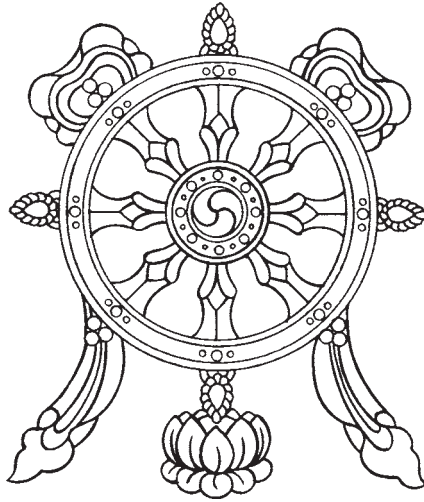


Discovering BUDDHISM *at Home*

*Awakening the limitless potential of your mind,
achieving all peace and happiness*



SUBJECT AREA 13

Introduction to Tantra

Readings

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Further required reading includes the following texts:

Introduction to Tantra, by Lama Thubten Yeshe

Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand, 1997 gold edition (pp. 707–8) or 2006 blue edition (pp. 649-50)

Why We Need to Practice Tantra

by Lama Zopa Rinpoche

First of all we need to practice tantra for the sake of other sentient beings; this is the purpose of practicing tantra. We need to plant the seed of the four *kayas* (the *svabhavikakaya*, *dharmakaya*, *sambhogakaya* and *nirmanakaya*) in our mind in order to accomplish extensive works for sentient beings, freeing them from all suffering and leading them to the sublime happiness of enlightenment. Receiving the four highest yoga tantra initiations vase, secret, wisdom and word initiations—plants the seed of the four kayas and permits us to meditate on and train our mind in the highest yoga tantra path. By giving the four perfect highest yoga tantra initiations, the qualified vajra guru definitely plants the seed of the four kayas in the mind of the disciple.

Because of his compassion, a Mahayanist feels it is unbearable that other sentient beings are in samsara, as if they are caught in the center of a fire. He feels as if a spear has gone into his own heart. Such a Mahayana practitioner wishes to liberate all sentient beings from their obscurations and lead them to enlightenment. He cannot stand the thought that other sentient beings are obscured and in samsara; their being in samsara even one hour, even one minute, is like they are suffering for many aeons.

In order to quickly lead all sentient beings to enlightenment, the only solution is for you yourself to achieve enlightenment, the dharmakaya, in this very brief lifetime. By thinking of what the dharmakaya is, you get an idea of the reasons why you need to practice highest yoga tantra. The dharmakaya involves the subtle wind and subtle mind, which are the same in essence but have different names because of their different functions. The subtle mind of dharmakaya is completely purified of subtle dual view, the appearance of true existence, the obscurations to omniscience. This subtle mind abides in equipoise meditation on emptiness forever, directly seeing the emptiness of all existence without duality of subject and object, like having poured water into water. At no time does this subtle mind leave the object of emptiness.

Arhats and arya bodhisattvas who are not practitioners of highest yoga tantra also possess wisdom directly perceiving emptiness but it is a grosser wisdom, not the subtle mind of dharmakaya. Even arya bodhisattva practitioners of highest yoga tantra who have realized the clear light of meaning directly perceive emptiness by submerging, or sinking, dual view, not by cutting it off completely. They still have dual view. During the time of equipoise meditation, while the subtle mind is directly concentrated on emptiness, subtle dual view has been submerged. They still have *sbe.drip*, the obscurations to omniscience. Because of this, even the subtle mind of such an arya bodhisattva cannot meditate in equipoise on emptiness forever, like having put water into water, without needing to arise from that meditation. During the break-times when he manifests in the illusory body, the submerged dual view arises again and there is the appearance of true existence.

The dharmakaya is the subtle mind one-pointedly concentrating on the emptiness of all existence by

seeing it directly. The dharmakaya is purified completely of even subtle dual view—forever. This subtle mind sees emptiness one-pointedly and directly all the time and is forever inseparable from the emptiness of all existence, like having put water into water. This is the dharmakaya, and this is what has to be achieved.

In order to achieve the dharmakaya, the immediate principal cause has to be a similar subtle mind. A gross mind cannot be the principal cause of the dharmakaya; the principal cause has to be a subtle mind. This is the whole point of why we need to practice tantra in order to achieve enlightenment. The transcendental wisdom of dharmakaya is completely pure subtle mind one-pointedly concentrating on emptiness forever. It is buddha's holy mind.

The holy mind of dharmakaya is completely free from all stains, even subtle dual view, but we cannot guide sentient beings simply by abiding in the dharmakaya. We need to manifest in the rupakaya, which comprises the sambhogakaya and the nirmanakaya. (The unification of no-more learning is the unification of the dharmakaya and the rupakaya.) Because sentient beings have different levels of mind, in order to guide each particular sentient being, at different times we may need to manifest in different forms: as a king, minister, beggar, virtuous teacher, butcher, prostitute, judge.

At present, even as ordinary beings, our subtle mind is inseparable from its vehicle, the subtle wind. They are always inseparable and the same in essence. When the path to enlightenment is completed, with cessation of all disturbing-thought obscurations and obscurations to omniscience, the continuation of the subtle mind becomes the dharmakaya and that of the subtle wind becomes the pure illusory body. At the result time, the holy mind and the holy body, the dharmakaya and the rupakaya, are unified.

In order to achieve the unification of the holy mind of the dharmakaya and the holy body of the rupakaya, the unification of no-more learning, we must train our mind in its principal cause, the unification of learning. This involves unification of the subtle mind of clear light, which directly perceives emptiness, and the pure illusory body, which has the thirty-two major and eighty minor signs similar to a buddha. To do this we need to receive the fourth initiation, the word initiation, which plants the seed to achieve the unification of no-more learning and gives permission to meditate on the paths of unification of learning and no-more learning.

In order to achieve the path of unification, we first need to achieve separately the causes of this path, the clear light and the illusory body. In order to achieve the clear light, we should receive the highest yoga tantra wisdom initiation, which plants the seed to achieve the dharmakaya and permits us to meditate on the clear light. Clear light has two divisions: the clear light of example and the clear light of meaning. Before achieving the clear light of meaning, one achieves the clear light of example and the impure illusory body. One first achieves the clear light of example, which is a subtle mind that sees emptiness mixed with dual view. Because of this dual view, one cannot see emptiness directly.

After achieving the subtle mind of the clear light of example, by continuing to develop this subtle transcendental wisdom realizing emptiness, one achieves the impure illusory body. Why is this illusory body called “impure”, and the one you accomplish with the clear light of meaning “pure”? The impure illusory body still has *nyön-drib*, disturbing-thought obscurations, whereas the pure illusory body is free of these.

The clear light of meaning is the subtle mind that directly sees emptiness by submerging subtle dual view and is the main remedy to cut *sbedrip*, the subtle dual view that is the obscuration to omniscience. From the clear light of meaning one achieves the pure illusory body and by alternately developing these, one achieves their unification. In order to generate the path of the illusory body, we should receive the secret initiation, which plants the seed of the sambhogakaya and permits us to meditate on the illusory body.

To accomplish these paths of the illusory body and the clear light through receiving these secret and wisdom initiations, we should train our mind in their preliminary, the graduated path of generation. To meditate on the path of generation we should receive the vase initiation, which plants the seed of the nirmanakaya and permits us to train our mind in the generation stage. To achieve the realizations of the clear light and the illusory body, we need to have the preliminary gross and subtle realizations of the generation stage.

Why highest yoga tantra is the quickest path

Enlightenment cannot be achieved without receiving highest yoga tantra initiations and practicing tantra. This is why at the end of the preparation for highest yoga tantra initiations, we generate happiness at having the opportunity to practice tantra. In the Paramitayana, all the minds that directly realize emptiness are gross minds. There is no subtle mind of clear light perceiving emptiness through ceasing all the gross minds that occur before the three visions, and even the more subtle minds during the three visions. This subtle mind does not exist in the Paramitayana.

When following the Paramitayana path, one has to accumulate merit for three countless great aeons. After accumulating this merit, when it is time to achieve enlightenment, one takes the four actual highest yoga tantra initiations and receives the actual wisdom consort. However, by actualizing the highest yoga tantra path, one can finish accumulating all this merit within one brief lifetime—even within a few years. How is this possible? One general way, as His Holiness explained, is through meditating on the four purities: the purities of body, place, enjoyments and actions. Doing the meditations in the sadhanas, which contain the practice of the four purities, is a skillful tantric method to complete the accumulation of unbelievably extensive merit in a short time. This is one explanation of how the practice of tantra completes the works of purification and accumulation of merit in such a short time. However, I think the main reason is that achievement of the impure illusory body helps one to complete the three countless great aeons of merit. It is this that enables one to achieve the unification of no-more learning within this very brief lifetime, even within twelve years, as did the previous great yogis.

The practitioner of the highest yoga tantra path who has realized the clear light of example has no worry at all that he will be reborn in the lower realms. For such a person there is no such thing as the lower realms. When one reaches the higher levels of realization, dirty and clean, avoidance and practice are the same. There is nothing to differentiate between the hells and enlightenment, samsara and nirvana. When you have reached these very high tantric realizations, everything in the teachings becomes your own experience. But if you have not reached this level and try to imitate these experiences, saying that there is no difference between good and bad karma, you become berserk.

When you achieve the clear light of example, there is a definite possibility of achieving the clear light

of meaning and enlightenment in one very brief lifetime. In the clear light of example, “example” means that for the completion stage practitioner of highest yoga tantra, the twenty-five absorptions, three visions and clear light, which actually happen at the death-time for ordinary people, occur exactly like this during the time of meditation. With the subtle mind meditating on emptiness, this meditator needs to cease the gross minds and even the more subtle minds that occur during the white, red and dark visions.

The clear light of example, this subtle mind of transcendental wisdom realizing emptiness, is called “the tantra mahamudra realization of non-dual bliss and voidness.” You can see that without this realization you cannot reach the illusory body or any other of these high attainments: the clear light of meaning, the pure illusory body or unification of no-more learning. Without the tantra mahamudra realization, there is no way to achieve the dharmakaya, no way to achieve enlightenment.

Since these gross minds have to be stopped to achieve even the clear light of example, you can understand that there is no way the gross consciousness can become the principal cause of the dharmakaya. The continuation of the tantra mahamudra realization, the subtle transcendental wisdom concentrating on emptiness, is the principal cause of the dharmakaya. The dharmakaya itself is the subtle transcendental wisdom completely purified of even subtle dual view, which one-pointedly and inseparably abides forever on the emptiness of all existence, like pouring water into water. The dharmakaya is the completely pure subtle transcendental wisdom realizing absolute nature. When you understand the dharmakaya a little, you can understand the subtle wind, which is the vehicle of this subtle mind. The vehicle of this subtle wisdom is the holy body of buddha, completely purified of both obscurations.

The blessings of the dakas and dakinis

During meditation, in order to experience the twenty-five absorptions, three visions and clear light of example by stopping the gross consciousness, the winds from all the chakras and channels in the different parts of the body have to enter the central channel, abide and absorb there. Different signs accompany these processes. With absorption of the winds into the central channel, the three visions and the clear light appear.

In order to make the subtle wind-mind function and have control over the winds so that you can bring them into the central channel, your drops, chakras and winds need to be blessed by the dakas and dakinis. The dakas and dakinis bless the drops, chakras and winds in order to make them serviceable. To have this happen you need to take highest yoga tantra initiation, as the other three tantras—action, performance and yoga—do not reveal the methods of the body mandala and the very secret, profound meditations of dakas and dakinis blessing the chakras. Only the highest yoga tantra path has these practices.

In order to do body mandala practices, you need to take highest yoga tantra initiations, then practice the sadhanas, training your mind in these meditations every day. This is why the long Vajrayogini and Tara Chittamani sadhanas, which have a body mandala, are so secret and precious. This is also why Heruka practice is particularly precious, with many meditators doing the long sadhana every day. In his tantric teachings, Lama Tsongkhapa explains the incredible importance of this practice:

In order to experience the simultaneously born bliss of the completion stage, you need to concen-

trate one-pointedly on the vajra body. To do this, the chakras and drops need to be blessed by the dakas and dakinis. This is why meditation on the body mandala is highly admired.

This is the very root. By taking initiations, doing body mandala practices and receiving the blessing of the dakas and dakinis, and practicing the Six Yogas of Naropa, you can more quickly achieve the tantra mahamudra realization.

You are fortunate to have been born in this southern continent, where there are the twenty-four holy places of Heruka, with dakas and dakinis like the stars at night. If you do a highest yoga tantra practice such as Heruka or Vajrayogini in this southern continent, especially near the twenty-four holy places in India, Nepal and Tibet, the dakas and dakinis bless your chakras and drops so that you are able to generate quickly the tantra mahamudra realization of non-dual bliss and voidness. You can then achieve the Vajradhara state either in this life or the next. Even if you do not complete the path in this life, at least you can complete it in the intermediate stage or in your next life. This is why this perfect human rebirth is unbelievably precious. Even if you cannot complete the tantric path in this life, you can be born in a pure realm where you have the opportunity to practice, complete the rest of the path and become enlightened. You have the unbelievable opportunity to accomplish all this with this perfect human rebirth—it is incredibly precious!

Meditating on emptiness

Wherever there is existence, there is emptiness, and everything exists in dependence upon the valid mind. Another way of saying this, which gives a different feeling, is that existence exists from the side of the mind. This has great significance. Things exist by depending on the valid mind of the subject. Without depending on a valid mind, nothing can exist. There is no way you can define an object as existing if it is not an object of valid mind. Everything exists not only from the side of the object, but from the side of the mind, the subject. Samsara and nirvana, good and bad, enemy and friend: the whole of existence exists in dependence upon the mind. Without dependence upon the mind, there is no way anything can exist.

Space cannot become earth. Something which is permanent cannot become impermanent, because a permanent phenomenon does not have its own cause. Let's say that you smash a brick into pieces with a hammer, then those pieces into powder, and then you use that powder to make a vase. As the brick does not exist any more, the emptiness, or absolute nature, of that brick has also ceased. While it is still a brick, the brick itself is *shig-pa*, which means in decay, or changing due to cause. At the end, when the brick has been broken by the hammer, it is also *shig-pa*. However, the emptiness of the brick is not *shig-pa* as it does not change due to a principal cause, nor can it be stopped by a condition.

When you make a vase with the powder, that vase becomes an object of the valid mind. In dependence upon the base, that particular shape, thought merely labels there on the base—this is the subtle, critical point to understand. After accumulating much merit, if a person is intelligent, fortunate and, especially, experienced, he can understand this subtle point without confusion. His understanding only makes him have more faith in karma, the existence of virtue and non-virtue, samsara and nirvana. This strong faith is an infallible sign that a person has realization of emptiness.

At this point it is very easy to arrive at the extreme belief that things do not exist. Thought merely labels there: "This vase is existing." Each word has great meaning, particularly there, or par in Tibetan.

From the side of the mind, there. When you hear the word there, the understanding that should come in your mind is that nothing exists from its own side. The vase does not exist from there, but on there, from the side of the mind. It is clear that it exists by being merely labeled there.

This book exists there; it exists by the mind merely labeling there. When you hear this word there, you should understand that there is a book on this base—not from the side of the base, but from the side of the mind. This word gives a very clear understanding that the book exists on that base with a particular shape.

When meditating on emptiness, it is extremely important not to miss any words, because each word can give an incredible feeling. Each word is very clear, rich, neat, powerful. To have an exact translation according to the Tibetan is very important as each word is very powerful and gives a very clear understanding.

Everything comes from the mind

When all sentient beings become enlightened, there will be no samsara, no six realms, no three lower realms with hell, preta and animal beings. There will be the omniscient mind of enlightenment. The stream of our consciousness—actually, we are talking here about the subtle mind—never ceases. Since the continuation of this subtle mind never ceases, there is always the dharmakaya. When everyone has removed the two obscurations, there will be no such thing as samsara, nor even the lower nirvana, which is mere release from the bondage of karma and disturbing thoughts. You can understand from this that enlightenment and samsara exist by depending on the mind.

To use a simple example: while I might see someone as very ugly and undesirable, another person may see him as very enchanting and desirable. We are both seeing the same person at the same time. This simple example shows that the way things appear to me comes from my mind, according to my karma; and how things appear to the other person comes from his own mind and karma.

This way of thinking is very useful in controlling the dissatisfied mind of attachment. While an object is appearing to you as beautiful, try to be aware that you have created this beauty. You have made it up. Your view, in which you believe one hundred percent, is that this object exists from its own side as beautiful. You believe that it is permanently beautiful. At the same time as this object is appearing beautiful to you, however, others may see it as ugly. Try to be aware that there are different views of the object. This makes it clear that your view of an object comes from your own mind. How an object appears to you depends on your mind. This helps you to understand generally your own karma and also different karmas. If the way of making commentary on an object, such as someone's face, were not dependent on the mind and karma of the individual observer, there would be no reason at all for the same object to appear differently to different people.

Let's use Tibetan tea as an example. When they taste Tibetan tea, Tibetans—and even some Westerners—experience a pleasant taste, on which they label “delicious.” The pleasant feeling arises due to the person's previous karma and the person then labels “delicious” on that feeling. The delicious Tibetan tea exists in dependence upon the drinker's mind labeling on that. Now, when some sophisticated Westerner, particularly an American, comes along and you give him the same tea with thick butter and salt, he feels as if he is drinking muck. That uncomfortable feeling also results from the individual's own karma. The unpleasant taste is the result of the person's previous karma and he labels “disgust-

ing” on that particular feeling. When that person drinks Tibetan tea, it nauseates him.

In the *Great Lam-Rim Commentary* Lama Tsongkhapa says that sometimes when you eat fruit that is supposed to be sweet, you unexpectedly find it tastes sour or bad. Lama Tsongkhapa explains that this is the result of covetousness, one of the ten non-virtues.

The whole of existence, samsara and nirvana, depends on a valid mind labeling on a valid base. Samsara comes from the mind of ignorance not realizing the absolute nature of the I. Samsara comes from the mind. These aggregates, the container of many problems, come from ignorance hallucinated as to the absolute nature of the I. Enlightenment, the indestructible vajra holy body of buddha free from all suffering, comes from the virtuous mind of method and wisdom. Everything that exists comes from the mind. Without depending on the mind knowing an object, or the knower (I am talking here about the mind, not the person), there is no way an object can exist. Anything that exists is empty of existing without depending on the mind.

A vase that we can use is empty of being a vase that exists without depending on the base and the subject, the mind. And it is the same with all the rest of existence: all the respective existents exist by depending on the base and the mind that labels. They are empty of existing without depending on the base and the mind. This emptiness is the absolute nature of existence. Therefore, wherever there is existence, there is emptiness. Wherever there is emptiness, there is buddha, and there is the dharmakaya, oneness with absolute nature forever, like having poured water into water.

The qualities of the dharmakaya

Wherever there is the dharmakaya, the holy mind of buddha, there is the vehicle of the subtle wind. The subtle mind and subtle wind are the same in essence, simply having different labels because of their different functions. Wherever buddha’s holy mind is, there is buddha’s holy body. Understanding the details of the dharmakaya according to tantra gives you definite faith that buddha is on your crown, even if you have not visualized him there. Even if you do not have a picture of buddha in your room, buddha is there in the room at the altar. Wherever you are, whether a clean or dirty place, buddha is also there. The teachings on Buddhist philosophy say: “There is no place where buddha does not exist. There is no place where the mind cannot discover buddha.” This helps very much to persuade your mind to practice Dharma and accumulate merit.

You may think that a statue or thangka is just a statue or thangka, but it is the transcendental wisdom of dharmakaya, which understands and directly sees absolute truth, as well as conventional truth. This statue of Tara has two truths: conventional and absolute. The Tara statue and the absolute nature of it are objects of the holy mind of all the buddhas. It is covered by all the buddhas’ holy mind. It is only because of our obscurations and defilements that we do not see that all the buddhas are abiding on this Tara statue. Whether it is blessed or not, all the numberless buddhas are living on this Tara statue.

It is very good to remember the qualities of the dharmakaya, buddha’s holy mind, when offering even one stick of incense or one bowl of water. Aware that all the buddhas are abiding on the statue, you make offerings to all the buddhas and generate secret bliss in all their holy minds, which is the essence of the offering.

When Lama Atisha was circumambulating the stupa in Bodhgaya, the statue of Tara and the ivory statue of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha spoke to him, saying: “Great yogi, if you want to achieve enlightenment quickly, you must practice bodhichitta.” To particular beings with thinner obscurations, these statues give advice and predictions. Actually, I think the great bodhisattva Kuntu Lama Rinpoche said that all the statues around Bodhgaya stupa speak—not only the Tara statue on the outside of the stupa. This means that they have spoken in the past, when great yogis came on pilgrimage.

One or two years ago, one old lady from Tibet went on pilgrimage to Nalanda, the great monastic university where thousands of pandits such as Lama Atisha and Shantideva studied. Now you can see only a few rooms; only a few piles of stones are left. This old Tibetan lady saw a life-sized Guru Shakyamuni Buddha on a flat area at Nalanda, where there used to be a buddha statue. The statue is no longer there. However, she did not see just a statue of the Buddha, but actually saw the Buddha himself for a short time; then he disappeared.

Kadampa Geshe Chagyulwa’s lifestory is always praised because he was extremely obedient in correctly devoting himself in thought and action to his virtuous friend, Geshe D lungpa. Every morning when Geshe Chagyulwa cleaned his guru’s room, he collected the garbage in his robes, took it downstairs and threw it out. He served his guru in this way every day. Even if Geshe Chagyulwa was offering a mandala, with all the grains piled up, as soon as he heard his guru’s voice calling him, he immediately stopped offering the mandala and went to serve him.

One day after he had cleaned his guru’s room, Geshe Chagyulwa was taking the garbage down the steps. When he reached the third step, suddenly he saw many buddhas in nirmanakaya aspect. Normally he couldn’t see even one buddha, but on that morning he suddenly saw many buddhas right there. This was a sign that Geshe Chagyulwa’s karmic obscurations had become thinner because he had devoted himself correctly to his guru.

It is only our own defilements and karmic obscurations that block our seeing buddha in our room. The buddhas are always there.

Colophon:

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Tara, the Liberator

by Lama Zopa Rinpoche

The ultimate meaning of life

I would like to thank everybody from my heart for coming to this meditation course. I rejoice greatly that you want to make your life beneficial for other sentient beings by developing your mind and that you are concerned about the happiness of others. I thank all of you from my heart.

We do not come to meditation courses and engage in spiritual practice in order to have a healthy body, nor even to have temporary peace of mind; we engage in spiritual practice to attain everlasting peace of mind, with ultimate liberation from mental afflictions and disturbing thoughts. Now we have a precious human body. Using this to obtain even the ultimate happiness of everlasting liberation from all problems and their causes—that is, disturbing thoughts and action-result, or karma—is still not the ultimate purpose of having this precious human body. The real purpose of taking this precious human body at this time is to avoid giving harm to sentient beings; and on the basis of that, to benefit all sentient beings, each of whom wants happiness and does not want suffering.

When you have this pure attitude in the very depths of your heart that wishes to avoid harm to others, you can then act to benefit them without discrimination. You do not recognize some beings, such as relatives and friends, as close and help only them, yet see others as enemies and not help them, or even harm them. Rather than following these discriminating thoughts, we cultivate a pure attitude of loving kindness, thinking to benefit all sentient beings equaling the extent of infinite space. With an attitude of loving kindness and compassion towards all living beings, we act to benefit them equally. This is the main purpose for which we have taken this precious human body. This is the ultimate meaning of life.

Everlasting happiness

You should live each day, each hour, each minute, in order to accomplish this ultimate purpose. This is why you try to be healthy and to have a long life. The purpose of everything you do—sleeping, waking, wearing clothes, eating, sitting, walking, having medical treatment—is to develop the good heart towards every sentient being and to benefit each of them equally. Other living beings are just like you in wanting even the smallest comfort and not wanting the smallest discomfort, even in a dream. Just as you want to eliminate all your suffering and to obtain happiness, so too does every other living being. They are exactly the same as you. Therefore, you need to eliminate their suffering and obtain their happiness.

Again, just like you, other living beings want the greatest, longest lasting happiness. When you go shopping, you try to buy the best quality, longest-lasting goods that you can. In the same way, every being wishes to have the greatest, longest-lasting happiness, and that means great liberation. Great

liberation refers to the removal of the two obscurations: the obscuration of the gross disturbing thoughts and the obscuration of the subtle mental stains. When the cessation of these is established in the mind, this is the purest happiness of full enlightenment.

Why is the happiness of full enlightenment everlasting? Because once the obscurations, the cause of suffering, are completely removed, it is impossible for suffering to re-occur and happiness to degenerate. Because the cause of suffering has been removed, it is impossible for suffering to return.

For example, why is our mind controlled today by disturbing thoughts, such as ignorance, anger, and attachment? Our mind is obscured by these because they are the continuation of the mental afflictions, or disturbing thoughts, that existed yesterday. Because we did not remove yesterday's disturbing thoughts, the continuation of these—today's disturbing thoughts—has arisen.

It is the same with our previous life. If, in our previous life, we had completely removed the disturbing thoughts by actualizing the remedy of the path within our mind, it would have been impossible for us to be born with these mental afflictions in this life. There could be no such evolution if we had stopped the continuation of the disturbing thoughts. With nothing to cause the disturbing thoughts, there would be no disturbing thoughts in this life and no unhappiness or problems resulting from them.

For example, if a cloth that had been dirty for many days was completely cleaned yesterday, there would be no continuation of yesterday's dirt. In the same way, once the obscurations of the disturbing thoughts are completely removed, it is impossible for them to arise again, since there is no cause; therefore, it is impossible to experience suffering again. This is the everlasting happiness of liberation. As I mentioned before, the ultimate purpose of having this precious human body is to liberate all living beings from all obscurations, or mental stains, and lead them to the greatest liberation of full enlightenment: everlasting, perfect happiness.

Developing the mind

In order to accomplish this great work for other living beings, you have to develop your own mind by putting effort into listening to, and reflecting and meditating on the teachings. In order for you to lead other beings to this peerless happiness of full enlightenment, they have to follow the path. Therefore, to lead them on the path to full enlightenment, you must reveal the teachings to them. In order to reveal the teachings—that is, the means to guide them in the path to full enlightenment—you must be able to see very clearly, without the slightest mistake, the level of mind, characteristics, and karma of every single living being. Because living beings have various levels and characteristics of mind, the methods you reveal to them must also be of various types. Again, you must realize clearly, without the slightest mistake, all the various means to guide living beings.

The only mind able to see these things fully is the omniscient mind. Therefore, in order to accomplish this great work for sentient beings, bringing them the ultimate benefit of great liberation, which they need and yet are lacking, you need to have omniscient mind.

For example, a teacher—whether in a school, university, or monastery—teaches different subjects to various classes to educate students in science, mathematics, engineering, biology, medicine, psychology, or whatever. It is generally accepted that the more education a student has, the easier it will be for

him to find a job, earn a living, and have an easy life. The general aim of education is to have an easier life. In order to educate others, the teacher himself has to be educated and knowledgeable in all the subjects he teaches. The less knowledge—or more ignorance—one has, the more limited one's capacity to educate and help others. The more knowledge you have, the more you can fulfill the wishes of other people.

If you are blind, you cannot guide others where they want to go. If you have no arms, you cannot help your mother when she is in danger of falling from a precipice or of being swept away by a river and drowned. In order to guide sentient beings perfectly to the peerless happiness of full enlightenment, you should first have omniscient mind.

By attaining omniscient mind, you also gain perfect power and great compassion for every living being. Because of great compassion, which feels no discrimination, there is no danger that you will help some beings and not others. There is no partiality in your actions. And with omniscient mind, you have the power to reveal every skilful means to guide living beings.

Developing compassion

How is it possible to achieve this? How is it possible for your mental continuum to become omniscient mind? You can understand this from a simple example: When you were very small, you did not even know the alphabet; but with the help of a teacher and by applying effort, you gradually began to learn. When you tried to memorize something, in the beginning your mind was completely ignorant. But as you continued, you learned more and more. It is the nature of the mind that understanding can be developed. The mind has the power to understand gross phenomena and even subtle existence if we try to do so in the correct way.

Even now, although you may not have fully developed compassion—that is, compassion towards every living being—you do have compassion for some beings. You can develop your present small compassion for these beings so that it becomes greater and greater. You can increase your compassion for these beings. By understanding the teachings and practicing meditation, you can also generate compassion for the other beings for whom you do not yet feel compassion. In this way, compassion can be developed.

With the compassion you already have for others and with your present understanding of their wishes and the methods to fulfill them, you already have some capacity to help. Even right now, with this human body and with the understanding and compassion that you already have, you have some power to help others. As your understanding of and compassion for all living beings develop through actualizing the remedy of the path within your mind, your obscurations will gradually diminish, and you will gain greater understanding. When this process is completed, you will have complete and perfect power to guide other beings.

Developing omniscient mind

How is it possible to separate the mind from the mental afflictions? In your everyday life, you can see that even if your mind is overwhelmed by anger in the morning, this anger does not last; your mind is not continuously overwhelmed by anger. In the morning you may be angry with someone, but in the afternoon there is no anger—instead you may feel attachment to that person, or indifference.

Even without meditation, disturbing thoughts arise and change. This proves that the nature of the mind is not one with anger, attachment, ignorance, pride, or jealousy. The mind is temporarily obscured by these but is not one with them. If the mind were one with anger, it would be spontaneously and continuously in the nature of anger. Or spontaneously and continuously in the nature of attachment. Then, towards one object, anger and attachment would be arising in the same moment.

If a mirror was one with the dirt on it, the dirt could not be cleaned away. This would be like cleaning dirt away from dirt. Because the mirror is not one with the dirt, but only temporarily covered by it, the mirror can be cleaned with water and a cloth. The more the dirt is cleaned away, the clearer the mirror's reflection. In the same way, as you listen to, and reflect and meditate on the graduated path to enlightenment, as you generate more realizations of this path, your obscurations first become gradually thinner and thinner and are then removed completely.

The Mahayana, or greater vehicle, path to enlightenment has five paths: the paths of merit, preparation, right-seeing, meditation, and no-more-learning. And the Paramitayana, or perfection vehicle, path has ten levels, or *bhumis*. Certain obscurations are removed when you achieve the third, the right-seeing path; and even more obscurations are removed when you reach the path of meditation. When a bodhisattva achieves the eighth bhumi of the Paramitayana path, the gross obscurations, the disturbing thoughts, are completely removed. By developing the mind to the ninth and tenth bhumis, the bodhisattva removes even the subtle obscurations—the mental stains, or impressions—left on the mind by the disturbing thoughts, such as the ignorance grasping the I as existing from its own side.

Although the I is merely imputed on the aggregates by thought, ignorance mistakenly grasps the I as independent, existing from its own side. Due to imprints left on the mind, everything appears as existing from its own side. However, even these subtle obscurations are completely removed when the mind is developed to the ninth and tenth bhumis. When the remedy of the path is complete within the mind, not even the slightest mental stain remains. At that time, the mental continuum becomes omniscient mind, fully seeing without the slightest mistake the past, present, and future; all the minds and wishes of living beings; and all the various means to guide them. Without the slightest effort or mistake, one is able to guide every living being perfectly.

Obstacles to success

In order to achieve this, we have to complete the realizations of the graduated path to enlightenment, or lam-rim. Developing your mind in the graduated path to enlightenment is the most important and most beneficial thing, for you and others, too. However, there are many obstacles to accomplishing even some small happiness in this life. Merely finding a job can take many months, even years. In business, the small work to obtain only the happiness of this life has many obstacles. So, of course, there are many obstacles to developing your mind and achieving the everlasting liberation of omniscient mind for the sake of all living beings. There are many inner obstacles created by disturbing thoughts: the dissatisfied mind; the selfish mind; the mind of worldly concern, which grasps at this life and samsaric perfections.

Worldly concern brings so many problems in life: fear, worry, depression, even suicide. This grasping mind does not allow your everyday activities to become virtue, the cause of happiness. Besides preventing you from finding happiness in future lives and receiving a good rebirth, worldly concern does

not even allow you to have happiness and peace of mind from hour to hour in your present life.

Even when we try to practice Dharma, worldly concern does not allow our practice to become pure. Grasping at samsaric perfections also causes us to take rebirth again, bringing the suffering of death and the experience of all these problems again and again. It does not allow us to achieve everlasting liberation from suffering and its causes.

Generally, the main cause of suffering is the ignorance believing that the I, which is merely imputed on the aggregates by thought, exists from its own side. This ignorance is the root of all suffering. But also there is the selfish mind, which does not allow us any peace of mind. As long as we constantly follow the selfish attitude, we will have no relaxation, no happiness. Besides harming you, the selfish attitude continuously gives harm to all other living beings—from day to day, month to month, year to year, and life to life. It does not allow your daily activities to become the cause of achieving full enlightenment, or omniscient mind, for other living beings. Similarly, the attachment that grasps at samsaric perfections does not allow your everyday actions to become the cause of liberation.

The hallucinated view that believes the I to be independent, even though it is a dependent arising, does not allow you to realize the absolute nature of the I. As long as you grasp the I as truly existent, there is no way you can realize the absolute nature of the I. In this way, there is no way to escape from suffering, from samsara. Following ignorance in this way does not allow the actions of your daily life to become a remedy to samsara, to the cause of suffering and all the resultant problems.

Relying on Tara

There are many inner obstacles to the development of your mind, and these inner obstacles create many outer obstacles. Therefore, for the success of your Dharma practice, in order to actualize the graduated path to enlightenment, you must rely upon a special deity, or Buddha, such as Tara. All the actions of the Buddhas have manifested in this female form, Tara the Liberator, in order to help living beings successfully accomplish both temporal and ultimate happiness.

Many Indian yogis relied upon Tara. By taking refuge in Tara, they completed the path and did great works for the teachings and for living beings, leading innumerable disciples on the path to temporal and ultimate happiness. For example, the great pandit Lama Atisha, who completed the whole graduated path to enlightenment, relied upon Tara.

Lama Atisha was invited by the religious king of Tibet, Yeshe Ö, to re-establish and spread the Buddhadharma in Tibet. Lama Atisha also wrote the text, *Lamp of the Path to Enlightenment*, which established the term “graduated path to enlightenment.” By listening to, and reflecting, and meditating on the *Lamp of the Path of Enlightenment*, many people have achieved enlightenment.

Besides benefiting the Tibetan practitioners who are, even now, experimenting on and accomplishing the path to enlightenment, Lama Atisha’s text is nowadays even benefiting people extensively in the West. The light of this lam-rim teaching has dispelled so much ignorance, even in the minds of many thousands of people living in the West. Because *Lamp of the Path to Enlightenment* integrates all the teachings of Buddha into a step-by-step practice by which anyone can achieve enlightenment, many practitioners have been able to use it to train their minds in the path to Buddhahood.

Even though Lama Atisha passed away a long time ago in Tibet, he is still benefiting us by having given us the opportunity to understand the teachings of the graduated path. Understanding and practicing this path gives us confidence and great happiness. By understanding the cause of happiness, we have the opportunity to obtain whatever happiness we wish. These are Lama Atisha's actions benefiting all living beings.

By depending on Tara, Lama Atisha was able to offer these extensive benefits to living beings and the teachings. Throughout Lama Atisha's life, Tara always gave him advice. When Lama Atisha had to make decisions about doing works for living beings—such as travelling to Tibet—he always asked Tara and then followed Tara's instructions. In the same way, even present-day Tibetan yogis who are actualizing the graduated path to enlightenment and successfully developing their minds also rely upon Tara.

The benefits of Tara practice

Tara's meditation practice is quick to grant success in obtaining the ultimate happiness of enlightenment. You receive much good merit, the cause of happiness. It prevents a suffering rebirth in your next life; you receive initiation from millions of Buddhas; and you achieve enlightenment. Besides these, however, Tara practice has many other benefits. Reciting the *Praise to the Twenty-one Taras* with devotion at dawn or dusk, or remembering Tara, singing praises, and reciting mantras at any time of the day or night protects you from fear and dangers and fulfills all your wishes. If you pray to Tara, Tara is particularly quick to grant help.

There are also many temporal benefits from Tara practice, either reciting the Tara mantra or the *Praise to the Twenty-one Taras*. Tara can solve many problems in your life: she can liberate you from untimely death; help you recover from disease; bring you success in business; help you to find a job; and bring you wealth. When you have a really serious problem, such as a life-threatening disease, if you rely upon Tara, commonly you will be freed from that problem, or you will recover from that disease. If you have eaten poison, if you rely upon Tara, the poison will not harm you. By doing Tara prayers and mantras, couples with difficulty having a child can have a child—a son or a daughter, according to their wish. These are common experiences. Through Tara practice, you can obtain any happiness in this life that you wish.

If you recite the *Praise to the Twenty-one Taras* once every evening, it is impossible—I can put my signature to this!—for you to die of starvation. It is also a common experience of lay practitioners or of monks and nuns who have financial difficulties to have such problems alleviated by doing Tara practice. In my personal experience, I have seen many instances of people who have prayed to and taken refuge in Tara and been saved from the danger of untimely death from disease without taking medicine.

The meaning of TARE

The Tara mantra is OMTARE TUTTARE TURE SOHA. To explain the meaning of TARE TUTTARE TURE: TARE means liberating from samsara. *Samsara* means these aggregates: the aggregate of form, or the physical body; of feeling; of recognition; of karmic formations; and of consciousness. These aggregates, on which the I is labelled, are caused by the contaminated seeds of karma and the disturbing thoughts. Under the control of karma and the disturbing thoughts, the past-life aggregate of consciousness circled to this life. Because these aggregates are contaminated by the seed of karma

and the disturbing thoughts, when we meet desirable and undesirable objects, the different disturbing thoughts, such as attachment and anger, arise. Since the seed of the disturbing thoughts is there, we again create karma. And the karma and disturbing thoughts again cause the aggregate of consciousness to circle and join with the aggregates of the next life.

Although this gross body does not continue into the next life, the aggregate of consciousness does continue into the next life. From life to life it continuously circles. From one life to the next, from the past life to the present, the aggregate of consciousness circles. It joins with these present aggregates and then later joins with the aggregates of the next life. This is why these aggregates are called samsara, or cyclic existence.

So, *TARE* shows that Mother Tara liberates living beings from samsara, from true suffering, or problems. You can relate this to the particular sufferings of human beings: birth, old age, sickness, and death; meeting undesirable objects and experiencing aversion; not finding desirable objects or finding them but gaining no satisfaction. No matter how much pleasure you enjoy, there is no satisfaction. No matter how much you follow desire, there is no satisfaction at all.

Also, nothing in samsara is definite. You have to leave the body again and again and take another body again and again. Like this, again and again you experience the suffering of joining with another body.

Your present-life mother came from her mother, your grandmother; your grandmother came from another mother; and that mother came from yet another mother. It is the same with your father. You can see this body that you have now as a collection of all the sperm and blood that has continued from parent to child for inconceivable generations since this earth evolved, since human beings began. This collection of sperm has come to you through your father, your grandfather, your great-grandfather, and so on. It is the same with the blood, which has come to you through your mother, your grandmother, and so on. Since this body you have now is a continuation of all this sperm and blood from all these other beings, there is no essence to cling to; there is no reason to get attached to this body, this samsara. The waste from all the toilets in a big city is collected into one big sewer; the body is just like this sewer.

By joining like this again and again with a body, again and again you experience problems. If you have high status, you fall down to low status. Again and again this happens. When you are born, you are born alone without any companion; when you die, you also die alone. Even this body does not accompany the consciousness; the consciousness has to go alone to the next life. All these are the problems of true suffering. If you rely upon Tara by taking refuge in her and doing Tara practices—such as the recitation of mantra or praises—Tara liberates you from all these true sufferings with *TARE*.

The meaning of TUTTARE

The second word, *TUTTARE*, liberates you from the eight fears. There are eight fears related to external dangers from fire, water, air, earth, and also from such things as thieves and dangerous animals. However, the main dangers come from ignorance, attachment, anger, pride, jealousy, miserliness, doubt, and wrong views. These eight disturbing thoughts that you have in your mind are the main dangers. By taking refuge in Tara and doing Tara practice, you are liberated from the internal dangers of these eight disturbing thoughts. In this way, you are also liberated from external dangers, since the external dan-

gers come from the inner disturbing thoughts.

This second word, TUTTARE, which liberates you from the eight fears, frees you from the true cause of suffering: karma and the all-arising disturbing thoughts. “All-arising” means that disturbing thoughts bring all the sufferings. By taking refuge in Tara and doing Tara practice, you are liberated from the true cause of suffering: this is the meaning of TUTTARE.

The meaning of TURE

The third word, TURE, liberates you from disease. From among the four Noble Truths, TURE shows the cessation of suffering, which is the ultimate Dharma. In terms of liberating from disease, the actual disease we have is ignorance of the absolute nature of the I, as well as all the disturbing thoughts that arise from that ignorance. These are the actual, serious diseases that we have. With the cessation of these diseases of the disturbing thoughts, all the true sufferings, the resultant problems, also cease. By liberating us from disease, TURE actually liberates us from the true cause, the disturbing thoughts, and also from the true sufferings.

How can we achieve this ultimate Dharma, this true cessation of the cause and result of suffering? What can lead us to this state, the cessation of suffering, which is the meaning of TURE? You achieve this by practicing the true path. As revealed in the Lesser Vehicle paths of the hearers and self-conquerors, and in the Mahayana path, the true path is the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness. This is the absolute Dharma. Actualizing this wisdom within our mind leads us to the state of the cessation of suffering. This true path is contained in TUTTARE, which liberates us from the eight fears—the word “liberates” indirectly indicates the true path. And as I have just explained, the third word, TURE, liberates you from the actual disease, the disturbing thoughts.

The conclusion is that by taking refuge in Tara, by doing Tara practices, such as recitation of the Tara mantra, and by practicing the path contained in that mantra, you can achieve the fully enlightened state with the four kayas, which is the state of cessation or liberation from the two obscurations. In short, OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SOHA means “I prostrate to the Liberator, Mother of all the Victorious Ones.” Tara is the mother of all the Victorious Ones, or Buddhas. Why are Buddhas called Victorious Ones? Because they are victorious over the two obscurations.

Tara the Mother

Tara is called ‘mother’ because it is the mother who gives birth to children. The actual meaning of Tara is the transcendental wisdom of non-dual bliss and voidness, which simultaneously sees the absolute and conventional truth of all existence. This is the absolute guru, the real guru. We should understand this real meaning of guru. Even though they have different aspects and different names, all the Buddhas are born from this transcendental wisdom of non-dual bliss and voidness, that is, the dharmakaya. In reality, every Buddha is the embodiment of this absolute guru: one manifests in many; many manifest in one. The absolute guru manifests in all these various aspects of Buddha; the essence of all Buddhas is the absolute guru. The real meaning of guru, or the absolute guru, manifests in ordinary aspect as the conventional-truth guru, the lama from whom you receive the teachings directly.

As Khedrup Sangye Yeshe explained: “Before the guru, there is not even the name ‘buddha’.” The entire *Guru Puja* expresses that the foundation is the guru, which is the dharmakaya, the transcendental

wisdom of non-dual bliss and voidness. From the very beginning, while experiencing great bliss, we manifest as the guru-deity. Even the front generation merit field comes from inseparable bliss and voidness, and from this merit field we take initiation; we request to receive blessings to generate the realizations of the graduated path to enlightenment from beginning to end; and we also make the four types of offering (outer, inner, secret, and absolute). We train our mind with these meditations, all of which evolve from non-dual bliss and voidness.

First we meet the guru externally and separately. After receiving teachings, we listen, and reflect and meditate on the path revealed by this guru. On the basis of correct devotion to the guru, we gradually actualize the remedy of the path and remove our obscurations. When our obscurations are completely removed, we meet the guru mentally.

On the basis of actualizing the three principles of the path, we receive the four perfect Highest Yoga Tantra initiations, which definitely plant the seeds of the four kayas within our mind. This allows us to practice the unification of the clear light and illusory body. By gradually actualizing this path, we can completely cut off even subtle dual view, stopping even the gross minds of the white, red, and dark visions, which are more subtle than the preceding gross minds but gross when compared to the subtlest mind of clear light.

When you achieve the dharmakaya, the transcendental wisdom of non-dual bliss and voidness, you have achieved the guru. You have achieved the wish expressed in our usual dedication prayer: “Due to all these merits may I quickly achieve the Guru-Buddha’s enlightenment, and lead every single living being to the Guru-Buddha’s enlightenment.” In reality, by training your mind in these meditations and developing your mind in the path, your mental continuum actually becomes that of the guru. In the future, you actually become the guru you have been visualizing.

Therefore, all the Buddhas are born from the absolute guru, the transcendental wisdom of non-dual bliss and voidness. This is the actual meaning of ‘mother’. This transcendental wisdom, this completely pure subtle mind, manifests in this female aspect, labelled Tara.

Normally children feel much closer to their mother than to their father. When they have some trouble, most children seem to scream for their mother. I don’t know about in the West, but in the East even adults rely on their mother when they have some severe pain or problem.

My father died when I was small, and I don’t remember what he looked like at all. People say that he had a beard, was very good at reading texts, and did not speak much. All I can remember clearly is my father’s sheepskin chuba. Everybody in the family slept under that big chuba—it was our blanket. The whole family tried to get underneath it. I can remember that very clearly. I was introduced to my father’s chuba—that is all I remember.

So my mother was the only adult in our home. My sister, who was a little older, helped my mother a little by taking our animals out on the mountains and bringing them back home every day. Otherwise, the rest of us—there were three, including me—were useless. Since my sister looked after the animals, all the hard work was done by my mother alone.

One day my mother had to go into the forest to get firewood. We waited outside the house. Because

none of us could cook, we waited outside for her to come home and give us some food. She came back very late from the forest with a very heavy load of firewood. After she returned, she could not make a fire because she was sick and in much pain. There was no fire in the stove and no food. She lay down next to the fireplace, screaming for her mother: “Ama! Ama!” My grandmother, who was still alive at that time, lived quite near to us, maybe five or ten minutes’ walk away.

The three of us—me, my brother Sangye, and another young brother who had a small piece of tail and later died—didn’t know what to do. We just sat around the fireplace looking at our mother. There was no fire; none of us could make a fire. We just sat and watched our mother. Somehow, even grown-ups naturally call their mother when there is some really serious pain or problem. However, Tara is much closer to us than our mother.

The meaning of OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SOHA

This female aspect, Tara, Mother of all the Victorious Ones, guides you and other living beings from the danger of falling into samsara or lower nirvana and leads you to the perfect state of enlightenment, which is qualified with the five transcendental wisdoms and the four kayas.

The rough meaning of these three words TARE TUTTARE TURE is: “To you, embodiment of all the Buddhas’ actions, I prostrate always, in happy or unhappy circumstances, with my body, speech, and mind.”

All the paths—Lesser Vehicle, Mahayana, Paramitayana, and Tantrayana—from the beginning to enlightenment are contained in TARE TUTTARE TURE. The remedy of the path and all the obscurations it removes are contained in TARE TUTTARE TURE. In the context of the lam-rim, TARE is the graduated path of the lower capable being; TUTTARE, of the middle capable being; and TURE, of the higher capable being. All the outlines of the lam-rim meditations are contained in this mantra. In the mantra TA YA THA OM MUNI MUNI MAHAMUNIYE SOHA, MUNI MUNI MAHAMUNIYE can also be related to the lam-rim in the same way.

The final word *SOHA* means establishing the root of the path within your heart. In other words, by taking refuge in Tara and doing Tara practice, you receive the blessings of Tara in your own heart. This gives you space to establish the root of the path, signified by TARE TUTTARE TURE, in your heart. By establishing the path of the three capable beings within your heart, you purify all impurities of your body, speech, and mind and achieve Tara’s pure vajra holy body, holy speech, and holy mind, signified by *OM*. Your body, speech, and mind are transformed into Tara’s holy body, holy speech, and holy mind. This is the rough meaning of OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SOHA.

Visualizing Tara

When you recite the mantra, visualize Tara in the space in front of you, level with your forehead, at a comfortable distance of about one body-length. As I mentioned when explaining the mantra, first think of the transcendental wisdom of great bliss of all the Buddhas, which fully sees all existence. Think of this holy mind of dharmakaya, the absolute guru. Because the holy mind of all the Buddhas, the absolute guru, is bound by great compassion for you and all living beings, who are obscured and suffering under the control of karma and disturbing thoughts, it manifests in this particular female

form of Tara. This happens due to compassion. Just as you act under the control of anger and attachment, the Buddhas work for you and other living beings under the control of compassion.

The holy mind of all the buddhas manifests in this female aspect, Tara. What does this aspect look like? Tara is in the nature of green light, with one face and two arms. Her face is very peaceful, with a slight smile. Her hair is very dark, half tied up and half loose, and decorated with an utpala flower at the crown. Tara is adorned with jewel ornaments: necklace, bracelets, armlets, anklets, and so on. Her eyes, very loving and compassionate, are not opened widely but are fine and a little rounded. Tara's eyes express compassion for you, like the look of loving kindness a mother gives her beloved only child. Tara's right hand, holding the stem of an utpala flower, is in the mudra of granting sublime realizations. Her left hand holds the stem of another utpala flower, with three fingers standing upright to signify refuge in Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

Tara has fully developed breasts, and she is adorned with a jewel necklace and also with jewel garlands and various scarves. Her right leg is stretched out, and the left one drawn in. Behind her is a moon disc. Tara is adorned with the complete holy signs and exemplifications of a buddha. On her forehead is a white OM, essence of the vajra holy body; at her neck, a red AH, essence of vajra holy speech; and at her heart, a blue HUM, essence of the vajra holy mind.

White nectar beams come from the OM, strike your forehead, and enter inside you to purify all the obscurations and negative karmas you have accumulated with the body from beginningless rebirths until now. From the AH at Tara's throat, red nectar beams are emitted and strike your own throat; all obscurations and negative karmas accumulated with your speech are completely purified. Then, from Tara's heart syllable HUM, blue nectar beams are emitted and enter your heart; all the obscurations and negative karmas accumulated with your mind from beginningless rebirths until now are purified. Out of compassion for you and all living beings, Mother Tara has purified you. Concentrate on this as you recite the mantra: OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SOHA. Or if you wish, you can visualize Tara on your crown as in the short Tara sadhana.

When you finish the meditation, pray to Tara: "Without even a second's delay, may I become Tara and in each moment free innumerable living beings from all their sufferings and lead them to full enlightenment." Pray to be able to achieve this by generating bodhichitta: the wish to achieve Tara for the sake of other living beings. Because you are not following the selfish mind but have changed your attitude to one of using your life to serve others and obtain their temporal and ultimate happiness, Tara is extremely pleased with you. Your practice of morality—that is, keeping your vows—and the loving, compassionate thought of bodhichitta pleases Tara the most. These essential Mahayana practices are the best offerings you can make to Tara. They bring you closer to Tara, so that she quickly helps all your actions to succeed. How much Tara helps you depends on how much you practice the essence of the Mahayana teachings.

Because of your attitude of bodhichitta, Tara is extremely pleased with you; she melts into green light, enters through your forehead, and absorbs into your heart. Think: "My body, speech and mind have been blessed to become Tara's vajra holy body, holy speech and holy mind." By receiving the blessings of Tara with a calm, devoted mind, you plant the seed to develop your mind and actually achieve Tara.

After the absorption, if you wish, concentrate one-pointedly on the nature of Tara's holy mind. Then

conclude your practice by dedicating the merits to the generation of bodhichitta and to your achievement of Tara, in order to lead every living being as quickly as possible to Tara's enlightenment.

Colophon:

From two teachings given at Kopan Monastery and Himalayan Yogic Institute, Nepal in May, 1987. Reprinted with permission from Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive.

Tantra and Compassion

by Lama Zopa Rinpoche

Chenrezig, Buddha of Compassion

The special deity, Chenrezig, is the embodiment of the great compassion of all the buddhas. Chenrezig has many different aspects. Teachings on *The Hundred Devas of Tushita*, which is the guru yoga practice of Lama Tsongkhapa, mention three different aspects of Chenrezig: the outer aspect, the four-armed Chenrezig that is commonly practiced; the inner aspect, Chenrezig Dorje Ch ; and the most secret aspect, Gyalwa Gyatso. Those who have received the *Rinjung Gyatsa* initiations will also be familiar with the many different aspects of Chenrezig found there, but there are also many other aspects of Chenrezig not contained in the *Rinjung Gyatsa*.

Why are there so many different aspects of Chenrezig? Because one aspect of Chenrezig is not enough to lead every sentient being to enlightenment. Many different aspects of Chenrezig are needed, as sentient beings have many different personalities and characteristics of mind. Some beings can subdue their minds and generate the realizations of the graduated path to enlightenment more easily and quickly with four-armed Chenrezig; some with the inner aspect; others by practicing the secret Chenrezig, Gyalwa Gyatso. Blessings are received more quickly when the initiation of a particular aspect of a deity is given to those beings who have more karma to be subdued through contact with it. When the path of that aspect is revealed, realizations are generated more quickly because that particular aspect fits them perfectly. This is why there are so many different aspects of Chenrezig.

Basically, by practicing the various meditation techniques of all these aspects of Chenrezig, we can develop our mind and stop obstacles. With the guidance of these different aspects, we are able to develop the methods of sutra and tantra. We are able to develop loving kindness, compassion, bodhichitta, and wisdom.

Compassion, the source of all living beings' happiness, is extremely precious. It is through the compassion generated by Guru Shakyamuni Buddha that we have the opportunity to meet the particular deity that suits us and can quickly guide us to enlightenment. That compassion was generated and developed in Buddha's previous lives when he was following the path as a bodhisattva. In one of his past lives, pulling a carriage on the red-hot burning ground in the hot hells, Buddha generated great compassion for the other beings who were suffering in the same way. In the beginning, because of his compassion for other beings, Buddha generated the Mahayana path; he also practiced tantra out of compassion for others; and even at the end, Buddha achieved enlightenment out of compassion for sentient beings.

In order to be able to guide living beings by manifesting in various forms, Buddha made many prayers and created much merit for many eons. For three countless great eons he practiced the six *paramitas*; for many eons he practiced only the paramita of charity, giving away his body, belongings, and relatives to other living beings. For many eons, Buddha practiced like this for our benefit. In order to be able to

guide living beings, Buddha followed the path and completed the accumulation of merit and purification of obscurations. Generating compassion for each and every sentient being, for each of us, Buddha felt it was unbearable that we should be overwhelmed by karma and delusions, continuously experiencing the suffering of samsara. For this reason, he accumulated merit, purified obscurations, and followed the path for many eons.

The various deities guide us to enlightenment in different ways. Tara manifests in many different aspects to bring us success. Vajrapani manifests in many forms to help us to develop power. The various aspects of Manjushri guide us to enlightenment by giving us the opportunity to develop wisdom. With the different aspects of Chenrezig we develop loving kindness, compassion, and bodhichitta. Deities such as Miyöwa help us to eliminate obstacles. Some deities such as the protectors manifest in wrathful aspects in order to subdue the impure conceptions of our uncontrolled mind: the self-cherishing thought and the ignorance that believes the I to be truly existent. Out of compassion, all the many different aspects of buddhas in the Action, Performance, Yoga, and Highest Yoga tantras manifest in order to guide us to enlightenment.

Not only do the deities manifest in these forms, they also allow us to accumulate merit through reciting their mantras. For example, reciting the Chenrezig mantra just one time can purify the negative karma of breaking all four root *pratimoksha* vows. A fully ordained monk who has degenerated all four root vows by killing a human being, lying about having realizations, stealing, and having sexual intercourse can purify all these by reciting one Chenrezig mantra. Reciting this mantra even one time can purify many lifetimes of negative karma. All this happens solely through the Buddha's compassion.

The Chenrezig mantra has power because the holy speech of Chenrezig is embodied in the sound and letters of the mantra. Reading, writing, or reciting the mantra eliminates the mental stains we have within us; it is these stains that interfere with our obtaining complete happiness and perfectly accomplishing extensive works for other living beings. All these are purified by this mantra. No matter how much negative karma we have accumulated, we always have the opportunity to purify it. These methods of purification also exist through Buddha's loving kindness and compassion.

Not only in the East where there are Mahayana teachings, but even in other countries, Chenrezig, Buddha of Compassion, is the most well known of all the buddhas. Somehow, naturally, many people come to rely upon the Buddha of Compassion, reciting the Chenrezig mantra as well as doing other practices such as *Nyung Nay*, which purifies many eons of accumulated negative karma. It is very common to see the Chenrezig mantra, OM MANI PADME HUM, and most people—even young children—find it easy to recite. In this way, they accumulate much merit and purify many obscurations. Even people who are not particularly interested in Buddhism, who have not studied it or done any meditation courses, come to know the mantra OM MANI PADME HUM just by going trekking.

The reason Chenrezig is so well known and his practice so widespread is that he is the manifestation of the great compassion of all the buddhas. Every single living being wishes to have happiness and does not wish to experience suffering. Compassion is the wish to free living beings from all their undesired suffering and its cause. Chenrezig embodies this compassion. Even though there are innumerable different buddhas, Chenrezig is practiced the most. This is the power of the buddhas' compassion benefiting sentient beings. The buddhas are unbelievably kind.

Compassion is the source of all the happiness of living beings. In the beginning, because of compassion for others, Buddha generated the Mahayana path, and even at the end, Buddha achieved enlightenment because of his compassion for us, the sentient beings.

We do not have the karma to see the pure aspects of Buddha, such as the various aspects of Chenrezig. However, Buddha guides us according to the level of our karma by manifesting in various human aspects. Buddha manifests in whatever form is needed to subdue our mind and guide us to enlightenment, whether in the aspect of an ordinary human who gives us teachings or as the beggar who allows us to accumulate merit. Buddha even manifests in material objects. Where there is need of a bridge, in order to guide sentient beings Buddha even manifests as a bridge. The variety of ordinary forms is inconceivable. Then, by revealing different means, Buddha gradually guides us to enlightenment.

Samsaric suffering

We should practice tantra out of great compassion for other living beings. *The Three Principles of the Path* explains that living beings are swept along continuously by four strong rivers. There is the strong river of ignorance, not knowing the cause of happiness and the cause of suffering; there is the ignorance of wrong view, holding the I and other phenomena as truly existent; and there are other wrong views gained through meeting wrong doctrines.

As well as being swept away by these four strong rivers, living beings are trapped in the iron cage of I-grasping ignorance and bound very tightly by the chain of karma. Their minds completely gloomed by the darkness of ignorance, living beings experience continuously the three types of suffering.

Living beings continuously experience the suffering of suffering and the suffering of change. When they experience some temporary sense pleasure, they label as ‘pleasure’ a feeling which is only suffering. This type of feeling is called ‘pleasure,’ but in reality it is only suffering. Even sense pleasures are only suffering.

Even during the times there is no suffering of suffering, sentient beings experience pervasive, compounded suffering, which means being under the control of karma and disturbing thoughts. Not being free from karma and disturbing thoughts is the fundamental suffering.

By thinking of living beings experiencing such misery in this way, we generate bodhichitta. Think of your own kind mother (or your best friend—whoever you feel is the kindest) trapped in an iron cage, being swept away by strong currents. There is no sun, no moon, no stars—nothing! It is completely dark. Her limbs are fastened tightly with chains so there is no way for her to move. If she could move her limbs, it would not be so bad—but there is no way for her to move. She is very tightly fastened with chains, trapped in this iron cage with no way to escape.

For your mother to be suffering like this is unbearable. You yourself, through being born and suffering, are also in the same situation. All living beings, the source of all your own past, present, and future happiness, who have been your mother and kind to you numberless times, are suffering even more heavily than in this example.

These four rivers of disturbing thoughts have always swept sentient beings from one samsaric realm to

another, without any freedom at all, so that they continuously experience suffering. As well as being under the control of disturbing thoughts, living beings are completely under the control of karma, tightly bound by karmic chains, like having all their limbs tied up with barbed wire.

For example, if someone has a serious disease such as leprosy, no matter how long that person lives—even one hundred years—he has to live with that disease. He has no choice, no freedom: he has to live with that disease. There is no way he can have a complete, perfect body. No matter how miserable he is or how unbearable he finds his situation, he has to live his life that way.

Another example: Some couples are always fighting even though they live together for many years. Every day they fight and beat each other. Somehow they are forced to live their lives always quarreling, always in misery, with no way to escape. There are human beings who experience this kind of mental and physical suffering.

It is also like this for animals such as buffaloes and horses, which are used to pull carriages, plow fields, or carry heavy loads. No matter how hot it is, no matter how exhausted they are, no matter how much pain, hunger, or thirst they experience, for as long as they live they have no way to escape from these sufferings. They have no freedom. It is unbelievable—so unbearable! They are tightly tied by karmic chains, with no way to escape.

Many creatures, such as mosquitoes, scorpions, lobsters, crocodiles and snakes, no matter how ugly their bodies are, no matter how much suffering they have, because they terrify human beings, are simply regarded as objects to be killed. There is no way for them to escape this karma. Once the karmic chain is tied, that karma has to be experienced. For as long as they live, they experience great misery.

Human beings, even though they may have escaped being born as animals, may have no opportunity at all to meet and practice Dharma. For example, the people in the village below Kopan have been both into a human body; they have not been born as animals. But because they have no opportunity to meet and practice Dharma, their whole life is spent in worldly activities for the happiness of this life. There is no way for them to find satisfaction. Since all their work is done out of worldly concern, it all becomes non-virtue, or negative karma. Day and night every single action of their body, speech, and mind is done out of attachment to this life, so all their actions become negative karma.

Even though they accomplished their work with a lot of difficulties, the only result of that work is suffering in this life—and in the life after this. No matter what they do, the only result they experience is suffering. Even their hard work in this life does not result in happiness, only in misery. They experience only suffering and problems, in this life and also in the life after this. The result is greater suffering for many lifetimes.

It is similar with millionaires in the West. Even though they may have some kind of external success, having everything that money can buy, if their attitude is solely one of worldly concern seeking the happiness of this life, every single action of their body, speech, and mind is non-virtuous and results in negative karma. No matter what they do, there is no satisfaction; their life ends in dissatisfaction. Their life finishes while they are doing work that never finishes. Worldly work has no end; there is no way to complete it. And since all their actions are done only out of worldly concern, it is very difficult for them to receive the body of a happy migratory being in their next life.

Like this, living beings are very tightly chained by karma. In addition, they are completely gloomed by the darkness of ignorance. They do not know the cause of happiness or the cause of suffering; they have no understanding of Dharma. Their minds are completely dark. Even though they wish for happiness, they perform actions that create only negative karma. The wrong methods they use result in the opposite to what they wish: only suffering, in this life and in the future.

Living beings are completely deluded by ignorance, believing that the I and all other phenomena—which arise dependently and are merely imputed by the mind—are instead independent and truly existent. Living beings are completely trapped in this ignorance.

Think how incredible it is that sentient beings are suffering, overwhelmed by karma and disturbing thoughts. Some kind mother sentient beings have been born in the hells and are experiencing unbearable sufferings of heat and cold. Other kind mother sentient beings have been born as *pretas*, spending many hundreds of years with heavy sufferings of hunger and thirst. Some kind mother sentient beings have been born as animals, mute and extremely foolish, and have been eaten by other animals. These sentient beings pass their whole time in the suffering of suffering.

Other sentient beings have been born as *devas*, but devas also have much suffering when they experience the signs of death, and there is much jealousy and fighting amongst them. Even the mother sentient beings who have been born as humans suffer birth, old age, various sicknesses, and death, even though they do not want to die. Human beings suffer when unable to find the objects they desire, and when do they find them, they suffer with fear of losing these desirable objects. The human body is suffering in nature. Even though the outside appears to be clean, the inside is the same as meat in a butcher's shop. In reality the inside is completely something other than what appears on the outside, and in which we believe. Human beings are born covered with flesh, in a bag full of blood, pus, and other dirty things, and tied with veins. It is so upsetting that they have to suffer like this.

All sentient beings experience the sufferings of samsara. Nothing is definite, even though we believe that everything is. Our experiences with relationships show that nothing is definite. There is no satisfaction no matter how much we follow our desires and enjoy samsaric perfections. Sentient beings have to leave the body again and again, and take another body again and again. The high become low. Sentient beings are born alone and even die without any companions. No matter how many friends and relatives we have during our lifetime, at the death-time we have to go alone. Leaving even our body, we carry all the negative karma we have accumulated with us. We have to experience alone the results of the negative karma created by us.

Sentient beings live in a complete hallucination of permanence, believing impermanent things—including themselves—to be permanent. Believing the impure body to be completely clean and pure, they grasp onto that appearance, and again create the cause of samsara. Attachment ties sentient beings to samsara. They also mistake suffering for real happiness. Sentient beings even believe things that are merely labeled and empty of existing from their own side to be independent. They are completely deluded.

The kind mother sentient beings, origin of all your own three times' happiness, are extremely pitiful. Their suffering is unbearable. The Mahayana practitioner with great compassion feels it is intolerable

that sentient beings suffer in this way. They feel just like a mother when her beloved child falls into a fire; she immediately has to do something. Right in that second, she must save her child from the fire. It is as if an arrow has been shot into her heart. Like this, a practitioner with great compassion feels it is unbearable that other living beings are experiencing the sufferings of samsara.

We have the opportunity to practice, and to benefit sentient beings by freeing them from all their sufferings and leading them to enlightenment. We have this opportunity so it is our responsibility to help them. When a mother is suffering, it is the responsibility of her son or daughter to help her. Freeing every sentient being from suffering and leading them to enlightenment is our responsibility.

Now, if you follow the Paramitayana path in order to achieve enlightenment and free sentient beings from all their suffering and lead them to enlightenment, you need to accumulate merit for three great countless eons. That is such a long time! To wait so long to achieve enlightenment is unbearable. For sentient beings to suffer in samsara for even one second feels like eons. To a practitioner with great compassion, the thought of sentient beings suffering in samsara is unbearable; he cannot stand their suffering for even one second. He wants to achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible. For such a practitioner the tantric path is revealed.

The four tantras

There are four types of tantra: Action Tantra, which mainly emphasizes outer activities such as keeping the body clean, as in the nyung-nay practice; Performance Tantra, which emphasizes inner as well as outer practice; and Yoga Tantra and especially Highest Yoga Tantra, which emphasize internal practice.

In these four tantras, the fundamental practices of divine pride and pure appearance are used in order to achieve enlightenment more quickly than in the Paramitayana path. You visualize yourself and other beings in pure form: yourself as the principal deity, and other beings in the pure forms of the mandala deities. You practice pure divine pride and pure appearance of yourself as the deity. When you become enlightened, you see yourself as a buddha and everything appears to you in pure form: the place as a mandala and other beings in pure forms of the deity. There is not the slightest impure appearance or conception.

In tantric practice, you visualize and train your mind in what you will really achieve and experience in the future: pure body, pure place, pure enjoyments, pure actions. The practice of looking at everything in pure form protects your mind from the impure conceptions that interfere with your achieving enlightenment quickly. These impure conceptions cause many disturbing thoughts to arise and create the karma that causes you to be born continuously in samsara and to experience suffering. You visualize right now all the pure appearances you will see when you become a buddha.

The four levels of attachment

A tantric teaching mentions that just as a worm born from wood eats up that wood, attachment should be used to destroy the root of attachment. The skillful means of tantra is used to remove completely even the root of the delusions. For the Mahayana practitioner who feels such unbearable compassion for sentient beings that he cannot bear their suffering in samsara for even a second, the skillful tantric path is revealed. Loosely speaking, the four tantras—Action, Performance, Yoga, and Highest Yoga—

are revealed in order to use attachment to completely destroy attachment.

There are different levels of attachment: attachment arising from looking at the object of desire, from seeing the object smiling, from touching, and from sexual intercourse. The four tantras use these different levels of attachment to destroy attachment itself. Action Tantra is revealed for the Mahayana practitioner who cannot use the strong attachment arising from intercourse in the path to enlightenment, nor the attachment arising from touching, nor even the attachment arising from seeing the object of desire smiling. This tantra is revealed for the practitioner who has only the capability to use the attachment arising from looking at the object in the path to enlightenment.

For the Mahayana practitioner with a little more capability to use attachment in the path, who can use the attachment arising from seeing the object of desire smiling—but not from intercourse or touching—Performance Tantra is revealed. For the practitioner who has the potential to use the attachment arising from touching in the path, but not the attachment arising from intercourse, Yoga Tantra is revealed.

For the practitioner of highest intelligence who has the capability to transform into the path to enlightenment the greatest attachment, that arising from sexual intercourse, Highest Yoga Tantra is revealed. With the skillful means of Highest Yoga Tantra one can achieve enlightenment in this very lifetime, even within a few years, as did Milarepa and many other great yogis, such as Indrabhuti, who achieved enlightenment in three years, and Ensapa, who achieved enlightenment without bearing hardships or leading an ascetic life. As His Holiness Song Rinpoche said, “Without bearing the hardships that Milarepa did, Ensapa achieved enlightenment comfortably in one very brief lifetime.”

The meaning of mantra

Tantra is also called *mantra*: *man* means understanding; *tra* means protecting migratory beings, which means compassion. Mantra is the unification of these two, understanding and compassion. In other words the general meaning of mantra is “protecting the mind.”

The specific meaning of mantra according to Highest Yoga Tantra is that by actualizing and developing the primordial subtle mind—the experience of clear light and simultaneously born bliss—one ceases the continuation of the ordinary mind. The ordinary minds that arise at the time of death during the white, red, and dark visions are more subtle than the previous gross minds; but compared to the subtle mind of clear light, these minds arising during the three visions are still gross. The continuation of these gross ordinary minds associated with the three visions is ceased by the clear light, the primordial mind of simultaneously born bliss.

By developing the real meaning of Highest Yoga Tantra, thus of mantra—that is, the primordial mind of simultaneously born bliss—we cut off dual view since this cuts off the continuation of the ordinary mind that arises even during the three visions. Only by cutting off dual view can we achieve enlightenment, that is, the unification of the completely pure holy mind and holy body.

Therefore, according to Highest Yoga Tantra, *man* means the transcendental wisdom of the simultaneously born clear light, and *tra* means protecting sentient beings from ordinary minds, or dual view. How can the minds of sentient beings be protected? We receive initiations, which ripen our mind and

allow us to practice Highest Yoga Tantra. We then generate simultaneously born bliss and, as we develop this further, clear light. By developing this clear light, we are then able to cease dual view. When we have this experience, we have actualized the real mantra.

Mantra should not be understood to be just recitation of some secret words. This realization of simultaneously born bliss is mantra. Generating this clear light of simultaneously born bliss protects us from the continuation of the ordinary mind, dual view.

It can also be understood in this way: The guru-deity, whose holy mind abides in the simultaneously born transcendental wisdom of great bliss, reveals the teachings—particularly the Highest Yoga Tantra path—out of that transcendental wisdom. In this way, we are able to practice and actualize the path. The mantra in the holy mind of the guru-deity protects us not only from the sufferings of samsara, but from even the ordinary mind, from dual view. If we have this realization of the transcendental wisdom of simultaneously born bliss, we can protect from dual view not only ourselves but also other sentient beings, who equal the extent of infinite space. This is the meaning of mantra.

The skillful means of tantra

As His Holiness the Dalai Lama has explained, the wisdom realizing emptiness in the Paramitayana path is only a gross level of wisdom. The Paramitayana path does not reveal the subtle wisdom realizing emptiness.

For the primordial subtle mind to realize emptiness, the ordinary gross mind and even the subtle minds that arise during the white, red, and dark visions have to be completely absorbed. When these subtle minds are ceased, the primordial subtle mind becomes clearly visible. Generally, the nature of the mind, whether it is subtle or gross, is the same. But of different functions and different ways of perceiving objects, different minds are called different names. For the primordial subtle mind to appear clearly, the gross minds have to be stopped. In order to do this, you have to stop the vehicle of the gross mind, the gross wind. And to do this, you use the skillful means of tantra such as the Six Yogas of Naropa to meditate on inner fire, or *tum-mo*.

First, you need to listen to, and reflect and meditate on the *lam-rim*. On the basis of this experience, you ripen your mind by receiving a complete Highest Yoga Tantra initiation, entering the mandala of a deity such as Gyalwa Gyatso. Such an initiation definitely leaves the seed of the four *kayas* on the mind. After practicing the first stage of tantra, you then meditate on inner fire in order to bring the winds from the right and left channels into the central channel and make them abide and absorb there. Making all the winds absorb into the central channel stops the gross winds. As the vehicle of the gross mind, the gross wind, is stopped, the effects of the gross mind stop, and you actualize the primordial mind. Such skillful methods as making the winds enter, abide, and absorb in the central channel are not revealed in the Paramitayana path.

The main purpose of practicing tantra is not only to free sentient beings from all obscurations and lead them to the state of omniscient mind, but to do so *quickly*. This work for sentient beings is done with the *rupakaya*, or the holy body of form. The *sambhogakaya* and *nirmanakaya*, the two kayas comprising the *rupakaya*, are the forms that actually do the work for sentient beings. However, without achieving the *dharmakaya*, there is no way to manifest in the *rupakaya*. It is the *dharmakaya* that manifests in the

forms that do the work and that other sentient beings can see. The dharmakaya manifests in different forms according to the levels of mind of sentient beings and then guides them by revealing different skillful means. This dharmakaya is not a gross mind but transcendental wisdom, the primordial, simultaneously born wisdom of great bliss.

Purified of the fabrication of dual view, the dharmakaya is completely pure. This primordial simultaneously born blissful wisdom does not have any fabrication of dual view at all, which means no appearance of true existence. It does not have even the slightest impression, or stain, left by the disturbing thoughts, such as ignorance. The appearance of true existence comes from subtle mental stains, but these impressions are completely removed by developing the clear light of meaning, their direct remedy. The clear light of meaning completely purifies these subtle obscurations.

The transcendental wisdom of dharmakaya does not have dual view. With this subtle wisdom you completely— not temporarily— cut off the appearance of true existence. Because you cut off the fabrication of dual view, you are forever in equipoise meditation on the emptiness of all existence. You do not arise from that, but one-pointedly, inseparably abide in emptiness, like having poured water into water. This is the dharmakaya.

There is no way that any temporary gross thought can become the direct cause to achieve the dharmakaya. There is no way that any temporary gross mind can go to enlightenment. The gross mind is called ‘temporary’ because it has to cease in order for the dharmakaya to be achieved. Therefore, delusions are ‘temporary’ obscurations.

The meaning clear light, the primordial mind directly perceiving emptiness—the right-seeing path of Highest Yoga Tantra—is the direct remedy to the subtle obscurations of the minds arising during the white, red, and dark visions. These subtle obscurations prevent the continuation of our present primordial mind from becoming omniscient. The obscuration to omniscience is removed completely by the meaning clear light.

With the meaning clear light, even the gross minds arising during the three visions are completely removed. Above, with the example clear light, these gross minds are temporarily absorbed, but manifest again. Developing the meaning clear light makes it impossible for them to arise again. Therefore, the transcendental wisdom of the dharmakaya is in meditative equipoise on emptiness forever. Subject and object are inseparable, like having poured water into water. The meaning clear light, this primordial mind that directly perceives emptiness and is transformed into great bliss, is the direct cause of the dharmakaya.

The main aim of the Paramitayana path is omniscient mind, and it is believed that the two obscurations can be removed by this path. However, in reality, it is impossible to purify completely all the fabrications of dual view by means of the Paramitayana path alone.

With the skillful means of tantra, as the gross winds enter, abide, and absorb in the central channel, the same thing happens with the gross consciousness. Just as at the death time, the pervasive wind—one of the five types of wind—completely absorbs. When every single pervasive wind has absorbed, the primordial mind of clear light is actualized. From that development, you achieve the impure illusory body, which is still stained by disturbing thoughts and still has the karmic potential to take rebirth. It is

‘impure’ because of this potential to take samsaric rebirth due to disturbing thoughts. This first clear light, the example clear light, does not directly perceive emptiness. Perhaps it could be said that one realizes emptiness ‘in imagination,’ because there is still dual view with subject (the wisdom of the primordial mind) and object (emptiness). Since dual view is not completely purified, emptiness is not perceived directly.

In clear light of example, ‘example’ means that it is similar to the clear light at the time of death. By developing the example clear light until it directly and unmistakably sees emptiness, without any dual view between subject and object, you achieve the meaning clear light. From this you achieve the pure illusory body.

Even after achieving the meaning clear light, however, you still cannot continuously be in meditative equipoise on emptiness, never rising again from that meditation. The appearance of true existence is the subtle obscuration that prevents your being inseparable forever from emptiness, like having poured water into water. This prevents your achieving the primordial mind of clear light one-pointedly abiding in meditative equipoise on the object of emptiness.

By developing this meaning clear light, you can completely remove dual view, so that it is impossible for it to arise again. When this happens, you have achieved the result, the dharmakaya. The meditator who has this realization of clear light has the opportunity to attain enlightenment—the holy body of unification of Vajradhara with the seven characteristics—in that very life; the methods of becoming enlightened in one brief lifetime can be taught to such a person. Wherever this practitioner is—whether in a prison, in a city, on a mountain—he is living in an inner pure realm. This person has achieved the actual pure realm.

Pabongkha Dechen Nyingpo’s advice

Pabongkha Dechen Nyingpo gives simple, unconfused advice about the essential practice of Dharma. The mind that does not follow anger and attachment is the precious treasure of the holy speech of the Victorious Ones. For those who practice Dharma and even for those who do not, all the difficulties and confusions of daily life, all obstacles, arise from the mind that follows anger and attachment. If your mind does not follow these two, you do not create obstacles, and the great meaning of life—all the works for self and other sentient beings—can be accomplished.

If you always meditate on the path, with your mind not separating from emptiness and compassion, you will have happiness all the time. According to the Paramitayana, this could be understood to mean emptiness. For the practitioner of Highest Yoga Tantra, it means that the mind should not separate from the practice of bliss-voidness. That there will be happiness all the time can be understood from what I have explained about achieving the dharmakaya.

Pabongkha Dechen Nyingpo answers the question, “What can I do? There is so much to study. The teachings are so extensive, and my life is short.” You may not have finished listening to and reflecting on all the teachings; you may not have a clear, extensive understanding that cuts off all doubts. However, Buddha said that the mind is the source of all samsara and nirvana. So, since your own mind is the root of your samsara and of your liberation, the most important thing is always to keep your mind subdued and peaceful.

All failures and undesirable problems come from the unsubdued mind. Keeping your mind peaceful and subdued is Dharma. Whether you practice Hinayana, Paramitayana, or Vajrayana, this is what you have to do. There is no other Dharma practice. There is no tantric practice without the practice of subduing the mind. If you leave out subduing your mind, there is no other practice. Watching your mind all the time and keeping it subdued are the real Dharma. Dharma that is not mixed with the mind is hypocritical—Dharma from the mouth, not from the heart.

Next Pabongkha Dechen Nyingpo says, and here he is relating more to the practice of tantra, “The very essence of the profound Dharma is condensed in the following: constantly meditate on your body as the deity’s holy body, which is the unification of appearance and emptiness; constantly keep your speech in the mantra; and constantly keep your mind in the sphere of bliss and voidness. Without moving your mind from the sphere of bliss and voidness, follow the father guru’s biography.” This means that the guru practiced in this way to achieve enlightenment. Pabongkha Dechen Nyingpo himself, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and Lama Yeshe also practiced this way to achieve the two kayas.

Checking dreams

If you did not dream, that is good because dreams are appearances of the hallucinated mind. However, there are what are usually labeled ‘bad’ and ‘good’ dreams. Seeing the deity, meeting the guru who is giving the initiation, going into temples or shrine rooms, and having dreams of Sangha or unbroken statues are labeled as good dreams. Other generally good dreams are: reading scriptures, bathing your body in clean water, drinking milk, and eating curd or rich food.

If you dream of the guru as skinny, sick, or wearing lay dress instead of robes (when he is not a lay person), these are bad signs. Even if you meet the guru in a dream, you may try to get blessings and not receive them. These are signs of having degenerated *samaya*. If you see the guru, Sangha, or statues as dusty or unpleasant-looking in your dream, these are the appearances given by a spirit called *gel-gun*. Dreams of stepping over paintings of buddhas or other holy objects, of having lost your bell and vajra or mandala, are also recognized as inauspicious. Since mandalas, bells, and vajras signify the path and are used to gain realizations, losing them is recognized as an inauspicious sign. These dreams can happen when you have already degenerated your samaya or can show what is about to happen the next day. Sometimes dreams come beforehand, showing that some mistake that will break samaya is going to be made.

Also inauspicious are dreams of falling down a mountain, going into a very dirty or tiny cave or house, going somewhere that is so difficult to climb over or through that you get stuck. Dreaming of your body being upside down could be a sign of going to the lower realms. Going downhill, especially on sand, is an inauspicious sign. (Climbing over the tops of mountains or cliffs is regarded as a good dream.) Mountains falling down and houses in space with no foundations also show something inauspicious related to a person’s practice, such as missing a basic vow. Riding on camels or donkeys towards the south is also an inauspicious sign.

All these are appearances of the illusive mind, so having a good dream is nothing to be proud or excited about and having a bad dream nothing to be depressed about. Think that any inauspicious signs are dispelled by giving the *torma* to the interferers, and also by remembering emptiness. Nothing of all these things you dreamed exists from its own side. Even though they appear to exist from their own

side as independent, these things are completely empty except as merely labeled on the base by thought. What is appearing as real, as existing from its own side, as not merely labeled, is empty. By meditating on emptiness, you can dispel inauspicious signs and obstacles.

Motivation for the bodhisattva and tantric vows

There is nothing better to do in the world than to live in the bodhisattva and tantric vows, especially the tantric vows. In order to achieve enlightenment quickly for the sake of sentient beings who equal infinite space, is there anything better to do? Nothing! From our own side, there is nothing more practical than this, and also from the side of other sentient beings. Every sentient being needs you to develop your mind through living in the vows, so that you can become a perfect guide, working unmistakably for sentient beings.

Think: Now my life will become highly meaningful. It will make my parents' suffering worthwhile: my mother suffered so much while I was in her womb for all those months, and my father has suffered much worry since my birth. They have been exhausted in body and mind through worry and fear. They have taken care of me, giving me all the best things they could to eat and wear. All the troubles and hardships they have borne for me will now become meaningful and worthwhile.

These comforts I have been enjoying belong to sentient beings. I have been wearing clothes and using things that come from the bodies of other beings. I may not have eaten sentient beings alive, but for all the rest of my pleasures I have been living off them. I have been using other sentient beings as slaves, using their body, speech, and mind for my happiness. All these enjoyments have come to me through the physical and mental suffering of other beings. The pleasures of my life come from the suffering of sentient beings—by killing them, or by their creating negative karma. My having this human body and being alive each day, each hour, each minute, will now become worthwhile. Enjoying this food, this clothing, this house, all these things that have come from others, will become meaningful because I will be living in the bodhisattva and tantric vows. Now, my life will become beneficial for other sentient beings.

Motivation for Gyalwa Gyatso initiation

With this most secret Chenrezig practice of Gyalwa Gyatso you can achieve enlightenment quickly—even within this very brief lifetime. To achieve enlightenment, you must enter the Mahayana path, and the door to the Mahayana path is *bodhichitta*. Quickly achieving enlightenment depends on quickly generating bodhichitta. Therefore, you need to rely upon the Highest Yoga Tantra path of this special deity, Gyalwa Gyatso, the compassion of all the buddhas, which quickly generates bodhichitta and grants enlightenment in one very brief lifetime.

You have the same potential within your mind as all the lineage lamas of Gyalwa Gyatso, such as Mitrajoki, the great yogi to whom Gyalwa Gyatso appeared and gave many teachings and initiations. You have the same potential as these great yogis whose life-stories you hear about and whose caves you see, where they practiced and achieved enlightenment. Receiving the four initiations allows you to actualize the clear light of the second stage of Highest Yoga Tantra; you develop this clear light to achieve enlightenment. Through wisdom (clear light) and method (illusory body), you are able to achieve quickly the unification of the holy body and the holy mind, in order to guide sentient beings perfectly. It is by taking initiation that you develop these potentials within you.

Think, I'm going to take the Chenrezig Gyalwa Gyatso initiation to achieve enlightenment, the unification of the holy body and holy mind, quickly and more quickly, as I feel it is so unbearable that sentient beings are obscured and suffering in samsara. To me it is like they are suffering for many eons. In order for sentient beings to achieve enlightenment, even if I have to suffer in the hells and practice the path for many eons, from my side I will endure it.

From beginningless rebirths until now, I have experienced numberless times the general sufferings of samsara and the particular sufferings of the hell, preta, and animal realms. Can I stand the thought of being born again even as a human being? Of being born again from a womb? Remembering all the misery, I cannot stand the thought of experiencing even one more suffering rebirth. Even being born again as a human does not necessarily mean that I will have all the perfect conditions to meet the Dharma and the perfect guru. The thought of taking another human body is unbearable.

It is difficult to see an end to this suffering. At this time, I have received a perfect human body, have met a Mahayana virtuous teacher and the complete, unmistakable teachings of Buddha. If I do not achieve enlightenment on the basis of this body, I will have to experience the suffering of samsara endlessly. If I do not actualize the path to enlightenment for the sake of other sentient beings in this life, if I do not practice Dharma in this life, it may not be possible in another life.

If I do not practice Dharma now, when will I? I should practice right now, while I have a perfect human body with all the necessary outer and inner conditions. Death is definite, and the actual time of death is uncertain. It could happen any day. It could happen today, at any moment. So many of my teachers and friends have already gone—unexpectedly, suddenly. At any moment, now, it could be my turn. At any moment, other people may hear of my death. Due to some inner disease or some external condition, my death could suddenly happen. Like a candle-flame in the wind, I am constantly surrounded by conditions that could cause my death. Day and night, my life is filled with conditions for death.

If I examine my mind, I find that disturbing thoughts arise frequently, while virtuous thoughts arise only rarely. Even the virtuous actions I do are imperfect, incomplete, weak. And anger and heresy can also destroy the results of my virtuous actions. On the other hand, all my non-virtuous actions are perfect, complete, and very powerful.

I have already accumulated much negative karma that has yet to be experienced. According to my karma, if death happened now, my rebirth would be in the lower realms. Before my breath stops, I am in the human realm; after my breath stops, in the hells. It's simply a question of whether this very fragile breath has ceased or is moving. Right after my breath stops, I will be in the hells. By practicing moral conduct and protecting karma, which means abandoning non-virtuous actions, I may be born in the realms of the happy transmigratory beings—but even that is entirely in the nature of suffering.

I am completely overwhelmed by the fundamental causes of suffering, karma and disturbing thoughts. All my sufferings come from cherishing the I, so the I is an object to be renounced always.

All my temporal and ultimate happiness comes from cherishing others, from bodhichitta. Cherishing others is possible because of other sentient beings, so each sentient being is the origin of all my past,

present, and future happiness, from beginningless rebirths up to enlightenment. Every single comfort in my daily life comes from other sentient beings. The first verse of *The Eight Verses* says that each sentient being is much more precious than a wish-granting jewel because everything depends on the kindness of other sentient beings. Without the existence of sentient beings, there would be no way I could have even the smallest comfort today.

In the same way, I receive all the happiness of future lives, of liberation, and even the ultimate happiness of enlightenment from the kindness of other sentient beings. Therefore, sentient beings are objects to be cherished always. Even all the buddhas and bodhisattvas, with whom we are able to purify by reciting their names, prostrating, and making offerings to them, come from sentient beings. So, sentient beings are more precious than the buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Just as my temporal and ultimate happiness depends on sentient beings, the happiness of all other sentient beings depends on me. It is my responsibility. All sentient beings want me to benefit, not harm them, and ‘benefit’ means bringing them temporal and ultimate happiness. So it is very clear that the responsibility rests on my shoulders.

Therefore, I *must* achieve the state of omniscient mind in order to accomplish this for all sentient beings. The thought of sentient beings’ suffering for even one second in samsara is unbearable to me, so I must achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible—right this second! To do this I have to generate bodhichitta, the door to the Mahayana path. Therefore, I need to rely upon this special deity, Gyalwa Gyatso, who embodies the compassion of all the buddhas.

I am taking this initiation only for other sentient beings; in my heart there is no other reason at all.

Colophon:

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