

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

DZOGCHEN TEACHINGS

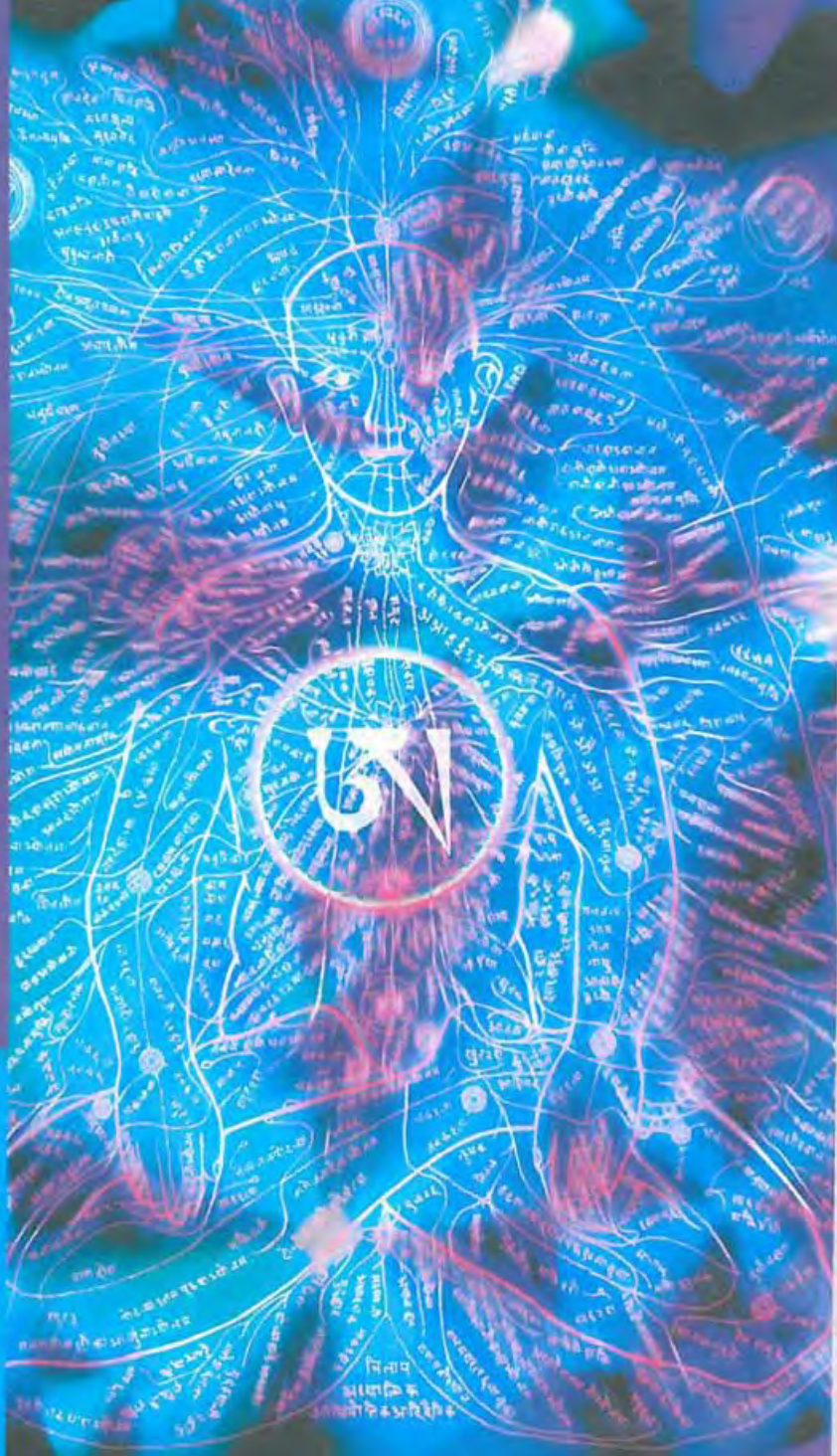
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Transcriptions from Oral Teachings



Shang Shung Edizioni

Shang Shung Edizioni



Series of Teachings
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JULY 6TH

THE TRUE SENSE OF THE DZOGCHEN TEACHING: OUR REAL NATURE

Welcome to Merigar. I know everybody has made a sacrifice to come here for this retreat. Some people may have sacrificed more than others, but everybody has made a sacrifice in some way. We are very busy in our daily lives. Everybody has something to do. We always need money to live our life and time is money. So it is not always easy to find time to come on a retreat. When we do come, it means we have made some kind of sacrifice in order to dedicate ourselves to the teaching and practice. I'm aware of that.

Therefore, each time we do a retreat, I try to help you understand the true sense of the teaching. Often, when people arrive at Merigar, they do not realise the real meaning of the teaching. Particularly when there are lots of people, everybody tends to become a bit agitated, even the people who are organising the retreat. The people at Merigar are usually quite relaxed but it seems that when we have a retreat then everybody becomes charged up. Of course, when the people who live here are charged up and the people coming from outside are also charged up, then the realisation of the retreat is also charged up! That is not what we need at all.

Many people have come from far away. If they want to talk to me it is not very easy because there are so many people. I can't talk to everybody one by one because we don't have the time. Even if I dedicated all day and all night to talking it wouldn't work. Everyone must be a bit aware of these things. Then rather than getting wound up because they can't talk to me, ask advice or meet with me, they should understand there

is not really very much to ask the teacher, because the teacher always teaches everything they need to know.

It is important when we are doing a retreat, that you try to listen to what is being transmitted and what is being said. You must be aware of this and try to listen attentively. I have had this experience again and again that I explain something today and repeat it again the next day. Then the day after that someone wants to talk to me and they ask me something that I had already just explained over the last couple of days. Then, I sometimes say, “But you didn’t listen to what I told you”. If you really listen well, then you will get all the answers. It is sufficient that you observe yourselves a little and listen carefully.

This is important because the teaching is not only a technique about how you sit and how you do practice. The teaching is also about how to live your life within society. This is what we need to know above all. For example, even if the teaching doesn’t tell you how to work in your shop, when you are there, it can show you how to work with your mind and your existence. Through the teaching, you can learn how to guide your mind and how to deal with your situation.

The first thing that you need to learn is how to be aware. Whatever you are doing, you should always be aware. I particularly want to remind long-term practitioners this, because they often think, “I’m an old practitioner. I have received this and that teaching”, and they make a kind of mental list of all the teachings they have received. Yet sometimes they don’t know what the essence of the teaching really is in a practical way. Such as what one should do in daily life. That is not good.

Some people say, “I’m old practitioner”, but if you observe that old practitioner they are always wound up and agitated. When they want to ask the teacher something they say, “Oh, I have a problem.” Then they ask about problem number one, number two, number three, they never finish. Today, they ask

about one problem and I give them some advice, but tomorrow they find a second problem. So why do they have all these problems? Because their knowledge of practice is not integrated with their life.

If we are really able to integrate the teaching into our life, our understanding of it diminishes our sense of anxiety directly. It is through tension that all our problems arise and manifest. If you are not tense, that is called relaxation. If you are relaxed you have no problems. Even if a problem manifests, you don't feel weighed down by it, because you know it is possible to overcome it. You can do something. But if you are wound up, then even if there is a small problem, you immediately get upset. Then you wind yourself up some more. Now, instead of disappearing, the problem grows twice as big. So you see that tension is the root of our problems. We experience tension when we are not integrated with the teaching. Maybe you have heard me saying this a hundred times, particularly the older practitioners, and maybe some people think, "Oh, he always says this, I already understand." But if you don't understand the real sense of what I am saying, even if you know the words, it doesn't work.

So when you come to a retreat you need to understand the true sense of the teaching before going away. The real meaning is not that you have come here to learn how to do some mudras and how to sing. This is something relative. You can also do practice very well without singing or doing any mudras. You must understand what the main point is, and when we really understand this principle, all secondary things become like an ornament.

For example, if you are on a mountain in the winter, it is often very cold. Maybe it is snowing. What do you need? You need warm clothes because then you have fewer problems. That is the main point in that situation. On the mountain you don't

think, “I need some very nice earrings or some ornaments”. You can’t overcome the problem of cold with some ornaments. So you have to understand what the main point is.

When we have no problems, it means that we have already understood the main point. Then we can add any kind of ornament that we like and enjoy it. But we can also live without any ornaments. This is a very important point. I’m always saying to my new students and older practitioners, “Please, try to understand the main point. That is what you need.” If you learn this, when you finish the retreat and go back home, at least you will know the main point and be able to utilize it.

Of course, new students should begin by learning this way immediately. Particularly if you want to say, “Oh, I’m receiving Dzogchen teachings,” then you have to understand what the Dzogchen teaching really means. The Dzogchen teaching is not a way of singing or doing a Puja or rite. The Dzogchen teaching and practice can be done without doing any Pujas. A Puja is like an ornament that you can use when you have the time, place and the opportunity. Then of course, you can do a Puja but it is not indispensable. This is what you should learn in the Dzogchen teachings.

You already know that the term Dzogchen means our real condition. So first of all we have to discover this. If we discover this, then there is the possibility of being in the state of Dzogchen, which is our real condition. Being in that state means practising Dzogchen. If you think Dzogchen is some kind of teaching, book or tradition, it means you are very far from Dzogchen. You can have many nice ideas about this but it doesn’t help your real condition. Once you have discovered your real condition and you live in that knowledge, you can really experience some benefit.

“Living in our real condition” means that we are not conditioned by dualistic vision. In general, we say that we have five

or six senses. We also have five sense organs: our eyes, ears and nose etc. Then they each have their consciousnesses. This refers to their function in relation to our mind. When we open our eyes we can see something; with our ears we can hear something; with our nose we can smell something. But we are not smelling or seeing or hearing in an indifferent way. For example, if we put on a festival, what kind of sounds do we need? We put on some nice music and then everybody listens. We don't make horrible sounds or noises as when someone is working with a machine. Why? Because in our condition of dualistic vision we have the consideration that something is nice and something else is not nice. We accept all the nice things and try to reject all the horrible things. This is our attitude.

It is the same when we open our eyes. If the first thing we see is a nice flower then we start thinking, "Oh, how nice, I like it!" If I see the dead body of an animal or a human in front of me, then I don't like it. So for me a flower and a dead body are not the same thing because I don't feel the same way about them. This means I am living in dualistic vision. We live our daily lives this way. Our senses are all faced outwardly towards a certain object. I see there is a dead body and I don't like it because I don't think the dead body is a part of me. This is our condition. Our senses are always facing outside. Our organs are also facing outside, not inside. Our two eyes, when they are open, are facing outside. We can't see inside. In the same way, our ears are for listening and our nose is for smelling. They are there in order for us to have contact with objects outside.

Of course, just having contact with an object is not a problem. But in general, as soon as we have contact, we fall into dualistic vision. We are always thinking in terms of a subject and an object. "I'm here and my vision is there". Then we immediately enter into judgement. If there is something nice then we think, "Oh, how nice, I like it". "Like it" means we are accepting it and we want it. Rejecting means the contrary. Then

we add an action for trying to get that thing. In order to have it, we enter into action. When we enter into action, if we don't succeed, we get angry or jealous. Anything can arise. After that, the famous karma comes into existence. It is because we act, that we produce good or bad consequences. That potentiality is called karma. All our problems are caused and manifest this way, and this means we are not in our real condition. Instead, we are always living in dualistic vision and are conditioned by it.

Learning about the Dzogchen teaching means that first of all we need to be told by a teacher that 'Dzogchen' means our real condition. If Dzogchen is our real condition, then there is nothing to look for outside. Instead of looking outward, we need to turn our gaze within. Maybe then we can start to understand things better and discover what Dzogchen really means.

Many of you may have previously followed different traditions or schools and learnt about their teachings. All kinds of traditions are always speaking about their point of view. They speak about the point of view of this school, this tradition, this teacher etc. That's why there are so many different points of view and why there are so many different kinds of schools. If there weren't any different points of view then there would be no reason for having different schools.

For example, when Buddha was alive, he gave instructions to those people who were following his teaching and practice. At that time, all the different kinds of schools or traditions within Buddhism didn't exist. But after the Buddha manifested Parinirvana, all kinds of different schools and traditions appeared. Immediately after he attained Parinirvana, eighteen different schools were created. One student of Buddha said, "Oh, I understood the teaching of Buddha like this". Another one said, "Oh, I, understood it a different way". Then they had an argument. In this way, many different kinds of schools and currents sprung up. So you can see what 'different points of view' means.

If you are living in dualistic vision and you are looking outside instead of inside, you will always find different points of view. If you follow this route, even though you may talk about Dzogchen, it is not Dzogchen. Of course, to give the title of Dzogchen to something is not so difficult. For example, when I went to the United States for the first time, I was in New York and over that period Dūdjom Rinpoche was also there giving a teaching. In the newspaper, there was an announcement saying, “Dūdjom Rinpoche is giving the supreme teaching of Dzogchen”. Then some of my students went to receive the teaching and we discovered that Dūdjom Rinpoche was actually giving a teaching about Refuge, Bodhichitta and other such things. He was teaching on the Four Teachings of Gampopa. The first teaching is called *For Directing the Mind in a Teaching*. The second is the related practice, so that the knowledge of Dharma becomes more real and for eliminating obstacles in order to overcome problems. Then the third one is for overcoming the illusion of samsara.

He taught these three, but he didn’t give the fourth one. The fourth one shows how illusion is transformed into wisdom. This kind of teaching is more commonly applied in Tantra but it is not necessary in Dzogchen. Gampopa originally gave these teachings predominantly in the style of Mahamudra. Then Longchenpa wrote a kind of summary of these teachings of Gampopa, and that is how it appears in the writings of Longchenpa.

Many teachers give this teaching, and it is an example of how something can misleadingly be given the title of Dzogchen. It is not so difficult to understand. When you give the title of Dzogchen to something and then teach some technique of practice, how to do Puja, or how to do different kinds of visualisation and transformation, then it is not Dzogchen. Dzogchen means our real nature, being in our real condition.

Of course, being in our real condition is normal. But generally we do not know that and are conditioned by dualistic vision. That is why we are always accepting or rejecting things. We create infinite problems this way. But when we have knowledge of our real condition and we try to live in our real nature, it means we are aware of what Dzogchen really is. This is very important.

However, before going into the essence of our real condition, first of all we need to have an awareness and understanding of our relative condition. Because if we don't know our relative condition and we just talk about 'nature of mind' it doesn't have much sense. Some people say, "Oh, this teacher is giving a very deep and elevated teaching called 'nature of mind'". Then they go there and listen a little. Then they say, "Oh, fantastic! It was very interesting!" But then what has changed? Nothing. So that is not very interesting.

To be truly interesting means that we actually find something out about our own condition. We don't just have the mental idea, "Oh, this is very interesting, very deep". Particularly, if we hear something we don't really understand, we say, "Oh, very profound!"

This is how it is, because our real nature is beyond explanation. How can we explain it? Even if someone says, "Oh, I'm explaining 'nature of mind': this is 'nature of mind'", in the real sense, we can't explain 'nature of mind'. It is impossible to explain. Even the Buddha could not explain it. Who can explain it, if Buddha couldn't do it? That is an example. Only using a name or a word, such as 'interesting' is not enough. It only becomes truly interesting, a deep knowledge and understanding, if we really know how to approach it.

If you want to understand the 'nature of mind', first you must understand your habitual mind a little. If you want to understand your habitual mind, you must also understand a little about

your body and your energy. You can touch your body but you can't touch your mind. So your body is something solid. Body, voice (or energy) and mind are related to each other. We must understand these things first. Once we have this knowledge and understanding then we can find a way to discover the real 'nature of mind'. Even if we can't explain what the 'nature of mind' is, we can approach it in a more definite way. We always do this using direct experience.

For example, if there is something very hot or very cold and we touch it with our hand, we immediately discover how it feels. This is because our physical body is something solid and the hot or cold object is also on the material level. There is something we can have contact with directly. With this experience we can discover what cold and hot is directly. If we have never had the experience of heat or cold, it would not be so easy to discover or understand it. That is an example.

Everything is experienced directly in relation to our physical body and our energy. If we approach things this way, then we can really reach an understanding of the sense of Dzogchen. Why do we need to get in the state of Dzogchen? That is a very important question. In daily life, for example, we generally have so many problems. When we have problems we don't like it. We would prefer to be without any problems. But how is that possible? If we are living in samsara, in the material world, then we are living in time. And time is related to circumstances and situations. Situations never remain the same.

For example, one day the weather is very nice but another day it is not so nice. Even if the weather is nice in the morning, the afternoon can be different. Everything is related with time, circumstance and change. Because we are living under these conditions we are constantly influenced in all sorts of ways. Not only by the condition of our circumstances but also by the real condition of our physical body and energy level. Our physi-

cal body is an aggregate: it is also subject to change. For example, one day we feel very well, another day we don't. Sometimes we suffer many kinds of illnesses; sometimes we are healthy. This means we are constantly being influenced by different circumstances.

What do we do, in general, when we have this kind of problem? We try to find an antidote. For example, if you have a pain in your head then you take an aspirin. Sometimes you can overcome the problem that way. It helps your head. But if you take too many aspirins then you will create some other problems. Even though we usually try to overcome our problems it is not always so easy. At times we need to get an expert like a doctor to check us and then give us some medicine. Sometimes we can overcome the problem, but sometimes not. So why do we have all these problems? Because we are living with constant change and we have dualistic vision. But if we are living in our real nature, our real condition manifests in a different way. It is therefore very important that we learn how to be in our real condition. This is the aim of the teaching, speaking in a very simple way.

If we want to learn the complicated way, then there are many arguments and details, we could analyse everything. But generally in the teaching, the most important thing is not just clever speaking or analysis, but understanding. For the teacher to really communicate the teaching he or she must somehow make the student understand. For that reason, the correct way the teacher should teach is by entering into the dimension of the student directly. If the teacher has only one student it is easier because the teacher knows that student very well already, their character, attitude and ideas etc. When he or she is teaching many people together it's a little different. It's not very easy. But mostly we are all living in the dualistic condition and we are all following our emotions, so there is not much difference between students.

There is also the possibility of working with the students directly. For example, if I'm talking to one hundred people and I have the idea, "Oh, in front of me there are one hundred people, they are trying to learn the sense of the teaching," then I'm more or less working with a consideration of the general view of these hundred people. But the hundred people in front of me must not think that way. Each person should consider, "Oh, the teacher is speaking to me", rather than thinking, "The teacher is teaching one hundred people". If you think in this way, then in yourself you can understand the meaning of all my explanations. You can also discover things about your own dualistic vision and your own emotions and how you are conditioned by all these things.

Essentially, in the Dzogchen teaching, we always say, "Dzogchen is our real condition". Dzogchen means the self-perfected state. Self-perfected means there is nothing to perfect. We already have all qualifications. So you must try to observe yourself a little and understand what this means. Do you have all qualifications or not? Observe yourself a little. It is very unlikely that you will find all qualifications complete.

When I studied the *Prajñāparamita Alankara*, I found it was a very difficult book to understand. When I studied it the first time, it was not so difficult. The second time I studied it, it was more difficult. I knew this was a very important Mahayana teaching so I studied it three times, while I studied all the other books that are considered important and difficult, like the *Abhidharmaśāstra* etc. only once. When I studied it the third time, I found it still more difficult. Of course, I understood what the book literally said very well. But I wanted to understand what the conclusion was, the real sense of it, and I didn't find it.

Then I went to my teacher. My teacher at the college was an important teacher of philosophy but he was also a good practitioner of Dzogchen. So I said to him, "I always find this book

more and more difficult. Why?” He told me, “When you are studying and reading this book you shouldn’t think that it is explaining something like the qualifications of the Buddha, the Bodhisattvas and Arhats. Rather, you should think about turning to observe yourself and see it as explaining your own condition. Maybe then you will understand it better”. That was his advice. Then I returned home and I studied it again. After that I was always observing if I had this qualification or that qualification, but I had none of them. It really didn’t help me. So then I was surprised, I didn’t understand what it meant.

Later, after I had met my teacher of Dzogchen and had received and followed the Dzogchen teachings, when I studied these philosophy books I understood a different meaning from before. When I arrived in Italy I found a text of the *Prajñāparāmīta Alankāra* in a library. Then I remembered, “Oh, this is a very difficult book. I want to read it again”. I took this book home and for a week I was reading a little every day. It was not difficult at all. It was very easy to understand. Then I discovered what my former teacher had meant about looking inside myself, looking at my condition. So that is an example. It is very important.

So when we say ‘self-perfected’, and ‘we have all qualifications since the beginning’ it doesn’t mean ‘all qualifications’ in the way that they are explained in the Sutra teachings. The Sutra teachings explain the qualifications of Buddha by saying that on his head there is a kind of round thing, that he has a very square body and very long arms so that, when seated in position, he is touching the earth. He has very long ears reaching his shoulders. If you see a statue of the Buddha, then you can understand what the qualifications of the Buddha are clearly. In addition, there are thirty-two main signs or good qualities and eighteen secondary qualities. We studied all these things in the college very precisely.

In the Sutra teaching, it says that in order to have all these qualifications you should do the ‘two accumulations’. In order to have all the qualifications like Buddha Shakyamuni, you should do the accumulation of merit; and in order to have the qualifications of Sambhogakaya and Dharmakaya, then you should do the accumulation of wisdom. This is the interpretation of the Sutra teaching. They consider these are important qualifications, but it is not so easy to understand why. I never understood these qualifications really and how they were considered to be qualifications. When it said “very long arms like a chimpanzee”, I was surprised because qualification generally means nice looking. If someone has long ears down to their shoulders, maybe it looks a bit strange. Yet that is how it is explained, and they are called qualifications.

So when we say ‘self-perfected’ it doesn’t mean we have all these type of qualifications. In Tibet, we have a school called Jonangpa. Jonangpa was a very important teacher of the Kalachakra. He was mainly dealing with the Sutra teachings and by combining it with Kalachakra he created a kind of school. Then he explained, “Not only do we all have the seed of the Tathagata in us, or that potentiality, we also have all the qualifications, like those of the Nirmanakaya automatically in our condition.” Then many schools like the Gelugpa, Sakyapa, Nyingmapa and Kagyüpa were against Jonangpa on this point. But even though they were against Jonangpa in this respect, in general, they considered Jonangpa’s teaching to be very interesting.

In the Dzogchen teaching, when we are speaking about the self-perfected state, many people immediately think, “Oh, like Jonangpa”. But ‘self-perfected’ doesn’t mean that we have all the qualifications of the Nirmanakaya. When we say self-perfected in the Dzogchen teaching, it simply means that all possible qualifications can manifest because we have that primordial potentiality. ‘Primordial potentiality’ doesn’t mean what is

actually manifesting or how our potentiality appears right now. This is a very, very important point you should understand. Otherwise you won't understand what 'all qualifications are self-perfected' means.

Our real nature is just like a mirror. A mirror has the potentiality to manifest everything but it doesn't mean that we are like the reflections. Manifestations or reflections in a mirror can be infinite, it depends on the secondary causes. For example, if there is a pig in front of a mirror, then a pig manifests; if there is a person, then a person manifests; if there is an object, an object manifests. So the mirror has the potentiality to manifest anything but what actually manifests depends on the secondary causes. This is called primordial potentiality: the potentiality of infinite manifestations. When we say 'self-perfected' it means we have this kind of potentiality. We are not speaking about the actual manifestations or reflections. You must distinguish clearly between these two.

When we are doing the practice of Guruyoga we pronounce A and we visualise a white A in the centre of a *thigle* of five colours. This is a symbol of our potentiality. It doesn't mean we actually have something like this inside us. This is just a symbol. In the centre of our body we have the letter A: this is a Tibetan character. A represents the origin of all sounds. You have the same idea in the Western alphabet that starts with A.

In the Sutra teaching, Buddha gave the example that *Prajña-paramita*, the state of emptiness, is represented with A. From this one sound, all the different sounds and all the different consonants and infinite words manifest. So A, in the real sense, is the origin of sound. Sound is the origin of all manifestations. So from emptiness, what manifests first is sound. But this type of sound is not an ordinary sound. Ordinary sound is what we usually hear with our ears, so we think, "Oh, this is sound". But in the Dzogchen teachings, this is called outer sound. Then there

is inner sound. Inner sound is related with our energy. We can discover this through vibrations. We can't hear inner sound with our ears. What we hear with our ears is more on the material level. What we feel though vibration is more on the energy level.

Then we also have secret sound. We can't even feel secret sound though vibrations or hear it with our ears. This is more related with the mind level. If we really have knowledge, an understanding of our real nature, then we can notice and discover what secret sound is. Until we reach that point we can't understand and secret sound will always remain secret and mysterious for us. In the real sense, secret sound develops from emptiness, and from that develops inner sound, and from that develops outer sound. And it is from outer sound, that what we generally call light develops. So when we have the letter A, this letter A is white and white represents light. Developing further, we have rays. 'Rays' means that now we have five distinct colours. The five colours represent the essence of the five elements. The five elements have five different characteristic functions.

We all have these three potentialities of sound, light and rays since the very beginning. And since we have these three potentialities, then when there are any secondary causes, anything can manifest. We can be in our real nature and we can have that knowledge. Through our primordial potentiality, a manifestation of the Sambhogakaya dimension or the pure dimension can occur. There is pure vision and impure vision, as they are called in the Tantric system. Both are related with our primordial potentiality, but their way of manifesting is different. Impure vision manifests while we are ignorant of our real nature while pure vision manifests with awareness.

So you see how important it is to be in our real nature. If we are in our real nature then we are aware of everything. We know everything that is going on, as well as knowing their cause and effect and how everything is related. This is very important not

only as a realization in itself but also when we are in samsara, working in an office. Particularly if you have to do some very complicated work, then it is much better that you are aware. If you are in your real condition, it means you are not wound up. And when you are relaxed and free of confusion then everything goes much better, even if you have a bit of a problem.

For instance, perhaps we wake up with a tummy-ache one morning. Later on, it just gets worse and worse. Then we start worrying and think, “What is happening? Now I should do something.” But you don’t know what is going on. Then what do you do? You go to a doctor. Why do you go to a doctor? Because you don’t know what is going on. If you knew all about the problem then why go to a doctor? But when you arrive at the doctor, he doesn’t know what kind problem you have either. To try and discover the cause, the doctor asks you all sorts of questions, like, “What did you eat yesterday? What did you drink?” At the end of it all, the doctor has some idea of what the problem might be. Then the doctor gives you some medicine or some advice. So why are you doing all these things? It is because you don’t know your real condition. So you see how it is important it is to know your real condition.

In daily life we have so many problems. One day, for example, you are feeling very agitated so you go to the doctor and say, “What is the matter with me?” The doctor checks everything but says, “Oh, you haven’t any problem.” It is often more difficult for a doctor to diagnose an energy disorder and particularly a mental health problem. So the doctor says, “You haven’t got any problem, you are healthy”, but it doesn’t help, because you feel unwell.

Then perhaps you go to a teacher, and say, “Teacher, I have a problem. what should I do?” Maybe the teacher understands that you have a problem at the energy level and that your energy is disordered. Then the teacher says, “Oh, you should co-ordi-

nate your energy. Maybe you should do some breathing or some exercise with movement, such as yoga positions etc.” When you are following a teacher, if you do all these things, then maybe the next day you will feel a little better. Then you are happy and think, “Oh, now I’ve got a solution,” and so you continue to do that practice.

But it doesn’t mean that once you have done this practice once or twice, you will then be OK. Because you are living in time, and circumstances always change. Maybe today you have no problems but tomorrow they can occur again. If you return to the teacher, and the teacher tells you to do the same practice as you did before, it becomes just like taking an aspirin when you have a headache. “Today I feel nervous, so now I’ll do this practice. The next day I’m feeling agitated, so I do that practice”.

This is a very provisional solution. If you definitely want to overcome these problems then you must learn what it means to be in your real nature. If you are in your real nature, you discover what relaxation truly and definitively means. In general, people don’t know what relaxation means. For example, when they go to a doctor, the doctor says, “Oh lie down here”. Then the doctor says, “Please relax!” What do they do when the doctor asks them to relax? They try and loosen up their hands, arms, stomach etc., but their mind is still very charged up; their energy is still charged up. Our existence is made up of body, speech (energy) and mind, not only our physical body.

We don’t know what it means to really relax. Really being relaxed means we are in our real condition. That’s why in the Dzogchen teaching when we are in a state of contemplation then we say in the Upadesha, that the state of *tregchö* means being in a totally relaxed state. Or in a teaching like the Dzogchen Longde and Dzogchen Semde, we say ‘the state of *lhugpa*’ that means we are in a totally relaxed state. There is no differ-

ence between the state of *lhugpa* and *tregchö*. In the real sense, they both mean being totally relaxed. But we generally don't understand and we don't know what total relaxation is until we have knowledge of our real nature.

So now you have some idea of what we should do. We should learn how to get into our real nature. The teacher gives you methods and explains how you can get into that state. If you get into that state and you have that experience, then that experience is just like a small taste: it doesn't mean that once you have discovered it, you are always in that state. Generally we are always living in dualistic vision. Just like the way we do practice in general. We say, "Now we will begin our practice," and then everybody enters into a visualisation and continues to do it for a while. Then after half an hour or one hour we say, "Now we have finished our practice". We think, "Finally I'm free now". "Free now" means now I can live in dualistic vision, just how I feel.

Even if we have discovered our real nature, we are not able to be in it continuously. So the teacher then gives you many methods for increasing your capacity to be in that state. Once you have more capacity to be in that state, the teacher gives you other methods for integrating all your behaviour and everything related with your existence, totally into that condition. Such as working together with the teacher, doing specific practices, having certain experiences etc. These things are very important, just like a medicine.

When we go to a doctor we discover what kind of illness we have. Having applied some of the methods transmitted by a teacher, we discovered our real nature. But it is not sufficient that you go to a doctor and only discover your illness. The doctor gives you some medicine, some advice about your behaviour and your diet, and particularly gives you a specific kind of remedy. Then you follow the advice of the doctor and take the

medicine in the way the doctor told you to. If you don't take the medicine and don't apply what the doctor said, it doesn't help. Just going to a doctor and discovering your illness is useless in itself.

It is the same when we discover that we must become a practitioner. It doesn't mean you must always carry a mala with you and go around chanting mantras everywhere you go. This is another relative or secondary thing. It is fine to use a mala but not in that way. Some people are always using a mala and going around chanting mantras. This is called fanaticism, not practice. If someone is showing too much outwardly it means there is nothing inside. It is empty. What you need to learn is how to internalise the practice, not show it outside. This means that it is not sufficient that you know or discover what Dzogchen is, but also that you know how to apply it. So this is what you should learn during a retreat.

When you have finished the retreat, you go away. But before you go away you should observe yourself and ask yourself, "Did I learn something or not? What will I do when I go back?" If you really know what the fundamental thing is, then it means you have learned something. So it is really very important. If you have only learned how to do a Puja or how to chant mantras, those are secondary things.

I'm always saying, "This is just like an umbrella or like a raincoat". If you have a very nice raincoat then when it is raining you can use it. If there is no rain, even if you have a very nice raincoat, you can't use it. This is the nature of secondary things or practices. But you can always use primary practices. Not only do you use them but you also integrate them into you. You become part of them. In the same way, your knowledge and practice becomes a part of you. This means you have integrated the teachings. You don't remain separate from them.

If, on the other hand, you just start to think, “Now I believe and accept it,” that means you are not really in the state of Dzogchen. There is nothing to accept. The teacher never asks you to accept something, because Dzogchen is your nature, your condition. How can you reject it? You couldn’t reject it. Your only fault is that you didn’t know or recognise it before. A Dzogchen teacher should never try to convince you of something. There are many false teachers. They say things like, “Oh, this is a fantastic teaching,” and then they try to convince you of what they are saying and make you believe in their teaching. But there is no real benefit in doing things in this way: this is not a serious teaching. A true teacher enables you to understand your condition, in order for you to discover your real nature. If you discover your real nature, it is better for you, not for the teacher. If you don’t discover your real nature, nothing changes for the teacher except that the teacher feels very sad because he tried to communicate something but you didn’t understand. What can the teacher say except, “I’m sorry.” That is all.

So in this case, it is very important that you know the principle involved. In the Dzogchen teaching we say from the start that the main principle is not that of believing something. Many teachings are like religions, in which they consider that belief itself is very important. Sometimes it is important. Indeed, a believer can have some capacity and power, but this is not the main point. This is a secondary thing. Sometimes we can work with secondary things, particularly when there are secondary causes. However, the main point is not ‘believing’ but ‘discovering’. They are very different things.

For example, if I hold up an object for you to see, maybe you think, “Oh, that is a white, square thing,” but you don’t have a precise idea of what it is. It seems to be made of cotton, but it also seems a bit like paper. I say, “Oh, this is not cotton, this is a kind of paper. This paper is not like plastic but is very similar

to cotton”. When I explain it very clearly then maybe you believe it is paper. But because you can’t touch it, you can’t be sure. Maybe you believe it is paper but it is not really paper. Then I ask you, “Please come here, look closely and touch it.”

Then you come and touch it and you say, “Yes, this is cotton”. Now you have discovered what it is directly. Then if someone says, “No, this is plastic or paper,” it is not a problem for you because you can say, “If you believe that it is fine. It is not a problem for me because I know what it really is”. This is called ‘discovering’.

So in the Dzogchen teaching, the most important thing is ‘discovering’ not ‘believing’. The teacher gives you methods and works with you so you can discover your real nature. This is what we should do on our retreat. Then you have something like a base, something real, so if you want to develop your practice, your knowledge of Dzogchen, there is always the possibility to increase your knowledge. If you lack this principle, then everything you know is not very important. This is the main point, not only for new people but also for old practitioners.

Old practitioners often have a good sense of this initially and begin developing this way. Then a little time passes and they become indifferent. At the beginning they are very sensitive but when some more time has passed, they don’t have this experience any more. In this case it is very, very important to refresh your spiritual principle or your knowledge. There are many practices, like fixation or Semdzins, for refreshing your knowledge. This is important because we don’t know how long we will be alive. You know that we are all in a condition of impermanence. Many people have the idea, “Oh, yes, this year I will do these things, and next year those things etc.” We speak of next year or maybe even of next week, but who knows if we will still exist or not? Many people think, “Oh yes, but I’m still very young. He or she is old and maybe they will pass away, but

I still have a long life ahead”. They have this kind of idea but often young people pass away earlier. Our life is just like a candle burning in an open place. The wind is constantly blowing from here and there, who knows? There are so many secondary causes for dying, particularly in our modern society. So we must be aware: time is relative and we are impermanent.

So we must try to do useful things, important things. For example, we should try to be in our real condition. If we have this knowledge and we are in our real nature, then if we are in it now maybe we can also be in it in the future. This is how we can help ourselves. So it is very important that we are aware that time is passing and we do our best.

Now we will dedicate the merit of listening to the teaching. In general, when we explain or listen to the teaching, we accumulate infinite merit. So now we dedicate this infinite merit with our intention to all sentient beings. This merit becomes a cause for their liberation from samsara. We dedicate our merit this way and then we empower it with mantra. If we empower our dedication with mantra then it becomes something real. It has an actual function otherwise it remains only our intention. If we have attained the level of realisation of a Bodhisattva or an Arhat or something like that, then we don’t need mantra. When we do an invocation it becomes real automatically. But we are in samsara, we have a normal life, we are normal people, so it is better we use mantra and empower our dedication. Then whenever we do some practice, we also empower our practice. The mantra for empowering: OM DHARE DHARE etc., is very powerful. Whenever we are doing practice, if we use this mantra, it becomes something more fruitful. So now we will dedicate and pronounce this mantra.

During this retreat there are many people here, so everybody should try to be aware. First of all when you are going up and down, be careful in order to avoid a car accident. New people

and old people should also try to meet each other in a different way. You should try not to feel that someone is old and someone is new and a stranger. It is very important that you collaborate with each other, pay respect to each other and know that everybody is in the same transmission and walking on this path. I am always telling you, “Relax, don’t charge yourself up when you are doing this and that. Do everything in a relaxed way.”

And particularly the older people who are more familiar with Merigar, please try to help those who are coming from elsewhere. There are many people coming from distant places like New Zealand, Taiwan and Japan. There are also many people here who don’t speak Italian. So being aware means knowing how the situation is and working with it. This is part of Dzogchen practice. You shouldn’t always think that the important practice is just sitting together and chanting a mantra. A very important practice is how we collaborate and how we respect each other. If we do this practice inside our community, then we can also increase this aspect outside the community, and in this way we can contribute to what is called ‘world peace’.

Everybody likes to speak about ‘world peace’ but if we do not pay respect to each other and the other’s dimension, peace cannot exist. In order to have world peace, we need to develop our own evolution. So if we start within our own community between practitioner and practitioner, then we can increase from there. This is a very important practice.

SUTRA, TANTRA AND DZOGCHEN

When we are learning about Dzogchen, we should know something that is indispensable: we are human beings in samsara and are following a path for attaining realisation but firstly we have to understand our actual condition. We have to know how to deal with our condition using the teachings and find out precisely what kind of teachings we need. First of all, we should understand that we have three gates: our body, our speech and our mind. These are common to all Buddhist teachings. Sometimes they are called the three existences of human beings, but in the Dzogchen teachings, they are called the three gates. If we want to enter something, or if we want to get out of somewhere, then we always need a gate. Similarly if we want to enter into knowledge or understanding, to liberate ourselves and get out of samsara, then we must deal with our three gates.

It is not very difficult to understand this in a practical way. Body refers to our physical body, which is very easy to understand because we can see it and touch it. The existence of our energy level or voice is a little more difficult to understand than our physical body. We can't see or touch it like the physical body, but nevertheless we can feel it through vibrations etc. The mind is still more complicated to understand. Our mind is always moving and thinking, but we can't see or touch it, nor feel it through vibrations. But we can still discover that we have a mind. For example, if we search for our mind and we think, "Where is mind?" just that is our mind thinking, "What is mind?" If we look and can't find anything material, we think, "I can't

find it”. But just that is our mind. It is always moving, even if we can’t find anything solid. This is how we discover that mind exists.

Our mind is more important than our body or energy, because our mind is like the ruler who governs everything. Energy represents all the functions of our physical body. The physical body is something like the base of all three. We know that they are all directly related each other, however, and we should be aware of this. If you learn any kind of practice, you first receive some instructions on how to sit down and how to do the practice. When you learn a position, it means you are working with your physical body. Then you receive some instructions about the breathing and about the functioning of all your senses. These all are related with our energy level. Then finally we learn how to do the visualisation. Here we are working with our mind. So our body, voice and mind are all functioning together.

This is the case in any kind of practice where we are using our three gates together, such as when we are chanting mantras, using mudras and doing a visualisation. Mudra is related with our physical body, mantra is related with our voice and visualisation with the mind. So everything is put together, and in this way it has more function. This is only an example of one kind of practice. Yet if we look closely, everything we learn on the path is related with these three gates.

Generally in the study of Buddhism, it is said there are Three Vehicles, so in Sutra, they talk about these three Vehicles: Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana. This is one way of classifying the teachings. But when we are learning the Dzogchen teachings to attain realisation, we talk about three characteristic types of teachings and we must understand that these three characteristic types of teaching are not the same as the Three Vehicles (or Yanas). We must distinguish between them. In a very simple way, we can say that teachings are either more related to the

physical level, or to the energy level, or to the mind level. Of course, that does not mean to say that a teaching only exists on the physical level, or only on the mind level etc.

Teachings that are mainly related to the physical level are more associated with Sutra. What is most important in this case? If you become a follower and practitioner of Sutra, you firstly receive a vow. If you don't receive a vow but you have faith in Buddha or the path of Buddhism it means you are interested in Buddhism but you are not a practitioner of Buddhism. To become a practitioner of Buddhism, in the Sutra style, then you must receive a vow. There are many levels of vow, but first you start with the vow of Refuge. That's why many people say, "I took refuge from this teacher or this Lama", because then they feel a true Buddhist. They think, "I have a vow of Refuge. I have received a Refuge name".

When people start to follow the Dzogchen teaching, many of them go to the teacher and ask, "Please, give me a Dharma name". But a serious Dzogchen teacher will never give you a name. A Dzogchen teacher, teaches Dzogchen not Sutra. And even if the Dzogchen teacher only makes you understand the characteristics of what kind of teaching it is, if a teacher of Dzogchen teaches Sutra he is no more a teacher of Dzogchen. A Dzogchen teacher is not interested in giving you a name or a vow, because receiving a vow is your idea of changing something. To follow the Dzogchen teachings you don't need to change anything. Even if you think, "I'm changed," that is your idea. It is not that the Dzogchen teaching is changing you.

The kind of teaching having Sutra characteristics is called the path of renunciation. This means renouncing all negative causes for negative karma. For example, if we kill animals, that is a negative action. Why is it a negative action? Because when you are killing an animal, that animal does not feel happy. That animal suffers. Likewise, if you create suffering for someone

else that is a negative action. Even if you don't actually kill someone else, we sometimes say, "You can kill with words". The person is not really dying due to an insult, but can suffer very badly. Therefore, we don't perform negative actions towards others. This is also a part of the Dzogchen teachings: being aware means knowing how to behave with care toward others.

In the Dzogchen teachings, we learn to become responsible for ourselves. We don't just follow a vow that says, for example, "You mustn't kill animals". There are many ways to make animals or other people suffer apart from killing them. It would be impossible to put all negative actions into the rule. When you receive a vow then, there are some actions that you must avoid. These are considered the main negative actions. Rules are always related to the particular conditions of a country, its people and their behaviour etc., so if you go to another country with another situation, maybe they don't correspond. That's why in the Dzogchen teachings, instead of giving a rule, the most important thing is that you learn to be aware and you know how to work with circumstances.

Sometimes we also need rules. Why do all these rules exist in Sutra? Sutra Buddhism started to give rules, knowing that ordinary people do not have the capacity to control things by themselves. People are not aware and they do not know what is good and what is bad. Rules are given to help prevent people creating negative karma. This kind of person has a rather weak nature. It is very simple to understand this using an example. Everyone knows very well that if you smoke it is not good for your health. But even though they know it is not good, they still smoke continually. Sometimes they try to stop, because they know it is harmful for their health. But they never succeed. They manage to stop for one day, but the next day a friend offers them a cigarette and they think, "Oh, today I'll smoke, tomor-

row maybe I'll stop". The next day is the same and also the day after that. It is also the same the next week, next month, next year, and so it goes on until the end of their life. So why do we have this problem? Because our character is weak. We do not have the capacity to control ourselves. In this case, in order to help us control our existence, we receive a vow.

The vow says, "Now you've taken this vow, if you don't follow it precisely then you can have very heavy consequences". Maybe you will die or go to hell. Even if you don't die, maybe many unfortunate things will happen. So then you think, "Oh, I can't break this rule". In the same way, if you take a vow from a teacher at an important moment, then you remember it and it stops you from doing negative things. That is the reason why all these different kinds of rules exist.

Sometimes even Dzogchen practitioners don't have enough capacity to control themselves and find it is necessary to follow a rule. But of course, in Dzogchen, that is not the main point. The main point is that we try to be responsible for ourselves. For example, you might say: "I'm not in control of myself this year so I have taken a vow for one year and then next year maybe I won't need it". So now you can understand what the path of renunciation means: renouncing the cause for creating negative karma that is related to our actions arising from our body, voice and mind.

Say we receive the vows of Upasaka, for example. This is not just one vow: there are two, three or four which we can follow. So in the end, we become like a monk or nun, having the consideration that we have renounced all of samsara. Generally, monks and nuns live in a monastery and do not feel they are in samsara. But in a practical way it is not like that: the monastery is just another samsara. But at least they are not living the ordinary way because they are following the path of renunciation.

The Dzogchen teaching is not a path of renunciation. The path of renunciation is mainly related to our physical level. For example, I could take the vow, “I won’t kill animals” or “I won’t drink alcohol,” and if I keep this vow for a very long time I can add, “Until I die”. I could never take a vow saying, “Until I have total realisation I won’t drink alcohol”. Why? Because for drinking alcohol you need your mouth. After your death, you will leave your mouth and stomach in the cemetery. How will you drink then? That is a very simple example. Thus, this kind of vow is mainly connected with our body and so we can also say that this teaching is related more to the physical level.

It doesn’t mean that this kind of teaching is not important. Sometimes this kind of teaching is more important than Dzogchen, because there are many sentient beings and many people in our samsaric condition who don’t know how to follow teachings like Dzogchen. They are not interested in receiving Dzogchen teachings. Even if they are interested, they think, “The Dzogchen teaching is a kind of blessing”. When they go to a Dzogchen teacher, they say, “Please, give me a blessing! Please, give me a protection cord!” Many Tibetan teachers give protection cords when they come to the Western world.

Why do they always give cords? Because they are used to doing it in Tibet, with Tibetan people. Tibetan people, who are mostly peasants and local people, are always asking for a blessing. That is all. Even if you want to explain the teaching a little, like the real meaning and sense of Refuge and Bodhichitta, they never listen. Because they don’t know that through listening and doing practice they can have realisation.

Maybe they have learned how to say a prayer in a very simple way, like OM MANI PADME HUM. If I say, “Oh, chant this mantra, it will help you,” even if they don’t know how it will help, they believe the teacher and say, “Oh, yes, I will do it”. Then often when they are working or doing business etc.

they are always chanting OM MANI PADME HUM, OM MANI PADME HUM, OM MANI PADME HUM, and they believe that is Dharma. Of course, this is better than insulting someone or lying; but this is not the real path. Just doing this is not enough. But some people have no more capacity. That is why teachers are used to giving protection cords.

When Western students meet Tibetan teachers and are given protection cords, they put them round their necks like Tibetan people. If they visit five teachers, they have five cords. In the end the cords become dirty, and people say, “Look, these are spiritual people”. It does not look very nice but they believe it is something important. But if you are following the teaching and you want to be protected, you should do practice. That provides real protection, not hanging a cord around your neck. You are not Tibetans, you are Westerners and you have the capacity to learn the teaching. In reality, if we want to use cords, we should put them on sheep and goats and animals like cows. We need to give cords to these animals because they don’t know how to do practice, they don’t know how to listen to the teaching. But humans have more capacity; particularly Westerners who have gone to school and received an education. So you must not do these things. If you have a cord, please, take it away and instead of using a cord, do practice. If you consider yourself a practitioner, this is the correct way to behave. You must not be passive. It is called passive, if you always think, “Oh, I will go to see a teacher, the teacher will bless me and I’ll have some kind of realisation”.

We can read the publicity done by some Dharma centres, such as, “Oh, we have a fantastic teacher coming. You do not need to receive the teaching, you only need to see this teacher and you can have a kind of illumination”. Maybe the teacher did not say that, but the Dharma centre says it. Why does the Dharma centre say that? In order to make money, you must un-

derstand that. You must not be confused. This is not teaching! You must not be passive, otherwise you can't attain realisation.

As you know, the Buddha is the most powerful teacher, but even the Buddha said, "I can give you the teaching, but your realisation depends on you". Buddha never said, "I can give you the teaching and your realisation depends on me and I will give it to you". If it could be at all possible, Buddha would have already given enlightenment to all sentient beings.

We need to participate and be active. If we look at the kind of practice that we do, particularly in the Dzogchen teaching, we are always sending out light from ourselves and communicating with all the teachers and enlightened beings. Why do we do this? Because it shows we are active. We need to receive their wisdom; we need to receive their empowerments. If we are active in this way, then we can receive everything. If you have received a type of formal Tantric initiation, you will remember that at the beginning the teacher asked you, "Now offer the mandala offerings". This means you understand that teaching is precious. After that, the teacher asks you to repeat some words. What is the meaning of these words? The words say, "I want to receive this teaching and follow this path. Teacher, please, give me the path! I will follow it in the correct way in order to have realisation".

Maybe the verses are presented in slightly different ways but the substance is always the same. So why does the teacher ask you to repeat this? The teacher already knows that you have come to the teaching to receive the initiation, and that means you are being active. But the teacher still makes sure that you will repeat it officially. This means that you are showing you are active because the realisation is for you, not for the teacher. This is an example. It is very, very important to be active. In any kind of practice or teaching that you follow, whether it is Sutra, Tantra, or Dzogchen, you must be active. Then you can get to the final goal of any path.

The path of renunciation is one of the three paths of liberation. Liberation means we know we are in samsara and we want to find liberation from it. We find liberation according to our capacity. If we do not have the capacity to govern ourselves, then we control our existence using rules and then we can attain realisation. Another style of teaching is Tantra and this is called the path of transformation. This path is related mainly to our energy level, which is also related to how the teaching was first taught by enlightened beings, which is different from Sutra. A Sutra teacher like Buddha Shakyamuni, is what we call a Nirmanakaya manifestation. In general, we talk about three kayas: kaya is a Sanskrit word meaning 'dimension'. Nirmanakaya means the material dimension, where things exist on the level of matter. This means we can see, touch, and have physical contact with the object. Buddha Shakyamuni had a physical body which means it was possible to see and talk to him. People could listen to the words of Buddha physically. Thus the Buddha's teaching is the path of renunciation. Remember, when you were studying Buddhism and you learnt that the Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths: the truth of suffering; the cause of suffering; how to stop the cause of suffering; and the path to follow in order to have realisation. These are all teachings related primarily to the physical level. This is path number one.

The second is the path of Tantric transformation. Tantric teachings were not taught by the physical Buddha. Tantric teachings were transmitted by enlightened beings like Buddha Shakyamuni in a state of transformation. There is a very important initiation that the Dalai Lama often gives, the Kalachakra initiation. It is considered that the Kalachakra was given by Buddha Shakyamuni, and it is said historically, that one year before manifesting Parinirvana, Buddha Shakyamuni transmitted this teaching. This is our way of seeing it in a dualistic way. If we really enter the Sambhogakaya, the dimension of transforma-

tion, then we cannot limit time in this way. Past, present and future are all part of our dualistic vision. If we are in the Sambhogakaya dimension, and enter into the manifestation or transformation, then we are beyond time. In order to speak of the 'three times', first of all we need to be in time, then divide it into these three. Being 'beyond time' means time does not exist. When we are in that state and then look at the dualistic condition, we can understand how time is generally considered.

In any case, there can be a Kalachakra manifestation of Buddha Shakyamuni. When Buddha Shakyamuni transforms into this dimension, he is beyond time. Then with this manifestation, he transmitted knowledge of Kalachakra in the Tantric style of teaching, which was not like his oral teachings. In the Nirmanakaya style, the teacher explains and the students listen so that they can understand something in an ordinary way. But in the state of transformation, we are beyond the physical level and there isn't any particular transmission of oral explanations. There is just manifestation, but not only of figures or forms; since the root of all these manifestations is sound, there is also the kind of sound we call natural sound and natural mantra.

One of the most important mantras is the Song of Vajra. This doesn't mean that the Sambhogakaya manifestation of Vajrasattva is saying EMAKIRI KĪRĪ and someone else is listening. There is just the manifestation of the Samantabhadra dimension and that is manifesting the sound of the Song of Vajra. Tantric transmission is not received gradually. In the Sambhogakaya, all manifestations related with our state of body, speech and mind manifest instantly. Sambhoga is a Sanskrit word. The real meaning of sambhoga is more or less 'qualification': the quality of all the five elements, the five colours, etc where everything is perfected in that state. That dimension of perfection is called Sambhogakaya. I explained yesterday that the primordial potentiality of the individual is sound, light and rays, and

that we have these three potentialities just the same as enlightened beings. There is no difference between our primordial potentiality and Samantabhadra's or Vajrasattva's. But in general we are very different, we can't compare ourselves with Samantabhadra or Vajrasattva.

Why can't we compare ourselves with them if we have the same qualifications? Because although we have the same qualifications, we don't have their knowledge. We are not in that state of knowledge and are ignorant of it. Not only are we ignorant for one day, or for one life but for infinite lives since we have always been accumulating negative karma. When we are always accumulating more and more negative karma then we are more and more ignorant of that knowledge. So we must eliminate all these obstacles, then maybe we can compare ourselves with Samantabhadra. It is not simply sufficient to have the same qualifications.

Many people have that idea because the Dzogchen teachings say, "We have all the qualifications and have always been perfect in our nature since the very beginning." Then why are we living in samsara? Enlightened beings like Samantabhadra are very rare, beings in samsara are numerous. Our qualifications are somehow manifesting because there are secondary causes. If we knew immediately, "Oh, this is my qualification," and were able to be in our real nature and not fall into a dualistic vision, then we would become a primordial Buddha like Samantabhadra. But that is very difficult. Most people and beings are ignorant of that and immediately see everything in terms of subject and object. When their qualifications are manifesting they immediately think, "How nice. What is this? I like this qualification". Then immediately they fall into dualistic vision. When you fall into dualistic vision then you have many thoughts, and many thoughts create many obstacles. For example, if you see a very nice flower, what do you think? First you think, "Oh,

what a nice flower”. Then maybe if you are a Dzogchen practitioner, you are not distracted and you know that you are thinking, “How nice this flower is,” and you don’t fall into a dualistic way of thinking. But if you are not a practitioner, then you think, “Oh, it is very nice, I want to have this flower”. Generally when we see something nice we wish to have it. For example, today in the modern world if you see a very nice computer in the newspaper, you think, “Oh, how nice, this is better than my computer”. Then you read some information about it and it says it’s really very, very special. Then you look in your pocket to see if you have sufficient money or not. This means that you have already created an attachment.

Generally, we create an attachment to everything we like. Then we struggle to get it. If we get it, then we must protect it. If someone takes it away, then we don’t like it. Then we struggle with the person who took it away, and all kinds of emotions arise. We are conditioned by these emotions, which creates negative karma. Then day after day we are always accumulating more negative karma. We are no longer in the original condition of how it all started. In samsara, we continue living infinite lives this way.

That is why we need the teachings and an introduction, in order to try and get into that knowledge again and purify our obstacles. So it is important to know the characteristics of Sambhogakaya and what it means. Sambhogakaya means the dimension of our potentiality. But even if we have that potentiality, if we are not in our real condition, then all of samsara develops. Although we don’t have any desire to create samsara or to develop samsara, in a practical sense, we continually develop it.

For that reason there is the Tantric style of teaching, where we transform our impure vision or karmic vision into pure vision. Within the Tantric teachings, there are mainly two different methods that are important when we are following the Dzog-

chen teaching. Most traditions or schools follow Anuttara Tantra, or Higher Tantra. Anuttara means superior, in contrast to Lower Tantra. Lower Tantra does not really refer to a Tantra of transformation. But it is called Tantra because in it they recognize that our real condition is the state of the Vajra. In Sutra, there is no recognition of the Vajra state.

In the Mahayana Sutras, for example, it is said that everybody has a Buddha seed. A Buddha seed means that if we are following Buddha, and the path of Mahayana Buddhism, then after many lives we can attain realisation like the Buddha. If you put a seed in the earth then give it water, light and heat, like in the summer time, then it will slowly, slowly grow. Eventually, flowers or fruit manifest but it takes a long time. This is what happens with a seed. So when we say, "We have a Buddha seed," it means that we have that kind of possibility. But not all Sutra style Buddhists consider we have a Buddha seed. In some Hinayana style teachings they also say that *rigche* exists. *Rigche* means people who can never have realisation. So there are discussions between Mahayana and Hinayana on this point. Even sometimes within the Mahayana, there were some currents not accepting the idea of a Buddha seed.

In the Tantric tradition, our real nature is called Vajra. A Vajra has the quality of being indestructible and unchanging. This means there is a greater potentiality in this case, not just a kind of seed. Within the Tantric teachings, Lower Tantra and Higher Tantra have different considerations. Particularly in Higher Tantra or Anuttara Tantra there are two distinct currents. In the Nyingmapa tradition, one is called Mahayoga. Mahayoga is more or less the same as Anuttara Tantra. Anuttara Tantra is diffused in all traditions or schools. For example, Kalachakra practice, Hevajra practice, Yamantaka practice and Guhyasamaja Tantra, all these are called Anuttara Tantra or Higher Tantra. Within the Nyingmapa tradition, they also have

all these teachings, which are called Mahayoga. There is no difference between Mahayoga and Anuttara Tantra.

But in the Nyingmapa tradition, there is also another system called Anuyoga. The Anuyoga and Mahayoga traditions were originally taught in Tibet by Guru Padmasambhava. Then many Tibetan translators went to India in that period and introduced many new tantras into Tibet. But all the new tantras they introduced belong to Anuttara Tantra. So Anuttara Tantra and Mahayoga are the same. Anuyoga was also taught by Guru Padmasambhava but is not the same as Anuttara Tantra. You can't find Anuyoga in any tradition other than the Nyingmapa tradition. The system of Anuyoga does not exist in the Sakyapa, Gelugpa, or Kagyüpa traditions. There is Anuyoga in some collections of the Tantric teachings of the Sakyapa and Kagyüpa, but Anuyoga is always considered to be in the Nyingmapa tradition.

It is very important that you know the system of Anuyoga, because in the Dzogchen teachings when we use transformation methods, we only use the Anuyoga system. Why do we use the Anuyoga system? For two reasons. One is related to the principle of our potentiality. The view of Anuyoga and Dzogchen is the same. Another reason is that in Anuyoga practice, transformation is done instantly, and we can transform in a very easy way. If we want to do transformation practice in Anuttara Tantra, which has developed in all traditions, then you must develop the transformation gradually. So it is a little complicated. It doesn't mean Dzogchen practitioners can't do Anuttara Tantra practice. If you want to do it and you have patience, then you can do it that way. But in general it is not so very easy to do. That's why we use the Anuyoga system more. Anuyoga does not speak of our Vajra nature in an ordinary way like Tantrism. It explains our primordial potentiality as sound and light and rays. How can we get in that state? How can we realise

that? Anuyoga uses the method of transformation. In the Dzogchen teaching we are using the method of Dzogchen. This is the difference.

Why doesn't Anuyoga use gradual transformation like Anuttara Tantra? Because the way of seeing our potentiality in Anuyoga and Anuttara Tantra is different. In general, Anuttara Tantra or Higher Tantra considers that we have the potentiality of the Vajra. But in order to have that realisation we must use two main stages: firstly the development stage and then the accomplishment stage. Working with these two we can attain actual realisation in the end. The development stage means when you are doing the visualisation, that firstly you are in emptiness. From a dimension of emptiness, the energies of the elements manifest. Then from these elements, there manifests the whole dimension or mandala. In the mandala, through the seed-syllable of our individual real condition, the main deity manifests. We also have five aggregations, five elements etc., many different kinds of functions, and all these, manifest one by one, as personified deities. So one by one, we create the complete visualisation of the mandala. This is just the main manifestation.

Then there is the description of the main manifestation of the deity: how many heads, how many arms, how many legs, what each hand is holding, what colour it is and which ornaments there are etc. So when you do a gradual visualisation you need a book. You read how it is all explained, one after another, and then you do the visualisation. By the end, you have constructed the complete mandala and the deity. This is called the development stage. If your development stage is precise and real then it is considered that you have more capacity for transforming into pure vision. Not only that, but you now also need to integrate your existence in that transformation.

Then you do the visualisation of channels and chakras, and you use your prana energy, like your kundalini, depending on

the different method. All this is integrated with the visualisation of the mandala. It is important that you also use mantra and chant the mantra for a long time. This all is called the accomplishment stage. Then, combining these two together, you can reach the end of the transformation. Then you don't need to exert any further effort building up the visualisation and doing something, you can just remain in this clarity. This is called the Mahamudra state. This is really what Mahamudra means in Tantrism. Mahamudra cannot be accomplished just through doing visualisation of deities or just through visualising chakras and channels. You have to go through the two stages. Only then can you get to the final goal, which is called Mahamudra.

Mahamudra is universal in Nyingmapa, Kagyüpa, Sakyapa, Gelugpa: all traditions. But what you receive as Mahamudra teaching in the Kagyüpa tradition is a bit different. In Kagyüpa there is the Mahamudra of Gampopa that is more or less combined with the Dzogchen principle. This is a special way of applying and learning Mahamudra. When we apply Anuyoga, there is no need to build up the transformation gradually because according to the Anuyoga principle, we have our primordial potentiality from the very beginning. Our primordial potentiality is just like the potentiality of a mirror. A mirror has infinite potentiality to reflect everything. We don't need to insert a program into a mirror. For example, when we are working with a computer it seems the computer has infinite potentiality. But actually nothing could appear in the computer without a program. In a mirror, we don't need a program. Everything that is found in front of the mirror instantly manifests. Why? Because the mirror has that potentiality. This is a good example. Our primordial potentiality is just like the potentiality of the mirror. Likewise, in order to manifest the mandala or the deity, all transformation depends on secondary causes.

Manifestation is not really dependent on building something up one thing at a time. For example, if there is a man in front of a mirror, his form instantly appears in the mirror. The reflection does not develop slowly, beginning from the feet and then the stomach and then the neck and head. Why? Because the mirror has infinite potentiality to reflect instantly. The man is only the secondary cause for the vision appearing.

If there is no secondary cause in front of the mirror, then nothing will appear. But it doesn't mean the mirror's potentiality has disappeared. We have the same kind of potentiality. When we are aware and are in the state of knowledge of our real nature, we can manifest anything that is in front of us, if there is a secondary cause. In this case, this could be a Sambhogakaya style manifestation. But usually we are completely ignorant of that. We ignore that we have that potentiality especially, and forget that our potentiality can manifest everything. Even if something manifests through our potentiality, we immediately fall into a dualistic way of thinking, "I'm here, I'm seeing something there, and that is something nice or ugly". This is called dualistic vision or the manifestation of impure vision. So for that reason in Anuyoga, there is no need to construct something using the development stage. Instead, we just use sound and manifest instantly. In the real sense, however, there is no difference.

If you are looking at a form in a painting or drawing, you examine carefully what it looks like. For example, if you look at a picture of Samantabhadra, you can see how Samantabhadra is sitting and what his head and body are like etc. You can look at all these things one by one. This means you are training using the development stage. But even if you don't go through each factor one by one, if you have looked at a picture of Samantabhadra, then afterwards when the painting is gone and someone asks you, "What does Samantabhadra look like?" you still have

an idea because you have already seen that image. If I asked you to describe all the details, maybe you couldn't explain everything precisely. It is just the same if you do the development stage of a very complicated visualisation like Hevajra, for example. Hevajra has sixteen arms. Where are all the arms and what are they all holding? When you are looking at them one by one then you can have an idea. But if I ask you now, "What does Hevajra look like? Do you remember what all the sixteen arms are holding?" it is a little difficult for you to remember. But you don't really need to remember all this. It is not the main point. Some people following Anuttara Tantra give too much importance to it. They think that when you do the visualisation, you should see everything clearly in your mind, because their idea is based on constructing something. But in Anuyoga we don't need to construct anything. A picture is only a secondary cause for manifesting something. Your teacher introduces you to the method by showing you a picture, saying, "Look, this is what Vajrasattva looks like". Then you have an idea of Vajrasattva, and later when you are doing the visualisation, you can instantly remember what Vajrasattva looks like, more or less. If you do the visualisation gradually or non-gradually there is not much difference really.

When we do a transformation practice in Anuyoga, the most important thing is the feeling rather than the form. If you are transforming into a wrathful manifestation, for example, then even if you don't remember everything in detail, you still have an idea of how it looks and you focus on the feeling of it. The way in which the figures of deities are presented in the Tantric style are just symbolic. It is just a method. If you ask me, "What does Vajrasattva look like?" then I must tell you. I say, "Vajrasattva is white and is seated in the lotus position holding a vajra and bell". Then you can have an idea. But it doesn't really mean

that Vajrasattva always manifests holding a vajra and a bell and is always seated like this. Vajrasattva can manifest in different ways.

But the method, or the way the transmission was received in that moment is very important. At the exact moment of seeing and having contact with a Sambhogakaya manifestation, there is a form that always remains as a kind of method, a bit like a photograph. If someone takes my photograph right now and I'm sitting like this, in that photograph I'll always be sitting like this. You can do a hundred thousand copies of it, and I'll always be sitting the same way. But in the real sense, I'm not always sitting like this. It was just at the particular moment the photograph was taken. This is an example. Therefore, it is not so important to always go into too many details with regard to these things. The most important point is to really feel the energy of the manifestation. This is the Anuyoga system.

The way of doing practice in the Anuyoga system is very simple. Firstly, we always need the seed-syllable and the mantra which is transmitted by the teacher. We also need instructions on how to do the transformation. Once we have received the transmission, then we can always apply it easily by just using the seed-syllable and transforming with that sound. This is already the development stage. Then, not remaining in dualistic vision, we chant the mantra. This is the accomplishment stage. So it is very simple, and that is why we always use it in the Dzogchen teaching.

But if you say, for example, "I have received the initiation of Hevajra and now I want to do the practice of Hevajra in Anuyoga style," you can't do that because you didn't receive Hevajra in the Anuyoga style. You only received it within the Anutara Tantra's gradual system. So if you do this practice, you should do it according to the gradual system. If you have received the transmission of Hevajra in the Anuyoga system then

you can do it that way. This is an example. You should do any kind of practice in this way. For example, after receiving the Kalachakra initiation from the Dalai Lama, which is in the Anutara Tantra style and seems a little difficult, many people asked me, “Can I do the practice of Kalachakra in the Anuyoga style?” Then I said, “Oh, you can’t do that, because there is no Kalachakra in the Anuyoga system”. But later I discovered it does exist. In a *terma* teaching of my teacher Changchub Dorje there is a Kalachakra Anuyoga system. So, if you have received that transmission then you can also do it in the Anuyoga style. This is just an example. You must not invent things by yourself but you should proceed according to the correct principle. You should deal with all practices this way.

Then we have another path of liberation, which is called ‘self-liberation’. Self-liberation is the path of Dzogchen Atiyoga. The characteristic of the Dzogchen teaching and path is not transformation or renunciation, although in Dzogchen, you can integrate any kind of practices within it. But integrating in Dzogchen, means you are generally able to remain in the state of Dzogchen knowledge and integrate everything with this. This is called integration: it doesn’t mean that you are doing a little practice of Sutra, a little of Tantrism and then make it into a little Dzogchen mixture. That is not integration.

In Dzogchen , the most important thing is not receiving an initiation, as in the Tantric style. If you want to follow a Tantric teaching, you must receive the initiation. After the initiation, then you receive the instructions and you can do the practice. Without the initiation, even if you do some Tantric practice, it doesn’t work. In Tantrism, applying Tantric practices without having received the initiation is considered very negative. It is very important to receive the initiation and for the teacher to introduce you to the path, because the way the path is introduced is how an enlightened being introduced it to another enlightened being.

We say that Mahasiddhas are enlightened beings but that they are not totally enlightened. Totally enlightened beings are able to transmit the path of transformation through manifestations and the Mahasiddhas are able to receive that kind of transmission. We can't receive this kind of transmission because we don't have the capacity. A totally realised being, like Vimalamitra, can manifest the Rainbow Body. And particularly Guru Padmasambhava, of whom it is said, that on each day of Guru Padmasambhava he is always present in front of people who have devotion. We always practice the Guruyoga of Guru Padmasambhava on the day of Guru Padmasambhava because this means that we can have direct contact with him at this time. Although we can't see Guru Padmasambhava and it seems Guru Padmasambhava is not present, it's not so. The truth is we just can't see him.

We generally perceive everything through the organs of our physical body. If we shut our eyes we can't see anything. In order to see something we must open our two eyes. Of course, our two eyes can only see the material level. They have no capacity to go beyond that. So when the material level is dissolved into the essence of the five elements as lights, we can't see it with our physical eyes. If we can't even see a Rainbow Body how can we see Sambhogakaya manifestations? It is difficult to receive this kind of teaching directly. Only enlightened beings like Mahasiddhas are able to receive these teachings. Then they introduce the teachings to ordinary people like us.

In a Tantric initiation the teacher says, "You should do the visualisation mentally. You do the visualisation like this in a pure dimension. The dimension is a mandala like this one, and in the mandala the manifestation of the deities is like this". Then he shows the mandala and the deity of the manifestation. Then he gives some instructions like, "Now you enter into this transformation," and at the same time, the teacher also enters into

the transformation. Then using mantra, he empowers the students, really giving them the possibility to enter into that manifestation. This is called an initiation. So if we don't have the initiation, we can't apply this kind of path.

In the Sutra system, which is the path of renunciation, the main point is receiving a vow. On the path of transformation, in the Tantric system, the most important thing is receiving an initiation. In the Dzogchen teaching, the principle is not that of receiving an initiation or a vow, but an introduction. That's why Garab Dorje in his three statements said, "the first statement is direct introduction". Direct introduction means the teacher transmits the knowledge of the real condition directly to the students. This is related to oral transmission. First the teacher explains everything for hours and hours. Then the teacher gives the symbolic transmission by saying, for example, "Our primordial potentiality is just like a mirror." A mirror is a symbol. If we are doing an initiation in the Tantric style, then the teacher needs to show a mirror, saying: "Look at this mirror. It has infinite potentiality". But in Dzogchen we don't need to follow this style.

When I say 'mirror' you already have the idea of a mirror. There are different ways of thinking of a mirror. Maybe someone thinks of a round mirror that they can hold with a handle. Other people may think of a big square mirror, like a bathroom mirror. When you enter a house or some hotels there is often a very big mirror. But a mirror is always a mirror. It doesn't matter what shape it is. We aren't interested in the shape of the mirror but in the function of the mirror. You already have that idea, so we don't need an actual object.

In Dzogchen when we are introducing our real condition, our real nature, we call it *kadag* and *lhundrub*. *Kadag* means pure since the beginning. This is more or less the same as the term 'emptiness' in the Sutra teaching. *Lhundrub* refers to its

qualification. In Dzogchen, knowing only about emptiness is not enough. This is incomplete knowledge. Our real nature is not only emptiness but also has infinite potentiality. That potentiality, just like a mirror's potentiality, is called the qualification, *lhundrub*. *Lhundrub* means the self-perfected qualification.

For example, if there are one hundred different objects in front of us, they have one hundred different forms, one hundred different shapes and colours etc. But if we are thinking materially of one hundred objects, perhaps we wouldn't be able to fit them all into a mirror because the dimension of a mirror is quite small, and the one hundred objects are bigger. But here we are not dealing with the actual objects but are dealing with potentiality. A mirror has the potentiality to reflect all these one hundred objects either one by one or all together. Even in a small mirror it is possible to see a huge mountain. It has infinite potentiality. In the same way, we have that kind of potentiality. We know we have that potentiality since the beginning, and we also know that we have the qualifications of *kadag* and *lhundrub*.

When we are formally introducing them we use symbols. When we are explaining *kadag* and the empty condition, for example, we show a crystal ball or a crystal rock that is transparent. This is something like our real nature: empty and pure. But it also has infinite potentiality. So then we introduce our infinite potentiality using the example or symbol of a peacock's feather. On this peacock's feather there is a kind of coloured ring or *thigle*. The *thigle* represents our potentiality and we use the peacock's feather to show that we have that kind of potentiality. Why do we use a peacock's feather instead of a drawing of a *thigle*? Because the peacock's feather is natural. No one has made it. If we draw a *thigle* then it means someone has constructed it. But our real nature, our potentiality, is not devel-

oped through practice or knowledge. We have had it since the very beginning. This is an example of what is called symbolic transmission.

When we do Guruyoga, we visualise a white A in a *thigle* that represents our three primordial potentialities. This is also just a symbol and not the real thing because our real potentiality is beyond form, just like the potentiality of a mirror. When we look at a mirror, we can't see the potentiality of it directly. We only discover it when there are reflections. Of course, the reflections are not its potentiality either, but they manifest on a relative level from that potentiality. Learning about these things is called symbolic transmission. When you know about symbolic transmission then you discover that all Tantric methods use symbolic transmission, like using the mandala as a dimension and deities for an individual's transformation. All these things are symbols and by using these symbols, then it is possible to have that realisation. This is called symbolic transmission.

Symbolic transmission is related largely to our physical level because if I show you a mirror, a peacock's feather, or a crystal rock you can see and touch them. Oral transmission is related with the voice, because when I explain something to you and you listen then you can understand. Direct transmission is related to the mind. Direct transmission is often received after the oral and symbolic transmission, because these two are a bit like a preparation for the direct transmission. But in a practical way, when we are receiving a transmission, they are all operating together instantly. So transmission is also related to our three gates.

Now we are going to do a preparation for receiving direct transmission, because you can't learn the Dzogchen teaching just by listening to some kind of lecture. If the teacher just explains something and then you say, "Oh, I have received the

Dzogchen teachings”, that is only the oral transmission and is incomplete. It is very important that you receive everything in a complete way because when you have received the complete transmission then you become a practitioner of Dzogchen.

Some people think, “Direct transmission is something very mysterious. I want to have an appointment with the teacher, a personal appointment. I have something important to ask”. When they meet me, they say, “Please, give me the direct transmission”. Then I’m very surprised because I’ve never said that I give direct transmission secretly to selected individuals. I transmit to all people who are interested in the Dzogchen teachings. This is a way of checking if people have capacity or not. If someone does have capacity, when they receive the direct transmission they discover their real condition. If they do not have enough capacity, they discover that maybe they need to do some more preparatory practice. Sometimes we may need to do some purification practice first to improve our clarity.

Maybe there are some obstacles. For example, some people are distracted even when the teacher is explaining very important points: some people even fall asleep. This can be an obstacle for receiving the direct transmission. It all depends: if you fall asleep it doesn’t mean that you should do Vajrasattva practice. If you fall asleep you need to do something to prevent yourself from falling asleep. It is very simple. For example, if you start feeling really sleepy when you are doing practice, you can move your head back very sharply this three times. Then you wake up. Maybe after five or ten minutes you fall asleep again. Then you can do it again. We need to observe what kind of obstacles we have. That’s why in the Dzogchen teaching we always say, “We should work with our circumstances”.

We need to work with our circumstances when we do practice, when we are learning, as well as when we are going about our daily life. There is no need to always ask the teacher if you

have a problem. You can ask some of the old practitioners because they have some experience already. If you really have a problem that you can't overcome, then you can ask the teacher. These days it is very easy to communicate with the teacher if you have e-mail. You can just send a few lines and then you can receive a reply immediately. If you write a philosophical discourse in your e-mail and send it to me, then you won't receive a reply. I don't have the time to read such things. My incoming e-mails are also limited in such a way that if there are more than twenty lines they do not get through. This is because many people like to write very long letters. They don't know how many e-mail letters I receive every day. There are many people but there is only one Norbu and I have no secretary. I'm my own secretary automatically. So you must remember that.

DIRECT INTRODUCTION

Direct introduction is the main point in the Dzogchen teachings, just as initiation is the main point in Tantric teachings. This means that it is something indispensable in order to properly receive the teachings. In general, the main practice that we always do is Guruyoga. Guruyoga doesn't just mean saying some words, praying and chanting mantra. These all are secondary things. The main point of Guruyoga is being in the state of instant presence and this instant presence represents our real condition. This is also the state of the Guru, the teacher. It is the same as the state of Samantabhadra, Vajrasattva or Garab Dorje. Even if we are only in this state for a few seconds, it is really Guruyoga. On the other hand, even if we are praying for a long time and chanting many mantras etc., if we miss the principle of instant presence, our Guruyoga has little sense.

Introducing the state of instant presence means connecting with the transmission. If we are not connected with the transmission we can't have realisation. Intellectual understanding alone is not sufficient. If intellectual understanding was the main point then we wouldn't need the teachings. We have already developed our intellectual understanding sufficiently within our society. Just look at a university program and you can see how many different courses it is possible to study. But even if we become an expert of intellectual knowledge we are always using our mind and making judgements.

When we are using our mind and we have a question, we usually think, "Why? Why is it?" Then we find an answer and

are satisfied. Sometimes we need to follow a kind of logic in order to confirm the answer. These are just mental concepts. This is not the main point in Dzogchen. There is no possibility of explaining true knowledge or understanding in an intellectual way. That's why in the Sutra teaching, the Buddha said, "Understanding Prajñāparamita is beyond judgements, beyond explanations, beyond words". And that is why many traditions don't understand what the Dzogchen teachings call, 'introduction'.

'Introduction' is officially used within the Dzogchen tradition and also in Mahamudra, within the Kagyüpa tradition. But if you talk with a Gelugpa teacher, even if he is a very good and scholarly teacher, and you say, "I have received an introduction into Dzogchen", the Gelugpa teacher will never accept it. He will immediately negate it, saying, "Introduction doesn't exist." The Sakyapa tradition doesn't understand either because they don't accept it. We already know from the Sutra tradition that nothing exists to show and explain. So how can we introduce something, if there is nothing to show and explain? If you meet a Gelugpa teacher it is better you don't discuss this point with him, saying, "Oh, I have received an introduction", because you will just receive a negative response.

You know that the characteristics of different teachings vary. In Dzogchen and in Mahamudra, we use an introduction. Why? Because without an introduction how can we attain realisation? In ancient times, the Mahasiddhas always introduced to the real nature their students who then manifested realisation. But you must understand the way of introducing and the characteristic of introduction. Why do we have direct introduction in the Dzogchen teaching? Why did Garab Dorje say 'direct introduction'? Because we know what the condition of the individual is like. We live in samsara and have so much knowledge and understanding in an intellectual way. And not just in an intellectual

way. Even when we go to school, we learn most things through experience, not just through intellectual study.

For example, you know that fire is hot and if you touch it you will be burnt. Water is cool and when you are thirsty, you need to drink water. You didn't learn about these things from a school book, you learned about them through experience. Everything we know about our condition was learned naturally through experience. We can understand this very easily. For example, if there is a man who never had the experience of eating something sweet in his life, how can he understand what sweet is? Since he never tasted it, he doesn't have that experience, so if you want to introduce him to the taste of sweetness, how do you do it? You could write a long explanation, a whole big volume or book describing what sweet is like. You could also found a whole school on your explanation so then the man could go to the school and study your explanation. But he will still never really understand the taste of sweet. That's why Buddha said he could not explain the real sense of his understanding. If on the other hand, we go by our direct experience, then learning is simpler.

Since we learn everything through experience, why shouldn't we also discover our real nature through experience? This is the principle of introduction. Introduction means we use our experience and through experience we discover our real nature. In reality, everything we do and have contact with in our life is part of our experience. But even if we include all of these experiences, we have to remember what the key point is. We have three gates and with these three gates we can understand everything. All our experiences are related with these three gates: there are experiences mainly related with our physical body; experiences mainly related with our energy level or voice; and experiences mainly related with our mind.

So there are mainly three kinds of experiences. Experiences

related with our physical form produce sensations that manifest through our body. For example, when we are doing a particular position during practice, the influence of that position enables us to have particular sensations. By focusing on our channels and chakras, we can have a different kind of sensation. In general, we know that sensation is related to our body. If someone gives you a punch, it hurts. That is sensation. If someone does something nice to you, you feel happy. Your feeling is different. You can understand how it is, it is very real.

In order to understand this point in the Tantric teaching, they use many manifestations of deities in the form of Yab-Yum, male and female union. Why do they use images of Yab and Yum union? It is the presentation of sensation. One of the strongest sensations is the sexual sensation. That is why everybody applies it. Even cats and dogs know about it. As human beings, we know very well that we are more intelligent, but we still have that feeling and know how to enjoy it. That is all. Then after that, we experience jealousy or anger and all sorts of problems arise. We only feel that sensation for a few seconds, a few minutes but then we create so many attachments and so many problems. Why do we have all these problems? Because we do not have the capacity to control ourselves. We are not aware and are not in the state of instant presence. Instead, we are completely conditioned by these feelings. Then we become upset. It is the same if we have a sad feeling. We immediately get upset. The sexual sensation is a very strong experience and not so easy to use on the path for this reason. We can use it, but if we are not aware, we simply fall into dualistic vision.

Another experience is that of clarity. This experience is related more to our energy level. For example, our way of controlling energy or circulating prana energy can lead to many kinds of visions. For that reason, in the Tantric tradition, they do visualisation of the development stage first. Here, the di-

mension is the mandala and all beings are just like deities. Then later in the accomplishment stage, when they use the chakras and channels, do the visualisation and positions etc., it is possible to have experiences. Our way of visualising at the development stage is simply through integrating with that presence, so it actually feels real. This is the way of working with clarity. Many people always think of clarity as referring to pure manifestations and pure visions. But clarity can be pure vision and impure vision: it doesn't just mean having visions.

When we open our eyes we see a tree, a mountain or the countryside. This is also part of our clarity. Of course, it is not the same as a pure vision of a mandala and deities. But if you don't focus on what you see and go to the root of where these visions come from, then you will discover that there is no difference between pure visions and impure visions. For that reason, if you are in the state of instant presence, there is the possibility of integrating pure and impure vision. Therefore, in the Dzogchen teaching, we do not give too much importance to pure vision and impure vision. The important thing is to be in our real condition, which is also part of our experience. By using this kind of experience, we can get into our real nature.

In Tantrism, first there is the development stage, then the accomplishment stage and finally the non-duality of these two stages. At that final moment, the practitioner does not simply remain in the dimension of transformation but is also aware of being in that state, and where all these manifestations are coming from. This state is beyond dualism and it is called Mahamudra, the final goal of the Tantric teaching. So Mahamudra does not only mean doing visualisation of deities and chanting mantras, these are all just means for having experiences as a kind of preparation. In the Tantric tradition, we have experiences for a long time and then we finally get into the state. This kind of experience is related with our voice or energy level and is another very important experience.

Then we have the experience of mind, which is the experience of emptiness. Even in the Sutra teaching, we do Shine practice of the calm state. Why do we need to do calm state practice first of all? Because we are in *samsara* and are generally very agitated. So the first thing we need to learn is to be a little relaxed. But only having the idea of relaxation is not enough. For example, if you are very agitated and someone asks you to relax, it doesn't help at all. It even makes it worse sometimes. You know that if you could relax you'd feel better, but when you are charged up, it's difficult to calm down. Then if someone tells you, "Please relax," you become even more wound up.

So this is not a solution. It is not sufficient to just have an idea of relaxing. We also need a method. First of all, a very simple way of relaxing is to use our breathing. If we exhale deeply many times, ten or twenty times, then it can help us to feel a little less agitated. If you start doing practice, for example, when you are agitated it is not so easy. So for that reason we do the nine purification breathing first and then we do our practice. For example we can do Shine practice. Shine practice is a kind of re-education of our mind. We know that our mind is very agitated, so we do fixation on an object. We can use any kind of object. In the Dzogchen teaching, when we do Shine practice, we generally put a white A in a *thigle* in front of us and then we do fixation on this. Why do we do that? Because we are more familiar with this image, as when we do the Guruyoga visualisation, for example. This is the reason, not because it makes for a better state of Shine. For Shine practice you can do fixation on any kind of object. Only it must not be luminous or bright because doing fixation on a luminous or bright object it is harmful for your eyes. Otherwise there is no difference between objects.

Some schools recommend specific objects. In the Gelugpa tradition, they use a picture of Manjushri, for example. Some other traditions use an image or a statue of Buddha. Why? Because when you are looking at a statue of Buddha, you automatically have some idea of the calm state. This because the image of Buddha is in a calm state and is not agitated. You also have the idea that the image of Buddha is pure vision. That's why it is used.

In order to have realisation of Shine you can use any object. Say you are walking in a garden and you sit down somewhere thinking, "Oh, this is a very nice place, I want to practice a bit of Shine". At that moment, if you try to set up a white A and *thigle*, or a statue of Buddha, or Manjushri, it becomes very complicated. It means the practitioner is not a free practitioner but is dependent on something. But since you know it doesn't matter which object you use, when you are sitting down and you look in front of you, you will see something. Maybe there is a tree, and the tree has many leaves. Or maybe there is a flower and you can do fixation on that object.

If you do fixation for a long time, however, you must be aware of your condition. Sometimes in summer time it is very warm and then you may fall asleep easily. That means you are in a sleepy state. Sometimes on the contrary, you are very agitated. So these are two different aspects of your condition. If you are very agitated, you should do your fixation gazing lower down. If you are sleepy, you do your fixation gazing higher up. If you don't have any of these problems then you look directly ahead. But what is important is that you do fixation in what is called a triangle style.

Imagine that there is a triangle with two points at your eyes and one point where you do your fixation. Why are there two points on your side? Because you have so many concepts and so much confusion that you need a larger space. Then you bring

all this large space into one point and fix sharply. You know what 'sharply' means. When you are doing fixation sharply you can't have any thoughts. Even if you have a lot of confusion and many thoughts, when you do fixation sharply, they all disappear. We do fixation in order to control all our thoughts. But you must not do sharp fixation for a long time, otherwise it will produce more tension and later, when you have finished your practice, you will discover you are more wound up. Instead of being in a calm state you are more agitated than before.

Sometimes when you are practicing fixation, if you are doing fixation too sharply something can manifest. Maybe you have some particular idea in your mind and through that idea something can appear. For example, while doing fixation sharply on the white A and *thigle*, the white A disappears. Or instead of the white A and *thigle*, the face of a person appears. Or something like a cat or a dog or some objects, it seems to change. Sometimes if you have a wonderful idea some nice image may manifest. But in general, we always tend to have more fears and think about terrible things, so these things can also manifest. This is not a sign of your realisation but a manifestation of your tension. So in this case you must understand that you are staying sharply in fixation for too long.

It is enough to only remain five or ten seconds fixating sharply and then slowly begin to relax. It is very important that you relax slowly. You remember when you were learning to drive a car, and in the beginning the car was always jerking. Why? Because when you released the clutch too quickly then the car jumped forward. But when you learned how to release the clutch pedal slowly, slowly, then there was no problem.

In the same way, as you relax in Shine, you notice immediately that thoughts arise. You relax slowly slowly, and then you see the thoughts appear and how they start and how they continue. Then you observe carefully whether the thoughts have the power and capacity to distract you or not. If there is a prob-

lem because you are distracted, then you fixate sharply again. Then again you slowly relax and observe. That is how you re-educate your mind. In the end, when you are relaxing, you notice there are thoughts, but the thoughts don't have any power to distract you. You can remain in this fixation in a relaxed way. Thoughts are free to arise and also to disappear. This means you have now realised the aim of your Shine practice with a object.

Now you can learn to do Shine without an object. You don't need a white A or anything for doing fixation. In this case, you can start your practice somewhere in an open place. If you sit down somewhere outside in the morning, you gaze into the western sky. Then you don't have any problem with the light. In the afternoon you do the opposite. You simply gaze into space. In the space there is nothing, it's empty. But even if it's empty, when you start you direct your gaze just as you did with fixation on an object. You do the fixation sharply in the empty space in front of you, fixing on one point without any object. Then you relax slowly, slowly. Thoughts arise, but you realise there is no problem. If there is a problem, you repeat the fixation sharply and relax again. It is very, very important that your way of practising is precise. If you know how to do the practice in a perfect way then in a few days you can realise Shine perfectly. If you don't know the aim of doing fixation, then even if you do it for one month, or two months it will be difficult to have realisation.

Now when you are in the state of Shine, what does it mean? Is this really a meditation state or contemplation? No, this is only an experience of emptiness. Why? Because when you are in a calm state you can't find anything, it is empty. Even if a thought arises, you are not doing anything. You just remain in this calm state. This is called the experience of emptiness. The experience of emptiness is something related with our mind. We learn it and through that experience we can get into the real

state. The real state means we are not only remaining in emptiness but we also look at who is in this emptiness, and we discover that. If we discover that, then we are in our real nature. In that state there is no difference between emptiness, clarity or sensation, it is always the same. We can get into that state through emptiness, through the experience of clarity or through the experience of sensation. But when we are in that state, everything has the same taste. There is the famous Buddhist saying 'same flavour'. We also say that good and bad are the same thing. Good and bad are not the same at a relative level. No one would believe that. But if you are really in your instant presence, rather than thinking or considering something has the same flavour, you discover that. This is very important for all practitioners.

I'll give you a very simple example. When we are dying, we have a lot of confusion and pain. Why? Firstly, because we have some illness in our physical body. Furthermore, when we are dying all the functions of our senses dissolve internally. Each sense and element produces many very strong experiences as they dissolve. So it is not so easy when we are dying. That's why people lose their presence. But if you are a really good practitioner, particularly if you are used to doing a lot of practice like Guruyoga, you know how to be in the state of instant presence and you have the capacity to integrate your ordinary condition in that state. Being in instant presence means being beyond time. That means beyond experiences. So you are now being in the same flavour of all experiences. If you are being in the state of instant presence, when you know you are dying, you remain in that state and then all suffering, all feelings, your sensations, everything is part of your experience. You are not dependent on experience any more. You notice everything that is going on. So 'same flavour' means there is no problem. You see how important it is not only when we are dying but in daily life also.

That's why I'm always asking my students whether they have problems or not. Because I'm always looking at my students to see if they have made any progress or not, or if they write to me, saying, "I have a problem" or "No problems". When they are not pretending they have "no problems", but they are really showing no problems, then I understand, "They are doing practice, they are doing integration in the state of contemplation". So this is a very, very important sign of practice. If there is always a progression of problems it means they are separated from the knowledge of Dzogchen. Sometimes they have had a kind of flash of the experience of instant presence but it is not enough. After having that experience, we must try to stay in that state, doing Guruyoga, or doing any kind of practice for integrating it. That's why we say, "We always need to do practice." Even if we know our condition is perfect since the very beginning, in order to manifest that perfection we must continually be in instant presence. When you have this knowledge, when you have such capacity, even if you don't show any manifestation of miracles, in the words of Garab Dorje, "Even if you remain in the physical body of a normal person, your real condition is Vajrasattva".

That's why in the Dzogchen teaching there is the example of the eagle's eggs and a small baby. The saying is, "Dzogchen practitioners are just like eagle's eggs". The explanation is this: "When an eagle's egg is hatching the small eagle is already perfect, and immediately has the capacity to fly". That means it is already perfect inside the egg. But the perfection does not manifest before the egg hatches. This is the explanation of Dzogchen. I did not invent it, because I don't know what the eggs of an eagle are like. I have never seen them. But in the Dzogchen teaching it is said this way. In any case, we can understand what this example means.

If we have knowledge in a perfect way, even if we do not manifest miracles, we are still perfect. The only thing that manifests outside in an ordinary way is less tension and less fear because that is how it is inside. Our behaviour also develops of course and automatically manifests. We don't need to be always speaking about Bodhichitta and cultivating Bodhichitta. Whoever has knowledge of being in the instant presence is fully compassionate. Because through clarity we know very well how the situation in samsara is. We know how many sentient beings exist in this universe and how they are suffering. They are not on the path and that means they don't have any guarantee that samsara and their suffering will come to an end. We are on a path; we have knowledge and understanding, so how can we remain indifferent to them? This kind of compassion is not artificial compassion; it is real compassion. There is no need to always speak of compassion. Your compassion needs to be more real. Real compassion arises when we have this knowledge.

Through the experience of emptiness we can get in this knowledge. When we are introducing our real nature directly, we use one of these three experiences. Of the three, the easiest to deal with is the experience of emptiness. The experience of clarity is a little more complicated. We need to work and train longer, otherwise we don't truly have this experience. The experience of sensation is very tangible but maybe it is too real, so it is very difficult for us to deal with it. We need a training first, and then we can apply it.

For that reason, most teachers give direct introduction by working with emptiness. There are many ways of doing it, so it is not necessary that we are following a book like in Kriya Tantra. We deal with our actual situation, knowing how we should work. We know there are two main things. One of the most important is that of connecting with the transmission. This means that practitioners connected with the Dzogchen transmission

are linked to it though a continuous chain beginning with their own teacher and going right back to Garab Dorje, Vajrasattva and Samantabhadra. Connecting with the transmission is very important in order to wake up and have realisation. This is because we have been used to live in dualistic vision for infinite lives and it is not so easy for us to escape from it and immediately get beyond it. When we connect with the transmission, we can make progress and get into our real nature. This is one important thing.

Then sometimes in the Dzogchen teaching we use the empowerment of Guruyoga. Empowerment means that we are connecting with the transmission and at same time doing direct introduction. This is a more complete way of giving an introduction, because direct transmission means we are introducing what our instant presence is like. Sometimes the teacher introduces you to the state and you can really have the experience of direct introduction. Sometimes even though you receive it from the teacher many times, you always remain in doubt or maybe you don't feel anything definite. What do you do in this case? It is important that you connect with the transmission and receive the direct transmission from the teacher. Then you should apply that method and you should continue in order to discover instant presence directly. We also have many methods like Semdzins in order to have this experience. We need all these kinds of teachings and types of introduction, as it is indispensable to have this experience for doing Dzogchen practice.

GURUYOGA AND SECONDARY PRACTICES

Today I want to explain some more about secondary practices. You already know that in the Dzogchen teachings the main practice is Guruyoga. All other practices are secondary. But even though they are secondary practices, if you know how to work with them, they can become part of the main practice. It all depends on your way of practicing. In Tibetan, we say *Lamai Naljor* for Guruyoga and in all the various traditions they have different kinds of *Lamai Naljor*. But if they do not do the Guruyoga or *Lamai Naljor* in the same way as we do it in Dzogchen, then it is difficult to say if it is necessarily the main practice or not. Because when we do any practice everything depends on how we do it. We must not be conditioned by the title or name of a practice.

For example, when we say Guruyoga in the Dzogchen teachings, it refers to our state of Guruyoga, which is the real state of the individual. This means an individual has discovered it through the transmission received from the teacher and has entered into that knowledge. When you have discovered that state and you are in it, then that is Guruyoga. This is not only your primordial state but is also the same state as that of your teacher. When we do the visualisation, we imagine that the teacher dissolves in light and unifies with us. This is just in our imagination, but the unification state is real if we are in instant presence. Even if you are only in this state for a few minutes or a few seconds, just that is Guruyoga. In this state of Guruyoga you can unify all your teachers and all enlightened beings be-

cause all of their three Vajras are in the same condition. There is no difference. We make distinctions with our dualistic vision, but when we are in instant presence, we are beyond such considerations.

In the Dzogchen teachings, when we do Guruyoga in a formal way using a system like Anuyoga or Mahayoga, we do the visualisation of the Guru using the form of Guru Garab Dorje or Guru Padmasambhava. We can also do it with Guru Vajrasattva or with Guru Ati Buddha (in the Dharmakaya style). But even if we use a particular form or image, in the real sense, it's the three Vajras that are the unification of all teachers - not just Dzogchen teachers, but all the teachers with whom we have had contact. We don't keep everything separate, saying, "Oh, I belong to this school or that school, or I'm a follower of this tradition or that tradition". That is not the path of realisation: that is called limitation. Limitation is the root of samsara, not the root for manifesting nirvana.

So that is the reason why we unify all teachers without any limitations. Of course, when we do Guruyoga, Guru Garab Dorje is always present in that moment. We should not think of a kind of list, going through them one by one, "My first teacher, second teacher, third teacher etc". Not like that. We already have ideas like, "I have contact with some Gelugpa teachers and some Nyingmapa teachers or Kagyüpa or Bönpo etc." It doesn't matter who belongs to which tradition. You have the Vajra connection with them so these teachers are called Vajra Gurus. So you unify all Vajra Gurus related with your knowledge of the Vajra. This is your intention and this is called Guruyoga in Dzogchen.

Other traditions and schools don't do it the same way. Even when they are doing Guruyoga, they do it with the founder of the school. They use this method, saying, "Oh, this is our lineage". If they are Kagyüpa, they only use Kagyüpa teachers, even though in the Kagyüpa tradition there are many different line-

ages. The same is true for the Sakyapa and the Gelugpa traditions etc. But this is called limitation. You don't need to be limited and just be a Gelugpa student or a Kagyüpa student. Living in society, you can have contact with all different kinds of teachers. So then you need to unify all these teachers and keep the samaya of all of them.

Keeping the samaya doesn't mean you do all the practices that you have received. Nobody can do that. No one exists who can do it in that way. For example, if you have received hundreds of different kinds of initiations from different teachers how can you do all the practices every day? Even if you don't eat, or sleep, or go to the toilet, you still wouldn't be able to do it. You must understand that if you only do one of these many practices, maybe you are satisfied, but it is not sufficient. You must go to the root or the source of all of these practices. You could receive the initiations of Kalachakra, Hevajra, Yamantaka and Vajrakilaya. There are so many different kinds of initiations, but then you wouldn't be able to do all these practices. From whom have you received these teachings? You didn't receive them from Kalachakra or Vajrakilaya directly. You received them from a teacher. So doing Guruyoga means being in the state of all your teachers, and if you have unified all teachers and you are in that state, then you are keeping all your samayas. This is a very important point, because this is the method of Dzogchen, the view of Dzogchen.

But if you discuss this view with a teacher of Yoga Tantra, and receive a teaching of Yoga Tantra, like Vajrapani, for example, and then you say to this teacher, "I can't do this Vajrapani practice as well because I have already received so many teachings. I'm only doing Guruyoga, is it enough?" It's absolutely certain that the teacher will say, "No, you should do Vajrapani". They do not know how it is possible to go to the root. They lack this knowledge and for that reason they cannot ac-

cept it. So the Dzogchen way is different, it always goes straight to the essence or to the root. You don't need to go and discuss it with different kinds of teachers saying: "Oh, I can't do this practice or that practice. I only do Guruyoga. Do you think this is fine?" Because when they reply no, what will you do? You will just be confused.

The principle is not for you go round discussing it with people, or to be conditioned by different teachers and their points of view. You are following a teaching to attain realisation and you do your best towards achieving realisation. That is all. You are not doing practice in order to support a teacher, or to support a tradition or school. You do Guruyoga to attain realisation, so you should do it in the correct way. Whether you do it with Guru Garab Dorje or if you have followed the Gelugpa tradition and lineage and you do it with Tsonkhapa, it doesn't matter. Form is relative, the main thing is that you unify all your teachers and the three Vajras into the form of the principal teacher. If you do Guruyoga this way, even the Guruyoga of the Gelugpa tradition has value. If you do it in a limited way, however, then any kind of Guruyoga is not very important. Therefore, when I say the main practice is Guruyoga in Dzogchen, you must understand the main point of it.

Secondary practices are related with Tantric methods. For example, in the Medium Thun, we visualise Guru Padmasambhava in front of us, and in the Short Thun there is the manifestation of Guru Garab Dorje in front of us in space. This is a way of doing visualisation in a dualistic way, not in a unified fashion. Why do we do it this way? Because we live in society and are living in a dualistic condition, and even though we know that dualism has less value, we use it and bring it into our knowledge. For example, when we visualise Guru Garab Dorje in the Short Thun, it's very important not only that we do the visualisation of Guru Garab Dorje, but also that our knowledge is uni-

fied with all transmissions, all teachers. Afterwards we sound A three times and we do *trondu*. This means we are integrating all kinds of wisdom. At the end, we dissolve all of our visualisation into ourselves and then we remain in the state of instant presence and we sing the Song of Vajra. Then this kind of Guruyoga becomes something very important.

It is the same with the Medium Thun. First we do Refuge and Bodhichitta and then we use mantra, mudra and visualisation, these three things. Mantra is related with our voice, mudra is related with our body and visualisation is related with our mind. When we use all these three gates together it has more effect. When we pronounce OM AH HUM at the beginning, we immediately visualise that at the three places of Guru Padmasambhava, inside a *thigle* of five colours, a white OM, a red AH and a blue HUM manifest. These represent the three syllables of the Vajra, the unification state of all teachers, not only of Guru Padmasambhava. Then we go ahead with the mantra VAJRA GURU PADMA THÖTRENGTSAL. Vajra Guru refers to all the unified teachers but not just any kind of teacher. When you attended primary school you had a teacher, but it is not necessary to unify the primary school teacher into your Guruyoga. If you learn a little music or art or something, you can also have a teacher, but these are not Vajra teachers. A Vajra teacher is someone who brings you directly or indirectly into the knowledge of your Vajra state. You unify all these kinds of teachers, all those who work that way.

Some people have problems with teachers, particularly Westerners, because on hearing that there is a teacher coming, they run to see him or her immediately. They never examine who the teacher is first. As soon as they read the publicity they say, “Oh, what a fantastic, wonderful teacher”. Of course, if someone is doing the organising and publicity for an event they will never say, “Oh, this teacher is not very good”. If they said that,

then no one would come and they wouldn't make any money. So they always say something like, "Fantastic! This is a reincarnation of Padmasambhava or Buddha Shakyamuni". Then you think, "Oh, this teacher is really important." You jump to this conclusion, but you don't really know who he or she is. Maybe you receive some teachings connected with the Vajra from them. Then he or she becomes a kind of teacher for you. After a few months or a few years you discover that he or she is not a real teacher, but just a kind of Dharma businessman or woman. Then you think, "Oh, I did something wrong. But now I have some kind of Vajra relationship with them. What can I do?"

Upon discovering that a teacher is not perfect in the correct way, some people then start to criticise them. This is not good at all. If you have received teachings from them, even if later on you don't want to follow that teacher anymore, you should never criticise him or her. It is bad for you not for the teacher. If some teachers are not good, then everybody knows they are not good, so there is no problem. But if you criticise them, you will accumulate negativities that will become an obstacle for your realisation. If you don't like that teacher and you have discovered that he or she is not a good teacher, then stay away. That is all. Don't criticise them. It is not necessary that you follow them again or that you do anything with them. So this is what you should do in such situations.

When you do Guruyoga, you shouldn't distinguish between a good teacher or a bad teacher: number one, number two etc. Some people say, "This is my root-teacher, this is my second level teacher, this is my third level teacher." Often these people like to prepare an altar. Then they put an image of a very important Lama in the centre and they say, "This is my root-Lama". But a teacher can be your true root-Lama without having a high official position.

Most people don't know what a root-teacher really means. I remember many years ago a lady came to me saying, "Oh, my root-teacher is Gyalwa Karmapa". "Oh," I said, "that is fantastic, very good." And she said, "I have come here to learn some teachings and how to practice." Then I said, "But if you have a root-teacher then you must know how to practice already". She said, "But I have never met Gyalwa Karmapa". She had chosen Gyalwa Karmapa to be her root-Guru because the Karmapa is famous and has a very elegant style of presentation. Then she wanted to learn something from me, yet that is really the service of her root-Guru. When you establish these kinds of levels, saying, "This is the first level, this is the second level etc." it is a wrong way of seeing. The root-Guru is very important. Your root-Guru is the teacher who woke you up, so that you finally understood the real sense of the teaching and discovered your real nature. This person is called your root-Guru, not someone who you choose.

So even if you have a root-Guru, when you do Guruyoga, you unify all Gurus without thinking that your root-Guru is first and the others are secondary. Even if there is someone who you consider is not a good Guru, in this moment, you don't make any distinction. All are unified in the three Vajras, and their three Vajras are unified with the three Vajras of Guru Padmasambhava. And then you pronounce the secret name of Guru Padmasambhava, PADMA THÖTRENGTSAL, and with this you can communicate with him. If you know the secret name of enlightened beings or guardians, through that name and sound you can communicate easily. If you have the idea, "Please, Guru Padmasambhava, I want to communicate with you", you can have that intention and you can do the invocation but it is not so easy to understand if you have really succeeded in communicating or not. If we use mantra and mudra combined with visualisation, then we can communicate easily.

For example, when we are communicating we always do the mudra of samaya. You put your thumbs under your ring fingers, then you close your fingers in a fist and you put your hands one on top of the other. Through the power of this mudra you can communicate. If you want to invite guardians or enlightened beings, you can communicate with them too. So it is very important to use the secret name and mudra. Many people ask for a mantra of Guru Padmasambhava. The ordinary mantra of Guru Padmasambhava is OM AH HUM VAJRA GURU PADMA SIDDHI HUM. This is a universal mantra, so everybody knows it and uses it. But when we are doing Guruyoga we say OM AH HUM VAJRA GURU PADMA THÖTRENGTSAL VAJRA SAMAYA JA SIDDHI PHALA HUM AH. This mantra is communicating through the transmission because we are using the secret name of Guru Padmasambhava, and of course, it is more effective. We not only know Padmasambhava and his usual mantra, but also by being in the transmission of Guru Padmasambhava, we know his secret name and can use this to communicate. When we use the mudra of samaya and we say VAJRA GURU PADMA THÖTRENGTSAL VAJRA SAMAYA JA, it means we are inviting all the commitments of Guru Padmasambhava. His commitments are Vajra commitments not ordinary commitments.

If someone asks me, “Would you like to come to my house for lunch tomorrow?” and I say, “Yes, I will come tomorrow,” that is an ordinary commitment. I have made a commitment to go and eat with them tomorrow. But before going to bed, someone calls me by telephone and says there is something very important I must do tomorrow morning. I have to go to Rome the next day, so I cannot go to that person’s house for lunch. Then I call my host saying, “Oh, my friend, I’m very sorry, I really wanted to be there for lunch but I cannot come.” When I explain all the reasons my friend accepts my apology. So this is not a Vajra commitment, and it can change.

But a Vajra commitment means it can't be changed. We are always creating Vajra commitments every day. You remember, when we do practice we say NAMO GURU BHYA, NAMO DEVA BHYA, NAMO DAKINI BHYA, and in this way we take Refuge and we check our intention for cultivating Bodhi-chitta. We are always accumulating commitments, when we say, "I want to have realisation, and when I'm realised, I want to save and help all sentient beings. That is the reason." I say it today, then again tomorrow, and until I attain total realisation I am always repeating it and increasing this intention. This intention is just the same as that of Guru Garab Dorje and Guru Padmasambhava. They too accumulated infinite commitments. So now we make them remember their commitment, because if we are not active, we cannot receive their wisdom. So we remind Guru Padmasambhava, "Do you remember how many commitments you took? Look, we are here in samsara, we have full faith in you, and we are following your teaching. Please, come with your help and your wisdom." That is the meaning when we say VAJRA SAMAYA JA, and instantly we invite his wisdom while clicking our fingers.

Whenever we receive an initiation or empowerment of body, speech and mind in the Tantric style, we use the mudra of Vajra. The mudra of Vajra represents the three Vajras, the state of body, speech and mind. Then, from the OM we invite white light, from the AH, red light and from the HUM, blue light. These are the three Vajras empowerments that we receive. We also say the mantra, KAYA SIDDHI OM, WAKKA SIDDHI A, CITTA SIDDHI HUM, one by one. And after that we say, JÑANA SIDDHI A, and at that moment we visualise that all the lights are coming in together. This fourth initiation means we are receiving all the empowerments. After that we chant the mantra. During the waxing moon we say OM AH HUM VAJRA GURU PADMA SIDDHI AYUSHE HUM NRI JA. This is the mantra

of Guru Padmasambhava which is related to long life, so here we visualise him holding a long-life vase in the left hand. Then from the long-life vase, nectar flows out and enters our body, purifying all negativities and we obtain long life. At the same time, from the three places of Guru Padmasambhava (the forehead, throat and heart) we receive infinite lights while we chant the mantra.

From the full moon until the new moon, when the moon is waning, we use the mantra OM AH HUM VAJRA GURU PADMA THÖTRENGTSAL VAJRA SAMAYA JA SIDDHI PHALA HUM A. When we chant this mantra we always keep the presence that we are receiving lights continually. This is more of a Tantric way of doing Guruyoga. We are taking initiation because we have received the initiation originally, and now we are connecting with this transmission and increasing that potentiality.

If we can't do the Medium Thun in the usual way but want to do the practice in a very simple way because we only have a short amount of time, then we can just use OM AH HUM. You pronounce A and with the A, the Refuge Tree manifests with Guru Padmasambhava. With OM AH HUM the Three Vajras manifest in him representing the unification of all teachers. Then with OM AH HUM we receive all the lights. With the next OM AH HUM Guru Padmasambhava dissolves and unifies into us and we manifest OM AH HUM at our three places. This is sufficient. We can also do it this short way.

If you want to do it an even shorter way, instead of doing the visualisation of Guruyoga with a white A, you do it with OM AH HUM. When you pronounce OM AH HUM, at the same time you do a visualisation of three *thigles* with the three letters OM AH HUM inside, at your three places. You recognise that these three Vajras are the unification of all your teachers and you remain in that state.

If you want to do *sagjang* in the more traditional way, you can do the practices of Ngöndro: firstly by doing prostrations for purifying your body, then by chanting the mantra of Vajrasattva or of Refuge and Bodhichitta for purifying your voice. All these practices are for purification. Then in order to accumulate merit, you do the offering of the mandala. The principle of Ngöndro is *sagjang*; *sag* means accumulating merit and *jang* means purifying, so you need to do a great quantity of all of these practices.

If you want to do it in a very simple way, then you sound and visualise OM AH HUM in your three places. This is also the root of Guruyoga, knowing that these are also your three Vajras, your potentiality. Then you pronounce OM AH HUM again and you imagine white, red and blue lights radiating infinitely into all the dimensions of Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya, and Nirmanakaya, in which there are all the manifestations of enlightened beings. Through these lights you communicate with them and also manifest infinite offerings to them and accumulate merit. Then sounding OM AH HUM again you receive their light as well as their wisdom and empowerments. This is the supreme way of accumulating merit, which is much better than doing mandala offerings. This is because a mandala offering shows a very strong attachment to material things.

Indeed, when you think, “I’m doing the visualisation of Mount Meru, the four continents and all of our dimension, and I’m offering it all,” in the real sense what you are offering is your intention, not material things. When you offer all of your mandala to the Gurus, Devas, Dakinis or Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, the mandala still remains at the end. If the offerings were real then they should disappear because you offered them and they were accepted. But this doesn’t mean they weren’t accepted. You are accumulating merit through your intention, not with the rice or all the things that you put in the mandala as offer-

ings. If we know that we are accumulating merit through our intention, then we can do that instead of offering Mount Meru or something limited, for then what can we offer universally? Offering all the dimensions of Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya, and Nirmanakaya is an infinite offering. So this is how we can do the accumulation of merit, and if you feel that accumulating merit is important then you should do it this way.

The same principle applies when you do purification practice. First you pronounce OM AH HUM. From your OM AH HUM infinite lights radiate out to all dimensions of samsara, and the six realms, where all the six different kinds of beings receive your lights. The power of your light, related with the three Vajras, purifies their negative karma and maybe also benefits them, particularly if you have accumulated a great deal of merit. You also imagine that they are purified and manifest in a pure dimension. Then the lights return again and purify all your obstacles, your negativities and everything, just like we do in the Short Thun with three 'A's. This is also how we can do *sag* and *jang* with OM AH HUM. The main thing is that when you pronounce OM AH HUM and are present in the state of the three Vajras, then you relax in that state. If you have time, and you feel like it, you can then sing the Song of Vajra for integrating it all. If you don't have time, then you just finish by pronouncing 'A A HA SHA SA MA to dedicate merit. It takes only a few minutes to do this practice.

You must learn how to adapt and use different practices by knowing your circumstances, rather than just deciding, "I want to do the Medium Thun every day," for example. If you decide things in that way, it won't correspond with your actual condition. When you have nothing to do and you are free then it is easy to do that kind of practice. But usually you are very busy and you don't have much spare time, so then you don't do any practice. In this case it is very important for you to remember

that you can do a very simple practice like Guruyoga with the white A. If you would like to do something a little longer then you do it with OM AH HUM. Of course when there is the possibility you can do something longer, you just do your best.

The most important practice is Guruyoga. After that you can do any kind of transformation practice you like, mainly according to the Anuyoga system. So, for example, in the Short Thun and Medium Thun we transform into Guru Tragphur or the Dakini Simhamukha. For a Dzogchen practitioner this transformation practice is a kind of symbol. We don't really think, "Guru Tragphur is my Yidam or Simhamukha is my Yidam". We do not do the practice that way. People who think that way are conditioned by the Lower Tantric system. In Lower Tantra, they choose one of the deities as their Yidam, they receive the related initiation, and then they dedicate themselves to doing only that practice. They consider that this is their path. Yet of course, this is not the full path but is always a secondary practice, just as in Dzogchen. So you must not think about transformation practice in a limited way. Instead, you should know that even if you do only one transformation, this is something like a symbol for all.

I will give you a very concrete example. The reason that you do practice is firstly to discover your real potentiality and to have the realisation that your potentiality is just like that of a mirror. If you stand in front of a mirror then your figure appears in the mirror, and seeing your reflection is just a secondary cause for discovering your potentiality. The important thing is not your figure, but that potentiality. If instead, there is a dog in front of the mirror, a reflection of a dog appears. In order to discover the potentiality of the mirror, a dog is enough. We can see it has the capacity to reflect anything. What is the difference between you and the dog if we want to discover the inherent potentiality of the mirror? None. So why do you give so much importance

to your form or to a dog's form? You must give more importance to discovering your underlying potentiality.

So when you transform into a deity, like Simhamukha, the manifestation of that form is part of your clarity, and through that form you can discover your potentiality. The main principle here is to get into your potentiality. If you do Guru Tragphur, there is no difference. We do two manifestations, Simhamukha and Guru Tragphur in the Thun practice. Why? Because, in general, in our condition we have male and female: these are two energies with slightly different functions. This is the reason there is a male manifestation and female manifestation, but if we go to the real essence, one is sufficient.

In the Dzogchen teachings related with Anuyoga, we can receive the initiation of Shitro. Why should we receive the initiation of Shitro and the introduction? Because the initiation and the manifestation of Shitro is a secondary cause for manifesting our potentiality. If there is a connection between our condition and the manifestation of one hundred different kinds of manifestations, then we have that secondary cause. So when our real nature is naked like in the state of the *bardo* of Dharmata, at that moment they can manifest. Then, when this manifestation appears we can recognise it as our manifestation, and we can attain total realisation of the Sambhogakaya. If there are no secondary causes present, how can we discover the nature of the mirror? Even though the manifestations are not the main things, they are very useful.

When we are dealing with any Anuyoga practice, this principle is also very useful. For example, if you have received hundreds of different kinds of deity initiations, when you are doing a practice like Simhamukha or Guru Tragphur you can integrate them all into it. You know that with all deities it is the same principle: they are just like a secondary cause for attaining realisation. Sometimes people are very attached to using

specific mantras. If you transform into the Dakini Simhamukha and use her mantra, for example, then if you like you can also add some other mantras. If you really have this kind of attachment, then you can use other mantras, but this means you are still not going to the essence. If you really go to the essence, you don't need anything else. Even if you don't transform into anything that is also fine, but of course we need some connection with those manifestations which are secondary causes for developing our knowledge.

We know that before doing a dark retreat we should try to do the practice of Shitro. Of course, this means that first you need to receive the transmission and then apply it. Then you have created a secondary cause. These secondary causes of manifestation are connected with your potentiality. Then there is some possibility that your naked potentiality manifests through a secondary cause. You can have a vision like Shitro, for example: maybe not necessarily all manifestations of Shitro, perhaps only one aspect of a Shitro manifestation, and just that is your realization of clarity. So you can understand how important it is. For that reason, when you are doing a practice like Simhamukha or Guru Tragphur, you should integrate everything into that practice, rather than just thinking, "This is the practice of Guru Tragphur or Simhamukha", just to follow the Dzogchen tradition. That is not the system of Dzogchen. The Dzogchen system is very simple. Instead of having hundreds of different things and a lot of confusion, it is better to use only a few words, or a few things and integrate everything into that. If you are doing practice in this way, then you won't have any problems and also your daily life practice will become much simpler.

In general, people need the practice of Green Tara a great deal because we are so confused and have so many problems. If we want to succeed in something then we should do Green Tara practice. But you shouldn't do it only as a secondary practice,

you are also dealing here with the main practice. In our community we do Green Tara practice by combining the Yoga Tantra system with the Anuyoga system. In the Yoga Tantra system, we do the visualisation of Green Tara in front of us and then we invite her wisdom, we unify, and then we offer. Here we are not making actual offerings and doing all kinds of complicated things, we are just imagining Guru Arya Tara in front of us knowing that she is also the unification state of all the Gurus. In this way, this practice becomes a main practice.

Then we do the invocation. First we have the mantra OM ARYA TARE SAPARIVARA VAJRA SAMAYA JA PADMA KAMALAYE STAM. Then we do the invocation OM JÉZUNMA PÀGMA DROLMA..., that is a very short invocation. You can pronounce this many times. If you like you can add also these words OM LÁMA GUNDÜS... etc., which means Pagna Drolma, Arya Tara is the union of all of these (Lama, Yidam, Khandro etc.).

Then you use the mantra OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SVAHA. This mantra has the action for receiving wisdom just like the Guruyoga mantra. After that there is another invocation: JÉZUN PAGMA DROLMA... etc., that is particularly effective for overcoming negativities. So you repeat this invocation a few times and then you chant the mantra TARE. Tara is a name, whereas TARE is an invocation, so if you say TARE TARE TARE..., then you are communicating with Tara and you are invoking her directly. After that you pronounce TAM and you dissolve the manifestation of Tara into yourself, and immediately you manifest as Green Tara. At the centre of your manifestation there appears a green letter TAM, which is the seed-syllable of Tara. From that syllable infinite lights radiate out and communicate with all enlightened beings in order to (activate and) receive their wisdom. You also send out lights which purify all the six Lokas. You can do *sagjang*, all the prac-

tices of Ngöndro, in this way. While you are doing this, you chant the mantra OM TARE TAM SVAHA. This is the more essential mantra of Tara and, if you like, you can add OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SVAHA, the longer one. If you like, you can also add the mantra of White Tara for attaining long life but it is not necessary to transform into White Tara. You can just use it like an action-mantra. In the action-mantras, you sometimes need to change the colour of the lights or use many coloured lights. So you can change this aspect a little but it is not necessary to change your transformation.

When you have done sufficient Green Tara practice then you can also add the action-mantras. I will give you the transmission of the action-mantras. You know that there are twenty-one main Tara manifestations so there are also twenty-one main action-mantras. When you are learning the action-mantras you need to understand what each of them are for.

Many people ask me how long we should practice each of these action-mantras. First we should do the main mantra. In general, I'm always saying that you should try to do at least one week of personal retreat using the main mantra. But this doesn't mean that when you have done one week of personal retreat then the action-mantras will work. It may work, but if it doesn't work, it means that your main practice is not sufficient. You don't do the action-mantras to begin with. You should do the main practice first. If you do the main practice for two weeks or three weeks in a personal retreat then it works very well.

Now I will give you the transmission of the Garuda practice. There are many kinds of Garuda but this one is called Red Garuda. It is a *terma* teaching of Adzom Drugpa. I'm giving you this transmission because it has a particular action-mantra for overcoming illnesses like cancer. For this practice also, it is necessary that you do the main mantra first for a sufficient time.

This is in the Anuyoga style, so you use the seed-syllable KHRÖM (pronounced TROM) and you transform instantly. Then you do the visualisation of KHRÖM at the centre of your body. The letter KHRÖM is red in colour and you do *tröndu*, spreading lights and receiving lights, which represents the wisdom of all enlightened beings. You use this main mantra OM KHRÖM VAJRA GARUDA HUM PHAT first, then when you have recited this mantra enough, if some negativities are present you use the action-mantra OM KHRÖM VAJRA GARUDA HUM PHAT NAGA SHATRUM UPAGRAHE MARAYA BAD SÖD.

If you have an illness like cancer or a tumour, after you have done the main mantra for a sufficient amount of time, you do the visualisation of a small, flaming Garuda at the place where you have the problem. Then you recite the mantra OM KHRÖM VAJRA GARUDA HUM PHAT SARVA ROSHA SHINTAM KURU SVAHA. When you are chanting this mantra, you imagine the flames are developing and completely eliminating your illness. Of course, when you do all these practices, at the beginning you do Refuge and Bodhichitta, and at the end you do the dedication of merit.

Then there is the Sang purification rite. This is done in a very short way and was composed by Adzom Drugpa. First you prepare an offering of *sang* with fire and then you empower it with the mantra RAM YAM KHAM OM AH HUM HA HO HRI. Then with HRI you transform into Guru Avalokiteshvara with Guru Padmasambhava above your head, and you chant these mantras a little; RAÑ ÑID... ZÖG SÄL; OM MANI PADME HUM HRI; OM AH HUM VAJRA GURU PADMA SIDDHI HUM. Now you invite all the local guardians and the Three Roots with: DÄG GI... SÖL etc. Then you offer the *sang*. *Sang* is mainly used for purifying our dimension and at the same time, making an offering. It is particularly valuable if we have

some conflicts with local guardians. Then we purify all of this with: GYE! ÑOSJYÒR... SAMAYA HO.

When you are preparing Lungta prayer flags especially if you want to harmonise your elements and the elements of the year, then you need to empower it with this mantra: E YAM RAM KHAM... SVAHA.

Sometimes you can prepare a Namkha for harmonising your elements. If you don't know how to do it, then there is a booklet in which you can learn how to do it. After you have prepared it, you then have to do the rite for empowering it.

Then there is an invocation of Öser Chenma. Öser Chenma is a kind of manifestation of Tara. It is very useful when you are travelling and generally for every day protection. You can do this invocation in the early morning or when the sun is shining: MUM... XARRO. Then you say this mantra many times: OM MARI ZEYE MUM SVAHA.

If you want to do the Puja for Nagas, then first of all you need to check in the calendar of Merigar. In this calendar there are not only Tibetan dates and Western dates but also information about all the elements of the day and about the special days to do Puja for Nagas. If you don't do it on a special day of the Nagas you cannot make contact with them. When you do this Puja, after the offering to the guardians in the Medium Thun, you add these mantras: OM KSHIMHA... SVAHA. If you do a Puja for the Nagas you must be careful using incenses. You can't use any kind of incense because many incenses are prepared for use in Pujas of Higher Tantra, so these incenses often contain ingredients derived from animals. If you use this kind of incense you will provoke the Nagas. So it is better that you don't use any, if you don't know which kind of incense you have. But you can make a little *sang* for offering.

Then there is the long version of the Mandarava practice. If you want to do a shorter version then you just do the mantras. In

this case, you should learn how to do the visualisation and you should know how to do everything correctly. The two main mantras of Mandarava are: OM HRI BAM JÑANA DAKINI MANDARAVA AYU SIDDHI JA HUM and HRI BAM HARI NI SA SARVA SIDDHI SAMAYA HUM JA. This second mantra is a more essential mantra than the first one and if you do a personal retreat you should recite it more than the first.

Then there is the practice of Shitro. First you should do the practice of Refuge and Bodhichitta, as in the Thun. Then with HUM you transform into Vajrasattva and you visualise the inner mandalas. Now you are not an ordinary person, you have transformed into Vajrasattva. When you are helping dead people, you visualise them in front of you. Then, from yourself in the form of Vajrasattva and your peaceful mandala, you send out infinite lights and purify the dead beings' negative karma using the mantras. At the end of your practice, you integrate your presence with these mantras, just like the Song of Vajra.

Then there is the practice of Guruyoga with Guru Garab Dorje with a special invocation. There is also an Anuyoga style long life practice of Guru Amitayus. There is also the practice of Purification of the Six Lokas. You connect this with the Medium Thun after the Guruyoga.

These are all the different mantras of Guru Tragphur.

These are the mantras of the twenty-five spaces of Samantabhadra. They are very, very powerful mantras for purification or for developing clarity; all these mantras are called Six Liberations. This means that we have six senses and we have contact through our six senses: seeing, hearing, smelling, etc. and then through them we can have the cause of liberation. You see on the roof of this Gönpa there are many mantras like the Song of Vajra and these twenty-five mantras. For those who are already practitioners it is not very necessary to make a cause for liberation. But many people just come here as tourists and when

they see these mantras, it makes a cause of liberation for them. Also as practitioners, when we are in this dimension and we are doing practice here, we can have more progress. There are many different versions of the Song of Vajra and these mantras. The version I'm using here is a *terma* teaching of my teacher Changchub Dorje.

The practice of Chöd is not principally about singing and making music, it is for diminishing your ego. Sounding the damaru and singing are only the relative aspects of the practice. At the beginning there is a kind of preliminary practice of Chöd, then there is the main part. First there is a Guruyoga of Chöd, then there is the offering of the body and this is called Lüjin. This is the main practice. When we say OM AH HUM, we offer our body to all our guests. Why do we do a visualisation of offering our body? Because our body is the root of our attachments. So we offer that with the intention of eliminating our ego and our attachment. But when we offer our body it doesn't mean we are actually offering our material body. We cannot do that. Even if we did it, our guests wouldn't need it. Even if you kill yourself and you cut yourself up as an offering, no one would eat it. Maybe just some dogs and birds. In this practice we are working with our mind: doing the visualisation, inviting our guests and offering our body, all of this is mind training, because our attachment is related with our mind, not only with our physical body. In order to overcome all of this, we imagine making this offering.

Then we do this invocation. And if we want to do the practice a short way, we can do the essence of Chöd just with this. If we want to practice the real sense of Chöd in a very simple way, then we just do Guruyoga with OM AH HUM where OM AH HUM also becomes an offering. When you sound PHAT practitioners must always be aware of their circumstances. Some people really like doing the practice of Chöd, they enjoy sing-

ing and making a loud noise. But when they go back to the city and do Chöd, their neighbours get very nervous. They call the police immediately. Instead of the invited guests arriving, such as spirits, a policeman arrives. Then we really have a problem. So we must be aware. At the end there is a longer invocation. This is the Chöd practice.

I should also give you the mantras of the Medium Thun and Long Thun, which are more or less the same. I will also give you the transmission of the Ganapuja because we will do a Ganapuja today. Someone else will explain to the new students how to do the visualisation before we do it. Then I'll give you the Marne Mönlam transmission, the invocation of the lamp. This is a very important invocation, particularly when you learn the meaning of it. When we are doing the Ganapuja, we recite it just before we offer the third Ganapuja.

DAILY LIFE

Now we have reached the end of the retreat so I want to give you a little advice on how to integrate practice into daily life. Our daily life is often just taken up with working, but when we are practitioners we must also learn how to integrate our practice into our everyday life. This is something very important. Integrating practice into daily life doesn't mean we dedicate a few hours or a few minutes to doing formal practice every day. We should remember that we have twenty-four hours in every day. Even if we dedicate three or four hours to practice every day, we still have twenty hours left. If we are always distracted and living in a state of dualistic vision during these twenty hours, we will never attain realisation. Especially when we become a Dzogchen practitioner, we must have the idea that we will integrate all twenty-four hours into our practice.

It is not very easy, particularly for new practitioners, but there is always this possibility. And although it is a little difficult, it is very important to know what our aim is and where we are going. When we know what our direction or goal is very clearly, then one day we will succeed in getting there. This is more important than thinking, "I want to do a retreat of three years, three months, three days, three hours, and three seconds etc." Your life is not just of three years duration. After three years, if you have not attained realisation, what will you do then?

After shutting themselves away for three years most people don't manifest any form of realisation! At the beginning, they have a very nice idea, "I will go into retreat for three years and

then I'll be enlightened and become like Milarepa. I won't need anything," but in the real sense it doesn't work that way. Instead, at the end of their retreat, they have no job, no wife or husband or family. So we must be aware that we are living in society and in dualistic vision. That's why we say we should always work with circumstances. The best way to work with circumstances is not to change or alter anything. Of course, if there is something that we need to change or modify we can do it, but this is not the main point. We need to know how society is and work accordingly.

Many people don't accept their situation and it causes them a great deal of conflict. This is very bad because it means they become increasingly tense. If you are not able to integrate your practice with your situation you will always find something that does not fit in with your desires. Many practitioners, such as in the Sutra system, always have the idea of renouncing something. If they are doing a practice like Shine, and are sitting and doing practice in a quiet place and then some people are walking around and making a noise, they immediately feel distracted and think, "Oh, I can't do practice here. This is not a good place for doing practice, I will go to another quiet place where I can continue better". This is the principle of renunciation. You think, "I renounce this terrible place, this noisy place. I will go to a mountain alone". Then you go to the mountain, and maybe you find a cave or a house somewhere there. At first it goes well and you think, "Oh, this is very comfortable. Now I can do practice and I can attain realisation." But after a little while you will always find something that disturbs you. For example, you may find out that your cave is full of scorpions and ants, and at night, there are many noisy owls outside.

I had this experience when I was very young. After receiving the Dzogchen Longde and Semde practices I went to an isolated place to do the practice of Ngöndzong Gyalpo. For twenty

days I was alone in a forest where there was a very nice retreat house under a rock. I went there alone but every three days people came and brought me food. For the first day, I really thought it was a fantastic place. But then, during the night, many owls came and settled around the house because of the rock. They were making a loud noise and I felt a little afraid because when I was small, some of my relatives said, "If you don't be quiet an owl will come in the night and take you to a rock." So at night I heard the owls making a noise and I felt a little afraid. But of course, I was inside the house, so there was no real problem.

The next day some monkeys started to arrive. Then hundreds of monkeys came and discovered that I was in the house. Generally the house was empty, so now they wanted to open the windows and get in. They managed to find a way into the kitchen, so I was always fighting with these monkeys and I didn't find the place quiet at all. The whole time passed in this way. That is an example. Even if we think that a place is really quiet, if we can't find the quietness inside ourselves, we will never find it elsewhere. That's why the main principle is not that of renouncing something but of integrating everything.

So if you are doing practice and you think, "I'm sitting here quietly doing my practice but that person is making a noise," then all you are doing is charging yourself up. When the same person starts making a noise again the next day, you don't feel the same as yesterday, you feel even more upset! Why? Because you have charged yourself up further and have become even more tense. If you go on this way, day after day, in the end you won't be able to remain calm at all. You have to learn how to integrate the noise. Integrating means not remaining in dualistic vision, rather than thinking, "I'm here and the noise is over there". In this way, you are just being a part of the noise, knowing your real nature is not only the calm state but also movement. We have the qualifications of both *kadag* and *lhundrub*.

If we know that and we integrate them both, in the end we won't feel troubled at all by noise.

Sometimes noise can help you. When I'm travelling by plane, I'm always aware that it is making a noise. Sometimes it seems to be the sound of HUM; sometimes it seems to be A. When it sounds like A, you integrate this sound with Guruyoga. You don't need to pronounce A since the aeroplane is helping you. If you think it sounds like HUM, you integrate with HUM. Then you will have no problems. It is very important in daily life that we try to integrate everything. Of course, if some new practitioners don't know what integration means or how to integrate, it is important that they learn about this.

We all have our existences of body, speech and mind together with their functions. If we observe ourselves well, everything that happens in our situation and dimension is related to these three gates. If we are in the state of instant presence, this means it is possible not to fall into dualistic vision. Even if we don't have that capacity directly, when we are present and hear a disturbing sound, we immediately know that it is part of our energy. When we are learning how our karmic vision manifests, the root is just like the potentiality of a mirror. From this real potentiality, when there are secondary causes, everything can manifest. If pure vision manifests, it means you are aware of that condition. If you have karmic vision, it means you don't have that knowledge or understanding and are ignorant of it, but something is still manifesting.

In the real sense, everything is related with our potentiality. So there is always the possibility of integrating everything into our real condition. Knowing this principle and simply being in the state of instant presence, we relax. We are able to relax more easily when we are not being strongly conditioned by our dualistic vision, when we are not constantly accepting or rejecting things. When we are accepting and rejecting things, we create

negative karma and have to bear the consequences of that karma. But if we are able go to the root of our experiences and remain in the real source, then we can liberate everything in daily life.

You need to be aware what the real condition of daily life is like. You must not live in too much of a fantasy. Many people have infinite fantasies: sometimes they have a nice fantasy, sometimes a bad one. If you have a bad fantasy, it can create many problems. But even a nice fantasy will produce problems for you eventually. Don't remain in a state of delusion. Try to understand what your real condition is like.

For example, we have twenty-four hours in a day. How do we live? How do we pass these twenty-four hours? What can we realistically do in this time apart from just having a nice idea? Many people think, "Oh, today I'll do practice and attain realisation". But practically speaking, most of us pass these twenty-four hours in the same way every day. We wake up and try to grab a little breakfast if it is possible. Sometimes we don't have enough time, so we leave our house and then if it is possible, we drink a coffee or something on the road. In Germany they drink beer. Then we arrive at the shop or the office. We have so much work to get through. Then there are always so many things to deal with in connection with our job and our colleagues. The whole day passes this way. Then in the evening we go back home. Maybe we eat something, then we feel tired and go to bed.

Some people like to watch TV and the news. While they are watching the news on TV, if they feel very tired, they just fall asleep there. Then they wake up the next day. What do they do that day? The same as yesterday. The day after tomorrow what do they do? The same. Maybe they wait for the weekend thinking, "Oh, the weekend is coming. At the weekend I will do practice. I will do so many interesting things". Finally the weekend arrives. Then they look at their diary. They realise that it their

mother's birthday or a friend's party or someone is getting married. There are so many things to do. They need to go here and there to prepare things. They pass their whole weekend that way. When the weekend is finished what do they do? They do everything in the normal way again.

So this is the reality of everyday life. Even if we have a very nice idea that we will do some practice or a retreat, it's very, very difficult. To even prepare for a few days of retreat is very difficult for many people. You may have to work in your office for more days than usual in order to have a few days off. This is *samsara*. This is our real condition. We know that it is like this and we should deal with our practice accordingly. This doesn't mean that now we should escape somewhere because our society and our social conditions are so complicated. If we escape, we will just have more problems. The main point is not escaping but integrating.

Integrating means that you learn about what kind of practice you can do in each situation. Firstly, when you wake up in the early morning, you try to remember to do Guruyoga. You know how many commitments you have and the kinds of teachings you have received. So if you do Guruyoga, you can maintain all of them and you are also connecting with the transmission. If you are connected with the transmission and you are in the state of Guruyoga, then you can have realisation. This is very important for you to remember. So when you wake up, you immediately do Guruyoga. Maybe you have the idea that you will do Guruyoga later. You can do Guruyoga at any time, but sometimes we have so many things to do that we forget later on. If you try to do Guruyoga immediately when you wake up for one day, two days, one week, two weeks, three weeks, one month, then eventually it becomes familiar to you. Immediately on waking up you remember to do Guruyoga automatically.

You don't need to do a complicated Guruyoga because it is not so easy to do the Medium Thun or Short Thun at that time. You just sound A and then remain in that state. If you have more time, you can also sing the Song of Vajra but it is not always necessary. It depends on your possibilities. Singing the Song of Vajra takes a little more time and maybe after waking up you don't have much time. Sometimes you wake up late and then it is almost too late to go your office. So when you wake up, try to be in the A immediately and then remain there just a little. You should start your day in this way.

To help you remember this, you can put a white A somewhere in your house. You don't need to prepare a very complicated altar. Some people like to prepare a place with many statues and many photos of teachers. But the most important teacher is not a photograph on an altar, rather you need the teacher in your instant presence. This is really the state of the teacher. You don't need an altar. You just put a white A somewhere in your room, because it can help you to remember your Guruyoga and your practice of the night. When you wake up, if you don't remember to do Guruyoga when you see the A you think, "Oh, yes, I should do Guruyoga", and immediately you do it.

Nor is it necessary that you always sound A with Guruyoga. When we sound A we can feel the presence of it more but it also depends on your circumstances. Sometimes, if you are sleeping with your wife or your husband or a friend, and if your friend is sleeping very quietly and you wake up singing AAA it will make them nervous. This means that you are not paying respect to the dimension of your friend. In this case, you have to be quiet and you do your Guruyoga by just exhaling with A. You can still feel more or less the same presence of the white A. If you can't do that, then you mentally pronounce A and you do the visualisation.

So in practice you should always work with your circumstances, particularly when you are using different kinds of mantras. You must not chant mantras where there are many extraneous people. You must keep mantras secret. If you don't keep them secret, mantras won't work for you. You will lose their function. So if you keep them secret, they work much better. You should also try to do Guruyoga this way.

Then after you have left the house, throughout the day you should always try to be aware. This means that you always try to use your attention to be present and not be distracted. This is practice. Many people don't consider it so, but this is really practice. If you are aware, then you can discover when you are charged up or when you are giving too much importance to a problem. In this way you can also find a solution, and how to relax. So it is very, very important to practice being present in daily life.

If you find it a little difficult, then you need to learn how to progress in a more practical way. Learning in a more practical way means, for example, that you think, "I want to be present for one hour or at least half an hour." Then you can take a kind of commitment, "For half an hour I don't want to be distracted". Then, during that time, if someone comes and asks you something, you are not distracted immediately. You think, "Oh, he is coming and asking me this," then you reply as necessary. You are not distracted all this time, but think, "Oh, now I'm replying". When the person goes away and is satisfied, you are also aware of this with your presence: "Oh, he is satisfied and now he's gone away".

Then something else arises and you think, "Oh, here is another thing." You can take this kind of responsibility for a limited time and then if you train this way a little, then after one week or two weeks it becomes very easy. You know that when we are learning how to drive a car at the beginning it is not so

easy. Then, in the end when we have learnt, we are always present when we are driving. We can look to the right and the left, and if there is someone nearby we can talk with that person but we are not distracted by them. When we are driving, we always have a kind of presence. If were to become distracted completely, we would have an accident.

This is the way we learn to drive a car. Now we can learn other things in the same way; eating, walking, talking with people or working. So slowly, slowly we learn these things. Being able to apply this it is a very, very important practice. If you do everything with awareness then you don't make mistakes, you don't create problems. When you are agitated you notice immediately. You think, "Oh, agitation is not good. If I'm agitated when I'm doing something then I won't succeed." So you immediately try to relax. If you continue in a more relaxed way then everything goes better.

For example, let's say you have invited some friends for lunch and are preparing food but you are very late because you had something to do beforehand. Now you are in a hurry and are feeling tense and charged up, so when you are cutting the vegetables and meat, instead of cutting the meat you cut your finger. If you have presence, when you are charged up in that way then you notice it and immediately you think, "Oh, it doesn't matter, even if lunch is ready a little later it doesn't matter." Then you do it more slowly, in a relaxed way and everything goes better and is easier.

Or let's say someone has to catch a plane at a certain time and you want to give him a letter. That person is waiting but he is in a big hurry because it is getting late. Then while you are writing the letter you make many mistakes because you are charged up. That is an example. If we are charged up everything goes badly. If we are more aware, we notice our condition and then there is the possibility of relaxing and becoming more present in this

kind of awareness. Later on it is very easy to integrate everything with our instant presence.

This is the final goal, the aim of Dzogchen practitioners. Firstly, we discover our instant presence. Secondly, we try to remain in our real nature for longer periods. Thirdly, we try to integrate everything into that state. When we succeed in fully integrating everything, it means we have attained realisation. Being realised means we are not dependent on anything anymore. We are no longer the slaves of our emotions, our thoughts or our dualistic vision. Now we can really become free. This is realisation. When we are totally free in our real condition then its qualifications will manifest. For example, when there are many clouds we can't see the sun, even though the sun is always shining. Even if the sun is radiating infinite light we say there is no sun. Yet in truth, the sun is always shining in the sky. In the same way, when we have gone beyond dualism, we are no longer dependent on dualistic vision. This means we are beyond the clouds. Our real nature manifests its qualifications just like sunshine. This is the real condition of our realisation that we speak of as Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya and Nirmanakaya. It doesn't mean that one day, all these qualifications will arrive from somewhere else or that we will succeed in constructing all these things. We already have all of these qualifications but they are not manifesting because we are ignorant of them and we are not in our real condition. So you see, trying to be aware in daily life is very important. You couldn't say you cannot do this practice.

After going back home at the end of a retreat, some people write me a letter or an e-mail saying, "Oh, during the retreat I understood the teaching and we all did practice. It was fantastic, but now I can't do any practice because my life is very busy." How can you say, "I cannot do the practice of being aware"? You can be aware when you work, walk or eat, at any moment.

To be aware you don't need to go to a temple or find somewhere to sit and do a formal practice. When I say, "We must be aware", some people ask me, "What should I do in order to be aware, what kind of concentration should I do?" When I say we should do practice, people immediately think it means concentrating on something. Concentration practice is a secondary practice. Sometimes it is useful but in this case you are always working with your mind and it is not so important. It is more important that you are in the state that is beyond thoughts and judgments. You can do this only if you know how to live in your real nature. This is called instant presence. If you have the capacity to be in the state of instant presence, then with Guruyoga you can always develop it. But at the beginning, it is not so easy to always remain in instant presence during all of your activities of body, speech, and mind and in all circumstances. For that reason, it is very important that you try to be aware and not be distracted.

Then there is an important practice called the Vajra Breathing. You remember the three Vajras and their syllables OM AH HUM. This is the supreme and most powerful mantra and when we do purification, we always use it. Some people think, "I don't know the mantra for this or that etc." They say, "Oh, what is the mantra of Avalokiteshvara, or the mantra of Manjushri, or the mantra of Shambala," for example. They are always going after mantras, thinking, "If I do this mantra I can really obtain something." If you are a good practitioner you can obtain something by only using OM AH HUM because the essence of all mantras is OM AH HUM. The essence of Avalokiteshvara is OM AH HUM; the essence of Manjushri is OM AH HUM; the essence of Buddha is OM AH HUM; the essence of all wrathful manifestations is OM AH HUM; the essence of Shitro manifestations is OM AH HUM. So you can simply use OM AH HUM for everything because it is a universal mantra.

Some people ask me, “Which mantra do I need to drive away ants from the house?” I don’t know if any specific mantra for ants exists or not, but I know that in the case of mice and these kinds of beings which can create problems in the farmer’s fields, there are many different kinds of mantras for driving them away. This means that you don’t need to kill the animals or disturb them, since through the power of mantra they don’t feel comfortable in that place any more and they go away. So someone asked me about driving away ants. Then I said, “Oh, if you use OM AH HUM then you can drive them away. If it doesn’t work, it is not a fault of the mantra, it’s your fault. You are not a good practitioner.” That is an example. In truth, OM AH HUM is a very important mantra particularly for purifying all negative karma and also for co-ordinating our energy.

This particularly so, when you are integrating the mantra OM AH HUM with your breathing, inhaling with OM, holding just a little with A and exhaling with HUM. This is called the Vajra Breathing. If you are doing a sitting practice, you can hold a little longer. If you are doing it in ordinary life, for example when you are walking in the street, you don’t hold for a long time, just a little. You just inhale and exhale in a normal way, although it is much better to always exhale a little deeper. So it is very necessary that you apply this practice of Vajra Breathing. It is also very important for protection because through this sound, your vital prana energy and all your other energies, such as the energy of the five elements, are co-ordinated.

If your energy is perfect then it means you are not passive and you can’t receive any negativity. But when your energy is disturbed, unbalanced or damaged, then you become passive and you can receive all kinds of negativities. Sometimes we have moments when everything goes badly: sometimes we have moments when everything is fine, and we call them lucky or unlucky times. In the real sense, it depends on the condition of

our energy. If you have this kind of problem, then you should co-ordinate your energy and instead of getting upset you should use the Vajra Breathing with OM AH HUM. This is a very, very important protection in daily life for practitioners.

But try to do this practice in the correct way. Otherwise sometimes you can create more problems. For example, last time I went to Poland one student said, “You told me the practice of the Vajra Breathing is a protection but it didn’t protect me.” Then I asked him, “What happened?” He said that one day he was riding a bicycle on a narrow road in the countryside and while he was doing the Vajra Breathing he had an accident with a car. So he said, “I was not protected otherwise I wouldn’t have had an accident.” I said, “There was protection, otherwise you would have died. But you have no awareness of how you should do the practice correctly. You need to take the circumstances into consideration. If it is a narrow road and you are on a bicycle, even without doing the Vajra Breathing you must be very careful or a car will come and you can have an accident. That is normal.” So it is very important to be aware and use these methods of practice in the correct way. If you do them in an exaggerated way then you can create more problems! So these are all very, very important practices.

Remember that you should try to do Guruyoga at all times. If you can only do it for a few seconds it is fine, but even if you manage to do Guruyoga one hundred times a day, it is never too much. When you attain realisation then you are always in the state of Guruyoga because being in Guruyoga means you are in instant presence. So try to always remember this. I’m always giving this advice to my students.

Many students are still smoking cigarettes even though they know it is not very healthy and not very good. People who smoke always manage to remember about their cigarettes frequently. They smoke a cigarette and after a few minutes they think, “Ah,

I need a cigarette.” If they could remember Guruyoga that way, it would be fantastic. I tell them to connect Guruyoga with the cigarette, “First you remember the cigarette and then, taking a cigarette, you think about Guruyoga because you are engaged in this practice”. That is an example. But it is not necessary to be a cigarette smoker. Anything we do can be a reminder for doing Guruyoga.

For example, many Dzogchen practitioners have a mirror with the letter A in order to help them remember Guruyoga, and to be in the state of instant presence. It can also help them to remember that they are in their primordial potentiality. Each time they see or touch it, they know the mirror symbolises the state of the A, and so it reminds them. It’s not necessary that we all have a mirror, but we try to remember somehow. It is very important that we are always connected with the transmission. Buddha explained that in our life we have four moments, the moment of sitting, the moment of standing or walking etc., so we try to be aware in all of them. We can also do the Vajra Breathing.

Then we have the moment of eating. Eating and drinking is like putting gasoline into the car. If we don’t put gas in the car, the car doesn’t work. So we eat and drink not only for enjoyment, but also to maintain our physical body. You know that it is best to put good gas in a car, because if the gasoline is mixed with water, then we will have problems. In the same way, we should be aware when we are eating and drinking, what is good for our health. If something is not good we shouldn’t use it. All of us have some understanding of our own condition. For example, we know that if we eat something specific we can have a problem. Some people drink a lot and at the end their realisation is that of being an alcoholic. There are so many problems. This is not good. But it is not necessary that you don’t drink at all. If you don’t have the capacity to control yourself and you

are becoming an alcoholic, then you should take a vow and stop. It is necessary in this case because your capacity to control yourself is inadequate.

Generally in Dzogchen, we learn to become responsible for ourselves. If we have the capacity to control ourselves there is no problem with alcohol. If you drink two glasses of wine in the evening it is fine. If you are in the habit of drinking, then if you drink three glasses you feel just a little strange. After four glasses, you feel still stranger; after one bottle, you begin to feel drunk; two bottles and you lose your presence altogether. This is an example and it's not good. So if you know your capacity and drink accordingly, there is no problem. In the Vinaya and many teachings, it is forbidden to drink alcohol. Why? Because most people do not have the capacity to control themselves and so the best way to prevent a problem is to ban drinking altogether.

In the Dzogchen teaching we do not generally take that view but sometimes it has benefit. Some people have very high *lung* humour and they need to drink a glass of very good wine before going to bed. It becomes like a medicine instead of a poison. Then sometimes if you are feeling very sad due to certain problems, if you drink a glass of wine you can feel a little better. Particularly as a practitioner, if you drink one or two glasses of wine you can have more experiences. So it's not always negative. For that reason, the great Dzogchen master Longchenpa wrote a kind of poem saying that wine or alcohol is fantastic. It doesn't mean that it is fantastic for everybody, but if you have that capacity and know how to use it, it is fantastic.

When Milarepa was on the mountain just eating vegetables, people came to visit him. One day some peasants offered him a kapala of wine. Milarepa had not tasted a kapala of wine for years and years. He did a Ganapuja and he drank the kapala of wine. After drinking it, he had some very interesting experiences. Then he wrote a song saying that the wine was fantastic

and that this one kapala of wine helped him to develop his practice as much as six months of his normal practice. So alcohol is not always negative. It depends on the way of using it. So we must learn about everything in this way and then become responsible for ourselves and have the capacity to control ourselves.

It is the same with food. Some food contains medicine. That's why doctors give advice on what you should eat and drink and what you should avoid. One of the main points in natural therapy is diet and behaviour. Then there are drugs for curing illness. We know these things are true and we should be aware of both the quantity and quality of our intake. We shouldn't always think we just eat and drink for enjoyment alone, but most of all for living well, particularly when we are doing a Ganapuja. Ganapuja is about learning how to eat and drink as practitioners. In a Ganapuja, there are two main things: alcohol and meat. Both of these are forbidden in the Sutra teachings. Meat is forbidden because if you eat meat, it means that someone has killed an animal and destroyed the life of that being. For that reason many practitioners become vegetarians. This is positive, but it also depends on whether or not you are a practitioner with more awareness of the real condition.

If you eat meat purely for the enjoyment it gives you, then this is completely negative. But if you eat with awareness, knowing that you are eating the meat of a being, like a cow or a sheep or a goat that is in samsara, then it is different. Someone had already killed that animal to sell in a shop. You did not set out to kill that animal, otherwise it would feel pain and that is not a good action. But if someone has already killed it and will sell the meat anyway, then you can participate and buy it. But then generally people think, "If I buy this meat, they will just kill more animals". They think this is a compassionate way of thinking. Yes, that is compassionate but it is a very miserable com-

passion because animals are not only being killed once, they can be killed infinite times because they are in samsara. A cow can be a cow an infinite amount of times, and it can be killed an infinite number of times without any benefit.

If you are a practitioner, sooner or later you will attain total realisation because you are on the path. The animals are not on the path and they haven't any guarantee to an end of their suffering. Now, by doing a Ganapuja with their meat, offering it to Gurus, Devas, and Dakinis, empowering with mantra, and eating and integrating it with your existence, you are creating a very strong connection with these beings. Then one day when you are realised and have infinite wisdom, they will be able to receive your infinite wisdom. Only beings with whom you have had a good relationship, or even a bad one, can receive your wisdom. But those beings with whom you have had no relationship at all, couldn't receive any wisdom.

For example, if we receive a Tara initiation, it's because we have some connection with her and have the possibility of receiving her wisdom. Now, as a practitioner, we increase that connection with her by doing Tara Puja and practice, and then by transforming ourselves into Tara. In the same way, all those sentient beings with whom we have had a relationship can receive our wisdom when we are liberated. The possibility of receiving our wisdom is far better for them than not being killed just once. Through us they can join the path. Maybe they will join the path in a very stupid way. If a practitioner has a dog and while they are doing practice, the dog is often sleeping nearby, or having a connection with the teaching by hearing mantras, practice or the Song of Vajra etc., in the next life maybe they will become a rather stupid person or even someone who has a little faith, a very blind faith, but in any case they are now joined on the path and it means that the end of samsara and suffering is guaranteed. If you refuse them that, it is not compassion. That

is the reason for the Tantric saying, “Those who have great compassion eat meat.” It doesn’t mean we are distracted while we are enjoying a nice beefsteak, but as practitioners, we must be aware and eat with awareness. In reality, it is not only meat but all kinds of foods, such as bread, that are all related in some way to animal sacrifice. How many animals are killed in a field of rice when peasants are working there?

For practitioners it is very important when we are eating to always be aware and, if it is possible, to transform our meal into a Ganapuja. If only practitioners are present, then we can use some words like in the short Ganapuja, RAM YAM KHAM OM AH HUM. But it is not so easy if we are in a restaurant. We are mainly living in society and often eat in places like a restaurant where there are many kinds of people present. Even if there is a group of practitioners in a restaurant, there are also many tables where there are other people who are not practitioners. In this case, if you say RAM YAM KHAM OM AH HUM, it’s not so nice for others. It is really a surprise. So it is not good to use the mantra OM AH HUM loudly in public.

In general, you should not be so conditioned by using lots of words. Just go to the essence. You can simply pronounce OM AH HUM under breath or you can just say it mentally. But the best way to eat is to be in the state of instant presence. If you are in the state of instant presence just for one second or three seconds, that is a fantastic Ganapuja. We do a formal Ganapuja when there is the possibility of many people meeting together. Then we do it in a more ritual way knowing that the Ganapuja is an example for practitioners to learn how to consume their food and drink correctly. This is a very important awareness to continue in our daily life, because we eat and drink something many times each day.

Another very important time is when we are going to sleep at night. We are asleep half of our life. So it is important that we

can integrate our practice into that period. For this, we have Guruyoga practice of the night. There is also the practice of dream, but it is much better you don't try to jump straight into complicated practices. Firstly you should try to do the practice of Guruyoga in a very simple way. So when you are in bed, you immediately remember the white A and *thigle*, do a little visualisation on that and relax. You just totally relax and fall asleep. If you succeed in this, there is a continuation of that presence.

Sometimes people have problems sleeping. These kinds of people cannot do this practice. Many people are also taking drugs to help them sleeping. If you have this kind of problem you must understand why you have this problem, and why you cannot sleep. Most people can sleep, why can't you? There are not many reasons, there is only one cause: your energy is disturbed and disordered. So what should you do to co-ordinate your energy? In order to co-ordinate it physically, you can do Yantra Yoga or some movements. You can also use diet in the correct way. Today in our modern society many people say, "Oh, I'm getting too fat. I want to be very slim, so I cannot eat meat and these things because I'm getting fat." They are always eating only fruit and vegetables, raw vegetables. Maybe you can get slim that way but you can't sleep. You are nervous and agitated and in the end your realisation becomes abnormal. Then what do you do if you are slim and abnormal?

It is much better to be healthy, even if you are a little fat. You must be aware of these things really. There are many kinds of foods that increase the humour of *lung*. You must be very careful of these, particularly in our modern society, because everybody is so charged up and tense already. If you add something for developing the humour of *lung* still further then you will have more problems. You must take care of your behaviour and your diet. You have to eat something that has substance, not just raw vegetables. I'm not saying you must not eat

them. You can eat these but you should also eat things with more substance. I'm not saying you should eat fat either; there are many other things that contain more substance. Health is very important. If you are not healthy you can't do anything, also to do practice.

Even our behaviour is important. We have talked about the day and night time already. At night, only owls and a few kinds of animals wake up, while we human beings generally feel like sleeping. When it is light we get up and start our day. But many people do the contrary. The whole night, they go here and there, organise parties and are jumping around till the early morning. Then they go back home and sleep till midday. They are always using electric lights and they never see the normal daylight. If you live this way, then the humour of *lung* develops. You must sleep at night. Some people have to work at night, but then you should try to organise things so that you don't always have to work at night. It is not good for your health. You should also do practice for co-ordinating your energy with the mantra OM E HO SHUDDHE SHUDDHE... and also strengthen your energy with something like the practice of long life. Otherwise, it is best to have a normal life. Then you can also do the practice of the night, otherwise it is not so easy.

If you want to do the practice before going to bed, sit down somewhere and do the Guruyoga visualising a white A in a *thigle*, remain in that presence and relax. Then you take a break and do something else. After a little while, go to bed, and when you are in bed just observe your thoughts. Be careful though. Observing your thoughts doesn't mean following your thoughts. For example, if you have the thought, "Oh, I want to go on holiday at such and such a place, this year", then this is your thought. But if you go on thinking, "I don't know the cost of that hotel. Who will I go with?" In this case, you are not relaxed but are following your thoughts. If you do that even if you had no prob-

lem before, now you won't be able to sleep. Observing doesn't mean that when you have the thought, "I want to go on holiday," and you know, " Oh, I'm thinking that," and you observe the face of that thought, that immediately all thoughts will disappear. Maybe another thought will arise. In this case, you act the same way and just remain relaxed. Maybe it will even help you go to sleep if you know how to relax properly.

It is also possible to have a continuation of presence. When you are in the dream state, it means that your mind and all your consciousnesses have woken up again. In a dream, your sense consciousnesses are not dependent on your organs. The consciousness associated with your mind is called the mental body. Dreams are a function of our mental body.

First of all we have karmic dreams related with our anxieties. Maybe we have different kinds of anxieties, particularly from the time when we were very young. When we were young maybe someone frightened us or created some kind of problem that touched us very deeply, and we developed a phobia around it. This kind of tension can easily manifest in a dream, even if you are sleeping very deeply. This is called a karmic dream. Sometimes a karmic dream of a past life can manifest in the same way, with the same colours and the same conditions repeatedly. In any case, a karmic dream is related primarily with our mental level. When we are sleeping with the presence of the Guruyoga state, if there is a continuation of presence, then slowly, slowly our karmic dreams will diminish and dreams of clarity will manifest instead.

The characteristic of a dream of clarity is that all kinds of dreams manifest with more presence. For example, last night I dreamt we were doing a retreat right here and now, in this moment. That means it had more presence. With dreams of clarity everything happens with more presence. And if we have this kind of dream then many other kinds of dreams of clarity can

also manifest. If we have some projects that we want to do next year, for example, sometimes we can see in our dreams how these projects will go and if they will succeed or not. Why do we have these kinds of prophetic dreams of the future? Because if we have the plan for a project in the future, there is already something of this project in the present. We are projecting and are working with something already. That is the reason we can have these kinds of dreams.

Last year in the summer, I had the idea to go to Tibet. I had already made all kinds of plans for going from Buryatia to Mongolia and then on to Tibet. But before leaving Australia, I had three dreams showing negative signs for my travels. The third dream particularly showed it was very dangerous. I don't know what kind of danger would really have manifested because I didn't go. I changed my plans and I didn't go. That is an example of what is called a dream of clarity.

If we have a very strong desire to do practice and have realization, or if we are learning teachings and many methods of practice and have received many kinds of transmission, all these things can also manifest in a dream of clarity. In daily life, we cannot do a lot of practices, whereas in a dream we can do better because we are not dependent on our physical body. Our sense consciousnesses are not dependent on our physical organs so we can have more clarity and this way we can develop our practice further. These kinds of dreams can also influence our daily life. Theoretically everybody knows that the Buddha said that everything is unreal, life is just like a dream. But in a practical way, we don't apply this insight otherwise we wouldn't have all these problems. If you have the capacity to develop your dreams of clarity, it will influence the way you view the reality of your present day life. Its illusory nature will become so clear that all your fears and attachments and all such problems will eventually stop. So the practice of the night is very important.

Then when you wake up, you should immediately remember the presence of the white A. You should connect with the white A when you are going to sleep and when you wake up. In this way, your dreams will also become part of your practice of awareness. When you become aware in your dreams, you can guide your dreams. You can also use your dreams for practice. If you have problems doing the practice of the night, you should try to do a kind of dark retreat. Not a full dark retreat, because in a dark retreat there are special practices to do, but just to help your practice of the night. Before doing a dark retreat you need to do Guruyoga of Guru Garab Dorje like in the Short Thun with the three As. You train in this practice and become more familiar with it. And then you enter in the dark. To start with you can do twenty-four hours. If you like, you can try to do two or three days, if you have no problem. But you must not decide to do three days at the beginning because you don't know what your condition is like; usually we live in the light not in the dark. Sometimes people can experience problems in the dark. So it depends. You should start by just doing twenty-four hours.

Then you enter into the dark, you prepare a very comfortable bed for sleeping and you do practice. Firstly you do the practice of Guruyoga with the visualisation of Guru Garab Dorje dissolving with the three As, and doing *trondru*. But you don't do these practices by singing loudly. You do it all under breath. You must not charge yourself up very much. Instead you should relax your physical body. Also you don't do Yantra Yoga movements in the dark, only the Guruyoga practice. When you have finished the Guruyoga, you can sit in the position of Rishi putting your knees together near your stomach and wearing your meditation belt, with your elbows on your knees. Then you put these three fingers – index, middle and ring fingers - on your eyes and you press a little looking upwards. Maybe you feel a little pain, but it doesn't matter, it will help your sight. You remain

like this until you feel tired. After that you open your eyes and you gaze in front of you in space, in the dark.

Then sometimes you can have a vision, like a *thigle* or some lights. Sometimes there isn't anything. But you mustn't search for a vision otherwise it is not good. If any kind of vision manifests, you know that the vision is just your own potentiality, not something outside of yourself. Then you just relax in the integration state and remain that way. After a little while you repeat the Guruyoga and if you feel okay, you repeat the Rishi position. When you feel tired you lie down and sleep.

If you are a male you sleep on the right side, like Buddha Parinirvana; if you are a female you sleep on the left side. If you don't have any problems with sleeping, then you can close your right nostril with your finger. If it's a problem don't do it. Just lie in the correct position. Do a visualisation of the white A in a *thigle*, and then sleep. When you wake up, do the Guruyoga again and also do the practice pressing the eyes. When you feel like sleeping then again, just sleep. Don't think that sitting in a position is practice and sleeping is not practice. It is also practice. If you are doing everything like this, then after, say, ten hours or fifteen hours your sleep becomes very light. It may also become easier to do the visualisation of the white A and *thigle*. Maybe then you can have that presence. This is the practice you can do for a preparation.

You know this practice is very, very important. Many people know it already but they don't care very much. Maybe they think, "Oh, I tried but I did not succeed so I don't do it anymore." That is very bad. Even if you don't succeed you should still try to do it. If you remain indifferent it means you are not trying anymore. We have so many nights in a year and we have so much time then because we are free at night. So we should do this practice.

This is also the practice for dying. If you are a practitioner and you die suddenly, what will you do? Some people say, “Oh, I did a retreat with this teacher, a retreat of Phowa. I will do Phowa.” Maybe you learned something about Phowa, it is possible. Phowa is not so difficult when you are doing the practice in your quiet room. There is no one to disturb you, you can do the visualisation and you can shout PHAT. That is very easy. But when you are dying, you may not be in your quiet room, and moreover your elements, your senses, and everything is dissolving inside. When each element dissolves inside there are terrible sensations and you can lose your presence. At that moment, if you want to do a complicated Phowa visualisation it is not so easy.

Particularly if someone dies in an accident, for example, they have no time to do all these things. But if you trained all your life doing Guruyoga with the white A, then when something happens, you are immediately in the A. That is not so difficult. Even if you are dying comfortably, if you are really in the presence of the A, you are in the instant presence, not just in experience. You already know the distinction between these two. So the sensations of dying are all part of your experience, and being in the instant presence you can observe all your sensations. But your instant presence cannot be conditioned by these sensations: that is impossible. So this is a very, very important practice for dying. You may call it the Practice of Bardo or the Practice of Dying, but everything is included in the Guruyoga of the night. So don't be indifferent. You must try to do this. It is very important as these are most important practices.

Then in daily life, there are four important days in each month, like the day of Guru Padmasambhava and the day of the Dakinis. We consider the day of Guru Padmasambhava to be important because Guru Padmasambhava took the commitment to be in front of faithful followers on this day. Guru Padmasambhava

also performed most of his important actions on the day of Guru Padmasambhava. The day of the Dakinis is considered to be the day that all kinds of manifestations of Dakinis assemble in sacred places. For that reason it is also an important day. So on these days we do the practice of Ganapuja.

Ganapuja is very important for accumulating merit and for purifying our commitments, and our samaya. Even if we didn't create problems willingly, sometimes we are ignorant of circumstances and we create many problems without knowing. In this case, we do a Ganapuja and we purify everything. To purify problems between teacher and student, and also problems between student and student, is very important for maintaining our samaya. We need to pay respect to each other, knowing that the dimension of everybody is unique. If we proceed this way then we don't create any problems.

Our samaya is also largely related to the protectors, the guardians of the teaching because the teaching is related with transmission, and the owner of the transmission is Ekajati and all these type of guardians. They are always present with their wisdom eye in order to control all the transmissions and samayas and check whether they are going the correct way or not. If things are not going the correct way then it is negative for the transmission. So when we do something wrong, we create automatically problems with the protectors of the Dharma. For that reason we purify ourselves and do the practice of Ganapuja.

We do this on two special days. If you don't have a Tibetan calendar then you calculate five days before the new moon for the day of Dakinis, and five days before the full moon for the day of Guru Padmasambhava. On these days we do a Ganapuja in a collective way with other practitioners if it is possible. Some people live in a big city and going from here to there can take a

long time. If you have this kind of problem, you can organise two, three or four different places for doing a Ganapuja instead.

Another two days that are important are the full moon and the new moon. These are more related with our circumstances because we consider that when we do certain practices on these days we can have more effect. If you do any kind of practice for increasing long life or your energy then you should do it at the full moon. If you do a purification practice like the Purification of Six Lokas, Shitro or Vajrasattva, all these are better to do at the new moon. I'm speaking of the collective way of doing these practices, but if you do a personal practice you can do it at any moment when you have the time.

Then if you have more possibility, sometimes it is very, very important that you dedicate yourself to doing a personal retreat. Even if you have only a weekend or three days free, it is also good to do some practice like Sendzin or Rushen or some other secondary practices. If we dedicate ourselves to doing practice, then we can always find some free time. If we don't consider it is important, then we will never find any free time. So do your best.

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DZOGCHEN TEACHINGS

MERIGAR, 6-11 JULY 2001

Transcription from Oral Teachings

It is important when we are doing a retreat, that you try to listen to what is being transmitted and what is being said. You must be aware of this and try to listen attentively. I have had this experience again and again that I explain something today and repeat it again the next day. Then the day after that someone wants to talk to me and they ask me something that I had already just explained over the last couple of days.

Then, I sometimes say, "But you didn't listen to what I told you". If you really listen well, then you will get all the answers. It is sufficient that you observe yourselves a little and listen carefully.

This is important because the teaching is not only a technique about how you sit and how you do practice. The teaching is also about how to live your life within society. This is what we need to know above all. For example, even if the teaching doesn't tell you how to work in your shop, when you are there, it can show you how to work with your mind and your existence. Through the teaching, you can learn how to guide your mind and how to guide your mind and how to deal with your situation.