

## Four-Armed Avalokiteshvara Initiation

His Holiness the Dalai Lama

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*What follows is the transcript of a teaching offered by His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Montreal in 1993. His Holiness gave the teaching in the Tibetan language and his words were translated into English by Geshe Thupten Jimpa, now Director of the Institute of Buddhist Classics ([www.tibetanclassics.org](http://www.tibetanclassics.org)). The English has been transcribed from audio tapes by Rosemary Kralik of the Canada Tibet Committee, Ottawa branch. Kind assistance and proof-reading was provided by the respected Tibetan scholar, Mr. Lobsang Lhalungpa.*

*Avalokiteshvara is the Sanskrit term for the Tibetan “Chenrezig”, Deity of Compassion.*

## Day One, Introduction:

Quite a lot of brothers and sisters have gathered here for today's teachings, which will be a ceremony of generating Bodhichitta. That is the ultimate state of aspiration to attain Buddhahood for all sentient beings. Tomorrow there will be a blessing initiation of Avalokiteshvara; the thousand armed Avalokiteshvara according to the Indian Pandit Atisha's tradition. Since the actual rituals or ceremony both today and tomorrow will be quite short, I thought I would like to use the time for giving more explanatory teachings on Buddhism. Today I will begin with a brief presentation of the general framework of the Buddhist path and tomorrow before the initiation, I will give some basic introduction to tantra Vajrayana Buddhism.

Among the audience here, I'm sure there are a lot of people who consider themselves practicing Buddhists and a few who do not. The introductory teachings that I will be giving both today and tomorrow are something that all of you can listen to, pay attention, and reflect upon. As far as the actual teaching and the ceremony is concerned, those who consider themselves practicing Buddhists could participate in the ceremony as a religious ceremony and those who do not consider themselves so need not follow or participate in the ceremony.

The teaching will be preceded by certain recitations, one that would include paying homage to the trichia for the Dharma and Sangha and recitation of certain sutras, followed by the recitation of heart sutra, Sherab Nyingpo.

Those who know these scriptures by heart can join in the recitation and those who do not can reflect upon the qualities of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

I will divide the teachings into two sessions. The first session will end at quarter past two; the next will last from two thirty until four o'clock. At the beginning of the next session, it would be nice if we could have questions from the audience concerning the first session. It would be more convenient if the questions could be written down on a piece of paper then handed to someone. I will follow the same format tomorrow morning as well.

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We are all equal in having this innate desire to be happy and overcome suffering. Similarly we all pursue methods of fulfilling this basic aspiration and depend on whatever methods or procedure that we individually consider as being the best course for ourselves. From one's own experience and from the lives of other people around you one thing becomes very clear. It is that the happiness and suffering or joy and pain which are so much linked with our existence, are also inextricably linked with our states of mind, the attitudes that we adopt and the way we think. So if we can adopt a method or find a means of bringing about a transformation within the mind, then perhaps we

would be able to find a better procedure or method for fulfilling this basic aspiration to be happy and overcome suffering.

There are many modern disciplines, methods which aim to bring about change or transformation within our mind through discipline or training. This is true of all major world religions, which are based on certain philosophical concepts and world views. All of these major religious traditions of the world also provide means or methods of training the mind and bringing about the necessary change and transformation.

I have stressed on a number of occasions the need to adopt a cautious attitude toward a particular phenomenon. The world reached an age where due to the information technology the knowledge and information in one part of the world can be very easily and quickly disseminated in other parts of the world.

Because of this interdependent nature, information and knowledge travel fast. Under such circumstances, it is important to adopt a principal as regards other religious traditions. I'm particularly thinking of the practice of conversion. For instance in the case of Buddhism, people in the west who feel attracted towards Buddhism and decide to take Buddhism as their personal religion. There might be two categories. Those in one category may not necessarily have any particular faith prior to taking Buddhism as their personal religion. In these cases, perhaps there isn't much danger because it is the individual's choice; they are not converting from one religion to another. In the second category people already have a particular religious faith, be it from their family or whatever.

For anyone who already has a religion, then decides to convert and become a Buddhist, I think it's very important to take this matter extremely seriously. Conversion is not an issue, which should be taken lightly. It requires very deep investigation as to suitability and appropriateness of that change. Once you have subjected yourself to a thorough analysis, self examination for appropriateness and suitability of the new faith, once you have felt convinced by the benefits and by the value of this change, once you have made the conversion, still there is something that one must bear in mind. Sometimes people, in order to justify their change or conversion, or adoption of a new religion, there is a tendency to be overly critical of one's previous religion as a means of self-justification. This I believe is extremely wrong.

One must bear in mind that first of all, just because this new religion happens to be more appropriate and suitable to *that* individual person does not mean or prove that this is the case for many other people as well. This is a point one must bear in mind. Secondly, one must also respect the diversity of dispositions that exist in human beings. Different people have different dispositions and just because one religion happens to be more suitable and appropriate to that individual does not give him the legitimacy to argue or claim that this should be the case for everyone. Just as in the case of the individual person, it was his or her individual right and choice to adopt a particular religion, so must he or she respect the individual rights and choices of other people as well.

That person must also not forget that all the major world religions have benefited millions of people in the past and fulfilled the spiritual needs and aspirations of so many millions of people in the past and they continue to do so. A very important point that the person who has undergone conversion must also respect and bear in mind. We are at a time when harmony between various different religions, interfaith dialogue and interfaith harmony and understanding is so crucial; therefore, one must be sensitive to this issue.

Generally, I make the statement that among the various religious traditions of the world which are based on rich, philosophical traditions, one can speak of two principal categories. One category which bases its entire world view and practices on a fundamental principal which is a faith in a creator and this I often call a godly religion. The second category of religion in which the fundamental basis of belief is not a faith in a creator or an external creator, but rather, ultimately, oneself, the individual person, or oneself as the creator of oneself. There is the belief in self-creation.

To the second category of religions belong Buddhism, Jainism and certain divisions of the ancient Indian Samkhya tradition. Today the religious, philosophical tradition that we will be discussing here, of course will be Buddhism. Within Buddhism, generally speaking we make divisions between two principal categories or traditions: the Theravada tradition and the Bodhisattvayana. Sometimes a third category is made, the Buddhist Tantrayana tradition. The Buddhist tradition that flourished in Tibet is a complete form of Buddhism where essential teachings of the Theravada, Bodhisattvayana and tantrayana traditions are complete.

There are differences in perceiving the nature of the Buddhahood, depending upon whether or not that Buddhist school of thought accepts the doctrine of three Kayas, the Theravada system does not. Common to both is the fact Buddhism was founded by the great master Buddha Shakyamuni over two thousand five hundred years ago in India.

Although all the Buddhist traditions accept that the Buddha Shakyamuni taught the teachings on Dharma, the actual dating of when he came into the world again presents diverging views. Within the Tibetan tradition, there is one school of thought which maintains he came into the world more than three thousand years ago, whereas another tradition or school of thought maintains Buddha's date of birth more than two thousand eight hundred years ago. According to Indian pandit Shantarakshita who came to Tibet, Buddha's date of birth is put just over two thousand five hundred years ago, which accords with the mainstream Theravada version. So what is, I think, quite important here is that one cannot accept that one historical Buddha came at different times in history. When we look at Buddha's life within the framework of historical time, we have to have a consensus. We cannot just maintain that Buddha came at various times, three thousand years ago, two thousand eight hundred, and so on. It is necessary to come up with a consensus. I think it is the responsibility of the practicing Buddhists to come up

with a calculation based on the examination, preferably, of some relics of the Buddha which are still existent.

We can in fact learn the essence of the Buddha's teachings, the Dharma, from looking at the life of Buddha himself. We find that Buddha was born a prince which indicates that the aggregation or accumulation of favourable conditions, even in the form of a human being, provides the individual much more opportunity to be able to reach out to more people and to be of greater benefit to others as well as a greater capacity for fulfilling one's needs. But Buddha did not satisfy himself by simply fulfilling the worldly desires but rather utilized that precious opportunity as a human being with all the facilities and faculties that are available to fulfil a higher purpose. The lessons we can learn from Buddha's life is that the opportunities and the faculties we have now as human beings must be used for a higher purpose. We should not be contented with mere fulfillment of worldly desires.

This higher purpose refers to the everlasting state of joy and peace. In order to attain that everlasting, enduring state of peace, tranquility and joy, you need effort and exertion on your part. That effort and exertion requires in itself, in turn, a real sense of aversion from the unsatisfactory nature of our existence. Therefore, you need a deep appreciation of the nature of suffering.

What you see in Buddha's life is that despite his enjoyment of all the worldly facilities in his princely life, he wasn't satisfied with these worldly acquisitions, positions and comforts but rather he aspires to something which is higher. In his life, we learn that the immediate motivating factor was certain sights outside his palace. He first saw a sick person who was suffering from illness and he realized the nature of suffering from illness. This was followed by the sight of an old person, thus leading him to realize the nature of old age and the accompanying discomforts that go along with it. This was followed by the sight of a person's dead body being carried.

These three sights caused him to reflect upon the underlying, unsatisfactory nature of life. In all of us there is, as I pointed out earlier, there is this natural aversion to suffering. We naturally do not desire suffering. We wish to shun and avoid suffering or find a solution to stop the process of suffering. These three sights were followed by the sight of a serene looking mendicant. The person may have been a monk from a non Buddhist order or an emanation but the sight of the mendicant, serene and peaceful, pointed out an alternative to our unsatisfactory level of existence.

There is a way out. The suffering that we experience in the world, there is a possibility of ending it. There is an alternative way of existence. Inspired by these four sights, then Buddha gave up his princely existence to adopt the lifestyle of a mendicant searching for the truth and spent six years in hardship and meditation. The import of this aspect of his life is to point out to his followers that attainment of liberation, peace and freedom is not something that can be realized out of indulgence, laziness or having an easy life but

rather it requires hardship, perseverance and dedication. This is the essence of the message that we must get from Buddha's life.

When Buddha was at the point of becoming fully enlightened as a result of this single pointed meditation, his meditation was disturbed by powerful, malevolent, negative forces. The manner in which Buddha counteracted these malevolent forces is very significant. Unlike other powerful deities of the world, such as Indra whose characteristic method of counteracting an opposing force is to use weapons of destruction, Buddha, when confronted with malevolent, powerful, negative forces, used the weapon of love and compassion. He did not retaliate with violence, force and weapons but rather, he used the weapons of love and compassion. He overcame the malevolent, negative forces of hatred through the power of love and compassion. Thus, he then became fully enlightened and following his full enlightenment, he gave teachings. He taught the Path that he himself has traveled through, he taught the Path to others.

The teachings of the Buddha are technically known as Chökhör the Wheel of Dharma and following his full enlightenment as a Buddha, a fully awakened being, he turned the wheel of the Dharma. The principal message of his teachings are enshrined in the doctrine of the four noble truths. The truth of suffering, the truth of its origin, the truth of the cessation and the true path leading to the cessation. These are the four noble truths. The first two, suffering and its origin form the set of causes and conditions which are linked with our experience of pain and suffering which we do not desire. The next two elements of truth, cessation and the path leading to it form another set of causes and conditions and these two related to what we ultimately desire, or aspire to attain which is the lasting joy and the process that leads to that state of happiness.

When the doctrine of these four noble truths are elaborated further then Buddha taught what is then known as the principal of the twelve links of the dependent origination Pratityasamutpada. The principal message is that when dealing with the origin of suffering, it can be understood in terms of two principal factors. These are the karmic action that we accumulate, the imprints that they leave within our psyche and the delusory states of mind such as our afflictive emotions and so on which impel us to act in a certain way.

These two, the karma and the delusions are the two principal causes which form the origin of our suffering. Then birth, aging, death and so forth are the actual states of suffering. Buddha explained in teaching the twelve links of the dependent origination, the whole process, the causal mechanism and the process by which an individual takes a rebirth into the cycle of existence and how that birth and that life is characterized by the unsatisfactory existence and suffering. Now underlying all our delusory states of mind is ignorance. I pointed out earlier, our natural constitution is such that we instinctively desire happiness and dislike suffering but although this is the case, we can't help but involve ourselves in an act which results in suffering and pain. It seems as if we are

uncontrollably, against our wish, accumulating the causes for our own pain and suffering.

Now why is this? Why do we act contrary to our natural wish or tendency? The answer lies in fundamental ignorance that we all possess with regards to exactly what is the best method, the best course of action for us. We are ignorant of the causality, the causal principal or relationship between suffering and its origin and the joy and happiness and its sources. This ignorance with regards to the appropriate karmic action to pursue, in turn is also rooted in an underlying, fundamental ignorance which misconceives the nature of reality, which misapprehends the nature of self and one's being, which has a false sense of identity and self.

This grasping at a truly existent, intrinsic self act as the basis which then lead on to other forms of ignorance which leads to delusory states of mind, thus into action and so on. If we wish to put an end to this process or cycle of existence, it is not possible to put an end right in the middle somewhere. We have to get to the root, we have to cut the root so that the cycle can no longer repeat itself. Buddha taught the possibility of this reversal of the twelve links of the Tibetan Origination. He explained that by cutting the root of the twelve links, the first one being ignorance, then we can put an end to the karmic action which in turn will put an end to the suffering and so on. The teachings on the twelve links of dependent origination is an elaboration on the four noble truths.

## **Day Two, Second Session:**

### **Questions:**

*Question regarding relics:*

There are in some of the Indian museums, relics of the Buddha. I'm sure that modern examination or analysis could be carried out on them. I have some relics myself but I don't know how reliable they are. Some of the relics tend to have the potential to increase. I've given some to a few people and they have told me in some cases that they keep increasing their size. This is the round one. They are not genuine relics in that they are not the bones of the Buddha but they are something which emerged from Buddha's relics.

*Question: To help sick (mentally) people, western psychiatrists try to give them back their self-confidence. Is it contrary with Buddhist methods, which teach us to be selfless? How do you reconcile these views?*

Although this point might come later in this discussion, I think it's very important to bear in mind that what is being denied in the Buddhist doctrine of selflessness should not be confused with the notion that Buddhism does not accept *any* notion of self at all. Buddhism does accept a conventional notion of self as an individual, as an agent, as a subject. It is on the basis of the acceptance of such a notion of individuality that the

theory of reincarnation or rebirth is explained. Especially according to the Mahayana tradition, individuality is maintained even at the level of Buddhahood. This must not be mistaken with the Buddhist practice of selflessness in the sense that there are certain practices, which are aimed at transcending and overcoming self centered attitudes and perspectives where you train yourself to consider other's wellbeing and happiness superior to your own wellbeing and welfare. In fact in this practice, there is a need for a strong sense of self and self-confidence built on it.

*Question: Why is it that people have such difficulty in loving themselves?*

This resistance to loving oneself is not really a natural or innate disposition. Rather it is a conditioned response. The innate, natural constitution of our being is to wish happiness for oneself, to seek joy and happiness. Perhaps the problem is too intense an emotion, maybe being too overwhelmed by the force of one's emotion.

*Question: What is happiness, according to Buddhism? Is it mere contentment, or must it involve development of the human being's faculties and knowledge of reality?*

The notion or nature of happiness according to Buddhism requires complex and extensive explanation at different levels. The scope and nature of happiness differs according to different planes or realms of existence. Within the desire of human beings and devas, happiness principally refers to a pleasurable sensation of joy and these are primarily linked with our feelings and experience. Happiness would have a different meaning and connotation to beings in other realms of existence. Such as those in the formed realms of existence and those in the formless realms, particularly from the fourth stage of the formed realm there is no feeling of joy or pleasure, but there is a state of equanimity where there is a total equilibrium. It is in fact free from the dichotomy of joy and pain or pleasure and pain and joy and suffering. There, happiness has a different meaning. Especially in Buddhism, happiness in the context of nirvana and liberation will have again a different meaning, which is totally divorced from any connotations of feeling or experience. It is a state.

*Question: How can human population increase if each person is the reincarnation of one previous individual, if more people are alive than have ever lived before?*

Here one has to look at this question in the context of the Buddhist belief in multiple universal systems. So, from the Buddhist point of view, this is a rather silly question!

*Question: Your Holiness, what is your opinion regarding the equality of men and women in Buddhist religion and in general?*

According to the fundamental insights of Buddhism there is an underlying emphasis to respect the equality of not just all human beings, but also all sentient beings and to respect the equality of all in that they all have the natural desire to be happy and to overcome suffering. If that is the case, then there is no question whatsoever as to the



need to respect the equality of men and women. Although this is the case with the fundamental position or the principle of Buddhism, as regards the question of equality, there are certain forms of practice or customs, which reflect a bias, a discrimination towards women. For instance according to the Vinaya practice, which are the Buddhist rules of monasticism, although we find that both men and women have equal opportunity for taking full ordination, still in terms of seniority, objects worthy of respect, who should respect whom, women seem to occupy a lower position there. So there is a discrimination or bias. Therefore, in fact I have suggested, and I would like to convene a meeting in the near future where many important Tibetan scholars would discuss the need to look at some of these practices and reassess them.

*Question: In the practice of generating Bodhichitta there is a method of seven point cause and effect instruction in which one of the seven points is to develop the recognition of all other sentient beings as your mother and repay her kindness. What if in this life your mother was not a good and kind person, how can you grow compassion to others?*

The practice where one of the points is to reflect upon all sentient beings as mother is not something that is indispensable but rather should be seen as an example of a person who is dearest to you and whom you consider dearest. The reason is because in the twenty five thousand verses on Wisdom Sutra, the section regarding the part of preparation we find the wisdom Prajñāpāramitā sutra sentences which state that one should develop the recognition of all sentient beings as one's mother, one's father, one's relative, one's brothers and one's sisters and one's closest friends and so on. The point is that you should generate a sense of intimacy and closeness towards others.

*Question: Do you think that every person is perfect?*

If the person includes fully enlightened beings, the Buddhas, then I could say that there are perfect persons, otherwise, even bodhisattvas on the highest levels of the path, let us say the tenth level of the path, they cannot be considered perfect, let alone people like ourselves...Although this is the case we must as human beings living in human society, we must respect the norms and conventions of human society. Just as there is an expression in the Vinaya practice, the monastic practice, where in certain forms of ceremonies, if the major part of the ceremony is performed, it is considered as though the whole ceremony has been performed. Similarly, within human society we can find individuals whose lives exemplify greater perfection.

Comparatively such a person can be said to be perfect. That's how we will have to conventionally define perfection and imperfection. It is crucial to not think or be convinced that fundamental human nature is imperfect and negative. There is the potential danger of depression, thinking that "I'm not worthy of respect and love", eventually leading to lack of self confidence, low self esteem and culminating in self hatred. As a counterforce for this, it is crucial to constantly remind oneself of the presence of Buddha nature in all of us. In the scriptures, it states that even within the psyche, within the being of a person whose life or behavior reflects or manifests total

negativity, even within that person there lies the seed of full enlightenment, the seed of the tathagata. This awareness of the presence of tathagatagarbha or the essence of Buddhahood in us is crucial.

*Question: If there is no creator, then who created the multiple universes?*

Ultimately, according to Buddhism, it is the mind which is the creator of the universe. As one of the texts in the scriptures states, the mind creates not only the natural environment, but also the sentient beings that reside in these environments. According To Buddhism, there is no beginning to the continuum of consciousness or mind and therefore there is no beginning to the continuum of the person or the individual. Now, as to the question of why this is so, the answer will of course have to be: this is natural, this is just nature. So again, if a further question is asked, why is nature, the continuum of consciousness beginningless? Well, we will just have to rub our heads! However, if we were to adopt a contrary position i.e.: if we were to posit a beginning, then we have to accept the notion of a creator and then the question still remains, in fact it creates more questions and leaves more questions unanswered, the questions will always be hanging, who created the creator? Then all sorts of qualifications have to be given to the creator, that the creator is self created, that the creator is permanent, eternal and so on, outside the bounds of many of the laws of nature.

*Last Question: Since Buddhism is a religion without God, can His Holiness tell us what he thinks of the possible relation between Buddhism and science with regards to the ways of inquiring about the nature of reality?*

As to the convergence and contrast between Buddhism and modern science on one important question which is the nature of consciousness. Although Buddhism deals extensively with this important topic, there seems to be less discussion of the nature of consciousness in modern science. As to the understanding of the nature of the physical universe and particularly the evolution of the physical universe there is, I think, much convergence on the views between Buddhism and modern science.

### **Teaching continued:**

The upshot of all these teachings on the twelve links of dependent origination which is an elaboration on the themes of the four noble truths, the central message of these teachings is the need to appreciate the principle of causality. Our central task, which is the fulfillment of our desire to be happy and overcome suffering, must be based on the appreciation of the laws that are inherent in nature. We have to go about fulfilling these wishes based on the understanding of the nature of reality. In the teachings of the four noble truths and especially the twelve links of dependent origination, Buddha tells us the importance of understanding the principles of causality. It is only due to the interaction of causes and conditions that results come about. The undesirable results of suffering and pain and the desirable experiences of happiness and joy come about only due to the interactions of causes and conditions. This importance given to the term

“only causes and conditions” excludes any idea of an external force or power such as a creator.

In this regard, it is important to reflect upon several principal statements made by the Buddha in his scriptures, the sutra on dependent origination. The first is that because the cause was there, the efforts or the fruits ensued or followed. The second is that because the cause was accumulated or created, the effects followed and because the ignorance was there, it led to the action. The first statement’s principal message is that all the things and events, particularly our experiences of joy, happiness, pain and suffering, do not come about without cause or other factors. Nor are they creations of some external factor such as an eternal creator, the result of someone’s conscious design but rather they come about merely as a result of the preceding causes and conditions. When elaborating or commenting on this particular statement of the Buddha, the Indian master Asanga further clarifies this statement of the Buddha, in his text called *Abidharmasamuchaya* compendium of Manifest Knowledge, he states that the notion of things and events as being creations of an eternal mind, the notion of things and events as being the consequence or result of someone’s conscious design is being denied.

Asanga, commenting on the second statement, that because the cause was created, the effect was also created, states that the significance is to point out that the cause which leads to the fruits of suffering and happiness, joy and pain, pleasure and pain, these causes themselves must be subject to change. These causes themselves must be again products of their preceding causes and conditions. The implication of this point is that it denies the notions of events and things being a product of a permanent cause such as those accepted by non Buddhist schools such as the idea of primal substance and so on which are themselves permanent and eternal but they are the creators of the ephemeral world. So in Buddhism such notions are being denied and any causes which have the potential to create something must themselves be subject to change and be products of earlier causes and conditions.

In this context, people may misunderstand certain passages in, for instance, Nagarjuna’s *Madhyamakamulakarika* where he states that because everything is empty, that everything is possible, which gives the impression that according to his thought that ultimately it is emptiness which is the creator and emptiness being not impermanent and not subject to cause, how can that accord the fundamental Buddhist stand on causal principal? What is meant is that everything emerges out of emptiness. The idea here is that because all things and events lack self-nature, all things and events lack independent nature. They are all dependently originated. They are ultimately empty of inherent existence. They are absent of intrinsic reality. Because of that openness, because of that lack of substantiality it allows or creates the space for the possibility of interaction between causes and conditions. This being able to produce the corresponding results and effects. This is the meaning of emptiness being the source of everything.

The third statement of the Buddha, that because emptiness was there, it led to the action, the volition. Commenting on this passage, Asanga states that according to Buddhism it is not just sufficient for a cause to be there, the cause must itself be impermanent, not only impermanent but subject to causes and conditions and that alone is again not enough. It is required that there must be some natural correspondence or natural correlation between a cause and its effect. The causes must have some natural connection between the two. Not just anything can produce anything. There must be something in the cause, a potential which will lead to corresponding results and effects. For instance in the case of the twelve links of dependent origination, ignorance being the first link in the twelve link chain. Ignorance corresponds to the action because ignorance impels or forces the individual from being aware of the appropriate method of seeking the causes of happiness and overcoming causes of suffering. We act ignorantly so ignorance leads to action and action leads on to other subsequent chains in the link.

What we see here is the working of an inherent law, a natural law of the causal principal operating within the twelve links of dependent origination of the four noble truths. There is an imbedded natural law of causality. Now this law of causality is not something that has been created by the karma of sentient beings nor can it be said to be created by the powerful force of the Buddha, it is simply a fact of existence, it is simply one of the laws of nature.

When talking about the nature of suffering, in Buddhism suffering is understood at three different levels, of three different types of suffering and the origin of suffering is understood in terms of karma and delusions although this is a general classification but they could be elaborated further. What is more important is the understanding of the two last elements in the four noble truths. These are the true cessation and the paths leading to cessation.

It is important to understand the nature of the last two truths. These are the truth of cessation and the paths leading to it. Regarding the truth of cessation, it is crucial, to develop the understanding and conviction that there is a possibility of attaining cessation from this cycle of existence, an end to or cessation of suffering. How do we do this?

As I pointed out earlier, first among the twelve links is ignorance, the root cause of our suffering in the cycle of existence. This ignorance is a misconceived state of mind, which distorts the nature of reality, it misapprehends reality in a way that it does not exist, as if it is enduring, intrinsic and independent. Therefore, it is possible to generate an insight to see through this illusion, which would counteract as a direct and opposite force, this ignorant state. Between the two, an ignorant state of mind, which misapprehends the nature of reality and an insight, which sees through that illusion, the first one lacks any valid support in nature or in our experience and is directly contrary to the way things are. Whereas the insight into the nature of reality has a valid support not only in our experience but in nature because it accords with the way things exist. On top of that, this insight is a quality of mind, unlike physical, athletic prowess or physical qualities.

This mental quality has the potential to be increased or enhanced to a limitless state. In the case of bodily, physical qualities, for instance athletic capacity, our body itself is subject to limitations. Whereas mind is a type of quality, which retains its continuum permanently therefore it has the potential to be increased or enhanced limitlessly. For instance insight, once it is fully cultivated, becomes spontaneous, a natural part of one's mind with the capacity to be enhanced limitlessly. Once the insight into the nature of reality is enhanced and made spontaneous then that insight can dispel the ignorance and cut the root of the cycle of existence.

When we try to understand the nature of the cessation, we must bear in mind that by cessation we do not refer to the natural cessation of a state of suffering, be it a particular affliction or pain. Here we refer to an end or a cessation put to a continuum, through the application of an open-end force, without which the continuum of suffering or the continuum of the ignorance or delusion would have carried on. By the application of this open-end force of generating the appropriate insight into the nature of reality, one puts an end to the continuum and that state is called cessation. There can be many different levels of cessation, the ultimate of which is called nirvana or true liberation. When we speak of nirvana or true liberation, we should not have the wrong notion of nirvana being a physical plane or a physical realm where individuals could travel or exist. Rather nirvana or liberation should be understood in terms of an state of one's mind which is totally freed and purified from negativity, delusions, forces of delusions and suffering. That state of mind is known as nirvana or true liberation.

According to Buddhism, when we speak of the state of existence in Samsara, a vicious cycle of birth and death and rebirth, it has to be understood in terms of a state of mind or consciousness. The principal cause of our rotation in the cycle of existence is not external, it is internal, it has more to do with the states of mind. Similarly, nirvana or true liberation is a state of mind free from suffering and delusions and all forms of afflictions. The process by which you emerge from that state of bondage to the state of freedom, the process, the path, the method you employ and the process you are engaged in are again mental, internal, psychological processes, not at all physiological or material. Here is a role of mind and consciousness in all the stages. In the stage of bondage, the factors that bind you there and in the state of total liberation, the factors that lead to total liberation. In Buddhist literature very extensive discussion on the nature of mind, the different divisions of it, the types of mind that exist in us, the different categories and so on.

When we speak of mind or consciousness we have the tendency to believe in a solid entity, a single entity which can be called mind or consciousness that somehow resides in us somewhere. This is a totally wrong conception. We must be aware that we are talking about a very complex subject. There are many different types of mind and there are levels. Subtle levels and grosser levels in which are many more different types and modalities and so on.

Much of what we consider consciousness operates at the very conscious, gross levels of our existence, such as our sensory perceptions. These are very dependent on our physiological states, generally our body but particularly our brain and the nerve systems. When the nervous systems and the brain no longer functions, the operations of these grosser levels of mind, sensory faculties, thought processes cease their functions, they cease to operate.

If we were to attempt to understand the whole complexity and nature of consciousness purely in material terms, in terms of the physiological elements, then it would be very difficult to account for the unique characteristics of consciousness or mind which is the nature of the mere subjective experience. Characteristics of mind and consciousness is that it has the nature of being a state of awareness, this experiential quality which cannot be accounted for by only material explanation. According to Buddhism a further factor is posted which is the continuum of consciousness.

Take for example a particular instance of perception, a visual perception. According to Buddhism, visual perception results from complex interaction between various factors. In order for visual perception of a physical object, there must be the eye, a physical organ. Secondly, the eye organ must have a visible object, that object is another condition. In some Buddhist writings, we find there is a third condition, an intervening space between the object and the eye organ to allow or that visual perception to arise. Still you cannot fully account for the visual perception in us without a fourth condition which Buddhism calls the immediately preceding condition. By this it refers to the continuum of consciousness. Unless there is an ever-abiding continuum of consciousness, there is no way that we can explain this unique characteristic of vision perception, which is the mere fact of it being an instance of awareness and an experience. That experiential characteristic visual perception cannot be accounted for without positing the fourth condition. There is a continuum of consciousness which retains throughout our existence and which, when it interacts with circumstantial, external conditions, then it can emerge or manifest in different forms of perception, be it sensorial or conceptual or otherwise.

The implication of the explanation given about the way in which instances of perceptions arise is that the fundamental essential nature of mind is pure, clear light. It is in the mere nature of luminosity of knowing.

Other implications of these explanations about how a specific instance of perception such as visual perception arise, is that one must posit the presence of an unending continuum of consciousness or mind. It is through these arguments that if in order for even a single instance of perception to take place there is a need, there must be an underlying continuum of consciousness. If that is the case, on that basis, on that premise we can explain the theory of reincarnation. If there is a continuum of consciousness within this lifetime, this continuum of consciousness must carry on and the first instance of consciousness of the newly born child must have its preceding continuum. Thus on this basis of the beginningless continuum of consciousness the theory of rebirth is based.

As I pointed out earlier the fundamental nature of mind is clear light. It is pure. It is undefiled. Given this, it is crucial to develop the conviction that ignorance and delusions which obstruct us from perceiving the nature of reality as it is, is advantageous. It is a construct of our mind. So that through generating an insight that can see through the illusion created by this construction, we'll be able to overcome the forces of ignorance and dispel it. It is from this point of view that understanding the Buddhist doctrine of selflessness or emptiness become very crucial.

When talking about the continuity of consciousness, here again there are complications with the English term consciousness, what is meant here that I pointed out earlier, that there are different levels of consciousness, the subtle and gross levels, so the continuity which is retained, is at a very subtle level. When Buddhism speaks of the continuity of consciousness being retained or being ever present, one should not have the notion that thinking about consciousness, it is understood in the sense of the English word consciousness and then thinking that this light, this illuminating entity is somehow hidden somewhere there and retains its line. That is the wrong notion. One must understand the presence of the continuative consciousness at a subtle, more profound level.

We find in Buddhist literature tremendous emphasis being placed on understanding the nature of mind. Claims like: mind is principal, mind is the primary factor, everything is created by the mind, mind is the source of everything. When we find expressions like that it is possible to have the impression of a very idealistic, mentalistic view of the world. Everything is mind or mental projection. There are schools within the Buddhist tradition which deny reality to the external world and claim that everything is either extensions of one's mind or projections of one's mind, that the reality that we perceive outside is nothing but an illusion. This is not the position of the ultimate school of Buddhist thought according to which, so much primacy is given to mind it also does not deny the reality of the external world and the reality of the physical world. For example, according to the Kalachakra tradition, when searching for the source of the physical universe, Kalachakra tantra does not trace it to a primal state of mind. Rather the physical universe, not only of the environment and nature but also of our body, if we are to trace the continuum of these material phenomena, the according to Kalachakra tantra even at the beginning of a particular universal system, there is a stage of total vacuity or empty space. There are what are known as space particles or Namkhaidul which are the sources from which then evolves the whole macroscopic universe of the physical world. We find in the Kalachakra tantra that it does not state that ultimately everything is mind and is created by the mind. So we should not automatically assume that because so much primacy is given to understanding mind that Buddhism ultimately is an idealistic position and that everything is projections of the mind.

Now if the macroscopic world of the physical universe has within itself its source or its evolution, one can materially or physically explain the evolution of the physical universe tracing its origin back to this stage of vacuity when they remain in the form of potential within these so-called space particles. If that is the case, what exactly is the role of the

mind? In awareness, mind fits into this picture. Here I think it may perhaps be quite useful to reflect on an analogy.

For instance we find in different parts of the world mines for iron ore of gold and so on, but these are not created by human beings. They occur naturally, through evolutionary process. Human beings come into the picture when they collect these base metals and then transform by putting them into a furnace, melting them or cutting, rubbing or refining. Through this process of refining we arrive at iron or gold. This does not mean that these metals in their basic forms are created by human beings. The macroscopic world of the physical universe has its own sources or basis in nature. Where does the human being or the mind come into the picture? Natural evolutionary processes in the physical world come into contact or interact with mind such that they reach a stage where the physical universe becomes relevant to the experience of pain and happiness or pain and pleasure or happiness and joy or suffering of a sentient being. This is due to karma.

When karmic imprints come into contact with a particular evolutionary stage in the physical universe, it intervenes in the process and a combination of the particles takes shape, giving them the potential to affect the lives of the sentient beings. These can be seen as consequences of karma of the individual. These are the karmic imprints left by human actions or sentient being's actions. Actions indicate motivation and motivation is mental, therefore it is ultimately mind which shapes the process, thus making them relevant or related to our experience of pain and pleasure.

Another way of seeing the connection is at the subtle level of correlation between external elements, earth, water, fire, wind and space and the internal elements within our bodily constitutions where there are both subtle and gross levels of those elements. The gross levels of elements are manifest forms of the subtle levels, which remain embedded. These subtle levels of elements in turn originate from what in Tantric terminology is called the subtle energy which possess the radiance of five elements: Lung Ozer Ngpa.

The initiation and blessing of Avalokiteshvara belongs to a category of teachings which requires vegetarianism. Tomorrow with your breakfast, if you normally eat eggs you should avoid eating them and maintain a vegetarian diet.

For lunch and dinner, you should continue to be a vegetarian. If you can't then salute and continue being non-vegetarian.

## **Day Two:**

We spoke of purifying negativities within the ultimate nature of mind. By referring to the ultimate nature, we are referring to the ultimate mode of being of reality. This is called by different names: the nature, the ultimate truth, the reality and so on. In Buddhism there are many extensive expositions of this notion of reality. How do we



define a system of thought as a Buddhist philosophical system? We define that on the basis of whether or not that system subscribes to the four axioms, four fundamental principals of Buddhism or technically, the four seals. That all composite phenomena are transient. All contaminated actions are in the nature of suffering. All phenomena are empty and selfless; and nirvana or the liberation is peace. On the basis of whether or not a school of thought subscribes to these four fundamental principals of Buddhism, we make the distinctions between a school of thought being Buddhist and those others which do not accept these four principals as being non-Buddhist.

Of these four fundamental principals of Buddhism, the third one, that all phenomena are empty and selfless and its interpretation of selflessness, Anātama, that we find divergence within the schools. Among the four classical Indian schools of thought the first two, Vibashika and Svatantrika, only accept selflessness of person or the individual being, not external phenomena. The two subsequent schools, the Yogacharya or Chittmatra which is the mind only school and the Madhyamaka school which is the middle way, these two schools of thought not only accept selflessness of person but also selflessness of phenomena. According to these two schools, selflessness is universal as an application. Within these two schools, there is a divergence on what is meant by the selflessness of phenomena.

For instance, according to the Chittmatra school, selflessness of phenomena is understood at two levels. One level where acceptance of non-duality between the subject and object which are seen at an ultimate level as an extension of one and the same essence. At another level of selflessness of phenomena where they understand selflessness or identitylessness in relation to how thought, concepts and language engage and operate.

In the Madhyamaka school the idea of selflessness, selflessness of phenomena or identitylessness is taken further. There, even the truly existent nature or self-identity is denied. Within the Madhyamaka school we find two principal divisions: Madhyamaka Svatantrika which accepts the absence of truly existing nature or independent status to reality while a certain degree of objective reality is accepted. According to Madhyamaka Prasangika school, which is considered to be the ultimate position of Buddhist thought not only do all phenomena lack inherent objective status but also notions of intrinsic reality or inherent nature is denied. So according to this school ultimate nature of reality has to be understood in terms of absence of inherent existence, absence of intrinsic reality, absence of intrinsic and self nature. This is what is meant by the doctrine of emptiness, according to this school.

We find such divergence of views on the question of the understanding of the nature of reality even among the Buddhist schools of thought. Which one should be considered to be the ultimate position? On what grounds can we determine what is more definitive and what is more interpretive? All of these divergent interpretations or understanding of the Buddha's thought can find some sort of scriptural sources. All of these various philosophical schools of thought have scriptural support for validating their various

positions. If we were to determine the nature of definitive and interpret the provisional or ultimate position according to scriptural citations alone it would be quite fruitless because every position would be able to come up with a citation from a text.

Ultimately it is the application of reason, understanding and analysis which help us judge, which has to be the authority in determining what position is more definite and what position is provisional. Because of this Buddha himself stated in one of his sutras *"O Bikshus, wise people do not believe in what I say simply out of reverence or respect to me but examine them as a goldsmith examines the quality of gold through a lot of stringent procedures. Similarly, my word should be subject to a very strict and stringent analysis and reasoning. It is only through such process that you must take them as valid."*

On the basis of that liberty which the Buddha gave to his followers that there are such principals as the four reliances: We're not supposed to rely on the person but rather on the words; we should not rely on the mere words but on the meaning; we should rely on the ultimate meaning rather than on the provisional meaning; and even there we should rely more on the transcendent spiritual experience of the meaning rather than mere intellectual understanding of the meaning.

The conclusion is that any system of thought which contradicts the valid process of reasoning or our understanding or a valid analysis should be seen as provisional or not a final position. Whereas any position which cannot be subject to such logical inconsistency, which is free of contradiction and which is in fact supported by a valid argument, reason and experience must be seen as the final position.

Within various Buddhist schools of thought and the divergent understanding of the selflessness that they present, an individual develops an ascertainment of the selflessness as presented by the lower schools of thought. The person may have a strong conviction or ascertainment and realization of these but even while the realization and understanding is strong, there is a certain degree of grasping at self and self identity as conceived from the perspective of the highest schools. On the contrary when a person has developed an ascertainment or realization of selflessness as propounded by the highest schools of thought, then while the ascertainment and the realization remains active and strong, there is no room for that person, within his or her mind to have any level of grasping as described by the lower schools of thought. That's one distinction here.

In selflessness or indentitylessness propounded by Madhyamaka Svatantrika School, all phenomena are empty of truly existing nature. They all do not exist independently and truly. When this particular school of thought sets out to present the conventional nature of reality, their definition of existence, they posit a certain form of objectivity. Their refutation of selfidentity is not comprehensive enough. According to this particular school of thought, although person or self do not possess any truly existing independent status, they do posit some form of objective reality. Although "person" as a label or as a concept is a mental construct, if we were to search for the true referent behind the label,

person or self, according to this school, something must be found. So according to Madhyamaka Svatantrika when we were to search for the true essence of personhood, if we were to search for the true label or referent behind the term person, what you would find is the continuum of consciousness, the consciousness of the person. Consciousness of the person, according to this school is really the person, something which is quite substantial. Although there is quite an extensive denial of independent self existing nature, at the same time there is an acceptance of a certain degree of objectivity, something existing from the sight of the object.

However, if you contrast that view with Madhyamaka Prasangika School then you will find a wide difference between the two. For according to Madhyamaka Prasangika School not only are phenomena absent of a truly existing independent nature but also they are devoid of any level of independently existing objective nature. Things and events including persons themselves have a state of existence, which is only emergent, which comes about through interaction with various entities. They possess a mode of existence which is only dependent upon other factors. There is no independent, self-defining identity and even that degree of objectivity is denied. So phenomena, things and events exist only due to other factors.

In Buddhapalita, a text written by one of Nagarjuna's principal students by the same name, he states if things, events and phenomena exist in and of themselves, if they possess intrinsic reality, then what need is there for this notion of interdependence? There is no way that phenomena can possess a dependent nature because if phenomena, things and events exist inherently, possess intrinsic reality and exist in and of themselves independently, then when we search for their essence, if we were to look for the true referent behind the terms and labels, we should be able to find it. But that's not the case. For instance, if we take one particular object and if we were to look for exactly what is the true essence of that phenomenon then it will disintegrate. Not only the concept but also the very idea, the notion of that phenomenon will disintegrate. When subject to such analytic process they are unfindable.

At the same time, one cannot conclude that they do not exist because of this nature the fact that they do exist is very evident from our own experience. Phenomena, things and events matter. Certain circumstances lead to painful experiences, certain circumstances lead to pleasurable and joyful experiences, these things and events do matter so they exist, it is through our experiences that we know they exist. At the same time if we were to look for their true essence, they are unfindable.

So what is the upshot of this? Phenomena exist, not inherently, not in and of themselves, not independently but only dependently upon other factors. They exist only nominally, only by the power of other factors and then Buddhapalita uses this very fact of the interdependent nature of phenomena to prove that they are ultimately empty of any substance, ultimately empty of any form of essence. This is in conformity to Nagarjuna's position where he states in his fundamental treatise on wisdom that anything, which is dependently originated, is empty, as taught by the Buddha. This realization of the

interdependent nature of reality is indeed the middle path taught by the Buddha. Nagarjuna then summarizes his position stating that there isn't any phenomena which is not dependently originated nor are there any phenomena which are not empty.

In London there was a question asked by someone in the audience. The question was that if, as Madhyamaka philosophy claims, phenomena exist only by dependence upon other factors, if they possess only a nature of existence, a status of existence which is interdependent, how can we talk about or how can we ever conceive or posit the very idea of identity? How can we even speak of distinct entities? The very idea of entity and identity does not make any sense. At That time, although I didn't have enough time to delve into the question, I was very impressed at the depth and the insight behind that question. If that question was coming from someone's personal experience, that person deserves to be prostrated. This question is trying to get at the heart of the matter. Once we begin to look at phenomena in terms of relationships, in terms of interactions, in terms of using the language of interdependence of course a lot of complications arise as to the very idea of distinct identities of individual phenomena. Although Mademaka Svratrantika accepts and embraces the doctrine of emptiness, they fail to follow through all the implications of the position because they accept some form of objective identity, some form of objective reality.

Madhyamaka Prasangika does follow through the implications of the doctrine of emptiness, deny any level or form of objectivity, posit the reality of phenomena only in terms of conceptual frameworks, of conventionality and interrelationships between causes and conditions. So the crux of the matter is to be able to, while denying any form of intrinsic and inherent reality, not to fall into the abyss of nihilism.

To be able to maintain and respect the reality of the conventional world. This is really the crux of the matter. As Tsongkhapa mentions in one of his philosophical works, the most difficult task of a Madhyamaka philosopher is to be able maintain and respect the conventional reality of the phenomenal world while being able to negate any concept or any notion of intrinsic reality or any notion of independent entities. I don't think it is possible for an individual or a person to experientially affirm the reality of the conventional world, account for it fully before the person has a genuine insight into the ultimate nature of reality. Before the person has gained insight into the nature of emptiness, fully realized it, I don't think it is possible, not only conceptually or intellectually to account for the reality of the conventional world. The full appreciation of the reality of the conventional world can only come from a subsequent realization following one's gaining insight into the ultimate nature of reality. Once you have gained this insight into the ultimate nature of reality and once you have realized emptiness, as a post meditative state you can experientially account for conventional reality of the phenomenal world.

The doctrine of emptiness that I'm presenting here and explaining is common to both sutra and tantra and as propounded by Nagarjuna and through the readings of Chandrakirti particularly in his auto commentary to Madhyamakavatara and

Prasannapada and his commentary on the four hundred verses on the middle way. It is through the combined study of these three principal texts of Chantrakriti who is considered to be the authoritative commentator on Nagarjuna's philosophy of emptiness.

Chantrakriti himself states in his *Madhyamakavatara*, a guide to the middle way, this text aims to expound on Nagarjuna's philosophy of emptiness as presented in the *Madhyamakavatara* from two perspectives. The perspective of the understanding of the profound view and also the perspective of the understanding of the transformative spiritual paths that are associated with that view. As he claims, I feel convinced that Chantrakriti has succeeded in expounding Nagarjuna's thought comprehensively as he set out to do.

It is from this viewpoint that many Tibetan scholars in the past claim that as far as the doctrine of emptiness is concerned, as far as the realization of the profound view of emptiness is concerned, there is no difference between Sutra and Tantra. In a way that is correct, however from the perspective of the subjective experience or realization of emptiness, there are so many different levels of consciousness and subject. One will experience emptiness differently at different levels. Even according to the Sutra system, one makes distinctions between the realization of emptiness which is accompanied by many factors such as Bodhichitta compassion and so on. That realization of emptiness is seen as superior to one which lacks such complimentary factors. Similarly in the Tantric case since the accompanying factors especially the skilful means of generating insight and emptiness are so different and divergent and diverse according to different categories of Tantra, there will be differences in the subjective realization of emptiness. Thus, we find in the writings of some of the Tibetan scholars that there is a difference between Sutra and Tantra on understanding the doctrine of emptiness.

There are two different understandings of what we mean by the profound view or Tawa. In the Tibetan language Tawa or view can be applied both to the subject, as in "point of view" and it can also apply to the position which is the object. I think the same thing applies in English. We can speak of view, the position, the tenet and also view, as the subjective point of view that you adopt. This is the case with perception as a cognitive state. You can talk about perception of something. Here again the perception applies to a position, object, or event. When view or Tawa is applied to the object, the position or the object then one can say there is no difference between Sutra and Tantra in relation to the profound view. Whereas if the view is understood in terms of the subjective perspective then, of course there will be differences between Sutra and Tantra in relation to the profound view of emptiness.

When we understand view in terms of the subjective experience of emptiness, objective realization of emptiness then of course this subjective state is an experiential state, a state of consciousness, a state of mind. It is a transcendent wisdom. We cannot accept that it is an unchanging, permanent entity. When we use the term ultimate truth, ultimate reality, according to the Sutra system, ultimate truth or ultimate reality is

applied to emptiness, the objective emptiness which is unchanging, permanent and so on, whereas in many contexts of tantra particularly the highest yoga tantra, ultimate is used often in relation to the subjective experiential wisdom of emptiness. In terms of its continuity, we can speak of wisdom as being eternal and continuous but in terms of its actual nature, it is ever changing, dynamic and it is transient.

The reason why it is important to make all these distinctions is that we will have a conceptual apparatus, a conceptual tool, which will allow us to then not let ourselves be confused by different usages of the terms in different contexts and also help us clarify many of the contradictions which we might otherwise perceive in the divergent positions of the various schools. For instance in the four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism, Sakya, Kagyu, Geluk and Nyingma, there are divergent presentations of the doctrine of emptiness. If we have these conceptual tools, the distinctions, then we'll be able to perceive how a particular perspective of one school is not in contradiction with a particular perspective of another school because we will be able to judge them in their right context and in their right scope.

So far as the profound view of the objective emptiness, no matter what level of consciousness, what level of awareness that emptiness is experienced or realized, it is realized and experienced only as a mere absence, only as total absence or emptiness. There is no degree of affirmation there of positing something in place of substituting the emptiness. It's experienced and realized and cognized only as a total absence, subjective awareness when we conceive it, or when it appears to another consciousness will be different. This is quite similar to the case for instance according to Madhyamaka Prasangika school which...(interruption)...that consciousness or that transcendent wisdom which precedes emptiness. From the point of view of its own perspective, it is total vacuity and total emptiness as pointed out earlier. If a third, different perspective were to adopt or to conceive it then we will find that there is a difference. Because it is a cognitive state, because it is a state of awareness it has to appear in an affirmative way. Although what it realizes is emptiness, the awareness of that subjective state comes or appears in an affirmative way. This is analogous to a situation we find in the Madhyamaka Prasangika position which accepts valid cognitions or a true knowledge, a perceptual state experience may be true or non deceptive because in relation to a particular object it can be valid in the sense that it perceives something and just as it perceives something, it exists there. That perception or knowledge when viewed or when judged from another perspective will be deceiving, a degree of illusion, because that perception itself, although valid in relation to its object, when it appears to another consciousness, appears as if it exists truly and inherently, in and of itself, which is not really the case. There is a disparity between the way that a perception appears to us and the way it actually exists. Still that does not rule out that perception being a state of knowledge, that perception being valid.

This point may become clearer if we take the example of perceptual visual awareness, visual perception of a particular object or a form. To that visual perception, that object appears and also there is this awareness of the object present there. Not only that, but

also to that visual perception there is another awareness, there is another appearance that it perceives the object as existing objectively out there in and of itself. Visual perception is valid in relation to the existence of the object because just as it perceives the existence of something, that object exists. However it is mistaken delusion in relation to the inherent existence or independent objective existence of that object. Although the object appears like that, it does not exist in that way. There is an awareness of that inherent existence that is valid. Here is a very complex case where a single instance of consciousness can have a perspective which is valid and a context where it is valid and true and a perspective and a context where it is false and totally deceived. So within one single instance of consciousness you can speak of both falsity and truth.

We come to the conclusion that things and events, all phenomenon are absent of intrinsic reality, lack inherent nature, they do not exist independently and in and of themselves. Not only are they empty of inherent existence but it is possible to generate insight into that nature of reality, fully realize it and as I pointed out such an insight can be enhanced to its limitless potential since it is a quality of mind something which is based on an enduring continuum. This insight into the ultimate nature of reality, this insight into emptiness, serves as the direct opening force that would cut the origin of our cycle of existence is principally our deluded state of mind. Within the delusions there are three principal afflictive states. These being ignorance, desire and hatred or aversion. These three are the principal delusory states or types of mind, three rooted ultimately in a misconception or ignorance, which misconceives the nature of reality. According to Madhyamaka Prasangika School, which is the perspective that we have adopted here, this ignorance, misapprehending the nature of reality as truly existent. It is the root of our cycle of existence. So generating insight, which perceives the ultimate nature of reality and which realizes emptiness directly, contradicts that wrong perspective and sees through the illusion and then cuts, putting an end to the whole process that gives rise to our cycle of existence. This is slightly different to the Madhyamaka Prasangika position where they make a distinction between the underlying basis of foundation which is the grasping at true existence but that is in itself not the actual root. In Madhyamaka Prasangika position it is this very grasping at the truly existing nature of phenomena which is the root of our cycle of existence and by putting an end to it, by generating an insight which directly contradicts it, one is able to put an end to the mechanism or process that gives rise to the whole subsequent chain in the cycle and thus lead to liberation. It is through these reflections that we will be able to generate a deep sense of conviction and the possibility of liberation from suffering, delusions and bring about that realization within ourselves. That is a conviction that needs to be cultivated.

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