearing as not merely imputed by
mind, the mind exaggerates “bad, ugly,”
then anger arises towards it. In reality,
there is no such thing. There is no such
object of anger, in reality. It is a total
hallucination, false. There is no such
thing. “On the basis of what ignorance
holding true exaggerates” – in other
words, on the basis of ignorance
exaggerating the existence of, in this
case, the body as truly existent – “The
mind exaggerates, ‘This is ugly,
undesirable.’ Then anger arises on that.”

You can clearly see the conclusion
from this quotation. (I may not have
given it completely. I have given the
essence, but maybe not all the words.)
What ignorance grasping as truly

existent exaggerates is totally non-existent. The object of anger or attachment that you totally believe is *there* is totally non-existent.

DELUSIONS CAN BE REMOVED BECAUSE THEY'RE DEPENDENT ARISINGS

There is no question that ignorance and attachment can be removed from the mind, because they're dependent-arising. If they were independent, they could not be removed; but because they are dependent, they can be removed by other causes and conditions.

In fact, all the defilements can be ceased. Because these seeds are not permanent phenomena – they are causative phenomena – they can be removed by the remedy path.

EVERY BEING POSSESSES BUDDHA NATURE

Finally, we can be liberated totally from all the delusions because we have buddha nature. Every insect, every worm, every spider, as well as the beings in all the realms of existence, all have

mind, and all their minds have buddha nature. The emptiness of their mind is their buddha nature. There is no mind existing from its own side, even though it appears that way to us and, due to ignorance, we believe it.

That's why everyone can be free from the suffering of samsara, everyone can achieve buddhahood, the total cessation of obscurations and the completion of realizations – remember, this is the very meaning of the word, “buddha.” Even the subtle negative imprint that projects the subtle dual view can be removed completely – by the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, with the support of bodhichitta; by completing all the merits of wisdom and the merits of virtue. Then your mind becomes a fully enlightened mind.

True cessation can be achieved because there is the true path. Lord Buddha has revealed and explained the true path in scriptures, and there are many great masters in whose minds the path exists as experience from whom we can learn. We can learn from them and practice.

This is how we can cease the defilements and be liberated forever from all suffering and its causes.

COLOPHON

*Teachings by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
from a letter to a man in prison.*

4. HOW IGNORANCE GRASPS AT THE I LAMA THUBTEN YESHE

THE MOUNTAIN OF SELF

Our conception of ego instinctively feels that I'm somewhere around here; Thubten Yeshe is somewhere here. Where is Thubten Yeshe? My ego's instinctive interpretation is that I'm here, somewhere in my body. Check for yourself. See what comes up in your mind when you think of your name. The huge mountain of your self will arise. Then check exactly where that mountain of "me" can be found.

Where are you? Somewhere around your body. Are you in your chest, in your head?

You feel this instinctively. You don't have to study philosophy to learn it; you don't have to go to school; your parents didn't teach you. You've known this since before you were born.

Buddhism describes two kinds of ego identity: *kun-tag* and *lhen-kye*.

LEARNED GRASPING AT SELF

Kun-tag means the sense of self that's philosophically acquired. It's something that you learn through outside influence from teachers, friends, books and so forth. This is the intellectually derived ego. Can you imagine? You can even acquire an ego through reading. This one is easier to remove, of course, because it's more superficial. It's a gross conception. The simultaneously born sense of self is much, much harder to get rid of.

INNATE GRASPING AT SELF

The one I'm talking about is *lhen-kye*, the simultaneously-born one; the one that exists simply because you exist. It was born with you; it needs no outside influence for its existence. Like the smell that comes with a pine tree, they're one. The pine tree doesn't grow first and then the smell comes later. They come together. It's the same with the innate sense of ego;

This instinctive conception of ego is really convinced that around my body is where you'll find Thubten Yeshe. Someone looks at me and asks, "Are you Thubten Yeshe?" "Yes," I reply, "I'm Thubten

Yeshe.” Where is Thubten Yeshe? Around here. Instinctively, I feel I’m right here. But I’m not the only one who feels like this. Check up for yourself. It’s very interesting.

MY NAME IS NOT ME

Until I was six years old, I was not Thubten Yeshe. That name was given to me when I became a monk at Sera Monastery. Before that time, nobody knew me as Thubten Yeshe. They thought I was Döndrub Dorje. The names Thubten Yeshe and Döndrub Dorje are different; different superstitions give different kinds of name. I feel my name is me, but actually, it isn’t. Neither the names Thubten Yeshe nor Döndrub Dorje are me. But the moment I was given the name Thubten Yeshe, Thubten Yeshe came into existence. Before I was given the name, he didn’t exist; nobody looked at me and thought, “There’s Thubten Yeshe.” I didn’t even think it myself. Thubten Yeshe did not exist.

But when one superstitious conception named this bubble, my body – “Your name is Thubten Yeshe” – my superstition took

it: “Yes, Thubten Yeshe is me.” It’s an interdependent relationship. One superstition gives the name Thubten Yeshe to this bubble of relativity and my ego starts to feel that Thubten Yeshe really does exist somewhere in the area of my body.

THUBTEN YESHE IS MERELY A NAME

The reality, however, is that Thubten Yeshe is merely the dry words applied to the bubble-like phenomenon of these five aggregates. These things come together and that’s it: Thubten Yeshe, the name on the bubble. It’s a very superficial view. The ego’s instinctive feeling that Thubten Yeshe exists somewhere around here is very superficial.

You can see that the relative reality of Thubten Yeshe is simply the name that’s been given to this bubble of energy. That’s all Thubten Yeshe is. That’s why the great philosopher and yogi Nagarjuna and the great yogi Lama Tsongkhapa both said that all phenomena exist merely in name. As a result, some early Western Buddhist scholars decided that Nagarjuna was a

nihilist. That's a conclusion that could be reached only by someone who doesn't practice and spends all his time dealing in concepts and words.

If I were to show up somewhere and suddenly announce, "You're all merely names," people would think I was crazy. But if you investigate in detail the manner in which we're all merely names, it becomes extremely clear. Nihilists reject the very existence of interdependent phenomena but that's not what Nagarjuna did. He simply explained that relative phenomena exist but that we should view them in a reasonable way. They come, they go; they grow; they die. They receive various names and in that way gain a degree of reality for the relative mind. But that mind does not see the deeper nature of phenomena; it does not perceive the totality of universal existence.

RELATIVE AND ABSOLUTE EXIST SIMULTANEOUSLY

Phenomena have two natures: the conventional, or relative, and the absolute, or ultimate. Both qualities exist simultaneously in each and every

phenomenon. What I've been talking about is the way that bubbles of relativity exist conventionally. A relative phenomenon comes into existence when, at any given time, the association of superstition and the conception of ego flavors an object in a particular way by giving it a name. That combination – the object, the superstition giving it a name and the name itself – is all that's needed for a relative phenomenon to exist. When those things come together, there's your Thubten Yeshe. He's coming; he's going; he's talking. It's all a bubble of relativity.

THUBTEN YESHE IS A BUBBLE

If right now you can see that Thubten Yeshe's a bubble, that's excellent. It helps a lot. And if you can relate your experience of seeing me as a bubble to other concrete objects you perceive, it will help even more. If you can see the heavy objects that shake your heart and make you crazy as relative bubbles, their vibration will not overwhelm you. Your heart will stop shaking and you'll cool down and relax.

If I were to show you a scarecrow and ask if it was Thubten Yeshe, you'd

probably say it wasn't. Why not? "Because it's made of wood." You'd have a ready answer. You can apply exactly the same logic to the argument that this bubble of a body is not Thubten Yeshe either.

I believe very strongly that this is me because of the countless times from the time I was born up to now that my ego has imprinted the idea "this is me" on my consciousness. "Me. This is me. This bubble is me, me, me." But this bubble itself is not Thubten Yeshe.

THUBTEN YESHE IS NOWHERE TO BE FOUND

We know it's composed of the four elements. However, the earth element is not Thubten Yeshe; the water is not Thubten Yeshe; the fire is not Thubten Yeshe; the air is not Thubten Yeshe. The parts of the body are not Thubten Yeshe either. The skin is not Thubten Yeshe; the blood is not Thubten Yeshe; the bone is not Thubten Yeshe; the brain is not Thubten Yeshe.

The ego is not Thubten Yeshe. Superstition is not Thubten Yeshe. The combination of all this is not Thubten

Yeshe either – if it were, Thubten Yeshe would have existed before the name had been given. But before this combination was named Thubten Yeshe, nobody recognized it as Thubten Yeshe and I didn't recognize it as Thubten Yeshe myself. Therefore, the combination of all these parts is not Thubten Yeshe.

If we call the scarecrow Thubten Yeshe and then analyze it to see exactly where Thubten Yeshe can be found, we can't find Thubten Yeshe in any of the parts or on all the parts together. This is easy to understand. It's exactly the same thing with the bubble of my aggregates. Neither any single constituent part nor the whole combination is Thubten Yeshe. We also know that the name alone is not Thubten Yeshe. So what and where is Thubten Yeshe? Thubten Yeshe is simply the combination of superstition flavoring an object with the words, "Thubten Yeshe." That's all that Thubten Yeshe is.

BEYOND THE NAME, THERE IS NO THUBTEN YESHE

Beyond the name, there is no real Thubten Yeshe existing somewhere. But the

simultaneously-born ego doesn't understand that Thubten Yeshe exists merely as an interdependent combination of parts. It believes that without question, around here, somewhere, there exists a real, independent, concrete Thubten Yeshe. This is the nature of the simultaneously-born ego. Therefore, if we do not remove conceptions like, "Somewhere in this bubble, I'm Thubten Yeshe," we cannot release the ego.

The conception of ego is an extreme mind. It holds very concretely the idea that somewhere within this bubble of the four-element combination body there exists a self-existent I. That is the misconception that we must release. If the ego mind assessed the situation reasonably and was comfortable and satisfied perceiving that superstition giving the name Thubten Yeshe to this interdependent, four-element bubble was enough for Thubten Yeshe to exist, that would be a different story. But it's not satisfied with that. It cannot leave that alone. It wants to be special. It wants Thubten Yeshe to be concrete. It's not satisfied with Thubten Yeshe being a mere

name on a collection of parts. Therefore, it conceives an imaginary, unrealistic, exaggerated, concrete self-entity.

COLOPHON

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**5. THE SETTING AND
STRUCTURE OF *THE HEART
SUTRA*
KHENSUR RINPOCHE JAMPA
TEGCHOK**

The prologue to *The Heart Sutra* is called “a basis for the discussion,” meaning the background or setting for the sutra. For example, in the case of some of the monastic precepts there is an explanation about how a particular precept came to be given. This can include a description of how a certain monk made a mistake and how, when the Buddha came to know of this he said, “This is something that the monks and nuns should not do.” From that point on the monks and nuns had to follow that precept. The background to how and why it came about is called the *ling.shi* or prologue.

The prologue to this sutra begins with: “Thus I have heard at one time: the Lord was sitting on Vultures Peak near the city of Rajgir. He was accompanied by a large community of monks as well as a large

community of bodhisattvas.” This is the common prologue. The next two lines form the special prologue. “On that occasion the Lord was absorbed in a concentration called the profound appearance.”

The common prologue describes how the Buddha was sitting with a great community of monks and bodhisattvas. The special prologue, that he was absorbed in a concentration called the profound appearance means that the Buddha was himself reflecting or meditating on emptiness.

Meanwhile the bodhisattva, the great being, the noble Avalokiteshvara was contemplating the profound discipline of the perfection of wisdom. He came to see that the five aggregates were empty of any inherent nature of their own. The Buddha meditates on emptiness and throughout most of the rest of the sutra starting from “Through the power of the Buddha,” the Buddha blesses and causes a change to occur in the mental continuum of two of his disciples, Avalokiteshvara (Tib. Chenrezig) and Shariputra. He blesses their continuums so that Shariputra asks

Avalokiteshvara a question. The rest of the text is Avalokiteshvara's answer.

Both question and the answer arise through the blessing of the Buddha and are called the holy word of the Buddha. There are different types of word or teaching of the Buddha and one is called the holy word that comes through the blessing of the Buddha. Although spoken by Shariputra and Avalokiteshvara, with the question coming from Shariputra, and Avalokiteshvara giving the answer, it is still referred to as the Buddha's word.

Specifically in this case it is the Buddha's word that comes through his blessing these two beings. The words at the very end of the sutra, "At that time the Lord arose from his concentration and said to the noble Avalokiteshvara, 'Well said, well said, that is just how it is my son, just how it is. The profound perfection of wisdom should be practised exactly as you have explained it, then the Tathagatas will be truly delighted.'"

This is the Buddha's holy word spoken from his own mouth. Although more detail is possible, this gives a rough idea of the structure.

To recap, a question comes from Shariputra followed by Avalokiteshvara's answer, and both are the word of the Buddha called the "blessed word." Later where the Buddha says, "Well said, well said," he confirms that what Avalokiteshvara said about emptiness is absolutely faultless. That is also the Buddha's word, specifically that spoken by the Buddha.

Thus there are three sections. In brief, The Heart Sutra, has three points – the question from Shariputra, the answer from Avalokiteshvara and finally the Buddha's approval.

6. THE HEART SUTRA

*Homage to the Holy Perfection of
Wisdom!*

COMMON PROLOGUE

Thus did I hear at one time. The Bhagavan was dwelling on Mass of Vultures Mountain in Rajagriha together with a great community of monks and a great community of bodhisattvas.

SPECIAL PROLOGUE

At that time, the Bhagavan was absorbed in the concentration on the categories of phenomena called “Profound Perception.”

BUDDHA BLESSES THE MINDS OF SHARIPUTRA AND AVALOKITESHVARA

Also, at that time, the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara looked upon the very practice of the profound perfection of wisdom and beheld those five aggregates also as empty of inherent nature.

SHARIPUTRA'S QUESTION

Then, through the power of Buddha, the venerable Shariputra said this to the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara: “How should any son of the lineage train who wishes to practice the activity of the profound perfection of wisdom?”

AVALOKITESHVARA'S BRIEF ANSWER

He said that and the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara said this to the venerable Sharadvatiputra.

“Shariputra, any son of the lineage or daughter of the lineage who wishes to practice the activity of the profound perfection of wisdom should look upon it like this, correctly and repeatedly beholding those five aggregates also as empty of inherent nature.

AVALOKITESHEVARA'S EXTENSIVE ANSWER

“Form is empty. Emptiness is form. Emptiness is not other than form; form is also not other than emptiness.

“In the same way, feeling, discrimination, compositional factors, and consciousness are empty.

“Shariputra, likewise, all phenomena are emptiness; without characteristic; unproduced, unceased; stainless, not without stain; not deficient, not fulfilled.

“Shariputra, therefore, in emptiness there is –

THE FIVE AGGREGATES

“No form, no feeling, no discrimination, no compositional factors, no consciousness;

THE SIX SENSE CONSCIOUSNESSES

“No eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind;

THE SIX SENSE OBJECTS

“No visual form, no sound, no odor, no taste, no object of touch, and no phenomenon.

THE SIX SENSE ELEMENTS

“There is no eye element and so on up to and including no mind element and no mental consciousness element.

THE TWELVE LINKS

“There is no ignorance, no extinction of ignorance, and so on up to and including no aging and death and no extinction of aging and death.

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

“Similarly, there is no suffering, origination, cessation, and path;

“There is no exalted wisdom, no attainment, and also no non-attainment.

“Shariputra, therefore, because there is no attainment, bodhisattvas rely on and dwell in the perfection of wisdom, the mind without obscuration and without fear. Having completely passed beyond error, they reach the end-point of nirvana.

“All the buddhas who dwell in the three times also manifestly, completely awaken to unsurpassable, perfect, complete

enlightenment in reliance on the perfection of wisdom.

THE MANTRA OF THE PERFECTION OF WISDOM

“Therefore, the mantra of the perfection of wisdom, the mantra of great knowledge, the unsurpassed mantra, the mantra equal to the unequaled, the mantra that thoroughly pacifies all suffering, should be known as truth since it is not false. The mantra of the perfection of wisdom is declared:

TAYATA OM GATE GATE PARAGATE
PARASAMGATE BODHI SVAHA

[TAYATA OM GO! GO! GO EYOND! GO
PERFECTLY BEYOND! GO TO
ENLIGHTENMENT! SVAHA]

“Shariputra, the bodhisattva mahasattva should train in the profound perfection of wisdom like that.”

BUDDHA’S APPROVAL

Then the Bhagavan arose from that concentration and commended the

bodhisattva mahasattva arya
Avalokiteshvara saying: “Well said, well
said, son of the lineage, it is like that. It is
like that; one should practice the profound
perfection of wisdom just as you have
indicated; even the tathagatas rejoice.”

EVERYONE REJOICES IN THE BUDDHA’S WORDS

The Bhagavan having thus spoken, the
venerable Sharadvatiputra, the
bodhisattva mahasattva arya
Avalokiteshvara, those surrounding in
their entirety along with the world of gods,
humans, asuras, and gandharvas were
overjoyed and highly praised that spoken
by the Bhagavan.

*This completes the Ârya-bhagavatî-
prajñâpâramitâ-hridaya-sûtra.*

COLOPHON

*Translated from the Tibetan by Gelong
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2010 or thereabouts.*

7. DEDICATE IN EMPTINESS BY LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE

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

May the I – which is also totally
nonexistent from its own side –

Achieve Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's
enlightenment – which is also totally
non-existent from its own side –

And lead all sentient beings – who are also
totally non-existent from their own side
–

To that enlightenment – which is also
totally non-existent from its own side –

By myself alone – which is also totally
non-existent from its own side.