



Bodhi Path Curriculum

H. H. Shamar Tulku's
lectures



Tilogaard Bodhi Path Center & Meditationskole
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Many kalpas ago there was a being who achieved Buddhahood as the Tathagata Küncho Yenlag. In the present good kalpa, blessed by the coming of one thousand Buddhas, this Tathagata will manifest in the form of a great Bodhisattva with a bright, ruby-red crown. He will help many beings.

This was a prediction made by Buddha Sakyamuni about the Shamarpa in the "Good Kalpa Sutra".

- Citation by Karma Tinlay Rinpoche.

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A brief account of the successive Shamarpa reincarnations

This brief account of the successive Shamarpa reincarnations is extracted from 'The Garland of Moon Water Crystal' authored by Situpa, Chökyi Jungne and Belo Tsewang Künkhyab.

(Compiled by Khenpo Chodrag Tenpel; translated by Kiki Ekselius)

The tradition of a successive line of reincarnations originated in twelfth century Tibet with the first Karmapa Düsum Khyenpa. The lineage of the Shamarpa reincarnations dates back to the same century and that lineage is the second line of successive reincarnations in the history of that tradition. The Shamarpa lineage of reincarnation began during the time of Rangjung Dorje, the third Karmapa who presented his principal disciple, Khaydrup Tragpa Senge, with a ruby-red crown while conferring the status Shamarpa which means 'Holder of the Red Crown'. That red crown is a replica of the black crown worn by the Karmapas, and it exemplifies the close relationship that exists between these two lines of reincarnation in that the Karmapas and the Shamarpas are emanations of the same mind-stream and that they are therefore regarded inseparable. The second Karmapa, Karma Pakshi, said: "Future Karmapas will manifest in two forms". That statement was later clarified by the fourth Karmapa, Rolpe'i Dorje, when he designated the Shamarpa reincarnates as a second manifestation of himself. The Shamarpas are also known as an emanation of Amitabha, The Buddha of Boundless Light.

Tibetan historical records refer to the Karmapa as 'Karma Shanagpa' which means 'Karmapa, Holder of the Black Crown' and the Shamarpas as 'Karma Shamarpa' which means 'Karmapa, Holder of the Red Crown'. These designations are found in the historical records authored by several well-known Tibetan Buddhist masters, masters such as Golo Shonnu Pal (1392-1481), Pawo Tsuglag Trengwa (1504-1516), the fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lozang Gyamtso (1617-1682) and the eighth Situpa Chökyi Jungnay (1700-1774).

It is important to understand that the crowns are simply symbols of the activity to accomplish the welfare of beings, the crowns do not denote separate lineages, both, 'The Black Hat Lama' and 'The Red Hat Lama' are of the Karma Kagyü Lineage.

The First Shamarpa, Khaydrup Tragpa Senge, (1284-1349)

was the principal disciple of the third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje. He is known as an accomplished master both in terms of scholastic achievements and meditation.

The Second Shamarpa, Kachö Wangpo, (1350-1405)

was recognized by the fourth Karmapa, Rölpe'i Dorje. He was Rölpe'i Dorje's main student and he was learned as well as accomplished in meditation. Kachö Wangpo recognized the 5th Karmapa, Deshin Shegpa, and he was his principal Lama. He is well-known for having furthered the Kagyü teachings to a great extent and he authored many treatises that elucidate the teachings of the Kagyü lineage.

The Third Shamarpa, Chöpal Yeshe, (1406-1452)

was identified by the fifth Karmapa, Deshin Shegpa, and he became his disciple. Chöpal Yeshe is renowned for having constructed several monasteries and retreat-centers. He was also able to abolish the practice of animal sacrifice in the regions of Tibet where that custom had continued.

The Fourth Shamarpa, Chökyi Tragpa Pal Yeshe, (1453 -1526)

was recognized by the seventh Karmapa, Chödrak Gyamtso, who became his Lama. Chökyi Tragpa Pal Yeshe is known for having embraced, without bias, the different approaches in Buddhism. The famous Tibetan monastery Ga Mamo Tashi Rabten was founded by him. He also established many smaller monasteries. During his travels outside Tibet, Chökyi Tragpa built many monasteries, among others there are four monasteries in Bhutan and he was the first of the Shamar reincarnates to visit Nepal where he built a small monastery in Swayambhunath, one of the country's most sacred places. Upon returning to his home-land, he acted as the king of Tibet for a period of twelve years and he ruled the country on the basis of strict adherence to Buddhist principles. His scholarly achievements include his fourteen compositions which interpret the meanings of various Sutras and Tantras.

The Fifth Shamarpa, Könchog Yenlag, (1526-1583)

was identified by the eighth Karmapa, Mikyö Dorje. The eighth Karmapa stated that the Karmapa reincarnations and the Shamarpa reincarnations are, in fact, of the same mind-stream, that they are inseparable.

Könchog Yenlag was a scholar and a meditation master. Among his written works are seven well-known texts on Buddhist meditation. He also recognized and became the Lama of the ninth Karmapa, Wangchuk Dorje.

The Sixth Shamarpa, Chökyi Wangchuk, (1584-1629)

was recognized by the ninth Karmapa who was his main Lama. He also received teachings from many other masters and is famed for his deep insight. By the age of seventeen he had already memorized fifty volumes of the Sutras and the Tantras and he had developed great skills in the art of debate. Thus he became known as 'the Pandita of the North, the Omniscient Shamarpa in Whom the Great Manjushri Delights'. Chökyi Wangchuk became the Lama of the then ruler of Tibet, Desi Tsangpa and he taught extensively throughout the country. During his travels in East Tibet he recognized and became the Lama of the tenth Karmapa, Chöying Dorje. At the time, as there was unrest in that part of the country, Chökyi Wangchuk mediated and he was able to achieve a peaceful settlement of the conflict. His travels also took him to Nepal where he taught Buddhism in Sanskrit to King Lakshminarasimha Malla as well as to others who showed interest and devotion. Chökyi Wangchuk passed away in the mountains of Helampur in Nepal in the vicinity of a cave where Tibet's great yogi, Milarepa, had stayed. His written works include ten treatises where he elucidated the meanings of both the Sutras and the Tantras.

The Seventh Shamarpa, Palden Yeshe Nyingpo, (1631-1694)

was recognized by the 10th Karmapa, Chöying Dorje, and he became the Karmapa's disciple. Palden Yeshe Nyingpo devoted his life to the practice of meditation. He recognized the 11th Karmapa, Yeshe Dorje, according to the instructions that the tenth Karmapa had left behind.

The Eighth Shamarpa, Palchen Chökyi Döndrub, (1695-1732)

was born in Helampur, Nepal to a Nepalese family. The 11th Karmapa, Yeshe Dorje, sent a representative from Tibet to Nepal with the instructions as to the whereabouts of the Shamarpa reincarnation. At the age of seven, Shamar Palchen Chökyi Döndrub was brought to Tibet and he was enthroned by the 11th Karmapa who took charge of his training. Palchen Chökyi Döndrub, in turn, identified the 12th Karmapa, Changchub Dorje and he became his Lama. Both travelled to Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, India and China where they taught extensively. Both, the 12th Karmapa and the 8th Shamarpa passed away in China with just one day between their deaths (1732).

The Ninth Shamarpa, Könchog Geway Jungnay, (1733-1741)

was discovered by the 13th Karmapa, Dödül Dorje. However,

Shamar Könchong Geway Jungnay lived just for nine years, therefore the historical records of his life are very brief.

The Tenth Shamarpa, Mipam Chödrub Gyatso, (1742-1793)

was recognized by the thirteenth Karmapa, Dödül Dorje, who was his Lama. Mipam Chödrub Gyatso became a scholar and a meditation master. In his forties he travelled to Nepal where he attracted and taught many followers. He also restored the great stupa of Swayambhunath, one of Nepal's great Buddhist monuments. He passed away in the vicinity of the Boudhanath Stupa, another well-known Buddhist pilgrimage spot in Nepal.

The Eleventh Shamarpa

During the eighteenth century, due to an outbreak of sectarian disputes, the Tibetan government, prohibited the official recognition of the Shamarpas. Because of this, most biographical material concerning the eleventh Shamarpa is unavailable. However, it is known that he became a physician and that he lived in and cared for people in the northern part of Tibet.

The Twelfth Shamarpa, Jamyang Rinpoche,

was the son of the 15th Karmapa, Khakyab Dorje. Because the Shamarpas were banned officially the precise dates of his birth and death are not known. However, it is recorded that he taught and practiced Buddhism as a layman.

A System of Practice at Bodhi Path

Until now, there has not been any properly established Mahamudra teaching center. I am now organizing Bodhi Path centers to teach Mahamudra. The first Bodhi Path center has been set up in America, and since then several more centers have been established there. Here in Europe, this is the first Bodhi Path center. Herbert Giller's Foundation has purchased this house in Remetschwil, which is now the first Bodhi Path Buddhist Centre in Europe. I hope that the Centre will be very useful and beneficial for the people in Europe.

I myself will teach at these centers. Of course H.H. the Gyalwa Karmapa will also come here to give initiations and teachings. In addition, Jigmela Rinpoche, Khenpo Chödrak Tenphel Rinpoche and other Khenpos, many Rinpoches and lamas, Drubplas of Le Bost who are well experienced in the Mahamudra teachings, will on occasion, visit and teach here as well.

A suitable Mahamudra practice

When the Mahamudra teaching is combined with Tantra, it is generally the Tantric practice of the Four-armed Chenrezig (or Avalokiteshvara in Sanskrit), or the Two-armed Chenrezig, or Chakrasamvara. With respect to the Four-armed Chenrezig, there are two: white or red. Gyalwa Gyamtso is the red one. The Two-armed and Four-armed White Chenrezig combined Mahamudra practice is also mixed with Maha Ati (Dzog Chen). The Chakrasamvara or the Red Chenrezig is combined only with Mahamudra practice.

When a disciple arrives at a certain stage, the guru will select a yidam for the disciple. The selection is based on the disciple's own qualities. The disciple will then do the Mahamudra practice according to his designated yidam.

When I was first organizing a Bodhi Path practice, I did quite a number of predictions to determine which Yidam would be suitable for the disciples in general. Every time the result showed me that it would be the White Avalokiteshvara combined with both Mahamudra and Maha Ati.

The Karma Kagyu's White Avalokiteshvara lineage comes from the 9th Karmapa – it is a combination of all lineages of the White Avalokiteshvara. There are many White Avalokiteshvara lineages. In Tibet, for example, there is the lineage from the Bodhisattva King of Tibet, Songtsen Gampo. There is the lineage of Guru Padmasambhava. There are also other lineages from the later Sakya and Kagyu masters. It was the 9th Karmapa who combined all of them into the one White Avalokiteshvara practice.

Karma Chagme was a very great Bodhisattva of the Karma Kagyu lineage. He taught the 9th Karmapa's White Avalokiteshvara combined with Mahamudra and Maha Ati. This combination practice became immensely popular among the Kagyu, Nyingma and also Sakya practitioners. For most of the genuine meditators of Kagyu and Nyingma, it was their heart practice. They still did the Guru Yoga on Padmasambhava, on Milarepa, or on Karmapa. They still received teachings and initiations on many yidam practices and then, practised them. But in the end, they chose and kept this combination practice to be their heart or goal practice.

The Dharma Path

To be successful in your Dharma practice, you need to walk the path of Dharma. There are two types of paths: the common (ordinary) path and the extraordinary path. Without the support of the common path, you can never reach the extraordinary path. Ultimate enlightenment depends very much on the extraordinary path, which in turn depends on the common path. This means that you have to practice both together.

Whether or not you meet the extraordinary path depends on karma. If your karma is fully functioning well towards enlightenment then you will meet the extraordinary path. If your karma is all right and you have only a good foundation, then you will always connect with the common path. Eventually, you will likely meet up with the extraordinary path. Again, it all depends on your individual karma.

Refuge

With respect to the ordinary path, you need the Refuge and Bodhisattva vows. To take Refuge means to take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. This is a first and fundamental level of Dharma practice. It acts like a fertilizer. When you want something to grow, first you need some soil, and then the soil has to be fertilized. Similarly, Enlightenment depends on your mind. The path of Dharma has to develop from your mind and your mind has to be purified. Any ignorance of mind has to be cleared away. Therefore, taking Refuge affords you a very important foundation.

The Bodhisattva vow - Relative and Absolute Bodhicitta

The Bodhisattva vow is like a staircase. In a many-storied house, you cannot reach any higher levels without a staircase. The Bodhisattva vow has two aspects: relative Bodhicitta and absolute Bodhicitta. Relative Bodhicitta is like the root of a plant, and absolute Bodhicitta its main stem. You need to take the Bodhisattva vow. It will enable you to develop the special quality of Bodhicitta towards all sentient beings, an attitude of loving kindness and compassion towards all.

Absolute Bodhicitta is the wisdom of Bodhicitta mind, and is therefore non-dualistic. When the attitude of loving kindness and compassion is dualistic in nature, then it is relative Bodhicitta. This is connected to the emotional states of mind and does not carry much quality. Nevertheless, it is the base of absolute Bodhicitta or wisdom. In other words, you have to develop the absolute Bodhicitta mind from the ground of relative Bodhicitta.

Relative Bodhicitta is compassion and loving-kindness mind. Lacking the wisdom of absolute Bodhicitta, you will attach to things, and you will grasp. The effect is that a lot of emotions will be stirred up making your Bodhicitta not pure.

Bodhi means enlightenment. Bodhicitta means the heart of enlightenment. Bodhi Path means the path to enlightenment. While on the Bodhi Path, the heart should be detached from the emotions. So, the view of absolute Bodhicitta is called for on the Bodhi Path.

Relative and ultimate truths

In order to develop absolute Bodhicitta, a few steps have to come first. The first step is to hear the precise instructions about the nature of phenomena. The teachings of the Buddha explain precisely how phenomena are just illusions of your mind. On a relative level, everything is there as you see it. However, the absolute or ultimate nature of any phenomenon is that it does not truly exist.

Take the beams of this house, for example. They are supported by the pillars, and the pillars in turn stand on the ground. So we say that the beams depend on the pillars, which depend on the ground. And the roof of the house depends on the beams. Put all these interdependent parts together, and you have a house. This is the relative truth of the house – a collection of the many interdependent parts.

But, if you were to look for the absolute truth of the house itself, you would not find it in any of its parts. The ground is not the house. The pillars are not it and neither is it the roof nor the beams. In absolute/ultimate truth, the house does not exist. Ultimate, in this sense, means that which cannot be removed or altered.

Relatively, everything exists in an interdependent way. You are in a relative existence in samsara. If you wish to liberate yourself from samsara, then you will have to depend on the Dharma, as well as both relative and absolute Bodhicitta. They are all the parts that you need in order to build up your (house of) enlightenment. In other words, to reach the ultimate truth of enlightenment, you rely on the path of Dharma, which is the relative truth.

Enlightenment is when all the ignorance of your mind is cleared away. It is the final, ultimate truth. But you need a path to get there, a path that can clear away the ignorance. The path is relative so long as you need it to get to your destination, just like you need all the parts to build a house.

We could also think of using the relative path to ultimate truth as taking remedies for problems until there is a full recovery. The meaning of terms like remedy, or solution, is relevant in the face of a problem. Where there is no longer a problem, or a full recovery, there is no longer the need to talk of a remedy. The remedies are therefore relative and dependent on the problems. In the same way, the Path of Dharma containing all the remedies is therefore relative and dependent on all the problems of mind. We take the remedies until we are fully recovered. We walk the relative Path of Dharma until we have reached ultimate enlightenment.

Samsara has only relative existence, like a dream, and so it can be eliminated. If Samsara ultimately existed, then it could not be removed. If a dream truly existed, then it would not disappear even when you wake up. Because a dream itself has no real existence, it can disappear naturally upon waking. The dream has not gone off somewhere, nor could you put it away in some corner and walk off either. The dream itself does not exist, and therefore, it disappears when you wake up.

Samsara is like a dream that is made up of all the negative emotions and karma. Its basis is ignorance, which gives rise to negative emotions on a stage of karma displaying uninterruptedly the illusions of samsara. All these conditions depend and feed on each other. Together, they are experienced as samsara. Yet nothing truly exists. There is ultimate enlightenment. It is possible only because all of samsara's problems can be solved and removed since they are not ultimately real. Develop ultimate enlightenment and samsara will end!

The precious human life

This human life is precious. In the introduction to all Buddhist teachings, you can find this fact. A human life has the potential and the capacity to see enlightenment, to know all the paths leading to it, and to be able to go on such a path to get there. A human life has wisdom. It has potential, opportunity, and richness enough to absorb the path of enlightenment. We are quite capable of understanding the meaning of ultimate Bodhicitta – that all phenomena do not truly exist. Human mind can understand all of this.

The 3 steps of the path - listen, reflect, and meditate

Therefore, first you have to listen to the teachings of the Buddha. Listen to how he explained the ultimate nature of phenomena. You have to think about it over and over again to find the actual meaning. When you do, the path of meditation will become clear to you. Listen to the teachings, reflect on the teachings, and then meditate. These are then the steps of the Dharma path. Your capacity to absorb the most profound meaning of the Dharma depends on your reflecting on its teachings.

Once you have self-clinging, then you have many things to cling to. This is what I want. Thinking like this, you will cling to everything. All living beings are in this trap of clinging. And meditation has naturally come about to solve this chain of clinging, which is actually a mistake of your mind. The process of meditation clears up the chains of clinging. There are two types of clinging: clinging to the samsaric phenomena and a more advanced level of clinging – clinging to the path of Dharma. The latter is also a problem. Your precise understanding and view of absolute Bodhicitta, of Madhyamaka free from the four extremes, and together with the view of emptiness, can remove both types of clinging.

The Refuge vow comes first. Then later, the Bodhisattva vow may be taken. As I have explained already, there are two aspects to the Bodhisattva vow: relative Bodhisattva vow and ultimate Bodhisattva vow. The relative Bodhisattva vow is taken as a commitment. You commit to uphold the relative Bodhicitta mind of loving kindness and compassion. The ultimate Bodhisattva vow is more than a vow. You actually will have to develop the wisdom of Bodhicitta mind.

Shi'nay

After you have taken these two vows, the Bodhi Path program will give you teachings on Shi'nay (calm abiding meditation). Shi'nay practice consists of two stages: preliminary Shi'nay and advanced Shi'nay. You can follow the Bodhi Path program where you will be guided through the stages of Shi'nay. At the same time you will also do the prostrations to the 35 Buddhas, which is a practice to purify bad karmas. The practice text has now been translated into German as well as English. The Centre here will provide you with the instructions for this practice.

The purpose of Shi'nay is to train your mind to be free from the bad habit of constantly thinking, and constantly being busy and confused. Your mind has to be free from all its preoccupations. The first level of Shi'nay, or common Shi'nay, trains your mind to be stable. Of course, the stability of your Shi'nay depends on your own diligence. If you maintain your Shi'nay practice constantly, then you will achieve it as your nature. It actually becomes your nature, and not something that you bring into your mind. Common Shi'nay is a very smart way to train your mind to be free from bad habits. Later, the more advanced Shi'nay allows you to develop the unobstructed peace of mind, the open mind.

The realization of emptiness is the eye of meditation. The realization of the emptiness of self, and of phenomena, is the eye of meditation for enlightenment. To develop these two eyes, one has to have stability in the contemplation of mind. And the practice of Shi'nay develops this stability. When you have a very strong base in Shi'nay, it becomes the foundation that allows you to develop a realization of the emptiness of phenomena and of mind. These two eyes actually are the view. It is not a view that you learn from books. It is a view that you experience. With these two eyes in your experience, then you will be able to look at your mind, examine each of your negative emotions whereby you will clear up all the ignorance of your mind.

Shantideva said, "Through developing stable Shi'nay, you conquer the emotions by emptiness. Therefore, first you must practice Shi'nay." You can develop successfully this level of Shi'nay if you are not terribly attached to things, or to phenomena. It does not mean that you should not own a car. It does not mean not to enjoy your breakfast. It means not to be emotionally grasping at your breakfast.

This is what Tilopa taught Naropa. The chain is not what you see; the chain is what you are attached to. The chain which ties you, is not what you see. What you grasp turns into a chain that ties you up. This is why avoiding emotional grasping is a necessary condition to develop your Shi'nay. And once you have a good foundation of Shi'nay then you can develop the precise view of Lhakthong (Vipassana).

Prostration to the 35 Buddhas

While we will first teach Shi'nay to subdue your mind's confusion and its restlessness, there is yet another obscuration, another problem in your mind that has to be addressed. It is the problem of bad karma. Karmic problems can be totally purified by doing the practice of the prostrations to the 35 Buddhas. The practice is contained within the Four

Foundations practised by Marpa. And all four schools of Tibetan Buddhism embrace this lineage of practice. We will teach it here.

Mandala offering

After prostrations comes the Mandala practice. The Mandala practice is for the accumulation of merit power. As long as you are on the path of Dharma you need merit. On the one hand, you purify your karma, on the other, you gather the support of merit.

To be a successful Bodhisattva for the benefit of sentient beings, you have to depend on the accumulation of merit, which depends on giving, on generosity. The practice of the Mandala offering allows you to practise generosity mentally. It is a kind of mental therapy. In the mind you visualize, or think of, all the things that you are attached to, then you release your clinging to them by offering them. You give away, give away, and give away all these things. In this way, you are accumulating the thoughts of giving them all away, and that is a very meritorious practice.

You don't have so many things to give to sentient beings now, right? Your capacity to give to others depends on your karma. So the first step is to give away everything mentally, and through that, you will accumulate the mind-merit of generosity. I don't mean that you are not lucky right now. Rather, by practising generosity and giving, you will perhaps become a very, very wealthy Bodhisattva able to give many things to sentient beings to benefit them.

Tonglen

While you are doing the 35 Buddhas prostrations and Mandala practice, you continue to practise Shi'nay. First, you do the common Shi'nay and then later, when you are well used to the common Shi'nay, the teacher will teach you Tonglen – the practice of giving and taking. Tonglen is also Shi'nay but a more advanced practice. It is a Bodhisattva practice where you give your happiness to sentient beings, and you take on their suffering. It is effective in accumulating very powerful merits.

You will do the Tonglen, the prostrations to the 35 Buddhas, and the Mandala practice, which would enhance your Shi'nay practice. You will definitely be able to achieve very good experiences of Shi'nay. This result is natural because the greater the purification of negative karma, the shinier and clearer your mind. Your Shi'nay will be very advanced, very familiar to you, and very tranquil. Your stability of mind will be much more mature.

Lhakthong

At the Centre, we will teach analytical meditation. This practice is connected to Lhakthong (higher seeing, or insight meditation, or vipasyana). It is more of a preliminary level of Mahamudra. In the analytical practice, mind is

divided into three parts: past mind, present mind and future mind. There is a way to analyze the mind as such. If you have a good level of Shi'nay, then you can do this practice very comfortably and it is very effective. So we will teach the analytical meditation, called analytically-examining-the-mind-meditation.

Vajrasattva

You will do the Tonglen meditation (giving and taking) combined with analytical meditation where you examine the mind. During that time we will give you the Vajrasattva empowerment. Then for some time, you will do the Vajrasattva practice.

Kyerim and Dzogrim, Chenrezig

After that we will teach the Kyerim practice (creation stage). A Vajrayana practice has two phases: Kyerim and Dzogrim (completion stage). Dzogrim is the Mahamudra meditation.

We will teach the Vajrayana view of Kyerim, what it is versus Dzogrim. We will give instructions on the philosophical view of Kyerim. There are three parts to the instructions. One part is on how one receives an empowerment. The second part is on the kinds of precepts, or samayas to protect the Vajrayana practice. And the third is on the reason for Kyerim practice.

After the teaching on Kyerim, we will give the Chenrezig empowerment as well as the teachings on how to practise it.

I have thus given you a general course or direction of the teachings offered at the Bodhi Path Buddhist Centre. The way is now laid out for you in order for you to achieve enlightenment within one lifetime. And the system of programs available to you at the Bodhi Path Centre will provide you with the necessary teachings and guidance.

Explanations on the Practice Program

The program set out for you here at the Bodhi Path centre, is a very systematic one.

While you are practicing Chenrezig Guru Yoga and Shi'nay, your practice program also includes the completion of 100,000 times Recitations and Prostrations to the 35 Buddhas, and 100,000 times Mandala offering to the 35 Buddhas, in that order.

Depending on how much time you have in a day, you can divide up your time to slot in these practices. If you don't have a lot of time, you can schedule the practices over whatever time is available to you. It may take you longer but you still follow the program systematically, step by step.

By the time the Prostrations and Mandala offerings are completed 100,000 times each, your Shi'nay by then will most likely be very fruitful, and excellent. This means you will be ready to receive Lhakthong teachings.

Actually, there are six levels of Shi'nay. Three levels are relatively rougher compared to the other three subtler ones. We may, or may not teach the subtler levels. It will depend on the needs of the people, so we could decide on it later.

All Theravada practitioners do the six levels of Shi'nay focusing on the breathing. Here, since we will be doing the Mahamudra Lhakthong, I think the second three levels of Shi'nay with breathing will not be required. For now, your goal is to complete the first three levels of Shi'nay: counting the breath, following the breath, and then resting on the breath. As I said before, you will also be practicing the Prostrations and Mandala alongside your practice of Shi'nay.

From the Mandala practice, you will progress to the Dorje Sempa practice. The latter is paired with the meditation practice of Lodjong, or mind training. It is better if you could achieve the Shi'nay results before your completion of the Mandala practice – as this would mean your Mandala practice would overlap the Lodjong practice. Here, the Lodjong practice is Tonglen, where you generate the merits to benefit the sentient beings.

The best is to practice Lodjong paired with Mandala. Why? Your Mandala practice allows you to accumulate merits. And in Lodjong, you are generating the merits to benefit sentient beings. The Mandala offering accumulates so much merit, so in Lodjong, you'd really have something to generate to the sentient beings. Of course, the Prostrations have merits, too, but the Mandala practice has more richness to it. Therefore, to combine the Lodjong with Mandala is optimal.

It is therefore best to be able to successfully finish Shi'nay while you are on the Prostrations, so that Lodjong can be practiced alongside the Mandala. Success in Shi'nay depends on the result you achieve. There is no limit, no numerical quantity that you have to complete as you do for the Prostrations or the Mandala offerings. The result of Shi'nay depends on how you achieve it. Therefore, we cannot arbitrarily put a limit there.

A general guideline for Shi'nay is: if your mind is still busy then you have to continue with it. If your mind has achieved the result of Shi'nay, however, you will experience it. You will experience it freshly, and you won't need someone to confirm it for you. That result of Shi'nay is very big, so you will know it. When that happens, you will shift your Shi'nay practice to Lodjong practice.

In the Thangtong Gyalpo lineage of Chenrezig, you visualize Chenrezig on top of your head, and you supplicate him. Afterwards, in order to receive his fresh blessing, he dissolves into you. That's all. For that practice, you need a Gong Lung. Someone who holds the transmission of that lineage can transmit it to you by reading the wording to you. In that case, you do not need an empowerment.

Once you have achieved some results of Shi'nay, we will give you the detailed instructions of Lhakthong practice. There are two stages. The first stage will be taught and you will practice it for some time. The stability of mind from Shi'nay will make you successful in Lhakthong.

Later, to activate even further your success in Lhakthong, you will practice a more powerful, a more elaborate Vajrayana form of Chenrezig practice. This practice is not the Chenrezig Guru Yoga described earlier, but a Chenrezig Khyerim (creation) practice where you also dissolve and then visualize yourself appearing again as Chenrezig.

During the Chenrezig initiation the other day, I have taught the Khyerim practice briefly. But when you are actually ready to do this Chenrezig practice, then we will teach you the precise details. This more elaborate Chenrezig practice requires you to receive an empowerment, or wang. And it will be paired with the meditation of Mahamudra, combined with Maha Ati – which is actually a form of Lhakthong. This pairing of Chenrezig with Mahamudra also happens to be the final set of practices, which will lead you to realize the first Bhumi of Mahamudra mind, called Dödra Chenpo.

The Thangtong Gyalpo Chenrezig practice does not require you to visualize yourself in the form of Chenrezig. You just concentrate that Chenrezig appears on top of your head, and then you recite the mantra. You earnestly supplicate Chenrezig and in the end he dissolves into you. That is called the Guru Yoga on Chenrezig and the Gong Lung amply qualifies you to practice it.

What purpose does the Thangtong Gyalpo Chenrezig Guru Yoga serve? In general, if you don't have a yidam like Chenrezig, or someone to pray to, then you might feel a bit of a void. I have noticed this among the Buddhist communities in Germany, and elsewhere in Europe. You need someone to supplicate to and so the Gong Lung Chenrezig fulfills this role quite perfectly.

There is no pre-set goal for the supplication practice to Chenrezig. You do not have to do it a fixed number of times. Practice it three times a week is fine. If you have more time then you can do it every day, that's also fine. The practice is for you to receive the blessings, and so there is no limit. It is therefore, very flexible. Your regular program of practice is: the Prostrations and Mandala offerings to the 35 Buddhas, and Shi'nay. Since all of you are working, you may not have so much time to do the many practices every day. You can therefore do the Chenrezig once, or three times a week.

On the other hand, with respect to the Prostrations to the 35 Buddhas, or the Mandalas, you have to achieve a hundred thousand times each. Therefore, you have to do them every day.

When you start the Dorje Sempa practice, you could then shift from the Chenrezig practice to Dorje Sempa like changing to a new boss.

To summarize, the coupling starts from Shi'nay with Gong Lung Chenrezig, and then progressing to Lodjong with Dorje Sempa. After that, it will be Mahamudra coupled with the more elaborate form of Chenrezig. And then after that, enlightenment!

If you do a retreat, you should follow the combinations as I have laid out for you. The same order and couplings are applicable even if you are not in retreat. You should try to carry on with your daily practice in the same systematic way.

To attain the Path of Seeing

The aim of the Bodhi Path program is to enable you to achieve the Path of Seeing (*1). If you are successful in following the program, you will be able to directly perceive the truth of the Path of Seeing. At that level of achievement, even though you are not yet fully enlightened like the Buddha was, nonetheless, you have gone beyond samsara in some respects. You will have at least reached the Bodhisattva levels. Your achievement of this level of liberation is not just for yourselves, but you will benefit other sentient beings as well.

For those of you who do follow the Bodhi Path program but who are unable to achieve the Path of Seeing in this life, then in your next life, or in the life after the next, you will spontaneously and naturally achieve it. This means that by following the Bodhi Path program, your progress on the Path of Dharma is not only maximized in this life, but its continuity is assured in your future lives.

The yidam practice of White Chenrezig

In Vajrayana, there are many yidam practices. If you are successful in just one of these practices, for example, Chakrasamvara, Vajrayogini, Hevajra, or Kalachakra, you will achieve the Path of Seeing in one lifetime. As to the choice of yidam, it is entirely dependent on you, on your own connection. Because you don't know how to choose, then the choice falls upon the predictions of the Lama. Nowadays, the majority of people seem very much connected to Chenrezig. Moreover, the predictions we have done also point to Chenrezig as being the most suitable yidam for you. In other words, you have a karmic affinity with Chenrezig. This is the reason why I have selected the Chenrezig practice as the yidam for everyone.

(*1) Footnote 1: The Dharma Path, which results ultimately in perfect enlightenment, can be subdivided into 5 spiritual levels, more commonly known as the Five Paths. They are the Paths of Preparation, Application, Seeing, Practice, and Fulfillment.

There are many different forms of Chenrezig practice in the different levels of Tantra – the Kriya Tantra, Upa Tantra, Anuttarayoga Tantra, and the Mahaanuttarayoga Tantra. In the Bodhi Path program, you will do the Chenrezig practice first as Guru Yoga. Later, you will practice the Chenrezig as a yidam practice of the Mahaanuttarayoga Tantra. There are two forms of the Chenrezig yidam, a red one and a white one. I have selected the White Chenrezig for you.

The White Chenrezig of the Mahaanuttarayoga Tantra is a lineage that has been passed down and upheld by all four schools of Tibetan Buddhism. It came originally from many different siddhas. King Songtsen Gampo brought it to Tibet. Later, other different lineages came to Tibet from India, and the lineages were all mixed together.

You will receive the four abishekas, wangs, or empowerments of the White Chenrezig, which the Center here will offer. These blessing empowerments for the practice will follow the Chikshe Kündröl, by the Ninth Karmapa. All these wangs, or blessings are for the khyerim stage of the practice.

After khyerim is dzogrim, or the completion stage. The dzogrim of the White Chenrezig practice is the practice of Mahamudra and Maha Ati combined. It was Karma Chagme who had vastly taught and spread this dzogrim lineage, and you will study it. The practice has its own separate meditation instructions in a book called the Chagdzog Sungjug, written by Karma Chagme. This is a text where everything is explained about the whole practice. We will teach it here. You will study the text and meditate accordingly.

Khyerim and Dzogrim

The purpose, or goal of the khyerim stage is to eliminate samsaric birth, living, death and the bardo. It is structured in such a way so as to purify the habits of birth, living, death and the bardo. Without dzogrim, however, you will not be able to do it, therefore khyerim and dzogrim must go together.

All Vajrayana practices have a creation and a completion stage. First is the creation stage. You have to go through it to reach the completion stage, or dzogrim. Khyerim is thus the path, or method that leads to dzogrim, the main Prajnaparamita meditation. So through khyerim, you reach dzogrim, the main path to enlightenment. Enlightenment actually comes from meditation, which is supported by khyerim, the creation stage. This joining of khyerim with dzogrim, then, is the gist of Vajrayana practice. Dzogrim, without khyerim is Sutrayana. But by combining the creation and completion stages together, you will achieve the results of meditation much more quickly and effectively.

However, it also means that when you practice Vajrayana, you have to protect it very well by the upkeep of the Vajrayana precepts, and samayas. You have to study the three sections, i.e. you have to practice the creation, the completion stages, and the path of liberation. To practice khyerim, you have to receive an initiation. When you receive the initiation, you have to keep your samayas strictly in order not to spoil your khyerim practice. You have to know certain samayas – how to protect your practice. There is a

list of things, of the mistakes you could make that would spoil your practice.

If you don't have the courage to go through the strict precepts of the khyerim practice, then you can practice dzogrim only, without the support of khyerim. It will take a little longer, and you won't have to receive any empowerment, or wang. You could do the Chenrezig guru yoga, which is the practice of Chenrezig in the tradition of Thangtong Gyalpo, and then meditate on dzogrim as the completion stage. This is then a possible alternative. And the Bodhi Path program provides instructions for both – Chenrezig with khyerim and dzogrim together, and the Chenrezig guru yoga in the tradition of Thangtong Gyalpo, paired with the meditation of dzogrim.

The Bodhisattva commitment

For now, you have to go through the preliminary practices and receive the Bodhisattva Vow, where you make the strong commitment to be a genuine Bodhisattva for sentient beings. To be a Bodhisattva, you have to take the Bodhisattva Vow. As I have explained to you, there are three kinds of Bodhisattvas – shepherd-minded, sailor-minded and king-minded Bodhisattvas. You make a commitment to be one of them. After, you learn how to be a Bodhisattva. You study Shantideva's Bodhicharyavatara, The Way of the Bodhisattva. Then, you will know how to be a Bodhisattva, a comfortable-minded and happy-minded Bodhisattva.

Purification

Once you are committed to be a Bodhisattva, the practice of Prostrations is very important for you to purify the negative karmas accumulated through your actions. All sentient beings in samsara have a poisoned mind. It follows then that what you say, and what you are influenced by your poisoned mind, by ignorance, by anger and by attachments. Inevitably, karmas are naturally accumulated limitlessly. When some of these karmas ripen, all your opportunities to practice the Dharma will be spoiled. So it is very important to administer the strong methods to weaken your karmas, and to destroy them.

For instance, one of the most powerful karmas results from killing one's parents— one will most likely go to the lower realms without any delay or postponement after this life. In your past lives, you must have done some negative acts and these karmic seeds are still here with you. The strongest seed will ripen immediately after your current life has expired. When that happens, you might find yourself in a lower realm. Your now precious opportunity will be spoiled.

Merit

It is therefore very important to rely now on the very strong methods to undermine the bad karmas, so as to continue this golden opportunity, life after life. This can be

achieved by two very effective methods. One method is by purification, and I have recommended already the Prostrations to the 35 Buddhas. The other is the practice of the Mandala. If you already are in a position to give generously to sentient beings now, then that is, of course, good. If you are not, then you can mentally accumulate the act of giving. In the Mandala practice, you give away, give away, and give away. You might regard it as a kind of powerful mental therapy to hone a meritorious mind, one that is without attachment to anything. The Mandala practice is very good for merits. Mentally, when you train your mind to give, it gathers very powerful merits, which will actually happen later. You will really be able to benefit beings.

Bodhisattvas who are on the bhumis are capable of emanating very rich and comfortable universes into which sentient beings can be reborn. The cause for that comes from this kind of training in giving – nothing is kept for the self. There is no clinging because you are always giving and giving. The Mandala practice was arranged to achieve that openly giving mind. Your giving is directed to two groups: to benefit the beings who suffer, and to give offerings to the enlightened beings. Both types of giving collect merit power.

To be able to manifest in the appearance of Chenrezig, and to emanate the many things beneficial to sentient beings requires certain samadhi power on your part. For example, if you have attained a certain power, you can manifest in the form of Chenrezig and emanate the suitable foods for the hungry ghosts. You are still a long way from such capabilities, but until you are there, you can collect merits by doing the Mandala practice. The merits, of course, are not of the same magnitude as those that the great Bodhisattvas are able to gather or generate.

When you make offerings to the Buddhas, they don't have to see you. The qualities, or the wishes of the Buddhas are already there for you. Therefore, by generating thoughts of offerings to them, you already collect merits. It doesn't depend on whether they see your offerings or not. On the other hand, it is important that the beings in the lower realms are able to receive what you emanate to them. So there is this difference where the recipients are concerned. For now, I recommend that you begin by doing the Mandala offering practice.

The ever perfect 35 Buddhas

Marpa did prostrations to the 35 Buddhas. We do not know if the same may be said of Milarepa, since he did not clearly specify if he did or not. It was Gampopa's disciple, Phagmo Drubpa, who arranged the dzog shing, or the Refuge Tree – the assembly of gurus. His guru is Gampopa, so Phagmo Drubpa's arrangement is very reliable.

Nowadays, even though the rules and guidelines set up by Gampopa are still maintained, the people and systems in today's societies are completely different than during Gampopa's time. Naturally, his rules were designed based on the people and conditions in his time. How they apply now under today's conditions has become rather delicate.

The practice of the 35 Buddhas, which Marpa practiced, is an unbroken lineage. It is, to this day, very properly maintained, and so everyone could do this practice. These 35 Buddhas will never come to us as human dictators and use religion to con-

trol people. This will never happen. There is no risk that humans could ever exploit this practice. The lineage itself is fresh – the Buddhas are Buddhas, then and now. A Buddha will never come as a human lama whose spiritual qualities you could not check. There are so many lamas nowadays – some are good, while others may not be. You can therefore be misled by the human lamas. This is what I mean by the conditions being no longer the same as in Gampopa's time. To continue to apply Gampopa's rules can therefore be risky because our societies now are totally different. Therefore, in the Bodhi Path centers, we go back and follow the practices of the great Marpa, i.e. the Prostrations and Mandala practices to the 35 Buddhas.

Tummo is a very powerful practice. The word, tummo, means very powerful. It is something that you can never reverse. You cannot back out of it, much like a vajra. There is a Tibetan saying: "to practice tummo, you have to be a human tummo like Milarepa." It means that you have to be such a powerful person who can never be stopped by any obstacle. You have to be like Milarepa who only moved forward, nothing could make him turn back. A tummo person can then do tummo practice successfully. If the person is not tummo, or powerful like Milarepa, then he will never accomplish the Dharma practice of tummo. The practice is one of the Six Yogas of Naropa, which is related to the inner energies. The word tummo is not familiar to you. You might think that it is a flame, or a fire in the navel, but it is not that. What is your understanding of tummo?

Answer from the audience: Melting snow.

Tummo means powerful in Tibetan. It has been translated as heat, but that is not really correct. Tummo means full of power.

A German couple once came to Rumtek, and it was winter. Karmapa said in conversation, with them, "It's very cold." The man responded by saying, "You should do tummo, then you will be warm!" His understanding of tummo was heat, or a heater. He was only half right because tummo does produce heat.

When disciples supplicate a lama, the lama should be like Milarepa, or Gampopa. They are capable of blessing you through their ever fresh wisdom and power. The times have changed. There are many lamas now. Any one of them could say, "I am as good as that guru." Many teachers could assume the role of a guru. They would ask you to supplicate them and you would get from them the fresh blessings of the Buddha. By so claiming, they and their followers keep the tradition of the gurus alive. However, this does not mean that the true wisdom of Milarepa, Marpa and Gampopa were realized in these gurus in the first place. Therefore, practice the 35 Buddha practice and you are guaranteed to connect with the Buddhas' qualities. They will never change!

Dorje Sempa and Chenrezig

So, I recommend the 35 Buddha practice for Prostrations and Mandala. And if one decides to follow the Vajrayana strictly, then the practice of Dorje Sempa will be next. Dorje Sempa is a Vajrayana practice. You will need to receive the Dorje Sempa empowerment. You will learn to recite the mantra of Dorje Sempa, which is an integral part of the practice.

The next practice in the Vajrayana program of the Bodhi Path Buddhist Centers is the Chenrezig yidam practice. This is different from the Chenrezig guru yoga in the lineage of Thangtong Gyalpo, which is a practice mainly for blessing.

Shi'nay is the main meditation practice

Once you have received the Bodhisattva Vow, you will learn Shi'nay as the main meditation practice. I have already taught the three ordinary Shi'nay levels: counting the breath, following the breath, and then resting on the breath. You begin to train in meditation by these very effective methods.

Khyerim is actually a special form of Shi'nay, where you visualize the yidam. In Vajrayana, visualization is a form of Shi'nay. You will achieve Shi'nay through visualization. But without first having trained properly at the common Shi'nay levels, you will not be able to do the visualization. Therefore, first train your mind very well. Since your mind now is like a wild horse, you should tame it, train it, and the breathing method is the most effective method for that. In the Bodhi Path Centers, we teach the first three of the six levels of Shi'nay.

Vipasyana

When you have achieved some success in Shi'nay, you will learn Vipasyana, how to analyze the mind. When you have good Shi'nay, you will be able to do Vipasyana very successfully. There are two parts to Vipasyana: one is the analytical way, and the second is to rest the mind in mind. By alternating between resting and analyzing, the two will mutually support one another and enhance your meditation. The Center will offer instructions on how to practice Vipassana.

You will practice the Mandala alongside Tonglen, the meditation of giving and taking. Tonglen is a Lodjong practice, or mind training, and it is an integral Buddhist practice. You can learn how to practice Lodjong at the Center, which incorporates both Shi'nay and Lhakthong meditations.

Some cautions

You will notice that in the Bodhi Path centers, there are no photographs of human lamas for worship. The 16th Karmapa has passed away already. To show respect in his memory, it is proper to have photographs, or thankas of him on the walls. Otherwise, I usually do not recommend any photos of human lamas for the shrine. When one human worships another human, it does not make too much sense! You can have photos of your teacher on the wall, but not on the shrine, where you offer them, lamps, oil and water. The photos will not drink!

I have to caution you against this form of worship because a lot of emotions can actually be aroused by it. This happened and is still happening in Tibet. As soon as a Tibetan enters another Tibetan's house, the first attention is paid to the shrine. The custom has become so very political. His picture is here, and not the other person's, why? A lot of emotions are thus stirred up. An absent photo may inadvertently become a subject of controversy. How come the Karmapa's picture is there but not the Dalai Lama's? Already, anger arises. This kind of attitude is very bad, yet it is happening nowadays.

It is unfortunate that in the West, the Buddhist centers follow the Tibetan tradition. Some Western disciples even think they should not discriminate between husband and wife. So where the teacher is a married man, his picture as well as his wife's picture are both placed on the shrine. In other words, the teacher's family gets worshipped, too. This is, of course, too much. Even when the teacher, and his wife explicitly advised against this kind of practice, people do it anyways.

Once, some people had made a group photo, which included the Buddha, the Karmapa, and me and their teacher and his wife. None of us knew before hand that they were going to do it, or we would have advised against it. Nonetheless, the picture was made showing a collection of eyes, the Buddha's eyes, the 16th Karmapa's eyes, the 17th Karmapa's eyes, my eyes, their teacher's eyes, and so on. We very quickly explained that a picture like that was not good.

People could always create the many things, and unfortunately, whether they intend to or not, much confusion can also be started. Right now, there are still teachers like me who would say to you, "Do this, but please don't do that!" But in the future, if these things go unchecked, then the Dharma in the West can become contaminated. There is then a huge risk of falling into great confusion. Therefore, it is very good and important to have proper guidelines.

Lamas have been very political both here in the West and in Tibetan society. Therefore, you should treat a lama as you would a teacher, and not as a god whom you worship. A lama is a teacher. He is your guide from the moment you take Refuge.

The Sangha are the qualified teachers who can teach you. They lead and guide you on the Dharma path, and so a lama is a teacher of spiritual practice. All Tibetans know this already, because the Dharma is ingrained in their culture. The Tibetan culture is very political, and so Tibetans are well versed in politics.

People in the West as well as the Chinese do not have political agendas when they follow the Dharma. This is why we have to explicitly explain to you – treat lamas as teachers of the Buddha Dharma. In this context, lamas are teachers. Naturally, you don't understand the Tibetan culture and their politics. You think everything is for the sake of religion when all the while, politics and religion are mixed together. This has been in the Tibetan culture for many hundreds of years now.

As followers of Buddhism, you should follow the Sutra, or the Vajrayana teachings. Follow the proper Buddhist texts, and the instructions and advice of genuine teachers who are without any political agendas.

When it comes to initiations, or empowerments, I always recommend the lamas who are more senior in age to give them because they are more reliable. These older lamas, who are around age 65, for example, would genuinely give wangs to the people. I usually don't recommend young Rinpoches or lamas to give empowerments too early. It is better to wait until they have matured in age, and have therefore had the experience of many retreats, like Lama Gendün Rinpoche. Rinpoche was not a recognized reincarnation, but he had continuously meditated for many years. His progress in meditation had brought him ever forward, never had he turned back. When lamas like him in his sixties, and seventies, give empowerments, you could really feel assured that the lama and the yidam are inseparable as taught in the Vajrayana teachings. But lamas like him are indeed rare nowadays.

On the one hand, I do not wish to underestimate every lama. But on the other hand, you should know that everybody could perform an empowerment. By studying a text, one can learn how to do it. Even you can do it. I can teach you how to do it. It is very easy. You just follow the text, and use the ritual objects in a certain way. To do it superficially is very easy. But to really give a real empowerment to the people, from one's own meditation is very difficult. To send the empowerment through meditation is very difficult. One really has to be very qualified.

Empowerment means to bring up the Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya and Nirmanakaya from a person's mind. When I give an empowerment of body, speech and mind to you,

I bring up your Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya and Nirmanakaya from your mind. I have to have the power to bring them up. It is very difficult. But you cannot tell who has the power and who doesn't. That is the dilemma. Anybody can read the text, and place the vase on your head. You cannot differentiate between the lamas who can actually do it genuinely, and those who cannot. You have no means to judge so you can be confused. Therefore, in the Bodhi Path Centers, I will only request those lamas who have some power to give initiations.

Questions (Q) and Answers (A)

(Q): Is it possible to make a break of one day, or one week while one is practicing the Prostrations to the 35 Buddhas?

(A): One day is perhaps all right depending on whether or not you have a physical problem. To be able to keep the continuity is very good. If you stop for a week, then you might stretch it to two weeks. Doing the prostrations continuously will activate the inner energy channels and the winds (lung). Therefore, it is very important to continue without interruptions.

Both the practice of Dorje Sempa and the Prostrations to the 35 Buddhas are mainly for purifying the latent karmas. The Mandala practice is mainly to accumulate merit. You need them both. The practice must be continued in this way. Don't follow the Dharma distractions, which lead you away from your practice. When you follow the path of the Dharma, then even a Dharma distraction is an obstacle.

(Q): Regarding the 35 Buddha practice, could you explain about the dissolving phase (Dzogrim)? At which point do we do it, and how do we finish the practice?

(A): There is one part that has to be added in the end, and it is to retake the Bodhisattva Vow in front of the 35 Buddhas exactly as you have it in the Ngöndro text. You absorb all 35 Buddhas after the retaking of the Vow. Alternatively, you could request all the Buddhas to return to their Nirvanas. You could say to them, "Please return to your Pure Lands and come back again when I call you."

I will arrange the practice text in that way for you. In the beginning section, there is an invitation. You invite them, and you do the Seven Branch prayers and the prostrations to them. Then you take the Bodhisattva Vow in front of the 35 Buddhas, and after that, you request that they return to their respective Pure Lands.

It is proper to ask them to return just as you have invited the Buddhas to come in the first place. Suppose Buddha Shakyamuni is in Bodhgaya, and you invite him to this Bodhi Path Centre here in Germany. Having received teachings from him, you will send him off. It is the same idea here. You are inviting all the 35 Buddhas to arrive and then in the end, you will respectfully see them off. This is entirely different from sending someone off by waving the hand and shouting, "Chello, chello". You should simply say:

"Please come back again for all sentient beings." You should do like that.

When you invite the 35 Buddhas, they will come for you. You don't see them now because of your ignorance. The wisdom Nirmanakayas of the Buddhas are spontaneously there. The moment you make the supplication and devotion, they are there. After you have been doing the recitations, the prostrations and the mandala offerings to them for some time, and when your karma is really purified, you will suddenly see the 35 Buddhas. When you could see them, you will also see that they do not jog back from where they have come! It is true that when you invite them, they will come. And so it is also true that when you are finished supplicating them, they will return. They will appear and disappear from your mind by your request.

Like a reflection of the sun, or the moon in clear water, when your mind is pure, then you will see them. There will also be the chance that the Buddhas will guide you in your meditation. This is indeed possible and can happen to you. Like Asanga, he was guided in his practice by Maitreya. And Nagarjuna was guided by Manjusri. Have you heard about the story of Asanga? It'd be good to know it.

After doing the recitation of the names of the 35 Buddhas, and the prostrations, by the time you come to the Mandala practice, maybe you will be able to see the 35 Buddhas. You will then be able to communicate with the 35 Buddhas, perhaps not all of them, but only with Buddha Shakyamuni because we humans of this world are karmically connected with him. Would you like that? That would be indeed auspicious!

(Q): Would it be wrong if I decide to let the Buddhas dissolve into me because I like that imagination very much?

(A): That's okay. Do that.

(Q): When is the dissolving phase, after finishing the prostrations and taking the Bodhisattva Vow, or after the dedication?

(A): After you have taken the Bodhisattva Vow and you have done some Bodhisattva prayers, or dedication of the Vow, then you do the dissolving phase. Finally, you dedicate your merits.

(Q): Regarding the Guru Yoga of Chenrezig, does Chenrezig dissolve into oneself before the mantra phase?

(A): Since you are not visualizing yourself as Chenrezig, the mantra recitation is mainly concentrated on the mantra in his heart. A more elaborate way is where the mantra is in six colors. The lights radiate from the mantra in his heart, to all six realms, and liberate the sentient beings there. The mantra recitations come before the dissolving phase. After dissolving, you finish with the dedication prayers. That's all.

(Q): It is said that in this eon 1,002 Buddhas will appear. Who are the 35 Buddhas? Are they from different realms?

(A): The 35 Buddhas are the Buddhas from different universes. They are not the same as the thousand Buddhas. As far as I can remember, some of the 35 Buddhas will come to this universe, too, but not all of them. These 35 Buddhas are already Buddhas. Only four of the 1,002 Buddhas have already appeared. The rest are presently all Bodhisattvas like Maitreya, who is a Bodhisattva presently in the Tushita heaven. He has yet to become a Buddha.

Whereas the 35 Buddhas are already Buddhas, existing now. Each Buddha resides in a pure realm, which does exist now. All these realms are located mainly near our realm. This is because karmically, they are closely linked to us. If you have a very, very fast and far-reaching rocket, then maybe you could go there. Their realms are mainly in the Milky Way Galaxy.

(Q): As far as I understand, Buddhas are beyond time – past, present, and future. At the same time there is a difference, so they could be more actual, they are more accessible, they have more blessing. How is this to be understood?

(A): All these Buddhas are Nirmanakayas. Nirmanakayas manifest according to the illusions of sentient beings, according to their times. It is true that a Buddha has no past, present and future. As far as sentient beings are concerned, the concept of time is real to them! Therefore, so long as there are sentient beings, there will be Nirmanakayas residing in their respective realms.

For example, Buddha Shakyamuni did appear in our time. He is the Buddha of our time. As for Buddha Shakyamuni himself, there is no past, present or future. But relative to us, he was here some 2,500 years ago. Among the 1,002 Buddhas, four have already appeared, therefore there will still be 998 Buddhas to appear because to us, there is the concept of a future.

When your mind is pure, then a Nirmanakaya Buddha is there to guide you to the Bodhisattva levels. When you reach the Bodhisattva levels, the Nirmanakaya may change into another form like the Sambhogakaya form of the pure realms. Finally, when you attain the Dharmakaya, then the Nirmanakaya and Sambhogakaya forms are no longer there because your mind doesn't need them any more. Why? Because your mind is fully enlightened, so your mind is in Dharmakaya and you no longer have to rely on the Nirmanakaya and Sambhogakaya Buddhas.

The Nirmanakaya appears from your mind and guides you. From your mind, the Sambhogakaya appears and guides you. It is like that. That is the nature of the progressively improving mind. Buddhas are actually like that, and so the mind situation is actually hopeful! Because Buddhahood comes from you, from your mind so that you do not have to depend on somebody else. Otherwise, the other party may feel, "I don't want to come, I'm tired." It is not like that. The help and guidance appears from within you. You should be happy that your mind could be actually enlightened in this way. The 35 Buddhas will appear in your mind as they are actually emanated from your mind.

The Nirmanakaya Buddha is appearing to you because of two causes: by the wish of the Buddha, and by your own pure mind. These two causes when combined together result in your being guided by the Nirmanakaya as well as the Sambhogakaya.

(Q): Do we at the same time also need an authentic Lama in order to progress on the Path?

(A): Yes, until such time that the Nirmanakaya and the Sambhogakaya appear, you need a spiritual teacher.

As to which kind of teacher you will meet depends on your karma. The right teacher is part of your spiritual progression based on your karma. Before meeting a Nirmanakaya Buddha as a teacher, there will be a Bodhisattva teacher. Depending on the wish of the Bodhisattva, and your own pure mind, you will meet the right Bodhisattva as a spiritual teacher.

There will be a time in the future when the Buddha Dharma becomes extinct in our world, which we call the Dark Age. We are not yet in the Dark Age. At that time, many Pratyekabuddhas will be there. The Pratyekabuddhas will appear as teachers in the future. When there is no longer any Buddha, or Dharma in the world, then the Pratyekabuddhas will appear. They will teach the people with good karma. These people will meet them as their teachers and will receive lessons from them but only through signs, gestures, or sign language.

Here is an example of how a Pratyekabuddha might come about. He will be someone from among the people who by merely seeing a piece of bone from a carcass, or from some human remains will spontaneously realize the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination. Due to his past deeds or karma, he will spontaneously realize that there is death. He will spontaneously understand that death comes from old age, old age is from birth, birth is from karma, karma is from ignorance, and so on. His mind is so sharp that a very small cause could lead him to realize the truth and thus he could quickly liberate his own mind.

A Pratyekabuddha is someone who can self-liberate such that he does not need a teacher. He did, at some point in his past, have a teacher. He did meet up with a Buddha and had received teachings from him. And then for one hundred kalpas, he cultivated in the different realms. Then he will come to be a human during the Dark Age. He may be an European, or perhaps an African, a Chinese, a Tibetan, or an Indian. Once he has self-liberated by himself having been triggered by some small cause, he will teach the people, but not verbally. Through gestures, and signs only, people will receive the lessons from him. This is how Pratyekabuddha teachers will come to teach the people. Again, it will happen according to the karmas of the people.

Sentient beings with good fortune are those beings who have as their spiritual teacher a Pratyekabuddha, or an Arhat, or a Bodhisattva. Good fortune means good for the achievement of enlightenment. A spiritual teacher, in this context, means a teacher who can teach you how to achieve enlightenment.

Among the heavenly realms, there are also precious forms as opposed to the not precious forms. Precious forms are those who can connect to a spiritual teacher for enlightenment. A heavenly form is not considered precious if it cannot obtain any spiritual guidance (e.g., sug me kham – formless realm). A fortunate being can therefore only be a precious human, or a precious heavenly being (in the realm of gods), who is able to have a Pratyekabuddha, an Arhat, or a Bodhisattva for a spiritual teacher.

When one has achieved the Bodhisattva bhūmis, then one can see the Nirmanakaya Buddha and learn from him. When one is in the land of Sambhogakaya, one will see and learn from the Sambhogakaya Buddhas. When one is near complete enlightenment, then one will have a glimpse of Dharmakaya. And when one is fully enlightened, one has achieved the Dharmakaya, at which point one no longer needs a teacher any more.

As to the formless realms, the beings there are not fortunate because their existence is only temporary. They will eventually fall back down to the form realms because they have no spiritual teachers to teach them how to be liberated. As to the gods of the desire realm (dōh kham), many of them are fortunate in that they are able to encounter Buddha Shakyamuni and his Teachings.

In the form realms of the gods, there are five Brahma-Vihara realms where they too have the good fortune to meet with the Buddhas and other spiritual teachers. Many gods of the desire realm are also fortunate in that they meet with one of the Pra-

tyekabuddhas, Arhats, or Bodhisattva teachers. In the formless realm, however, there is a level called "peak". There, they are not fortunate for they mainly sleep without being able to meet the spiritual teachers.

The Asuras (demi-gods) are a grey area. They can meet the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. However, being fight-minded, most of the time, they are engaged in fighting. As a result, they don't really have the mind to look for a teacher.

The fortunate forms are some heavenly forms and the human form. The human form is therefore deemed especially fortunate.

(Q): Do the three levels of Shi'nay correspond to the waterfall phase, the river phase and the lake phase?

(A): These effects will not come about if you train in the three levels of Shi'nay on the breath. You will not have to face the difficulties of the waterfall phase. Only when you train by the method of watching the nature of mind, would you encounter that waterfall experience, which is indeed a difficult challenge. The great meditators of the Kagyu lineage in the past had successfully gone through it.

(Q): I've understood them to be at the level of beginners.

(A): No, if you do the counting Shi'nay properly, you will not face that problem at all.

(Q): Do we need a lung to practice the 35 Buddhas?

(A): I have given that lung already, and I will give it again. It is not necessary to have the lung, but it is good to have it.

(Q): For a long time now, I have a samaya for Mahakala. At one point, I didn't do it for several months – is there a way to purify it?

(A): In Vajrayana, samaya does not mean that you have to do a certain practice forever.

There are 14 very different samayas, and there is a lot of confusion surrounding them. I know that people do not understand them, even though you may have received the Vajrayana samayas, your understanding about them is actually very limited.

One misconception is to think that once you have received an empowerment, you have to do that yidam practice every day. That is not the meaning of samaya. Yes, it is but a very small part of the samaya proper. But if you have really received the full empowerment of Mahakala properly, then there is much more to it than just practicing it daily. If you have received just a lung of the Mahakala prayer, then yes, you do it every day. However, even if you don't do it every day, it is not a problem, you will not be breaking a samaya.

In Vajrayana, there are 14 main samayas, 8 branch samayas and 40 minor samayas for when you receive the empowerment of a particular yidam, or Dharma protector, completely and properly. If you have received a lung of the Mahakala prayer, or blessing empowerment, then you have a small samaya. Still you need not worry about breaking it.

There is a very good transcript of an explanation about samayas given by Khenpo Chödrak Tenphel. It is an English version made by an American. It will probably be published. You should get that text.

(Q): What is the difference between the normal Ngöndro, and the practice of the 35 Buddhas which you have explained?

(A): The effect of the two practices is the same. There is no difference. But as I've explained, there are many controversies surrounding the lamas nowadays, in marked contrast to the time when Gampopa lived. There were no problems with teachers like Milarepa, Marpa, and Gampopa. Moreover, they were enlightened teachers.

However, the followers today are confused about the lamas, and teachers. For example, there is now the controversy about the 17th Karmapa. You are wondering who is authentic, and who is not. As long as the extremes of dualities are there, then all kinds of things can happen. You will discriminate, and then your mind will go in that direction. You take the term, lama too literally. It is better to understand lamas as teachers of Dharma practice. Otherwise, the problems are there, and they will continue.

(Q): Why is the Dorje Sempa practice after the Mandala? I heard that, first, the all-base consciousness has to be purified, only after would you have enough mental surplus to be able to give away.

(A): It doesn't matter. You can do Dorje Sempa before Mandala. There isn't a better order. The Prostration practice is good enough, too, so that you can progress to Mandala afterwards. You will remember the 35 Buddhas very well if you continue with Mandala right after the Prostrations. But if you wish to do Dorje Sempa after Prostrations, you can, because there is simply no difference.

(Q): You said that it might be difficult for some to keep the samayas for the Chenrezig yidam practice. Would you advise to practice it in retreat?

(A): Once you've taken the samayas then there is no difference whether you are in retreat or not, you keep them. The samayas are very good for you to keep, plus they are not that difficult to keep. You receive the samayas right after receiving the empowerment.

(Q): Seven years ago, you gave the Chenrezig initiation in Austria, and since then I have trained in the yidam practice you gave there. But my Shi'nay is still very poor; shall I continue with it, or should I switch to the Chenrezig guru yoga practice you explained here?

(A): Starting with Shi'nay is very good, and concentrate more on guru yoga Chenrezig is also good...

(Q): And stop with the other one?

(A): I think there are many who are like you. Have you practiced the yidam practice a lot already? (Answer: Yes.)

First you do Prostrations to the 35 Buddhas, and then Mandala. Have you ever done this Ngöndro practice with the dzog shing, or the 'refuge tree'? (Answer: Yes.)

Continue with the yidam practice, since you have already started.

But I recommend that you do the Prostrations, the Mandala practice and the Dorje Sempa again. This time around, do not do 100,000 times but perhaps 10,000 times each. Then, start again with the Chenrezig practice. But at all times, do Shi'nay as your main practice.

(Q): I don't know anything about these 35 Buddhas, so I have difficulties with this practice. I would like to know more about the 35 Buddhas.

(A): First you should know what a Buddha is. I have explained it for the Refuge Vow the other day, where you take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha.

For example, the Buddha in our world was Buddha Shakyamuni. You know the history of how he came to our world as a prince. Then he went to the forests to do meditation and became a Buddha. Afterwards, he taught. All these are the activities of a Buddha, which will naturally happen when the mind of a Bodhisattva has fully enlightened and achieves the state of a Buddha.

When you know how Buddha Shakyamuni is a Buddha, then you know as well the other Buddhas. There are many Buddhas in the different realms. The 35 Buddhas are in the realms that are located near our world. Buddha Shakyamuni had told his followers to pray and to prostrate to these 35 Buddhas to get their blessings.

(Q): When Buddha was a Bodhisattva and he went to the forest to become a Buddha, why did it take so long for him to become enlightened? Why did he not come as a Buddha immediately?

(A): Yesterday; I explained that there are shepherd-minded Bodhisattvas. Why are they referred to as shepherds? It is because they choose to be in the realms of sentient beings in order to be very powerful in their ability to help sentient beings.

The Buddha presented himself as an example to his followers to show them that in order to get enlightened, one has to meditate a lot. Buddha Shakyamuni's life in this world served as an example to us. He meditated for not so long, only six years. You cannot meditate while you are enjoying yourselves in a restaurant or bar. You cannot enjoy yourselves in a worldly life and at the same time become enlightened. That is simply not possible. For enlightenment, you have to totally change your present mind, which is a confused mind. Meditating for just one hour will not change you. You have to meditate a lot, and the Buddha demonstrated that to us.

(Q): When doing the prostrations to the 35 Buddhas, what do we have to count, the prostrations, or the recitations of the Buddhas' names?

(A): Count the prostrations.

In the beginning, when you say,

<jom den de/ de shin sheg pa/ dra jom pa/ yang dag par dzog pe/ sang gye/ Shakya Thubpa/ la tschag tsal lo//>, the words mean,

"Your Greatness, Your Holiness, ...Buddha Shakyamuni, I prostrate to you."

You say the honorific addresses out of your respect for the Buddhas, once, at the beginning starting with Buddha Shakyamuni, and then the names of all the other Buddhas. You don't have to repeat the addresses every time for each name. The one special address applies equally to each of the 35 Buddhas that come afterwards. For example, the title of venerable need not be repeated if you were addressing ten such teachers. You might simply say, "I pay respect to the venerable Lama Yeshe, Lama Dschangchub, Lama Tashi, Lama Dorje, etc." You don't have to repeat the word venerable for all ten names.

In the Gelugpa tradition, you address each of the Buddhas completely with:

<jom den de/ de shin sheg pa/ dra jom pa/ yang dag par dzog pe/
sang gye/ > ,

before every name of the 35 Buddhas. In other words, you recite the whole thing for each Buddha. It takes a long time. But the Gelugpas have their reason in doing so. They feel this way emphasizes more the devotion.

The Kagyupas, Nyingmapas and Sakyapas don't repeat the special addresses. The Buddhas don't care whether you address them properly, or not. They don't have jealousy. A Buddha will not think you unfair if you say the honors to another Buddha, but not to him. Buddhas don't think like that. If you choose to do it, it is out of your devotion rather than for their sake.

If you don't think it is alright to not repeat for each Buddha, then you follow the Gelugpas' style, and repeat the words for each and every Buddha. If your Western tradition also would have you say a title before every name to be more respectful, then you follow the Gelugpas' tradition. It will take a long time, but it is certainly alright to do so.

(Q): When we do a puja, where should the Shi'nay phase fit in?

(A): If you want to do Shi'nay, then do it after the completion stage, which is very good. This means the order would be like this: khyerim, then dzogrim, dedication prayer, and then Shi'nay. In other words, Shi'nay comes after everything – after the dedication prayer is finished.

The dedication prayer is made because you have accumulated a lot of merits by having done khyerim meditation, and dzogrim meditation. You then dedicate the merits for the benefit of sentient beings.

After the dedication, if you have time, then you use the time for Shi'nay training. Shi'nay is not part of the Chenrezig practice. You don't necessarily have to do it with your Chenrezig practice. Shi'nay is for training your mind. You can of course do it after the Chenrezig practice. But first, you must finish all the phases of the Chenrezig practice, i.e. the creation stage, the completion stage and the dedication.

(Q): You said that if one takes an empowerment, one has samayas and that you have them forever. I wonder how you can remember in your next life that you have already those samayas? Would one not naturally break them due to the loss of memory from life to life?

(A): No, don't worry. If you practice very well in this life, then in your next life, you will naturally continue to do very well. You don't have to worry about your next life. Place your efforts in keeping your samayas properly now, and the rest will follow.

(Q): Is the result of Shi'nay that thoughts will get less and eventually stop completely?

(A): Thoughts will not stop totally. If you want to think you can think. Shi'nay will not wipe away all the thoughts. It is not as if you are in a coma. It means that you have the freedom to be in a thoughtless state of mind. When you are able to do that comfortably, then that is the result of Shi'nay.

Curriculum for Buddhist Practice

Compiled by Shamar Rinpoche

This curriculum of study and practice is taught in all Bodhi Path centers and should be undertaken with the guidance of a qualified teacher. Note that some practices require prerequisite training and experience.

You should follow each practice with the Wishing Prayer of the Arya Samantabhadra.

Foundation Practices for all Bodhi Path Practitioners:

1. Refuge vow
2. Bodhisattva vow
3. Shamatha (shi'nay) meditation
4. 35 Buddhas practice
5. 7 Points of Mind-Training
6. Vajrasattva (Dorje Sempa) practice

Main Practices to be specially chosen for each individual with the help of the root master:

1. Practice of Avalokiteshvara (Chenrezig)
2. Practice of Buddha Amitabha
Requires lineage transmission for initiation.
3. Karma Kagyu Mahamudra practice
Lineage Practice.
4. Kagyu Mahamudra
The Stages of Practice in relation to the Blessing received from the Short Supplication to Vajradhara and the Lineage Holders. Lineage Practice.
5. Highest Practice for Enlightenment
Lineage Practice.

Curriculum for Buddhist Study

Compiled by Shamar Rinpoche

This curriculum of study and practice is taught in all Bodhi Path centers and should be undertaken with the guidance of a qualified teacher. Note that some practices are not available to the general public, as they require prerequisite training and experience.

General Subjects of Study for Bodhi Path Centers:

1. Learn how to take refuge and follow the precepts of refuge as explained in the Jewel Ornament of Liberation.
2. Study the commentary on the Remembrance of the Three Jewels.
3. Learn how to take the Bodhisattva vows and follow the precepts of the Bodhisattva vows as explained in the Jewel Ornament of Liberation.
4. Study the Commentary of the Wishing Prayer of the Arya Samantabhadra.
5. Study Nagarjuna's Letter to a Friend.
6. Study Distinguishing the Center from the Limits.
7. Study The Meditation Instruction on the View of Madhyamika.
8. Study Vimalamitra's Progressive Integration of the Meaning of Meditation.

Specific Topics for Study in Bodhi Path Centers:

See this detailed list of topics.

The Three Subjects of Study Related to the Bodhisattvayana Tantric Way for Bodhi Path Centers:

1. Empowerment and the Path of Liberation, by Tsele Natsok Rangdrol
2. The Meaning of the Development Phase, by Getse Pandita
3. The Samayas of the Tantric Vow, by the 6th Shamarpa

Calming our minds is the first step

By Shamar Rinpoche

Teaching given at Bodhi Path Washington, DC Metro Area in Spring 2004.

Today, I will give you instructions about mind nature that will be helpful for your meditation. And, I will give you reasons for doing the shamatha or calm-abiding meditation practice. To meditate, you first need some understanding about your mind. Our normal concepts about mind, which really are not accurate, can disturb your meditation. Therefore, it is very important to have a correct understanding about the nature of mind.

Generally, people today view mind from a scientific perspective. Perhaps they equate mind, which is a process, with the brain, which is a bodily organ. In this case, it is easy to see mind as no more than a collection of nerves transmitting and processing electronic signals, like a computer made of flesh. I should tell you that if mind functioned in this way, then there would be no need to meditate. In fact, you could not meditate at all with such a mind. However, for Buddhists, mind is not like this. In Buddhist terms, we say that mind is clear. Clarity here means mind can understand itself. We can understand things because the mind's true nature is self-understanding. Otherwise, we could not learn anything. To learn in the Buddhist sense means to gain self-understanding.

All conceptual knowledge comes to us as pictures in our minds. The physical objects that we comprehend are not themselves of the same material as our minds. Physical objects have atoms, while minds do not. This makes physical objects different than mind.

Mind itself is not made of atoms. Thus, mind has its own, separate nature from physical objects. If we reason this out, it means that in reality, there is no contact between mind and matter. When you understand that objects are just reflections in the mind, then you realize that what your mind comprehends are not objects themselves, but merely images or pictures. Through this concept of mind you can then approach the more difficult idea that mind-nature is defined by self understanding and self-realization. Every moment mind is working, it is moving. Mind is not a fixed thing with some permanence, but a process; a true mind-stream. So, as thoughts pass through mind, they themselves ensure mind's continuance. If mind were to remain always on one thought, then it would get stuck. It would be frozen. But because mind is always moving, because it is dynamic, then you can perceive the outside world through ever-changing sense data. You can see, hear and feel. For example, we might com-

pare the mind-stream to reading a series of words quickly. Each word is connected to a thought. The only way you can comprehend a series of thoughts is because your mind is not a fixed, unchanging entity. If your mind was not dynamic, then it would get stuck on "A," and never able to get to "B." So, in every moment, the mind is moving; it is passing by its former position. When we are fully awake, mind is free of the object with which it connects to through thoughts, perceptions and feelings. Mind is unobstructed. You neither have a single thought nor many thoughts. Mind does not exist substantially. Mind is no longer ignorant or stupid in the deepest sense. But we should understand that self-realization is not like being in a coma. Instead, there is clarity and power. Self-realized mind is free from the influence of phenomena. It is mind free from all need to occupy itself; it is now an independent mind.

This, we might say, is good mind, non-dualistic mind. Of course, this kind of mind is not easy to obtain. Our habits are strong, and the unrealized mind is easily carried away by the flow of thoughts. If you examine your own mind, you will understand this. Mind does not exist in tangible substance; it is not a physically existing thing. Mind is not limited by any size, any shape, or any color. It is boundless and spacious. When you can realize an open state of mind—and keep it stable—then you can develop this state without limit. You can call this state enlightened mind, but enlightenment is difficult to realize. You may be able to realize this state of mind through examination or analysis. But your mind won't stay in this state for long. It quickly disappears because of your mental habits. I'm talking primarily about the mental habit of confusion and agitation. This habit of agitation is very, very strong. Our minds and those of all living beings are nothing if not restless. While the basic nature of our mind is clear and limitless, our present mind is restless because agitation is a mental habit. Therefore, meditation is the natural antidote. Systematically organized meditation techniques are available to solve this problem of mental agitation. In other words, we have to train our minds. Right now, our minds are wild and agitated, like a confused hurricane. To realize our full potential, we must tame our minds. And the good news is that we can use the mind to tame itself. We need to develop new mental habits. Among the many varieties of methods used to tame the mind, one of the most powerful is taught at Bodhi Path Centers—the practice of shamatha meditation. You should concentrate on practicing shamatha a great deal.

Shamatha is the best tool to pacify your mind. It will help you develop the habit of mental concentration, and help you keep your mind from wandering. And, if you can remind yourself from time to time about the concept of mind that we explained earlier, you will be able to meditate better. If you forget the true nature of your mind is calm, peaceful and radiant, then you may create unnecessary stress in your meditation. You may try to force your mind to stay focused. This will make you tense and will impede your progress. Relax, and you will do better. As I explained earlier, mind is very spacious. As you concentrate, you need to be relaxed. It's much easier to concentrate if you aren't tense. In anything you do, like swimming, for example, you will not do well if you're too tense. You should be relaxed as you meditate. You will be successful if you have a proper concept of the mind and then apply the method of shamatha.

Initially, shamatha meditation is very useful. But don't push yourself too hard—you will need patience to get used to this practice. Just remember, meditation is something that you can do right now to achieve peace of mind. Everybody is looking for peace of mind, and meditation is the way to achieve it. Why do you need patience? If you're not patient, then you won't continue to practice once you've started, and then you won't get anywhere. You get as much as you put into it. If you don't meditate, you won't gain anything. So, please be patient.

Generally, people today spend a lot of time working and cannot just sit down and meditate whenever the mood strikes them. So, at least in the early stages, it usually helps to schedule a time in your day for meditation practice, either in the early morning, the evening, or after work, when you can be alone in a quiet, peaceful place.

However, once you learn to meditate well, you can meditate anywhere. You can schedule a specific time to meditate, but if you meditate whenever you have free time, you will get used to it quickly. While you're in the office, if there's spare time to do a little bit of meditation, maybe at the end of your lunch hour, why not try a little meditation? Wherever you are, do some meditation.

Often meditation teachers advise their students to be like a cow eating grass; just as the cow is always chewing on her cud without thinking about it, so we should develop the habit of continuously, almost automatically, meditating. Whenever you can, meditate in this way. Then it will really become part of your everyday life.

When you start to meditate, you may want to focus the mind by using some kind of external object of concentration. It need not be a physical object—the most common meditation "object" is the breath—but it should be something simple and still. If moving, then it should be something repetitive, like the breath. A good practice is to count to 21 breaths in and out, and then rest your mind by letting your attention wander for a bit. Then, gently bring your attention back to your breath, counting to 21 again. Rest again, and then repeat this cycle for the duration of your meditation session. You will develop quickly if you focus on counting your breaths in this way. After a while, once you are accustomed to concentrating, you can stop using an external object of focus. Instead, you can then start to focus on mind itself. At this point, you can also focus on the passing moments of mind. Before starting this more advanced practice, you should first go through the concentration training of shamatha. Later, once your concentration is stable, then you can begin to meditate on mind itself.

What else is there to consider in shamatha? Most of you have heard your sitting position is important. You want to be comfortable, but alert; either on a cushion on the floor or in a chair. Also, look at your diet. Eating a lot of rich food can create drowsiness, making you feel sleepy during meditation. However, becoming too weak from not eating isn't good either. If your body is weak, then you won't have the energy to focus your attention and remain alert. In meditation, as in all things, seek the middle way.

Potomac, Maryland, Spring 2004.

The Refuge Vow

Today, I will give the Refuge vow.

A Buddha is one who has attained the three kayas. He has attained the Dharmakaya, the Sambhogakaya, and the Nirmanakaya. When you take the Refuge vow, you can focus on Buddha Shakyamuni, who is the Buddha of our world. Imagine Buddha Shakyamuni in front of you and then think of his qualities – the same qualities as those of all the Buddhas. Buddha Shakyamuni accomplished two benefits, the benefit for himself, and the benefit for others. To accomplish the benefit for himself means that he has given up all veils and all negativities of mind, and his wisdom has been fully awakened.

Dharmakaya

There are three kinds of veils. The first is the veil of obscuring states of mind. The second is the veil of knowledge, and the third is the veil of very fine habitual patterns. When the veil of obscuring states is given up, one is free from rebirths in the cycle of existence – one is liberated from samsara. When the veil of knowledge is given up, one is no longer stuck in self-liberation. And when the veil of habits is given up, one has become a fully enlightened Buddha. To be a Buddha means to be free from all three kinds of veils. It means to be fully awakened having realized the Dharmakaya.

Take for example, Buddha Shakyamuni who did not start out in his life enlightened. He was a Bodhisattva, the son of a king. And in his role as a prince, he had enjoyed life for some time. It was not until later that he came to realize that there was no meaning in the life of a wealthy king, and no satisfaction to be found either. He then went looking for a cause that would give satisfaction. This cause as he came to understand, could be found in the freedom of a mind completely removed from all ignorance. Consequently, the prince renounced everything, went to the forest and meditated. Through meditation, he eliminated all three veils of mind and became fully enlightened. In other words, he attained the Dharmakaya.

Nirmanakaya

Enlightenment benefits not just one person. And just because the Buddha himself was enlightened, it did not mean that he would then disappear from his disciples or sentient beings. On the contrary, the enlightened Buddha Shakyamuni went on to teach sentient beings how to achieve enlightenment. Thousands upon thousands of disciples everywhere were enlightened as a result, and not only in his lifetime. This effect is just like the reflection of the rising sun, the sun's reflection at once, appears in every droplet of water everywhere, just like that! (a snap of the fingers.)

The real cause of liberation from samsara depends on you. It depends on a change in your own mind, which is the real cause. Therefore, emanations from the enlightened mind or Nirmanakayas appear to help beings by encouraging them to change their attitudes. For instance, to affect a beneficial change in the attitudes of insects, the impetus would have to come from an insect. It could not come from a human, and so an emanation in insect form would appear to help the insects change for the better. Accordingly, Nirmanakayas are as numerous and as varied as there are forms of sentient beings.

Buddha means completely accomplished. What is accomplished is the compassion he has generated towards sentient beings on the way to become enlightened. All his wishes beneficial to sentient beings come from this compassion. Therefore, completely accomplished means that all the wishes of a Buddha are happening. These wishes are coming true. They come to us through the Nirmanakaya. In other words, all the help that sentient beings are receiving, all the beneficial circumstances that are happening to sentient beings are the Nirmanakayas, the emanations of Buddhas. Just as the sun's reflection appears in the water droplets everywhere, the Nirmanakayas appear in every realm of sentient beings to benefit them.

Sambhogakaya

There are many realms of advanced beings like the Bodhisattvas. These Bodhisattvas have already attained certain bhumis, or levels of achievement. There are many small and medium bhumis that come before the final bhumi, which is complete enlightenment. Bodhisattvas who have attained these bhumis are in very pure realms, unlike our impure human realm, or the impure realm of insects. The realms of Bodhisattvas are very, very pure. The reason is because their minds are like a clear mirror, and so the reflections from these pure minds are also clear. However, these Bodhisattvas still need guides to help them reach the full enlightenment. To help these pure beings, the Buddhas' emanations manifest in these pure forms, pure like Buddha Vajradhara. This form of very pure emanation is called Sambhogakaya. Again, Sambhogakaya also comes from the wishes made by the Buddhas.

Nirmanakayas and Sambhogakayas appear according to the qualities of the sentient beings. They are inseparable from a Buddha's Dharmakaya, a Buddha's wisdom, or a Buddha's complete enlightenment.

Wisdom

The three kayas can also be described in terms of the two aspects of Buddha wisdom: vast wisdom and profound wisdom. Dharmakaya is profound wisdom because it is wisdom that realizes itself, so nobody can judge it. Vast wisdom is Nirmanakaya and Sambhogakaya, which are emanated. Whether you refer to enlightenment as the two wisdoms, or the three kayas, the meaning is the same as described.

Without profound wisdom, one cannot have vast wisdom. Profound wisdom is the wisdom that you can achieve. However, there is no separate way to achieve vast wisdom, because it is part of profound wisdom. Profound wisdom means a

mind totally free from all veils of obscurations, at all three levels: gross, medium and subtle. In the absence of obscuration, the mind changes into profound wisdom, and that includes the vast wisdom.

If I have profound wisdom, I will no longer have dualistic concepts. I will see your illusions as your dreams. I will recognize that all of you here, are sleeping and dreaming. As well, my profound wisdom can understand all your dreams, which are different individually, yet the same in one nature. It is because a Buddha knows all the illusions of sentient beings that he can accordingly, manifest the emanations, which is vast wisdom, to help them. Profound wisdom is the quality of a Buddha. And Buddha also means profound wisdom. They are synonymous.

Refuge of the Triple Gem

To take refuge in the Buddha means by knowing the Buddha's qualities, you take refuge in the Buddha in order to be liberated from samsara. The Buddha is the ultimate refuge. We also take refuge in the Dharma and the Sangha.

The Dharma is the path to enlightenment, which is called the truth of the path. It encompasses all the remedies that can eliminate all the obscurations of mind. The taking of remedies is the path to enlightenment. The Dharma explains what the obscurations are so you don't take refuge in your obscurations. Rather, you take the remedies prescribed by the Dharma to eliminate them.

The Dharma is the teachings of Buddha Shakyamuni. He taught the Dharma to his disciples. Since then, it has been transmitted through generations in an unbroken lineage, as it still exists in the world today. Other than through words, the Dharma can also be transmitted through gestures and by examples.

By implementing the methods of the Dharma, you will achieve the results. The methods are the steps that allow you to progress step by step, towards what is called the truth of cessation. The truth of cessation does not consist of words. It is rather an experience of mind, which is developed by means of the Dharma. If you apply the methods successfully, then the result, which is the truth of cessation, will develop. What you will achieve is beyond words. The final truth of cessation is the Buddha. Everything leading up to, and including the final truth of cessation, is the Dharma. Therefore to take refuge in the Dharma means that until you are fully enlightened, you depend on the path of Dharma to get you there.

The refuge in the Sangha is a temporary one. In the beginning, you rely on a qualified teacher who represents the Buddha, and who introduces the Dharma to you. There are two kinds of Sangha. There is the genuine Sangha, the community of realized beings who are already on the advanced level of the Dharma path; they could be Bodhisattvas, or the Theravadin Arhats. The other is considered a semi-Sangha. It consists of those who have renounced the worldly life. They could be Bodhisattvas or Arhats, who are striving for liberation by listening, reflecting and practising meditation. You also can take refuge in them, temporarily, because they are qualified guides of the Dharma.

In the Theravada, the members of the genuine Sangha are on the path of unification, and the path of seeing. Within these two paths, the levels can be again subdivided into three or four: small, medium, and advanced, for in-

stance. In the Mahayana, the genuine Sangha consists only of Bodhisattvas who are already on the advanced path, and they can be in any form. In the Theravada, however, the genuine Sangha is always in human or heavenly form.

What are some necessary conditions of a Sangha member either in a human form or a heavenly form? A human is defined as an individual who has the capacity to communicate and to understand. In addition, a human Sangha member possesses clear faculties capable of understanding and explaining in words the profound subjects of the Dharma. Furthermore, he is not strongly controlled by bad karma. The Sangha member in a heavenly form, is similarly capable, moreover, he is of much better quality than the human form. These two are then the useful forms of lives to achieve enlightenment. The Sangha of the Shravakayana, or the Theravada, are always humans or heavenly beings. The Sangha of Bodhisattvas, on the other hand, can be any life form even as tiny ants, or butterflies.

For the accumulation of merit, when you take refuge in the Sangha of Bodhisattvas, you can even supplicate those Bodhisattvas who are appearing as dolphins, for example. However, for the purpose of liberation, you take refuge in the Bodhisattvas in human form because communication between you is possible.

The Buddha is the ultimate refuge whereas your refuge in the Dharma and Sangha are temporary. I have now explained the qualities of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. With this knowledge of their qualities coupled with your genuine devotion towards the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, you now take the Refuge vow.

I will say the words three times and you will repeat after me. You should think:
"I, (name), will now take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha until I attain full enlightenment."

This is the commitment you will be making presently.

At the end of saying it three times, I will snap my fingers at which time, you will receive the vow, which is an unbroken transmission descended from the Buddha down through the lineage from me to you.

Imagine the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas are in front of you, and you are receiving the Refuge vow. You then do three prostrations signifying this:

"I show respect for the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha with my body, speech and mind in order to eliminate the obstacles of body, speech and mind."

The cutting of the hair means you renounce samsara.

In the Refuge prayer, the line: "I take refuge in the Lama" is not read. The Lama is included in the Sangha. The Buddha, Dharma and Sangha are the triple gem. In the practices of Ngöndro, or the Four Foundations, you also take refuge in the Lama.

You should know the precepts, which will protect the Refuge vow. These are written in the booklet you have received. The Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha are a vast subject. Even though the instructions I have given you on the subject are very concise, everything has been covered.

Shi'nay

Calm Abiding Meditation

This afternoon session marks the start of a program of teachings at the Bodhi Path Centre. I now begin with a teaching on Shi'nay.

Training the mind and a trained mind are two different things. To practise Shi'nay is training, and it is different from a 'trained Shi'nay'. There are different varieties of Shi'nay practices but they all serve one purpose and it is to train the mind to be in Shi'nay.

Shi'nay is an ordinary level of mind. To attain a trained Shi'nay does not depend on purification of mind, or the accumulation of merit, or Lhakthong (vipasyana) meditation. So it will not take long to achieve the results of Shi'nay. But success in Shi'nay does, however, depend very much on how many times a day, and how long you can do it. What is essential is consistency of practice.

Mind does not exist substantially, or physically. Once you are trained, then you will have the flexibility of mind to do many things. How well you have trained will determine how much freedom of mind you have to remain in one level, while thinking, or concentrating. You are considered trained when your mind has this kind of freedom. This is the trained state, and to get there, you employ the methods of training.

To have this flexibility of mind of Shi'nay is very useful. You have heard of the so-called Five eyes and the Five extensive powers of the mind to know hidden things. You can access these states after you have achieved the training of Shi'nay. If you have wings then you can fly anywhere you'd like. If you are a good swimmer, you can swim in whichever way you want. Mind has limitless skills. When you have trained your mind, you will have more freedom than you do now. Since mind is not physical, it is very easy to use it everywhere. Through training, you will know more extensively than what you do now, which is rather limited.

At present, your mind has no peace because you are not free to be at peace. Because the mind is in the habit of thinking constantly, like a waterfall, it is totally overwhelmed by thoughts. The habit of thinking is very strong. All the time, you are thinking because the mind connects to everything and everywhere. The thoughts are therefore incessant, and you have no freedom, only distractions. If you hear something, mind connects to the sound. If you feel anything, or see anything, your mind is right there. Mind is totally inundated by contacts. There is no rest, no peace. Peace of mind means to be free from thoughts. You need freedom of mind to have control of your mind. This means you need to be free from confusion. Then you will be able to maintain your mind in its peace.

Because mind has no form or substance, the extent of mind's peace is limitless. There is just peace. When you are able to go deeper into the nature of mind, then it is called a realization of mind, which can get rid of the ignorance of mind. First you should have the freedom to rest in the peace of mind. Later, you develop the skill to realize the nature of mind, and then you will be free of the ignorance. These are the steps.

To achieve some freedom of mind, you practise Shi'nay. The level of Shi'nay within

the ordinary level of mind does not take long to achieve. However, it does depend on effective methods. They are effective in pacifying the mind, to free it from thoughts, or to give it some freedom. One very effective method to gain control over the habit of thinking is to concentrate on the breath.

Breathing and meditation sitting posture

The main causes for mind's restlessness are ignorance and dualistic attachments. But temporarily, an imbalance in the physical posture can also disturb the mind.

To maintain a proper balance in the internal circulation, you need to know how to breathe gently. When your breathing is proper, it brings about a very balanced circulation in the body. It makes your mind comfortable and clear. The Buddha gave a lot of advice on health, too. One such advice is proper breathing, which keeps your physique very steady and comfortable.

To make mind peaceful, the sitting posture must be correct. A wrong sitting posture will give you physical as well as some nervous problems. Sit in the shape of a pyramid (triangular-shaped) where all sides of the body are properly balanced. It was exactly how the Buddha sat under the tree. He sat on a stone-seat with some kusha grass layered on top. Nowadays, we use cushions, and we don't need to go to the forest either.

Here are the points for a proper sitting posture (They include all the points of the seven-point posture):

While sitting, the backside should be a little higher. The lap in front is thus lowered and slopes slightly downward. If you sit as you would on a sofa with the front higher and the back lower, then you cannot meditate. The full lotus posture for the legs is fine. If you cannot sit fully cross-legged, then you can adopt the half lotus posture with the left leg in and the right leg out.

Regarding the two hands, the right hand is placed on top and in the left hand. Both hands are resting on the lap.

The two elbows should not be bent. They should be straight, but not too much. If you have long arms that reach past the lap, you could rest the hands on the feet to give them support.

The shoulders should be raised up slightly.

Your eyes are open and looking downward and slightly ahead of you so that you can see the tip of your nose.

The head or neck is tilted very slightly forward and not too much.

The stomach should be in. Below the navel is the abdomen. When you gently press in the stomach, the breath will go down to the abdomen so just keep it there. In this way, you will feel very comfortable. If you keep the breath in the stomach then it will become uncomfortable to meditate.

The back should be straight, and when it is, your whole posture will naturally be proper. And the inner circulation of the breath will be smooth.

The mouth is gently closed and you breathe through your nose. You should not breathe through the mouth. Just naturally, breathe very gently.

What is beneficial for health is to visualize the breath as a very bright (not straight, but slightly arched) beam of crystal light. This will prevent you from falling asleep, or feeling drowsy. The bright light brightens your mind and keeps away dullness. But do not attach to it. You should not have a vision of crystal as practised in some crystal religion. The object here is for your mind to concentrate on your breath. When breathing out, the light is almost touching to the ground, and when you breathe in, it comes back into you and down into the navel. The light is just a visualization. It is not real. It is not like the tongue of a lizard, going out and in again. The light should be independent of you.

Length of practice

As to the length of practice, in the beginning, it should not be too long. Later on, when you are more trained, you can practise for a longer period. To concentrate means to focus the mind on the breath, and to keep the awareness. To be aware means you know what you are doing. And at the same time, you can count by mind. You can also use a mala, a counter, or you can use a clock, and time yourself for five minutes. Afterwards, relax a little, feeling free, and then you can start again. It does not matter whether you do it for five minutes, or for three, the point is to do it with quality. This means to keep the awareness, and try not to think unnoticed.

Training means to develop new habits. Your habit now is thinking constantly. You don't need training in that. You already do it all the time. To train a new habit depends on the accumulation of the desired new habit. This means to accumulate 'quality', which is to focus with awareness – this is proper training. If you do one hour without resting during which time you are very distracted, then you are nurturing a bad habit again. Therefore, do it for just a short while, but with quality. There's nothing wrong with that. To be clear means you realize, you are fully aware, whether you are concentrated or not. True, awareness is also thought, but that does not matter for now.

A five minutes session with quality counting to 10, is much better than a 10-minute session of lower quality where you are distracted. In the latter case, you are not accumulating good habits. Instead, you are practising making mistakes. Therefore, do the five minutes well, and take breaks in between. If you can manage a count with quality to 10 for a five-minute period, then you will be trained very quickly. Soon you will be able to increase the duration to ten quality minutes with counting to 10. Many of my students in Washington D.C. in America can comfortably count to 100. There is even one member there, who could count to one thousand. Then mind is very, very peaceful and you will experience the wide peace of the mind. For extensive training, the practitioners train to have the capacity to count up to many thousands. This means that they are then fully trained.

The levels of Shi'nay

Counting the breaths is the first level. Not counting, or letting the mind to simply follow the breath is the second, and subtler level. A third level is where the mind does not even follow the breath. Mind just rests on the breath. Between these first three levels, you progress from coarse to more subtle, to very subtle. All three levels fall within the very preliminary levels of Shi'nay.

Another three levels that are even subtler follow the preliminary levels. The first of these is called realization of the connection of mind and breath where the realization of the described connection becomes the object of focus. When you are able to control mind then you will know how to do it. If you don't have the control then it is difficult to imagine. But, that is the first step of the advanced Shi'nay.

Once you have become proficient in the first, you can then progress to the second level called playing. At this level, you will play a lot with the mind in order to extend the skills of the mind.

The next or third level is called pure level. This level is connected to Lhakthong (Vipasyana). There you will enter into the natural peace of the mind. There is a way to enter into a more profound, deeper, or subtler state of mind.

You will be taught these levels according to your own progress in your practice. What I have presented to you is for your information only. The main thing for you to do now is to start the practice of the counting of breaths. The first three preliminary levels are very important. To dance in the water, you must first know how to swim. So, start from the counting.

Shi'nay is very important. Without Shi'nay you can never meditate. There is no chance, no way to meditate without Shi'nay. Think about it, how can you meditate with this busy mind? You cannot keep the candle lit in the wind. You cannot ride a wild horse without taming it first. Mind is like a wild horse so you should train it. And discipline is quite important in order to train the mind to be clear and energetic.

Advice regarding eating

Usually, the advice for Shi'nay meditators is not to eat very heavy foods after 1p.m. This is very true from experience. When we do summer retreat in the monastery for 45 days, we do not eat after 1p.m. Mind is indeed very clear at that time.

During the time when Buddhism flourished in India, many highly qualified Indian monks and meditators had meditated very well. And when the Dharma was first introduced in Tibet, the Tibetans could not follow and meditate exactly like the Indian masters did. Their meditations were less successful but still good. One contributing factor for the difference had to do

with eating. The very good Indian meditators had strictly kept the discipline of not eating after 1p.m. This was something the Tibetan meditators were unable to do. Meditators in China were even less successful than the Tibetan monks because they liked to eat a lot. Here we are talking about success in meditation. However, where karma is concerned, the Chinese monks in general, have less karma because they are vegetarians. The Tibetan lamas on the other hand, had to eat meat of the lamb and yak, especially in the olden days, when there were no other foods.

Milarepa's diet consisted only of nettles. His diet, too, became a training tool for him. You can find this in his biography. He would think to himself in this way.

Food needs salt. Salt is food. Nettle is food. To add salt, I eat more nettles.

He was not making fun in the least. He would reason with himself and then he would apply the reasoning in his own experience. This was his line of reasoning.

Salt is food. Between food and salt, there is no difference so they are equal. Therefore, instead of adding salt, I will eat some more nettles.

Food needs butter. But butter is food. As far as their natures are concerned, food and butter are the same. So instead of butter, I will eat some more nettles.

So Milarepa ate only nettles. Not everybody can do what he did. Therefore, it takes the rest of us longer.

To be vegetarian like the Chinese monks, and then to eat only twice in the morning and not after 1p.m. will certainly make one very successful at practice. This was difficult for many people in the past especially for travellers who had the added problem of inconvenience. But nowadays, health foods are very popular and readily available. Meditators could easily manage to have more proteins in their diets. One could eat more in the morning, and only very light foods in the afternoon. This should prove very helpful for meditation. When the meditation is already advanced, then diet, or the timing of meals, will no longer exert as much effect on it.

Be careful of attachments

In general, your job or everything else you do to make your daily life run smoothly is very important. As I explained this morning, attachment is the main chain, which ties up your mind. A very important advice then is to curb your attachments. They are the chains that tie you down. It is not your work or anything else that you have to do that binds you. It is your grasping and attachment. If you can make your mind freer from this kind of grasping, then the Western way of life will not deter or disrupt your meditation.

Again, how to sit is very important; sit in the right posture as I have demonstrated. The next is how to concentrate, how to keep your mind in the awareness of your concentration. And then comes discipline. These three points are key to the success of Shi'nyan meditation.

Recommended practices

I always do the Buddha Shakyamuni prayer and mantra. By listening to me, you have already received the 'lung' (oral transmission) from me. You should always recite it. It is full of blessings. Whatever practice you do, always start by reciting:

TEYATA OM MUNE MUNE MAHA MUNE SHAKYAMUNAYE SOHA.

Then your practice will be very successful. You will not be disturbed by any obstacles such as bad karma, or by any evil beings that harm practitioners. These things can happen, but this mantra guards against them.

I also composed a Sadhana of Shakyamuni Buddha in English about 20 years ago. I have given a copy to the Bodhi Path centre here to make copies for everyone. It is now one of the regular Sadhana practices of Bodhi Path. Every week, it is good to do pujas like Amitabha and Shakyamuni Buddha. I think in the Bodhi Path Centers in America, three different pujas are practiced: Shakyamuni, Buddha Amitabha and Green Tara. In Europe, people do a lot of Green Tara puja, don't they? Anyway, you can do these three pujas.

Chenrezig is a very, very good daily practice for an individual. As well, the Chenrezig puja can be practiced together in a group. It is one of the main practices of Bodhi Path. Prostrations to the 35 Buddhas, Mandala offerings to the 35 Buddhas, then the Dorje Sempa practice and especially the Chenrezig practice are the main practices. You will do Chenrezig practice individually, and a lot of meditation will be required.

If you are already doing the Chenrezig practice together as a group, please continue to do so, together as well as individually. You can do any Dharma practice together, or individually. There is no need to construct rules as to when, or what to do together, or what not to do together. Dharma is Dharma. Dharma depends on how much you do. How much result you get comes directly from how much you do. And whatever practice you do together as a group, you can also do individually. The only recommendation is to do the same practice when you are together, rather than each person doing his own, as in some are doing Green Tara, while others are doing Amitabha. This is not convenient. But when you are alone, then it is your choice.

I will now give some more advice as to how to maintain the Shi'nyay practice that I have taught you.

It helps to count

Initially, when you concentrate on your breath, you are counting by clock, by mala, or by a small counter. But it is best to count by mind. In the beginning, your mind cannot concentrate on a very subtle level, so you need rather obvious points to focus on.

For Shi'nay, there is no fixed number of counts that you must do, unlike the practice of Vajrasattva, where you are to recite the mantra 100,000 times. Here, you are simply counting your breaths by mind. When the focus-object is more apparent as opposed to subtle, you can concentrate better. Trying to focus without counting is considered a very subtle way. Beginners cannot concentrate like that, so their minds will go off elsewhere.

Gentler longer breaths

It is good to breathe gently with longer breaths. Gently, breathe all the way down. Visualize your breath going all the way down, and all the way out, almost touching the ground. But don't think of it as real, or it will give you trouble. For instance, if you think it real...real...real, then later, it will develop into a sensation, and that is not good. It is only a vision. You can visualize as it suits you. The visualized breath should not be straight because it is not convenient to do so. Visualize it slightly curved. The breath can also be visualized as light.

When you are used to the breathing and counting, then the next advice is for you to visualize a longer breath. It can go all the way down to the tip of the toe. By lengthening it, you will be able to concentrate more continuously. So, concentrate on a gentler and longer breath.

Some people can count up to 1,000 breaths. They are very good at it. They actually like it, and so they can do it for many thousand times. Why do they like it? It is because the mind is entirely peaceful. It is a very, very profound contemplation where there are no other thoughts. Your mind is now able to think only of one thing, but it is neither a narrow mind, nor a tense mind. A peaceful mind is very spacious and comfortable. However, it is quite a long ways yet to enlightenment. For that, you will have to purify karma. The achievement of Shi'nay, however, is possible within the ordinary level of mind.

By Shi'nay, you tame your mind. When mind is tamed, there is no reason not to be peaceful. It is very peaceful because it is mind. You will experience it. The genuine peace of mind is the most comfortable. You may sometimes find a place peaceful. "Oh, nice place, it's very peaceful here." It might be because the place is away from the noisy traffic. But still inside, you are neither peaceful nor comfortable. In a house totally quiet, and by yourself, you would still feel confused, because you have an inner voice. Your mind is busy, so there is no peace.

The waterfall experience

Counting the breaths is a very skilful way to train the mind. By going through the steps of this meditation practice, you will not face the 'waterfall experience'. The waterfall experience is like a tragedy in the mind. Mahamudra meditators, or those who don't train through the gentler levels in order to be quicker, will run into the waterfall experience. In it, they will feel as if they were going mad. The very committed meditators can meet this challenge as part of a very quick shortcut to tame the mind. And yes, it is possible to get through it.

When you have reached a certain level of taming the mind, which is in-itself an achievement, you will encounter a totally confused state for some time. Your mind will feel very difficult to control like a very disobedient horse jumping wildly. Regardless of that feeling of going crazy, you still have to go through with it. The strong-minded people do manage to get over it, but there are also those who can't

make it and give up meditation. I know a few meditators who had this trouble and gave up. But if you could work with it, then one, two, or three weeks later, it'd be over. A very comfortable level, called 'river-flowing-experience', will then come after it.

One meditator, during the waterfall experience, even recalled how he was crawling as a baby in his childhood home. He would not otherwise have this kind of recall outside of meditation. But it all came to him during meditation, when the difficulties started to happen. He remembered everything, and he couldn't stop it. He kept on thinking, not imagining, but remembering. His memory took him further and further back. Why is that? It is because as the mind itself is being tamed, the experience is different.

Right now, your mind is totally scattered so you don't feel it. When everything shows up in the mind as in the waterfall experience, then it is not comfortable. If you follow the longer path as the Buddha taught, which starts with the breathing, then you will not have to face this very difficult challenge. You will instead gently tame your mind. The Maha Ati and Mahamudra practitioners start by focusing on the nature of mind. They start just like that. Then they will face these problems. If they succeed, then it is a much quicker route. But it is also rare that one succeeds.

Counting the breaths

All the meditation books advise to start with the counting-breath meditation. One of my students in America was able to quickly count up to 1,000. This was a very difficult accomplishment. He must have practiced every day.

When you meditate, you should not expect some comfortable feeling, some wonderful visions; otherwise, by trying to experience those feelings, you are, in effect, contaminating your meditation.

Counting 1,000 times by focusing on the breath is not totally done by forcing oneself either. You cannot do it by force. It is a spontaneous development. So, when you can count 1,000 times, it means that you can do it comfortably.

You start from a count of 5, and then develop it to 10, 15, 20, and so on. You count up to 5 without any mistakes. You count to 5 with quality, then have a little rest, and start again counting to 5. If you do it with quality, then you will develop 'quality' as a habit of mind.

It follows then, to develop quality, you increase the count only when you can do it comfortably, and without mistakes. In this way, you will progress smoothly to 15, 20, 30, 40, to the 100's, to and then to 1,000. The mind will be very, very peaceful, and steady.

While you are practicing, you should not try to have some beautiful vision, for instance. You will not see any beam of light, or any special visions either. The instruction to visualize your breath as light is just to help you focus, a temporary support which you will not need later on.

Following the breath

When the counting becomes very, very spontaneous, you don't count anymore. You shift to following the breath. Mind follows the breath, which is a subtler kind of focus. You can still visualize the breath in some color, to be more comfortable with the focus. Later, when the following becomes very spontaneous, very natural, then you won't even visualize anymore.

When mind becomes very peaceful, you will not fall asleep. Falling asleep happens when mind gets tired. When mind is spontaneous and peaceful, why would you feel tired? Mind becomes very clear, and you won't feel sleepy, unless perhaps you have eaten very fatty foods, which would make your mind unclear, and sleepy. By concentrating well, you will never fall asleep.

Resting on the breath

From following the breath, you shift next to resting on the breath. You no longer visualize the breath in a color. Just concentrate because you have full awareness. Mind's awareness is fully, and clearly there, so you don't have to focus on some image. Mind still depends on the breath for support because it is not yet totally into contemplation. You need to rest on the breath for support. Only very subtly, you rest on it, not following it.

So, two thoughts have become one. Following out and in are two thoughts. However, if you are simply resting on the breath, then there are not two, but one single thought. This one thought being gentler, more spacious, and clear is not something that you hold on to. When you can rest comfortably on it, then you have profound contemplation, and your experience is very clear.

From the Buddhist view of the internal system, it is said that during profound contemplation, your whole system is totally stable and in contemplation. The germs in the body are therefore not moving. I don't know why they are not moving, whether it is because they are sleeping, and undisturbed, or whether they, too, are receiving some meditation. But the fact is, their immobility makes your mind totally clear, and your body feels very, very light. That lightness does not mean light as in flying in a balloon, but just a very light feeling.

Therefore, with the support of profound Shi'nay in the mind, you will easily develop Lhakthong when you come to do the meditation of Lhakthong, Mahamudra, or Maha Ati. Both Mahamudra, and Maha Ati are Lhakthong meditations. Your success will come easily because mind is not confused, mind is in total stability. And there are no obstacles.

Usually, the obstacles to meditation are from mind. Thoughts are the obstacles in meditation. In general, we think of obstacles as external things. We think of them as the many problems of our world such as wars. But in meditation, your thoughts are the obstacles. When you have achieved naturally, without force, a completely stable contemplation, then that mind can easily develop the Mahamudra mind, which can eliminate all the negativities and ignorance. Your contemplation will then become a very comfortable journey for you.

The disturbing concepts, and the obscuring states of mind will be eliminated by

Lhakthong, which is absolutely developed by Shi'nay. You should understand and know this.

First, you have to develop Shi'nay. Attain Shi'nay. You will achieve it successfully so long as you do not cling to the worldly things. I think for Westerners, the grasping to material things is perhaps not so much of a problem. You already have everything: discotheque, good restaurants, and bars. You have tried everything, and now you are growing tired of these things, aren't you?

In the Himalayas, and in the poorer countries, the young people there must still find all these things. We cannot tell them you must do Shi'nay. It is not so easy to convince them, because they lack material things. For example, the young Tibetans in Tibet want to emigrate to the foreign countries. They think the West must be very beautiful. It is when they have achieved everything they want, that they will realize satisfaction cannot be found in worldly pursuits. Why? It is because satisfaction actually comes from mind. It does not mean that you should not have everything either, rather, the point is not to grasp so strongly for things. People who have everything actually have less of a problem with grasping. Strong grasping, and being too eager to have the many things will disturb you.

These are some points of advice to help you maintain your Shi'nay meditation.

In the afternoons here, you should all do Shi'nay. I will teach in the mornings. In the afternoons, with the help of Ani Paldrub, you will do Shi'nay here. And if you have any problems during your Shi'nay, then you can tell me during the morning sessions.

Questions (Q) and Answers (A)

(Q): If one is not able to sit on the ground and has to sit on a chair, what is the right sitting position then?

(A): To sit on a chair is all right, but not on a soft chair like a sofa. Sit on a harder chair where you can sit up straight. Only advanced meditators can sit in a sofa and still meditate. They can even meditate while sleeping.

(Q): Is it better to do a cycle of breath of 21 times?

(A): It depends. As I've explained, the counting has to be done with quality. It is safer if you start from a small count with quality. You can then progress with quality to the higher counts.

Some people have difficulties counting with the mind during meditation. In that case, it is fine to use a clock for three minutes, or five minutes at a time. During the sitting, you can look at a watch but it is better to put a clock in front

of you. However, don't try to hurry and finish the session.

You might have heard a lot about Shi'nay teachings. All of you have attended courses everywhere. But have you achieved Shi'nay? This is why it is very important to do Shi'nay properly. You have to do more than going to the dharma talks and participating in the events. You should do the practice very properly.

The information about how to do Shi'nay should be given intact. Otherwise, the students will not fully know or understand the practice – how to do it, why it is the way it is, and then to practise.

There is a proverb popular in the community of Vajrayana practitioners.

Mahasiddhas in India attained all the yidams by one yidam. But the Vajrayana practitioners in Tibet didn't achieve one yidam through the hundred yidam practices.

It means that the Tibetan practitioners were less successful in meditation when compared to the Indian Buddhist practitioners. This was what Atisha had discovered when he was in Tibet. He had found the Tibetan mentality very much like that of a shopper. They were always picking and choosing to find something very high, or very big. They liked to hear about the energies and miracles, and so on. They liked to listen to all these things, but when they tried to actually do the practices, they were not as successful as the Indian Mahasiddhas. These were some observations that Atisha had made.

(Q): When I look at the watch while practising then I am also distracted.

(A): Don't try to look again and again. You can put a bigger clock in front of you and then just look at it once or twice. That is not a problem. Don't look at it too often.

(Q): You talked about the disturbances of mind. What about the posture, is it very important to keep the body still?

(A): The body posture is very important. Those who meditate a lot while leaning more to the right, or left create different mental sensitivities unhealthy for the mind. If you meditate a lot in a crooked position, bad results will later develop rather than good ones. For example, your mind will become unbalanced, a bit abnormal. Your mind might become overly sensitive as in imagining that others are talking about you when they are not. "Oh, they are talking about me over there." The mind is quite delicate, so the sitting position is very important. To sit up straight is very important, as it affects the energies in our body. Sit properly in the seven-point posture (as explained in day one), which will naturally prevent all these problems.

(Q): I have some difficulties with my neck and shoulders in sitting properly. So I thought I could do a Yoga course, maybe it helps me, or is the 35 Buddha practice enough?

(A): It depends on the way you sit, whether you are sitting properly, or not. It is not necessarily from karma. Well, if somebody has the karma of having a crooked body, then it is different. I think you may have a neck problem because you are sitting incorrectly. You are too stiff. Keep your posture in balance, and relax, but not too relaxed. Lama Paldrub can tell you very well how to sit properly. The Theravada teach-

ers in Thailand teach a different style of sitting, but I don't recommend that.

(Q): I only know the counting to 21 and then start again.

(A): Very good. If you can count to 21 again and again, then that is very good. But as I said, do it with quality. If you count to 21 while still thinking a lot, then it is a bad habit. So, count to 5 with quality. Then accumulate the practice in that way to quickly train your mind without forming any bad habits.

If one starts right away by counting to 21, with much thinking in-between, then one is actually accumulating the bad habit every time. Therefore, longer periods are not recommended in the beginning. Start with the short counts.

The meditation with focus on the breath is very, very effective. It is the quickest way. The Buddha, and his disciples (maybe including Shariputra), invented it in a scientific way. This method is really very good. Why? The breath is the circulation in the body, at the same time, the mind runs closely associated with it, too. When you make the breath gentler, then in effect, everything is being pacified. Mind is pacified, and at the same time, the body system is pacified. It is very effective. Proper posture is very important, because when the body is straight, then the energies in the body flow correctly, which in turn calms the mind.

(Q): Do we use counting at the same time as the visualization, or is it a different technique?

(A): At the same time. You visualize the breath and count the breath going out and in, as one.

The circulation of the energies will be balanced when you sit in the seven-point posture. This posture is scientifically arranged to naturally balance our system. The posture services the mind to be peaceful, and so you can concentrate comfortably without drowsiness, or agitation.

(Q): I have difficulties with keeping my eyes opened. I feel it easier to have the eyes closed.

(A): In the beginning, it is fine. For the creation-phase of a practice like the Chenrezig practice, having the eyes closed is all right. For Shi'nay, it may cause you to develop the little bad habits, which will persist. This is why I advise you to keep the eyes opened.

(Q): I'm doing the Mandala practice of the Ngöndro. Can I right after that switch to the 35 Buddhas and do the prostrations as you said, and then the Mandala?

(A): Sure, that is fine.

(Q): You talked about the different kinds of Bodhisattvas. I was wondering if it'd be some kind of egotistical wish to go to Dewachen first.

(A): I talked about three kinds of Bodhisattva: sailor-minded, shepherd-minded and king-minded Bodhisattva. To go to the pure land of Amitabha first, is perhaps a king-minded Bodhisattva where one achieves everything first, and then one is able to help others. To be a king-minded Bodhisattva is all right, but be a good king, not a bad one.

(Q): Isn't there a contradiction, the wish to go to a Buddha's pure land versus the sailor, or shepherd-minded Bodhisattva?

(A): The best is to have a big mind. That means a shepherd-minded Bodhisattva. He is one who wants to go more into the hardships so as to become a very powerful Bodhisattva. He stays longer in the realms of samsara to build up his positive reserve of merits. A big and strong reserve can support the very big wishes for beings.

If you are a Bodhisattva who wants to associate with the animals at the bottom of the ocean, you have to make a wish to be one of them. For instance, you can be a very fat fish with a very scary existence. You sit at the bottom of the ocean, and every day, you can be a good lunch for the many other fishes. Bodhisattvas who take such challenging rebirths want to accumulate greater merit power for their wishes. When they later achieve the first bhumi, their wishes for sentient beings, far more extensive than the sailor-minded and the king-minded Bodhisattvas, will all be happening.

(Q): If such a Bodhisattva makes wishes to be reborn in Dewachen, doesn't he disturb his own wish then?

(A): No, it is possible that he shifts from being a shepherd-minded Bodhisattva to another kind. He might want to reach his goal quickly, which might mean that he is a little tired. But whatever he has accomplished already, will not be wasted.

The physical, sexual desire that is between the male and female can be used for rebirth. The shepherd-minded Bodhisattvas don't aim to eliminate it. They use it to actualize a rebirth. As well, they are making wishes to take rebirth in samsara to help beings. Together, these two conditions of wish and sexual desire make it possible for them to be reborn.

(Q): I quickly get tired when I do Shi'nay. Why is that?

(A): I think the sitting-posture is not proper. You should learn the proper way to sit. Someone should correct your sitting posture. Lama Paldrub will be the one to show everyone.

(Q): I feel that when I do Shi'nay with counting, I count but actually my mind is like sleeping. Isn't it then better not to count and focus on the visualization?

(A): I think you better do both. Imagine and count. Don't be stiff. Make your mind comfortable. Counting will develop into a very good habit. Then later, you will not make mistakes. In the beginning, you might think it is easier not to have to count, but it won't be easier later on. This order of counting first, which

leads later to not having to count, is actually how you will progress naturally according to your ability to concentrate.

Now we do a short meditation together.

(Q): I have difficulties in relaxing my eyes, as there is always tension.

(A): When you are trying to concentrate, don't give pressure to the head. Some people conceive the brain to be the mind. But it is not the brain that thinks. To feel that the brain is thinking is just a habit. Tibetans do not have this same habit. Instead, they feel that it is their heart that is doing the thinking. They think with their hearts. Either way is still a just a habit.

When you concentrate, don't pressure your brain. Mind is empty, so focus on the breath. The tension actually comes from your applying pressure to the brain, so try to reduce that habit. As to self-awareness, it comes neither from the brain, nor the heart. Don't place your focus in either. Rather, try to keep your awareness while allowing the mind to rest in the mind.

(Q): When concentrating in Shi'nay on breathing and counting, there are a lot of thoughts running parallel to it, or happening at the same time. Is that normal, and does it go away?

(A): That's normal. It is the reason why in the beginning one should concentrate only for a short time. I have emphasized this point repeatedly. By keeping the sessions short, you will be able to prevent the parallel thoughts. It is easier to maintain the concentration for a short count of five rather than a longer count. If you continuously count for ten minutes, then for sure, you will not be able to control your mind throughout. To gradually build up a good habit of concentration is the way to develop concentration. Concentrate for a short time, and before the mind gets tired, take a brief rest. In this way, you will be able to prevent the thinking.

(Q): When reciting mantras, does one need to hold the mala in the left hand and skip the Buddha-pearl while completing the turn of the mala?

(A): It's good to hold the mala in the left hand. And if you already have the concept that the centre bead is the Buddha's head, then you won't want to put your finger on it.

Actually, to regard the bead as the Buddha's head came from hearsay, a bit of an old wives' tale. It probably came about from a practice called the Dorje Phamo, where one imagines that each bead of the mala means something. Then people over-stretched the idea and spread it like a rumor. In Tibet, the centre bead is called a term meaning captain. That bead is considered the captain of the other beads. In this context then, it does not matter if you press, or touch it. However, because you already think it the Buddha's head, then don't press your thumb on it. Just continue to do as you have been doing thus far.

(Q): When I do Shi'nay meditation and my mind gets relaxed, then I always have the tendency to go more up, and more wide, and to go more into space.

(A): No, here it is very important to maintain the concentration on counting. Don't make more visions here.

(Q): It is not a vision. It is just a tendency to always look more up.

(A): Don't do that. Just keep as usual.

(Q): When I breathe in, it is sometimes difficult to breathe down when pressing the stomach in. Sometimes it gets a little bit tense.

(A): No, the breathing actually makes you feel more comfortable. But don't breathe down too hard. If you do, then it comes from your own worry, created by you, that you are not doing so well. It makes you want to put more pressure there. Then it is uncomfortable, isn't it? Take in the stomach. The abdomen is slightly out, and then press down. This way is more comfortable, and more supportive of the sitting posture.

(Q): I have read many teachings about the importance of breathing naturally. But when I do, I have more the impression that I am controlling my breath.

(A): Yes, you should control your breath here. You are using the breathing as your object of concentration. Also, one should breathe gently, and keep a longer vision of the breath. Visualize it like a tiny white rainbow. The visual is to enable you to concentrate properly. Gently, you inhale and exhale a long breath. This will make the mind more relaxed, and clearer.

(Q): In the Pujas, there is the dissolving phase where the Buddha dissolves into oneself. Should one do this phase of the meditation and still be very much concentrated on the breath?

(A): These are two different kinds of meditations. The Shi'nyai meditation where we are concentrating on the breath and counting each breath is one type of meditation. The various Sadhana practices following the meditation texts, where the Buddha dissolves into oneself, Chenrezig for example, are an entirely different type of meditation.

(Q): Do I count the breath during the dissolving phase in the practice on Chenrezig – as when I feel that my mind becomes active then I concentrate on the breath?

(A): When you are doing the Sadhana practice, then you are not doing the breath-counting practice. You don't do the two together. Are you doing that?

How can you concentrate on the breath when you are visualizing on Chenrezig, or reciting the mantra?

Suppose you are doing the Chenrezig practice. You visualize Chenrezig. Then you recite the mantra, and concentrate on Om Mani Padme Hung. After, during the

completion stage, you visualize that the body absorbs the lotus moon seat, and then the body is absorbed by itself. That is the procedure.

(Q): I did not count then, but just concentrate on the breath.

(A): After the dissolving, when you are into the Dzogrim phase of the practice, you can then concentrate on the breath. In other words, when the Sadhana part of the practice is finished, then you can focus on the breath. That would be good. But don't do the two practices together.

(Q): When we are practicing Shi'nay and Prostrations, is it possible that our mind will react with some strange emotions because of this re-education?

(A): Mind is empty. In an empty mind, you can learn everything comfortably. If it were not empty then every time you learn something new, it'd be like adding more things to the mind, like packing many things into a suitcase, compressing them. If you regard your mind as a substantial thing, then of course, when you add the many, many things into it, it just might bust. However, because mind is empty, there is no problem. You can change the concepts any way you'd like.

Don't think of your mind as a machine. Many westerners regard mind like an electronic device, isn't that true? You think that when you are thinking, you are sending something from your brain. You think that is how your thinking works. That concept is your habit now, inaccurate as it may be with respect to the nature of mind. There is no transmission of energy involved when you are learning something, neither is there anything that is absorbed by your mind. Thinking, or learning does not happen like that with the mind.

Mind is unobstructed, very spacious and very clear. In that clarity, you will know everything. There is nothing in mind that you can specifically identify as a form of light, or as magnetic energy that could be recharged. This is very important to know.

(Q): I have practiced Shi'nay for a long time now, and I did practice as you advised about counting the breaths. I also know another technique where one just looks at the sensation of the breath at the tip of the nose where it comes in and out. However, both techniques did not work very well for me. Instead, I can count the breath very well when I concentrate on the movements of the belly. However, you told us that it is not correct to do so. Still I wonder what is wrong with this technique? When I concentrate on this in and out movement of my belly, my mind gets really calm. But now it seems that I am doing something wrong.

(A): To concentrate on the belly is not recommended. You may get some feeling but it is just your feeling. However, it will not create the real concentration power. Moreover, to concentrate on some sensation is very, very wrong. The sensation will soon become an artificial sensation, and that is not good. You must follow the technique as I've taught in the last few days. You will derive two benefits from it: it gives positive stimulation to the body system and it trains your mind to keep the concentration. The focus on the belly, and other sensations, I think, are found in the Hindu traditions.

(Q): From the Theravada, Arya Khema.

(A): I think it is a westernized Theravada then. There are many westernized Theravada and Hinduism.

Here in the West, people attend seminars everywhere. They also read all kinds of books and they listen to everything. Then, they mix everything together. This is how people get very confused by the various Dharma subjects. It is better to follow properly. If you bring all kinds of concepts into the Dharma, you will be totally confused.

Rightly, it is the Dharma that could clear up the confusion of sentient beings. But if you read all kinds of Dharma books and bring all the concepts together all at once, then you are in effect, creating extra confusion – Dharma confusion.

In the Theravada, the Bodhisattvayana, and the Vajrayana, the one and same principle of Shi'nay is taught. True, there are varieties of Shi'nay but none subscribe to building up sensations, or belly moving. This form of Shi'nay has never existed in the Buddha's teachings. You may feel calm, but it is not the true calm. It will never reduce the thoughts. Moreover, the result of Shi'nay does not depend on what you feel at one moment. Your temporarily feeling comfortable or not does not attest to the success of Shi'nay, or to the lack of it. The evidence of Shi'nay achievement comes through your achieving freedom of mind as I taught in the last few days – total freedom, that's the result of Shi'nay.

(Q): From my experience, this is a kind of concept, and then you have experiences and sensations. For me, the way to deal with this feeling is just to let go, to recognize there is a concept, there is a sensation, and to go beyond it. There is a kind of clinging, or identification with the sensational experience.

(A): No, it depends on which meditation you are doing. If you are doing the mindfulness meditation, then you concentrate only on mind. You are ever mindful of the view that a thought has no shape, size, etc. Any thought that arises then you implement that view on it. This is the analytical way where you examine every thought – whether it has a color, or shape, where does the thought come from, and where it goes. You simply examine each thought.

There is another way, and it is resting the mind. Any thought that appears, you are aware of it. That's all. But it is a different meditation.

Right now, we are training the mind by Shi'nay. While you are concentrating on your breath and counting, you are aware of any thought that arises. Be aware of any rising thought, and do not follow it. Simply come back to the point of focus. That's all. You don't have to apply the view of the nature of thoughts. Do not analyze. And do not develop any sensation, or whatever other experience during Shi'nay. If you do, then your mind is not concentrating. Instead, your mind is going after the sensation. In like manner, when your mind holds on to the different concepts, you are in effect making your mind busy.

Shi'nay is training your mind, and the result depends on how much, and how long you can keep at that level. Later, you will develop the habit of mind where you can remain at one level. Shi'nay means maintaining peace. Shi' means peace, where there are no thoughts. And nay means to maintain or to remain. Therefore, Shi'nay means to remain in the peace, this is what you are training yourself to do. You train your mind to be able to remain at one level without thinking of anything else. Concepts, and sensations are all distractions. Everything that you can think up, is a distraction during Shi'nay. This is very impor-

tant for you to understand.

(Q): Do we breathe down until the navel, or until a place under the navel?

(A): You should not concentrate on the center of the navel. This is again, I think, borrowed from the Vajrayogini practice, or Tummo practice. You should not apply these kinds of visualizations here.

There is now so much confusion with respect to Dharma practice. As I said earlier, by putting together everything you have heard or read, you will not be successful. You have to go through a systematic program of practice.

Here, to press the breath down slightly is just a technique in order to keep the right posture. You should neither visualize, nor concentrate on anything in the area of the navel. You are not to do any yoga here.

(Q): I would like to do a retreat in the Bodhi Path center for one week. What practice would you advise?

(A): For an individual retreat, you should follow a systematic program. This means that as a beginner, you should do Shi'nay. You have to train your mind, and Shi'nay is especially good for that.

As well, you do Prostrations to the 35 Buddhas. It is a very good practice to do in the morning. For the rest of the day, you practice Shi'nay. It is still too early yet to do the yidam practice of Chenrezig.

However, for your personal practice, you can do a Chenrezig-Guru Yoga practice of Thangtong Gyalpo. It is a practice where you visualize Chenrezig on top of your head and you supplicate him. After, you dissolve with him. If you do a retreat, then you do this Chenrezig supplication practice in the afternoon, or evening. In general, you can always carry on with this Chenrezig-Guru Yoga, or Chenrezig-Lama Naljor of the lineage of Thangtong Gyalpo. You supplicate Chenrezig to bless you. This is very good for you. The blessing of Chenrezig will ripen your mind, and you need this blessing.

The Mahamudra practitioners in the Kagyu meditation centers in the Himalayas do the Ngöndro Prostrations many, many times. Not only one hundred thousand times, but two hundred, three hundred, four hundred thousand times. Some do a million times prostrations. They then become more successful in meditation.

Many of you must have done Ngöndro in the past, which is good. By doing the recitations and prostrations to the 35 Buddhas one hundred thousand times, you will, in effect, be refilling whatever you had done before. The practice will activate all your merits. Therefore, it is really worthwhile to do them one hundred thousand times.

After that, you will do the Mandala to the 35 Buddhas.

Until you have achieved the results of Shi'nay, you have to carry on with it. Without Shi'nay, you can never develop Lhakthong, or insight meditation. Without Lhakthong, you will never attain enlightenment. Why? Lhakthong is the laser that can ignite the ignorance. Laser power! (This is just a metaphor, so please do not take the words literally.) Lhakthong meditation wakes up

your mind from your ignorance. Without it, you can never attain enlightenment. Lhakthong depends on Shi'nay, and enlightenment depends on Lhakthong. Therefore, Shi'nay is very important.

Summary review of meditation posture and method

We will do some meditation now. The posture: The right hand is in the left hand and rests on your left leg. Raise the shoulders a little, but not forward, a little more towards the back. Keep the stomach in. Breathe into the stomach and press it down. Keep it below the navel, in the abdomen. The spine should be kept straight up. The neck is bent down a little. The eyes look to the ground along the nose. The mouth and the tongue are kept normal. The mouth is closed but without pressure. The advice is not to close the eyes when doing Shi'nay. Keep the eyes normal as usual. Blinking is not a problem.

Then concentrate on your breath. Breathe out gently, visualize your breath as a slightly curved beam of light, and it almost touches the ground. Then, it independently comes back in. You inhale and it goes down almost touching your navel. In, out, in, out. Concentrate and keep the awareness of whether the mind is focused on the breathing and the beam of light, or not.

While you are meditating, don't be tense. But if you are too relaxed then you will fall asleep. So by thinking, or by forcing your mind to be brighter, you energize yourself.

Visualize your breath from the two nostrils, but as one beam of light, slightly curved, and independent of you. It's tiny but very clear. Inhale and exhale. Do not try to think that the light is really there. It is just a vision. It is like training a wild horse. In the beginning, it is very uncomfortable for the horse to be controlled by people. It's the same for the mind. At first, the mind doesn't want to agree with you. But later, the mind will become naturally calm. Then, the mind will be very comfortable.

Concentrate on one thing. Try not to think so much.

When you breathe out, the tip of the light beam nearly touches the ground, and the other end of the beam is almost out just underneath the nose. Since the beam is visualized, it does not have to exactly follow through the whole body.

When you are used to it then you can expand it. You could do it all the way to the tip of the toe and so on. You will do that later. It will produce a good effect

also. For now, visualize the light beam from the navel to the nose and out, more in a curve.

For beginners, those of you who have never done any meditation, this is very uncomfortable. The mind won't stay focused. You may feel that you can never do it well. But do it. Quickly you will get used to it. You can do it.

Here is a repetition of the Shi'nay points:

You can sit either in the cross-legged posture, or in the half-crossed posture, or on a chair, or in the Zen meditation posture, any one of them is fine.

In the cross-legged posture, then the right hand is in the left hand, and they rest on the ankle of your left foot, which is facing up.

The back should be straight.

The shoulders are up.

The arms are slightly stretched.

The neck is bent down a little.

Your eyes look along your nose to the ground. The eyes are not looking at your lap but along the line from the tip of your nose towards the ground.

Press the air in the stomach down and keep it in the abdomen below the navel, so that the stomach is kept in.

Exhale and inhale. Visualize the breath that leaves your nose as a beam of crystal light, and focus on that.

It goes out, one end almost touching the ground and the other end coming out of your nose. When you inhale, one end almost touches your navel and the upper end is just inside your nose.

Focus on the breath you are visualizing, and keep mentally aware.

Practice of the 35 Buddhas

The two benefits of the practice

The 35 Buddhas practice is a method to purify negative karmas, and to accumulate meritorious karma. The practice produces these two effects.

By purifying the bad karmas, your mind will be free from their influences. This means your mind will be clearer. When the negative karmas are diminishing, your wisdom will strengthen.

The other effect of the practice is that your mind will accumulate merit, a necessary condition for enlightenment. Merit supports you as you try to attain enlightenment. Merit affords you the opportunity to be enlightened. For instance, by your very good merits, you can be reborn in a Buddha field. A rebirth in a pure land is deemed optimal for enlightenment because the Buddhas are there. You can learn directly from them. They are there to guide you, and so you will be able to follow the teachings and become enlightened. Excellent causes and conditions such as these are dependent on your store of merits, so you have to know how to gather them. By doing the practice of the 35 Buddhas, you will accumulate useful merits. To understand through reason and logic

Whenever you hear about karma and the problems caused by it, your mind naturally thinks of it from your perspectives tied in with your traditions and history. Therefore I will give you some clear instructions to make out the differences between the truth of the teaching versus cultural and traditional attitudes.

First of all, when you listen to the Dharma teachings, you have to know that you are listening to a different subject, a different culture than those found in the European or Western countries. Secondly, when you listen, you have to judge whether it makes sense or not. Judge in a way where you consider the information through logic and reason. The teachings actually show you that logic. Learn that logic. It is not just Buddhist logic. It teaches you to think more clearly. It enhances your understanding, judgment, and wisdom. It enables you to understand that mind is mind.

Before a teaching, you could remind yourself, "I will be listening to something new and totally different from our Western ways I will be listening to a subject entirely different than my own culture and values." Then whatever it is you hear, you will know not to associate it with something very interesting you have in the West that you are attracted to. And you will also know not to associate it with Western ways, which irritate or disappoint you.

An example: Take someone who is always criticizing the Western way of life. He is somewhat of a rebel. Others around him look down on him. This person encounters an Asian culture where he finds the Hindu or Buddhist teachings. He draws similarities between them and his ways. Then, armed with the Hindu or Buddhist views on his side, he challenges those in his society who have always looked down on him. He justifies his own thinking and views. "What I thought all along was correct because the Buddha said so, too. I don't like to wear clothes so I don't have to. I can go naked. People always say I'm crazy. I'm not so crazy after all. Look at

Milarepa, he was naked, too, and so are the Hindu Babas!" This shows how a person could use foreign customs to validate his own ways.

Here is another example: During the Middle Ages when the Church ruled, a "guilt culture" was prevalent in Western Europe. In this respect, some of you may think that to feel guilty is correct, while others among you may think it very bad.

Now I am explaining to you that in Buddhism, there are teachings and practices that involve feeling regret for past karmas committed. However, I also qualify it by adding that regret in the Buddhist context serves a totally different purpose. The Buddhist regret does not mean for you to feel guilty or to blame yourself.

If you are not flexible in how you think, if you don't try to develop a new attitude in your listening, or if you are stuck in your own views, then you could seriously misunderstand what I have said to you.

Half of you may interpret what I said like this: "What I thought so far about feeling guilty, which the Christian Church had taught me, was right. He just said it, too – to feel regret for the bad karma. So Buddhism also says the same thing." By interpreting what I have said in that sense, then you have given yourself the confirmation you were looking for. You'd feel encouraged to continue to feel guilty. You have associated my explanation with something in your religious belief that attracts you.

The other half of you may think this. "The Buddhist teaching is just as bad as the teaching of the Church. They are also telling us to feel regret, and to purify the bad karma. That is the same as wanting us to feel guilty, that we should be punished. This purification sounds like the burning of witches. They're all the same." You have associated my explanation with something in a religion that you dislike.

If you understand the meaning of regret in either of these two ways, then you are wrong. In both instances, you have misinterpreted the Buddhist meaning and use of regret for past karmas.

It is therefore important to know that you are learning a new subject, new to your Western tradition. Some similarities might be there, but most of it is new. Whenever you receive information, you keep an open mind without bias and judgment. Afterwards, you reflect on what you have heard. You think carefully about the meaning of the explanations given. Do the points make sense, and are the explanations reasonable? The explanations given in Buddhist teachings actually train you to reflect, analyze, and introspect skillfully. Your understanding will then be accurate.

The karmic thoughts

Thoughts are many. Some of them are karmic, which will produce results in the form of illusions. The karma, or illusion, does not come from anybody else but you. Karma comes from your own mind. Some examples of karmic thoughts are: profound desire, a very grasping form of desire; profound anger, a deeply rooted anger; and profound ignorance. Any thought that is related to these three

thoughts is a negative karma.

Ignorance, to begin with, is a neutral state— like sleep. It does not immediately create karma. But because of ignorance, because of not-knowing, negative karmas can develop. When ignorance gives rise to wrong views, the consequences can be very serious. Strong negative karmas can be created as a result. One example is Sati, the rite of burning widows.

In India, the followers of a religious sect called, Sati, had believed that it was good to burn widows at their husbands' funerals. This practice is almost extinct now. More recently, it has attracted the attention of researchers, moviemakers, and authors alike.

A Brahmin scholar who had a very strong attachment to his wife invented sati. When the scholar knew his end was near, he wrote a book. In it, he extolled the virtues and rewards for a wife to be burnt in the funeral of her deceased husband. He wanted to make his wife believe that it would be very good for her to jump into his funeral pyre – that they would go to heaven together. This was the main theme of his book, which had turned out very convincing to the people in those days.

The scholar's misdirection came from three factors. The first was his very strong attachment to his wife. He was said to have been a very ugly man. His wealth had procured him a very beautiful and young wife, and he grew very attached to her. The second factor was his nature was not good. He harbored much jealousy and lacked compassion. He did not mind that his wife would suffer greatly by being burnt alive. The last factor was his ignorance. He did not believe that his action was absolutely wrong. The scholar did not know about karma, about cause and effect. His ignorance caused him to create the terribly bad action— writing the book— with dire consequences for his wife and so many other women afterwards.

Based on the scholar's book, a religious practice was founded which attracted followers in many parts of India until recently. The practice stirred up very many negative emotions in the believers. As a result, tremendous negative karmas were created. Now the government of India and the Indian public at large are putting an end to this horrible rite. But some people are still convinced by this book.

Some types of anger, and desire are like drawings on water; they can immediately disappear. They do not create much karma. Other types of anger and desire are like drawings in the sand they can be wiped away. These create some light karma. A third type of the karma from anger and desire are like carvings in stone; they will remain and will always cause problems because they are perpetuating ever more negativities.

Remedies for karmic thoughts

Regret is like therapy. It weakens the karmic thoughts that are like carvings in stone. Regret works like an antidote – it is effective against the power of your negative emotions by weakening and then subduing them. However, regret does not mean to blame yourself. We have to be very careful to distinguish this regret from the Christian guilt where self-punishment is used as atonement. I do not wish you to go in that direction, and this is not a criticism of your traditions and

culture. Buddhist teachers are always very open-minded in their communication with their students. They do not talk diplomatically, nor do they try to please the students. They talk very honestly, and wish only to lead the students to a proper understanding.

In general, for someone to help you, you have to cooperate with that person. Your cooperation serves you, as it opens you to receive the help of another. Through the supplication to the Buddhas, you are, in effect, bringing their wishes for you, upon yourself. In the practice, you have to arrange some karmic cooperation on your side.

The Buddhas have fully accomplished the path of enlightenment. Therefore, they have wisdom, and their store of positive potentials powerful. Moreover, all the wishes they have made for sentient beings are happening. All that remains is for you to absorb their help. In other words, from your side, you provide the cause to make their great wishes happen to you. And the cause is your pure devotion. Supplicating the Buddhas with pure devotion actualizes their good wishes for you.

Devotion is a pure state of mind rooted in having full confidence and trust in the accomplishments of the Buddhas. Your confidence and trust can only come about through a precise understanding of the wisdom qualities of the Buddhas, and of their wishes for you. Devotion means you know. It is your devotion and knowing that prevents your not-knowing about the Dharma path, and its result that is Buddhahood. An attitude of pure devotion thus prevents ignorance, and doubts that can originate from your basic ignorance. Devotion is a very pure attitude towards the wishes and wisdom of the Buddhas inviting their wishes and blessings to come to you, to purify your negative karmas.

35 Buddhas

The Buddha taught that there are Buddhas in the different universes. In particular, there are 35 Buddhas who reside in the realms located quite near our universe. Quite near in our context, means somewhere near our Milky Way, which astronomers nowadays could see, using the very powerful telescopes.

Each of these 35 Buddhas has a different color. Among them, there are many white, blue and yellow Buddhas. Why are they in these different colors? It is because the humans in those realms where the Buddhas appear are in those colors. In some realms where the majority of beings are yellow, then the Buddhas there also appear in yellow.

This is something that Bodhisattvas do – when they become enlightened, according to their wish, they choose a realm of beings to show them the way to become liberated. To be in their midst, such a Buddha then pretends to be born as a child of a family in their realm. Taking their form, he then pretends to realize that samsara is problematic. And then he pretends to become enlightened when in actual fact, he is already a Buddha. In other words, he pretends to be a normal human being for the sake of helping humans.

Our Buddha Shakyamuni was no exception. He too, was already enlightened. But he came into this world as a human in order to show you that you have the potential to become a Buddha. You can do as he did and become exactly like him. So he appeared as the child of a wealthy family on this earth.

If a beggar boy who has a lot of suffering were to tell you that samsara had no meaning, you won't pay him any attention. But when a very wealthy man, or a king, tells you that life has no meaning, that samsara has no meaning, that there is something else that you could achieve, he would be much more convincing than the beggar boy. You'd be more likely to give a wealthy prince your attention.

People in general think that someone very rich must be happy. But, the Buddha had conveyed quite the opposite message. "No. I am not happy. Here I am a prince. I have everything. And still, I find no satisfaction. There must be something else"—meaning enlightenment. So he ran away from the family trap, and went to the forest. He didn't just sleep in the forest; he meditated there, and then he demonstrated his enlightenment. He went through it all to show us that it could be done. He was an example to his followers of how it could be done, and he is our example still today. The Buddha said, "You can achieve everything that I have achieved!"

The Buddhas in the different universes are in the same color and form as the beings in their respective realms. And lucky are the realms where they have Buddhas. A yellow Buddha appears to the yellow humans. A blue Buddha is in the realm of the blue-skinned humans. And black Buddhas appear where black humans are the majority.

Once I was visiting a museum in Chicago, and some Americans asked me, "Why is the Medicine Buddha always in this dark blue color?" And I answered, "There was a universe with people of that color, so the Buddha there was that color. The Medicine Buddha was that kind of blue." Then I corrected myself, "Not was, he still is." Why did I say is? It's because he is still there, within our Milky Way.

We do have a stronger karmic connection to the Buddhas who are closer to us. Whether their universes are visible to us goes along with our illusions. For example, the Milky Way is within our illusion so it is visible to us. It means there is a karmic connection between the Milky Way and us. The Buddhas are there, in an area that is distantly visible to us, so you can still receive their blessings. Therefore, Buddha Shakyamuni selected the 35 Buddhas for us so that we could pray to them and supplicate them from among the millions of Buddhas.

Explanations on the actual practice

Visualize in the space before you the sky. In the sky, there appear 35 big lotuses. They serve as comfortable seats. You are mentally creating and offering them to the Buddhas to sit on. The 35 Buddhas include our Buddha Shakyamuni. You can imagine him in the center and arrange all the others around him any way you like – in a pyramid, circle or square.

In the Buddha realms, when a Buddha gives a teaching to his disciples, he is sometimes seated in the lotus posture or, otherwise, in the posture as when sitting on a chair like Buddha Maitreya. You can imagine the Buddhas sitting in either of these two ways. (But I don't think they'd be doing gymnastics, or exercises like push-ups. So don't imagine them in other postures.)

You invite all these Buddhas and they are there. And then, you do prostrations to them.

You begin with Refuge in the Triple Gem as written in the text.

The Refuge vow:

<sem tschen/ tam tshe/ tag par/ sang gye la/ kyab su tschi'o... >

which means, constantly all beings take refuge in Buddha....

Then, you read the section of supplication to the 35 Buddhas. There are two versions of it. The original version is in Sanskrit, the other is in Tibetan. If you know Sanskrit, you can read that version. Otherwise, read the Tibetan, which is quite nicely transliterated here.

The English translation from the Sanskrit is:

I prostrate to the Baghwan, the Tataghata, the Arhat, the completely perfect Buddha Shakyamuni.

In Tibetan:

<tshom den de/ de shin/ shag pa/ dra tshom pa/ yang dag par/
dsog pe/ sang gye/ sha kya/ tub pa la/ tshag tsal lo,
dor je'i/ nying po/ rab tu/ jom pa la/ tshag tsal lo >

Here are some explanations of the Tibetan terms:

* *Dorje'i nying po rab tu jompa* is the name of one of the Buddhas.

* *La* in Tibetan is a grammatical term meaning to.

* *tshag tsal lo* means prostrate.

* The whole phrase, *dor je'i/ nying po/ rab tu/ jom pa la/ tshag tsal lo*, therefore means:

I prostrate to Dorje'i Nyingpo Rabtu Jompa.

Or, in Sanskrit, *I prostrate to Vajragarbha.*

I would suggest that you read the names in Tibetan. This way, it is more convenient for you when you could read together with the lamas. Reading the text in your language (e.g. German, or English) is also fine.

The prostration verse section has been composed with the names of all the Buddhas ending always with *la tshag tsal lo*.

The practice consists of three parts, or sections.

Section 1:

1. Visualization: The visualization of the Buddhas comes before you do the actual prostrations. If you want to accumulate merit, you can try to visualize in a more elaborate way. As I said before, you think in your mind, or you visualize the 35 large lotuses. Then you invite the Buddhas to come, and to sit down before you in the lotuses. Then, imagine them all coming and sitting down on the lotus seats that you have mentally created and offered them.

You don't have to visualize each one of the 35 Buddhas in detail, because you cannot do it. Focus on Buddha Shakyamuni, and think that all the other Buddhas are also there. They have wisdom. They have compassion. From your devotion towards them, you have requested their presence, and you have supplicated them, and so they are there!

2. Then you recite the Buddhas' names, one by one, saying according to the text, as in 'I prostrate to Buddha Shakyamuni...' Read the whole verse once complete with all its mental elaborations. This part is referred to as 'the calling of the Buddhas' by their respective names.

After you have finished the verse, then you move on to the next part.

3. Offering: Create in your mind the most precious of offerings. All the precious things that you can think of – precious lakes, precious flowers, precious jewels. You manifest the offerings mentally from your mind, in front of the Buddhas, as you would in the Mandala practice.

4. Seven-branch prayer: Recite the prayer once:

- i. I prostrate to all these 35 Buddhas, including the countless Buddhas who live in all directions.
- ii. I pay homage to the boundless qualities of the Buddhas.
- iii. I request all the Buddhas to teach sentient beings.
- iv. I request all the Buddhas to appear to sentient beings, don't disappear!
- v. I request all the Buddhas to liberate all sentient beings.
- vi. I rejoice in all the merit of sentient beings, including great beings like Arhats, Pratyekabuddhas and Bodhisattvas.
- vii. I regret all the (bad) karma of sentient beings, including my own (bad) karma – please give blessing to purify everything in one moment.

5. Recitation with Prostrations: After the Seven-branch prayer, you stand up to do prostrations by calling again the name of each Buddha, one by one.

Each complete recitation of the prostration verse begins with,

<sem tschen/ tam tsche/ tag par/ sangye la/ kyab su tshi'o//>

or 'I prostrate to Buddha...'

and ends with the name of the last Buddha,

< de schin/ scheg pa/ dra tschom pa/ yang dag par/ dsog pe/ sang gye/ rin po tsche/ dang/ pe me/ den la/ rab tu/ schug pa/ ri wang gi/ gyal po la/ tschag tsal lo//>

Then you go back again to the words in the beginning.

The verse you recite again and again while prostrating to all 35 Buddhas.

As you prostrate, you should visualize all sentient beings are with you, including mosquitoes, as well as beings in the precious human forms. Imagine them all on a boundless plain. The 35 Buddhas appear above in the space, all the sentient beings also can see them, and are together with you doing prostrations to the Buddhas.

To do this prostration practice, you have to memorize the names of the Buddhas. I suggest that until you have the words memorized, you read the words into a tape recorder. Then you could play the disk, or cassette, as you do the prostrations while saying the words along with the tape. This is my suggestion. You only have to memorize the verse for the prostration part. The rest of the practice, you can follow the text.

In one German edition, in the beginning of the supplication verse before the names of the Buddhas, this phrase appears:

<... lama la/ kyab su tschi'o/>

It is a supplication to one's teachers, and I have taken it out.

The phrase was not part of the original sutra, but a Tibetan addition. It means to take refuge in the teachers. Nowadays there are all kinds of teachers, so there is no security. It is safer and better to stick with the original text.

Chinese Buddhists have a slight criticism of Tibetan Buddhists about one point. Buddhism was invited into China 500 years before it reached Tibet. The Tibetans everywhere added 'the Lama', so Buddhism became known as Lamaism.

There were two reasons for the inclusion and placement of the phrase at the beginning of the verse. The first is to show respect for one's teacher. This is understandable as you receive teachings from your teacher so you could be enlightened. As to its placement at the beginning of the verse, the logic is as follows:

'Lama' in Tibetan Buddhism should mean spiritual guides who are enlightened. These include all Arhats, and Pratyekabuddhas who have already attained their respective levels of enlightenment. Their achievements depended completely upon the Buddha. And all Buddhas became enlightened having fully and directly depended on the Bodhisattvas. The Bodhisattvas are the ones who will develop into Buddhas. In other words, one is a Bodhisattva first, before one develops into a Buddha. By that logic, some people supplicate first to the enlightened Bodhisattvas, and then to the Buddhas. But the order does not mean at all that the Bodhisattvas are higher than the Buddhas. Here, I am just repeating their logic to you.

If this logic and the placement of the words were taken to the extreme, the original meaning would be lost. Then, it could be dangerous. Do you know why it could be dangerous? It is because a teacher could then claim this: "I am a great teacher of Buddhism. I even come first in the supplication, and then the Buddha. So, I am above the Buddha." You can all see how that teacher has manipulated the intended logic of the placement. He has distorted the original meaning of the order to suit his own personal ambition, making the Dharma into his own kind of politics. Even today, these kinds of claims are being made. This is the reason I have removed that line.

Here in this practice, concentrate only on the Buddhas. Follow directly the original sutra text. The Buddha is the direct cause of your enlightenment. Prostrate to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, and don't add the teacher. Then, there is no danger of going in a wrong direction.

Do the long, fully stretched prostrations many, many, many times. They are called the condensed yoga. Prostrations are very good for health and they have many other benefits. They activate all the positive nerves in the body, which

service your wisdom and clear your mind.

With hands together folded, touch the three points of body, speech and mind.

Then prostrate, and touch the Buddha's feet. In this way, you get rid of all your negative karmas accumulated by body, speech and mind through the three mental poisons of ignorance, anger and attachment.

Think that you are sending all the poisons out of you when you stretch out your body and limbs.

Think that you are liberating all sentient beings in the six realms when you stand up. This is one way to train your mind to activate your Bodhicitta.

I have witnessed that some cancer patients have recovered from their cancers by doing prostrations. I have no proof, but I know someone whose cancer was completely eliminated by doing prostrations. Buddhist practitioners made this very new discovery by chance. I have also told a cancer research center so they could make further investigations into it.

A relative of mine had esophagus cancer. At that time, she could not swallow rice. She could only manage to eat thin porridge, a liquid rice porridge. The doctor's recommendation was to cut away the cancer. But she refused to go under the knife.

She had heard that doing a lot of prostrations cured one of her friends who had stomach cancer. She did not have much confidence in it at first. Nonetheless, she made up her mind to do it. Her thinking was this: "Let me die. But I will do prostrations until I die and the merit will follow me. The cutting by operation won't make much difference. I will still die in any case. It might be postponed by a year or two, so it doesn't matter." She then committed herself to doing only prostrations.

You know, when you do many, many prostrations you will like doing them. Physically, you will feel very comfortable. And so, she did many prostrations every day. Then later, having been able to swallow only porridge before, gradually, she was able to swallow rice. Then later, she could eat again. She stopped prostrations for some time, because they were too much for her. She was growing very thin. But when she felt that the tumor might be growing again, she started doing prostrations again. This time, she did them until the tumor had completely disappeared. She is normal now. This is her seventh year since recovering from her serious esophagus cancer.

Another young Bhutanese lady, had blood cancer in the limbs. She went to a very good cancer research center for two months. I saw her last in Timphu, the capital of Bhutan. It is now her fifth year since her recovery. She did so many prostrations that she developed a lump on her forehead. She is also completely recovered.

One of our khenpos has serious liver cancer. When he first came to the hospital in New Delhi, the doctors told him he could eat whatever he'd like. They had given up on him thinking that he would die within two months. There was no point in putting him on a strict diet. "Let him enjoy," they had thought. Then I told Khenpo to do prostrations. Now it is his fourth year since his diagnosis.

The prostration practice is very powerful, whether as an exercise, or for blessing. The recoveries of all three people must have been due to the blessing as well. Maybe the practice produces an effect that burns the cancer cells, I don't know.

There is no difference whether you do the prostrations in the way of the Four Foundations Practice, or to the 35 Buddhas. The Bhutanese lady and my relative just recited "Namo Buddhaya, namo Dharmaya, namo Sanghaya," meaning "I take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha", that's all. But they all did the long prostrations. It is good to know. You should all know this because sickness can happen at any time.

Here, you do prostrations to purify your negative karma to attain enlightenment.

Section 2:

Purification: After doing as many prostrations as you'd like, a hundred, or a thousand, you sit down again on your seat, with your hands respectfully joined towards the Buddhas.

Read the rest of the practice text. It is a list of bad karmas that sentient beings can accumulate. Any sentient being has created, and can still create these bad karmas in the past, present, or future.

It starts with <de dag/ la sog pa/...>,

or You and all the others ...

and ends with <... tshö tshing/ dom par/ gyi lag so//>,

or ...and promise not to do bad things from now on.

The confession prayer is recited three times.

As you recite the words, you should really know that they are the negative karmas. You recite the words with the motivation that you wish to get rid of the negativities.

Pray to the Buddhas to give blessing to purify all the negative karmas, all the karmic seeds of negative actions that are still in your consciousness. Do not interpret the word, 'confession,' in the Christian sense. Here you are repeating the whole list of negative karmas. You are thinking that the blessings of the 35 Buddhas are purifying all of the negativities.

If there is no karmic connection for something to happen to you, then it can never happen to you.

Nagarjuna, who lived after Alexander the Great, learned the Greek alchemy of turning stone into gold. He gave gold to many beggars and inadvertently caused inflation in the country! The king sent a messenger to Nagarjuna to beg him to stop!

Nagarjuna thought to himself, "When the beggars come, I can't help but give to them. I think now is the time for me to leave this world. Rather than wait for a natural death, I need a cause to die now." Nagarjuna knew for the good of the country, he had to end the inflation. So he decided to take himself out. He then tried to see if there was an unnatural cause for his demise. Was there any nega-

tive karma left in his mind, which could act as a cause to end his life?

Through his wisdom, Nagarjuna's investigation into his mind showed him one karmic seed that could kill him: countless millions of years ago, when he was a baby, he had killed an ant by cutting off its head with a blade of grass. That karma was still left there.

So Nagarjuna told the messenger, "Please cut a piece of grass, and touch my head with it." The messenger did as he was asked. Miraculously, Nagarjuna promptly removed his own head, and presented it to the messenger saying, "Now I die." Nagarjuna then disappeared.

This example shows how a karma was stored in the dualistic mind, which when ripened, gave rise to an illusion. Nagarjuna had attained the Bodhisattva bhūmis but he had yet to become a fully enlightened Buddha. He was still in an illusion. However, his illusion was so light that it was more like looking at a picture screen, and as such it could no longer trap him.

Section 3:

The third section is the dedication of your merit to sentient beings. Recite the dedication prayer three times.

It starts with: All Buddhas, be aware, [now I am going to dedicate!]. ... please be my witnesses!

<sang gye/ tshom den de/ [...] dag la/ gong su sol//>

The merit I've accumulated in this life, or in any previous lives, from only giving a bit of food to a living being, and up to enlightened merit, all these my merits I have combined them here and I dedicate them to sentient beings.

In other words, the results of my merits must benefit sentient beings.

In this way, you are making an earnest wish that the good results of your merits, from as small as giving a biscuit to a dog up to the merit you accumulate for the sake of enlightenment, should go to sentient beings. Make that wish from the bottom of your heart in front of the 35 Buddhas.

These are then the three sections: the prostration, the confession, (I have to use this word, but please understand it in the Buddhist context) and the dedication. Practice all three sections in front of the 35 Buddhas.

Questions (Q) and Answers (A)

(Q): What you say is so close to me; it feels like something I've always known but now it has become clear and bright. And I am touched by that, so I feel like crying.

(A): That's very good. I am happy you've understood what I've explained to you. But again, that emotion should not be something that you grasp. Don't solidify it.

(Q): What happens to people who have bad concepts about guilt, for example in Christianity, and develop the theory that you can be purified by being burnt?

(A): There is not really a problem. But if you stick to a wrong view then it simply remains a wrong view.

Nowadays people do not practice rites like Sati anymore. They no longer act negatively out of wrong religious beliefs. Still, the people who had created the negativities are receiving very bad karma; for instance, the people who had caused so many women to jump into the funeral fires.

The Buddha had always cautioned, "Don't write books wildly."

This was why Tsongkhapa invented a new way for people to learn the Dharma – to learn it verbally. It was during the time when he was organizing schools in Tibet to teach Buddhism. He did not want the people to know how to write. So, he invented a unique method to train them in a special verbal skill for learning Buddhism precisely. Tsongkhapa organized a school that allowed thousands of people to learn Buddhism by his method.

This was also why the majority of Gelugpas used to only teach people to learn verbally. Their people did not know how to sign their own names because they never learned how to write. Tsongkhapa did not want everybody writing books. To write a book is a very delicate task. Books that are not written properly will confuse people. That was Tsongkhapa's concern, and even the Gelugpas then did not know of his real motive.

There is a belief in some cultures that a deceased person would receive things that are burnt in his funeral fire. In those cultures, family and friends therefore offer up many nice things for burning during a funeral. I don't know how this misunderstanding originated. But again, a book was written about this rite, which became popularized and spread in China. Consequently, many precious things are burnt for funerals. The act is not bad karma per se, but it is a waste, isn't it?

During the Buddha's time, as expected, the quality of the teachings was very well preserved. Only the qualified students like Kashyapa, or Ananda were teaching. They taught from memory only. Even for several hundred years after the Buddha's passing, the teachings were still very well maintained. The standards of the Hindu schools then were very high. My guess is some of the teachings of Buddha Kashyapa were kept in those schools, which accounted for the very high qualifications of some Hindu saints.

For example, in those days there were a very few teachers who taught that if you were to kill 1,000 people in one week, then you would go to heaven. Related to this kind of misconception, there was a man who was collecting thumbs of his victims.

He had killed 999 people, and he needed only one more. His last victim was supposed to have been the Buddha, who instead, saved him.

It was people's misinterpretations of the teachings that had started the decline of the Buddha Dharma and the Hindu teachings. Moreover, it was when those misinterpretations were written down in books that the decline really spread on a very large scale.

Wrong views are always created by ignorance. At the moment, wrong views are not an obstacle for you. But when your practice comes to the really deep levels in meditations such as Shi'nay and Lhakthong, then you will realize that wrong views can be indeed disturbing. They are, in fact, the targets for elimination in Lhakthong meditation.

Practice of the 35 Buddhas in a Group

First section:

While I read, you will do the prostrations. We all visualize the 35 Buddhas in front of ourselves. When you have memorized the verse, then you will be able to say it faster.

You keep reciting while you do the prostrations.

(Prostrations)

Second section:

Sit down, or kneel down – whatever you like, or whatever is comfortable to you.

The second section is the confession, for purification.

(Speaking the confession part)

The last line means: **"I will not deliberately commit all these bad karmas again."**

You will get copies of these instructions including the list of the bad karmas, like killing your father, killing your mother, killing an Arhat or other beings.

Third section:

(A) The dedication prayer.

(Speaking the dedication part)

(B) Wishes

Recite the confession prayer three times. Recite the dedication prayer also three times. Then, the lines after that are wishes for all sentient beings from the Seven-branch prayer. This you recite only once.

If your time is limited, then recite the prostrations a few times and then the confession and the dedication prayer once.

If you have time for many prostrations, then you keep on calling the names of the 35 Buddhas and make as many prostrations as you'd like. Then you do the confession, and the dedication once, or three times each.

Questions (Q) and Answers (A)

(Q): Can I also do this practice besides the practice I do right now?

(A): Yes you can. Here, it is best if you go systematically starting from Shi'nay until you reach the most profound practice. Shi'nay is the concentration practice on the breath as I've described. Those of you who have no knowledge of Shi'nay and whose minds are very busy should start with this practice. If you have already done a lot of Shi'nay, and you are used to it, then of course, you wouldn't.

But if your mind is still not calm, it means that you have not effectively implemented the various methods, which you have learned and practiced. This is why I showed you how to start with Shi'nay. To concentrate on breathing by counting is very important.

Once you are well used to the counting, then you won't count any more. But your mind should still be trained to follow the breath that you visualize. And once you are used to following the breath without counting, then you don't follow it anymore. You would simply keep your mind on the breath.

You need Shi'nay to pacify your mind. The 35 Buddhas practice is for purification. You should concentrate on the 35 Buddhas practice in lieu of Dzog Shing (the field of accumulation/refuge tree we focus on when we do the prostrations in the Ngöndro). I suggest that everyone now concentrate and prostrate to the 35 Buddhas. This is a very powerful practice. It was Marpa's prostration practice. Dzog Shing is good,

but I think the 35 Buddhas practice is better for you.

If you are doing the Six Yogas of Naropa practice, and you are doing Guru Yoga, then Dzog Shing is fine within those practices. This is Mahamudra practice, so our prostration practice as well as our Mandala offerings should be directed towards the 35 Buddhas.

You can memorize the text of the 35 Buddhas. The blessing contained therein is very, very powerful. It is much better than the practice Dzog Shing, because we are in the Kali Yuga, meaning many things can happen. Therefore, the 35 Buddha practice is a very secure method within a systematic program for Mahamudra, which I have organized for you.

During the times of Marpa, Milarepa, Gampopa, the first Karmapa, Düsum Khyenpa and the second Karmapa, Karma Pakshi, when practitioners were doing the Guru Yoga practice, their gurus were the great Siddhas as I have just named, like Gampopa. There was nothing wrong with these masters. With respect to Düsum Khyenpa and Karma Pakshi, they were perfect –almost like Buddhas. The practices that focused on such highly enlightened teachers were convenient to follow and they were very effective. But nowadays, you are wondering what to do? There is no security in following the teachers anymore.

For instance, a student might think like this. "I took initiation from my teacher, but now I've heard something bad about him, so what should I do?" There is doubt. Where is the truth? There are no teachers like Gampopa and Düsum Khyenpa anymore. The followers don't feel safe, and they are confused. It is happening.

In those days of Gampopa, Düsum Khyenpa, or Karma Pakshi, to hear anything bad about such a master was impossible. What bad things have you ever heard about Karma Pakshi? But nowadays, lots of things are happening.

For example, suppose a certain teacher gives an initiation here, and in keeping with the instructions during Gampopa's time, he tells you to think of him above your head. And suppose, you agree and do as you are told. Then, something happens to him. You will feel very confused, and you will not know what to do. It is not safe to just follow any teacher. I have come across many teachers, and many disciples who have come up against these kinds of things. Therefore, the thing to do is to put all the teachers into the Bodhisattva group. There can be no problems with that. The teachers give you explanations and instructions about the Dharma. On your side, you should maintain a good attitude towards them. But don't prostrate to them.

For Mahamudra, the prostration practice is to the 35 Buddhas. Stick to that – it is secure. When you do prostrations to the 35 Buddhas, you will not have any problems and you will only get merit. For sure, you will not see the 35 Buddhas doing something funny later on. After you have finished the prostrations, then you will do the Mandala practice.

You should follow a systematic program in order to achieve quickly the results. You should not do so many different practices. When you don't do any Dharma practice, you are totally detached, or separated from the path of enlightenment. This means you are not on the Path. You are completely out of it. On the other hand, if you are on the Path, but you are always looking for other paths, or trying out everything, then you will never make progress. You are not going straight, but zig-zag. Don't go "Dharma shopping."

(Q): I am doing Ngöndro right now. Should I finish it, or should I switch?

(A): If you finish the Four-Foundation practice and then start the Six Yogas of Naropa, then that would be all right. Start this program after you finish the Ngöndro is also fine. There is no difference. I am just making a program that is secure. Everybody is talking about lineage nowadays. And it is very confusing. You are reading books, here and there, thinking about the lineages. In the end, you will be totally confused. After all, we are in the time of the Kali Yuga. So, I have made a practice system that is safe and secure.

(Q): For the Shi'nay meditation, is it also possible to visualize something different than explained while concentrating on the breath? For example, can one focus on the movement of the stomach, or some other Shi'nay meditation?

(A): No, don't do it like that. What I taught is very important. It is what you should do. The disciples of the Buddha have done exactly this practice. They were all successful and so the method is reliable. Many inventions cropped up afterwards, but they are not so reliable. Shariputra and the other disciples of the Buddha all started with this practice. With regards to the other inventions, what proof is there that they work? The people who invented their own ways are not Buddhas. An invention is just one person's idea. I could create a wave and call it the way to enlightenment but then I would have no proof to give you that it works. For enlightenment, all teachings should come from the Buddha, only then is it reliable.

(Q): What to do when you have back problems and you can only do the prostrations very slowly.

(A): That's fine. One prostration with back pain is equal to 1,000 prostrations by a healthy person with respect to merit. You can also visualize yourself doing the prostrations together with the many sentient beings. There is no difference in the merit accumulation. But where health is concerned, then there is a difference – the back pain may disrupt the benefit of the physical exercise.

(Q): And when are they finished? After how many times? Is there a number?

(A): 100,000 times.

(Q): Is it alright to do Ngöndro and Shi'nay at the same time, for example, one in the morning, one in the evening?

(A): Sure, you can do that. For Dharma practice, there isn't any special time. Dharma is merit. Merit needs to be accumulated by mind. There is no specified time for practice. You should do it whenever it is convenient to you.

You need to practice the method of Shi'nay, because your mind is not in Shi'nay. And when your mind is not in Shi'nay, you cannot do Mahamudra meditation. There are just too many thoughts. You cannot meditate when you are thinking a lot.

All Dharma practices will result in a good rebirth because of the merit one accumulates in doing them. Receiving the many Dharma teachings, and doing the

many positive things are always good for merit accumulation. They are good for the next life, for your future lives. But those activities will not make you successful in meditation within one lifetime. By doing ten different practices a day, you will not succeed in any one of them, but you will have merits.

(Q): If one has already finished the Ngöndro, and is doing a yidam meditation, should one go back to do another preparation?

(A): That depends on the result. In Austria, some people, though not many, did the 35 Buddhas practice. They did it exclusively and got the signs exactly as mentioned in the sutra. The results came so quickly – through all the blessings. Everything is fresh. In other words, these practitioners have pure attitudes. They do not hold any wrong thoughts, or views about the Buddhas.

know someone who gave up on his teacher of many years. What could he do now? He had done 100.000 prostrations, and 100.000 Mandala offerings to his teacher. This is what I meant by, ‘there is no security’. In this time of Kali Yuga, you see many things. That person lost his trust in his teacher because he saw something. I don’t know what it was. He had already finished 400.000 times the practice of thinking his teacher as Buddha Vajradhara. Just think, what kind of problems would that person have now had he practiced the 35 Buddhas? He would not have any problems. He would not have a fight with the 35 Buddhas.

I meet sometimes with a group of students whose teacher had passed away. So I do know them through my own experience. They are doing very well because their teacher had taught them to have respect for the spiritual teacher. To most people, to have respect for a teacher who has given you the instructions for the path to enlightenment, is easy. It is totally reasonable.

This particular teacher had always emphasized to his students to think that Milarepa was Vajradhara in the Ngöndro. People never have any trouble with Milarepa. So to this day, his students are still very respectful and grateful to him for his proper guidance. They don’t have any problems with their dharma practice regardless of what might have happened to their teacher. Day and night, they practice Guru Yoga with Milarepa as Buddha Vajradhara. What problem could possibly arise from that? Milarepa would not create any problems for them.

(Q): When I am already concentrating on one Buddha, then if I were to jump back to the 35 Buddhas, isn’t that more like jumping left and right, instead of going one way straight?

(A): You should not make any differentiations between the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. You should not put them into the different categories like we do with the many species of animals. You should also not divide the Buddhas into parties or groups as we humans do with different social, political, and cultural groups.

You should not think Buddha Vajradhara different from the other Buddhas. The Buddhas don’t belong to any party. They are not divided into groups. They are all aspects of Buddha wisdom and enlightenment. The 35 Buddhas and Vajradhara are of the same nature. The Buddhas are not your personal friends, nor are they fellow human beings who may like you, or not like you. Do you think the 35 Buddhas and your teacher are the same, or not? If you do, you will be confused. They are not the same.

(Q): What about Chenrezig?

(A): Chenrezig has the same nature as the Buddhas. When you concentrate on the 35 Buddhas, Chenrezig is included.

The 35 Buddhas practice includes everything – all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. This means they also include the 1,000 Buddhas. The 35 Buddhas will not push the 1,000 Buddhas away. This is the reason why the 35 Buddhas practice is organized as it is. When you do prostrations to the 35 Buddhas, you will receive the blessings from 1,000 Buddhas, even from a million Buddhas. You will receive the blessings of countless Buddhas, from all the Buddhas, when you do the 35 Buddhas practice.

How humans conceptualize and group things cannot be applied to Dharma practice. For instance, you might think that one Buddha doesn't belong here, but there. This is 'group-mind', or 'party-mind'.

An example of a group-mind is when you think that there is a group of holy people here. You decide to stick to them – that is being group-minded. When something is changed in the group, then you will have difficulty shifting to another group. It'll make you feel uncomfortable.

When you are leader-minded, you are pegging someone to be your leader. Later, when you are then asked instead to pray to ten Buddhas, you have a problem. In your mind, your leader has changed to ten, when you've been used to having only one. This is how an ordinary, or worldly mind works. This is how you think now.

There is also a nationalistic-mind. "My country is the best." All these conceptualistic minds should be dropped when it comes to the Dharma. Dharma practice does not require a party-mind, a leader-mind, or a nationalistic mind.

The Buddha taught the 35 Buddhas practice with all three sections of practice. It is from the Sutra of the Buddha. It was taught by the Buddha to sentient beings for them to become enlightened. And we are the ones who want to be enlightened, aren't we? We have chosen the Buddha's teachings as opposed to those of Jesus, Mohammed, or Krishna. The three sections of practices to the 35 Buddhas, which have now been presented to you, are very effective in helping you to attain enlightenment. This is the reason why the Buddha taught them. The lineage of this practice has been passed down to us unbroken, and it is a practice within the Mahamudra lineage.

You should do the practice. When you do, try not to apply the party-mind of worldly thinking. This means you should not think that you 'belong' to Kagyüpa, Nyingmapa, Sakyapa, or Gelugpa..., etc. Don't bring the group-mind into it. You are here now for enlightenment, that is your focus. You want to purify your bad karma so you use an effective way to achieve the desired result. The Dharma is not a competition for market share between companies like Suzuki versus Toyota. That kind of mentality is not needed here. Rather, your only concern is to be cured of your sickness, which is your only objective. Here, your sickness encompasses samsara, bad karma, negative emotions, and ignorance. They are your problems, so you want to apply the right methods to be rid of them.

You should not discriminate among the Buddhas. You should not be like the followers of Sarasvati (goddess of wisdom). They refuse to pray to Norjuma, or

Lakshmi (goddess of wealth). Why? It is because both Sarasvati and Lakshmi have the same husband. Both devis are married to one god, the king of Desa, which is a kind of Asura realm. Followers of this religion believe that by praying to Lakshmi, Sarasvati would kill them out of jealousy. For the same reason, those who follow Lakshmi also do not follow Sarasvati. But Buddhism is for enlightenment, so you will have no problems with the Buddhas. There are no problems between them. So, there is no need to worry about 'shifting'.

The approach to the Dharma for enlightenment should be: first, engender Bodhi-citta towards all sentient beings. Second, focus on enlightenment by knowing the method-practices, and the wisdom-practices. A method-practice is for the accumulation of merit. And a wisdom-practice aims for enlightenment that comes from your own mind.

The worldly mind should never be applied to the path of enlightenment. Worldly mind means self-clinging, or ego, which entails a lot of discrimination in the mind. If you apply it to Dharma practice, you will never achieve a good result. Everybody should be clear about this point. Forget the worl

The Bodhisattva Vow

I will begin with a short instruction on the Bodhisattva Vow and then I will give the Vow.

'Bodhi' means enlightenment, and 'sattva' means a mind committed to enlightenment, or a mind that has the courage to attain enlightenment.

The three kinds of Bodhisattvas

There are three different kinds of Bodhisattvas according to one's motivation. A shepherd's motivation is to first take care of the sheep, and then oneself. A Bodhisattva with a shepherd's motivation therefore tries to liberate all sentient beings first, and then achieve enlightenment oneself. The second kind of Bodhisattva is like a boatman or sailor, where everyone including oneself are in a boat, and cross the water together to get to the other shore. The third kind is like a king where one becomes a king first, and then protects one's people.

These three distinctions in motivation will come into play only when a Bodhisattva has reached the higher level of the Path of Accumulation and the Path of Junction, or the Path of Application. Only when he has come to these levels of achievement will he have some freedom to choose how to proceed through the Buddha, or Bodhi levels. Until then, a Bodhisattva embraces one of these three motivations as an inner commitment.

When a Bodhisattva attains the final level of the concentration practice, his mind will be very flexible and powerful, very clear and stable. With the support of this stability of mind, his mind will develop prajna, or wisdom. This wisdom mind is like a bright light that clears away the darkness. In this context, prajna means Lhakhong, insight, or 'the meditative absorption in the perfection of wisdom'. However, he is not yet on any of the Bodhisattva bhūmis. The Bodhisattva will use prajna to hit the different defilements as if they were targets, to ignite and to eliminate them. In other words, he will apply his wisdom against the many different nyōnmongpas, or defilements, or disturbing states of mind. Like shining a spotlight on each defilement, he is then able to know every single one by knowing its essence. Prajna removes defilements just like the light eliminates darkness.

There is, however, one small attachment to the body that is not targeted for elimination. Instead, a Bodhisattva keeps it to use it. And it is the desire between the male and female genders. Sexual desire is the cause of rebirth, even though a good or bad rebirth depends on other karmas. The sexual desire for rebirth does not refer to any sexual misconduct. It is the sexual desire that is natural, which the Bodhisattvas use for the purpose of rebirth. The shepherd-minded Bodhisattvas use it. They want to stay longer in the realms of sentient beings. They like to be with the beings in order to help them. Therefore, they won't particularly eliminate this habit from their minds. However, it does not mean at all that they would engage wildly in it.

The Arhats in the Theravada, on the other hand, train to eliminate everything, to cut off any cause for rebirth. Their accomplishment would see a

complete breakthrough to attain a level called 'no more return to samsara'. Having not much involvement with sentient beings, Arhats have not conscientiously accumulated merit, since merit comes from extending help to sentient beings.

The main causes of being helpful to sentient beings come about in two ways. The first is through the dedication of merit: you make wishes to be helpful yourself, and you make wishes that are beneficial for beings. An example: "I want to be like this and this, in order to be helpful to sentient being." In Shantideva's 'A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life', there is a chapter on how Bodhisattvas make wishes. The second cause is to actively help beings through actual actions. Such actions include the giving of food to animals, up to the practice of limitless generosity.

By joining the causes and wishes together, and using the natural desire for rebirth, the Bodhisattvas are spontaneously reborn in the different realms to help sentient beings. These are very difficult endeavors because the Bodhisattvas have to face all kinds of hardships in the realms of samsara. Helping sentient beings is difficult, isn't it? But the more you are involved with the difficulties, the more merits you accumulate. Then accordingly, your merits support you so you will attain the bhumis. When you do, your ability to help will become ever more powerful. Then when you become a Buddha, the help you can extend to sentient beings will be unlimited.

The second kind of 'hero' Bodhisattva is the boatman-minded Bodhisattva. This Bodhisattva will not postpone his achieving of the bhumis. He is involved in the realms of sentient beings, and without hesitation, he faces the hardships in order to help others. But he would not try to remain longer in the realm of sentient beings. For him, helping others and achieving his own enlightenment go together.

The king-minded Bodhisattva is the least courageous of the three. He thinks he cannot be involved in the realms of sentient beings for many, many kalpas. He therefore uses prajna to eliminate all the causes to be in samsara, and tries to attain the first bhumi as quickly as he can. When he does attain it, his help to sentient beings becomes spontaneous. In other words, rather than spending life after life in the realms of sentient beings, the king-minded Bodhisattva works hard to attain the first bhumi. "I shall become a king first, and then I will help sentient beings." The king-minded Bodhisattvas therefore try to accomplish quickly the Paths of Accumulation, of Application, and of Seeing. This does not mean that they do not help beings while they are on those Paths. Unlike the Theravadin practitioners, the king-minded Bodhisattvas continue to interact with sentient beings, always helping them.

The shepherd-minded Bodhisattvas and the boatman-minded Bodhisattvas remain longer on the Path of Accumulation and the Path of Application. All three kinds of Bodhisattvas aim to give sentient beings both temporary benefit and ultimate benefit. Ultimate benefit is liberation from samsara. Relative, or temporary, benefit is whatever it is that beings need.

When one receives the Bodhisattva Vow

To receive the Bodhisattva Vow means that you make the commitment to be a Bodhisattva, any one of the three kinds, which I have just described. Your choice depends on your courage. When you make up your mind in the beginning, it is a most powerful state of mind. It is the main cause that defines what kind of Bodhisattva you will become. Accordingly, you will develop into what you wish for! So this first wish is very important.

Whether you want to be a shepherd-minded Bodhisattva, or a boatman-minded Bodhisattva, or a king-minded Bodhisattva is your own choice, and you don't have to tell me. But when I say the words, and as you repeat after me, you are making the commitment. "I will achieve enlightenment in order to help sentient beings as the Buddhas of the past, the Buddhas of the present and the Buddhas of the future, as the Bodhisattvas of the past, the Bodhisattvas of the present and the Bodhisattvas of the future. I will follow in their path in order to help sentient beings."

First you make the wish and commit to the practice of the Bodhisattvas. Then you repeat the words after me three times, and receive the Bodhisattva Vow.

Relative Bodhicitta is an attitude of genuine compassion and loving kindness towards sentient beings. Absolute Bodhicitta is that compassion that is influenced by wisdom and so it is not emotional. It is pure, genuine compassion that is not dualistic.

All the thoughts in the mind, and the mind itself are unobstructed. None of them exist like solids, because mind's nature is emptiness. Genuine compassion is not emotional, nor is it a sensation, or feeling that makes you cry the whole day, and gives you insomnia during the night. By knowing the empty nature of mind, you develop compassion that is unemotional, detached from any self-clinging. It is self-clinging where there is an 'I', which gives rise to your attachment to your body, and to your feelings. Compassion based in this self-clinging is emotional, the kind that makes you cry.

Whenever I teach about compassion to Westerners, I use the example of the lady who went to Africa to save the gorillas. Her compassion had turned out very emotional, and she fought aggressively with the poachers there with devastating results. That kind of very emotional compassion is very common in people, and it is not the kind of compassion that you should encourage.

The actual giving and receiving of the Bodhisattva Vow

How does one receive the Bodhisattva Vow? First, from the bottom of your heart, with devotion, you make a request to the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas. They have unobstructed wisdom. They know when any living being is making supplications to them. Through your supplication, you are cooperating in the process. You open up your positive karma in order to receive the blessings of the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas. Here you make a very precious commitment that is Bodhicitta, and receive the Bodhisattva Vow.

You invite the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and they all appear in front of you. The teacher, who represents and transmits to you the lineage of the Bodhisattvas, is also in front of you. Together, they are your witnesses as you take the Vow. There are also the devas, the beings in the celestial realms, who are on a better level than we are. They have some kind of mental power to know, too. They know what you are doing. They know you are now adopting the very precious attitude and commitment. These positive deva beings also rejoice and support your merit. You invite all of them to be your supportive friends as you activate your Bodhicitta.

First, we offer the Seven-branch prayer. We usually say this prayer three times. Let's do it once in German, and then twice in Tibetan, so that you know the meaning of what you are saying.

(Seven-branch prayer was offered three times.)

Now, in order to receive the Bodhisattva Vow, do three prostrations to the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and the spiritual teacher.

Then you kneel down while making the respectful mudra.

First is the Refuge vow. For someone on the Bodhisattva path, the Refuge vow means:

"I follow the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha until I achieve full enlightenment."

(Refuge was transmitted)

Now the Bodhisattva Vow: as I've explained already, you make up your mind and then you make the commitment.

(Bodhisattva Vow was transmitted)

Now you do three more prostrations and then sit down.

I will make some prayers and wishes, asking those in the deva realms to rejoice in your merit. At the same time, you also make the same wish. Then, make the wish that all sentient beings will become Bodhisattvas and attain enlightenment...

... You have received the Bodhisattva Vow.

Keeping the Vow

This Vow can be damaged when you have strong anger towards other beings. You can restore it by taking the Bodhisattva Vow in front of the teacher again. Alternatively, you can invite all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in your visualization, and take the Vow again, by yourself, in their presence. In these ways, you can restore the Vow. Of course, you should not get in a habit of breaking it and then re-taking it.

Later, you will learn Tonglen (a giving-and-taking compassion) practice. Those of you who have already learned it should practice it. Those of you who have not yet learned it, will learn it as part of the Bodhi Path program. You will receive detailed teachings of Lojong (mind-training) practice as well.

From here on, it is very helpful for you to extend Bodhicitta as much as you can. Mind is mind, so when you think a lot about Bodhicitta, when you concentrate as much as you can for the compassion and loving-kindness mind towards sentient beings, then mind will change into this nature. It is very good to read the book by Shantideva, 'Bodhicarya Avatara' – 'A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life'.

Read books that are concisely written about the Bodhisattva precepts. It is good to read the 'Jewel Ornament of Liberation' by Gampopa. It is good to know what he said about deceiving sentient beings, and deceiving the holy teachers.

Gampopa also explained why one should not make others regret that which is not to be regretted, as in taking the Refuge or Bodhisattva Vow. If you say to the person, "It is a mistake, you did wrong," then you are making him regret. That is wrong, and the Bodhisattva Vow is broken. As well, it is wrong to speak negatively about the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. The Sangha, as I have explained, are those who are already on the high levels of the path.

The Bodhisattva Vow

First we chant the *Tung Shag*, the Sutra of Confessing of Downfalls to the 35 Buddhas. You are therefore receiving from me, the lung for it as well. Then, I will give the Bodhisattva Vow.

There are two parts to the Bodhisattva Vow. There is the vow of aspiration and the vow of practice.

The vow of aspiration means to aspire to have the attitude of bodhicitta towards sentient beings. In addition, you also make the commitment that you will follow the Bodhisattva practice just like the past and present Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. You commit yourselves to follow in the same Path of the Bodhisattvas so as to achieve Buddhahood, and that is the vow of practice.

By repeating the following words, three times after me, you will actualize your commitment:

"I will follow the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the past, present and future. I am making this commitment to follow the practice of a Bodhisattva just like the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the past, present and future."

Repeat the commitment three times, and then you will receive the Bodhisattva Vow.

Visualize Buddha Shakyamuni seated on a precious throne in the middle, and the other 34 Buddhas are seated around him. Then in front of all of them, you make the two-part wish of the Bodhisattva Vow.

[Shamar Rinpoche read the Tung Shag and the lung was given.
Everyone recited the Seven Branch Prayer.
Everyone then performed three prostrations, and then knelt down.]

First, I will give you Refuge. You take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha until you attain enlightenment. You also make the Bodhisattva commitment by taking the Bodhisattva Vow.

[Shamar Rinpoche gave Refuge and the Bodhisattva Vow.]

We now make prayers to call the devas in the deva realms. We ask them to rejoice in your merits. At the same time, you encourage yourselves by thinking that you are now Bodhisattvas having firmly resolved to attain Buddhahood.

[Shamar Rinpoche recited the prayers.]

The precept

To commit to the Bodhisattva Vow means that you will do everything to benefit sentient beings. It means that you will, step by step, abandon all acts harmful to sentient beings. Having taken the Vow, you should know and keep the precepts. A khenpo at the Centre will teach you the precepts of the Bodhisattva Vow, as well as the precepts for some Vajrayana practices.

The principal precept of the Bodhisattva Vow is not to deceive the Triple Gem – not to deceive the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.

The second precept is: do not make sentient beings regret that which should not be regretted. For example, to someone who does Theravada practice, you should not say, "You are wrong. You should practice Vajrayana, or Mahayana." If someone is practicing the Bodhisattvayana, you should not discourage him by saying, "It is a very difficult path. You should instead switch to Theravada, it is easier." You should avoid this kind of loose talk, which makes people regret that which is not to be regretted.

The third precept is: do not malign others. The worst is to malign Bodhisattvas, Arhats and Buddhas, or the Triple Gem. If you talk bad about them, you will break the Bodhisattva Vow. You do not really know who is a genuine Bodhisattva, or Arhat. Therefore, it is best to refrain from talking ill of others with a bad motivation. An example of bad motivation is jealousy. If out of your own jealousy, you try to malign others, you will break your Bodhisattva Vow.

Do not deceive sentient beings is the fourth precept. This precept includes all the little tricks and schemes to lure, and to trap living beings with the intention to kill them. An example is to bait animals with food so as to catch them and then kill them. Of course, it depends on the motivation, too. If an action is carried out in order to benefit a majority of beings without any selfish reasons, then it is different. But to deceive other sentient beings for your own self-interest, your Bodhisattva Vow is then broken.

Actually, the expression, to break a vow is not quite precise enough in conveying the meaning here. If you consider the reason why you commit to a vow in the first place, which is to attain enlightenment, then the vow itself is indeed very precious

and meritorious. In effect, your upkeep of the vows actually multiplies any merit you accumulate due to the sheer power of your very positive resolve and commitment. Consequently, when you act negatively, you are spoiling your own precious vows and merits. Therefore, it is more accurate to say that you spoil a vow. And this applies to all vows – the Refuge, the Laypersons' vows, and the Mahayana and Vajrayana vows.

To spoil a vow means you have damaged your own merits, rather than you have broken a rule. In the Dharma, there are no rules that are made up by people like those within a system, or government, which can be broken. It is more the fact that powerful negative actions spoil your merits, and your vows. You are walking alone on the Path to achieve enlightenment. When you then make some mistakes, and spoil your own good practice, it is not good.

To restore small damages to your Bodhisattva Vow, you need to make prayers to the 35 Buddhas. You confess and regret your wrong actions. Where you have committed a more serious transgression, then you have to take the Bodhisattva Vow again, so as to restore it.

Over the course of the last eight days, I have taught the general practices, which you can do on your own. You have ample to work on for now. Later, more teachings will be given according to your progress in practice.

You have received teachings on Refuge and the Bodhisattva Vow during the giving of those vows.

The main teachings I have given you are on Shi'nyay and the Practice of the 35 Buddhas. You will start with these main practices. Later, there will also be the Mandala practice. Afterwards, Khenpo Chödrak Tenphel Rinpoche will teach Lodjong, or mind training in the tradition of Atisha. You will do Lodjong practice once you come to the Mandala practice.

After the completion of the practices of Prostrations, Mandala, and the Vajrasattva, you will then concentrate more seriously on the Guru Yoga of Chenrezig in the *Thangtong Gyalpo* tradition. You are doing it now already, but at that time, much more emphasis will be placed on it. You will recite the Chenrezig Guru Yoga recitation for 100,000 times, or 10,000 or 20,000 times, whatever your case may be.

If you have already done the Kagyu Four Foundations, then you only need to do 10,000 times each of these practices: the Prostrations, the Mandala to the 35 Buddhas, and the Vajrasattva. You don't have to abandon what you have done already. It is rather a matter of refilling and refreshing what you have accumulated. You should always refill your merits anyway. And certainly, you should always do the Four Foundations from time to time.

The Four Foundations are the Prostrations to the 35 Buddhas, the Mandala to the 35 Buddhas, recitation of Vajrasattva, and the Chenrezig Guru Yoga, in that order. The order used to be Vajrasattva, first and then Mandala.

If you have already done the Vajrasattva recitations, then you could just pro-

ceed to do the Mandala practice to the 35 Buddhas and then do the Chenrezig Guru Yoga. There is no need to repeat the Vajrasattva again.

I have given you a Chenrezig empowerment already. However, when you come to do the main practice of Chenrezig with khyerim and dzogrim, combined with Mahamudra, then you will have to receive its empowerment again. At that time, you will also receive greater teachings on dzogrim, which are the Mahamudra teachings. The additional teachings on Mahamudra and Maha Ati will depend on your personal progress in practice and these will increasingly become more expansive teachings. Again, the teachers will give the instructions according to the disciple's individual progress.

Questions (Q) and Answers (A)

(Q): So whoever has done the preliminary practices already doesn't have to do Diamond Mind again?

(A): What is Diamond Mind?

(Q): Dorje Sempa.

(A): Dorje Sempa is the name of Vajrasattva in Tibetan. Use the name of Vajrasattva because it is a good name, one that has been recorded in the texts. Please do not change the names of the deities by using the English translations of them. You won't find in the libraries, texts with those new names. If you look for a text of Vajrasattva under Diamond Mind, you will not find it. Another example is Shaky Thubpa. You will not find a text of Buddha Shakyamuni under the English translation of Shaky Defeater.

In some books, you call the deity Mahakala, or Bernagchen in Tibetan, Black Coat. In the Kanjur and Tenjur, which are only found in Tibetan since the Sanskrit versions have disappeared, you can find information about Mahakala. Mahakala is Sanskrit. If you look up the tantra of Mahakala in the index under Gompo Bernagchen, you'd also find it. However, you would never find it in the Kanjur under the name, Black Coat.

In general, the instructions we give in the lectures are rather brief and short. The great masters had written down the main and comprehensive explanations in text. The masters were themselves, 'professionals' who specialized in certain yidam, or Dharma protector practices. Their instructions to these practices can be found in the sections of the main texts on the different tantras within the Kanjur and Tenjur. You could find them by searching in the index.

In the future, if ever someone wrote a book misconstruing Mahakala, then you could always reference the original or source explanations to check it, and for clarification. But you have to use the proper name, and not Black Coat. The English is actually a correct translation of the meaning of Bernagchen, but don't use it. What kind of coat would westerners imagine when they hear the word, coat? The western coat is a different style than the Tibetan coat called dōthung. People will therefore have a wrong concept about what Mahakala is wearing. He is actually wearing a ber, which looks very different from a normal coat. The English reference is thus defective in its representation, and gives the wrong impression.

Tibetans had already made a mistake in the past. They had translated the name of every Indian Buddhist master into Tibetan. For example, Nagarjuna in Tibet is known as Lhundrub. Even the names of holy places in India have been translated into Tibetan. Tibetan pilgrims in India therefore have difficulty in asking the local Indians where these places are. For instance, if you ask an Indian where the place of Lhundrub is, he won't understand. Ask him where the holy site of Nagarjuna is, he'd tell you right away. Another example is Bodhgaya. In Tibetan, it is Dorje Den. But a Tibetan at a train station would not be able to buy a ticket for Dorje Den! This is why it is better to keep the original names for the yidams and protectors. It's all right to know the meaning of the names, but don't create separate labels for them in your own languages.

I have now given you the detailed explanations on Shi'nay meditation. You have to do Shi'nay because without it, you can never do Lhakthong. Without Lhakthong, you will never be able to do dzogrim. Lhakthong means extra view, which can eliminate all the ignorance in your mind. You use Lhakthong meditation to clear up your ignorance. This is also how you develop wisdom. But without Shi'nay, you will be missing the first and very essential step on the path to rid yourselves of ignorance. Therefore, first you must put effort into attaining the result of Shi'nay.

Avalokiteshvara (Chenrezig) practice

1. Take Refuge, Pratimoksha (the lay or monastic vows), and Bodhisattva vows. Cultivate Shamatha during one month, focusing on the image of the Buddha with devotion in order to mature the mind.
2. Accomplish the preliminary practice of the 35 Buddhas (minimum 30,000 prostrations and Mandala offerings).
3. Receive the Gomlung of Marpa's exceptional yidam Vajrasattva, and accomplish the recitation of his mantra (minimum 30,000).
4. Do the Tonglen practice of The 7 Points of Mind Training during one month.
5. Receive the Avalokiteshvara Gomlung of the Thangtong Gyalpo tradition and study the commentary written by the 15th Karmapa. From this point on, always rely on Avalokiteshvara as your principle yidam.
6. Receive the instructions of the practice combining Mahamudra and Dzokchen according to the Karma Kagyu tradition and cultivate it continuously, like the flow of a river.

Those who wish to do strict retreat must learn the three subjects of tantra before receiving the extensive empowerment of Avalokiteshvara, then accomplishing the required recitations. As for the completion phase, do the combined practice of Mahamudra and Dzokchen as specified above.

Sukhavati

Practicing the methods to take rebirth in the Pure Land of Buddha Amitabha according to the Sutras and Tantras

1. Take Refuge, Pratimoksha (the lay or monastic vows), and Bodhisattva vows. Cultivate Shamatha during one month, focusing on the image of the Buddha with devotion in order to mature the mind.
2. Take the Bodhisattva vows belonging to the profound view tradition.
3. Read the Sutras related to Buddha Amitabha and study the commentary by Karma Chagme on the aspiration prayers to take rebirth in Sukhavati.
4. Accumulate merit and purify negative karma through 100,000 accumulations of Mandala offerings and prostrations to the 35 Buddhas.
5. Continuously recite the short sutra ritual of offering to Buddha Amitabha.
6. Do the Tonglen practice of The 7 Points of Mind Training every day.
7. If one follows the Vajrayana path, one should receive the empowerment of Buddha Amitabha according to the Namchö tradition.
8. Do the Buddha Amitabha Sadhana of the Namchö tradition, accumulating 100,000 recitations of the mantra.
9. Do the daily Sadhana of the Namchö tradition with the accumulation of mantras in combination with Powa training until the appropriate signs appear.
10. Do the Long Life Practice as it is explained in the main Sadhana.

Kagyü Mahamudra

The Stages of Practice in relation to the Blessing received from the Short Supplication to Vajradhara and the Lineage Holders

- 1.** Take Refuge, Pratimoksha (the lay or monastic vows), and Bodhisattva vows. Cultivate Shamatha during one month, focusing on the image of the Buddha with devotion in order to mature the mind.
- 2.** Study the instructions on the short supplication to Vajradhara and the lineage holders (the Dorje Chang Töngma).
- 3.** Either: Accomplish the preliminary practice of the 35 Buddhas (100,000 prostrations and Mandala offerings) and the recitation of the Vajrasattva mantra (100,000).
Or: Accomplish the Kagyü 4 foundations practices written by the present Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche, based on instructions of the 8th Karmapa.
- 4.** Cultivate basic Shamatha focusing on the cycles of breath during one month.
- 5.** Do the Tonglen practice of The 7 Points of Mind Training during three months.
- 6.** Study the three subjects of Vajrayana.
- 7.** Receive the empowerment of the Guru Yoga of Milarepa and do the Sadhana practice.
- 8.** Study the instructions on lovingkindness and compassion by Tsangpa Gyare, the Mahamudra instructions by Pema Karpo, the Mahamudra instructions by the 3rd Karmapa, and the Ronyom Kordruk according to the instructions written by the 2nd Shamarpa.

Those who wish to go into strict retreat should:

Receive the 5 Deity Chakrasamvara empowerment, do the completion phase as detailed in point 8 (above), accomplish the required recitations, and pursue the practice continuously, like the flow of a river.

Karma Kagyu Mahamudra practice

1. Take Refuge, Pratimoksha (the lay or monastic vows), and Bodhisattva vows. Cultivate Shamatha during one month, focusing on the image of the Buddha with devotion in order to mature the mind.
2. Either: Accomplish the preliminary practice of the 35 Buddhas (100,000 prostrations and Mandala offerings), and 100,000 recitations of the Vajrasattva mantra.
Or: Accomplish the Karma Kagyu 4 foundations practices written by the 9th Karmapa.
3. In order to subdue mental agitation, cultivate Shamatha during one month, focusing on counting the cycles of the breath.
4. Do the Tonglen practice of The 7 Points of Mind Training during three months.
5. Study the 3 subjects of Vajrayana.
6. Study the instructions on lovingkindness and compassion by the 8th Karmapa and do the training during one month.
7. Receive the empowerment of the Guru Yoga of Milarepa and practice the Sadhana daily.
7. Study and practice “Dispelling the Darkness of Ignorance”, the profound Mahamudra instructions
by the 9th Karmapa.

Those who wish to enter strict retreat should:

1. Receive the empowerment of the 9 Deity Red Avalokiteshvara (Gyalwa Gyamtso).
2. Study the instructions by the 5th Shamarpa as well as those by Karma Chagme on the Sadhana of Red Avalokiteshvara.
3. Accomplish the required recitations of the mantra of Red Avalokiteshvara.
4. Cultivate the completion phase according to the profound instructions of Mahamudra by the 9th Karmapa continuously, like the flow of a river.

Highest Practice for Enlightenment

1. Study The Seven Points of Mind Training [Lojong] and do the practice intensively for at least three years.
2. After one year, from a qualified instructor receive the secret ultimate mind training (lojong) instructions. These instructions are the key to penetrating emptiness (shunyata) and are received as oral transmission only. While Mind Training belongs in general to the Kadam lineage, the Kagyu has a special tradition was developed by Gampopa (1079-1153) who joined the Kadampa instructions with the Mahamudra teachings passed along from the time of the great Indian Mahasiddha Saraha. This oral transmission is known as "Two Rivers Joined" (bka, phyag chu wo chig drey) and represents a distinctly Kagyu tradition of Mind Training. This special, highest teaching is not written in any texts (including Mahamudra, Madhyamaka, and Maha Ati texts) and can only be learned from a qualified teacher. After receiving it, do this practice continuously.
3. All the members of Bodhi Path centers at present should receive this transmission from Shamar Rinpoche, who received this oral transmission lineage from the 10th Pawo Rinpoche, a disciple of the 15th Karmapa.

The Karma Kagyu Lineage of Mahamudra

Within the Karma Kagyu lineage, the Mahamudra is one of its principal teachings. The Karmapas and other Karma Kagyu Lamas had written various commentaries on Mahamudra. In particular, it was the 9th Karmapa who had composed three volumes of Mahamudra teachings: concise or small, medium and large. The concise volume is called The Finger Pointing out the Dharmakaya (choeku dzubtsug). The medium one is called Illuminating the Darkness of Ignorance (marig munsal). And the third or large volume is called Ocean of the Ultimate Meaning (ngedoen gyamtso). All three volumes teach the Mahamudra.

The majority of the Kagyüpa Lamas were enlightened by the Mahamudra practice. The name Mahamudra, is a Sanskrit word denoting a tantric term. There is a particular tantric practice of Mahamudra related to Tummo (inner heat yoga). Whether or not a practitioner combines Mahamudra with the practice of tummo, depends on the individual. Some of the realized Kagyüpa Lamas needed the support of Tummo or the Six Yogas of Naropa to speed up the Mahamudra realization. Many other Lamas, on the other hand, did not require such supports and they simply became realized through the Mahamudra practice.

The Mahamudra lineage of Saraha's Mind-pointing meditation/ Pointing out the Mind Meditation is very profound. This teaching or method, precisely points to the nature of mind and leads the practitioner in its special way. Saraha travelled as a beggar. He gave Mahamudra instructions by singing songs with his own guitar accompaniment. In his songs, he elucidated the nature of mind. Many people, by listening to his songs, were enlightened with Saraha's blessings. These people were able to attain the first level of realization on the Mahamudra path.

Today, three volumes of Saraha's songs called the Dohas (songs) of Saraha are available to us. They are the King Doha, the Queen Doha and the Minister Doha. Saraha's lineage has been passed down to us through his disciple Nagarjuna in the beginning, and then followed by Shavaripa, Maitripa, Marpa, Milarepa and Gampopa.

Teachings can be transmitted in two ways: through written instructions, which tend to be more superficial and then through oral instructions. Instructions found in books titled Mahamudra, are limited in scope, and are often restricted only to the first level of Mahamudra. However, the books thus titled, give the impression that they give an entire system of Mahamudra.

People may read a book on Mahamudra to start, having received some instructions from a teacher. But only the practitioners, who are able to reach a more advanced level in their practice, would receive the secretly kept part of the Mahamudra teachings, called the oral instructions. As the term oral implies, these are not-written. There is a reason why that part is kept secret. If it were written down and made public, then people would naturally be drawn to meditate on what they have read. Their meditation would simply be their own imaginings and as such could not be accurate. This would also mean that the key points of Mahamudra were being distorted, or altered by people, serving no purpose to anyone. To avoid this adverse disturbance of the teachings, the oral instructions have been strictly kept.

The path of progression in Mahamudra begins first with a student receiving some instructions from a book, from private teachings, or from public seminars. Then he reflects on the teachings he has received so as to reach a proper understanding about the path of Dharma. Once he has a good understanding of the path, then he should follow the path and practise as instructed. According to his personal progress, his teacher

will give him the more profound instructions when it is deemed appropriate and fitting.

The direction of teachings in the West up until now

Up until now, Mahamudra has not been taught in an organized way in the West. I think that His Holiness, the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa, Lama Gendün Rinpoche, and others who had taught here in the West must have meant to teach it later and to introduce it gradually. These teachers have now passed away, having laid down indeed, a very good foundation here in the West.

In Le Bost, Lama Gendün Rinpoche had strictly organized the Practice of the Six Yogas of Naropa. In general, over the last few decades, most teachers taught the general Buddhist practices including Lodjong, a mind training practice, which is a Kadampa teaching. And of course, instructions were also given on the Ngöndro practices. They are the most important prerequisites to both the practices of Mahamudra as well as the Six Yogas of Naropa. Some teachers taught it extensively. Other teachers as requested by the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa, taught focusing more on the Refuge vow, the Bodhisattva vow, and Ngöndro as well. This has been the direction of teachings laid down in the West up until now.

Le Bost, which was under the direction of Lama Gendün Rinpoche, is still doing very well. After Lama Gendün passed away, I went there to give initiations and teachings. And now, H.H. Karmapa is leading it, and so Le Bost continues to improve. And Dhagpo Kagyu Ling is also doing very well under the leadership of Lama Jigme Rinpoche.

Karma

I will first explain what the fundamental consciousness is. It is important to understand it because it will lead you to understand and know about karma – what it is, what are its causes, why karma has to be purified, and how.

The fundamental consciousness is like the ground, or the field of the mind. From this ground, you have a mind for what you hear. Hearing something, you have a mind of hearing. Similarly, you have a mind for what you smell, taste, touch, see, and think. These six minds are generally referred to as the six consciousnesses. If you separate and sort away these six minds, then what is left? It is the ground, or the main mind, and it is called the fundamental consciousness.

The main mind, or fundamental consciousness, is by nature very pure. However, in every sentient being, the pure mind is lying underneath a sleeping mind, or ignorance. As a result, you do not realize the pure aspect of mind. Your mind is said to be in ignorance, or clouded. The purity of mind in-itself is beyond size, beyond time, beyond anything that you can think of. Likewise, the ignorance of mind also has no size, and there is nothing there. The nature of the pure mind and the nature of ignorance are therefore the same.

The process of how an illusion is created

Ignorance is a state of mind in which you do not realize your own nature. It gives rise to a dualistic mind. Characteristic of the dualistic mind is that any strong thought that appears in it can be kept as a habit or karma. Much like a seed in a field, a strong thought— or karma— can be planted in the mind. The planted seeds of habit can then be activated by the many thoughts, and the consciousnesses.

The main cause of any strong thought, or emotion is self-clinging, be it positive or negative. And all these strong thoughts, or states of mind, are stored in that space of ignorance. Then together, they will grow by supporting and connecting with other similar states of mind. In this way, the karmas gather and become bigger and bigger.

Eventually, the strongest of these karmic states of mind will ripen and become a main cause. This main cause will give rise to a mind full of many tendencies and attached to a form. This mind, in the form, will then have to experience an illusion of a lifetime.

For example, when a main cause for a human life ripens in the mind, that mind experiences a life in a human form. In addition to the main cause are all the many different but interrelated causes, which have also come to fruition. Therefore, in our example, the person will also find himself in a network of connections with other beings, in a world on earth, with all its living conditions and happenings.

The ripening of karmic thoughts

There is an ant walking on the table is not a very emotional state of mind. "I want to kill it!" is a stronger state of mind. If you actually follow it through by killing the ant, then the thought backed by the action, has become very solid. It has become a strong seed prone to ripen quickly in the future. Right now, because your current karma as a human is still going strong, the other karmic seeds are somewhat blocked and dormant. Later, when your human life has expired, the strongest seed, karma, or impression stored in the mind will come to ripen first.

The process of ripening karmic thoughts in the mind is the same as the process of dreaming during sleep. All the sense faculties such as hearing, and seeing, and their corresponding consciousnesses, are withdrawn into the fundamental mind. With not much going on, mind is much less active. During this period, from the ignorant part of the fundamental mind, many habits can come up and this is why we dream. However, the causes for dreams are not very strong. They are, in fact, rather weak. This accounts for why dreams can just appear, change, and disappear. Dreams are not solid at all.

An illusion is created from very strong habits. Your current life is a relatively solid dream in that it has already been established. Let's suppose you live for a hundred years here. Until the cause of those hundred years is finished, your life will not disappear. When it does expire, you will die. Death means that a solid illusion, created by a particularly strong karma, is finished. The cause has been exhausted, and therefore the illusion disappears. To other people, you are dead. However, as far as you are concerned, it just means the end of one illusion and the beginning of a new one.

The bardo is the intermediate state between lives. It is a very confusing time, because all the very many habits and tendencies, or illusions are still there. However, the passing of every day brings you closer to the time, when the next very strong karmic seed is about to ripen. Once that seed is ripened into an illusion, your mind will again become one with it. You are no longer separate, and your mind is in the illusion. It is not the case at all where there is an illusion of a human life somewhere out there, and then you enter into it. It is rather a case of a seed ripening in your mind causing you to then experience a human life in a human body in the midst of a human world, if you were to be reborn again as a human.

One karma can also be disturbed by another. One karma can block another karma depending on their respective strengths. As long as the karmic thoughts are not yet ripened, then they can be disrupted. Any karma or karmic thought that has been acted out is strong, because it has been satisfied through action— regardless of whether the thought was negative or positive. In the ignorant mind, you have both positive and negative karmas. Some karmic thoughts can very well be strengthened without actions. Mental karmas can be very delicate.

The main problem is the big space of ignorant mind, which is like a huge TV screen where you can have lots of illusions there. The space of mind is unobstructed. As long as you do not realize your own mind, then you are overwhelmed by the duality. Your mind has become the space where illusions happen.

One example of karma and rebirth

Through Shi'nay, you can attain a mental power of seeing. For instance, you can see where someone is reborn.

There were once many Shi'nay practitioners even before the Buddha had started to teach. A Hindu-sect had practiced one form of Shi'nay. A yogi of this sect, in a cave near the River Ganges, saw in his deep contemplative state of Shi'nay, a mother and child swept away in the River Ganges and drowned. He also saw that both the mother and the child were reborn in a celestial realm. However, he did not know the cause for their high rebirths.

According to the Buddha's teaching, the causes could only have been strong states of mind. Indeed, the mother had thought only of saving her son's life, and so she sacrificed her own life while trying to do so. The child also had wanted to sacrifice his life so that his mother could live. At the time of their deaths, both were thinking only of the other. In that moment, there were no thoughts of self, nor any other self-ish thinking. That strong selflessness was the cause that created, in that moment, the heavenly rebirths. In other words, their human lives had expired while they were both in very strong positive states of mind. At the same time, no other disturbances took place because no other karmic imprints were involved.

The knowing power of the yogi was, however, limited because he was just practising Shi'nay. He had only seen the good rebirths so he surmised that the River Ganges could wash away the sins, and negative karma of people. He then told people what he thought, and that was how the religious tradition of washing in the River Ganges had started. According to Hindu mythology, Shiva lives on Mount Kailash, and the River Ganges is his daughter. People are still bathing in the River Ganges to this day.

Positive karma is useful

Strong mental states are the most active causes in the mind. Any karmic imprint, even when blocked from ripening by other karmas, will eventually manifest. As long as our mind is lodged in illusion, the accumulated karmas cannot be wiped off. Sooner or later, they will ripen.

An Arhat, or a Theravada practitioner, is someone who has renounced samsara and no longer wants to take rebirth again. He can eliminate the illusion by meditation. It is a meditation where he targets the self-clinging to eliminate it. You may wonder where the karma would go once your mind were free of the influence of illusion? Karma is part of ignorance; like darkness, it will naturally disappear. The Arhats are able to attain a certain realization of pure mind, where karmas and emotions no longer appear.

The Arhats, however, have not accumulated the positive karmas, which would produce the good effects. For example, if you have amassed a great quantity of positive karmas, then you would have a wealth of resources available to you. You would be

able to use it to help others. If there were no sentient beings, you wouldn't need any of it. But since sentient beings are innumerable, and you want to help them, then you need the positive karmas to create the good illusions for their benefit.

For example, by his merit power, Buddha Amitabha manifested the Pure Land of Dewachen for sentient beings. Dewachen can then appear in the minds of sentient beings. Dewachen is not for Buddha Amitabha. The cause of the appearance of his Pure Land comes from his positive potential. Of course, at the same time, there must also be some positive potential in the minds of sentient beings for there to be a connection to the Buddha and his wishes. And it is this connection that gives the beings the opportunity to know and to see the Pure Land.

Positive merits cause beneficial manifestations

A Bodhisattva is one who does not wish to sever the illusion immediately. He uses the illusion to create rich karmas useful to sentient beings. The Nirmanakaya and Sambhogakaya both come from the positive karma of an enlightened Bodhisattva, who does not want to attain liberation immediately for himself. Instead, he uses the human life to accumulate merits so he could better help sentient beings. He takes rebirth again and again in the different realms to help. His usefulness translates into ever more merits, enabling him to continue to manifest in many different forms to benefit others.

By helping others and accumulating the merits, you can also do as the Bodhisattvas. You will be able to do it, too. Let's suppose I have attained certain bhumis, then I can emanate so very many Shamar Rinpoches in all the different realms to help beings. There is no point in having many Shamar Rinpoches in this world here.

Another example is Nagarjuna who had attained the first bhumi by meditation in one life. That achievement enabled him to then manifest many Nagarjunas in the many different realms all at the same time.

The meaning of manifestation

Manifestation does not mean that a similar body like mine comes out of my body. Manifestation means a wish as in, "I wish..., comes true." Manifestation is my wish happening: "I wish that there'd be a very, very good fish in the ocean, which would help all the fishes there." When my wish comes true, then the fishes will see a fish helping them. This is what is meant by a wish is happening. Monkey is a character-hero in a Chinese fable. The Monkey had special power to send out many forms of itself to attack the demons. Enlightened emanation, or manifestation, does not mean that at all. It simply means that a wish is happening, or a wish is fulfilled. When the Bodhisattvas attain the bhumis, then whatever wishes for sentient beings they have made will happen. All their wishes will come true.

Examples of manifestations or the happening of Bodhisattva wishes

Shantideva once told this story: In Southern India and in Indonesia, there used to be many snake attacks on the local people. One yogi, Shanku, had made a statue of a garuda and placed it on a pillar.

A garuda is a big black bird that kills snakes. In Africa, larger species of the garudas are still living there today. So, garudas prey on snakes and snakes are therefore afraid of this predator. This is interdependent origination (Tibetan: tendrel). Snakes have the karma to fear the garudas, and the garudas have the karma to prey on snakes.

Shanku, accordingly, had carved a statue of a garuda out of wood. He then put some mantra inside the statue, and blessed it. He made a wish that where the pillar with the garuda was set, the snakes would stay away. And it did happen as he had wished.

The wooden garuda statue could not possibly have intended to chase the snakes away. Yet the snakes had sensed something there and stayed away. Maybe they saw a real garuda because of Shanku's wish. Wherever the statue was placed, the wish kept away the snakes and so the people were protected.

If you were to analyze how a wooden garuda that could not move or fly, could accomplish such a feat, you'd find no explanation for it. It was the wish of Shanku coming true. This was how, in Indonesia, the tradition of placing garudas on top of pillars had started. Nowadays, it is only a tradition without any real effect anymore, but it worked back in those days. This story is an example of how the wish of a Bodhisattva could help sentient beings. All these wishes depend on the accumulation of merit of the Bodhisattvas, which explains why they keep on gathering the merits limitlessly by taking rebirth after rebirth.

When Guru Padmasambhava first went to Tibet, the ministers to the king were followers of shamanism. They did not want Guru Rinpoche there and so they slandered him in front of the king. In the end, the king sent him away. Guru Rinpoche then said, "I have not yet accomplished everything I wish to do to help the Tibetans. But my help also depends on the karma of the Tibetans. I could have made a wish that the land of Tibet be full of trees. Now that you are chasing me out, I'd just have to forget it!" So, Tibet doesn't have trees.

Connection karma

Karma is in a mind under illusion. As a matter of fact, it is your own karma that is creating the illusion. Sometimes, it depends also on connection karma. This is the karma, for example, that connects you to the great Bodhisattvas, who are making wishes for you by creating many positive illusions, like Dewachen. Their wishes come to you through the connection karma between you, and then you will encounter the positive illusions useful for your enlightenment.

Connection karma can also be negative as in a connection to an evil-minded person. That negative person may be making bad wishes towards you and others. By his harmful wishes, he is creating many bad conditions for sentient beings. If you have any karmic connection to this evil-wisher, then the negative circumstances created by his wish could also happen to you.

Based on the constancy of negative emotions in your mind, based on the many times you have already been in samsara, you can easily deduce that you must have a lot of negative karma in your mind. When any of them ripens, it will block your path to enlightenment. The karmic illusions, and the ripening of karma won't disappear until you are fully enlightened, or at least till you have achieved the level of an Arhat. Therefore to weaken your negative karmas, rooted and caused by your self-clinging, you need merit support now so that your development on the Dharma path will not be spoiled.

The practice of the 35 Buddhas is particularly effective for purifying karmas and for gathering merits. Tomorrow, I will teach the Practice of the 35 Buddhas.

Questions (Q) and Answers (A)

(Q): Does the system of karma apply to all sentient beings, or does it work only for Buddhists, and not for beings with other religions or beliefs?

(A): There is no system of karma because karma is happening in the minds of sentient beings. Because of karma in the mind, there is illusion. Every sentient being has a mind. In your mind, there are many karmas created by you. Each karma can ripen into a different illusion, so there is no system.

If you were to say system of illusion, that would be correct. An illusion is a system of ignorance, self-clinging, emotions, etc.

But karma is not a system like a democracy, a republic, communism, Hinduism, Buddhism, or Christianity. Karma is neither a man-made religion, nor a political system. It is also not a justice system where you could be judged and punished.

(Q): Can one say that great saints of the past, not Buddhists, but still very developed and holy, were Bodhisattvas without knowing it, that they were free from karma?

(A): Your question comes from a concept that great saints of the past, who are holy, might be free from karma. First of all, so long as one's mind is in the illusion, one is not free of the karmas regardless of whether or not one is holy. As well, being holy is a religious concept, and karma is not dependent on religious concepts.

It sounds like perhaps you think having karma is bad. You think perhaps someone holy would be free from karma, free from punishment. It is not right to think of karma as punishment. Karma is based in the individual. It can be positive or negative.

I have explained that in the ignorant mind, karmic thoughts could ripen and create illusions. Karmic thoughts do not depend on a judge, a boss, or a king, or whether you think of them as good or bad. Karma is not a verdict from a higher authority.

When a karma ripens, there will be an illusion. While beings are in samsara, they have karmas regardless of whether they believe in Buddhism or not. The karmas are actually you, yourself.

(Q): The question was different. What if somebody is realized, but without knowing the concepts of Buddhism, can he still be free from karma? Maybe he is a Bodhisattva, for example, some Christian holy person.

(A): Yes, that's possible, you don't have to be a Buddhist in order to become free from karma. When a wish of a Bodhisattva is happening, as in the example I gave about a good fish in the ocean helping other fishes, it is happening whether we call it Buddhism, or not.

Karma is illusion, but there are both good and bad illusions. It depends on your mind not your religion. Karma is your mind so you should know what is right and what is wrong. If you know, then you can fix the problems of your mind by yourself.

Suppose you have learned how to fix the problems of your mind, then what would you call it? What would you think it is? Would you think of it as a religion, or a form of education?

The point is to know how to correct and improve yourself, that's all. You might call it religion, or just information. But the key is still to know to correct and improve yourself.

Since you have a mind, and you have ignorance, then you can be enlightened. If your mind had no ignorance then you couldn't be enlightened – because you would already be enlightened! Buddhas could not be enlightened again.

If you are on the way to enlightenment, it means that your mind is very pure. You could call it holy, positive, good, supreme, or any other positive term.

Suppose I have a very bad and hateful attitude towards others. My karmic cause has made me into a very evil-minded animal, like a crocodile, which kills humans and animals. You could call me Mara (evil). The point is, it is a label. It is just words. It does not change the fact that I am still just a crocodile. You can call me bad, or you can call me a monster, but I am still a crocodile.

Now let's suppose the opposite, that I have a good attitude towards others. I have Bodhicitta, and I have accumulated a lot of merit such that I am now a Buddha. It means I can help many others. If there could be a crocodile that harms beings then there could also be a being that helps them. That's nature. If beings can receive harm from other beings, then they can also receive help. That's nature, too.

If there were someone who could help you to receive help, what would you call that helper? If you'd like, you could call him god or doctor. But still, he is the same person who is helping you. Calling him god will not change him. Calling him a friend will also not change him. He still is helping you to receive help. This is what a Bodhisattva or a Buddha means. Neither of them is dependent or caught in a system, religious or political. Whether you get help, or harm, that is nature.

(Q): Can you change present karma?

(A): You can change the small karmas, but the big karmas are fixed for now. For instance, while you are human, you cannot change into a celestial being. When your current life has expired, then it will be possible for you to change into a different form.

Positive karmas can eliminate the negatives, so positive thoughts are important. They are the remedies for negative karmic thoughts. There are many positive and powerful karmic thoughts, and Bodhicitta is one of them. Another one is devotion towards the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who have made a lot of good wishes for sentient beings. The merit that comes from that kind of devotion can absorb their wishes for you. In other words, your devotion towards the enlightened qualities creates a connection for you to receive the wishes of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

By the same token, if somebody wants to kill you and there is a karmic connection between you, then it is possible for him to hurt you. If he actually sets out to kill you, then you will be killed by him. Your bad karma makes you vulnerable and open to his harm. For example, in our lifetime, we know that Pol Pot had killed three million people in Cambodia. He did not kill us because there is no cause for us to be his victims. But those he had killed had some karmic connection to receive his harm. On Pol Pot's side, he had achieved his bad wish caused by his past karma. One could not even imagine killing as many people as he did.

Another powerful karmic thought that can weaken negative karma is strong regret. This is not an emotional regret, but you regret your bad actions. There are practices where you focus on the negative karma in order to eliminate it. This motivation to eliminate the negativities is also powerful.

These three: Bodhicitta, devotion, and strong regret are all relative methods for purifying karma. The most powerful method of purification is a direct experience of the empty nature of karma. This is the most effective method for eliminating karma, but it is difficult. You have to develop wisdom.

In your current life, you can apply all these remedies to purify your negative karmas that have been naturally accumulating from your many past lives until now. In doing so, you can weaken them considerably in a very short time. You can even eliminate them all. But even if you don't eliminate them completely, you can still weaken your bad karmas to the extent that they no longer have any chance of ripening. In the meantime, you meditate until you are enlightened, at which point, all bad karmas would disappear.

It is very effective to combine the two methods as I've just described. The first is to create new, positive karmas as remedies. You use them to block the chance of the ripening of bad karmas. If the bad karmas were to ripen, your opportunities would be ruined. The very many merits could weaken your negative karmas and create very fruitful results. The second method is meditation. While your negative karma is being stalled by your merits, you meditate so that wisdom can emerge from your mind. In the presence of wisdom, the illusion will disappear. This is how these two methods combined would enlighten you.

In any case, the strongest positive thought is Bodhicitta, and the strongest negative thought is selfishness. A very selfish attitude together with anger creates very strong karma. If one's self-clinging is less, then the anger is also weaker.

Karma happens in the realm of ignorance. Once ignorance is gone, then all the karmas will be naturally gone. That is the nature of sentient beings. We, Buddhist

teachers, cannot create a law for you about karma. If karma were not in the nature of sentient beings, then there would be no point in talking about it. The talk would just be nonsense. Karma is nature.

There is also no point in saying how beautiful something is, if it is not. If karmic nature is bad, there is no point in saying nice things about it, because bad is bad. During an election, some voters may think like this: "I don't mind him, I'm voting for him because I want to believe that he is a good man." This way of thinking doesn't help; it won't make him a good man if he is bad. To want to believe that something or someone is good, is naïve.

The real nature is as it is. Understanding the nature accurately, that is what you should strive for. This is what the Four Noble Truths are about. They are the truths about nature. The truth of suffering is about nature, therefore there are teachings about suffering. The cause of suffering is nature, therefore the truth of the cause is there. And then the remedy is according to the nature of the cause of suffering, therefore the instructions on the truth of the path are there. Enlightenment will naturally result from the truth of the path; that is the truth of cessation. The Four Noble Truths follow nature. They are not something that the Buddha or another teacher made up to present something interesting to the people. It is not like a movie.

(Q): What about Dorje Sempa?

(A): It is a very powerful practice – it is mainly for the purification of broken samayas (vows, commitments, promises), and also the subtler, negative karmas.

Here is an example of a broken commitment. When you start to practice, you have made a strong commitment of Bodhicitta in your mind. Later, you change your mind. "I don't want to be a Bodhisattva anymore; instead, I want to be very harmful to others." You have then deliberately destroyed the Bodhicitta attitude. This creates a very strong negative karma. There are people who do these kinds of things. To purify these broken promises, the Dorje Sempa practice is especially effective.

(Q): I came here to take the Bodhisattva vow. I feel hesitant now because when I look at what I did in my current life alone, I already don't know the consequences that are yet to come. Together with all the things I must have done in my previous lives, how can I even trust myself?

(A): Of course you can trust yourself! First, you have a good human life. Second, you have good faculties so you can understand everything perfectly if you pay attention. Third, you are now connected to the teachings of the Buddha. Not only have you understood about the Bodhisattva vow, but you have also understood what Bodhicitta is, what the benefit of the Bodhisattva vow is, and how to develop and preserve it. This is your chance, your opportunity to understand it. Therefore, there is no need to doubt yourself when you are fully equipped with good potentials. Once you've taken the Bodhisattva vow, you will gently improve through the various skillful methods. It doesn't mean that immediately, you have to be exactly like a great Bodhisattva.

(Q): Can this illusion disappear completely, or will a rest remain in the end, which is just positive?

(A): When the Buddha-nature mind emerges, illusion will disappear completely. But that doesn't mean that you will be in a coma either. There is no need to imagine now what will happen later.

(Q): I find it difficult to judge whether something is a good illusion or a bad illusion.

(A): You are in a good illusion now because you are in a human form. There are also different human forms, but you are in a good one, being mentally and physically fit. You are not a spider, which would be a bad illusion. However, if you don't improve yourself while you have a good human form, if you don't develop wisdom, then you are spoiling your good illusion.

(Q): How can you say about those people who were born in Cambodia that it was their own fault? That it was their own fault that they were killed by Pol Pot?

(A): Those who were killed by Pol Pot had some karmic connection with him. That was just an example. Just like in Tibet or China, many people in the prisons were killed by Mao Zedong. Those people also had a karmic connection to Mao such that they were harmed by him.

An example is an example, and not a judgement. Some animals live in nice surroundings without the threat of being butchered, whereas others are slaughtered. It is because they have different karmic connections. To be in a war, or to be killed in a war is bad karma. It does not mean that we should judge those people involved as bad people or good people. We should be flexible and careful in our understanding of things.

It is the duty of a teacher to explain – this is bad, or this is good – to show the right path. During the Middle Ages, people were not allowed to voice what they believed. But now you are free to speak, and you also have the freedom to know about everything. You should use your freedom to know what is good and what is bad.

What I needed was an example of somebody making an evil wish. Someone who thinks: "I want to harm many sentient beings." Can you help me think of such an example, someone we all know in our lifetime, who has made such a wish? If I just made something up then it would be a fairytale. Can you think of an example of a Bodhisattva who has made good wishes to save people from suffering? Again, it has to be someone in our lifetime, or in our history, for the example to be convincing.

The world had experienced Pol Pot, so he is not a fairytale to all of you. Everybody now knows he was an evil man. And to have killed millions of people was not easy and not incidental. It wouldn't have been possible without a karmic connection between him and the people he had killed. He couldn't have been in that position and he couldn't have had achieved that magnitude of negative harm without a cause. The cause was his evil wish created by him in his past. This example is realistic. A fairytale is unrealistic and cannot convey accurately the proper meaning here.

It is the same for positive karmic connection. This would be a poor example: There was a Bodhisattva who managed to save many others from the bad wishes of someone. It would not mean very much to you because it is a fairytale. An example, which we have all experienced, is a good lesson when it can show you the meaning of what you are listening to, about karmic results, and connections.

It is all about the attitude in your mind. You call the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas, saviors of sentient beings. Why? Because the power of their Bodhicitta and

their good wishes, coupled with the good fortune and connection of sentient beings to receive their wishes, make it possible for them to save the sentient beings. That is positive karma. On the other hand, a mara or evil being, who has made a bad wish can harm sentient beings who have karmic connections to him. That is negative karma. The example used earlier is common knowledge to all of you, and so it is a good lesson to help you understand the meaning of karmic connection.

Nowadays you have freedom of speech. You can say anything without breaking German law here in Germany. You can listen to everything. We use this good opportunity to talk about the Dharma.

To all of you here, try not to be so sensitive with words, or rules. For example, table etiquette stipulates a certain place for the cup, the spoon, and the knife, etc. It is fine to follow these table manners. If someone were to put a knife in another place, and if that should cause you pain, then something is wrong. You should not have to react in an alarming way. Please follow the rules comfortably, not sensitively.

These days, I visit America and the European countries quite frequently. "Ha," I said to myself, "the hippies are right, too." It was mainly their taking drugs that had caused their decline. But otherwise, there was reason in their thinking, too. And what was that? It was that people were too sensitive about everything. In the West, everything is one hundred percent. When you make a little mistake with the table manners, for instance, it'd be considered shocking! It is the same with words – please try not to attach so much importance to them.

There is a saying in Buddhism. "The wording is not so important, the meaning is very important." So, along the same line, I once said, "When the meaning is good, then it is like a beautiful woman. When the wording is good, it is like nice adornments." Then someone corrected me. "You should say, 'Good meaning is like a beautiful woman, and also like a beautiful man.' Otherwise, you are a sexist." His mind had gone in that direction one hundred percent.

When some people hear the words beautiful woman, they are already thinking that the words are sexist! That is very shocking to a Buddhist mind. Then I realized. Ah, their minds are very sensitive in their culture. People in the Asian cultures are also quite sensitive. But in the Western culture, everything is pushed to one hundred percent. That sensitivity creates a lot of problems in the mind. It is very important that you try to open up.

The Buddha once taught a sutra to a female disciple, a very beautiful woman. She had asked a lot of questions, and the Buddha gave her the answers. If that sutra were to be translated into English, some Americans might think the Buddha a sexist. It is because throughout their dialogue, the Buddha addressed the disciple as "beautiful woman." Words should not be taken so sensitively. The hippies had good reason to want to break this kind of neurosis. The early Indian culture was wonderful in this respect. People were very easy minded and tolerant. One could say everything.

The Truth of Cessation

The root of enlightenment is the development of Bodhicitta. You begin with emotional compassion towards sentient beings by knowing their sufferings. Later, when you know the cause of suffering, your compassion will change into wisdom-compassion, which means non-emotional compassion.

The cause of suffering is the ignorance in the minds of sentient beings. Although ignorance creates suffering, it does not really exist. It is an illusion. The knowing of this reality about ignorance can remove it – just like darkness is eliminated when there is light. Because darkness itself does not exist, it is removable. You could not push darkness away either. But as soon as the sun is out, darkness is gone. The development of wisdom within your mind is like the rising sun— in its presence, ignorance disappears.

Examine an emotion

Suffering is an illusion. You feel compassion for the beings who suffer, but there is no reason for you to become emotional yourself. Because suffering does not exist, it can be removed. Even your emotions do not really exist. You may not be able to actually experience other people's emotions, but you can certainly experience your own. Your emotions need no introduction, as you already know them. In fact, you can examine them in a thorough way.

When you experience an emotion, find out how it exists. You can research it by your mind because it is fresh and within you, and you experience it. See whether the emotion is in your skin, or in your bones, or in your blood. In which part of your body is it located? When you look, you will not find the emotion anywhere. By the time you decide to have a good look at it, the emotion is already lost. So where did it go? Is it hiding somewhere in one corner of your body? Where is the emotion? When you examine both negative and positive emotions in this way, you will not find them as having any real existence.

When somebody makes you angry, is that anger coming from a place inside him to you? Or is the anger inside you? Examine it. Did he throw the anger at you? Check it! Or is your anger like a light that can be switched on? If so, where is the switch? Analyze and examine every part of your mind relative to the anger that is there. Rummage through all parts of yourself to see if the emotion really exists somewhere in you, or not. What caused your anger? Is the anger caused by somebody, if so, how?

You can examine an emotion with the kind of precision I have just described. Every emotion can become an object of your mental examination. None of the emotions truly exist. Instead, what you will find is just emptiness – the emptiness of anger and the emptiness of every emotion. This is the way to develop the wisdom in your mind by means of your emotions.

An emotion is easy to examine, but so is a non-emotional thought – neither exists.

The reality of all thoughts is non-existence, yet superficially, they appear clearly like a mirage. Depression, anxiety, all thoughts and emotions are like waves of the mind. When the wave comes, you feel it. When it has subsided, you don't experience it.

The wave or thought is from your mind; this is why you can experience it. When it is there, examine it, and you will find nothing. Don't try to find it in a deliberate or aggressive way, as if you have to find it. That would be too emotional and extreme. You look, and finding nothing, you keep that awareness. This is how you maintain an analytical, and accurate view of mind.

It makes no difference whether the mental happening is positive, or negative. What makes you happy should be examined. What makes you sad or cry, should also be examined. Finding nothing, you might feel at a loss, and that feeling should also be examined. In other words, examine anything and everything. You will find nothing. Keep that view, and you will have a fresh experience of the real nature, or the pure part of your mind. When you do, you will also see that the minds of others are the same. All suffering are just waves of the mind, having no true existence. They are like reflections, reflections from a crystal, mirages, or dreams – none of them exist solidly in the least.

Rinpoche (to the general audience):

"What is happening in your mind right now?
Are you realizing something now?
Or are you feeling surprised?
Can one of you tell me what is on your mind now?"

Answer from the audience:

"Joy."

Rinpoche:

"Joy is also to be examined. Everything should be examined."

Questions (Q) and Answers (A)

(Q): With all this analyzing of emotions, you always look for something physical – whether it has a form or whether it can be felt. And in the end, you conclude that it doesn't exist because I cannot touch it, etc. But that doesn't necessarily mean that it doesn't exist at all. It could exist in a way that I cannot touch.

(A): This has to do with theory, and for now, we are not talking about theory. Whatever it is that is happening to you, whatever it is that you experience, your emotion, or your thought, examine it. You don't have to go into the theory of it. Follow the fresh experience. Just check it. See what is there.

(Q): Sometimes when you are afraid, you cannot react, or act. Even if theoretically, I know it is just an expression of my mind, but in that moment, I cannot ana-

lyze it.

(A): Fear is also just a thought. Does it appear as a monster? No. It is one kind of mind – your mind, so you can examine it.

If it is like a tiger, one that is about to eat you, or a ghost that is frightening you, then of course, you have to run away and there is no time to focus on it.

But your feeling afraid is different because you are not in a dangerous life-threatening situation. Why don't you use your fear for meditation then? It is easy – the greater the fear, the easier it is to focus on it. It is your own mind, so you can think about it.

(Q): But it frightens me even more because I don't know what's behind it.

(A): If someone were standing in front of you about to shoot you, then you'd run away rather than be shot. There is a difference between this scenario and your case of being afraid.

In your case, nothing is happening to you, except for the illusion of fear in your mind. That fear is your own creation, so use it and focus on it.

Your habit of thinking fear, is a very strong sensation. Therefore, in the beginning, when you try to focus on it, you might think or feel that you are not able to work with it. But after trying a few times, you will be able to do it. There is nothing there! The size of your fear is much smaller than the size of your nose.

This is actually an analytical way to see the nature of mind, which is part of the Mahamudra practice. Try to practice it from time to time. The main practice is Shi'nay, but also do this kind of analysis sometimes.

I now repeat the Shi'nay points, which I taught yesterday. Then, we will do Shi'nay meditation together.

- * You can sit either in the cross-legged posture, or in the half-crossed posture, or on a chair, or in the Zen meditation posture, any one of them is fine.
- * In the cross-legged posture, then the right hand is in the left hand, and they rest on the ankle of your left foot, which is facing up.
- * The back should be straight.
- * The shoulders are up.
- * The arms are slightly stretched.
- * The neck is bent down a little.
- * Your eyes look along your nose to the ground. The eyes are not looking at your lap but along the line from the tip of your nose towards the ground.
- * Press the air in the stomach down and keep it in the abdomen below the navel, so that the stomach is kept in.
- * Exhale and inhale. Visualize the breath that leaves your nose as a beam of crystal light, and focus on that.

* It goes out, one end almost touching the ground and the other end coming out of your nose. When you inhale, one end almost touches your navel and the upper end is just inside your nose.

* Focus on the breath you are visualizing, and keep mentally aware.

4 Ways to Have Proper Aims & Actions

By Shamar Rinpoche

Shamar Rinpoche's Statement on the September 11 Attacks:

During the past two weeks as I have traveled to several Bodhi Path centers in the United States, many members have asked me to explain the horrible acts of the terrorists on September 11 and to suggest a course of action from the Buddhist perspective. I offer the following thoughts for my disciples' guidance.

The terrorists who brought about this senseless tragedy are afflicted by ignorance and consequently can be deceived by a blind faith in a belief system that distorts the true spirit of Islam. They do not have the wisdom and proper sense of judgement to determine what is right and wrong. Because of their ignorance and blind faith, people with evil intentions manipulated and misused them. Therefore, just as we should show compassion on the victims, we should also have compassion on the terrorists due to their ignorance.

When governments and individuals set a future course of action, their motivation or aim is the critical determinant to what is appropriate and morally correct. The seeking of revenge clearly is not acceptable in Buddhist terms. However, if a government or individual must take an action that has harmful effects but that is done for the purpose of preventing evil and benefiting the majority, this is acceptable.

According to Buddha's teachings on ethics, I believe there are four different combinations of aim/intention and action. Listed from the most evil to the most compassionate, they are:

1. Bad or evil aim-negative or hurtful action
2. Bad aim-benign or positive action
3. Good, realistic aim-destructive or harmful action
4. Good or pure aim-benevolent action

In order to counter terrorism, governments of the world and their leaders must pursue this goal only with the aim of benefiting everyone, including the ignorant terrorists themselves. If purely benevolent acts are inadequate to achieve this goal, then there is no choice but to engage in narrowly targeted acts designed to root out the evil of the terrorists while inflicting the least amount of harm to the innocent. This can be accomplished through the use of our wisdom and compassion which we find through logical analysis that is a part of human wisdom. It is important not to make decisions based on our obscured emotions.

On a personal level, we should not dwell in our sadness or fear over this tragedy. Instead, we should use it as an inspiration to develop our own compassion. We should make wishing prayers for the victims but also expand our wishes to include all beings who have suffered throughout the world. This tragedy must inspire us to achieve a vast compassion for all beings.

September 24, 2001.

The Reincarnation and Recognition of the 17th Karmapa, Thinley Thaye Dorje

by H.H. Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche

The 17th Gyalwa Karmapa, Thinley Thaye Dorje, was born in 1983 in the Year of the Pig. He is the first-born of the 3rd Mipham Rinpoche of the Nyingmapa School of Buddhism.

The 17th Karmapa's father is the third reincarnation of the 1st Mipham Rinpoche, the head of 13 Nyingma monasteries in Kham, Tibet, and a descendant from many generations of doctors and learned medical scholars. His mother, Dechen Wangmo, is the daughter of a noble family descended from King Gaesar of Ling. In his youth the 3rd Mipham Rinpoche escaped the fate that befell many Tibetan people unable to practice their religion under Chinese communist rule. His teacher found a hiding place in the mountains where they were able to practice the Dharma continuously ever since his early childhood. In 1982, after a general relaxation of government restrictions on religious practice, Mipham Rinpoche went to Lhasa to take part in the reconstruction of Buddhist institutions and practice. Due to his good connection with the Panchen Lama, his activities were particularly successful.

In the early 1980s, Mipham Rinpoche's yidam (a personal deity in Vajrayana Buddhism) predicted to him that if he took a consort that he would produce several sons who would be great bodhisattvas. The next day a group of pilgrims from Kham ar-

rived to see him; among them was Dechen Wangmo. He realized that she was humble and gentle and an accomplished Chakrasambhara practitioner. When he proposed marriage, she immediately accepted.

As man and wife, Mipham Rinpoche and Dechen Wangmo settled in an apartment rented from an old lady in the Bakor area of Lhasa on the same street that circled three-quarters around the famous Jokhang Temple. A son was born in wedlock in the year 1983. At the age of two and a half, the little boy started to tell people that he was the Karmapa. The landlady happened to be a distant relative of the late 16th Karmapa and had met him before he escaped from Tibet in 1959. He told her once, "Before you die, you will meet me again." Due to the exceptional behavior of the boy, she was convinced that he was the Karmapa himself. Out of strong devotion, she offered the use of her apartment to the family for free. However, Mipham Rinpoche remained silent about his son while hoping that he might turn out to be the reincarnation of the great Nyingma master Katog Situ Rinpoche.

One day in early 1985, when Ngorpa Lagen, a humble old Sakya lama, was circum-ambulating the Jokhang Temple in the circular street, he noticed the gleaming white face of a little boy peering out of the window of a private house. Drawn by curiosity, he walked towards the window, and the little boy said, "Don't you know that I am the Karmapa?" Without pondering the seriousness behind these simple words, Ngorpa Lagen replied, "If you are, then give me a blessing." The boy stretched out his arm and touched the lama. According to the lama, he instantly felt something akin to the post-meditative experience of deep calm and expansiveness that prevails over all forms of gross emotions.

A few days after this blessing, the Sakya lama, together with a group of pilgrims who had arrived from his homeland, went to Mipham Rinpoche for a prediction as to where their next pilgrimage should be. He noticed the little boy who previously had blessed him playing in a corner by himself. Mipham Rinpoche asked the group of visitors how many families they were. When they answered, "seven," the little boy rang out from the corner and said, "Eight!" All of them were obliged to count again. When they realized that the boy was right, the lama reported that his hair stood on end and that his shock and excitement were so great that it was difficult to hide his reaction completely.

Further along his pilgrimage in late 1985, Ngorpa Lagen went to Kathmandu, Nepal, and joined a large annual prayer and recitation gathering led by Lama Sherab Rinpoche, a disciple of the late Karmapa. The two soon became acquainted, and Ngorpa Lagen began telling Lama Sherab Rinpoche about his encounter with the little boy in Bakor. After this, Lama Sherab Rinpoche and his attendant Chopel Zangpo left for the Tsurphu Monastery but first stopped to visit Mipham Rinpoche in Lhasa. The boy was not with his father when they arrived, so Lama Sherab Rinpoche asked if he could nevertheless see the boy. When he was brought in, he sat next to his father quietly, but from time to time would eye the guests and smile with obvious amusement. When Lama Sherab Rinpoche inquired about the wife of Mipham Rinpoche, he replied she was doing a Chakrasambhara retreat. During the course of the conversation, Lama Sherab Rinpoche reported that he started to tremble and was unable to stop. As soon as they left, his attendant immediately told him that something very strange had happened to him while they were talking, which was exactly what Lama Sherab Rinpoche himself had felt.

The above story was first recounted to me in 1987 by Lama Sherab Rinpoche. The circumstances of the story matched those of an earlier report brought to me from Lhasa. In October 1986, Chobje Tri Rinpoche had alerted me about Mipham Rinpoche's son and showed me a photograph of the young boy.

Between late 1981 and 1984, Tai Situ Rinpoche, Kongtrul Rinpoche, Gyaltseb Rinpoche and I - the committee of regents established by the late Karmapa's General Secretary Dhamcho Yongdu to find the reincarnated Karmapa - held several meetings to coordinate our efforts to recognize the Karmapa's reincarnation. Although Dhamcho Yongdu did not have the authority to create such a group of regents, I initially followed along to be polite. Soon however, I felt that these meetings increasingly became politicized; resolutions were never acted on as the three other committee members had promised. Instead, other courses of action were pursued without notice to the full committee. I was left with no choice but to act independently, but quietly, in my capacity as the Shamarpa, while inside the committee I did my best to win the other Rinpoches to my point of view. After all, by long-standing practice, it is Shamarpas who are empowered to identify and recognize reincarnated Karmapas.

In 1988 I undertook my own independent investigations to determine the authenticity of the Mipham Rinpoche's son as the Karmapa. First I asked Tsechu Rinpoche who visited Tibet as part of a Nepalese government delegation to obtain more information about the young boy during his visit. Next I sent a lama to go to Lhasa to investigate the boy more directly. Immediately upon their first meeting, the boy told the lama that he had been sent to investigate him. The results of all these reports and investigations prompted me in July 1988 to go into a long retreat when I confirmed that the boy was indeed the reincarnated 17th Karmapa.

In spite of my personal conviction about the identity of the Karmapa, the time still had not come to make a formal declaration. However, in early 1991, at the inauguration of the Karma Kagyu monastery built by Shangpa Rinpoche at Phokhara which was attended by Dhazang Rinpoche, Shachu Rinpoche and hundreds of lamas plus more than four thousand Tibetans, I announced: 1) Tibet probably would be the country of the Karmapa's next reincarnation; 2) The supplication to the 16th Karmapa for his early rebirth should be changed to supplication to the 17th Karmapa for his long life; 3) The name of the 17th Karmapa that I had decided on was Thaye Dorje. The obvious conclusion to be drawn from this announcement was that I had in effect confirmed the reincarnation of the 17th Karmapa.

Karma Pakshi, the 2nd Karmapa, in his esoteric works (sangwei namthar) called Dugpa Tsarchod predicted the rebirths of 21 Karmapas and gave or predicted the name of each rebirth. The name of the 18th Karmapa is Thaye Dorje. However, the 5th Karmapa also predicted, "My lineage weakens, at the time of the 16th or 17th Karmapa." On the surface Karma Pakshi's prediction seems inconsistent with my recognition and naming of the 17th Karmapa as Thaye Dorje. The apparent inconsistency can be readily explained, though. As is well known, the reincarnation of the 14th Karmapa only lived for three years and was never enthroned; so official protocol does not count the fifteenth rebirth as the 15th Karmapa. Thus, it follows that the sixteenth rebirth of the Karmapa becomes the 15th Karmapa upon enthronement and so forth. In other words, the predictions of Karma Pakshi and the 5th Karmapa are not ambiguous but actually correct. The 5th Karmapa's prediction of the weakening of the lineage at the time of the 16th or 17th Karmapas actually refers to the discrepancy between the number of rebirths and the number of enthronements caused by the early death of the fifteenth reincarnation. Karma Pakshi's predicted bestowal of the name Thaye Dorje for the 18th Karmapa is actually correct since the 17th Karmapa to be enthroned is the 18th by rebirth.

(Incidentally, my announcement at Pokhara in 1991 contradicts and, indeed, completely disproves Tai Situ Rinpoche's accusation of me just a short time afterwards in 1992, that I was trying to stage Karmapa's reincarnation in the Bhutanese royal family. I can only conclude that his baseless claim was nothing more than a calculated, desperate tactic to obstruct my recognition of the genuine Karmapa.)

My announcement at Pokhara no doubt caused much excitement but also provoked many comments. It also stimulated Lama Sherab Rinpoche to come to me immediately in Kathmandu and show me a poem written on a piece of paper. A very hold saint named Lobpon Kunzang Rinpoche, who had already passed away before 1991, had given the paper to Lama Sherab Rinpoche in 1983 in strict confidence on one of his many visits to Lobpon Kunzang Rinpoche's retreat in the Rinag mountains in Sikkim. The exact literary origin of the poem is still being ascertained. According to Sherab Gyaltzen Rinpoche, the spiritual leader of the Manang tribal community of Nepal, Lobpon Kunzang Rinpoche said there are two possible sources. One is the old text called The Treasures of Yogi Zilon Lingpa (Zilon Lingpa belonged to the Nyingma School of Buddhism). The other possible source for the poem is the late Dudjom Rinpoche when he was performing a special Guru Padmasambhara puja in Kalimpong in the 1960's.

Before the official announcement of the recognition of the 17th Karmapa Thaye Dorje could be made, Tai Situ Rinpoche and his party tried to discredit me and to undermine the credibility of my identification of the 17th Karmapa. He took many illegal and spiritually corrupt steps that as far as our Karma Kagyu tradition is concerned, are completely dishonorable, indeed traitorous.

He and his followers even went to the extreme of violently attacking the Rumtek Monastery in Sikkim in August 1993, and through mob action forcibly evicting the late Karmapa's monks from the monastery.

Immediately after the Karmapa Thaye Dorje and his family managed to escape from Tibet to Nepal in March 1994, the young Karmapa came to New Delhi where during a welcome ceremony I formally recognized him as the 17th Karmapa. In November 1996, he joined the monkhood by receiving refuge vows from Buddha in a large ceremony at the Buddha Gaya Temple. He then was give the name Thinley (meaning, Buddha activity) Thaye (limitless) Dorje (unchanging).

As should be clear from this account, my identification and recognition of the 17th Karmapa Thinley Thaye Dorje proceeded according to many centuries of Karma Kagyu tradition. The process was completely spiritual and not corrupted by political motives. The same unfortunately cannot be said of Tai Situ Rinpoche and his followers. In a separate document I shall set forth his illegitimate actions and disprove his accusations.

[Written in September 1999]

The Shamarpa Lineage

1. Khedrup Drakpa Senge 1283 - 1349
2. Khachoe Wangpo 1350 - 1405
3. Choepal Yesje 1406 - 1452
4. Choegyí Dragpa Yeshe Pal Zangpo 1453 - 1524
5. Koenchok Yenlak 1525 - 1583
6. Mipham Choegyí Wangchuk 1584 - 1630
7. Yeshe Nyingpo 1631 - 1694
8. Palchen Choegyí Doendrup 1695 - 1732
9. Koechok Geway Jungne 1733 - 1741
10. Mipham Choedrup Gyamtso 1742 - 1792
11. (uofficiel inkarnation som læge i Nordt Tibet)
12. (Tugsay Djamyang Rinpotje
ca. 1880 - 1947)
13. (Thinle Kunchup 1948 - 1950)
14. Mipham Choegyí Lodroe 1952 བ

(The inkarnations shown in brackets were made illegal by the then active tibetan government, while the then Dalai Lama were a minor and the government under the rule of his appointed regent. This happend because the tibetan government was displeased with the 10th Shamarpa. The effect of this law was, that the following Shamarpas could not be officially recognized by the Karma Kagyu School. Very few therefore knew about these incarnations. After the general escape from Tibet in 1959, the 16th Karmapa approached the 14th Dalai Lama and requested this ban on the Shamarpa incarnations to be lifted. The Dalai Lama granted this request and the 14th Shamarpa was thereafter en-

throned at Rumtek monastery in Sikkim by the 16th Karmapa. On the tibetan exile-governments list of tibetan Tulkus, H. H. the Shamarpa is counted as number 11, because they will not recognize the unofficial incarnations. The many governments of H. H. the Dalai Lama never did like the Shamarpas very much, because the 4th Shamarpa Choegyi Drakpa Yeshe Pal Zangpo was regent (king) for the boy-king Gongma Tashi Drakpa of Tibet during a period around the year 1500 as a political compromise in order to avoid a civil war in Tibet. The 5th Dalai Lama Ngawang Losang Gyatso was the first of the Dalai Lamas to become king of Tibet in the year 1642. They have remained kings of Tibet until 1959, but most of the time the government have been conducted by appointed regents, because most of the Dalai Lamas never reached the proper age in which to take over the government. Since the Tibetans think that earlier incarnations of the Tulkus are the same persons as their predecessors, then Shamarpa was in fact king of Tibet before the Dalai Lamas, and so he may have a claim on the throne. Nowadays this may seem irrelevant. Tibet will most likely remain a republic, but still the tibetan exile-government does not like the Shamarpas very much.)



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