



THE MIND, KARMA AND THE BODHISATTVA PATH

by "Thubten Gyatso

A edited transcript of teachings given in August 1997 at Amitabha Buddhist Centre, Singapore

Published in 1999
for free distribution in Singapore

Acknowledgements

Amitabha Buddhist Centre 494-D Geylang Road Singapore 389452

Amitabha Buddhist Centre gratefully acknowledges with deep appreciation and heartfelt thanks the following persons, without whom the printing of this book would not have been possible:

October 2001 - 3000 books

To Thubten Gyatso for his kind permission in allowing us to put into print his enlightening talk and for his editorial assistance.

@ Thubten Gyatso, 1999

To Catherine Wheeler for her editorial work, proof reading and her invaluable assistance throughout the whole project.

ISBN 981-04-1456-0

To Sara Pek, Stella Tan, Grace Tan and Santi Yeo for transcribing the tapes.

To Yayoi Hamazaki and Angles for the contribution of the cover photography.

Printed by Ad Graphic Pte L td 625 Aljunied Road #03-08 Aljunied Industrial Complex Singapore 389836 Tel: 7478320

To Tom Teo and the staff of Ad Graphics, for technical expertise in production.

To all sponsors and benefactors who in one way or another helped made the production of this book possible.

Dedication

By the merits of printing of this book,

May all spiritual teachers teaching true paths to enlightenment especially His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, Lama Ribur Rinpoche, Lama Zopa Rinpoche and Lama Osel Rinpoche, have long and healthy lives and continue to benefit sentient beings.

May all the wishes and aspirations of all our sponsors and benefactors be fulfilled according to the Holy Dharma.

Acknowledgements

May all sentient beings have happiness and its causes

May all sentient beings be free of suffering and its causes

May all sentient beings not be separated from sorrowless bliss
May all sentient beings abide in equanimity, be free of bias, attachment and anger.

LESSON ONE

Buddhist teaching mainly emphasizes understanding the nature of mind. The mind is the basis of spiritual development, the "substance" with which we work on the path. The actual path of Dharma is actualizing the wisdom understanding reality and cultivating the attributes of loving kindness and compassion.

At the same time, following the path involves elimination of disturbing factors within our mind, such as self-grasping ignorance, attachment and anger. If we do not have a clear idea of what mind is and how it functions, our spiritual growth will be limited.

The Buddha explained the nature of mind in great detail and these teachings were preserved mainly in the "Abhidharma", one of the three collections, or baskets, of Buddha's teachings. The other two are the "Vinaya", the teachings on moral restraint, and the "Sutra", the general teachings on meditation and so forth.

Abhidharma is sometimes translated as "metaphysics" but I do not like that term because it implies something "out of this world", whereas Abhidharma is the opposite. It explains exactly the nature of the world and the mind. Certainly, it contains topics such as karma and meditative states, which do not often feature within scientific treatises, but these phenomena are as much of this world as are gravity and knowledge.

What is Mind?

What are we referring to when we talk about mind? My dictionary gives two general definitions of mind. The first, "mind is the state of thought and feeling", is not too bad. Thoughts are definitely mental events, and feelings are too, but the two alone do not give a clear idea of what mind actually is. Also, thoughts and feelings are incomplete. They do not cover the five sense consciousnesses, nor other mental factors such as discrimination, intention, concentration, faith, love, anger, pride, avarice, and so on.

The second definition, "mind is that which thinks, knows, feels and wills", includes more mental

functions, knowing and will. But it is also incomplete, and the words "that which" in the definition imply that mind is something else which possesses the activities of thinking, feeling, etc. What could this be - the brain, the person, some unique substance called "mind"?

The brain is a major condition for the mind to function, just as computer hardware is a major condition for software to function, but the two are not the same thing.

Persons do indeed think, feel, and know things, but they are not mind. They possess mind, and bodies as well.

As for some unique substance called mind which possesses the activities of thinking etc., but is not them, if such a thing exists it should be observable, demonstrable, or able to be established by logic. But no such thing has ever been shown to exist.

Buddha's definition of mind is free of these inconsistencies. He defined mind as "clarity and awareness". The two definitive qualities of clarity and awareness occur in every instance of mind and nowhere else.

The Defining Quality of Awareness

Awareness is synonymous with knowing. It is the subjective experience of things. When we are walking down the street, we are aware of things through our senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. Sensory experience is reported to the sixth sense, the mental consciousness, which thinks, understands, makes decisions, and so on. When we hear the distant sound of an ambulance, our mental consciousness knows it is an ambulance and may even generate compassion for the passenger inside.

For us non-meditators, our mental consciousness functions as thought activity. It receives information from the five senses and assesses it with memory, acquired knowledge, and so on. Our mental consciousness is active in making sense of our environment and what we are doing in the environment.

The Defining Quality of Clarity

At a gross level, clarity refers to the fact that at a deeper level, clarity refers to the nature of our mind - "clear light" - which is the natural capacity to experience things as they are, without distortion. Unfortunately, this clear light is obscured by veils of mental afflictions which distort our perception of things. In the discussion on clarity, His Holiness the Dalai Lama mentions a quality of "luminosity" which, I think, refers to the fact that, in the action of being aware, mind "illuminates" or takes the aspect of its object.

Mental Obscuration

The obscuring veils are rooted in the ignorance not knowing reality, due to which we incorrectly imagine things to exist independently, from their own side. Grasping at our false projections to be true, we then generate longing desire for pleasant objects, the pleasant qualities of which we exaggerate even more. Similarly, we generate aversion and anger towards unpleasant objects by exaggerating their negative qualities.

Thus, imagination and exaggeration, together with the disturbing emotions of self-centredness, anger, attachment and so on, become the veils which obscure perception of reality - of things as they are.

Although it is the nature of our mind to experience things as they are, unfortunately, we never experience reality. Whatever we experience in life is distorted by the emotions of self-centred ignorance, anger, attachment, pride, and so on.

We must observe our minds to see how they influence the appearance of our own self and the world of our experience. When something goes well for us - maybe we have just passed an important exam, or perhaps we have a new boy friend or girl friend - our mind is joyful. When we walk down the street, we see the beauty of flowers as if we had never seen them before. The world seems brighter, more pleasant than ever before.

On the other hand, when we are unhappy and things are going wrong in our lives, as we walk down the street it is difficult to generate a smile or see anything as pleasant. Somehow, we only see ugliness and dirtiness. Our experience of the environment exists in dependence upon the subjective state of our mind.

Buddha Nature

The superficial distorting emotions are not oneness with our mind. They can be removed by destroying their cause - ignorance. This illustrates our potential to attain enlightenment, our "Buddha Nature". Ultimately, because our mind is empty of existing from its own side, we are not unalterably caught in the suffering wheel of life. This emptiness is our ultimate potential to attain enlightenment.

Karma

When we destroy ignorance with the wisdom seeing reality, we no longer grasp as true the appearance of self to exist from its own side, and there is no opportunity for anger, attachment, pride, jealousy, and so on, to arise. Therefore, we no longer create karmic propensities to bring suffering results in the future.

Karmic propensities are established on the mind-stream by actions performed under a particular motivation or intention. These potentials remain without deteriorating, even from life to life, until eventually conditions occur to nurture their ripening into the experience of particular results.

Results are similar to the cause. Intentionally inflicting pain upon others creates a harmful karmic imprint which ripens by connecting us with an unhappy experience in the future. Intentionally helping others creates a beneficial imprint upon our mind with the power to ripen in the future as an experience of happiness.

The entire unfolding of our life is due to the continual ripening of harmful and beneficial karmic imprints established in the past. If we can remove disturbing emotions from our mind, we will not create any more karma - because it is established by disturbing emotions. It is now becoming more clear how the basis of spiritual practice is the mind itself.

Where does this phenomenon of clarity and awareness come from? Buddha explained that all

things depend on something else, nothing exists in its own right. Awareness exists, there is no doubt about that. You are aware of my words, you can see the various things in the room, you can feel the temperature, and so on. Our minds are very active. How do they arise? Relatively, the (human) mind exists in dependence upon:

- 1 The nervous system and sense organs
- 2 The object of awareness
- 3 The prior continuum of awareness

Ultimately, mind is established to exist in dependence upon the mere label "mind" given to the state of clarity and awareness (which, it-self, is not mind).

The above three conditions are necessary to bring about the present moment of consciousness. The dominant condition is the physical basis of awareness - our nervous system and five sense organs. The object condition is the object of our awareness, either a sense object or a mental image that is the object of a thought consciousness. Awareness is a subjective experience of an object; you cannot have consciousness without an object. For example, in order to have visual awareness of a blue sky, it must be day time with no clouds when you look at the sky.

Now here is an experiment. What happens in your mind when I say the words "blue sky"? An image of blue sky appears in your mind. This is the object of the mental consciousness thinking about blue sky, as opposed to the visual consciousness which directly perceives a blue sky. This is a good illustration of the thinking aspect of our "sixth sense", or the mental consciousness.

For ordinary people, mental consciousness functions as thoughts and dreams, but it has another capacity to see things directly, like eye consciousness sees the sky. And the objects of this direct cognition are not limited, whatever exists can be its object. Meditation is the method by which we are able to manifest this special property of mental consciousness.

The third condition to bring about the present moment of consciousness is the immediate condition, the prior continuum of consciousness. For the present moment of consciousness to arise, it requires the decay of an immediately preceding moment of consciousness. And that previous moment of consciousness came from the decay of a moment of consciousness that preceded it.

Also, for the future moment of consciousness to arise, it requires decay of the present moment of consciousness. The mind is thus a continuum of awareness going from past to present to future. This also happens in the physical world. At the level of atoms, particles exist for a split second and change into another, similar, particle. Electrons are in a state of continual flux, changing moment by moment. An electron does not arise from nothing, it arises as a continuum of energy. So, just as our body is changing moment by moment, so is our mind. This is the meaning of Buddha's teaching on impermanence.

Although mind is not matter, I sometimes talk about the energy of mind because mind has the power to bring about a result. It is, in fact, the most powerful thing in the universe. The mind creates the universe; it is not just a passive experiencer of life, it actively creates the ongoing experience of our life.

We wake up in the morning and think, "What day is this? Oh! It's Saturday, a holiday, what shall I do?" We think about what to do and proceed to do those things. The mind sets the body in motion and we achieve what we intend to achieve. If we are at work, designing houses, cars, or space ships' to go to the moon, it is the mind which does these things, then builds the house, the car, the space ship. We work with our hands, but the prime mover is the mind.

There is no harm in seeing mind as a continuum of energy that is not physical but which exists in dependence upon the body as one of its supports. The human organism is a duality of body and mind which are interdependent. The mind is not some special substance other than awareness. Mind is awareness. We are familiar with awareness in its various guises of anger, love, attachment, happiness, unhappiness and so on; these are mind.

What is Rebirth?

Our bodies disintegrate at death but our minds continue from life to life as never-ending streams of consciousness. There is no such thing as a permanent, independent, self-sufficient person, or soul, who goes from life to life.

The future mind receives the seeds of our positive and negative mental qualities, as well as karmic seeds established by our behaviour. Therefore, the person of the next life is uniquely related to the person of this life, but is not the same. Memories of previous lives exist but access to them is usually only possible through the power of meditation.

2222

Where does the Mind Exist?

There are six levels of rebirth within the three realms of cyclic existence:

- 1) Divine Beings (suras, Gods) – formless realm (4 levels). Form realm (17 levels). Desire realm (6 levels)
- 2) Demigods (asuras, titans) - Desire realm..all of below:
- 3) Humans
- 4) Animals
- 5) Hungry Ghosts (pretas)
- 6) Hell Beings (narak)

Beings of all six realms of rebirth have mind. Besides humans and animals, there are hungry ghosts, hell beings, demi-gods, and gods. These are "sentient beings" - those who possess feelings. Buddhas also have mind, but they are free from the wheel of life and are not classified as sentient beings.

No matter where we are born, our mind is always "clarity and awareness". There are obscuring veils, and we still have the potential to be enlightened. Some people think, "How could my human mind, which is so intelligent, be reborn as a lizard? Impossible! My mind couldn't fit into a lizard's body."

Mind has no physical properties, you cannot talk about it being too big or too small to fit anywhere. How could our mind exist in a lizard's body? It is definitely possible because when we die, our mind separates from this body in a subtle aspect supported by subtle physical energy called "wind", which may correspond to the Chinese "Chi". All of our mental qualities, good and bad, as well as all of our unripened karmic imprints are borne on this subtle mind and carried through a dream-like intermediate existence into the next life.

Karma propels us through the intermediate state and into the next life. How the continuity of our mind is able to express itself will depend upon the type of body we have. If we are reborn in a human womb, the human nervous system will have the full potential for our mind to again be

human. But if our karma is to be reborn as a lizard, we are limited by the lizard's nervous system. Our mind can only function as a lizard's mind because that is the type of nervous system it now inhabits.

Similarly, if we are born as an insect, we will have an even more primitive nervous system and our mind will only be able to function at that level. Mosquitoes have mind; they smell, taste, hear, and see. They have a sense of self, which causes fear when they see a huge monster hand coming to squash them. And they have happiness, especially when we are asleep and they are able to suck our blood without being slapped.

When the mosquito or lizard dies, due to positive karmic imprints carried on their mind streams from previous lives, they may be reborn again as humans. Then, their mind which had the potential for human intelligence but could not manifest that intelligence from an insect's body, can again manifest as a human mind.

When Did Mind Begin?

We have seen that mind is a continual stream of awareness which cannot be produced by the body and therefore must have come from the previous life. When did we first begin to take rebirth? Buddha said, "I cannot answer that question because as far back as I can see, there was no beginning."

There was no first time when our mind stream came into existence. It has been flowing from life to life since time without beginning and will continue to flow endlessly into the future. There is an uncountable number of mind streams throughout the universe. Nowhere are new beings coming into existence or old beings going out of existence, except those who become Buddhas. But even then, their mindstreams will continue forever, always working to benefit sentient beings. The Buddhas do not abandon us.

There are countless Buddhas throughout the universe continuously working for sentient beings by appearing in many different ways.

They do not always appear as Guru Shakyamuni appeared in India 2,500 years ago. He was a "wheel-turning Buddha" who taught the entire path to enlightenment. Buddhas can only do this on rare occasions when our collective karma is suitable for it to happen.

Usually, they appear in any form suitable to give a small indication of the path, to an individual or a small group, whose minds are receptive. They can appear in any form, even as an animal or a tree. The only thing that restricts them is our stubbornness. We are not always open to learn, we are not always interested in spiritual development. Even though we shave our heads and wear the robes of an ordained person we may not necessarily be on the spiritual path. When our motivation is selfish, the Buddhas cannot help us.

The great scholar and meditator Asanga meditated for twelve years trying to see Maitreya, the future Buddha. On several occasions during this retreat, he almost gave up. After leaving his cave, he would see signs that encouraged him to try harder, so he would go back. After twelve years he had still not seen Maitreya, so he gave up one more time.

While walking along the road back to the village, he came across a red dog with a wound full of maggots on its back. Feeling unbearable compassion for this suffering dog, he tried to clean the wound but realized that if he used a stick it would hurt the maggots and they would have nothing to eat. With compassion for the maggots, he cut off a piece of his own flesh and then decided to remove them with his tongue so as not to hurt them. The sight and smell of the wound was terribly repulsive, so he closed his eyes, put his tongue out, and leant towards the dog's wound. He kept leaning forward but there was nothing there. He opened his eyes, and the dog had become Maitreya Buddha.

"Where have you been?" asked Asanga. "For twelve years I have been trying to see you, and now you are here."

Maitreya replied, "I was in the cave all the time, in the corner where you spat after clearing your throat." He showed Asanga his cloak which was covered in dry spittle. "It is the great compassion you have just manifested that has enabled you to see me."

Asanga was so happy that he ran through the village carrying Maitreya on his shoulders, calling, "Everybody come out, come out, Maitreya Buddha is here." The people came out of their houses but could not see Maitreya. All they saw was a crazy man running down the street. One old lady, who used to recite the mantra Om Mani Padme Hum with faith but no understanding, saw a man carrying a red dog on his back.

This story indicates that, from our side, our mind must be mature and ready to see the Buddha who is there all the time even though we do not have the merit to see him. So we should be careful where we spit.

It is excellent mind training to always think the Buddha is nearby. This will make us happy and careful in our actions. This is not fantasy. The minds of Buddhas are omniscient, they see everything, so they are always present.

Student: What causes people to be born retarded?

Gyatso: Some children are retarded at birth, others are born normal but become retarded due to brain injury, disease, or the effects of senility. There are various causes and conditions. The underlying cause of all that we experience is karma. Our body is a product of karma and mental afflictions. As Buddha said, it is a "True Suffering". As the body's causes are not perfect, the body is not perfect even though we like to think it is pure. Also, our body is continually changing. It can degenerate at any time, in the womb or later.

If we are born retarded, we must have created the fundamental cause in a previous life; an action such as disturbing the minds of others. A virtuous throwing karma gives us a human rebirth, and the retardation is due to a non-virtuous completing karma.

Other conditions for retardation, such as chromosomal defects, in-utero malnourishment, anoxia, and so on, occur in association with that non-virtuous karma.

In the case of Alzheimer's disease, the nervous system degenerates and we progressively lose our capacity to think clearly. Those suffering from dementia appear confused and completely out of touch with reality. In fact, the fault is with the nervous system, not with the mind itself, and it could be possible that behind their apparent confusion they may have clear awareness of what is happening. They may try to speak coherently but just rubbish comes out.

This is a terribly sad situation, when perfectly intelligent people are unable to express themselves because of the limitation of the nervous system. Jeffrey Hopkins, the American professor who often translates for His Holiness the Dalai Lama, contracted Lyme's Disease, an infectious disease, in America. Despite being in an apparent coma, unable to move or speak, his mind was perfectly clear and he was aware of all that was happening around him. He even heard the doctors discussing whether to turn off his life-support system. They thought he was finished.

While listening to their conversation, he was mentally reciting a protector mantra that he had learned from His Holiness. Fortunately the doctors decided not to turn off the machine and, after some time, he regained consciousness and all his faculties.

Student: Perhaps retarded people have been in hell for a long time, and now they find it hard to adjust coming back as a human?

Gyatso: I don't think so. There is usually an obvious physical or medical condition that can be identified as the immediate cause of retardation in infants. Karma is the underlying cause.

It is said that when the foetus awakens, at about 25 weeks gestation, it is aware of its previous life and how it created the cause to be reborn as human. This memory can be retained after birth, even for the first year or two. But because the new nervous system is not capable of expressing speech, the infant cannot talk about what it is experiencing. There is nothing to substantiate these memories and they are soon forgotten. If at the age of two we start telling mummy and daddy about our previous life, they will say, "Don't talk rubbish. Eat your noodles and be quiet."

There are cases of children who have reported a previous life and their stories have been investigated. Remarkably, they have been taken to villages where they say they lived, and they have pointed out previous family members among people in the street, who have verified their story.

I doubt that retardation is re-adjusting from the hell realm. I think there are some new karmas ripening strongly. But karma is very subtle and profound. I cannot give you a hundred percent answer.

Student: What about a baby who dies very young, even in the womb?

Gyatso: Again, the underlying cause is a karmic action, perhaps taking the life of another, in a previous life. Obviously, it has not created the karmic cause in this life. At conception, we already have a karmically determined lifespan, although there are other factors that determine lifespan. Perhaps the miscarried baby's karmic lifespan was very short.

Student: It's not so much the parent's bad karma, is it?

Gyatso: The unhappiness of experiencing the death of one's own baby is the ripening of another karma in the mind of the parent. It is absolutely impossible for a baby to die as a result of its parent's karma. All three - the father, mother and child are experiencing the ripening of their individual karma.

Student: As a dharma practitioner, I believe the general point of view is that you must tame your mind at the point of death. This is extremely important, as it more or less determines the quality of your rebirth. If you have a bad disease, it means that when you are dying you may have no control because your mind is degenerating, not just the nervous system.

What if you knew that you were going to die in five years' time, and you wanted to have a good rebirth so that you could continue practising dharma? Would these circumstances justify suicide?

Gyatso: It is said that the last moments of clear discrimination before death determine the karma that will ripen to throw us into the next life. If we die with a confused or an agitated, angry mind this will nurture a negative karma that will lead to an unhappy rebirth. Whereas if we die with a peaceful mind, with loving kindness, that mind will nurture a positive karma for a happy rebirth.

Yes, our rebirth is determined during the time when we are sinking into death. So, the question is, if a person knows he has a disease which will cause him to lose control of his mind, who knows what sort of rebirth he will have when he eventually dies? Would it not be better to commit suicide while his mind is clear, to ensure a happy rebirth?

I think it would not be skilful to commit suicide. To take one's own life is contrary to tantric vows. Without clairvoyance, it would be an act of ignorance. Without the wisdom realizing emptiness, it would be an act of self-grasping. Without great compassion, it would be an act of self-cherishing. It would definitely create the cause for a lower rebirth, contrary to what we expect.

Every moment of life is not only an opportunity to practise Dharma, to make our mind virtuous, but is also an opportunity to purify negative karma. If I was told that I had early Alzheimer's disease I would definitely not commit suicide. While my reasoning faculty was still intact I would be totally energized to "clean up my act". I would pay all my debts, resolve all conflicts, forgive my enemies, and pray with as much compassion as possible to take upon myself the karma and suffering of all those with Alzheimer's disease so that they would be freed.

Death from a mentally disabling disease does not necessarily lead to an unhappy rebirth. The mental consciousness has many levels, if one has had training in Dharma before becoming ill and one knows how to activate and maintain a virtuous mind, there are many possibilities of dying skilfully even with disease. If one has not learned this ahead of time, it would be difficult to die skilfully.

Student: What about committing suicide when we have a terminal ill-ness? And what about euthanasia?

Gyatso: There are two things here, suicide and euthanasia. If we do take somebody else's life out of compassion, believing we are helping them, there is no guarantee that this will happen. We may be sending them to a much more suffering state. As for our own terminal illness, the problem is a karmic ripening and, if we have the strength to say, "I will accept this karma now," then it can finish and we can die with that karma behind us. Otherwise we may have to continue experiencing that karmic ripening in the future. Death does not destroy karma, we take it with us.

Many of us will get cancer. I cannot remember the frequency, but it is becoming more and more common. So we should start preparing to die now. Do not wait for the doctor to tell us, that is like playing Russian roulette every day of our lives. There is no guarantee that we will live sixty years and then get cancer, it may happen next week. So we should start cultivating a positive mind now. That is much better than walking in front of a bus after leaving the doctor's surgery.

When somebody else is dying, it is much better to surround them with an atmosphere of loving kindness, explain Dharma as much as they can understand, say mantras, and allow them to die peacefully.

There is no need for heroics trying to maintain life. Pain killers should be given but try not to overdose and send them into a drugged oblivion. Turning off a life-support machine when the body is incapable of remaining alive on its own is not the karma of killing. It is a natural death.

Student: If mind is mental energy continually creating karma and the cause for rebirth in samsara, then how does this mind get out of samsara? And can the enlightened mind exist after that because it no longer has karma?

Gyatso: The flow of mental energy from past to present to future is a quality of mind itself, it has nothing to do with karma. The root of cyclic existence is the conception which grasps at the self to truly exist. From this conception, the afflictions of anger, attachment, pride, and so on develop and these, in turn, lead to the creation of throwing karma that keeps us within samsara. Thus the entire process can be short-circuited by cultivating the wisdom seeing reality the emptiness of true existence of the self. This wisdom destroys afflictions and karma. Buddhas are free from karma. Through compassion, they are able to manifest in any way they wish to help sentient beings.

How Emptiness is Realized

There are five stages on the Bodhisattva path. When we first generate the altruistic mind of bodhicitta, we enter the path of accumulation where we accumulate merit and greatly improve our power of concentration. With further practice, we enter the path of preparation to realize emptiness directly. This leads us to the path of seeing where we directly see reality.

On the path of preparation, the mental consciousness is meditating on a mental image of emptiness, not directly upon emptiness itself. There comes a time, however, when the mind is able to break through that image and see emptiness directly, as it is. That is the first moment of the path of seeing and it is achievement of the direct realization of emptiness. At that moment, our karmic imprints are destroyed and we will create no more karma contaminated by ignorance.

We still have a long way to go. There are ten Bodhisattva grounds and we are only on the first. Wisdom, loving kindness, and compassion are now creating our world, not karma and afflictions. There is no possibility for us to ever again be reborn in the lower realms. If we wish, we can go to the Pure Lands. Through choice, we can take rebirth as a human or in any form in order to continue our practice.

When Lama Zopa Rinpoche is here, he does not see these walls and peeling paint. That is our projection. He knows what we see, but he sees a pure land. Like the hungry ghosts who are in this room they see what their karma projects.

Many years ago, in the seventies, in the Kathmandu Valley, Lama Zopa Rinpoche was visiting Swayambunath with Peter Kedge, an English student now based in Hong Kong. Rinpoche asked Peter, "What do you see?" Peter replied, "I see monkeys harassing people, dirt on the ground. It's pretty ugly, Rinpoche."

Rinpoche shook his head and said, "I see a Pure Land, a mandala."

LESSON TWO

Motivation

Before continuing with the discussion of the mind, we shall recite the prayer of refuge and bodhicitta. The most important benefit to be gained from any action is dependent upon the motivation, the reason behind the action. 50, reflect upon your understanding of the meaning of Buddha, the Dharma that he taught, and the kindness of all the teachers over the centuries since Buddha who have maintained the tradition.

Think particularly how much the teachings have helped people, that we are equally lost in the confusion of not understanding reality. As a result, we have been unwittingly creating the causes of suffering when trying to do the opposite, to create happiness. And it is the Dharma, taught out of compassion, that all beings can rely upon to achieve happiness. In our own experience we can see the truth of Dharma, we can see that our disturbing emotions are indeed the basis of our unhappiness. The Dharma was taught to help us recognise the root problem and how to overcome it. Thus the Dharma is the most precious thing in the entire universe, especially when we are thinking from the point of view of all sentient beings, not just ourselves. Dharma, the cure for all suffering and the cause of all happiness is what we have been searching for in all our beginningless lives.

Understanding the mind is crucial for understanding Dharma and how Dharma can be practised. Through the kindness of the gurus, we are most fortunate to be able to meet here and discuss the teachings and how to put them into practice. When we refer to mind, we are talking about the very phenomenon of awareness itself. The meditating mind is the continuity of experience of the object of meditation. During meditation, we feel lethargy in our mind. It resists making the required effort to meditate. Like when we have an exam coming up and have to study, it is so hard to keep our mind focused. Then, when we do learn, we forget and have to learn it again. The Lamas say we have to forget something three times before we really learn it. So that is encouraging.

Meditators are like Olympic athletes, except that our contest is in the mind. There was something in the newspapers yesterday about the Mental Olympics where people were doing mind tests. Athletes need to train because, in the beginning, their bodies are stiff and weak. The energy they put into their training is just amazing. To strengthen their bodies for the momentary pleasure of winning a race, they train with strong dedication day in, day out, week in, week out, year in, year out. Eventually they transform their bodies into fit and capable instruments that run, swim, hop, skip or whatever they do.

The goal of attaining enlightenment and being able to guide all mother sentient beings out of suffering is incomparably greater than winning an Olympic gold medal. Most of us have no chance of ever winning an Olympic medal, but everyone of us can definitely achieve enlightenment.

To actualize our Buddha Nature, we must not give in to mental laziness and distracting thoughts. We must train our minds ever so much harder than Olympic athletes train their bodies. Realization and meditative understanding do not come easily. We have to work with our mind, train our mind repetitively. We must remove the stiffness of ignorance and the wrong activities of anger, attachment, jealousy and pride.

The athletes' preparations might bring a moment of glory. They win their gold medals, and from then on it is all downhill. Their bodies become progressively weaker as they get older. All the work they have done is wasted as the moment of glory recedes into history and they are forgotten. So much effort goes into such a brief moment of happiness. And that is only for the few who win; the majority do not even experience the momentary pleasure of winning a gold medal.

Mind-training does not wear out. In the beginning, we may lose something as we go from one life to another but because of past imprints, it becomes easier to regain realizations in the next life. The closer we approach understanding emptiness, the greater the capacity we have to maintain realizations.

When we realize emptiness directly, it is impossible to fall back and lose our realization. We are not out of samsara, but we will never again be reborn in the lower realms. We have destroyed karma and future lives are taken by choice, not under the control of karma and affliction. Therefore, in order to understand how to train the mind for the supreme attainment of enlightenment, we are going to study how the mind functions.

We tend to indulge in day-dreaming of momentary glory in this life, then we "Come back to reality" and realize that it is just ordinary old us with our ordinary old life that we have to live. When we discover our mental potential, however, we realize that we are not ordinary at all. We have the seed of enlightenment and we should never put ourselves down by thinking, "I do not have good karma, I cannot do anything."

That is not how we should see ourselves, particularly when we are following the Bodhisattva's path. Olympic athletes are given a big welcome back home and are treated as heroes. Movie stars are admired and receive more money for less work than anybody else in the world. The real heroes and heroines are those who work on their mind, destroy the enemy of ignorance, and attain universal love and compassion. Bodhisattvas are the true heroes, and there is no reason why we cannot follow the Bodhisattvas' path.

Understanding the mind will help us see how we can attain Enlightenment. Once we see it is possible, we are encouraged to face and overcome the difficulties. New things always seem difficult because we do not understand how to do them, but once we learn the mechanism, the practice comes easily. All we have to do is try. It is already our experience that many things in our life are never as difficult as they appeared to be in the beginning. So, as we recite the prayer of motivation, we must summon up the courage and determination to achieve the Bodhisattvas' path.

Review

Last week we asked, "How does the mind exist?" We discussed the mind at relative and ultimate

levels. At the relative level, the human mind exists in dependence upon three things - the nervous system and sense organs, the object of awareness, and the prior continuum of awareness. Mind is seen to be a succession of moments, a stream of awareness, the past moment giving rise to the present moment which decays and produces the future moment.

Physical matter is also a continuum of momentary existence. Electrons, protons, and neutrons exist momentarily and then transform into other electrons, protons, or neutrons. The new particles are similar but different to their precursors. Although mind has this property of momentary change, it is not a material phenomenon. Awareness cannot be seen, heard, or measured by any physical means.

Ultimately, the clear light nature of mind sees things as they are, without distortion. And the ultimate nature of mind is empty of true existence.

Then we discussed where mind exists. Mind is possessed by humans, animals and other sentient beings within the various realms of re-birth, but not by plants, or by inanimate things such as rocks. Some people think there is a degree of consciousness in everything, especially plants, but Buddha and all the countless yogis and yoginis who have attained the clairvoyance able to see the minds of others have declared that it is only sentient beings who have a suitable basis for mind.

Even though plants are living, reproducing, and dying, they are not seen as suitable bases for consciousness. Nor are computers, even though there is a lot of talk about artificial intelligence. Somebody asked His Holiness the Dalai Lama, "Will computers ever be conscious?" His Holiness replied that if computers are developed to the point where they are a suitable base for consciousness, then it could be possible.

There is a catch here. "A suitable base for consciousness," like our nervous system, is not easy to produce. And also, the computer would not create consciousness, it would simply become a base within which somebody's mindstream would be reborn. Maybe the inventor's!

The suitable support for a human mind is clearly our nervous system. If our brain is deprived of oxygen, it is no longer a suitable support for consciousness and we die. If nerves are paralysed by chemicals, they temporarily lose their capacity to support consciousness. We anaesthetize people by giving chemicals which stop nerve function so that we can cut their bodies, even when they are awake, and they feel no pain.

Animals and humans need bodies for their minds to function, but there are rebirth states without a gross body. Those born in the Formless Realm have no body at all. Their minds exist in pure meditative contemplation. They do have subtle bodies of wind energy, but not gross bodies like ours..

The Six Types of Primary Consciousness

1 Visual consciousness - observes colours and shapes

2 Auditory consciousness - observes sounds

3 Olfactory consciousness - observes odours

4 Gustatory consciousness - observes tastes

5 Tactile consciousness - observes tangible objects 6 Mental consciousness - observes all phenomena

Mental Consciousness

With thoughts (conception), mental consciousness can observe all phenomena indirectly through the medium of mental images. For example, close your eyes and think of the place where you live, the front door, the main room, the bedroom and so on. You see it clearly as a picture in your

mind. That is an image appearing to your thought consciousness.

Mental consciousness also has the ability to see things directly, with-out a mental image. This capacity is cultivated in meditation where we can generate clairvoyance to actually see and hear what is hap-pening in the next room, to read minds, and so on. The clairvoyant mind is usually achieved through meditation. Sometimes, due to karma, people can have a degree of clairvoyance. Maybe this is what happens when, for no particular reason, we think of somebody, the phone rings, and they are on the other end.

It is said that with identical twins, one may be experiencing labour pains and the twin on the other side of the world feels similar pain. Perhaps these are brief flashes of direct mental awareness that come in an uncontrolled way. They do indicate the potential of our mental consciousness.

Clairvoyance, however, is a side-effect, not the main aim of meditation. The main aim is to generate the direct perception of reality, yogic awareness.

Secondary Consciousnesses OccUrring simultaneously with each of the six types of primary consciousness are secondary consciousnesses, or mental factors. The most important of these are listed within five groups, making fifty-one altogether:

- 1 Ever-present mental factors: feelings, intentions, discriminations, etc.
- 2 Object-ascertaining mental factors: aspiration, concentration, knowledge, etc.
- 3 Virtuous mental factors: faith, compassion, non-hatred, non-attachment, etc.
- 4 Non-virtuous mental factors: hatred, pride, attachment, ignorance, etc.
- 5 Variable mental factors: analysis, regret, sleep, etc.

Study of these mental factors is vital for our Dharma practice. They indicate how to practise Dharma, how to observe karma and how to train our mind.

The five ever-present mental factors are feeling, intention, discrimi-nation, contact and engagement. Normally, "feelings" refer to a wide range of emotions, anger, attachment, love, and so on. Here, "feel-ing" specifically refers to the feelings of pleasure, displeasure, and neutral feeling.

Intentions are important mental factors, equivalent to karma. Inten-tion is the movement of the mind to a particular object. It is like having a sudden interest in something, or an impulsive movement of the mind.

For example, imagine there is a hundred dollar note on the ground and four people walk past without noticing it. Something prevents their minds from connecting with the hundred dollar note. Then a fifth person comes along and his eye consciousness Sees the note; he picks it up and puts it in his pocket.

The first four people had a psychological reason for not seeing the hundred dollar note - no karma. Karmic seeds ripen by producing a moment of intention which connects our mind with objects. In Buddhism, there is no such thing as chance, the fifth person's mind saw the note through a karmically ripening impulse.

Maybe I should not use money as an example, we could be stealing! In Australia, I am building a monastery where, a century ago, people used to find big pieces of gold on top of the ground. So maybe we should use the example of a gold nugget lying on the ground. I have looked but have not found any. No karma.

In general, if we do find something, is it stealing to keep it? Buddha taught that if we find

something which could belong to somebody else, we should try to find the owner. If we cannot locate the owner, we should shout in the four directions, "I found a hundred dollars, does anybody own it?" And if there is no reply, we can keep it without stealing.

The five ever-present mental factors occur in every moment of con-sciousness. The next group is the five object-ascertaining mental factors. They are particularly involved in meditation.

Next is the eleven virtuous mental factors of faith, compassion, non-hatred, non-attachment, non-ignorance and so on. Then there are the six root non-virtuous mental factors: ignorance, hatred, pride, attach-ment, doubt, and wrong views.

And there are twenty secondary Non virtuous mental factors derived from these six.

The last group is the variable mental factors such as analysis, regret and sleep. These re "variable" because they are either virtuous, non-virtuous, or neutral according to their accompanying mental factors. In order to explain how the mind functions, Buddh'a divided con-sciousness into its component parts. The primary conscioussnesses are like the hand - the five fingers are the five senSe conscioussnesses and the palm is the mental conscioussness. Sensory experience is re-ported to the mental conscioussness, and all six are associated with varying numbers of mental factors.

In anyone moment there cannot be both virtuous and non-virtuous mental factors manifesting, because they are contradictory. It is impossible to love somebody and hate them at the same time. But it! is possible to love them one moment and hate them the next. We do that quite frequently.

We are seeing the mind in terms of a succession of moments, so we always come back to what is happening at anyone moment. This analy-sis of the mind is like when police are watching a video of a crime and they stop the video at a certain point to analyse exactly what, is going on at a particular moment. Buddha has frozen the continuum of conscioussness at different times - virtuous, non-virtuous - and has explained what is there.

I think it is a beautiful presentation of psychology. There are no obscure terms such as ego, super ego, and id. These mental factors are all obvious to each one of us. We know what anger is, we know what love is, we know what attachment, jealousy and pride are. This is a method for making sense of our emotions.

LESSON THREE

The Merely-Labelled Person

Last week we said that conscioussness is beginningless, there was no first moment of creation, and mind will continue endlessly into the future. What is the person who is reborn again and again? The body disintegrates and the mind continues from life to life, but what about the person?

There is no such thing as a permanent, independent, self-sufficient person or soul who goes from life to life. There is no concrete en-tity, no "I existing in my own right" who goes from life to life. The person of this life is merely labelled on the present body and mind. It ceases at death because its base ceases.

Immediately after death, however, there is a new base, the subtle body and mind of the Bardo being. The person in the Bardo is merely labelled upon this base. Then, in the next life, immediately after the Bardo ceases, there is a new person merely labelled upon the new

combination of body and mind. Thus, the person who goes from life to life is the merely-labelled person.

When We were born and our parents saw us as a new baby, we did not even have a name. We were just "Baby". Then our parents gave us a name and people knew us by this name. Now, everywhere we go, We announce our arrival by giving our name. This is how we are established to exist as a person - by a mere name given to the base, our body and mind. There is no person or I within the body and mind.

In the Bardo, there are no parents to give us a name, but we are aware of our body and mind and we establish our existence with the thought "I" labelled upon the Bardo body and mind. We are individuals in the Bardo, just as we are individuals in a dream. In a dream, we think "I" even though our dream appearance is totally different to our waking appearance. We can say that there is a dream person labelled on the dream body and the dream mind.

Similarly, in the Bardo, we think "I" and that is labelled on the Bardo body and mind. Thus, the merely-labelled person goes from life to life, always changing because the base is always changing but, nevertheless, a continuum, the history of which can be traced. Although we exist as merely labelled, we possess the characteristics of the base upon which we are labelled. We are male or female, young or old, educated or uneducated, etc., but neither our person nor our characteristics exists independently of the labelling process.

When we say this person is a teacher, he is a lawyer, she is a doctor, we mean these peoples' minds have become qualified, by passing exams, as suitable bases for the labels teacher, doctor, lawyer.

Although they are not teachers, lawyers, or doctors from their own side, they appear to us to be teachers etc., from their own side.

Grasping at this appearance to be true is the basis of all our mistakes and suffering.

TypeS of Mental Consciousness

Mental consciousness
-perception & conception

perception – ordinary; yogic; inattentiv; clairvoyant
conception – correct inference; correct presumption; doubt; wrong conception

Mental consciousness is most important, it is the mind with which we meditate. The table above shows that mental consciousness can be either perception or conception. Perception is direct awareness of an object, as occurs with the sense consciousnesses.

Perception within mental consciousness has two types: ordinary and yogic. Yogic direct perception is based upon a meditator's unification of calm abiding (shamatha) and insight (vipassana). Its objects are the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths.

Ordinary mental perception has three: inattentive, dream, and clair-voyant. Inattentive mental perception is momentary direct mental awareness that we have following a sensory cognition. It is immedi-ately followed by conceptual mental awareness of the object. For example, if we See a red book, our eye consciousness registers "red book" and that awareness is reported to the mental consciousness.

In the first moment, mental consciousness has a direct perception of the red book but this brief moment is immediately followed by _conceptual awareness of a red book. Even though we may be still looking at the red book, our dominant consciousness is the mental consciousness thinking about it, and relating to it through the appearance of a mental image associated with those thoughts. We may be imposing certain values on the book such as ancient book, valuable book, or "Chairman Mao's Little Red Book".

That moment of direct mental perception was "inattentive" because it was not strong enough to induce a memory. Habitually, we immediately go into "thinking mode" when we experience things and, because the object itself is no longer appearing to the mind, we do not have direct experience of the object as it is. Also, because it is a mental image appearing, experience of the object can be further distorted by subjective projections that take the mental image further and further away from the reality of the object.

To understand inattentive consciousness, imagine when children, are watching their favourite show on television. Mother calls out that dinner is ready but they do not answer. Even though their mother's voice is loud, they are so absorbed in what they are watching that they do not register what she is saying. Their ear consciousness is inattentive, suppressed by mental consciousness thinking about what they are seeing on TV. This is dangerous. Mother does not know how the mind works and she thinks they are deliberately ignoring her, so she gives the poor little things a beating.

If the mind is absorbed elsewhere, even though things may be appearing, we do not retain awareness. If we are reading and we begin to daydream, our eyes can go from the top of the page to the bottom, and we will suddenly realize that although the eyes are reading the words, the mental consciousness has no idea of what they are seeing. So we have to go back to the beginning.

Another ordinary mental perception is dream consciousness. When we see sensory objects in a dream, such as a mountain or a lake, it is not eye consciousness. Eye consciousness ceases when we go to sleep. All of our apparent sensory experiences in a dream are the activity of mental perception. We can also have conceptual consciousnesses in a dream.

The third ordinary mental perception is clairvoyant awareness. Through meditation, this can be developed by anybody, whether they are Buddhists or not. Clairvoyant awareness is the ability to see the minds of others etc.

Realizing Emptiness through Yogic Direct Perception

In the table I have listed four types of conception to show how we generate yogic direct perception of emptiness. In the beginning, we have the wrong conception grasping as true the false appearance of the self to exist from its own side.

After receiving instruction on correct view, we begin to doubt, "maybe this appearance is mistaken?" Our mind hesitates between correct and incorrect understanding. After further contemplating the meaning of emptiness, we generate the correct belief that the self is empty of existing from its own side as it appears. This is presumption because, although it is correct, we are not yet thoroughly convinced.

With further meditation on logical reasoning, we generate correct inferential understanding of emptiness. This is unshakeable understanding based upon perfect comprehension of logical reasons. We can defend our understanding of emptiness in any debate.

We increase our power of meditation until we generate single-pointed concentration, then turn this

mind towards our inferential understanding of emptiness. Due to the power of our concentration we are experiencing mental and physical ecstasy. "Ecstasy" has different connotations these days; in meditation there is bliss and our body and mind are completely supple, able to do anything. Maybe it's the same connotation?

This meditative mind focused upon emptiness is still a conceptual mind. We must now penetrate and break through the mental image of emptiness so that we can see emptiness directly with mental perception. The attainment of yogic direct perception of emptiness is a fantastic state of mind. It is the first moment of the True Path.

It destroys karma so that we can never be reborn again under the control of karma and afflictions, it achieves the first True Cessation of mental afflictions, and it marks the beginning of the first of the ten Bodhisattva grounds. We are now on a one-way journey to enlightenment.

Why Buddha Taught the Dharma

Having realized the nature of suffering and its cause, out of universal compassion Buddha taught Dharma primarily to enable people to realize emptiness directly so that they could cut the root of cyclic existence and achieve liberation from suffering.

The three baskets of teachings', Vinaya, Sutra, and Abhidharma, were taught out of great compassion in order to lead people towards the yogic perception of emptiness, the perfect antidote to self-grasping ignorance, the root of all suffering. For the remainder of the Path, that same wisdom, supported by progressively greater merit and power of concentration, eliminates more and more subtle afflictions and their imprints until enlightenment is eventually attained.

Why do we take the Eight Mahayana Precepts on the full moon, new moon, and so on? Why do we make offerings on the altar? Why do we do any Dharma activity? Dharma actions are done to purify obstacles and accumulate the necessary merit to gain the direct realization of emptiness. Only by destroying our own causes of suffering can we help others to overcome theirs. The practice of loving kindness can only be complete when it is supported by the wisdom realizing emptiness.

Wanting to destroy our own suffering and its cause is not selfish. For a Bodhisattva to live within society and not be overwhelmed by the enormity of misery and despair, he or she must have the realization of emptiness to support loving kindness, to be an unwavering support for others. To remain calm and loving amidst the chaos of suffering that we ignorantly and child-like inflict upon ourselves and others.

We have chosen to adopt the role of a Bodhisattva. This is what we want to do for society, to be a pillar of strength within confusion and misery. If our mind is made unstable by jealousy, attachment, anger and so on through not understanding emptiness, we would drown in the sea of suffering.

Student: Is ignorance actually the result of conception?

Gyatso: The ignorance that is the root of samsara includes both the underlying lack of awareness of reality (marigpa) and the self-grasping conception (jigta). Thus ignorance is a conception. It exists in our mind now because we had that wrong conception in our previous life, and the life before that, and so on. Ignorance has no beginning. It leaves imprints on the mind which manifest again and again in future lives as the same wrong conception.

Student: What is the difference between marigpa and jigta?

Gyatso: For example, in the twilight we cannot see things clearly and we imagine a coil of rope to be a snake. Marigpa, the fundamental ignorance, is like the darkness. Jigta is like the wrong conception which grasps at the appearance of the rope as a snake to be true.

Student: So we think ourselves into existence and we think ourselves out of existence?

Gyatso: We think ourselves into samsara, I will buy that. Attachment is conception; the karmas we create that cause us to be reborn are the result of conception. This has been happening since beginningless time, so I will buy that. We think ourselves into existence through the karma created by deluded thoughts. But we cannot think ourselves out of samsara. That requires the non-conceptual direct realization of emptiness.

In terms of the dependent-arising of existence, however, it is indeed stated that the final way in which things are established to exist is by mental imputation upon a valid base of imputation. The valid base, the ever-changing continuum of body and mind, has been flowing through time forever, without a beginning. Its continuity is due to its very quality of moment-by-moment change. It even continues into the ever-changing, pure body and mind of Buddhahood.

Student: If Buddhahood is a state of non-conceptual awareness, shouldn't we abandon all conceptual activity immediately?

Gyatso: First we must replace wrong conceptions with correct conceptions. Listening to teachings on emptiness, we have to first recognize the wrong conception, the self-grasping conception, and replace it with the correct conception of reality. We go through doubt to correct presumption - still a conceptual mind, but a conception to be generated, not avoided.

Love and compassion are also conceptual, and are to be generated. It is essential to cultivate the virtuous conceptions of love and compassion and the correct conception of reality. These oppose, but do not eliminate, the wrong conceptions of hatred, attachment, and ignorance. To generate the wisdom directly seeing emptiness, which eliminates those disturbing conceptions forever, we need love and compassion to accumulate positive karma to support our mind in meditation. Indeed, once Buddhahood is attained, even virtuous and correct conceptions are left behind, but we rely upon them to reach that point.

Single-pointed direct realization of emptiness requires a huge collection of merit. The Path to Enlightenment is the parallel growth of Wisdom and compassion in our mind. Correct presumption becomes correct inference based on rock-solid logic. Inferential understanding of emptiness cannot cut the root ignorance, there is still an element of mistake because we confuse our mental image of emptiness with emptiness itself.

We mistakenly feel that our intellectual understanding of emptiness sees emptiness itself. Even though it is a correct understanding, we have to break through the mental image and achieve direct perception where emptiness itself appears directly to the non-conceptual wisdom realizing emptiness. At this point the meditator loses, all sense of "me observing emptiness." It is as if the subjective mind fuses with the object, emptiness, like clear water being poured into pure water.

We have overcome wrong conception, and have even stopped the incorrect conception, but we are not yet enlightened. When we arise from meditative equipoise our conceptions flow back. Why? Because there are still seeds on our mind. We have only abandoned intellectually-acquired ignorance, anger, and attachment, we have yet to abandon innate ignorance, anger, and attachment.

Due to these innate seeds, things still appear to exist from their outside, but now we do not grasp at that appearance to be true. We can still experience impulses of anger and attachment, but we will not act on those impulses to create negative karma. To remove the innate afflictions, we have to generate more powerful concentrations on emptiness.

If you want to know the details, there are nine levels of innate afflictions. Gross gross, medium gross and small gross. (Laughter) Gross medium, medium medium, small medium. And gross small, medium small, and small small. The small small afflictions are the last to go. These are abandoned on the Path of Meditation where we repeatedly generate the direct realization of emptiness supported by greater and greater merit.

Even when we have abandoned the small small afflictions, we are still not enlightened. We have attained the eighth Bodhisattva ground and now, on the last three grounds, we must abandon the obscurations to omniscience - subtle imprints of the afflictions which still exist on our mind. These too are divided into gross, medium and small. We have already spent two countless great aeons on the path, and abandonment of obscurations to omniscience will take us another countless great aeon, unless we enter the tantric path.

Student: Why is there so much emphasis on understanding emptiness?

Gyatso: First we need to understand the opposite, self-grasping ignorance, and how the opposite to emptiness, a truly existing self, appears to this ignorance. Self-grasping ignorance is the root mistake of grasping as true the wrong appearance of our self to exist from its own side, independent of imputation. Because of age-old Imprints of ignorance, everything that appears to our mind appears incorrectly to exist from its own side. We do not see the self as it actually exists merely imputed upon the body and mind and we grasp at this incorrect appearance to be true; we see the self existing independently of the label.

If this were true, a baby would possess its name even before the parents gave the name to it. This ignorance which grasps at the self to exist in a mistaken way, is the source of attachment, anger, hatred, jealousy, pride - all of our disturbing emotions.

Buddha's teaching on emptiness is a presentation of the ultimate nature of the self - it is empty of existing in the way our ignorance projects it to exist. At the relative level, there is a self. It is established to exist by mental imputation, or labelling, upon a basis of the body and mind. But we mistakenly project the self to exist upon the body and mind independent of the labelling. To illustrate this, let's say we meet somebody for the first time and for some reason we take a dislike to him. Whenever we see him, we ignore him because of our preconceived opinion. Even though we hardly know him, we believe our projection truly exists upon him and does not come from our side. A friend points out that this person is not bad, he is a good person, and we realize that he is empty of the "badness" that we had mistakenly projected upon him. Then we are happy to be with him. Liberated from our wrong conception, no longer have dislike towards him.

Having established the wrong view of self, we then create a complex "self-image" where we project all sorts of good and bad qualities upon the self which we also believe to exist in their own right upon the self. Then we begin to hate or cherish our self, not realizing that these characteristics are empty of existing in their own right. In the same incorrect manner, we project things upon others, and our world gets crazier and crazier.

As long as we have self-grasping leading to self-cherishing, we will always create karma out of anger and attachment and we will always suffer. The doctrine of emptiness was taught so that we can realize the opposite of ignorance, throw it away, and destroy forever the cause of suffering.

LESSON 4

Review

Until now, we have established the definition of mind as clarity and awareness. Clarity refers to the formless nature of mind and the mind's natural capacity to experience objects without distortion. Awareness is the function of mind: subjectively knowing things.

There are countless mind-streams throughout the universe, each of which has been flowing through time without beginning and will flow endlessly into the future. Since beginningless time, our minds have been darkened by the ignorance not knowing reality; due to ignorance, we have the root misconception that ourself, other persons, and everything else we experience, all exist inherently, from their own side.

This leads us to attachment, anger, pride, jealousy, and so on which bring about all suffering. Thus, due to ignorance, in our uncountable previous lives we have always lived under the shadow of dissatisfaction and unhappiness.

Unaware that our minds contain the root of all suffering, we believe that happiness comes from the outer world - wealth, health, friends, career, reputation, and so on. No matter how hard we try, we are continually disappointed in our efforts to bring happiness to ourselves and our family. Even when we achieve our external goals, they are not guaranteed to bring happiness. Very often, the opposite can occur.

Fortunately, this situation is not necessarily eternal. Since beginningless time there have also been enlightened beings who have eliminated ignorance from their minds by attaining the unification of wisdom and universal compassion under the guidance of previously enlightened beings. It is always possible for us to follow the same path that they have followed and achieve Buddhahood, the fulfillment of our supreme potential.

Because the minds of Buddhas are the unification of wisdom and compassion, they are able to effortlessly work for sentient beings by appearing wherever they wish within the realms of rebirth to, assist those whose minds are ripe to comprehend and follow the path.

The Buddhas themselves have no power to lift us out of suffering; They cannot wash away our pain, They cannot take our sufferings upon themselves, or transplant their wisdom and compassion into our minds, What they can do is show us the path whereby each of us can develop our mind to abandon ignorance, anger, and attachment and cultivate wisdom and compassion.

So, in order to achieve our goal of happiness for ourselves and others, we need to understand the basis of all happiness and suffering, the most powerful energy in the universe, the cause of the universe, the mind.

To study mind, I used the analogy of stopping a video so that a particular image on the screen can be examined in detail. Buddha explained mind in a similar way, describing six primary consciousnesses and secondary mental factors that accompany them. The five sense consciousnesses are perception, and mental consciousness can be either perception or conception.

Conception is thought. The objects of our thoughts appear to our mind through the medium of a mental image. I listed four conceptions, chosen to show how we grow from confusion to wisdom. We begin with the wrong conception that we exist inherently from our own side, and are entities in our own right, independent of everything else. We gradually gain understanding of reality that we are empty of existing from our own side because we exist in dependence upon other things.

Listening to explanations on correct view, we generate doubt. Our mind wavers between the correct conclusion and the incorrect conclusion. We are not sure whether the self exists as an independent entity or not. With further listening and thinking, we generate correct belief, accepting that the self is empty of existing in its own right, but not really understanding why.

Through deep contemplation of logical reasonings proving that the self is empty of existing in its own right, we then generate correct inferential realization of emptiness. This is still a conceptual mind. A mental image of emptiness is appearing to our mind and we mistakenly take that appearance to be emptiness itself. Even though it is a correct mental image, it is not the actual emptiness.

In order to eliminate our root ignorance, we must now break through this mental image and see emptiness as it is, with direct perception." Direct perception is the second way in which mental consciousness functions.

The five senses are perceptions, not conceptions. Mental consciousness has both conception and perception. For ordinary beings, those who do not have direct realization of emptiness, there are three types of mental perceptions: sensory experience in dreams, inattentive perception, and clairvoyance.

Inattentive mental perception is the brief moment of mental perception that occurs immediately after a sensory experience. It is too short to even induce a memory, and our mental consciousness immediately switches into conceptual mode. Through the power of meditation, one can gain certain clairvoyant* powers, such as being able to remember one's past life, or to be aware of what is happening in the mind of another person, or to be able to see through walls or hear at a long distance.

The second type of mental perception, yogic mental perception, is founded upon the unification of calm abiding and higher seeing. Having achieved single-pointed concentration, we turn our minds toward our correct inferential understanding of emptiness. This powerful mind dissolves away our correct mental image of emptiness and we see the ultimate nature of things, emptiness, directly appearing to our mind. That mind is a true path and it begins the destruction of ignorance, anger, attachment, pride and so on.

To complete the elimination of ignorance we must enter meditation on emptiness again and again to overcome the progressively more subtle layers of ignorance. Our concentration must be even more powerful and supported by the accumulation of merit, positive energy generated by helping others.

Student: I am curious about the different stages of meditation.

Gyatso: There are nine stages of meditation to attain calm abiding.

After that, one enters single-pointed concentration, samadhi, through -further preparatory levels until the first absorption is attained. Then we go on to the second, third, and so on.

In the beginning we must overcome the two main distractions of indulging in fantasies of pleasure and of dullness or sleepiness. Our mind is like a waterfall of thoughts, not created by meditation, but our normal mental state which we are only just recognizing.

At the end, our mind is like the still surface of the ocean when there is no wind or current to cause disturbance. Like water, mind is naturally clear and still. They can both be disturbed by superficial things that are not part of their nature. Our goal is to achieve this natural state of clarity and stillness. There are nine stages going from the waterfall to the still ocean. How to progress from one stage to the next is described in great detail in the Graduated Path teachings.

The Fifty-One Mental Factors

Looking in detail at the six primary minds, there are many different mental factors accompanying them. Mental factors, shown in the six.

groups listed in Lesson Two, are qualities of consciousness within the primary minds. There are many, but the fifty-one that we study are the most important to know about. When we understand these, others will be easily understood by inference.

The Five Ever-Present Mental Factors

- 1 Feeling: the experience of pleasure, displeasure, or indifference
- 2 Discrimination: knows the particular features of the object
- 3 Intention: moves the mind to the general object
- 4 Contact: experiences objects as pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral
- 5 Engagement: focuses the mind upon a particular feature of the object

.....
The five ever-present mental factors accompany every primary mind at all times. Whenever we

are looking, listening, smelling, tasting, touching or thinking about something, the primary mind is always associated with five ever-present mental factors. Feeling is specifically defined as the experience of happy, unhappy or neutral feeling. When we see something pleasant, our eye consciousness the feeling of pleasure. When we see something terrible, like a road accident, our eye consciousness experiences unhappiness. When we see something neutral, our eye consciousness experiences neutral feeling.

Discrimination is a mental factor which knows the specific features of the object. It is a type of knowledge that understands what the object is.

.....
Intention moves the primary mind toward objects. Consciousness is not passive, it is an active observer that moves towards and connects with objects through its own volition. We may think that we have no choice in our experience of the world - things come and go without any relationship to our state of mind. This is not so. The quality within our consciousness which actively seeks its object is variously called intention, motivation, will, volition, or interest.

..

Contact is the experience of coming in contact with pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral objects. It precedes feeling and occurs when there is a meeting of the three conditions - dominant, immediate, and objective - mentioned in the previous chapter. Objects are either pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral.

Engagement is also movement of the mind toward its object, but now it is focusing upon a specific feature of the object. Picture how complex it is. Our feelings, discriminations, intentions, and so on flow from one to another each moment as the mind changes moment by moment. Also, we are constantly alternating between sensory awareness and mental awareness, each of which have their own five ever present mental factors.

At anyone moment, only one of the six primary consciousnesses can be clearly manifest. The remaining five are inattentive. As much as we like to think that we can taste food, have a conversation, and watch television all at the same time, we cannot. Our mind alternates from one awareness to another. When we are absorbed in the TV, we cannot taste the food or concentrate on the conversation. When We are talking, we miss out on the TV, and the taste, etc.

This is a great tragedy. We invite friends to our favorite restaurant, spend a lot of money for special foods, then engage in a fascinating conversation, and miss out on the expensive tastes that we came to enjoy. The food goes down but we forget to enjoy it. This is why monks eat in silence. We're no fools.

How the Five Ever-Present Mental Factors Function

Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, one of my teachers in India, gave an illustration of how the five ever-present mental factors function. Imagine one nice morning you wake up and decide to take a walk in a park; that decision is like the mental factor of intention. There are two parks, and you choose to visit the upper park, this is like engagement in a specific object. When you arrive at the park; that is like contact. The park is pleasant and you experience the feeling of pleasure. When you recognize the various trees and flowers, that is like discrimination.

Intention, the most important of these five, moves the mind to a particular object and is equivalent to karma. Literally, karma means "action." Intention is mental action and is karma not only from the point of view of cause, but also from the point of view of effect.

The motivation, or intention, behind our actions is the main factor in determining their karmic result. Virtuous intentions establish virtuous karmic seeds or propensities upon the mind-stream which bring happy results. Unvirtuous intentions establish karmic propensities which bring unhappy results.

How do karmic propensities produce their effect? They do so by ripening as the mental factor of intention, which connects our mind with particular objects - pleasant or unpleasant according to whether the seed was virtuous or unvirtuous. Our mind tells our body where to go, our speech what to say. We may feel that we do not have control over our life - we move from one disaster to another. This is true, it is the ripening of karmic propensities in our mind connecting us with experiences.

The other four ever-present mental factors are also important. Contact and feeling occur in the twelve links of interdependent origination which were taught to show how karma works. Through the ripening of throwing karma at death, we uncontrollably take another body with sense organs and the six consciousnesses.

We experience contact, the sixth link, with pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral objects and these give rise to pleasant, unpleasant and neutral feelings, the seventh link. Because we still have the root ignorance in our minds, we generate the next link - attachment to happy feelings and aversion to unpleasant feelings. At death, craving, the ninth link born out of attachment, nurtures the ripening of a new throwing karma in the form of intention - the tenth link.

\

Attachment is a wrong conception which exaggerates the pleasantness of the object and believes

that we cannot be happy unless we possess the object. When we experience an unpleasant object, aversion exaggerates the unpleasantness of the object. We see it as bad and wish to be away from it.

Whenever we have feelings of pleasure or displeasure we generate a degree of attachment and a degree of aversion. We then create more karma that binds us even more tightly to the wheel of life.

It seems that we are hopelessly trapped within the wheel of life, but there is a way out. Intentions do not *only* arise from mental afflictions and ripening karma. When we understand the four noble truths We will make a decision, born out of wisdom, to cultivate virtue and abandon non-virtue. We will then activate virtuous intentions and decrease unvirtuous intentions and begin to progress towards one of the three goals - a happy rebirth, personal liberation from the wheel of life, or Buddhahood.

Student: Do pleasant and unpleasant feelings come from conception?

Gyatso: When the sense organ, consciousness, and object come in contact, we experience a feeling of pleasure, displeasure or indifference according to the nature of the object. This feeling does not come from conception. Sensory feelings, however, are reported to mental consciousness, which may have feelings influenced by conception. For example, we love chocolate. Every time we eat it we have a pleasant feeling in both our taste and mental consciousness. Even just seeing a box of chocolates makes us feel happy. One day we eat too much chocolate and vomit all night. The next day, the mere thought of chocolate causes us to feel unhappy, not to mention putting some in our mouths.

Student: If you don't think a thing is unpleasant, would it not be unpleasant?

Gyatso: Most of us would feel painful sensations when a needle penetrates our skin, no matter how we look at it. Perhaps a masochist would experience painful tactile sensation and pleasant feeling in the mental consciousness.

A virtuous mind experiences pleasant feelings. So if we are able to establish and maintain virtue in both mental and sensory consciousness, I guess we would not have unpleasant feelings no matter what object we experience. It seems that it would be impossible for an unvirtuous karmic propensity to ripen when the mind is virtuous. I'm not sure about this, I think it would also depend

upon our realization of emptiness.

The Five Object-Ascertaining Mental Factors

- 1 Aspiration: seeks and takes interest in a desired object
- 2 Conviction: holds firmly to the object found by aspiration
- 3 Mindfulness: remembers the object held by the primary mind
- 4 Concentration: focuses uninterruptedly on the object
- 5 Knowledge: enables the primary mind to know its object thoroughly

These are "object-ascertaining" because each is certain with respect to its object. In this context, we are discussing five mental factors involved in generating concentration upon a virtuous object. These only occur in the retinue of a virtuous mind. Similar mental factors occur in a non-virtuous mind, but we are not interested in those at the moment.

Aspiration is a virtuous desire wanting to experience a particular object of meditation, such as the image of Buddha. It has two aspects of seeking and faith. With faith in the meditation object it seeks to be one with love, wisdom, compassion and so on, to not separate from spiritual attainments, and to gain future realizations.

Conviction maintains the object found by aspiration in a stable and unwavering way.

Mindfulness holds our mind on the object by being well-acquainted with it, not forgetting it, and remaining undistracted from it by excitement or dullness.

Concentration is a mental factor able to focus uninterruptedly on the object for a long time.

Knowledge removes doubt and misunderstanding, knowing what is to be abandoned and what is to be cultivated in meditation on the path.

The Importance of Knowledge

In general, there are three types of knowledge to be cultivated on the path: the knowledge of listening where we hear or read the Buddhist teachings; the knowledge of thinking about the meaning of those words; and the knowledge of meditating on that meaning.

These are cultivated simultaneously. We must always reflect on the meaning of what we hear and, if we have the opportunity, meditate on the meaning. In this way our understanding will grow and will inspire us to achieve more realizations on the path.

Knowledge is an essential quality for growth on the path. After stimulating our initial inspiration to follow the path, it then supports each realization - the practices of generosity, morality, patience, concentration, love, and so on all require knowledge to be practiced properly and perfectly. Wisdom and compassion are like two wings, we cannot fly with one alone.

To cultivate loving kindness we need knowledge of relative reality, how we are all connected from previous lives, how others have been so kind to us, how our minds function in similar ways, and so on. We need valid reasons for loving others. There are a lot of mean people in the world and it is difficult to love them without very good reasons that we see are true. Knowledge of the ultimate reality of emptiness also assists in the practice of loving kindness.

The Eleven Virtuous Mental Factors

1 *Faith*: opposes non-faith by admiring virtuous qualities and those who possess such qualities, and wishes to attain them. Admiring faith is a peaceful, clear state of mind induced by seeing the good qualities of teachers etc. Believing faith is conviction in the means of spiritual growth such as method and wisdom induced by understanding them. Aspiring faith is the wish to achieve virtuous goals, such as Buddhahood, induced by believing faith.

2 *Shame*: avoids non-virtue through a personal code of ethics.

3 *Consideration*: avoids non-virtue by considering the feelings of others, such as gurus or Buddhas, who would disapprove.

4 *Non-attachment*: directly opposes attachment to the pleasures of cyclic existence.

5 *Non-hatred*: the lack of intention to harm others, the direct opponent to hatred.

6 *Non-confusion*: a type of knowledge that has no confusion in distinguishing between virtue and non-virtue. It can be innate or acquired through listening, thinking, and meditating.

7 *Effort*: delights in virtue and overcomes laziness.

8 *Mental suppleness*: induced by concentration, it renders the mind flexible and light when engaging in virtue.

9 *Conscientiousness*: prevents the mind from being controlled by afflictions and engaging in non-

virtue.

10 *Equanimity*: is "non-application" in samatha meditation. Holds the mind within the three roots of virtue and prevents distraction by any affliction.

11 *Non-harmfulness*: a compassion that tolerates pain with no wish to inflict harm on others.

The eleven virtuous mental factors are virtuous from their own side. Virtuous minds are to be cultivated and non-virtuous minds are to be abandoned. Afflictions can be abandoned because they are not oneness with the mind, they are superficial obscuration.

Faith, the root of the path, is a mental factor that appreciates and admires virtuous qualities and those who possess such qualities and wish to attain them. The function of faith is to oppose non-faith and to induce the virtuous mental factor of aspiration.

There are three type of faith. Admiring faith is a clear state of mind induced by seeing the good qualities of teachers. Through the inspiring example of our gurus, the Buddha, and previous yogis and yoginis, we generate confidence that they are valid beings. Sometimes it is called clarifying faith as it makes our mind less cloudy or confused. "

Admiring faith leads to faith of conviction, or believing faith, generated by contemplating the meaning of the teachings and generating the three levels of knowledge - listening, thinking, and meditating. Through these we gain conviction in the truth of the teachings.

Aspiring faith is the wish to achieve virtuous goals such as nirvana and Buddhahood. It is generated by gaining believing faith that those goals are real and possible attainments.

Faith, in the western view, is often a dirty word. It is seen as contradictory to scientific understanding of a rational world. That is a mistaken view of faith. Faith is not "blind." It is necessarily based upon a proper reason. Every time we board an aeroplane we have a degree of faith - that the plane will not crash and the pilot is good enough to get us to our destination. There is no guarantee, but we've checked the statistics and they are good enough - especially if we're flying QANTAS. So we have faith based upon reasons - as are the three types of faith mentioned above.

We enter law school with aspirational faith that it will lead to our becoming a lawyer. Faith functions in everything we do. Most scientists work on faith - that what is reported by other scientists is correct. This is not always necessarily true. Many incorrect scientific ideas have been maintained as true for long periods of time because the reputation of their authors was so great.

Even though new experiments proved the great person wrong, they were suppressed. This is a correct example of blind faith. Buddha implored his followers to listen attentively and do all they could to prove him wrong. Many tried, nobody succeeded.

Whether Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha are valid objects or not needs to be investigated. Buddha said, "Check up! Blind faith is useless. If you simply have faith because other people say it is good, that will get you nowhere. On the basis of what you can see to be true, you can generate faith in what you cannot see to be true, and this faith will lead you to understanding it in the future."

Eventually we will know the reality of karma and rebirth, but we cannot wait until somebody proves it to us before we start doing something about it. It is essential that we start training our mind now, that we start cultivating loving kindness, wisdom, and compassion now. We must start to oppose ignorance, anger and attachment now, to the best of our ability. Otherwise, if we procrastinate, death" will come and we will lose this precious opportunity to destroy suffering and its cause. Dharma practice - cultivating wisdom and compassion and abandoning mental afflictions is founded on faith.

Faith is vital for achieving spiritual results. We cannot wait for Buddhahood or nirvana to be scientifically proven before we decide to do something about our lives. That is not possible. All scientific advances have arisen from correct faith. A scientist has an idea, "Maybe this is how it works." With faith, he sets out to prove his idea. This is needed to overcome difficulties both in the experiment itself and then, once he has shown it to be correct, in overcoming resistance within the scientific establishment to accept his results.

Shame and consideration are both mental attitudes whereby we refrain from engaging in non-virtue. With shame, we avoid doing something harmful through having adopted a personal code of ethics. For example, in our mind we have accepted that it is wrong to harm others by stealing and have determined to not take that which is not given to us. Shame is the state of mind which refrains from stealing when temptation is there by remembering one's promise and thinking, "I shall not steal this, that would be against all I stand for."

With consideration, we also refrain from engaging in negative actions, but this time the reason we do so is by considering the feelings of others. We think, "In the eyes of Buddha and my teacher, it would be wrong to steal"

Shame and consideration are roots of virtue. These mental factors are the Support of all our virtuous actions and our abandonment of non-virtuous actions. We have them to a small degree,

but we need to enhance their presence in our mind.

Non-attachment, non-hatred, and non-confusion oppose the three poisons of closed-minded ignorance, infatuated attachment, and deep hostility. They are also considered to be roots of virtue.

According to the three types of spiritual practitioner, there is non-attachment to the pleasures of this life, non-attachment to all pleasures of cyclic existence, and non-attachment to the bliss of nirvana.

Non-hatred is the lack of intention to harm others. It is like patience, the mind is able to experience harm without becoming angry in response. We train in non-hatred by not blaming others when they blame us, not striking others when they strike us, not becoming angry at others when they are angry at us, and not criticizing others when they criticize us.

Non-confusion is a type of knowledge that has no confusion in distinguishing between virtue and non-virtue. It is a knowledge that understands relative reality of cause and effect and, therefore, what is virtue and what is non-virtue, and also the ultimate reality, emptiness.

People can be born with this knowledge, acquired by cultivating wisdom in previous lives. Instinctively they refrain from committing harmful actions. Some children have this innate recognition of virtue and non-virtue, others do not. Also, non-confusion can be generated in this life through the three activities of listening, thinking and meditating.

Effort is enthusiasm in relation to virtuous activities. Effort is a strong state of mind that enthusiastically embraces positive activity, whether it is meditating, practising generosity, patience, or whatever, without discouragement. Its primary function is to overcome laziness. Laziness is a major obstacle in our mind where we are not interested in being generous or helping, we just want to indulge in selfish pursuits.

Mental suppleness is a virtuous mental state of mind generated through concentration. Sometimes called ecstasy, it is a blissful state of mind where we are able to stay focused on a virtuous object effortlessly as long as we wish.

Conscientiousness is a virtuous attitude which prevents the mind from being controlled by the afflictions and engaging in non-virtue. It maintains our mind free from selfishness, anger, and attachment by repairing past faults and avoiding present and future faults.

Equanimity is generated during meditation, it enables us to go from one meditative stage to the

next, giving no opportunity for distractions. The strings on a musical instrument must be neither too tight nor too loose. Similarly, when we are meditating, if we are too loose in our mindfulness our concentration will slip. If we are too tight, then the effort itself will be a distraction. Equanimity is the mental capacity to remain in the middle. It is not the equanimity of the four immeasurable attitudes. Non-harmfulness is strong compassion able to bear pain oneself if it relieves others of suffering. Ordinary compassion simply wishes others to be free from suffering. This compassion is the essence of Buddha's teachings.

.Student: How do you achieve that middle way equanimity?

Gyatso: I don't know, I have never achieved it. (Laughter) I think we must recognize the two faults. I know well the fault of being too loose, but I am too lazy to know the fault of trying too hard. I can understand how it can happen, if we are too intense in anything we do, it becomes a distraction. Equanimity is simply being there, nicely balanced. Sounds great! I can see the result, but exactly how to do it I'm not sure. It must be through repeated experience. We will definitely know that we are there when we are there. (Laughter)

Student: Why do we have to set up a motivation like bodhicitta if we can just do a virtuous action without any motivation?

Gyatso: Only Buddhas have spontaneous virtue. All of their actions are effortless. Every action we do has a motivation and, if we really check up, it is usually a selfish motivation even when we think we are being virtuous. When we give money to a beggar in India, is that true compassion? Not necessarily. It can be to get them out of our way, can't it? "Stop bothering me, here, take a rupee and go away."

We need to constantly check our motivation and, ideally, make it bodhicitta because we are habitually selfish and non-virtuous. Before doing any action, we should reflect on our real intention. "Why am I doing this?" At the end of the action, dedicate the merit to others, also with bodhicitta.

I find this subject of primary minds and secondary mental factors extremely interesting and useful. It is a psychology that we can all understand. It talks about states of mind that we all experience and can identify with. There is nothing unusual that we have to learn.

Even though it was taught in India two thousand five hundred years ago, it is completely

contemporary. In fact, it is way ahead of us it explains our mental disorders, even ones that we did not know we had, and gives methods to free ourselves from them.

This presentation of the six primary minds and fifty-one mental factors is the basis of my faith in karma, reincarnation, and the possibility of attaining Buddhahood and helping all beings, the Bodhisattva's goal. I do not have experience of karma. I do not remember previous lives. I do not have single-pointed concentration or the wisdom realizing emptiness. But this presentation I find to be clear and acceptable. It gives me something I can definitely work with, it is so logical.

The spiritual path is internal, in our own mind, and it is up to each individual to work on his or her mind. Simply having faith in Buddha is not enough.

Review

Now you have the means by which you can make each moment of your day worthwhile. Practising the spiritual path is not simply going to the temple or spending time in a short retreat. It is twenty-four hours a day working on the mind - abandoning non-virtuous mental factors and cultivating virtuous ones.

Until now, we have discussed Buddha's presentation of mind as clarity and awareness. Whenever we have the experience of being aware of something, that itself is mind. Consciousness and awareness are synonyms. Clarity refers to the nature of mind as being formless. Awareness is not physical, yet mind depends upon the physical body.

We divided mind into its component parts by looking at the ways in which we experience things. The five sense consciousnesses are easy to understand because they have their own distinct objects - colours and shapes, sound, smells, tastes, and tangibles.

Mental consciousness, the sixth "sense," is our thoughts which conceive things by means of a mental image. Mental consciousness has the capacity to experience things directly without a mental image, but that ability needs to be cultivated in meditation.

Then we discussed how the mind, at anyone moment, can be analysed into various mental factors. There are five ever-present mental factors which exist within every moment of consciousness, sensory or mental. The mental factor of contact is the experience of objects that are either pleasing, displeasing, or neutral. Contact is followed by the mental factor of feeling - happiness, unhappiness, or neutral feeling.

The ever-present mental factor of intention is the experience of being attracted towards the object. This is equivalent to karma because, from the resultant aspect, the ripening of karmic imprints throughout our life causes our mind to be attracted to objects pleasing, displeasing, or neutral. From the causal aspect, intentions associated with virtuous, non-virtuous, or neutral motivations establish new karmic imprints upon our mindstream.

When non-virtuous karma ripens, the resulting intention moves our minds, and therefore our bodies, to connect with unpleasant objects.

When virtuous karma ripens, the resulting intention moves our mind and body to connect with pleasant objects. Thus the pattern of our life follows the continual ripening of karmic seeds upon our mindstream. It seems that we have no choice. Many people think, "Oh, everything is karma, what hope have we got?"

Buddha did not say everything is karma. He did say that karma is a condition behind our experiences, but there are other causes for intention. It does not arise solely through the ripening of karmic imprints.

For example, imagine that we have never heard that stealing is wrong and we are natural thieves. Somebody comes along, impresses us with their calm and honesty, and explains that stealing is a mistake because it hurts others and leads to poverty in future lives. Listening, and thinking about what this person has said, we decide to give up stealing. Then an opportunity to steal arises, a karmic impulse, an intention to steal, manifests in our mind but, through our new knowledge we do not follow that impulse and we generate the virtuous intention to not steal. We now have a degree of freedom from karma- dependent upon knowledge and the conscious generation of virtue.

This new intention creates a new karmic imprint, one of honesty, not of stealing. And, instead of non-virtuous thoughts causing the ripening of imprints to steal, our virtuous thoughts cause the ripening of virtuous imprints, and our life pattern begins to change for the better.

We begin the path of freedom from karma by first learning about it and, with faith in the teacher, abandoning non-virtue and acting virtuously. Without faith in the person who shows us that stealing is wrong, we will not change our behaviour. Faith in a valid teacher is the beginning of virtue.

I had an experience which illustrates this point. I was buying provisions for my first retreat, before I became a monk. On leaving the shop, I noticed that I had been given five dollars too much change. My initial impulse was, "This is my lucky day:" but then I thought, "How can I be serious

about Buddhism if I keep this money?"

So I went back into the shop and explained what had happened. The shopkeeper said, "Look, if I was so stupid, you can keep the five dollars." I walked out again, still with the money, and an even bigger smile on my face. "Dharma is true!" I thought.

Watch Your Mind

Having learned about the mental factors, we must always be mindful of which ones are manifesting in our mind. Not just when we meditate, but we should be mindful all day. We should especially cultivate the habit of looking at our mind whenever we feel an impulse, an urge to do something in our daily life. Instead of immediately following that urge, we should think, "Why do I feel pushed to do this? Is it a virtuous or a non-virtuous impulse?"

Big shops and supermarkets layout their goods in an enticing way because they know what attracts us and they exploit our own attachment to buy their products. Just like fishermen baiting their traps. We have to fight against the impulse to buy something we have been tricked into thinking we must have, when we do not need it at all.

When our arm involuntarily stretches out to put something in the supermarket trolley we must ask ourselves, "Do I really need this? What is pushing me to buy it?"

When I go into the supermarket to buy a few things, some milk and bread, I feel almost shameful that I buy so little. The things on the shelf are pleading to be bought. The packaging industry and the advertisers have cleverly designed their product to exploit my longing desire.

So, we should be mindful and watch our mind to see what is pushing us to do or say things. This is especially true in our speech. Often, when somebody is talking to us, even while they are still talking we have stopped listening and are thinking of a reply. In my case, the motivation is to make a reply which shows how clever I am - the mental factor of pride is manifesting. Pride, arising from self cherishing, is useless. It only brings unhappiness. So, if I can catch it when it arises, I can change my way of listening and replying and make the communication worthwhile.

Sometimes, just a sign saying "sale" is enough to entice us into a shop and buy things we do not need. I read in the paper that a trickster lured a lady into his shop to sell her jewelery. Her friend knew he was a trickster, so she went into the shop to rescue the first lady.

Then she ended up spending as much money as her friend, even though she knew they were being tricked. She ended up with a box of worthless trinkets which she originally had no intention of buying. Her knowledge, which knew better, was overwhelmed by her attachment.

Often when we are angry we impulsively speak hurtful and spiteful words. We regret this afterwards, but the words come out too quickly, due to lack of mindfulness and the strength of anger. The solution is to utilize the brief moment between the impulse, arising from affliction and ripening karma, and acting or speaking on that impulse. We need to train our mindfulness to use and expand this time gap so that eventually we can control negative impulses and not act upon them. We can then eliminate anger, attachment, pride and jealousy from what we say and, instead, use virtuous mental factors to speak pleasing, skillful words.

Thus, with mindfulness, we must always be watching what we are thinking. When we are alone we tend to go off into a day-dream and indulge in a fantasy of attachment. That seems to be okay, we are attached to our day-dreams. For some people it may be the only moment of happiness in a bleak life. The problem is, it increases our attachment and takes us further into the lost world of mental projections and away from seeing things as they are.

Our mental escapism indulging in fantasies of attachment is also exploited by others. The lottery industry is huge in the world, and getting bigger as the holy dollar becomes more and more an object of worship. Most people buy lottery tickets because the pleasure of just dreaming of winning gives some relief from the frustration and unhappiness of living in the material world.

We will never achieve the wealth displayed before us on the TV screen, we have no concept of the fact that real happiness lies not in wealth but in loving others, and even this ignorance and unhappiness is exploited by others for material gain.

Week after week we fail to win the lottery. Our mood goes down, so we buy yet another ticket to raise our mood with (almost) impossible expectations. We are no different to a poor, suffering heroin addict whose source of relief from pain is killing him.

Last week we mentioned the virtuous mental factors of shame and consideration. Through these we avoid behaving in a non-virtuous manner by reflecting that it would be shameful according to our personal code of ethics, or by considering how our action would be seen by our teacher or by Buddha.

Then we discussed non-attachment, non-hatred and non-confusion which, although their names

imply a simple absence, are actually forceful states of mind. Non-attachment is a forceful attitude of renunciation, a turning away from the pleasures of cyclic existence. Non-hatred is like the power of patience and kindness, not only an absence of hatred but a positive feeling of good-will towards others. Non-confusion is knowledge, understanding relative reality, cause and effect, and understanding ultimate reality, emptiness.

The next virtuous mental factor was enthusiastic effort to engage in virtue. Then there was mental suppleness, a special state of mind which is generated during single-pointed concentration that enables us to remain focused on the virtuous object as long as we like. Then we mentioned conscientiousness, a type of virtuous mindfulness, not allowing our mind to be controlled by afflictions. Equanimity, and non harmfulness are the last two virtuous mental factors.

..The Six Root Afflictions

The next group of mental factors is the six root afflictions. Lama Yeshe used to call them superstitions or delusions; both of these translations indicate a fixed, mistaken belief in something to be true. "Affliction" indicates the effect these six mental factors have on our mind. Like a sickness, they make our mind agitated, unpeaceful, and reckless, difficult to subdue.

The afflicted mental factors of attachment, hatred, ignorance, pride, doubt, wrong-view, and so on, can manifest in association with any of the six primary minds. When they do arise, they cause the whole consciousness at that time to be "afflicted:" just as when any of the eleven virtuous mental factors are manifesting, the whole mind is virtuous.

When we look at an image of Buddha with faith, the whole eye consciousness is virtuous. We establish positive karmic imprints merely by looking at an image of Buddha with faith. In that same eye consciousness, the mental factor of happy feeling is virtuous, the intention is virtuous, all five ever-present mental factors are virtuous due to the natural virtue of faith that accompanies them.

There is no such thing as a particular moment of consciousness that is partly virtuous and partly non-virtuous. Virtue and non-virtue cannot manifest simultaneously. The mind is always either virtuous, non-virtuous, or neutral, never a mixture. Sometimes we talk about mixed motivation, for example, killing an animal out of compassion. Killing is a naturally non-virtuous action. At the moment of taking the animal's life, the mind is necessarily totally non-virtuous.

Buddha taught that to cut the life-force of a living creature, the act of killing can only be done with the aggressive force of hatred. We cannot kill with compassion, it is not possible. Compassion thus precedes the moment of killing. It establishes a virtuous imprint, then we generate a non-

virtuous imprint with the action of killing. That is how a mixed result can occur.

Six Causes for Afflictions to Arise

1 *The seed of the affliction* We carry two types of seeds in our mind-stream - karmic seeds and seeds of affliction. Karmic seeds, or potentials, are neither physical nor mental. They can be likened to footprints in the sand - we cannot say that the footprint is either sand or space, but it is something that can give information. We can tell what kind of animal has walked on the sand. Karmic seeds are imprints carried upon the mind-stream which have the potential to bring about karmic results. The seeds of afflictions are consciousness itself.

Even if we do not have manifest anger, we still have the seed of anger. Some people say, "I don't have a problem with anger:" but we have the seeds of all afflictions from previous lives and, as long as we still have them it is always possible for our afflictions to manifest.

2 *The object of the affliction* is that which we are angry at or that to which we are attached. Without an object, the affliction will not arise.

Clearly, for a sense consciousness to arise, we need a sensory object. We may be happily enjoying a party until somebody we dislike comes into the room. As soon as we see this person, anger manifests as a mental factor within our eye consciousness and we feel upset. Somebody else who likes this person sees them walk into the room and their eye consciousness feels happiness. Whether the person is pleasant or unpleasant comes from us, not from their side.

Mental consciousness does not need the presence of a physical object. We just have to think about Someone and we can get angry. During retreat, when I am supposed to be thinking of something virtuous, sometimes thoughts of my enemies drift into my mind. My mind imagines the enemy doing something and I feel angry. The poor person is probably sitting somewhere thinking good thoughts about me, but here my mind is getting angry. Completely crazy!

During meditation, it is easy to fall into a fantasy either of anger or, more often, attachment. This is dangerous because it increases the power of the seed of affliction. The more often we allow anger to manifest in our mind, the stronger the seed becomes, and the stronger is our habit to be angry.

We must always be mindful and not allow negative thoughts to abide in our mind. Anger is easier. None of us likes to be angry, its faults are obvious. Attachment, however, is harder to abandon because we like to indulge in our fantasies. We must be strict with ourselves and know the faults of attachment.

3 *Incorrect view* is our projection of exaggerated positive or negative qualities upon the object. By

thinking again and again about what pleases or displeases us, we believe these qualities actually exist on the object of our attachment or anger and are not mere projections of our mind. These incorrect projections themselves become causes for our afflictions to arise.

4 *Familiarity* The more familiar we are in behaving in a certain way, the stronger will be our tendency to act that way again. Some people manifest great anger or attachment with the slightest provocation, due to their familiarity with these afflictions in this and previous lives. We habitually indulge in anger and attachment but not in virtuous thoughts. We need to cultivate familiarity with the latter.

We must know that our future is in our hands. If we want happiness we have to make an effort to cultivate patience, kindness, and honesty, to cherish others and not to cherish ourselves. This effort is immediately rewarded by a peaceful mind, which then encourages us to engage in virtue more frequently.

5 *Misleading friends* The negative influence of misleading friends easily distracts us from virtue and causes afflictions to arise. There is a story of two friends, one a heavy drinker and layabout, the other studious and a non-drinker. They left home and went their separate ways. The studious person took a job in an inn where, over time, he became friendly with the drinkers and started drinking himself. The other person, the drinker, lived near a monastery where he made friends with the abbot and started to receive teachings. He gave up drinking and became studious and a meditator. Thus we can see how the company we keep can lead us into non-virtuous or virtuous ways.

6 *Distracting stories* Reading or listening to stories that stimulate afflictions, such as treatises on love, war, sexual positions, and tantric spells easily increase our anger, attachment, and ignorance. It is much better to read stories of the great yogis such as Milarepa, which will establish imprints of virtue.

A Detailed Look at the *Six Root Afflictions*

1 *Longing desire* sees a contaminated object as attractive and wishes to acquire it. It is non-aversion to cyclic existence.

2 *Hatred* observes a contaminated object, exaggerates its bad qualities, sees it as undesirable, and wishes to harm it. *Hatred* can be directed towards a sentient being, suffering in one's own

continuum, or an inanimate object.

3 *Pride* arises from the I-grasping ignorance and feels superior to others. Seven types: pride, superiority, extreme pride, egotism pretentiousness, slight inferiority, and wrong pride.

4 *Ignorance* in general, confusion about the nature (reality) of phenomena, especially of cause and effect. In particular, the grasping ignorance that is the opposite of the wisdom realizing selflessness.

5 *Deluded doubt* wavers between the correct and incorrect understanding of selflessness, cause and effect, etc., and obstructs the attainment of liberation and enlightenment.

6 *Deluded views* are five:

(a) *View of transitory collection as real I and mine* observes the I and mine of one's own continuum and holds the I to be intrinsically existent.

(b) *Extreme view* observes the + or mine of one's own continuum and conceives the I to be either eternal or annihilated at death.

(c) *Holding false views as supreme* holds false views, as above, to be correct and the best for gaining realizations.

(d) *Holding wrong morality and conduct as supreme* sees physical, verbal, or mental wrong actions to be correct and superior methods for attaining liberation.

(e) *Wrong view* is an intellectually-acquired mistaken idea which denies the existence of things such as cause and effect, rebirth, etc., that are necessary to understand in order to attain liberation and enlightenment.

Longing desire or attachment, is a mental factor that sees a contaminated object as attractive from its own side and wishes to acquire it. A contaminated object is something which has arisen from karma and afflictions, or which causes an increase in the afflictions when it is observed.

Longing desire is a non-aversion to cyclic existence, the opposite to renunciation. It functions to generate suffering by causing rebirth. In relation to the Desire Realm, it believes that indulging in sensory pleasures is worthwhile, that it brings pure happiness. In the Form Realm, it believes that the happiness of meditative concentration is supreme and brings permanent happiness. In the Formless Realm, it believes that the neutral feeling of the formless meditative absorption is

supreme.

Attachment can arise in our mind in terms of the past, the present or the future. Attachment in relation to the past is when we indulge in nostalgia - thinking about the "good old days." Like homesickness, when we are feeling sad, longing to be back home. Not long after we return home, of course, we start longing to be back where we were.

Attachment in relation to the present is manifest attachment to objects of pleasure - the things that we have right now. We cling to friends and pleasures with a mind that obscures their reality. Attachment blinds us to the faults of our friends.

When we feel lonely and are looking for a new friend, we meet someone and become swept up in longing desire. The person appears to be a god or a goddess, perfect in every way. Our mind cannot let go, whatever we are doing we are always thinking of them. Longing to be with them, we feel miserable when we are apart, or if they do not ring us up. When we are with them, our mind again soars high.

This roller-coaster mind is the suffering of attachment. It is dangerous because we have an obscured view of the person who is the object of our attachment. Once we become friends, their faults appear and we become angry. "Why aren't you the same as when we were courting?"

They were the same. Our eyes were different, that is the problem. We did not want to see them as they were. Our friends could see, they may have warned us, "What do you see in that person?" Their eyes were not obscured by attachment.

Now that we are angry, our eyes are exaggerating the faults, we are painting a much worse picture of our friend than they actually are.

It is difficult to have a relationship free from obscuring the reality of our partner. We even obscure the reality of ourselves!

Nobody is perfect except a Buddha, and we are not Buddhas so we have to be realistic. To deal with attachment we must first be realistic. We should take it easy, sit down and have an honest look at ourself and our friend, see ourselves for what we are without exaggeration. When we see another's fault we should not just abandon them and look for somebody else. The search for the perfect friend is futile. We should try to understand our own faults and our friend's faults and still want to be with them.

Wisdom tells us that faults are not fixed. Attachment is blind to faults, and anger tells us that faults

are inherently part of the other. That is why attachment so often becomes anger when our friend does not live up to our projections. We blame them for not living up to our fantasy. The same thing is happening from their side towards us. We are not living up to their unrealistic expectations fueled by attachment. We are revealing faults that they do not want to know about. So there is mutual disenchantment and the relationship becomes a disaster.

This happens to so many relationships. Divorce is almost matter-of-fact in the West. We belong to the disposable generation. When we are tired of something we throw it away and get another. We trade in our old car for a new one, we exchange our house or apartment for a new one, we swap our wives and husbands for new ones. Dissatisfaction rules supreme and is fed by the foolish belief that we can find pure happiness.

Attachment to future objects is where we indulge in daydreams. Unsatisfied with the present, we allow our mind to fantasize future happiness, where the object of our pleasure is always perfect. This may not seem to be a big problem. As we discussed before, buying a lottery ticket may give the only relief within a bleak existence, even if the relief comes simply from imagining winning. It is a fault because it leads our mind further from reality, into a fantasy world from where it is difficult to escape.

Fantasies prevent us establishing from good relationships and experiencing pleasure in our everyday life. Having gone so far into our imagination, reality will never live up to our expectations and there will be no opportunity for happiness.

To overcome attachment, we need to first recognize it. Throughout the day we must observe our minds and, when we see nostalgia, excitement with present pleasures, or fantasies of future pleasures, we should examine the very nature of attachment and recognize its faults. Then we will be energized to overcome attachment, otherwise we will allow our mind to indulge again and again in nostalgia, excitement and fantasy.

A major fault of attachment is that it binds us to the wheel of life. We even go to hell because of attachment. How? When a karma for rebirth in hell ripens as we are dying, in the intermediate state we experience great cold. In the distance we see the red glow of the fires of hell and, through attachment to warmth, we experience an impulse to go there - and so the Bardo experience ceases and we are reborn in hell. Attachment thus lies behind all the sufferings of samsara, is this not a good reason to give up nostalgia, excitement, and fantasy?

Attachment projects permanence, believing objects of pleasure will last forever. Intellectually we know we will die, we know our car will wear out, we know we will grow old, but subconsciously we believe the opposite. Our distress when somebody to whom we are attached dies is partly due to

our inability to come to terms with impermanence. Buddha taught that if we have a problem with attachment to a person we can visualize them growing old and wrinkled, dying, and their corpse gradually rotting and becoming a skeleton. Then check to see if we still want to hold their body as close as possible!

The real solution to attachment is to understand emptiness. Even the intellectual knowledge that the objects of attachment do not exist from their own side as they appear is a great way of reducing attachment.

Hatred/Anger Hatred, or anger, is a mental factor which observes a contaminated object and exaggerates its bad qualities, sees it as undesirable and wishes to harm it. Hatred can be directed towards another sentient being, suffering in our own continuum, or an inanimate object.

The main thing to remember is that anger is a wish to inflict harm. We may feel that anger is justified in certain situations, such as disciplining our children. But we must distinguish between anger and wise discipline. Too often we lose control, become angry, and shout at or physically abuse our children. We ourselves are red-faced and shaking with a disturbed mind.

Discipline coming from love and wisdom may be firm, but the difference is vast. We remain calm and are able to communicate with the child - their response is so much better than when we are out of control with anger.

One of the Lamas who helped Lama Yeshestart Kopan monastery, in Nepal was Lama Pasang, who directed most of the building. He was also in charge of disciplining the young monks. One of the boys had been caught stealing and was sent to Lama Pasang for the prescribed punishment - with a leather strap. I remember seeing the young monk leaving Lama Pasang's room a bit downcast but quite happy. I was on my way to see Lama Pasang about something else. When I entered his room, he was sitting on his bed with tears running down his face. There was no anger in his way of disciplining the young monk.

When we are angry, we cannot rationalize that we are acting out of kindness: anger is either manifest in our mind or it is not. Anger is the intention to hurt through a physical action, words, or simply the thought itself.

To overcome anger we must first recognize it for what it is - the intention to inflict harm. Then we must reflect on its shortcomings. Think how anger disturbs our inner peace, and the peace of our family and environment. Our anger causes harm to others/even our precious family. Anger makes

us irrational, we even destroy our treasured possessions out of anger.

Anger makes us abuse our friends who try to help us calm down. They are not the main object of our anger but because anger has taken over our mind, we become angry at the whole world. Anger harms our own body. Our blood pressure goes up, we could have a stroke.

We smoke cigarettes and take alcohol or drugs with complete disregard for their effect on our body and mind. Anger causes us to become more and more lonely as our family and friends avoid us, unable to bear our aggressive nature. Anger destroys our accumulated positive karma and creates more negative karma.

The list of shortcomings of anger is endless. This should give us the incentive to overcome our anger. The actual antidote to anger is patience - the ability to tolerate disturbing situations and remain calm. When we appreciate the value of patience, we will want to acquire it before anything else, even wealth! With this attitude, we can now see that disturbing situations are not times to be angry, but are great opportunities to cultivate patience. We *need* disturbing situations, otherwise we can never cultivate patience. The ultimate solution to anger is the wisdom realizing emptiness.

Pride, like the other root afflictions, arises from the self-grasping ignorance. Pride is an inflated sense of superiority towards others. It can manifest in several ways. Ordinary pride is when we feel socially superior to people like the maid or the man who collects the garbage. We see them as lower than ourselves. Special pride is when, even amongst our social equals, we think we are special, better than them. Extreme pride is feeling superior even to those who are socially higher than ourselves: "My boss is an ass, I could do much better than him."

Egotism is the pride of being obsessed with our physical appearance or our mental qualities, "I am so beautiful," "I am so clever." Although the body and mind are the basis of the label "I," we incorrectly identify them as *being* the self. We dress our body for a party, have our hair done and put on makeup. As we go out the door we look at our reflection in the mirror and the pride of identifying with our physical appearance as superior to others arises. Or, when we are at the party, we generate pride in our intelligent comments or our ability to tell jokes during conversation. This is egotism identifying with our mind as "I" and feeling superior to others.

Pretentiousness is the pride of pretending that we have Dharma understanding when we do not. Either directly or indirectly we give the impression to others that we understand emptiness or have acquired clairvoyance.

Pride of slight inferiority is where we pretend to be humble or inferior but are actually bathing in

the reflected glory of an important person. Our Lama visits the Dharma centre and, although we bow low in his presence we are conscious of the other students watching us and we are thinking, "Here am I, the perfect student who knows how to relate to the teacher, I'm so special."

Finally, there is wrong pride - a fisherman proud of his catch, boasting about the big fish he killed, stretching his arms out widely when, actually, the fish was much smaller.

Pride is a major barrier to learning. We think we know better than the teacher, we cling to our own views, we cannot admit that faults may exist in our own mind or behaviour. We are too arrogant to learn something new. An antidote to pride is to study the detailed teachings of Buddha shown in the Abhidharma, and a method to overcome pride is the practice of prostration - putting oneself on the floor before the Lama and the Buddha image.

During my first meeting of Dharma, at Kopan in 1974, I knew nothing about Buddhism. When I heard Lama Zopa Rinpoche talking about the hells, hungry ghosts, and karma something snapped in my mind and I found myself vociferously defending scientific rationalism. I did not even know that "Guru Shakyamuni" was the Buddha, I thought he was just some teacher from India.

I had not expected this reaction, it was very powerful and I became notorious for debating with Rinpoche, with Lama Yeshe; with the Western sangha, with everybody! Gradually, I came to admit a few points. "Well, that's clever, yes," particularly the psychological aspect of Buddha's teachings. Then, during one particularly strong meditation, I came to the conclusion that Buddha was a pretty smart guy. He knew more than me -- a lot more than me. (Laughter)

Until then I had refused to do any prostration. No way! I was not going to follow this silly Eastern custom. I even sat with my feet pointing towards the Lamas. SO, after that meditation, I waited till most of the people had left the tent and then I stood up and made one prostration. It was an amazing experience. I felt like I was floating on air. When I went outside, my girl friend saw the look on my face and she tweaked my ear, asking, "Boy, what's got into you?"

I still have much pride to overcome, but that was the beginning. It was an important step. By finally admitting that Buddha knew more than me, I opened my heart to learn more.

Another important event happened early in that course. We had listened to the story of how Lama Zopa Rinpoche in his previous life had been a famous meditator in a cave near Mt Everest. He had been incredibly kind to the Sherpa people and when he was dying he promised to come back and establish a Dharma school for the Sherpa children, And it happened that way. Lama Zopa has fulfilled that promise by establishing the Mount Everest Centre for Buddhist Studies.

For me, the idea of karma and reincarnation was too much. I thought Lama Zopa Rinpoche was a

really nice person because' he had been treated so specially since a young boy, and he had been indoctrinated to believe in rebirth. But I still had some doubt.

So, during an interval in the teaching, I made my way to the throne where Rinpoche was sitting and asked, "Lama Zopa, all these stories about your previous life, are they true?" (Laughter) I wanted proof, I had to ask that question, it was the first time I had spoken to Lama Zopa.

Rinpoche looked at me with penetrating eyes and said something which he would not normally say: "Yes."

It was no ordinary "yes." The look in his eyes, the power in his voice, conveyed to me total conviction in Rinpoche's mind that it was true. Then I asked the crucial question, "*How* do you know?" (Laughter)

Again that penetrating *look*, and Rinpoche replied, "Through mental experience,"

I understood. I wanted proof then and there, but how could Rinpoche prove reincarnation to me? It was his own mental experience. How he had achieved that mental experience, I had no idea. But I knew that I would only be able to prove rebirth for myself when I was able to have such an experience, and I knew that could only come later. I had no doubt, however, that Rinpoche's "mental experience" was accurate.

I still had doubts as to the exact nature of rebirth, my pride had not totally gone. It took me about a year to become convinced that reincarnation was true. How? Through mental experience, of course.

(Laughter).

Student: Is an inferiority complex the opposite of pride?

Gyatso: An inferiority complex is where we see our self-image in a negative light. Perhaps it is "reverse pride." I guess it is a belief that we are inadequate in a particular area or in every area, depending upon its strength. As pride is an obsession with our good qualities, or our imagined good qualities, perhaps an inferiority complex is an obsession with our bad qualities or our imagined bad qualities. There are two similar faults in pride and a sense of inferiority. Attributes

projected onto the self image are seen to exist from their own side upon the self (and not as mere projections), and they are exaggerations.

Understanding the clear-light nature of our mind, and the nature of afflictions and their antidotes, and seeing the inspiring example of the Buddha, the Bodhisattvas, and the lamas, we become confident that we can defeat our anger, attachment, pride and so on, and we cultivate a virtuous "pride of achievement" - the conviction and determination that we can emulate their example.

In Tantra, there is the practice of "divine pride" where we see ourselves in the aspect of Buddha right now as a means to attain that result. This is like when we are learning a career - the more we identify with that career, the better we are able to achieve it. When we study medicine, the more we identify with being a doctor, the quicker we will attain that result. If we are learning to be an artist, the more we identify with the role of an artist, the better an artist we will become. So your question is good. We can look at pride from a negative point of view - as an inferiority complex. A positive "pride" of achievement is like self-confidence. If we do not have confidence in our ability to achieve meditative realization, then we will not. Without the motivating force of self-confidence we will fall back into, "I can't do this, it is too much for me."

Student: What about pride of reputation? It is very difficult to let go.

Gyatso: I think all the prides are difficult to let go. But when we recognize pride as a problem, that is a great beginning. Pride of reputation is like an inflated balloon that floats away from the ground, we lose touch with our friends. If we notice that we are floating away in a balloon of pride that harms our ability to relate with others, we should immediately begin to deflate that balloon.

On the other hand, if we are engaged in an activity of helping others, and this can be aided by a good reputation, we should utilize this situation for the benefit of others, not our self-cherishing. People will be attracted to support our cause if we have a good reputation.

Ignorance is the root of all afflictions. There is the ignorance of not knowing reality - selflessness, karmic cause and effect, rebirth, and so on, and the self-grasping ignorance. This is a darkness in the mind that prevents us seeing things clearly. For example, at night, a coil of rope on the path appears to be a snake. Then there is ignorance which is a mistaken conception, in particular, this is the ignorance which grasps at the wrong appearance of one's person to be an entity which exists in its own right upon the body and mind. This self grasping ignorance is opposite to the wisdom realizing emptiness and is likened to grasping the appearance of a snake on the path to be true.

Deluded doubt is a mental factor which wavers between the correct and incorrect understanding of the four Noble Truths, the three jewels of refuge, and so on. It obstructs the attainment of liberation and enlightenment because it thinks, "I'm not sure about karma, but I don't think it is true." As a result, one does not observe cause and effect and one strays further from the Path.

Doubt Leading Towards the Correct Conclusion, "I'm not sure about karma, but it might be correct," is okay. First, we are likely to observe cause and effect even if we do not completely believe. Second, it gives us the enthusiasm to investigate and find out for sure whether karma is correct or not.

Deluded Views are five in number. To understand the first, we have to think again of how the person, or self, exists. The person who wakes up, eats breakfast, goes to work, creates karma, experiences past karma, and so on, exists in dependence upon the body and mind - the transitory collection. The body and mind together are a "transitory collection" because they are ever-changing. Wherever the body and mind are, we say the person is "there."

If we try to identify the person *exactly*, it cannot be found on the body, nor in the mind.

Nevertheless, it is correct to point to the *physical* appearance of someone we all know as George and say,

"George is right there." George definitely *exists*, but he cannot be located on that *which* we call George - *his* body and mind. So, *how* does George *exist*? George is established to *exist* by the mere label "George" that we place upon that-which-is-suitable to be George - *his* body and mind.

George is only nominally existent. There is nothing more tangible that can be George. *The same goes for you, me, Buddha, your pet dog, your car, your mother, whatever exists is only nominally existent.*

Nothing can be found *when* we look for it with deep analysis. There is only the mere-I, the merely imputed *self*.

Aie yai yai! Scary isn't it?

The View of the Transitory Collection as a Real I and Mine observes the mere-I and conceives it to *exist* upon the body and mind independently of imputation *like* the wrong conception *which* conceives a snake to *exist* upon the rope. Just as the rope is empty of the snake, the body and

mind are empty of the person.

When we look at our hand and we *think* "mine," the mere-I is the main component of the thought "mine". Again, We conceive the mere I which *owns* the body and mind to *exist* upon the body and mind We See our hand as part of "me." *This* deluded view is the basis of anger, attachment, pride, all afflictions, all karmas, all suffering.

Extreme View believes the self, as it is incorrectly conceived to exist by the view of the transitory collection, to last forever, even into the next life, or to completely cease at death. Buddha's "middle way philosophy" is that the mere-I of this life ceases at death, because its basis, the body and mind, separate. But is immediately followed by the continuity of a mere-I imputed upon the body and mind of the Bardo being. This ceases at the end of the Bardo existence, but is immediately followed by the mere-I imputed upon the body and mind of the next rebirth. Thus the extremes of eternalism and nihilism are avoided.

Holding false views as supreme is the view that holds the above false views to be correct and the best for gaining realizations.

Holding wrong morality and conduct as supreme is, for example, the mistaken belief that sitting beneath the midday sun in India - which is something that only mad dogs and Englishmen would do - and lighting fires in the four directions, which is something that people with this deluded view do, is a way to purify karma and attain nirvana.

Wrong view is, for example, the fixed belief that denies cause and effect, and asserts that there is no such thing as future results of actions done in the present. It is highly dangerous. There is nothing to hold one back from negative karma, nothing to hold one back from the three lower realms.

The Twenty Secondary Afflictions

The twenty secondary afflictions are derived from the six root afflictions.

1 Belligerence renders the mind unhappy when one is in the proximity of a painful object and intends to inflict harm.

2 Resentment continues on from anger by holding a grudge, wishing to retaliate.

3 Concealment through attachment to wealth or reputation, seeks to hide one's faults; denies wrongdoing.

4 Spite wants to verbally abuse others.

5 Jealousy is displeasure at seeing other's good qualities.

6 Miserliness holds tightly onto objects of longing desire.

7 Pretension deceives others by claiming qualities one does not possess, trickery, flattery, etc.

8 Dishonestly hides one's own faults to receive gifts.

9 Haughtiness is a puffed-up mind that delights in one's own body, possessions and attainments, feeling, "I am great".

10 Harmfulness is a lack of compassion, the wish to disturb the mind or harm the body of another.

11 Shamelessness is a lack of personal code of behavior to refrain from non-virtue. The opposite of shame.

12 Inconsideration is not caring about the feelings of one's guru or the Buddhas as a reason to avoid non-virtue.

13 Lethargy renders the mind inflexible and unwilling to work. A cause of laxity, an obstacle to shamatha meditation.

14 Excitement makes the mind unpeaceful by leaping towards contaminated objects of desire. A major obstacle to shamatha.

15 Non-faith is the opposite of admiring, believing and aspirational faith, it is the basis for laziness.

16 Laziness does not delight in virtuous activity, it distracts one from virtue by wishing to sleep or amuse oneself.

17 Non-conscientiousness continues with non-virtuous activities without restraint.

18 Deluded forgetfulness due to accompanying afflictions, forgets virtuous objects.

19 Non-alertness is a lack of discrimination between virtue and nonvirtue. The opposite of alertness, a wisdom which is an antidote to laxity and excitement.

20 Distraction is a leaping away from meditation and following any object of the three root afflictions.

The Four Changeable Mental Factors

These are changeable in that they can be virtuous, non-virtuous or neutral, not from their own side but according to their accompanying mental factors.

1 Sleep through lethargy withdraws the sense consciousness from their objects.

2 Regret is remorse for actions done in the past.

3 Investigation is *inquiry* into the general aspects of an object.

4 Analysis is examination of the specific, subtle nature of things.

Student: Can you love somebody without attachment?

Gyatso: As long as we have the self-grasping ignorance, our love is always associated with some attachment. Before, we discussed the six causes for *afflictions* to arise. *The* three main ones are the object, self-grasping ignorance and the seed of attachment.

Student: Does having non-attachment mean we can't have relationships? (Laughter)

Gyatso: Having non-attachment enables you to love freely without ever making a mess of your relationship. All you miss out on *will* be the arguments.

Student: What is a contaminated object?

Gyatso: In this context, a contaminated object is an object that has arisen from karma and afflictions. Me, you, the microphone, the sensory world, and all the beings born within it. The six

realms are all contaminated objects. Uncontaminated objects are true paths, true cessations, enlightenment, Buddha.

Student: What are pervasive sufferings?

Gyatso: The first Noble Truth presents the suffering of cyclic existence in three levels: gross suffering, suffering of change, and pervasive suffering. The first is gross physical or mental pain that we all agree is suffering - the pain of a broken arm, a broken relationship, and so on. It is like the extra pain we feel when an already scalded finger is put into hot water.

The suffering of change refers to what we normally call "happiness."

In reality, happiness is just a lesser degree of suffering. It is like the relief we feel when a scalded finger is put into cold water there is still pain but we call it pleasure. The conditions which support happiness are constantly changing, they cannot be maintained, and we inevitably fall into sadness, pining for past experiences.

Pervading suffering is the ever-present suffering of our five aggregates being under the control of karma, afflictions, and death. Like a scalded finger, always hurting and sensitive to the lightest touch because of its very nature. Wherever we are within the six realms of rebirth, we are always under the control of karma and afflictions. In the Form and Formless realms there is no gross suffering, but there is always pervading suffering.

Student: Is pervading suffering controlled by karma and afflictions?

Gyatso: Pervading suffering is the result of karma and afflictions.

Student: A negative action can create negative karma, but sometimes we make negative actions we are not aware of. For example, when I am driving a car, I have no intention at all to kill but, whether I like it or not, I may kill an animal while driving. Will this create negative karma?

Gyatso: If we accidentally kill an animal, there is no intention to kill, we do not create the karma of killing. However, we should try to always be mindful and, where there is danger to insects and so on, we should try our best to avoid hurting them. If we know there are insects in danger and we act carelessly, not intending to kill but not trying to avoid it, there will be some negativity involved. The Lamas can give you a mantra to recite and blow on the soles of your shoes so that, if you

accidentally tread on something, its mind will be benefited and it will be reborn in a better place. Maybe this mantra can also be blown onto the tyres of your car?

Student: Maybe it is the karma of the animal to be killed?

Gyatso: Yes, it is the animal's karma, but that is no excuse for you. to act carelessly.

Student: Buddhism says this is the Dark Age.

Gyatso: So what should we do? Give up? (Laughter) No, work harder. We *are* in a degenerate time, the world is going from bad to worse and it is hard to practice Dharma. It is said, however, that in these degenerate times, practicing virtue is extremely powerful because it takes effort to go against the stream of negativity.

We are indeed experiencing the time of degeneration. Closed-minded ignorance, deep hostility, and longing desire are becoming more powerful. The environment is degenerating, new diseases appearing, conflict and wrong views are spreading, our bodies and mind are becoming weaker, our life-span is getting shorter.

As individuals, we do not have to go with this downward spiral. We can still practise Dharma and achieve spiritual paths even in the world today. The living Dharma exists in the minds of our teachers and we are able to receive the transmission of method and wisdom to actualize the Dharma ourselves, and pass it on.

From one point of view, there is the disadvantage of living in the Dark Age. From another point of view, with a perfect human rebirth and knowing how to practice Dharma is a great opportunity for us to break free. We do not have to be reborn in a society that is continually getting worse, we can be reborn in a pure land, or another planet where, as humans, we will be able to practice Dharma without hindrance.

Conclusion

Thank you all for paying so much attention and coming to these talks. It has been a pleasure for me to meet so many keen and enthusiastic people who want to learn about and practise Dharma.

This course could not have happened without the incredible devotion and energy of the

committee, supporters, and members of ABC. I am deeply impressed by the Co-operation, enthusiasm and energy that you devote to making such situations happen. If all these people had not worked so hard to make the room available, I would still be *sitting in Australia doing nothing*.

I have no Dharma realization. The only reason I am *sitting* up here is because I have been requested by my teachers Lama Thubten Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche to teach Dharma as well as I can. I have certainly made mistakes, but I have done my best and I know you have too. I appreciate your *questions* and the whole experience. Let us dedicate the positive energy we have created together towards the ultimate *liberation* from *suffering* of all *sentient beings*.

Dedication

Through the merit created by preparing, reading, thinking about and sharing this book with others, may all teachers of the Dharma live long and healthy lives, may the Dharma spread throughout the infinite reaches of space, and may all sentient beings quickly attain enlightenment.

In whichever realm, country, area or place this book may be, may there be no war, drought, famine, disease, injury, disharmony or unhappiness, may there be only great prosperity, may everything needed be easily obtained, and may all be guided by only perfectly qualified Dharma teachers, enjoy the happiness of Dharma, have love and compassion for all sentient beings, and only benefit and never harm each other.

The End of ebook*

A little note from Dharmacorner Buddhist Library (DBL)

Scan error may occurs – especially for Pali & Sanskrit words. DBL scans, protects & humbly store authentic Dharma ebooks (just in case their original source ceases) . All Book Rights respectfully belong to the writers or publishers listed clearly in the 1st page. Only 'free-distribution' labeled books will be sent to requesters, absolutely free of charge!

Kindly sent feedback to admin@dharmacorner.com