

**Preliminary Teachings**  
**Prior to the Kalachakra Initiation**  
**H.H. the Dalai Lama**  
Translated by Thupten Jinpa  
**Barcelona, December 11-14, 1994**

Let us recite the verses for taking refuge and generating bodhicitta together. Today we are gathered here, a large number of people from different walks of life with different languages, different cultural backgrounds, societal backgrounds and so forth. We are not gathered here for a business purpose nor are we here to watch a performance or spectacle. We have all been drawn here together by a single objective which is to participate in a ceremony which is religious and which has to do with the Buddhist path and practice. I would like to extend my greetings to all of you and express my appreciation to those of you who have come here with great interest.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to all the individuals who have been involved in organizing this event. They have all worked very hard to make this event possible. So I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks to them. I am also grateful to perform the Kalachakra ceremony in this famous city of Barcelona. I gather that Barcelona is a city that takes great interest in the diversity of cultures and also in a diversity of religious traditions. Barcelona's fame has been even made even greater by the staging of the Olympics here. Incidentally this hall where the teachings are being held was built during the Olympics and during the Olympics it was used in some sense to demonstrate the excellence of physical and athletic prowess. Today in contrast although in terms of physical expression we are all sitting here rather relaxed but what we are engaged in here is in an act where we are trying to sharpen and refine our mental, intellectual and spiritual faculties.

In this multitude of faces I can see quite a number of faces which are familiar and those of you may find little new in what I have to say. To those of you perhaps you can use these teachings as something to refresh your memory and reinforce your understanding and commitment. However in the audience there are many new faces and to these I hope my teachings will give something new to think about, something new that they can reflect on, something they can practice.

All of us who have gathered here and in fact all human beings, and also all sentient beings, one thing that is common to all of us is that we have right from birth a natural tendency, instinct to seek happiness and avoid or overcome suffering. It is this basic, fundamental instinct to seek happiness and overcome suffering that in some sense drives us as individuals, living beings and it is on this basis that we also insure our survival. One can also understand the whole process of evolution in terms of this fundamental, basic instinct that is common to all of us.

So what distinguishes us as human beings from other forms of life? One principal characteristic of the human species is that we are gifted with a much higher faculty of intelligence, the ability to understand. Unlike animals we have the capacity, the faculty of intelligence and capacity to determine the long and short-term consequences of our actions. So in this sense of course we are distinct, we are unique but at the same time this unique faculty, this unique gift of intelligence sometimes one could say creates more problems and sufferings. For example many of the pains and sufferings that we

experience are in some sense products or constructs of our own imagination. Hopes, aspirations, frustrations, doubts and so on constantly characterize our lives. These are things in some sense products of our intelligence.

Even within humanity if we compare human society and the lives of individuals at our present age with that of the past, it is plausible to say that people in the past were dogged by less anxiety. In some sense their lives were simple and one could say that was because there was less progress, economic development and also less educational development. Even in the current age if we make a comparison between two societies, one where there is high economic development and education compared to a less developed, simpler society, between these two contemporary societies, the more developed one is dogged by more anxieties, frustrations and expectations.

The crucial question arises that since our fundamental aspiration or fundamental desire is to overcome suffering and at least to lessen or minimize suffering, and if we know that our faculty of intelligence often becomes another cause for additional suffering, are we better off without developing our intellectual faculty? So far as I am concerned the answer is definitely no.

The reason why I say that the answer is definitely no is because the degree of calmness, temporary freedom from such anxieties which comes from inadequate knowledge due to a lack of education is a product of ignorance. Therefore even though it might be comparatively a more calm state, but it is not reliable; it is not enduring because the potential for disturbance is present. What is required is that to be able to appreciate the faculty of intelligence properly and to see what it is for. If we examine the faculty of intelligence, in itself it is neither positive nor negative; it is neutral. It has the potential to be used negatively or positively at the same time. So what is important is to be able to appreciate its nature and then utilize the faculty of intelligence to understand a situation properly, to be able to look at a problem or suffering through the application of human intelligence. Through this way in some sense transcend the problem by the application of the faculty of intelligence. Once one can confront and overcome suffering through this way then the result is much more reliable and enduring. This is what needs to be sought.

When I look at materially advanced societies the impression I get is that although there has been much human progress made and a tremendous increase in human knowledge there is also a tremendous appreciation of the importance of education and intellectual understanding. But I feel that no comparable emphasis is placed on paying attention to taking care of what could be called the human individual, the person who possesses that faculty of intelligence. In other words there is not enough attention paid to nurturing and enhancing the fundamental human qualities of love, compassion and the feeling of connectedness with fellow human beings and so on.

There is not enough attention or energy expended towards the enhancement and nurturing of that aspect of the human psyche. Not only that but also there seems to be an assumption that when it comes to talking about nurturing these humanitarian qualities, it is something which is private matter of religious practice. It is not something that is the concern of the average person as it were. This I think is a great mistake. When I talk about goodness and positivity and negativity in this context, I'm not talking in religious terms; I'm not talking about religious faith being positive and non-religious ideas being negative. Rather I am talking at a much more basic human level. I'm talking about goodness and badness in relation to fundamental human existence such as the qualities of

love, compassion and the feeling of connectedness, which form the core of human values. These are values, which can not be neglected and ignored by even non-believers. So long as we are human beings we cannot exist as a fully human being without nurturing and enhancing these qualities. So it is in this respect and it is in these terms that I am talking about positivities and negativities.

When we think about these human qualities for example like compassion and love, we know from our own personal experience the significance of these basic human values. For example like compassion, the altruistic and compassionate a person is, not only does it bring about immediate calm and tranquility in the mind of the individual but also that individual creates a peaceful and tranquil atmosphere and them. This atmosphere is enjoyed and benefits by other fellow human beings as well. On the other hand if the person is nurturing ill-will, hatred and so on within themselves, not only does it immediately destroy calmness of the individual and brings about disturbances within that individual's mind but it also creates a very disturbed environment around that person. It immediately affects other people in a negative and destructive way. So this is something we know from our own experience.

So what happens in such situations is that as you nurture this ill-will, you project it on to others and then you start to see other people in very suspicious terms. You feel that they are hostile towards you; you see in some sense the whole world as being hostile towards you. This is because you are projecting what you feel inside and what you harbor inside. So if on the other hand as societies and as individuals we can pay equal attention to the development and enhancement of these fundamental human qualities like love, compassion and so on along with attention to intellectual and educational development, then not only will we create healthy and more full human individuals but also we will create a healthier society.

On the other hand if you have an individual whose fundamental outlook on life is altruistic, who naturally and from the depths of their heart always takes into account the wellbeing and welfare of other fellow beings, then if that person is in a professional life such as a scientist, economist or politician all of their activities well become humanitarian. All of their activities will become truly human activities. On the other hand if these activities are separated or divorced from these fundamental human feelings then there is no guarantee that they will serve human society in a positive way. As in the case of intelligence they are in and of themselves neutral; they can be used either positively or negatively.

What we are engaged in is trying to find a way, the best way by which we can apply this natural faculty of intelligence that we are gifted with to transcend and overcome suffering, the fundamental problems of existence and so on. But intelligence alone is not adequate, we need another factor that will compliment it. This would compensate for intelligence such that we do not push too far, to the extremes of using our intelligence faculty alone.

The importance of the combination of these two factors can be understood quite clearly if we look at the way we relate to question of objectivity. We all know that when we are analyzing a situation, objectivity is very important otherwise our prejudices, feelings or whatever will color our perception of that situation or event. What is needed in order to understand fully any situation correctly we need a degree of objectivity. Yet at the same time if we go too far in our insistence on objectivity then we may end up in a

very absurd situation where we are even detached from our own feelings, pain or suffering. We may end up looking at our own experience like as if it were something “out there”, totally unrelated to ourselves. This is not what we want.

What is needed is an extra factor, a sense of involvement, a sense of engagement or a sense of concern. So the faculty of intelligence should be combined with a sense of involvement or a sense of engagement that in some sense cater to the feeling side of our psyche. At the same time if the feeling side or the sense of involvement is too prominent again we will lose the objectivity and end up looking at the situation in a very prejudiced way. What we need is a fine balance between the use of the faculty of intelligence so we have a degree of objectivity yet at the same time we are not too detached from the subject of our investigation so that it remains a human endeavor. Of course even in ordinary language when we criticize someone as being too cold we are using the word in a pejorative way. We don't like to be called a person who has no feelings or a person who is cold.

The fact that this supposed objectivity divorced from feeling is impossible can be understood by taking an example of a cultural custom. For example in the West in modern society death is a taboo subject; nobody wants to talk about it. People try to avoid thinking about it. Even to use the word death in some sense is sort of a taboo. What this indicates is that there is this fear, almost subconscious hesitation to take about death as the pain and suffering associated with the idea is so great that you don't want to be involved with it. So this tells us that as human beings we are an intelligent species, but also we are a species with a component of feelings. So what is needed is a combination of the faculty of intelligence with a sense of involvement or a sense of concern.

Of course when we talk about the sense of involvement or a high motivation, strong motivation, it is possible to see that our selfish instincts or impulses can give us a strong sense of involvement and engagement. But if you examine it carefully such a sense of involvement or concern is very limited and also quite narrow-minded. Whereas if the sense of involvement or sense of concern is derived from an underlying compassion and altruistic attitude concerned for other fellow sentient beings, then that sense of involvement is much more firmly rooted and also reliable. It is because of this that in Buddhism there is this repeated emphasis placed on engaging in a path where there is a combination of wisdom and compassion.

So in the Buddhist context when we talk about wisdom, generally speaking there are two principal types of wisdom that are mentioned. The first is the five principal types of conventional wisdom that deals with matters that are relative and conventional and then the second type of wisdom is the wisdom that principally deals with the ultimate meaning or the ultimate truth. Of these two of course it is the wisdom related with the ultimate truth, which is felt to be more important. However it is only on the basis of the difference of the objects of the two wisdoms that distinctions between the two wisdoms are made. So far as the subjective experience of these two wisdoms is concerned, no distinctions can be made. So because of this there is an emphasis placed on a union of emptiness and compassion.

Now the question may be quickly raised as to why it is considered so important in Buddhism to understand the nature of emptiness. Why is it so important that we should understand and cognize emptiness? This is related to wider questions about our knowledge of the world in general. Generally speaking when we examine the nature of

our knowledge we find that even in our ordinary life, the day-to-day experience, we constantly confront situations where we find a disparity between the way we imagine a thing to be like and the way things actually are. There seems to be a constant gap or disparity between the way things appear to us and the way things naturally are. There need not necessarily be a conscious will on the part of a person to deceive us. We often find ourselves in a situation where we are deceived.

So there is this disparity between appearance and reality and this is something quite natural or common. Especially if we were to reflect on the findings of modern science then the disparity between appearance and reality is something that is quite understandable. Similarly in Buddhism emphasis is placed on understanding this point that there is a disparity between the way things appear to us and the way things really are. In order to enable us to deal more appropriately and more correctly with the appearance of things what is required on our part is to have a greater and deeper knowledge of the underlying reality. It is in this respect that the understanding of emptiness is crucial.

We find that from our own experience that there are events and things in which there is a disparity between appearance and reality. There are also events and situations where there is no such disparity. So in order to enable us to determine whether or not there is such a disparity between the way things appear to us and the way things really are Buddhism suggests that we apply a formula of analysis. This is based on looking at the reality in terms of two levels or technically known as the Two Truths.

So far as the technical term of Two Truths is concerned it is not something that is not unique to Buddhism. Other ancient non-Buddhist Indian schools such as Samkhya uses the terminology of the Two Truths and use this model of reality, looking at reality in terms of two levels. For example in the Samkhya philosophy where the entire expanse of reality is divided into twenty-five categories out of which prakrit which is the primal substance or substratum is considered to be the ultimate truth. All the other remaining twenty-four categories are seen as in some sense effulgence or illusory manifestations of the underlying reality. So they have the idea of two truths even in a non-Buddhist school like Samkhya. Using this model of reality where you look at reality in terms of two levels of truth is quite a common feature in other non-Buddhist Indian schools as well.

Similarly of course in Buddhism all the four major schools such as the Vaibhashika, the Sautrantika and so on, all speak about the doctrine of the Two Truths. However it is only in the Mahayana schools that the understanding of the Two Truths in terms of identity or sameness is understood. According to these Mahayana schools the Two Truths are seen in terms of ultimately being identical yet with unique or distinctive features.

As I mentioned earlier although the language of the doctrine of the Two Truths is something common to many ancient Indian schools including non-Buddhist schools, so far as the deepest understanding of the doctrine of the Two Truths is concerned, it is only in the Madhyamika schools of Mahayana Buddhism that we see the fullest development of this doctrine. According to this school the Two Truths has to be understood in terms of an identity of the interdependent world of appearance and its underlying emptiness of intrinsic identity and existence. It is this unity of appearance and reality that is the deepest meaning of the Two Truths.

The essence or the deepest meaning of the doctrine of the Two Truths emerges at the level where one's understanding of the doctrine is so advanced that by the very

perception of the efficacy in the relative world of interdependent origination that in itself will give rise to an understanding of the emptiness of inherent existence or intrinsic reality. Given the validity of the interdependent laws, the laws of interdependent origination we realize that it is only by dependence upon other factors, the multiplicity of causes and conditions, interacting with each other that can give rise to a thing or an event. The very fact that things and events come into being as a result of such a multiplicity of causes and conditions, they lack an independent status. They are absent of independent, intrinsic reality. This absence of independent existence is emptiness.

The world of our everyday reality where we see a multiplicity of things and events, a diversity of causes and conditions where there are distinct phenomena which enjoy distinguishing and unique features and characteristics, the whole multiplicity of our empirical world is in Buddhism known as conventional reality or the relative world. It is a world, which we posit without any metaphysical or philosophical postulations. It is the world of our everyday, lived experience. This is for example when we talk about causes and conditions we do not talk in terms of metaphysical constructions we are talking at the level of the way we experience the world. Our understanding of reality at this level is known as the wisdom cognizing the conventional aspect of reality.

However when we examine the existential status of these things and events, not satisfied by the mere label or convention, if we probe further and try to seek the true reference behind the terms and labels, what we find is the total absence of things and events. This absence or the unfindability when sought in such an analytic process is called the ultimate truth or in other words emptiness. Wisdom or insight understanding this nature is called the wisdom realizing emptiness.

One could say that multiplicity is the world of appearance and unity is the world of reality. In other words they are sometimes described as the multiple appearance and the ultimate world of one taste or single taste. When we think about this contrast between the multiplicity of the world of appearance and the unity and singularity of the world of ultimate reality, here it is important to understand how we generally relate to an object, how it appears to our mind. Generally speaking there are two manners in which we can conceive an object.

Generally when we relate to an object, it appears to our mind in two possible manners, either in affirmative characteristics that the object has definite features and characteristics or in contrast, what it is not in terms of its negation. When we think about the world of ultimate reality we can approach it only in terms of negation. We can not approach ultimate reality in terms of any affirmative or positive characterizations as it is the total absence or negation of independent existence that is ultimate reality.

When we look at the nature of reality in terms of this model of the Two Truths, we find it very intimately linked with the manner in which we understand reality, the manner in which our consciousness or mind operates when it engages with reality. As explained earlier the multiplicity of the world of appearance is the conventional world or conventional reality and the unity of the underlying absence is the ultimate reality or the ultimate truth. So immediately we find here that the Two Truths are in some sense defined with regard to how we know or perceive reality. It is because of this that we find in Buddhism there is extensive discussion of the nature of knowledge, how we develop knowledge and what means or methods exist in terms of generating such knowledge.

It is in this respect again that the importance of applying our faculty of intelligence comes into the picture. As I stated earlier that in our quest to find solutions to the problems of existence we need to use the faculty of intelligence. For example in the case here when we talk about generating knowledge of the ultimate reality, ultimate truth or the conventional truth and the relationship the relationship between the two of them, what is required is not just mere understanding but rather true knowledge or insight into reality. Then the question is raised as to what means do we have that would help us verify that our understanding is correct, that the understanding we develop is true knowledge and not mere assumption?

Here it may be quite useful to draw a parallel with scientific experimentation. In modern science in order to prove something the scientist needs to go through certain procedures of methodology. Initially the person through experiment thinks that they have come up with a new discovery. Now it is not enough for someone to claim that one has found this through experimentation, the person needs to verify it. One of the ways verification takes place is whether someone else can repeat the same experiment and arrive at the same conclusion, come up with the same result. This is seen as verification that the initial discovery is correct. On the other hand if someone else proves the supposed discovery incorrect the supposed discovery is seen as suspect.

Similarly in the case of our knowledge when we arrive at an understanding we must have means by which we can test the validity of that understanding and to verify that it is a case of true knowledge, not a false belief. But this can not be done by the knowledge itself we need the case of another knowledge, which would be able to put the previous knowledge to a test. Through this way it can be verified. What we find here is the importance of understanding the very concept of knowledge and also verification.

What we find here is the basic standpoint that when we asked a question whether or not something is true or whether it exists, what are the basic criterion that we use in determining whether or not something is true or whether something exists? In Buddhism of course the answer lays with knowledge; anything that is an object of knowledge exists and anything that is not an object of knowledge is non-existent.

Then the question arises how do we know that an instance of understanding is true knowledge and not a false belief? Here some Buddhist schools maintain that there is something called a self-cognizing faculty to all instances of consciousness, that the object is certified by an understanding, which is a state of consciousness, and the validity of that consciousness is certified by a self-cognizing faculty of that mind. This is how the problem of verification of that knowledge is solved in some schools of Buddhism. The main reason they come up with this strategy is because they are uncomfortable with the idea of mutual dependence between subject and object. This mutual dependence from their point of view entails that both subject and object have equal power of validation or verification. So far as they are concerned it is the consciousness or the subject which has greater power in validating or verifying an existence. Therefore they postulate this faculty which is known as the self-cognizing faculty.

Now in other schools of Mahayana Buddhism such as Madhyamika-Prasangika, they do not accept such a faculty, self-cognizing faculty of consciousness. The reason for this is that the acceptance of a self-cognizing faculty, which in some sense is the primary validating faculty, would entail believing in an intrinsic power or reality of consciousness. So far as Prasangika-Madhyamika is concerned all things and events

including consciousness, including all states of mind are all dependently originated phenomena. Nothing exists on its own; nothing exists in and of itself. Nothing possesses intrinsic identity or inherent existence. All things and events are dependent; they lack independent status. So because of this it is contradictory to posit a faculty which is self-validating. As far as the Madhyamika-Prasangikas are concerned of course existence is determined in terms of whether or not something can be known or something is an object of knowledge. However Madhyamika-Prasangikas argue that the reality of subject and object can be established through mutual dependence; just as subject is dependent on the object so is the object dependent on the subject. There is nothing seen wrong with this formulation of verification.

So the fundamental criterion of existence that the Prasangika-Madhyamika school comes up with is that something to be conventionally known as long as that convention is not contradicted or negated by another convention or another validating consciousness. In some sense whatever is known should be verified by another instance of knowledge, be it a subsequent state of knowledge or understanding or a third person's verification. So as far as the Prasangika-Madhyamika is concerned they accept this mutual dependence between subject and object. Just as the object exists dependently and by the power of the subject similarly the subject exists in dependence on the object; there is a mutual dependence.

Not only this but also Prasangika-Madhyamikas accept that all states of consciousness must have an object even if it be a mental object like an image. All states of consciousness must be a consciousness of something. In this regard or in this respect all forms of consciousness are a consciousness of something; it is a state of awareness. But this is not to say that we can not make distinctions between a false belief and true knowledge. That distinction between false belief and true knowledge is made on the grounds, on the basis of whether or not an understanding that one has is controverted or negated by an instance of knowledge, which would directly contradict it. (Break)

**Question:** (Not on tape)

**Answer:** For example Buddhist teachings explain that grasping at the true existence of things and events is at the root of volitional, karmic action. However that does not imply that the grasping at the true and inherent existence of things and events in itself is the product of karma.

**Question:** Is there a simple example of emptiness that can help a beginner before reaching higher levels of understanding of emptiness

**Answer:** Discussions on emptiness will come up in subsequent sessions and also during the initiation.

**Question:** Please explain how if one understands dependent arising and cause and effect? Does one see it in a flash, the connection with ultimate truth that objects are like an illusion?

**Answer:** It is possible in the case of some people that due to their long karmic seeds that the connection between the interdependent world of cause and effect and the ultimate reality can appear in a spontaneous awareness like a flash. But it is not truly a spontaneous awareness in the true sense of the phrase because one needs to take into account that the individual's having reflected on this in previous lifetimes.



As for my own understanding of the relationship between the interdependent world of causality and the ultimate reality is concerned, I have definitely put great effort with a sense of involvement and engagement into this understanding. So I can say as far as my current understanding is concerned it is more of a sense, an intuition rather than a spontaneous flash of knowledge. But one thing I can definitely say is that such understanding is truly beneficial. It has been nearly thirty years since I first began to take serious interest and effort into developing and refining my understanding of the Two Truths.

**Question:** Is it possible that emptiness and god are similar concepts?

**Answer:** Of course I have found that when we talk about the concept of god that there are diverse interpretations. I have heard sometimes god defined in terms of infinite compassion and defined in terms of a creator or absolute being. So far as god understood in terms of an absolute being or creator, then this is very different from the Buddhist understanding of emptiness.

According to the Madhyamika teachings of Buddhism, all things and events without exceptions are absent of intrinsic reality or independent existence. This includes not only samsara, the samsaric world of everyday reality but also it includes Buddha and emptiness itself; nothing is spared.

Sincere Christian practitioners have asked me questions relating to the relationship between Buddhist meditative practices and the contemplative traditions of Christianity. I have told them that it is possible at the initial stages to have in some sense a combined approach of the two traditions. It is possible for a practicing Christian to adopt certain meditative techniques from Buddhism such as techniques aimed at enhancing compassion or one's capacity for tolerance or overcoming hatred and anger. These techniques which do not necessarily require accepting unique doctrines of Buddhism could be of course be seen as common practices which can be adopted by practicing Christians. So it is possible at the initial stages for a spiritual trainee to seek refuge both in the Buddha Shakyamuni and also Jesus Christ.

However as one specializes in one's own spiritual quest, as one embarks further and progresses on the spiritual path then at a certain stage, at a more advanced stage I feel one needs to part company. In some sense one needs to pursue a specialized line of practice because the approaches of the two traditions to some sense are fundamentally different. In the case of Buddhism the entire path of meditative techniques and practices are based upon the fundamental Buddhist philosophical tenet of the no-self doctrine where the emphasis is placed on selflessness and relativity. On the other hand in Christianity the entire spiritual approach is based on a single-pointed dedication towards the objective or goal which is seen in terms of absolute being. So at the more advanced stages I feel one needs to part company.

What we see is that the major religious traditions of the world, each of them has its own uniqueness in its approach along the spiritual path. These unique approaches suit different individuals, individuals with differing mental dispositions.

**Question:** Prasangikas say that the reality of subject and object can be validated through dependent arising but if ultimate reality is a non-affirming negative how can we say that anything is a cause of something else? How can we establish dependent arising?

**Answer:** Here in the Madhyamika context when we speak about emptiness it is important to bear in mind that we are not talking about emptiness in terms of mere nothingness. We are talking about the emptiness of independent existence, the emptiness of things and events possessing intrinsic reality or intrinsic identity. So emptiness is not a mere nothingness or nonexistence but rather it is the emptiness of an independent status, an independent existence.

When we look at the multiplicity of the world around us we see the fact that things and events come into being due to other factors is quite obvious. We see things and events coming into being as the result of causes and conditions and this is quite obvious to us. Now if we pursue that line of argument or pursue that line of understanding further, we will arrive at the knowledge of the absence of independent existence. Again if we pursue that knowledge, the absence of independent existence further then it will reinforce our understanding of the world of interdependence, the fact that things come into being as the result of causes and conditions.

Perhaps what is important here is to make a distinction. When we talk of emptiness as the ultimate absence of independent existence, when we talk of ultimate truth as being understood in terms of mere negation, a non-affirming negative, what is important here to understand is that when we arrive at such a knowledge of emptiness, in that state of consciousness there is no underlying sense or inference that maybe there is something else. Maybe things exist in such-and-such a manner? What constitutes true insight into emptiness is the full appreciation of the total absence, the negation of independent existence.

Now the understanding of the interdependent nature of reality comes as a subsequent knowledge. When you have gained such knowledge of emptiness then as a consequence of that knowledge, it reawakens in you the full implication of that knowledge. That is to say, if things and events lack independent existence then it is only through the interdependent nature, it is only through the nature of interdependence that they can come into being. So it is a subsequent knowledge.

When we think about the relationship between or the mechanism or process of our understanding emptiness and also the validity of that knowledge, it is quite a complex issue. Generally speaking when one develops a knowledge of something, one negates a false belief. When one develops insight into emptiness what is being negated is the false belief, which is grasping at the true existence or inherent existence of things and events. This knowledge of emptiness in itself can not apprehend the existence of emptiness nor can it apprehend the validity of the knowledge itself.

However that is not to say that in order to gain knowledge, in order to understand the existence of emptiness, in order to understand the validity of that knowledge, one needs further consideration or reflection. This is not the case. They come about in some sense as a natural by-product of subsequent awareness to one's awareness of emptiness. So in the aftermath of one's full realization of emptiness, this total absence, the knowledge that emptiness exists, the knowledge that one's understanding of emptiness is valid, come naturally and spontaneously subsequent to one's understanding of emptiness.

**Question:** How does one remain aware of compassion and tolerance despite all the problems of daily life and the clashes between people?

**Answer:** When we think about the true meaning of tolerance, I don't think we should understand tolerance in terms of a meek acceptance of harm and suffering. What is meant by true tolerance is an active principle whereby you deliberately adopt a standpoint not to retaliate against a harm or infliction of pain. So when you understand tolerance in such a way then of course when you practice tolerance it further strengthens your capacity to withstand sufferings and problems.

So when your understanding of tolerance is such I as just described then in some sense one could say that your tolerance or your choice to be tolerant is based on an understanding which is that you see retaliating is foolish and also has no benefit. You will then be in a position in fact when you see someone inflicting harm on you, because of your tolerant standpoint you will develop a sense of empathy or compassion towards the perpetrator of the harm. You see that person whose is perpetrating the crime is doing something which is totally stupid and self-destructive.

**Question:** How can one be sure that one is not going crazy or beyond reality when considering reality?

**Answer:** One basic rule or a rule of thumb that is used in Buddhism especially in regard to examining one's analysis in Madhyamika is to check whether or not as a result of one's analysis of emptiness and ultimate nature of reality, whether or not it effects one's attitude and relation towards other areas of practice. These include love, compassion, tolerance and also whether or not your attitude towards the law of karma and causality is effected. If one finds that as a result of one's understanding of emptiness, as a result of your analysis that your respect towards the subtle laws of karma and causality is increasing even to the point where one is so mindful of the consequences of even the slightest negative action, this is a positive indication that one's analysis is going in the right direction. On the other hand if one finds that as a result of one's long meditation or analysis on emptiness one is beginning to feel more apathetic, thinking that there is nothing out there and one's commitment to the laws of karma becomes more lax then that is an indication that one's analysis is going in the wrong direction. This is the basic rule of thumb.

So when you find yourself in such a situation, then it is very important not to be totally confined into meditating on emptiness alone but rather combining and balancing one's meditation on emptiness with other practices. These include generating a genuine aspiration to seek liberation from cyclic existence based on developing insight into the suffering nature of samsara and also enhancing one's capacity for compassion and bodhicitta. So it is with these other aspects of the path that one must balance one's meditation on emptiness.

Not only that but it is also important to bear in mind that as a result of one's reductive analysis, one finds things and events can not be found when sought through an analytic process. This unfindability in itself alone does not constitute a full understanding of emptiness. If that were the case then it would be rather limited. This is something one can derive even in respect to things that are totally non-existent. So what is required is that in addition to the insight that things and events, although they may seem solid and enjoying a discrete reality, when sought in an analytic way they are unfindable. Yet they must exist in some way because the reality of their existence is something that is

incontrovertible; it is something one's valid experience, in some sense, speaks for their reality.

If this is the case then in what manner do they exist? They must exist; there must be some level of reality. However they do not exist in an independent or inherent way, as they seem to appear to us. What is the status of their existence? Through this two-pronged approach, when one arrives at a point where one's understanding of their status is that they truly lack independent existence although they exist in some sense, therefore their existence must be understood only in terms of conceptuality, label or imputation. So it is through this way that one can steer away from falling into the two extremes and stay in the middle, arriving at the true middle way understanding of emptiness. So it is rather a profound insight.

**Question:** Are we born with a soul? Do we have a soul at the moment of birth or do we build our soul day by day? What do you think of Jesus Christ?

**Answer:** As a Buddhist and from a Buddhist point of view, since Jesus Christ played such an important role in bringing a spiritual message and spiritual solace and taught on love, compassion and tolerance to millions of people one can not view him as an ordinary person. Definitely a Buddhist would have to say that he was a Noble Being. Now as to what exactly is the status of such a Noble Being, Buddhism would have different explanations. Although the philosophy, the metaphysical teachings of Jesus is very different from the Buddha's teachings and as practicing Buddhists would consider their own metaphysical or philosophical teachings as reflecting the truer nature of reality, however there is no contradiction for a Buddhist perceiving Jesus as a manifestation or emanation of a Bodhisattva or even the Buddha. In Buddhism there is no contradiction in accepting a teacher whose own personal standpoint may be different from the teachings the person has given because the Buddhist hermeneutic tradition makes a distinction between the author's intentional standpoint and the scriptures standpoint. They need not be identical.

For example in the Buddhist tradition if one looks at the thangka immediately behind me, on the two sides of the Buddha Shakyamuni there are two figures. On his left is Nagarjuna and on his right is Asanga. Asanga who is considered by Mahayana Buddhists as someone who has attained the Third Bodhisattva Bhumi, the third Bodhisattva level, in some of his writings such as the *Bodhisattva Grounds* and also his *Compendium*, he criticizes Nagarjuna's philosophy as being nihilistic. Yet we accept that Asanga was a Bodhisattva on a very high level of realization. There is no contradiction in this as we make a distinction between Asanga's own ultimate standpoint and Asanga's intended standpoint in a particular text which may be addressing an issue for a particular perspective.

Similarly in the case of the Buddha he has taught so many sutras and in some sutras for example in the sutra the *Unraveling of the Buddha's Intention*, which is a hermeneutical sutra, Buddha discusses reality in terms of what are called the Three Natures. This is in contradiction with other sutras that the Buddha has taught but again the hermeneutic tradition in Buddhism maintains that a sutra taught by the Buddha need not necessarily represent the ultimate standpoint of the Buddha. So one can make a distinction between the author's ultimate standpoint and a particular scripture's

intentional standpoint. This hermeneutical explanation could be applied to other cases as well.

As to the first part of the question concerning the question of a soul, generally speaking if one conceives of a soul in terms of an eternal principle, which is unitary, eternal and indivisible, then this is synonymous with the atman theory of the non-Buddhist schools. There the soul is characterized in terms of an eternal principle. So far as that concept is concerned all Buddhist schools deny the existence of such a soul or self. Such a soul or atman or self would be naturally something that is independent from the psychophysical constituents of the person; it would be independent of both body and mind. This type of self or soul is definitely not accepted by any Buddhist school.

However the Buddhists' position as to the identity of the individual is explained in terms of the five aggregates. Even on this there is a divergence of opinion within the Buddhist schools themselves. Some schools of Buddhism will accept the identity of the individual or the identity of the person from within the five psychophysical constituents, something identifiable either with the collective or one of the individual aggregates. This is different from another category of Buddhist schools that accept the personal identity of the individual only in terms of dependence upon the five aggregates. It is not identifiable either with the collective of aggregates or any of the individual aggregates; it is seen purely in relation or as a dependent phenomenon.

One of the non-Buddhist ancient Indian schools has a conception of the soul which according to them; the soul is co-extensive with the body of the individual. In this concept although the soul is independent of the body but is co-extensive such that when the body grows, the soul also grows. When a child grows ... increase in its size. There is such a conception.

What we find in Buddhism is that the whole motivation behind this complex analysis of the nature of reality is to try and see if it is possible to fulfill one's basic aspiration to seek happiness and overcome suffering. The very analysis of the nature of reality is connected with a purpose and that purpose is to seek fulfillment of this basic aspiration. Through analysis of the nature of reality and through developing one's insight and awareness, the idea is that one will be in a better position to seek happiness and the causes of happiness while overcoming suffering and prevent the causes of suffering. Because of this Buddha in his first sermon taught the doctrine of the Four Noble Truths. In some sense one could say that the doctrine of the Two Truths arises from the doctrine of the Four Noble Truths.

One could roughly say that when we are discussing about the nature of the Two Truths in some sense we are in a philosophical domain or realm. We are not talking about a religious idea. However when we go on to a discussion of the Four Noble Truths then we are talking about something that is directly related to our experiences of pain, pleasure, suffering and happiness. We are then talking within the realm of religion or spirituality. So although one could make an arbitrary distinction between the two, the separation of the two, however when we talk about the Four Noble Truths we are talking about a means and a way of overcoming suffering and means and ways of achieving happiness. When we are talking about experiences of pain and pleasure we are talking about events and phenomena which are directly related with the law of causality; pain

and pleasure do not come into being from nowhere or without any cause. They come into being as the result of causes and conditions.

Although we are talking about something that is a spiritual matter, something related to our spiritual life, yet at the same time we can not totally divorce it from a discussion of the nature of reality. Because in order to understand fully how the causal mechanism works that gives rise to suffering and happiness, we have to understand the natural laws of causation. In order to understand that fully, we have to understand the nature of reality. So we are already in the realm of the Two Truths. One can not really make such a separation.

One of the reasons why this is such an intimate connection between the teachings on the Two Truths and the Four Noble Truths is that the deeper one understanding of the Two Truths the deeper and more refined becomes one's understanding of the interrelationships between the Four Noble Truths. One is also in a stronger position to overcome seeming contradictions that might arise in one's understanding of the Four Noble Truths. On the other hand if one has a rather superficial knowledge of the Two Truths or if one lacks an understanding of the Two Truths, then one's understanding of the Four Noble Truths will remain on a very superficial level. One's understanding may only be on the level of everyday reality such that if one tries to probe deeper then one will confront constantly situations where one simply can not understand or come up with seeming contradictions.

For example if one reads the Madhyamika writings by Candrakirti one finds that because of Candrakirti's very advanced and very highly developed understanding of the doctrine of the emptiness of inherent existence or inherent reality, he's whole understanding of the Four Noble Truths is very sophisticated and deep. One finds that because of his understanding of emptiness his identification of the fundamental ignorance and its mode of apprehension is very different. Because of this and his whole understanding of the nature of derivative delusory states along with their interactions is again very deep. Because of this his conception of True Cessation is much deeper and because of this his understanding of the true nature of the path that leads to such cessation is also very deep. So one sees that one's understanding of the Two Truths deepens one's understanding of the nature of the Four Truths. As one's understanding of the delusory states of one's mind deepens then also one's understanding of the nature of suffering and the basic unsatisfactory nature of existence also deepens.

One of the principal implications of the teachings on the Four Noble Truths is that pain and pleasure or suffering and happiness come into being as the result of the interactions of causes and conditions. They do not come into being without any cause or from nowhere nor do they come into being because they were created by some external force or absolute being. Nor do they come into being as a result of some totally unconnected or unrelated cause. The moral one should take from the teachings on the Four Noble Truths is that pleasure and pain, suffering and happiness come into being only and merely as a result of their related causes and conditions.

What we see in the teachings on the Four Noble Truths is two sets of causation; the causation between suffering and its origin and the causation between cessation and the path. When these two sets of causation are further elaborated then we find the teachings on the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination. The whole causal mechanism that gives rise to suffering and existence in the samsaric world when it is elaborated in its

fullest form one has the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination starting with fundamental ignorance and so on. Similarly when you try to understand the mechanism that leads to in some sense the unwinding of samsara, putting an end to samsara one finds the reverse order of the Links of Dependent Origination. So the teachings on the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination are in some sense elaborations on the teachings of the Four Noble Truths.

In the sutras where Buddha taught the sermon on the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination he made the statement, “Because there was the cause, the effects ensued. Because the cause was produced, the effect was engendered. For example because there was ignorance, then the volitional actions followed”. Asanga in his *Abhidharmasamuccaya*, *The Compendium of Manifest Knowledge*, when he elaborates and comments on these three statements, he identifies three characteristics of dependent origination. He states that these characteristics are that dependent origination entails that effects do not come into being as result of being created by an external agency, force or some entity’s design nor do they come into being due to a permanent, eternal cause, but rather come into being only as the result of related causes and conditions. So these three characteristics are fundamental features of the laws of dependent origination. So it becomes quite clear when Asanga makes such comments on the three cryptic statements by the Buddha.

In his *Fundamentals on the Middle Way* Nagarjuna raises a point and responds to the objections raised his opponents who are realists and criticize Nagarjuna’s philosophy as being nihilistic. They put the objection in the following manner. If as you [Nagarjuna] accept that all things and events are devoid of independent, intrinsic reality, intrinsic reality and existence, then that means that one can talk about reality only in terms of a mental construct, that means whatever the mind creates, becomes reality. If this is the case then there is no room for accounting for natural law in the relationship between causes and effects. If this is the case then there could not be any causal laws operating and if that is the case there can’t be any laws of Dharma. If this is the case then there can not be Sangha members practicing the Dharma and if that is the case then one can not have Buddhas, fully enlightened beings as there is nothing to practice. If this is the case then there are no Four Noble Truths; there is no possibility of the Three Objects of Refuge and so on and so forth. So in other words you [Nagarjuna] deny everything.

To this Nagarjuna responds by stating that on the contrary it is you [the Realists] if one pursues the line of argument that you adopt who would be faced with all those consequences. According to you since things and events possess intrinsic reality, they possess independent existence therefore they are absent the nature of dependence. If they are independent how can you talk about their being dependent on causes and conditions. If they are absent of dependence on causes and conditions then there are no causal laws operating and if that is the case then the charge of nihilism that you level against me will be reversed.

Candrakirti in his *Prasannapada* or *Clear Words* when he comments on this particular section of *Madhyamikakulakarika* or *Fundamentals on the Middle Way* states that what is being stated here by Nagarjuna is that when the Madhyamika’s talk of emptiness they are talking about emptiness in terms of dependent origination. It is not an emptiness in terms of mere nothingness; it is an emptiness in terms of dependent origination. It is only when one accepts emptiness can one fully account for the laws of

interdependent origination. Whereas if one denies emptiness then one denies interdependent origination therefore one denies the nature of dependence so therefore one can not account for any of the conventionally valid world of relativity. Therefore one would not be able to validate all of the Buddha's teachings like the Four Noble Truths, the Three Jewels, taking refuge so on and so forth. So what this discussion indicates is that it shows a clear connection between the understanding of the Two Truths on the one hand and how a deep understanding of the Two Truths contributes towards a deeper understanding of the Four Noble Truths.

Let us meditate for five minutes or so. One object of meditation that would be quite convenient is to examine one's own self of self. One thing that is certain for all of us who are here is the feeling that "I" exist that "I" as an individual exist here. So far as sense of self and existence is concerned it is quite incontrovertible. However underlying this sense of self, if we search for the true referent of that term self then we find we have this sense that there is something which is solid or concrete, something that is me, a core, my being. Now in our meditation let's seek whether that appearance is true or whether it is mere illusion.

## **Day Two**

As we discussed yesterday one of the unique features of human beings is this gift of the faculty of intelligence. As I pointed out yesterday, because we possess this faculty of intelligence, we humans unlike species of other life forms, have the capability to project into the future and think about the long and short term consequences of our actions. Also if you look at human history as a whole, we can see that human civilization is in some sense the product of this faculty of intelligence. Because it is through the application of this faculty of intelligence that human beings progress, expand our knowledge and increase the body of collective knowledge that we possess. So we have better means to relate to the external world and deal with situations. One could say that the whole history of human civilization is a history of the development and evolution of human intelligence.

When we examine the nature of the intelligence that we possess as human beings, we can see that to some extent intelligence is innate; it is there right from the beginning of one's birth. We could say it is natural to the human psyche yet at the same time we also see that there is a degree to which this natural intelligence can be enhanced and developed. What seems to be true is that there is this innate or natural potential in all of us to be able to enhance and develop this faculty of intelligence, to be able to expand the scope of knowledge.

When Buddhist teachings deal with the question of intelligence and its potential for enhancement, Buddhism talks about three different types of intelligence or understanding or one could say three levels of understanding. At the initial stage, the level of understanding is known as the understanding derived through listening or hearing. Here one's understanding is primarily based on an explanation, an accounting by someone else or one has read something and one's level of understanding is at the level of the intellectual understanding. When one contemplates on this level and deepens one's understanding through constant reflection and analysis then one can enhance this level of



intelligence to the second stage which is technically called in Buddhism understanding developed through contemplation or reflection. This is more reliable and also deeper.

If one pursues further analysis and reflection and constantly compares this with one's own experience, then through meditation this intellectual understanding is deepened and transformed into a sort of meditative understanding. This is the third level of understanding or wisdom which is called the wisdom or understanding derived through meditation. So we see that there is a progression from the initial stage of understanding based purely on reading or hearing, culminating in an understanding which is more experiential.

Similarly when we talk about intelligence, there are different types of intelligence. Certain types of intelligence could be described as sharp, some people are gifted with this kind of intelligence where they are capable of seeing things in a very fast way, very sharp. Yet at the same time that sharpness need not necessarily reflect a depth of intelligence. Some people may have a very sharp mind but it may be only at a surface level but then some people may not be as sharp and quick. They may take a longer time to understand but once they do develop an understanding it is much deeper. This type of intelligence is known as penetrating intelligence, which is not only to understand a subject or topic in a very penetrating way but also at the same time it, is capable of appreciating the wider dimensions or ramifications of that knowledge.

There are other types of intelligence where people have a vast knowledge such that whenever that person looks at a particular subject, that person is able to bring upon that understanding many different perspectives. So we find in the Buddhist literature discussions of such different types of intelligence such as sharp, penetrating, profound and vast knowledge. It is important to bear in mind that the nature of intelligence is very complex and varied.

When talking about the way in which we can apply this basic or natural faculty of intelligence that we possess in understanding the nature of reality, of course it is very important to apply it and probe whatever topic or subject it may be, to be able to see things in a very clear and correct way. It is very important to have a sort of alertness and precision but what is also important is to have another faculty, which is the faculty of single-pointedness of mind. This allows one to really be able to channel one's attention fully to whatever topic one may be analyzing. If one is able to single-pointedly focus one's mind on the particular subject then one will be able to in some sense fuse one's mind with the subject under analysis. In some sense one identifies with it and become one with it, the probing intelligence of the mind becomes united and one with the object under analysis. One will then be able to enhance one's understanding in a much more effective and powerful way.

This is particularly true when one is dealing with a topic that is either totally unfamiliar to one so that one can not naturally or spontaneously deal with it at ease or it may be a concept which is quite contrary to one's normal way of thinking. Under such circumstances then without this faculty of single-pointedness of mind, one may not be able to retain one's attention, one's focus on the subject. At the same time one may not be able to channel one's energy or attention to the subject. So if on the other hand one possesses and has developed this faculty of single-pointedness, which by the way is a natural quality one has within us, then one is in a very strong position to apply the clarity of intelligence and its alertness with a degree of stability and focus. It is because of this

that in ancient Indian spiritual traditions the need to unite the combined single-pointedness of mind and penetrating insight has been very extensively emphasized. In other words the union of tranquil abiding and penetrating insight has been emphasized in most of the ancient spiritual traditions of India.

We have by birth the natural capacity to enhance our intelligence. We possess that faculty naturally therefore we have the potential to enhance our intelligence, understanding and insight. Similarly we naturally possess within our psyche the faculty of single-pointedness, the fact that you can pay attention to a particular object, the fact that you can retain your attention or focus on to an object. This is an indication that the seed for single-pointedness of mind is within us. So this can be developed and should be developed so that you have advanced mental capabilities.

In Buddhism there are discussions and also techniques of how to enhance one's philosophical view through meditative techniques. Similarly there are techniques for enhancing one's meditative practices, single-pointedness of mind through a philosophical analysis. Now leaving this aside because these are techniques, which are described within the context of the Buddhist meditation, however we are talking about the practice of developing a single-pointedness of mind and enhancing intelligence in general. As this is relevant even to someone who doesn't believe in any particular religious tradition, what may be more appropriate for us is to discuss how it is possible to develop a single-pointedness of mind by choosing a particular object as the focus of your meditation, an object quite easy to imagine, conceive or something that is familiar to you.

Let us take an example of an object like a flower. When we talk about developing a single-pointedness of mind focused on the flower, we should not have the notion that what is being focused at is the visual image of the flower that is in front of you, the object itself. Of course one may gaze at the flower in order to have a clear, vivid image of the flower. But the direct object of one's meditation is not the real flower, the physical flower "out there" but rather the image of the flower that arises within one, not at the sensorial level but at the mental level. It is the image of the flower that arises within one's mind at the mental level. That is the object of one's meditation and one should be able to retain one's focus and attention on this object even when not looking at the flower at that moment.

When you begin the session developing the single-pointedness of your mind focusing on the example of the flower, you should begin by developing a very strong will and determination or resolve that you will maintain your attention, focused on that object, without any distraction. You should develop that strong resolve and then once you begin the actual meditation make every effort to try and retain that focus, not being distracted.

If you make a constant effort it is possible to be able to extend your ability to retain focus on the object of meditation. Through this way you will be able to increase your capacity for stability of mind. Along with it what is also required is developing the luminous quality of the subjective experience of the mind itself. It is not merely enough to have a vivid image of the object of your meditation; there should also be a sense of alertness, a sense of clarity. This is such that although your mind may be stable and undistracted but it may be beginning to sink, beginning to lose its alertness. This should not be the case. Along with the stability of mind, along with the ability to retain your attention, there should also be a high degree of alertness and subjective clarity.

When you are engaged in a meditation aimed at developing single-pointedness of mind and attempting to attain tranquil abiding, there are certain factors that obstruct your ability to make progress and attain single-pointedness of mind. There are two factors generally speaking, which are the main obstacles that prevent you from developing the stability of mind. These two obstacles are mental scattering or distraction, which is more general and then mental excitement, which is a form of attachment. These two obstacles, these two factors of mind are the key obstacles that hinder your development of the stability of mind. Similarly mental sinking is the main obstacle that hinders your development of alertness and clarity, subjective clarity of mind.

Among the two, mental distraction and mental excitement, generally speaking excitement is considered to be the more serious obstacle because it is a form of attachment. So for a practitioner whose primary aim or objective is to attain single-pointedness of mind, it is important to first of all identify these two key obstacles, mental excitement and mental sinking, and then seek means by which the practitioner can confront and counteract them.

Of course when we speak of these two primary obstacles, mental sinking and mental excitement, they are many different levels even within these two factors of mind. There are subtleties and coarse levels. Generally speaking the way in which the meditator or practitioner should confront them and counteract them is like the following. If you find in your meditation that your mind is beginning to be distracted, your mind is starting to lose its focus then that is an indication that you may be at a slightly more excited state. Under such circumstances the right antidote is to try to bring the state of your mind lower and try to withdraw your consciousness a bit more.

On the other hand if you find that you are beginning to lose the clarity and alertness, although there is no distraction it is beginning to lose its grip and its intensity, then it is an indication that mental sinking is arising. So under such circumstances the right antidote is to try to uplift your mind; try to make your mind more alert and awaken yourself.

So what we find is that the right approach is to try to find the right balance between the two, kind of an equilibrium. Of course what constitutes an equilibrium will differ from individual to individual depending upon different physical makeup of the person. It depends on many different factors. Age might make a difference and also the physical health of the individual may make a difference. In some cases even the food you may have eaten previously might make a difference; the diet may make a difference. There are many factors which need to be taken into account so therefore there is no standard sort of point where one can say this is the equilibrium everyone needs.

So far as this state of equilibrium is concerned it is something that every individual needs to find out for themselves through experience and through practice. You will arrive at a point where you can in some sense intuit that this is the right balance, the right equilibrium for me. Once you have found it, then it is important to retain it. It is through pursuing such a balanced approach that you will be able to advance and make progress in your meditation.

What is important here is to give a caution that especially at the beginning it is very important not to exert too much, not to put too much exertion in your meditation. What is important is not to put yourself in a situation where you may end up feeling put off by the experience. At the initial stage even though the session may be very short, let's

say one or two minutes, during which one can maintain one's focus on the object, that is fine. What is important is to pay more attention to the quality of the state of mind you arrive at in your meditation rather than trying to push yourself too hard in trying to have an extended period of meditation. Pushing too hard may lead to a situation where you are in some sense being dragged along in your meditation without much clarity but rather in a foggy state. This will lead you to acquire bad habits, which may in the future be quite difficult to overcome. So at the initial stage it is important not to put too much exertion but rather to pay more attention to the quality so that you can, even though initially it may be very short, be able to slowly extend the duration of your single-pointedness of mind. In this way whatever duration you manage to achieve will be of a very good quality. This is the way in which you should progress.

Sometimes it is also very beneficial if one could develop single-pointedness of the mind focused on one's own consciousness, the nature of one's own consciousness. This will have a very powerful effect but in order to do this first of all it is important to have some idea or some sort of image of what the object of meditation would be like, i.e. the consciousness. Of course when one says meditate on consciousness and take one's own consciousness as the object of meditation, one is not referring to the mere term "consciousness"; that's not the object of meditation. What is required here is to be able to take consciousness itself and focus one's attention upon it.

So in order to be able to do this first of all one needs to identify what the consciousness is. This is of course quite difficult. One technique, which can be used to assist one in enabling one to identify consciousness, is following a particular meditation. For example in one's normal, ordinary state, one finds oneself constantly immersed either in a sensory state or in a conceptual state where one is totally distracted or preoccupied by either external sensory objects, be it colors, shapes or odors, or internal feelings and sensations, be it pleasurable, painful or whatever.

In some sense one could say that since one's consciousness, since one's states of mind are so dominated by these sensorial or conceptual experiences that the basic nature of the consciousness itself, which is the mere luminosity, mere experience, is in some sense obscured or covered. This is such that it no longer becomes apparent to one; it is no longer manifest to one's experience, at least to one's conscious mind.

So in one's meditation, what one can do is to deliberately adopt a stance resolving that one will not allow oneself to become distracted by past experiences, recollections of past experiences nor allow oneself to become distracted about future events, with expectations and hopes. Rather one retains one's focus, the focus of one's mind and consciousness only on the experience of the present moment. When one starts practicing in this manner, of course it is difficult, but slowly and gradually one may be able to distance one's mind from recollections and memories of the past as well as expectations and anticipations projected into the future. One will be able to retain one's awareness fully to the present and through this way slowly begin to have a glimpse of a certain vacuity. When one takes the path and the future out of the stream of consciousness, what one experiences is this vacuity.

Through one's practice one will be able to extend that experience of vacuity. At the initial stage it may only be a glimpse or a momentary experience but slowly and gradually one will be able to extend that experience. When one extends that experience gradually and slowly then the basic nature of the mind, which is the clarity and the

luminosity, will become more and more apparent to one, more and more manifest. One will then get to a point where when one encounters the term consciousness, it will give one a different meaning, a different sense. This experience is the one, which needs to be taken as the object of meditation when one is meditating on consciousness, developing single-pointedness focused on consciousness.

An analogy used often here is the example of murky water. When water with sediment is shaken it becomes murky. If one then lets the container rest without motion, slowly one will begin to see the sediment settle and the clarity of the water becomes more and more apparent. This is the analogy used to describe when one separates out the past and future anticipation from one's mind from the stream of consciousness. The vacuity is like the clarity of the water.

So far as this meditation on identifying the nature of consciousness is concerned, the technique that I just described; it does not require any religious presupposition or any particular belief in any religious ideas. It is universal; it is something that could be adopted by any person even a non-believer. Even in the case of a non-believer I think that pursuing such a meditation and through this meditation focused on the experiential luminous nature of the mind and developing single-pointedness of mind, may have a very positive beneficial effect on the individual. This is especially in terms of helping the person have a certain degree of the relief of stress.

For example in modern society the pace of life is so fast that it may be quite difficult to control the pace of events around one. However one possibility that the individual has is to take control over one's own response to that fast pace of life. By engaging in such meditative practices one can in some sense slow down and have a respite internally so that one no longer feels driven the mechanistic pace of life. Rather one exerts one's own control and one chooses to slow down the pace and also to seek respite. It is possible through this way to have less stress and have more relaxation in one's own mind. I think this is possible. This may also have beneficial effects enhancing one's natural capacity of intelligence as one can develop and enhance alertness of mind, clarity of thought and so on and so forth.

In the case of a religious believer, for example a Christian practitioner ... following single-pointedness of mind by taking the figure of Jesus as the object of one's meditation or the figure of Mary. Focused on that one can develop single-pointedness of mind. However this type of meditation is slightly different when one talks of meditation on love or compassion. In that context one is not talking about taking love or compassion as the object of meditation but rather one is talking about generating one's mind or consciousness in the nature of love or compassion. There is no subject-object duality. So in such meditations one's aim is to try to strengthen and enhance one's natural capacity for love and compassion. For example in the case of the meditation on love as well as the Christian meditation on love what one is trying to strengthen is one's own natural capacity for love and insure that in one's meditation on love that one's mind is not distracted or lax.

So one could say that as far as the meditative techniques for developing single-pointedness of mind are concerned it is truly a universal and common practice. Because of this in ancient India all the techniques having to do with developing single-pointedness of mind are known as methods and meditations common to Buddhist and non-Buddhist practitioners.

When one can combine one's faculty of intelligence with the faculty of single-pointedness, a powerful single-pointedness of mind then one's intelligence acquires a very penetrating power or ability. When we speak about the need and the importance of enhancing and developing one's faculty of intelligence and having that intelligence penetrate into the nature of reality, it is important to bear in mind for what purpose one is trying to enhance this capability. It is not purely out of academic interest or out of a sense of enjoyment; there must be a purpose. Otherwise one's intelligence might become trivial.

In the Buddhist context to the question of to what purpose does one enhance one's faculty of intelligence, the answer is that in order to bring about an internal transformation within the mind or to bring about an inner discipline one develops one's faculty of intelligence. However when we speak about internal transformation and inner discipline, I personally feel that it is actually the states of emotion, which directly bring about the transformation. For example in the case of positive transformation, it is emotional factors like compassion, love, trust and faith, which directly and actually bring about the transformation. The role of intelligence is to complement or reinforce the emotional factors. In the case of compassion, love and so forth, they are in some sense drawn out and reinforced by the factor of intelligence. Through intelligence one understands the value and importance of compassion and through intelligence one understands the need for trust. One understands the grounds under which one can trust one's spiritual wellbeing to someone. Through one's intelligence one understands the benefits and value of compassion and the need for compassion. One sees an intimate interplay or dynamic between one's faculty of intelligence on the one hand and the various positive emotional factors which intelligence brings forth and enhances within one.

I feel that these types of emotions are in some sense rooted in reason and are valid experiences. So generally when we say don't be emotional there is the idea that emotions are negative. But it is important to make a distinction between two types of emotion. There are of course negative emotions like anger, hatred, strong attachment and so on. These are negative and also quite different from emotions like love, compassion and so on in that the former emotions are instinctual, impulsive, reactive and arise without reason. They are destructive as well so when we talk about emotions it is important to make a distinction between the positive ones and the negative ones. The positive emotions as I explained earlier, when these are complimented by intelligence then true internal transformation can take place.

Similarly when we look at our sense of self and our sense of ego, we find that we have naturally within us a very powerful, strong concrete sense of a self as it is the core of our existence. One's whole attitude or perception of the world in some sense reflects this sense of self and this strong sense of self is a grasping at the inner being or the self is very egoistic, projecting one's view of the world. This sort of egoistic grasping at a sense of self leads to all sorts of complications. It leads to strong emotions, deluded states of mind, frustrations, sufferings and so on. This is definitely a negative sense of self.

On the other hand we can have positive senses of a self, which in some sense arise as a result of constant reflection and deep thought. For example in the context of Buddhism, the scriptures tell us that all sentient beings possess the Buddhature, there is within us by birth this germinal seed for attaining full enlightenment. Also there is the

fact that the ultimate nature of the mind is emptiness, the fact that clarity and luminosity are the essence of the mind which is totally untainted. Based on these reflections and also the fact that oneself at this juncture as a human being has all the intellectual and mental capabilities of understanding what is the correct path and by pursuing it one has the ability to activate the Buddhature within one so that one can fulfill one's altruistic aspiration to help other sentient beings. So based on these considerations then one can develop a strong sense of confidence that one can achieve full enlightenment, one can do this for the sake of all sentient beings. This sense of self is positive and more one thinks about these reasons, the more one reflect on the underlying reasons the stronger this positive sense of self will become which is in marked contrast to the earlier sense of self which is deluded, unfounded and egoistic. So one can see even within the sense of self there are positive and negative senses of self just as with the emotions.

To sum up Buddhism the objective or the purpose of developing the faculty of intelligence is to bring about an internal transformation. The ultimate purpose of bringing about such an internal transformation is for a Buddhist practitioner to seek enlightenment or to seek nirvana, freedom from cyclic existence. Further then a Buddhist practitioner seeks full awakening not just for one's own sake but also for the sake of all sentient beings. So what we see is that at the initial stage the motivating factor that brings about internal transformation is really this genuine desire to seek freedom from the bondage of suffering and cyclic existence. At the second stage the motivating factor is the altruistic attitude and aspiration to seek full enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. In both of these cases it is the faculty of intelligence that compliments and makes these motivations effective and powerful.

It is with this background that one should then look at the fundamental Buddhist teachings on the Four Noble Truths as the whole framework of the Four Noble Truths is setting a context within which a spiritual trainee can use their natural capacities towards fulfilling their spiritual aspirations. This aspiration is to obtain freedom from suffering.

In brief the essence of the teachings of the Four Noble Truths is the following. What we don't desire is suffering and pain. Where does suffering come from? From its origin or source. So the first two truths have to do with suffering and its origin. What we all seek and naturally aspire to attain is happiness.

When we talk about happiness in the context of spiritual practice like aspiring to attain liberation from samsara, our conception of happiness is not confined to ordinary pleasurable sensations alone. In fact those pleasurable sensations which in worldly terms are known as happiness are in the true sense of the word not experiences of joy but rather transient and unreliable experiences. These experiences can easily turn into suffering. So the true happiness one is seeking is the total freedom from suffering and even the potential for suffering. This freedom in Buddhist language is described as a state beyond sorrow or nirvana. The methods or the process by which an individual can arrive at such an ultimate joy or happiness or in other words the state beyond sorrow are called the true paths. Freedom and its cause, which is the path, are the last two truths, the truth of cessation and the truth of the path. They point out the causation between what we seek which is happiness and the conditions or causes that lead to such a state of happiness.

In other words the essence of the teachings of the Four Noble Truths is that it states that all things and events including one's own experiences of pain, pleasure, suffering, happiness and so forth come into being as the result of their causes and

conditions. If one does not desire suffering then the logical thing to do is to put an end to the processes that lead to suffering. On the other hand if it is happiness one seeks, then the logical thing to do is to seek the causes and the processes that lead to attaining that happiness. So this is the morale one should draw from the teachings on the Four Noble Truths.

In the sermon, which is the teachings on the Four Noble Truths when the Buddha taught the individual truths, he taught them in terms of four characteristics each. So let us first deal with the characteristics of the First Truth which is the Truth of Suffering. One can speak in terms of three characteristics or four characteristics. For convenience sake let us say three characteristics. Suffering is described in terms of three characteristics of impermanence or transitory nature, unsatisfactoriness and selflessness.

When we reflect on the first characteristic of suffering which is impermanence or the transient nature of existence, of course there are two levels, the coarse and the subtle levels. At the gross level from one's own experience one knows that every aspect of one's life and all the conditions of one's existence, be it one's own belongings, shelter and so on which one requires for one's survival, are transient in the sense that they are finite. None of them can last eternally and this is a fact we all know. However when one relates to them sometimes one totally forgets their transient nature, we ignore this fact.

For example when one desperately want something, when one covets something one feels as if that object, whatever it may be, holds the answer to all of one's happiness. One feels as if one attains this object, all of one's life will be no problem at all and one would in some sense obtain eternal happiness. There is this sense and one invests so much into the task of obtaining it. So in some sense one does forget occasionally the finite nature of one's own existence. Not only are all these conditions, be it wealth, friends, health or so on, finite but also the very being for whose purpose these are sought itself is also finite, must come to an end. So it is important to reflect upon the transient nature even though it is at a gross level.

However more powerful contemplation is to reflect on the subtle nature of impermanence which is to appreciate that all things and events are transient in the sense that none of them have the ability or capacity to endure for more than an instance. Every phenomenon is undergoing changes in every instance and there is nothing that endures in the true sense of the word. This is one understanding of subtle impermanence. More powerful still is to appreciate the very fact that when something has come into being that in itself is an indication that it has the potential to cease. In some sense one could say that built within the cause of something's production there is also within the object the cause or mechanism for its cessation or demise. One can understand that the causes and conditions, which gave rise to its production, are the very causes and conditions, which plant the seeds for its disintegration or cessation. One should not have the notion that things come into being first, endure and then cease to exist. This is not the case. In order for a thing or event to come to an end there is no need for a further third factor to intervene and bring about that cessation as built within the very causal mechanism which produces the thing itself is the cause for its eventual demise or cessation. When one understands impermanence in such a profound way it will have a very liberating and powerful effect.

When one's understanding of the transient and impermanent nature of existence is brought to such a deep level then one will be able to draw out its full implications. So



long as an event or thing has come into being as the result of causes and conditions then that event or thing has no power over itself. It is not self-governing. In some sense it is under the power of other factors, in other words it is other-powered. It has no control over itself and it is governed by other factors. When this understanding is then applied in the context of meditation on the Four Noble Truths then one realizes that the suffering which is the unsatisfactory nature of one's own existence characterized by the nature of one's psychophysical existence, the five aggregates, and one's very existence is the product of causes and conditions. When one examines this further one begins to identify what those causes and conditions are and principal among them are one's karma, the volitional actions which lead to one's existence and the underlying delusions which motivated those karmic actions.

The delusory states if examined further have their roots in fundamental ignorance or avidya. This fundamental ignorance if one examines its nature, one finds that it is a distorted state of mind. It is a state of mind, which misapprehends the nature of reality; it conceives reality in a distorted way.

So through following this line of thought one comes to the realization that one's very existence is rooted in a distorted state of mind. Because it is a product of this distorted state of mind, so long as it remains chained to that cause, one will have no control over its forces. Just as one avoids a particular food grown from a poisonous plant, in one's own life since its primary cause is ignorance and karma and as long as one remains in such a state of existence then one's existence can not be characterized as joyful or satisfactory. Through this way one can understand the full meaning of the second characteristic of suffering which is the unsatisfactory nature of existence.

When we say that our very existence is in some sense the result of delusions and karma, it might give the impression to some people that there are these autonomous forces called karma and delusions somewhere out "there". This is a totally wrong impression. Let me clarify this statement that our very existence is a product of karma and delusion. We will leave aside for the time being the question of rebirth and previous lives before this present one.

Even within this lifetime we can from our own experience see the connection between how our varying states of existence and the delusory states with the actions that follow them are connected. As Chandrakirti said in his *Entering into the Middle Way*, first we have the innate sense of self and then we expand it by projecting a sense of mine. This is followed by grasping which then leads to the rotation of the cycle of existence. This process goes on without any control like a machine, which once started, is propelled on and on.

For example if we examine our own very existence and our own experience we find that underlying all of our experiences there is a strong sense of self spoken about earlier. There is a grasping or clinging to this core, to this inner being within ourselves which is felt to be the true referent of the notion of me or self. Our whole existence, our whole perception in some sense springs from this grasping, this clinging. From this strong identity of a self then we cling to our body and mind, which are in some sense the basis from which this sense of "I" or self arises. We begin to embrace our mind and body as "mine". In order to nurture and protect what you think is your mind and your body, you cling onto many factors of existence like shelter, food, companions, wealth and so on and so forth which you see as essential needs of the self. Thus the scope of your clinging

becomes expanded, becoming wider and wider. Along with this your emotional reactions increase towards events and people who you see as posing a threat to the things you consider yours. You feel anger and hatred towards people and things who you consider as threatening and attachment towards that which you perceive as helpful to your sense of self.

You can see how you fluctuate in your emotional reactions to different objects and persons based on what you project or perceive in their relationship to you. These fluctuating emotions be it attachment or hatred or anger, they impulsively lead you to certain actions either positive or negative. These actions then lead to further consequences leading to a chain reaction. So you see within this single lifetime or this present state that there is a complex nexus formed between your sense of self, your sense of “mine”, your clinging to various factors of existence and how they give rise to emotional responses in yourself leading to actions which cause new circumstances. You can see the nexus that is formed.

If this is the case we can then extend this kind of understanding of the connection between this type of life with the experiences of previous lifetimes and so on and so forth. One can in some sense apply the same scheme onto other lifetimes as well. It is in this way that one can understand the statement that our existence is the product of karma and delusions. (Break)

**Question:** There are numerous deities to whom one prays with great fervor. What is the relationship between the deities and emptiness? Do they exist only in a relative way?

**Answer:** Perhaps it important here to give a context to the position of deities in Buddhism as a whole. If one were to look at Buddhism in its general form, the sermons that the Buddha gave in public, according to these teachings there is no reference to any meditational deities or supernatural beings other than worldly devas like Brahma, Indra and so on. In the Mahayana sutras there mention of Bodhisattvas on high levels of realization, some of who are not in a human form.

However it is only when it comes to the discussion of tantric practice is there reference to supernatural beings or divine beings like meditational deities. If one looks at the idea of a meditational deity, tantra and the underlying reasons for it, one finds that one of the principal features of tantra is that in tantra one is engaging in a meditative practice where one’s whole purpose is based on a reflection of emptiness. This is not just of one’s ordinary self but also of one’s own perfected state. In some sense one deliberately adopt and assume an identity which is one’s own perfected state. Focusing on this one develops an identity, a sense of perception directed towards that image while at the same time acknowledging its empty nature.

So there is a discussion of this meditative method called deity yoga where there is a union between meditation of the visualization of the deity and being fully aware of its empty nature. What this implies is that there is no autonomous, independent form of a deity of a particular color, totally independent of the meditator. The implication is that there is no such external, independent deity.

However the meditator as he/she advances along the tantric path and gains progressively higher realizations becoming fully enlightened, in the tantric terminology this experience is described as the practitioner attaining the state of the particular deity.

For example if the meditational deity is Manjusri, one can say that the individual meditator has now attained the state of Manjusri.

With regard to such a deity in relation to emptiness, there is no reason why these deities should have a particular relationship with emptiness. As I pointed out earlier when one talks of emptiness, one is talking about a dual perspective of the nature of reality, the ultimate nature and the relative nature. So far as this dual aspect of the levels of reality is concerned, it is universal, common to all phenomena both things and events. As I pointed out earlier as far as emptiness is concerned, it embraces the entire expanse of reality including the Buddha and the state of nirvana.

**Question:** Inaudible

**Answer:** It is true that when people hear and come into contact with the Buddhist doctrine of no-self for the first time they often react by thinking that Buddhism denies the self and the very existence of the individual. If this is the case then who or what incarnates? This question naturally seems to arise. I would like to point out that personally I feel that so far as the existence of the individual or self is concerned, the fact that there is a being, an individual who creates karma, engages in actions, who faces the consequences of those actions, who perceives things and events, so far as to the existence of that individual being, I don't think there is any dispute between Buddhists and non-Buddhists. It is a universally accepted by both Buddhists and non-Buddhists that such an individual or being exists.

The dispute really lies on the question of in what manner does that being or self exist. What is the ontological status of that being? In what sense does this self or individual exist? As I pointed out yesterday, Buddhism as a whole rejects the idea that the self or individual is something independent from the mind-body aggregate, the self or being as being something separate from the psychophysical constituents such as the five aggregates. Buddhism rejects an external agent or eternal principle. All the schools of Buddhism deny this sort of a conception of the self or personhood.

Within the various Buddhist schools the highest school of Buddhist philosophical thought even rejects the possibility of identifying the self or the individual with any of its designated bases, be it body, mind or perception. However this highest school of Buddhism also accepts the reality of the individual or being and its continuum. The individual is beginningless and also endless. As far as the continuation of an individual being is concerned, it has come from beginningless time so there is not a denial of such a being or individual in any of the Buddhist schools of thought.

Since the nature of existence of the individual being or person seems to be a very important concern in many spiritual traditions of the world including Buddhism and since there are many possibilities of how to conceive of this person or self, we find in Buddhist philosophical literature discussions of various misconceptions regarding the true identification of the self. For example the Madhyamika literature lists four principal types of misconceptions regarding the identification of the self. The first is to conceive the self as something that is eternal, permanent, unitary and self-governing. This is at quite a gross level of mind. Another misconception identified by Buddhism is one which conceives the self in terms of an agent that is independent from the mind/body composite, something in the mode of a servant and its master. It conceives the relationship between

the self and the mind/body aggregate as like the relationship between a master and his servants.

A third misconception is where the self is conceived as part of the designated basis, self as ultimately identifiable either as the collective of the five aggregates or one of the individual five aggregates. The fourth which is the subtlest form of misconception is to conceive the self as having some sort of intrinsic identity that is not derived from the aggregates but rather has an intrinsic reality. Out of these four misconceptions, the first two are considered to be more gross conceptions of the self and these are more intellectually based misconceptions of the identity of the self. These two result from philosophical speculation and therefore are not found in persons who are not philosophically trained or in animals. They are not instinctual or innate feelings. However the last two forms of the misconception of the self are said to be innate and deeply ingrained in all of us.

**Question:** Over the next few days we will be required to have some imagination. As I am someone not familiar with imagination but clearly familiar with illusion, please explain the difference?

**Answer:** According to one scripture it is said that apart from highly realized and spiritually evolved beings on the levels of Arya bhūmis in meditative equipoise totally focused on emptiness, all other beings are always at some level of illusion. The reason for this is because ordinary sentient beings always have a perception of some form of intrinsic reality, some form of objective experience.

So although as I pointed out earlier, in ordinary states of consciousness one is always at some level of illusion, however within the illusions there are differences. Some forms of illusion although they are illusions from the perspective of emptiness, however they can have beneficial effects. They can be beneficial in bringing about certain desired state of mind within one. Therefore these types of illusions are deliberately cultivated and enhanced in one so that one can achieve the desired beneficial effects. Some types of illusions need to be eliminated from one's mind and so on.

To go back to the questioner's own concerns, over the next few days during the initiation one will be performing visualizations but on the part of the initiates what is of most importance is to continually keep in mind one's understanding of emptiness. One combines this understanding of emptiness with a strong feeling of altruism, a strong feeling of bodhicitta. Maintaining and cultivating these two factors is of most importance in an initiation.

**Question:** Does anything permanent exist?

**Answer:** There is a slight semantic problem here. When we use the terms permanence and impermanence in the Buddhist context, the way it is understood in Buddhist philosophy, they are defined in terms of whether or not the phenomenon in question is a product of causes and conditions; whether it is a composite or a non-composite. All things and events which are composite, i.e. products of causes and conditions, are said to be impermanent, transient and changeable. All phenomena, which are not subject to causes and conditions, are said to be permanent. So this is the basic definition.

So according to this definition let's take the example of a vase or pot. The pot is impermanent but the emptiness of the pot or vase would be permanent. But in some sense one can say that the emptiness of the pot is not permanent because if the object (the pot) on which the emptiness is qualified no longer exists then its emptiness no longer exists either. The standard example found in Buddhist philosophical literature is that of space. Buddhists define space as the mere absence of obstructive quality. One can say that space is permanent and eternal. Similarly one aspect of a human being is that it is not a horse. This "non-horseness" quality is said to be permanent but it is a quality of a human being by the fact that a human being is not a horse.

**Question:** You spoke of human intelligence as in some sense as the foundation of civilization. This would seem to imply that you believe that the mind has played a more important role in human evolution than the heart. Is it therefore that the reasoning faculty is to be valued over and above that of the creative, intuitive faculties?

**Answer:** To respond to the last part of the question first, it is difficult for me to say that there is a difference between the English definition of the term intelligence and the Tibetan equivalent *sherab*. However my premise for stating that it is the faculty of human intelligence which is the foundation of human civilization is the following. If we compare humans to other species, we know that there are other life forms on the planet who have had millions of years of evolution. So far as the fundamental instinct for seeking happiness and avoiding suffering is concerned, I would say that humans as well as other species are equal in having this instinctual sort of drive or aspiration.

Similarly based on this drive both humans and other species seek ways and means to fulfill that aspiration, to avoid suffering and to bring about happiness. However we wouldn't call the simple processes of survival and reproduction civilization. We would call the evolutionary process of human progress civilization because there we see the very direct role played by the factor of intelligence, which is not found in the historical evolution of other species. This is the main premise on which I base my idea.

For example one principal difference between humans and other species is that some marine biologists believe that whales may have a fundamental language; they can communicate with each other. But I would conjecture that in terms of the range and scope of such a language there wouldn't be differences in the same species of whales from different parts of the world divided by geography.

This is not the case with human beings. Human beings of course have the natural capacity for communication and develop language. But human beings by using their intelligence have developed a multiplicity and diversity of languages. Though all individuals have this capacity biologically speaking different environments and geographical locations has given rise to the diversity and multiplicity of languages which appear in some cases to be independent of each other.

**Question:** If it is necessary for a person practicing meditation to have a teacher to orient and guide them, how does one know that one has met with an appropriate master?

**Answer:** First of all we be clear on what is meant by meditation practice. In some forms of meditation practice such as the one I described earlier, developing the single-pointedness of mind focused on consciousness, in such a practice I feel it is possible that one can pursue the practice by reading on one's own without seeking guidance from a

guru. It is possible to make progress simply by reading, developing one's understanding and practicing.

However if one wishes to engage in more advanced religious practices then of course it is very beneficial to have a guru. Now as to the question of how does one know that one has met the right guru or is qualified, one reads in the biographies of the great masters of the past that when a spiritual trainee has met the guru with a karmic connection with the trainee, there are instances of very moving experiences. They feel immediately drawn to the guru, deeply inspired. They feel in some sense a deep spiritual experience with them. So the indications could be finding someone most inspiring, someone whose teachings affects you most and so on. These may be indications.

However as to the point of whether or not the person is qualified to be a guru, first of all it is important on one's part to be familiar with what are the standard requirements on the part of a teacher. What are the basic, minimum qualifications that someone must possess in order to be a spiritual teacher? These one can read from texts. Once one is familiar with these qualifications then use that standard to judge the person to whom one is considering as taking up as one's teacher. Not only test this once or twice but for a long time examine the person and his or her behavior. It is through such examination that one can make a decision whether that person is qualified or not.

**Question:** For what karmic reasons was it decided to hold the Kalachakra initiation in Barcelona?

**Answer:** Unfortunately as far as the answer to that question is concerned, until one becomes fully enlightened there is no hope to understand. Of course one can guess, one can speculate, one can rationalize but so far as to the detailed understanding of the various connections of karma that led to the holding of Kalachakra here is concerned. Until one has eliminated all obstructions to knowledge in one's mind, one can not possible realize it. It is for this reason that in the Buddhist scriptures it is said that so far as understanding the minute details of the workings of karma is concerned, it can only be known by a fully enlightened mind.

**Question:** What is the position of women in Buddhism?

**Answer:** When we think about the position of Buddhism about the question of gender as a whole it is important to bear in mind that there are various perspectives within Buddhism itself. One perspective is that of monasticism and as far as this perspective is concerned although in terms of opportunity, there is equal opportunity for men and women for full ordination. However in terms of seniority a fully ordained monk is considered in some sense higher than the fully ordained nun. So from a feminist point of view of course this reflects a bias based on gender. Of course there have been complaints about this but as I pointed out earlier, as far as the opportunities are concerned, there is an equal opportunity.

Being mindful of this bias and one could say male domination in the practice of monasticism of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition; I have wanted to convene a meeting attended by various members of the Sangha. I want the meeting held soon having representation from countries like Thailand, Sri Lanka and so on. Unfortunately although we have been able to collect papers for various would-be participants we have not been able to hold the meeting and look at these issues. Of course there is quite diversity, some

are orthodox and some are quite progressive and liberal. However I'm very committed to the idea of a meeting so that some of these customs which reflect gender distinctions can be corrected. One of my reasons for advocating and pointing out the need to reassess some of the aspects of monasticism and the monastic tradition is based on the fundamental standpoint of Tibetan Buddhism as a whole. Since Tibetan Buddhism perceives itself as a complete form of Buddhism embracing not just monastic practice but also general Mahayana Buddhism and esoteric, tantric Buddhism, the standpoint is that from within the precepts of Vinaya, Mahayana and Vajrayana if there are any conflicts or contradictions, then it is the higher precepts such as the Mahayana and Vajrayana which need to take precedence and modification is to be made in the lower precepts. This is my premise from which I am arguing that there is a need to modify some aspects of the monastic tradition.

In the general Mahayana Buddhism, from this perspective there are certain aspects of thought where there appears to be a gender distinction. For example in Mahayana Buddhism in the sutra tradition the bodhisattva who is at the point of becoming fully enlightened, a characteristic used to describe them is that they are male. Similarly in the first three levels of tantra again in the practices and beliefs are certain instances of gender distinction.

However from the standpoint of Highest Yoga tantra which is considered by the Tibetan Buddhist tradition as being the apex of Buddhist practice and tradition, there is no bias what so ever. Not only both male and female can become fully enlightened in both forms of gender, but also during initiation or in sadhanas there is the need for representation from both male and female deities. Similarly in Highest Yoga tantra there seems to be a greater emphasis placed on respecting women. For example in the tantric vows, one of the root precepts is not to disparage women. The disparagement of women is considered to be an infraction of one of the root precepts. So there is a greater sensitivity to the position of women. Also according to Highest Yoga tantra both in male and female forms can practitioners attain full enlightenment within their current lifetime.

Of course if one thinks about it, definitely it makes sense because in Highest Yoga tantra the main emphasis is placed on understanding the subtle nature of mind and body. So far as the gender distinction is concerned the distinctions between men and women are only physiologic and are relevant only at the gross bodily level. Whereas in the Highest Yoga tantra where one is involved in practices aimed at and developing perfecting the subtle level of physiologic energies, the channels and so on. At this level gender distinctions make no sense, as it has no relevance what so ever. Therefore Highest Yoga tantra makes no distinction between male and female practitioners as far as the potential for attaining full enlightenment in this lifetime is concerned.

**Question:** Because the Buddhist deities are so strange; many colors, arms, several heads, how can an intelligent person regard these as anything other than superstitions?

**Answer:** You are quite right. Unless one is fully aware of the underlying philosophy of tantra and also the whole model process of procedure on the tantric path, the way in which various techniques are used to enhance the psychological and physiological aspects of the practitioner, these deities seem rather weird. In some sense they can be seen as mere products of imagination or superstition.

However when a practitioner who is mindful of the deeper significance and symbolism of the various aspects of these deities as well as their mandalas and so on, engages in the practice of tantra related to a particular meditational deity, what seems to be true is that within that practitioner's mind a positive transformation occurs. The practitioner is able to enhance their compassion, tolerance, awareness, insight and so on. So this indicates that when these practices are engaged in with full knowledge of the symbolism and its significance, it does have certain power.

**Question:** You have said in a book that mental suffering is worse than physical suffering. What do you think of Western psychiatric methods? How can one help others with great mental suffering? What can these people do for themselves to get out of their difficulties?

**Answer:** Generally speaking various forms of therapeutic practices which have evolved in the West over the last several decades in psychiatry, as these practices have naturally evolved as a response to coping and dealing with emotional problems, in general they are very beneficial. I must admit that I have not studied any of them so I can not claim any deep familiarity with any of these practices. I don't have much to say either than making this general point.

As to the last two questions, when one deals with how best to help people with psychological and emotional problems, what is most important is to be very sensitive to the context and how each individual case differs from another. One has to take into account the person's background particularly the person's spiritual inclinations, whether or not the person is a believer, whether or not rebirth figures into their world view and so on. It is important to be sensitive to that aspect of the individual so that one is in a better position to help them overcome their problems.

First of all when practicing Buddhists think about happiness and the wellbeing of sentient beings, one attempts to embrace within one's aspiration for happiness all sentient beings. There is an all-inclusiveness, all-encompassing aspect to one's aspiration to seek happiness. Secondly there is the idea that one has had beginningless lifetimes and this current life is not the only one. So when one has such a world-view where the interconnectedness of all sentient beings is accepted, where one's aspiration for the happiness of others is part of one's outlook, where one's outlook is not confined to this as the only life then when one has such a perspective a particular suffering which may be very real, intense or acute however within such a perspective, this suffering is seen as part of a wider context. One does not see it in isolation so that one does not feel to be in a fix where one feels that this is everything; everything is at stake as far as one's own well-being is concerned, a make or break situation. This sort of anxiety, this acute sense of suffering is lessened, the sting is taken out.

Similarly with the idea of karma, the idea of rebirth, recognizing the destructive nature of karma and the delusions and recognizing the basic unsatisfactory nature of existence, all of these considerations play an important role in assisting the practitioner to cope with adverse circumstances and situations. As explained earlier as a result of one's deepened understanding of the transient nature of existence, the impermanent nature of existence, one realizes that one's very existence is in some sense the product of karma and delusions. Delusions have their root in fundamental ignorance, avidya. This fundamental ignorance is a state of misconception, a totally distorted state of mind where one



misapprehends the nature of reality. One apprehends things and events as well as one's own self as possessing a form of intrinsic existence or intrinsic identity. One then clings to one's self-existence or own-being.

Once one realizes this then one understands that it is only by seeing through the illusion of this ignorant mind, in other words it is only by developing an insight into the nature of the emptiness of self-existence that one learns that true liberation can take place. In some sense the process of unwinding begins with insight into the realization of selflessness. It is because of this Buddha taught the third characteristic of suffering which is selflessness, no self or no-soul. When one understands the inter-relationship between impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and selflessness in such a manner that what one realizes is that the first two characteristics, impermanence and unsatisfactoriness, give rise to an insight into the suffering nature of one's existence. One's very existence is ultimately unsatisfactory; it is ultimately deluded. By then reflecting on the third characteristic, the characteristic of selflessness, one receives a vision of a new alternative, an alternative way of existing. Therefore this gives rise to hope that there is a way out. Otherwise if one's understanding of existence is confined only to the first two characteristics, impermanence and unsatisfactoriness then it could lead to a loss of hope, a sense of discouragement. A sense of hopelessness, thinking that one's existence is only suffering but the characteristic of selflessness shows one the way out. In some sense it points one towards the way of freedom. So it is through this way that one begins to develop a genuine sense and genuine aspiration to seek freedom from suffering.

When the entire teachings of the Four Noble Truths are summarized one can understand it within the formula of the Four Seals of Buddhism. First is that all composite phenomena are impermanent or transient. This points towards the first characteristic of suffering which is that all things and events are transient, impermanent or subject to change. The second principle or seal states that all contaminated phenomena are unsatisfactory and this points towards the second characteristic, which is the underlying unsatisfactory nature of existence, itself. As I pointed out earlier this insight is gained on the basis of understanding that one's very existence is in some sense a product of karma and delusion. The third seal states that all phenomena are empty and absent of all self-existence. This points towards the hope that I spoke of earlier, pointing a way out, showing one an alternative way of existence by pointing out the doctrine of selflessness. It is through the realization of selflessness, through generating the insight into the selfless nature of things and events that one can ultimately attain a state of freedom, a state beyond sorrow or nirvana. Therefore the fourth seal is that nirvana or cessation is true peace.

In brief all that I have said over the last two days points towards this simple statement that for a practicing Buddhist, what is the ultimate aspiration? The ultimate aspiration is the attainment of nirvana, freedom from suffering, the state beyond sorrow. It is towards this aim that a practicing Buddhist would employ the faculty of intelligence and generate insight and understanding of the Four Noble Truths, the inter-relationship between the Four Noble Truths and their underlying causal principle. To reach that understanding one needs to understand the Two Truths. So it is through the understanding and developing insight into the Four Noble Truths and the Two Truths while at the same time bringing about internal transformation that the practicing Buddhist seeks to fulfill the ultimate aspiration which is to attain nirvana or the freedom from suffering.

As I pointed out earlier the ultimate aspiration or aim is to attain nirvana, the freedom from suffering. However when we talk about the freedom from suffering and the freedom from cyclic existence, we are talking of a manner of existence which is cyclical, situated within a cycle. The very concept of a wheel or cycle entails beginninglessness. One can not state that any certain point on the circle is where the circle begins. The idea of a circle or wheel is that there is an infinity, one can keep going around and around. In the idea of the samsaric cycle, the cycle of existence as I pointed out earlier, even when one is experiencing the consequences of an action, which one has done in the past, one has many instances of a sense of I or of ego arising. This gives rise to emotional responses which then lead to positive or negative actions. This leads to further consequences so there is an interlinked chain in the cycle so that even when one cycle is not completed, the seeds for other cycles are being planted. So there is a vicious kind of a cycle going around and around all of the time.

In an ultimate sense there is no real beginning because although ignorance is seen as the first of the twelve links of dependent arising, ignorance itself comes from another factor and so on and so forth. However when one tries to understand the very process or mechanism which leads any individual to take rebirth in samsara and which allows the individual to put an end to the whole cycle, one has to try and understand in a manageable way. Therefore one takes a starting point and the fundamental ignorance is seen as the starting point. Just as ignorance leads to volitional action and then on to consciousness and so on and so forth, similarly when the practitioner embarks on the path, the task of putting an end to the cycle, it is only by ending or cutting the earlier link that the connections with the subsequent link is severed. By putting an end to ignorance, one puts an end to volitional action. By putting an end to volitional action, one puts an end to consciousness and so on and so forth.

Within the idea of the wheel of life one can understand both the process through which one exists in samsara and also one can appreciate the possibility of a reversal of the cycle. One thus puts an end to the rotation of the cycle. Let's meditate for four to five minutes reflecting upon what we have discussed about the Four Noble Truths.

### **Day Three**

During the last two days we have been talking a lot about the importance of bringing about within oneself internal transformation, transformation within the mind and heart through practice and through meditation. To sum up, in Buddhism it is stated that all of one's experiences, be they pleasurable or painful, if examined for the processes leading to the experience of suffering and pain, one finds at the root of all those experiences is an undisciplined, untamed and disturbed state of mind. Similarly if one examines the process and causes and conditions that lead to experiences of happiness and joy one finds at the root of those lays a disciplined, tamed and also peaceful state of mind. Ultimately one's experiences of joy, pain, suffering and happiness are results from either a disciplined or undisciplined states of mind. This is the crucial point that Buddhism makes.

Similarly if one examines the nature of all things and events, all things and events that either have direct or indirect relevance to one's experience of pain or pleasure, such as one's body, environment, physical universe, in other words all things and events, are

ultimately rooted in a state of mind. For example as I pointed out yesterday, one's experiences of suffering result from negative and delusory states of mind which in turn are motivated by volition. Volition in turn leads to actions and so on which are themselves rooted in a distorted state of mind. So one finds that ultimately all things and events, the whole expanse of reality that has any relation to one as an individual, one's experiences of joy, happiness, suffering or pain are all in some sense products of mind, different states of mind. These do not come about without any cause and they do not come about by just any cause rather there is an intimate connection between causes and their fruits. So one finds that ultimately all experiences are products of different states of mind or consciousness.

To continue, what we find is that ultimately one's experiences of joy or happiness are the result of a disciplined state of mind, peaceful or positive states of mind whereas one's experiences of pain and suffering, the undesirable consequences are fruits of undisciplined, negative states of mind. One finds that in one's everyday experience the mind plays a very important role in governing one's very existence. Not only this but also when one engages oneself on a spiritual path trying to bring about the internal transformation that I spoke about earlier, even there one finds again that one's mind plays an important role. It is only through using factors of the mind, different faculties of mind and different ways of thinking, attitudes and thought processes that one can bring about this internal transformation. One can transform from negative states of mind to positive and peaceful states of mind. So that even when it comes to the spiritual path and spiritual practice, mind still plays a dominant role.

Similarly from the Buddhist point of view at the resultant stage when the individual eventually attains full awakening, again here mind plays a tremendously important role. Buddhism defines or characterizes full enlightenment in terms of a level of mind or the perfection of the mind. When we speak about the perfected states of Buddha's body, speech and mind we are talking about the qualities of Buddha's enlightened mind. What becomes crucial in understanding Buddhism be it the nature of one's experience, the human condition or the nature of the path leading to cessation or characterizations of the fully enlightened state, what is clear is the understanding of the nature of mind.

The question arises when discussing the nature of the self and the importance of the mind, what is meant by the mind? How is it defined? Here again it is important to bear in mind that when Buddhism talks about mind or *sems*, one needs to take into account that one is talking about a complex concept. There are different levels of consciousness or mind, many different levels of subtleties. At the gross levels one could say that mind or consciousness has a very intimate relationship with one's physical body. Just as the scientists point out there is a close correlation between one's brain, the chemical processes in one's brain, one's thought processes and levels of consciousness at the gross level. Also one can see through the evolutionary theory how the development of the brain goes hand in hand with the development of consciousness. There is no contradiction in accepting these facts. Also there seems to be a correlation between the size of the brain of a particular species and the level of intelligence in that particular species. This is a fact and there is no contradiction in accepting this fact. What seems to be true is that at the gross levels there seems to be a close correlation between levels of consciousness and the physiological/biological makeup of the body.

As I pointed out earlier, at the gross level there is a close correlation between consciousness and the brain or the body. In order to have a conscious event, for example a visual perception, it requires the collection of certain conditions like the visual object, the eye-organ, the sensory faculties and so on. Through the interaction or aggregation of these conditions it gives rise to an instance of sensory experience. This is something that we can know through our experience.

However the question arises, what is it that makes this particular experience, this particular cognitive event to possess the nature of experience, that experiential quality or the clarity of the subjective experience? Of course Buddhists would explain that in terms of its preceding cause. When one speaks of causation here one needs to bear in mind two types of causes. One is known as the substantial cause and this is the particular cause that turned into the effect. There are also cooperative causes, which act as conditions or circumstances that give rise to that particular effect.

When we talk about the luminous, mere experiential quality of the consciousness, we need to trace its cause to its preceding moment. Otherwise if we were to accept that pure matter, purely a physical entity could give rise to an entity of consciousness which is so distinct in its nature from matter then that would lead to all sorts of inconsistencies and intolerant positions.

The complex question really is how do we understand the mind-body relationship? Of course it is an area where there are still many unresolved questions even from the scientific point of view. Much research is being done into the study of neurons and how they give rise to states of consciousness and so on. One could say that this research is in some sense trying to understand the relationship between consciousness and matter or consciousness and the body. I feel that in this area there are still many open questions and I feel that further research can be done.

However one thing we need to bear in mind is that the scientific methodology that is used currently at this stage of understanding and the conception of scientific methodology is very much based on a model of investigation which is entirely based on the idea of physical reality. It is very much characterized by methodological ideas like quantification, measurement and these sorts of parameters. Therefore I wonder whether this current scientific methodology can fully embrace studies on the nature of consciousness. For example some scientists when they are asked the question, is it possible that conceptual thought occurs in the brain and the occurrence of that particular thought can then cause a chemical change within the brain which in turn leads to further thought processes? Strangely enough I found that some scientists hold a dogma that since only through the process of chemical reactions that take place in the brain that thought and consciousness occurs, they see no possibility of conceiving the reverse process. To give such an answer is not true to the spirit of scientific understanding. To be scientific is to be open-minded and one should leave possibilities open.

Part of the limitation I feel comes from the conception of scientific methodology, which is very much dominated by the idea of reality being exhausted by physical reality. This then leads to many complications. However when we employ such investigative methodology using quantification, measurements, calculations and so on, and through such methods when we do not find anything, this in itself can not entail that the object of analysis when searched for in such a manner that the object of analysis does not exist.

For example let's take the question of personal identity or any other abstract entity like in the case of Buddhism selflessness. Also let us use the example of the Buddhist concept of impermanence or the transient nature. There is no way that by using the current scientific methodology that we can measure or quantify these concepts. There is no way to find personal identity nor can we find impermanence nor selflessness. However this is not to say that these things do not exist. Of course they exist though we can not find impermanence per se or selflessness itself. Because they exist we reflect on them, we meditate on them and when we enhance our understanding of them we can feel within ourselves a transformation, the effect they bring in us. So these are indications that they do exist, not necessarily in physical terms. I feel it is important here to make a distinction between what is not found and what is found not to exist. This is a very important distinction we must make. Simply because something is not found doesn't necessarily entail that thing does not exist.

According to Buddhism as you may have surmised by now there is the notion that mind and body although they are dependent on each other very intimately, however in terms of their continuum they possess separate continuums. These are traceable through their substantial causes. For example if one traces the continuum of one's physical body, one's present body at this time in history, it came from the previous evolution of bodily forms. If one were to trace the continuum of this body, it came from a fertilized egg. Tracing it further back, examining its physical continuum, one can arrive at say the beginning of the universe. According to Buddhism at the point of the beginning of this particular universe, there was a form of matter, which was condensed from all the matter in this universe, and is called space particles. There is a notion that all the matter and material elements are condensed into these previous space particles. So one can trace the continuum of one's physical body back to this point of space particles.

Similarly if one traces back the continuum of one's consciousness, it is quite untenable if one were to maintain that the same physical continuum of one's body is the same as the continuum of one's mind. They clearly have two distinct natures. As I pointed out earlier much of one's gross conscious events, cognitive processes are in some sense products of one's body, like sensory experiences. These are dependent on the sense organs and because of this we call our consciousness a human consciousness, a human mind. When the human body ceases to exist that gross human mind or consciousness will also cease to exist. But still this does not really account for the underlying factor, which enables one to have experiential events. A pure material explanation can not give a full account for the presence for the unique factor that allows one to have experiential and cognitive events. This factor according to Buddhism can again be traced in terms of its origin. Just as the physical continuum can be traced back through beginningless time, similarly the continuum of mind at the subtle level can be traced back through previous lives.

It is along these lines that Buddhism accounts for its belief in rebirth as if the previous mind must come from a previous continuum, that earlier continuum must also be a state of mind or subtle consciousness. Through this way Buddhism accounts for its belief in rebirth. This is how one traces the continuum of an individual's mind and body. Again one can not explain the continuum of the consciousness purely in terms of the continuum of the body, which in the case of one's current body, comes from the fertilized egg from the parents.

If one were to try to extend this to the understanding of the cosmos as a whole then one can see that in terms of its material constituents, a particular universe such as this one starts from space particles. The question arises what is it that makes the same continuum, the same matter like particles, evolve into inanimate objects like planets whereas other matter evolves into animate bodies, life forms? What is the factor, which makes the difference? Here I think it is important to understand from the Buddhist point of view the role karma plays in this process. As I pointed out earlier when one talks about the continuum of causation, the present continuum of a material object is a consequence of its previous moment. In terms of that continuum I do not feel it is the result of karma; it is just following a process of natural law.

However the role karma plays is seen more in terms of a factor of circumstantial conditioning. Through karma for example in the case of this universe, although the material continuum comes from the space particles, it is the collective karma of the sentient beings who later inhabit the particular universe that allow the continuum of the matter to evolve gradually into the macroscopic world. The planet for instance will then have a direct effect on the sentient beings living there and their experiences of pain and pleasure. So one could say that at the point when the physical evolutionary process begins to become relevant to the experience of living beings, at that point one can say karma has entered into the picture.

Of course this leads to another question which is how can karma that is a non-substantial, immaterial phenomenon have any effect to influence a material, physical process? This is a valid question. Here I think that perhaps some explanation could be found in the tantras, especially in the Highest Yoga Tantra. There it is mentioned about subtle matter in the form of energies and there is a particular concept of energy called the Energy of the Five Radiances. These in some sense can be described as the subtlest form of the five elements, space wind, fire, water and earth. This subtlest form of the elements I feel give rise to the grosser forms of the bodily elements and these inner bodily elements then have some relationship with the external elements. It is through this subtle connection one could explain the relationship between karma and the processes of the material world.

A further question can be raised as to how the space particles and the continuums of consciousness come into being? Such an investigation would then ultimately lead to a point where one is forced to either believe in a beginning point where one would need to accept a creation at some point or one pursues a line of argument further. As to the first alternative of accounting for this by invoking a notion of creation, from the Buddhist point of view there would arise many complications. The first question to be raised would be what exactly is the nature of the creator? Is the creator in turn dependent upon a cause or is it a self-caused entity? Is it a necessary being and if so how can a causeless, self-arisen entity have the power or potential to produce something that is in essence different from itself? From the Buddhist point of view this leads to all sorts of untenable complications and leaves many questions unanswered and unresolved.

From the Buddhist point of view the second alternative which is to seek an explanation more in terms of the same causal principle is adopted. So ultimately Buddhist accept the possibility of infinite causes [infinite regress] and conditions, infinity in the continuum of cause. Of course to some people this may not be satisfactory and further questions could be raised such as how did the infinity come into being? How is an

infinity of causes possible? This may seem very discomforting and unsatisfying to some people. To them the Buddhist would respond that it is the way it is; there is no further logical explanation.

To sum up Buddhist's understanding of the nature of human experience would be that many of our problems, our experiences of pain, suffering, frustrations, or anxieties come about as the result of certain attitudes or states of mind, an undisciplined state of mind. Of course there are other factors like power predispositions coming from past lives and also karmic influences being exert from past lives. So when we talk about trying to understand the nature of experience now, for a Buddhist all of these factors have to be taken into account.

Within such a world-view then makes it easier to accept certain phenomena, which one faces. Even today there are cases of children who can very vividly and very clearly recollect events from a previous life. So for such a world-view there is the concept of rebirth and the beginningless continuum of consciousness and these phenomena become acceptable and understandable. Otherwise one is forced either to say that these are a total mystery, there is no explanation at all or one is forced to conclude that even in the case of someone who recollects very clearly and accurately, one is forced to say that it is just an illusion.

To sum up what we find is that so far as the continuum of consciousness is concerned, it is ever-present. Similarly so far as the continuum of the individual or being that is designated upon such a continuum is concerned, it is ever-present. The question can then be raised that if that is the case how does one account for phenomena like death, birth and life? Buddhism would explain that although as far as the continuum of consciousness is concerned, it is always there but death, birth and life are in some sense different stages of the same continuum at a particular point in the continuum of the cyclic nature. One understands death and birth in terms of different stages in the process.

This is similar to the processes of sleep, the waking state and also the dream state. According to Buddhism these different stages in one's daily life are seen as different states of consciousness where consciousness abides in different levels. One could also say different levels of energy. For example sleep is where the consciousness and energy is at a deeper level. If one includes the dream state then the level of consciousness and energy becomes slightly grosser, this is the dream level. The consciousness' grossest form is when it is awake and because of this there is a comparison made between death and sleep, dream and the intermediate state and the waken state with birth.

On this view we can see that at the point of death is characterized by the point where the old body, the gross body is severed from the mind. However the continuum of the mind/body at its subtlest level will always remain. So there is not a total separation between the mind and body. It is only on the gross level; the gross body, which is in some sense, is discarded at the point of death. At the point of birth a new gross body is assumed. Similarly when one looks at the nature of sleep and the waking period, one can also see that there is a form of renewal of one's body. For example if one is totally exhausted, during sleep and when one awakens one feels as if the body has been refreshed and renewed. If one wishes to be very exact one could say that there has been a renewal process during sleep. So there is a similar process going on even during the sleep and the waking period.

It is because of these similarities and correspondences between death, the intermediate state and rebirth on the one hand and sleep, dream and the waking period on the other that in the *Guhyasamaja Tantra* one finds many practices which are aimed at drawing out the parallels and comparisons between these stages known as the Practices of Mixing. It is with the knowledge of these in the background that Buddhism talks about many lifetimes and also talks about time scales in terms of innumerable eons. So when one understands the Buddhist position in these terms then when one recites prayers like we will be reciting shortly from the *Bodhicaryavatara* as “As long as space remains, As long as sentient beings exist” then one can really feel something. When one reflects on the infinity of one’s own continuum and beginninglessness, does it make one feel exhausted? Or discouraged?

Although the concept of infinity and the concept of beginninglessness may seem quite daunting and may seem difficult to comprehend, one point to remember however is the reality of one’s present existence. Also as long as one exists it is important to make one’s existence meaningful, making it meaningful in terms of making oneself be of service to others. Now that one exists and so far as one’s existence is concerned one cannot question that along with survival so one might as well make it a meaningful existence by being of service to others. The fact that one exists is a natural phenomenon, one can not really fully account for it, why one is here but from the Buddhist point of view the fact of an infinity of lifetimes since beginningless time and in some sense an endlessness, this is also just part of nature. One might as well make these infinite lifetimes meaningful and useful. When one reflects along these lines then Santideva’s verses where he states, “So long as space endures, So long as sentient beings exist, May I too remain, To dispel the miseries of the world” then these lines will really be brought home. These lines will then begin to make real sense to you.

So when we talk about being of service to others, we are not talking about it purely in a moral sense where one’s altruism is confined to mere wishful thinking. We are talking about something deeper than that especially in the context of Buddhist practice. Compassion and altruism have to be based on a clear realization and deep insight into one’s own unsatisfactory nature of existence, one’s own suffering. As I quoted yesterday from Candrakirti’s *Entering into the Middle Way* where he states that one first out of clinging at a solid ego identity, one then clings to one’s body and possessions as mine. Through this clinging to I and mine then one generates within one certain emotional responses which then lead to volitional actions which then perpetuate the whole cycle of samsaric existence.

When one thinks along these lines one sees that from one’s own experience one knows that although one does not wish to be angry or negative but one often finds oneself being overcome by strong negative impulses. This indicates that in some sense one has little control over one’s responses and one’s psyche. Similarly one doesn’t wish to act in a negative way, one does not wish to create bad karma but we often find ourselves acting against one’s fundamental wish. Again this shows one has little control over one’s actions. So this shows that one is in some sense being governed by the dual forces of karma and delusions. Through the manipulation of these two forces one is driven into the vicious cycle of habitual patterns of action and existence.

Once one realizes this then one develops a strong sense of repulsion towards these delusions and negative karma. One also develops a genuine sense or aspiration to seek



freedom from this type of existence. One aspires to get out of this vicious cycle and this is known as true renunciation in the Buddhist context. Once one has true renunciation and deep insight into suffering and the nature of unsatisfactory existence then when one extends this insight to other, fellow sentient beings. One then realizes that just as oneself is being propelled against one's wishes by the forces of karma and delusions so are all other sentient beings who equally do not wish for unhappiness or suffering but are again being driven by the dual forces of karma and delusions against their wishes.

When one reflects on such facts then of course one's sense of abhorrence towards karma, delusions and the unsatisfactory nature of existence becomes so strong that it forces and motivates one to be concerned with the well being of other sentient beings. They, just like oneself, wish to be happy and overcome suffering. Thinking along these lines and being convinced by the power of compassion if one can dedicate one's whole life for the service of others in bringing about the welfare of other sentient beings using all the resources available to one, bodily, mentally and verbally, then the sense of fulfillment and the joy one would achieve from leading such a dedicated way of life would be tremendous. The underlying sense of joy and fulfillment through leading such a dedicated way of life one is making in some sense one's life the most meaningful in the best possible way.

So when one reflects on these things then passages from the *Bodhicaryavatara* and other bodhisattva texts make definite sense. For example, Santideva says in the *Bodhicaryavatara*, "Why should I seek nirvana?" Similarly Bhavaviveka states in his text called the *Heart of Madhyamika*; "Through insight into the unsatisfactory nature of existence I will be freed from attachment to existence. However through the power of compassion I distance myself from seeking nirvana". The implication is that once one is gripped by the power of compassion one's commitment to bringing about the welfare of other sentient beings is such that in some sense that the thought to seek enlightenment for one's own sake simply doesn't arise. In Candrakirti's when he summarizes the great qualities of the bodhisattva on the sixth bodhisattva bhumi, he states that a bodhisattva at such a high level of realization as a result of their deepened insight into the nature of emptiness and their intuitive, direct experience of emptiness will then develop spontaneous compassion which is at the true mode of being of that bodhisattva.

In this regard I would like to draw an analogy which could perhaps bring my point into sharper focus. For example when we look at the Milky Way Galaxy and when we have a concept of cosmology, which embraces a universe where there are so many stars and planets, our earth then becomes just a speck. So once one has such a vision or image of the cosmos then of course it will reveal that all the divisions we fight for, such as national boundaries leading to bloodshed and conflict, from the larger perspective seems so insignificant. They appear to be insignificant squabbles. The issues and disputes are really something trivial, not really worthy of such emotional investment. So this will definitely have an impact on our global consciousness.

Similarly in the Buddhist context when one has a view or vision of existence where one's understanding or conception of life is in terms of infinity and one's conception of fellow sentient beings is of an infinity in number, and one's commitment is to bring about the welfare of this infinity of sentient beings then once starts along these lines it will have enormous impact on one's attitudes towards one's immediate concerns and interests. Something which previously would have seen so important, maybe dealing

with one's own self-interest in this single lifetime and dealing with a particular point in one's life which may seem to be very important, when seen from the wider perspective these temporary self-interests and needs seem insignificant. One will not feel so attached and bound with the preoccupations of trying to achieve these limited goals.

Even in conventional terms we know that people who have a greater sense of security, small incidents are less likely to effect them whereas people who have a deep sense of insecurity are more prone to be easily effected by minor incidents. This shows to what extent that if one has a greater sense of security it makes a difference in how one is emotionally effected. I would say it is these expansive and in some sense broad ways of thinking in Buddhism that assist practicing Buddhists in dealing with their problems of life. I would say that Buddhism does not have a single formula or one remedy as it were to deal with adverse situations in life. It is all these ways of thinking, these spiritual orientations which embrace such infinity and magnitude that really help give a broader perspective on life.

Since there is certainly benefit for the individual by adopting such an outlook, such a spiritual orientation the question of whether these things are actually true or not really isn't primary. As they are truly beneficial, that is what matters. If at the beginning it may seem difficult to comprehend, may seem difficult to digest however through constant reflection, thinking and meditation it is possible that one will gradually begin to understand. This will definitely have a tremendous effect on one's mind and on one's psyche. In some sense they will have a kind of liberating effect and will make one's mind more resilient, providing one with a greater capacity to cope with the adverse circumstances and problems of life.

To some this may seem very idealistic and also unrealistic. Some may feel this is impractical as for instance when one suggests that this kind of approach, this kind of solution to people they may reject it offhand. (Break)

**Question:** It seems it is not enough to simply understand the absence of self and others or enemies and friends based on understanding the transient or impermanent nature of existence. What seems to be required also the need to develop an altruistic sense to help other sentient beings. However since we do not have such a capacity to be of help and service to other sentient beings, what can we do to give us this capacity or ability to help others?

**Answer:** From the practicing Buddhist's point of view the full potential for helping other sentient beings becomes perfected only when one has totally overcome one's own personal limitations and have attained full knowledge of the needs and dispositions of all sentient beings. Such knowledge can only be obtained at the fully awakened state. However this is something that needs to be kept as the ultimate objective and while one is aspiring towards that objective, one needs to engage in various practices. For example bodhisattvas have as their main practices consist of the Six Perfections which are aimed primarily at bringing about internal transformation within the practitioner. In terms of assisting to bodhisattva-to-be in assisting others, the teachings talk about the Four Factors for Helping Other Sentient Beings such as giving material needs to fulfill the immediate needs of others, providing protection, setting an example for others by living the teachings oneself and teaching others. These are the types of activities that a bodhisattva must engage in.

In our day-to-day lives even in our ordinary state of course there are many things we could do in implementing these bodhisattva ideals. I would personally say that for example in our modern professions like teaching which involves educating others and also the health professions along with social work and so on, if one adopts the right attitude and motivation, these activities become the implementation of the bodhisattva ideals. It is through these activities that one enhances one's capacity to be of service to others.

**Question:** You say there is no end, there is a continuity. How can we set ourselves free and more than anything how can we free other beings who are suffering? If we leave samsara then we are abandoning these others to their fate.

**Answer:** When we speak of nirvana we need to bear in mind that there are different conceptions of it. One type of nirvana is known as the isolated peace of nirvana, which refers to the type of goal that non-Bodhisattvas like Sravakas and Pratyekabuddhas (Solitary Realizers) seek. What they seek is more the peace and tranquility of the freedom from suffering which is motivated primarily out of self-interest.

However this is not the type of nirvana or freedom from suffering that the bodhisattva is seeking. In fact the bodhisattvas' quest for full enlightenment is in some sense not for themselves but rather the motivation arises out of altruism. The bodhisattva sees the need to attain full enlightenment as a requirement in order to utilize their potential to help others fully. Therefore the nirvana or the freedom of suffering that the bodhisattva seeks is described as the state which is free from the extremes of the isolated peace of nirvana and free from the extreme of uncontrolled cyclic existence. So it is a freedom from both existence and nirvana. Those who are gathered here among those I know, I can not say anyone here has such realizations but if you do come to India, I can give you the names of people who I think may have had experiences of such a type.

**Question:** Is the Long-Life puja announced part of the Kalachakra initiation or is it something different? Is there a commitment with the Long-Life initiation or daily practice?

**Answer:** The Long-Life empowerment ceremony is not part of the Kalachakra initiation itself. There are no commitments by attending the empowerment however I can assure you that if you come then you can take the long-life pills.

**Question:** In samsara time is relative and we can speak of the past, present and future. For the Buddhas is there still a past, present and future times? Does time have a cause and if so what is it?

**Answer:** This is a complex question. In Buddhism when we talk about the nature of the Buddha's enlightened mind and the nature of its perception of reality, we need to take into account in some sense a dual perspective. It is said that so far as Buddha's perception of the ultimate unity of all phenomena is concerned, in other words Buddha's perception of ultimate reality or the truth of all phenomena there is no sense of time or sense of the passage of time. Buddha's perception is all-pervasive yet at the same time a Buddha is fully aware of the multiplicity of the world of dependent origination, the relative world. Within the relative world there are many appearances which are primarily

the results of illusions. Of course Buddhists would accept that as far as a Buddha's own conception is concerned there is no level of deception or illusion within a Buddha's own perception. However what appears to us as sentient beings to our delusory minds also appears to a Buddha not because a Buddha has the causes or conditions for deception or illusion but rather Buddha sees the deceptive appearances, the deceptive perceptions that we have as they appear to us.

So when we talk about the question of what is the nature of a Buddha's knowledge, it is a very complicated question which needs to take into account this dual perspective which is operating always at the same time. Therefore the fully enlightened mind of a Buddha is said to perceive the Two Truths simultaneously without any passage of time.

As to the second part of the question which is whether time has a cause, of course the Prasangika-Madhyamika standpoint, which is considered to be the highest philosophical standpoint of Buddhism, accepts that time is a relative phenomenon. Time is not permanent, is eternal and is a relative phenomenon and is in some sense a mental construct. Therefore it has a cause and is a product.

**Question:** When we die and are born again do we choose the place and the parents? If not who or what determines where we are born? Is it possible once one is human to be born again as an animal? How can we gain control over the process and cut the cycle?

**Answer:** Where do we take rebirth and in what form are governed by one's own karmic imprints. When it comes to the question as to which parent, one needs to again take into account the karma also of the parents; it is not just the karma of the individual to be born. Even though this is the case if we examine in more detail we find that karmic imprints are planted by our volitional actions. An individual who is motivated to act in a particular way commits volitional actions. So ultimately it is ourselves who are responsible.

Perhaps an example may clarify the process or mechanism of karma. Take the example of someone flying back to India. By you buy your plane tickets you have the choice whether to go or not and also when to go. After this you buy your ticket your choices are now limited but you still have a choice as to whether to go or not. You are then at the airport and even there you still have a choice even though the cancellation becomes more difficult. If you choose not to cancel, have boarded the plane and it is taking off then your choice not fly is gone. So unless you hijack the plane, you have no choice left. The closer you get to the action or objective the narrower the range of your choices becomes and the more determined is the course of events.

Similarly in the case of karma, which literally means action, volitional act, at the stage of motivation or intention one has tremendous choice of whether to act or not. As one gets closer and has committed the act then the karmic imprint is implanted and then the imprint needs to be activated, needs circumstantial conditions to activate it. Once further conditions acting as ripening factors activate the karmic seed then one's control and choice over the causal events becomes narrower and narrower. But until that point one does have a choice, one does have the choice to reverse the cause of the karmic determination.

We will proceed with the ceremony for generating the mind of enlightenment. In the following ceremony among the audience those who have been practicing Buddhists for several years can fully participate in the ceremony for generating the mind of enlightenment. For those who are non-Buddhists and for those who are Buddhist but do not feel fully committed to the practices of bodhicitta, they need not fully participate in the ceremony. One thing however that you could do is to use the opportunity to develop a strong determination and resolve to be a warm-hearted person, to be a kind person and resolve never to hurt or harm any other person or sentient being.

Now for those who wish to fully participate in the ceremony for generating the mind of enlightenment, you should visualize in the space in front of yourself the Buddha Shakyamuni as in the thangka behind me. He is surrounded by many bodhisattvas and imagine yourself as being surrounded by all other sentient beings.

Having visualized the Buddha in front of you surrounded by all the bodhisattvas and yourself being surrounded by all sentient beings, you should develop the following thought, reflect in the following manner. Reflect that just as you instinctually and naturally aspire to achieve happiness and overcome suffering, so do all the limitless and countless sentient beings. Just as you are driven by this fundamental and instinctual desire and engage in all sorts of activities to fulfill this basic aspiration so to do all other sentient beings. However up until now you have lived throughout many lifetimes pursuing only your own self-interest and your whole existence has been characterized by pursuing self-centered interests and ends. Even though this has been your primary motivating force you still haven't been able to achieve what you wished to achieve which is the fulfillment of your own well-being.

On the other hand all the Buddhas' and Bodhisattvas' lives have exemplified the virtue and value of altruism. They have reversed that self-centered way of existence and way of thinking. They have put other's interests as more important than theirs and have pursued a way of life where they have been dedicated to bringing about the well-being of other sentient beings. So though this process you should reflect upon the fact that all problems, anxieties, frustrations and miseries are either directly or indirectly the result of egocentric, self-centered ways of thinking and ways of living. However all positive events of happiness, joy, sense of fulfillment and so on are all directly or indirectly the result and consequence of altruism.

Reflecting in this way on the benefits of altruism and the destructive nature of selfish and self-centered attitudes, you should now resolve to follow in the footsteps of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who have dedicated their lives to the fulfillment of the altruistic ideal. Make a resolve to follow in their footsteps and follow their example from now on regarding others' well-being and happiness as more important than one's own. This is such that you are never again imprisoned in your own egocentric, self-centered way of thinking and way of living.

When we talk of generating the mind for enlightenment or bodhicitta, one should understand that bodhicitta is a state of mind which arises as the result of two principal aspirations. One is the aspiration to fulfill the welfare of other sentient beings and the other is the aspiration to attain full enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. Through these two aspirations when one attains a very strong sense of confidence and a very strong sense of resolve to seek full enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings that is the point when one has attained genuine bodhicitta or the mind for enlightenment.

Of course to be able to have a true realization of bodhicitta is very difficult. It takes a long period of meditation and practice. However today at this point we can at least have developed an intellectual understanding of what bodhicitta means and also try to develop a sense or intuition of bodhicitta. At least for this ceremony we can have a simulated state of bodhicitta within us so therefore now on the part of all of you, generate this aspiration and resolve to seek full enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.

Before we do the actual generation of bodhicitta let us participate in some preliminary practices such as the Seven-Limbed Practices. There is no need to perform any recitation of this but you can now reflect in the following way. For the sake of generating bodhicitta for the benefit of all sentient beings I shall now prostrate to the Buddha and Bodhisattvas in front of me. What do we mean by prostrating to the Buddhas? By reflecting upon their qualities one develops a strong sense of admiration and faith in them. Then with one's folded hands at one's heart, one performs the gesture of paying one's respect and acknowledging the Buddhas' great qualities.

The second limb is making offerings to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. When one does this one should imagine that one is offering all forms of articles and substances which are beautiful and things which one would offer as a gift. One should visualize making these offerings to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The best type of offering is one's own practice and realization so one should reflect that up until now one has tried one's best to engage in a serious practice and shall now make an offering of whatever progress one has made in one's practice. One resolves to continue to pursue one's practice in the future with commitment and single-pointedness.

The third limb is purification and here one should reflect in the following manner. In the past one has committed many negativities either knowingly or out of ignorance, not only in this lifetime but also have committed many negative actions during past lives. The fact that one finds oneself committing negative actions in this life, falling prey to negative impulses with little choice on one's part, is an indication that one has many habits developed in past lives of acting in a negative way. One needs to fully disclose and confront all these negative actions committed in the past and focused on them one develops a deep sense of regret and repentance for having committed those acts. This should then be followed by developing a strong resolve that in the future one will never engage in such negative actions again.

The fourth limb is the limb of rejoicing. Here one rejoices not only in all the positive actions that one has done, all the wholesome deeds one has engaged in but also one rejoices and admires the wholesome activities performed by others as well.

The fifth limb is requesting the Buddhas to turn the wheel of the Dharma, to give teachings. To put it simply Buddha Shakyamuni is the teacher and if the teacher does not speak then we will not be able to learn. So we are requesting the teacher to teach and show us the way so that we can understand.

The sixth limb is requesting the Buddhas not to enter Nirvana. This is analogous to a teacher who having come to the class is prepared to leave. This is not of any use to the students as the teacher must not only come to the classroom but also need to spend time with the students so that the students will benefit from the teacher's presence. Of course this is from the perspective of a good student, as the lesser student would rejoice at the teachers leaving!

The seventh and final limb is the limb of dedication. Here one is praying and dedicating all of the positive energies just created, the positive karmic imprints created and one is not dedicating them so that one may have a successful life, health and so on but dedicating the positive potential towards the attainment of liberation for all sentient beings.

Now we will recite these verses in Tibetan but you should recite in your own language. Out of these three verses the first verse is the formula for taking refuge in the Three Jewels, the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. The second verse is the formula for generating the mind for enlightenment, bodhicitta. The third verse is give one a sense of encouragement and also reinforces one's determination and strength to be able to fulfill the Bodhisattva ideals. We will recite the first verse now three times.

**With a wish to free all beings  
I shall always go for refuge  
To the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha  
Until my full awakening.**

So when we do the recitation, which is the formula for generating the mind for enlightenment, those who are fully participating in the ceremony should reflect upon the meaning of the verses and resolve to seek full enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. Retain this mind throughout. Those who are not participating please use the time to reaffirm your resolve to be a warm-hearted person, a kind person and never engage in actions, which are harmful to others.

**Enthused by wisdom and compassion  
Today in the Buddha's presence  
I generate the mind for enlightenment  
For the sake of all sentient beings**

**As long as space endures  
As long as sentient beings exist  
May I too remain  
And dispel the miseries of the world.**

Those who are fully participating keep these verses with you and use it as a daily practice. At appropriate times such as when you are relaxed or in a calm state of mind then read these verses to reaffirm your bodhicitta but do not do this if you are in a disturbed state of mind or feeling a strong negative emotion.

We will now perform a dedication constituting the conclusion of this ceremony generating bodhicitta. You should think in the following way. If we examine the nature of our own experience we find that an instance of a deluded state of mind like clinging to the false sense of self or strong ego-identity, leads to afflicted emotional responses which then lead to negative actions creating a negative energy. Similarly I feel that by even a very short period of time when we develop within ourselves the seed for positive

thoughts, an altruistic mind fully aimed at helping other sentient beings, I am certain that this in itself creates a tremendous power and potential for positive energy.

So today in this gathering by participating in the ceremony of generating bodhicitta and in some sense reaffirming our resolve to pursue the ideals of altruism we have created a tremendous positive energy and imprints. It is important to dedicate this positive potential, imprints and energies towards an altruistic cause. The verses which I will recite are verses of dedication at state that just as the great bodhisattvas like Manjusri, Samantabhadra and so on have dedicated their positive potentials and virtues with tremendous creative imagination, we shall to follow their examples. We will dedicate the positive energy and potentials created today towards the attainment of full enlightenment for all sentient beings.

**Question:** Is there any special diet to follow in order to receive the Kalachakra initiation?

**Answer:** There is no special diet. Generally for a practitioner whose main emphasis and foundational practice is that of universal compassion vegetarianism is the best diet to follow. So long as you are not vegetarian then I do not feel that any other special diet makes much difference. I feel that vegetarianism is really admirable and if you can't be vegetarian then as to the other forms of diet there is not grounds for a preference. Once an Indian asked me if I was a vegetarian and I said, "No". He then asked what special diet did I have and I told him that being a fully ordained monk I don't eat after noon but other than that I am like a pig in that I eat everything!

If the initiation ceremony you are attending belongs to Kriya Tantra which is Action Tantra as well as Carya and Yoga Tantra then of course you need to follow a very strict diet that is vegetarian. You also cannot eat onions, garlic and so on. The Long-Life empowerment, which you will be given, belongs to the Kriya Tantra class. On that day if it is possible don't eat any non-vegetarian food.

**Question:** If everything is a dependent arising are space particles also? If they are not dependent arisings then what are they?

**Answer:** Of course the space particles would be considered as caused because as I spoke earlier even these space particles themselves are infinite in terms of their continuum so current matter is an product of its earlier instance. There is a causal continuum. From this point of view they also have a cause.

However when we talk about dependent arising or dependent origination in the Buddhist context, our understanding should not be limited to dependent arising only in terms of causes and conditions. Rather our understanding must embrace a broader and in some sense deeper understanding of dependence. Dependence need not necessarily be understood only in terms of causes and conditions; one can talk about dependence in relation to parts and the whole. The very concepts of parts and a whole are interconnected and interdependent. In some sense one emerges only in relationship to the other.

Still there is a further and deeper understanding of dependent origination which is to understand dependent origination in terms of a designated basis and the designation that involves a labeling process. This view understands things and events in the form of mental constructs. Of course this is a very subtle point and is very difficult to understand. For example if one were to examine the content of one's consciousness, one's perception,



what one sees is the designated basis not the designation. For instance one sees things or objects but if one were to examine the content in a specific way, what is the content of one's consciousness? One sees a certain shape or color but these are the basis of the designation of that particular object. These in of themselves do not constitute the object itself. When one analyzes in such a way then the very idea of objectivity, the entity itself begins to dissolve. One begins to find that it is non-substantial, there is no substantiality, no entityness. Of course this is a very complex issue but as pointed out earlier when one discusses dependent origination one needs to embrace these three levels of understanding of dependent origination.

**Question:** How do we obtain knowledge of reality or emptiness when all we perceive is appearance?

**Answer:** When we of different forms of knowledge and the nature of our perception, it is important to understand the complexities behind the issue. For example when we talk about knowledge we have means through which we gain knowledge. Some of the knowledge is from direct experience like sensorial experiences such as vision and so forth and some knowledge is non-sensorial; they are mental or conceptual. So there are different types of knowledge and similarly the mode of engagement of the object between sensory perceptions and mental perceptions are quite different. Also conceptual thoughts are quite different.

For example when conceptual thoughts engage with an object it does so in some sense by a process of elimination. It is selective; it does not embrace the totality of the object rather it hones on a particular aspect of the object and focuses on that aspect of the object. So in that sense it is exclusionist whereas sensory perception does not make such distinctions rather it reflects. There are different ways in which sensory perceptions and mental perceptions operate.

Because there are different types of knowledge and different forms of perception, similarly when we talk about objects of knowledge there are different meanings to the term object even from the perspective of one instance of knowledge. One can talk of the appearing object of that consciousness, the apprehended object of that consciousness or the intended object of that consciousness. So even from the perspective of one consciousness one can talk about different levels of the object of that consciousness.

When we talk about reality and our knowledge of reality we have to understand that there are different levels of reality. The doctrine of the Two Truths reflects in some sense two levels of reality. One can talk about reality within the context of the relative world and also the underlying reality of the ultimate world. Again the meaning of reality differs according to the different levels in which one is operating.

Even then it is important to understand that when we talk of the two levels of reality we are not talking about two different entities or two entirely distinct things. As I pointed out earlier the two realities are in some sense dual aspects of one and the same thing or event based on two different perspectives. For example when we speak of the ultimate truth, we are talking about emptiness and when we talk of emptiness we should not have the notion that there is some thing called emptiness "out there" which is independent and autonomous of the relative world. Emptiness can be understood only in relation to a particular instance of an object. When one takes a particular instance like an object and examine its nature, analyze its ontological status, what one finds is the absence

of its substantiality. What one finds is the absence of intrinsic reality, inherent existence and this absence is the ultimate nature, ultimate reality. So there is no separate thing called emptiness other than a quality or mode of existence of the object under analysis.

Also it would be useful here to recall a distinction I made earlier between negative and positive phenomena, phenomena, which can only be understood by a negation or some phenomena, which can be known in affirmative or positive terms. Emptiness belongs to the first category; emptiness is a phenomenon only understood through a process of negation. It is the mere absence or negation of intrinsic existence or intrinsic identity. (End of talk)

### **COLOPHON**

Transcribed and typed by Phillip Lecso from audiotapes obtained from QED Recording Services entitled *Kalachakra for World Peace: Kalachakra Initiation Preliminary*. I take full responsibility for all mistakes that have occurred, through hearing and writing incorrectly what was taught, for these I apologize. May all be auspicious. May any merit from this activity go to the long life and good health of His Holiness. May all sentient beings quickly attain the state of the Glorious Kalachakra even through these imperfect efforts.