

Santideva's Meditation
Chapter Eight of the *Bodhicaryavatara*
His Holiness the XIVth Dalai Lama
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The preliminary recitations that we just performed constituted what are known as the Three Daily Activities which are paying homage to the Buddha by reflecting on his kindness and enlightened qualities, reciting passages from the Sutras expressing the key teachings of the Buddha and finally reflecting on the transient nature of life, impermanence. The last verse was of dedication dedicating the merit and virtue accumulated from engaging in such activities.

Next is the recitation of the Heart Sutra. The Heart Sutra presents the Buddha's teachings on emptiness and of all of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras, it is the most concise sutra that presents the teachings on emptiness. The recitation of the Heart Sutra is common to all of the Buddhist traditions following the Mahayana Sutras. There are some differences in the lengths and translations of the Heart Sutra but it is common in all Mahayana traditions to recite this sutra. Of course we will recite it in Tibetan but those in the audience who are Japanese or Chinese, please feel free to quietly recite the sutra in your own languages. Those of you unfamiliar with the sutra please reflect upon the profound and enlightened qualities of the Buddha.

After this I as normally do, I will recite two verses. The first is the salutation verse from Maitreya's *Abhisamayalamkara*, the *Ornament of Clear Realization* and the second is the salutation verse from Nagarjuna's *Mulamadhyamikakarika*, *Fundamentals of the Middle Way*.

Since the text that I am basing the teachings on is the meditation chapter from Santideva's *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, I will do a recitation of salutation to Manjusri.

As is the custom at the beginning of a teaching to cultivate the proper and appropriate motivation and state of mind, we will recite the formula for taking refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha as well as reaffirming the generation of bodhicitta, the altruistic intention to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings. When one takes refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha one does so for the higher purpose of fulfilling the welfare of all other sentient beings. With this in mind one should cultivate the right and appropriate motivation.

The chapter on meditation from Santideva's text, the version I have consists of nine folios. Since we have three days to cover these nine folios and there is no need to be concerned about the entire text, I felt that at the beginning today I would present a general overview of the Buddha's teachings. Particularly since Tibetan Buddhism is a comprehensive form of Buddhism that contains the essential aspects of all of the elements of the Buddhist tradition such as the Lesser Vehicle, the Great Vehicle and the Vajrayana Vehicle, so I feel that perhaps it would be beneficial to have a general overview at the beginning.

At the outset however I would like to make one thing clear, which is my basic belief that I share with others whenever I have the opportunity, is that I generally believe that it is more reliable, more appropriate and more beneficial for people to remain within their own traditional faith. Given the diversity of cultures, societies, environments and so on, there have evolved a multiplicity and diversity of spiritual traditions. Generally I feel it is safer and more reliable for individuals to follow one's own traditional faith.

Out of millions of individuals there might be a few who, for whatever reason, either not ell exposed to their traditional religions or have not acquired any particular interest in

their traditional faith, but whose vision of life is not totally defined by a materialistic perspective. They are aware of the limitations of the materialistic way of life and recognize the need for some sort of a spiritual element in their lives whereby their basic aspirations can be fulfilled through some sort of spiritual teachings. Not only this but there are also individuals who would like to cultivate a spiritual life within the framework of a traditional religious teaching. So this is possible.

For example in Tibet ever since Buddhism flourished there, the majority of the Tibetan people have been Buddhists; they follow the Buddha's teachings. However at least over the last four centuries there have been Muslim communities in Tibet, followers of the Islamic faith. The Muslim faith probably came to Tibet through Kashmir or Ladhak. In any case in Tibet there were those who followed the Islamic faith over the last four centuries and also from the turn of this century there were a few Tibetans who adopted Christianity as their own personal religion.

So we see that just as in Tibet where the overall culture and society may follow the Buddhist faith, there were however individuals who followed different faith traditions. Similarly in the West, although the main religious faith of Western society is the Judeo-Christian tradition however out of a society of millions of individuals there are a few who are inclined towards teachings outside the main Judeo-Christian tradition. For example here the majority of people who have gathered for this teaching are individuals with an interest and inclination towards Eastern spiritual traditions in general and Buddhist teachings in particular.

However I think it is very important that those who's personal inclination and affinity may be towards Buddhism in this case not to fall into the trap of criticizing or being overly critical of one's traditional religion. In the case of an individual because of his inclination and mental disposition, although the traditional religion may not seem effective in their individual case this does not mean that the traditional religion and its message is not effective nor a source of inspiration for millions of others. So it is very important not to lose one's reverence and respect for one's traditional religion.

There are two grounds for this. First of all the traditional religion continues to serve the spiritual aspirations of millions of individuals so out of respect for individuals' choices and their rights, one needs to pay reverence and respect towards the traditional religion. Furthermore we are living in a time when we all recognize the importance of developing inter-religious understanding and harmony. Under such circumstances it is very important not to criticize and judge other religious traditions but rather to maintain respect, reverence and admiration towards other traditions.

To give the example of my own case, I consider myself as someone who is a devout follower of the Buddha Shakyamuni. I can actually claim that my admiration for the Buddha is grounded in a genuine conviction based upon understanding of the essence of his teachings. I also feel that at least in me there is the perfect realization of taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. So this is the case of my own personal belief as a committed practicing Buddhist.

But at the same time when I look at other faith traditions such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and other major world religions, I have a profound sense of admiration and reverence for them. This is because each of the great spiritual traditions has served the spiritual needs of millions of individuals in the past, they continue to do so and they will continue in the future. They provide spiritual solace and inspiration as well as a deep sense of fulfillment of peoples' spiritual needs. In a sense these are very powerful and profound methods for other sentient beings to bring about the fulfillment of their spiritual aspirations. They are in a sense sources of profound benefit to millions of individuals. So when I look at these other faith traditions from this angle, my admiration and reverence for

these traditions tremendously increases. One of the aspects this reflects is the diversity and multiplicity of the mental inclinations, spiritual inclinations and mental dispositions and interests of sentient beings.

On what grounds do I base this kind of attitude or perspective of the other faith traditions? Again I draw from my own Buddhist teachings. For example if one looks at the Buddha's teachings they are, within the followers of a single master, the Buddha Shakyamuni, there is a tremendous diversity. This is so particularly in the realm of philosophy where one finds a great diversity. In some cases divergent and conflicting opinions can be found. For example within the followers of the Mahayana tradition, all of whom accept the idea of the selflessness of phenomena, the no-self of phenomena, there are the Mind-Only School and the Middle Way School. From the point of view of the Mind-Only School when looking at the understanding of emptiness as presented by the Madhyamika School, regard it as nihilistic. They view it as constituting a negation of everything. When one looks at the Mind-Only School from the perspective of the Madhyamika School, they feel that not only has the Mind-Only School fallen into the extreme of absolutism but also the extreme of nihilism. So one can see that not only is there diversity but in some areas there are conflicting perspectives as well.

What is the significance of all of this diversity and in some cases contradictory viewpoints, all of which are attributed, in the case of Mahayana Buddhism, to the same teacher, the Buddha Shakyamuni? For me the profound lesson one needs to learn from this tremendous diversity is an appreciation of the diversity of the mental inclinations and mental dispositions of practitioners. If this is the case within the Buddhist traditions themselves then certainly there are sufficient grounds to extend this perspective to other traditions and admire the richness and diversity of the spiritual teachings.

Also since the majority of people who are gathered here have an interest in the Buddha's teaching and have an affinity and inclination towards the teachings of the Buddha, I would like to make an appeal. I think it is very important for those who consider themselves to be practicing Buddhists to cultivate a deeper understanding of the teachings of the Buddha. Without some understanding of the teachings of the Buddha your practice will not have effect and it will not have the benefits you seek. Especially if one's interest and practice of the Buddhadharma is not grounded in some kind of deeper understanding and if it is based on a superficial premise such as following a certain fashion, even though one may practice one's practice will not have the effect it would otherwise have. Therefore it is very important to cultivate a deeper understanding.

How does one cultivate a deeper understanding of the teachings of the Buddha? Here the key is to develop some understanding of a basic, overall framework of the Buddha's teaching. Whatever one practices one will be able to situate that within an overall understanding of the basic framework of the Buddhadharma. This I think is very important. When one does this one's practice will have an added dimension; it will have an added effectiveness.

I would also like to point out that when one speaks about Dharma and when one tries to cultivate an understanding of the Dharma, one's attitude towards the Dharma should not be like that of other forms of knowledge such as just gathering information. The essence of the Dharma is the practice. For example when one speaks about food, although one can go on with a very detailed and sophisticated discussion of food and how it is prepared but at the end of the discussion one has yet to eat it. The very purpose of the food is not fulfilled. No matter how elaborate the discussion or one's understanding of the food, one has not eaten.

In a similar way of course one can enter into very complex and highly sophisticated discourse on the Dharma. However at the end of the day if one does not implement the teachings, if one does not practice the Dharma then the essence of the Dharma is lost. Just as

when food is not eaten, its purpose is not fulfilled. Similarly in the case of the Dharma at the end of the day if it is not practiced then the purpose of the Dharma is not fulfilled. The purpose of the Dharma is to bring about discipline to one's mind, to tame and discipline one's mind. This is the purpose of the practice of the Dharma.

Since the essence of Dharma practice is bringing about inner transformation and discipline within one's mind, it is very important that right from the beginning, even when engaging or participating in a teaching, both on the part of the teacher as well as student to have the right kind of relationship. One needs the right kind of attitude so that even in the teaching itself the subject matter that is being taught is constantly related to one's own mind so that there is no gap between one's state of mind and the teaching being given. As the Kadampa masters said that when a teaching is being given and one is listening whether it be on the part of the teacher or on the part of the listener, if there is a gap between them then the teaching is not successful. So it is important when participating in a teaching, not only for the students but also the teacher to insure that their state of mind is constantly related to the points of the teaching. There should be no gap between one's state of mind and the teaching being given.

Otherwise normally when one approaches a teaching, often mental afflictions arise in one's mind. For example it is normal for all of us when we first try to study a text, at the beginning when our minds are afflicted by anxiety as to not knowing and a lack of understanding, to have anxiety dominate our mind. As one deepens one's intellectual understanding of the text then one may get to the point where one feels that one has mastered it. One has knowledge, it has increased and at this point the anxiety dissolves to be replaced by a sense of pride, in fact arrogance. This is so much so that one starts to feel competitive towards one's perceived equals and look down upon those whom one considers to be inferior in their knowledge. Towards someone of greater understanding one feels envy.

Already one's mind has become dominated by the mental afflictions, which if one examines carefully arise whenever there is the opportunity. They arise whenever one gives them an opportunity, as the mental afflictions are very opportunistic. Whenever there is the opportunity they naturally arise within one's mind. On the other hand when one does not have such anxiety then one's mind can be become dominated by discouragement, depression, no interest or no enthusiasm. One's mind tends to swing between on the one hand discouragement and on the other hand arrogance. This is how the mental afflictions afflict one's mind.

Therefore it is important that whatever understanding one has developed be turned into the understanding of a Dharma practice. Otherwise there is the danger that if as a result of one's cultivation of understanding one becomes more and more arrogant then what a Tibetan master would say will become a reality. This is that the gods themselves have turned into demons. As other masters have said that for someone who has a high level of intellectual understanding and very rational resulting in great arrogance, such a person often has a high degree of skepticism. For such a person it is said that even if the Buddha himself came in person, there is little chance that the arrogant person could be tamed. One must insure that one does not fall into this extreme or danger. The point that I am stressing is that one should insure that the Dharma becomes a Dharma practice and the Mahayana teachings become a Mahayana practice.

This is not something unique to the Buddhadharma alone. I think it is equally applicable to all other spiritual traditions. Of course it is up to the individual as to whether or not to become a religious practitioner or not. Once one has chosen to become a religious practitioner, it is very important to make sure that one actually implements the teachings within one's life, integrate the teachings within one's daily life. This I think is very important.

One needs to make sure that one's thoughts and actions are commensurate or in accordance with the spiritual teachings one believes in.

When one speaks about Buddhadharma, I think it is important to understand what is meant by Buddhadharma. What is the essence of the Buddhadharma? The Sanskrit term dharma has the etymological meaning of sustaining or being protected. What is being sustained or what kind of protection is being sought? Here I think it is important to understand that the dharma in the context of Buddhadharma must be understood in terms of nirvana, in terms of the true cessation of all suffering and mental afflictions.

How is one protected and what is sustained? This refers to in the case of the Buddhadharma of dealing with the mental afflictions which lay at the root of all of one's suffering. This is true not only in this life but also of many lifetimes. By the means of dealing with the mental afflictions, by countering and overcoming the mental afflictions, one gains nirvana thus one is protected. Therefore when one speaks about Buddhadharma, one must ground one's understanding of the Dharma in terms of nirvana.

For a practitioner of the Buddhadharma the key task is to adopt an attitude towards the mental afflictions as that of an enemy and one must combat the mental afflictions. Also one must apply the antidotes to the mental afflictions and this is the essence of the task of a Dharma practitioner in the Buddhist sense. Therefore at least a Buddhist practitioner must have the following conditions. He or she must never willfully embrace any of the mental afflictions. This is a sort of minimum requirement. On the other hand if someone continues to deliberately and willfully embrace the mental afflictions, refusing to acknowledge their shortcomings and their destructive nature, there is simply no way that such a person could be described as a Buddhist practitioner.

In the realm of the physical discipline sometimes it is possible that by an imposition from outside such as a threat of force, one can create a degree of discipline or politeness. For example if someone is nodding off and another comes by threatening to strike them with a stick if they fall asleep again, that person will become more awake and alert. However this is not the case when dealing with the mind. One cannot simply impose upon the mind that it will change simply saying to reject the mental afflictions. One must combat with the afflictions. Simply by imposing on the mind the wish, such transformation cannot take place.

How then does one bring about a transformation? I believe that the transformation of the mind has to be come about as the result of the voluntary adoption of a particular discipline. It has to be consciously cultivated by reflecting upon the pros and cons of the mental afflictions, on the destructive nature of the mental afflictions, on the benefits of discarding them, on the benefits of overcoming the mental afflictions and so on.

Also one needs to look at the examples of the great enlightened beings like the Buddha and reflecting that these great enlightened beings have attained a total transformation of their minds and perfect peace. They accomplished this by first applying the antidotes and later overcoming the negative aspects of their minds such as the mental afflictions. By engaging in such disciplines they have attained mental discipline and peace of mind. Through this way they have attained perfect enlightenment, a state of joyfulness. By reflecting upon these kinds of examples and also reflecting upon the destructive nature of the afflictions and so on then gradually an enthusiasm and interest will arise within one's mind to seek out such a discipline. In this way one will be able to voluntarily adopt within one the kind of discipline that I am speaking about that leads to transformation.

What one finds is that in the realm of mental phenomena it is only by applying other mental factors and thought processes that one can undermine the force of the mental afflictions and so on. Given this complexity one finds in the practices different approaches. Principally there are two categories of practices, one belonging to what is known as the method aspect of the path and other known as the wisdom aspect of the path. Generally

speaking the method aspects of the path are thought processes where it is not so much the actual object of mind that is emphasized, not the cognition of an object but rather cultivating a particular thought process through which the transformation takes place. For example true renunciation, which is the genuine aspiration to attain liberation from suffering and samsaric existence, is a part of the method aspect of the path. Similar is great compassion. These are states of mind or realizations that are attained as the result of prolonged contemplation.

These need to be cultivated through processes of insight and understanding. For example great compassion, which is the aspiration to see others free from suffering arises on the basis of thought processes that reflect upon the nature of the sufferings of others and so on. The factor of insight or wisdom is also very critical.

One realizes that the inner discipline, the transformation of the mind is something that has to occur on the basis of a voluntary adoption of the spiritual discipline and is not something that can be imposed from outside by the means of force. What is the method or process by which one brings about this change? Here I believe that it is through cultivating constant familiarity that this occurs. It is a fact of the nature of our human minds that the more one habituates it, the more one familiarizes it with something, the greater one's ability to sustain that thought process or the greater will be one's ability to cultivate that understanding. This is a very natural fact of the mental factors of the mind.

What is required is to cultivate a constant familiarity and through this constant familiarity one will be able to bring about a gradual transformation and change. One can see change within one's own life. For example one may have a very strong emotional reaction to a small incident or have a negative state of mind that is slight at the beginning but it then becomes a very powerful surge of negative emotions. From the Buddhist point of view the reason why such occurrences come about is because of one's long habituation and familiarity with the thought processes leading to the experience of negative emotions. Therefore if one cultivates the habits of contrary thought processes or positive aspects of the mind then similarly one will gradually make the positive emotions more and more natural, a more spontaneous part of one's mind.

For example someone may have had a very short temper in his or her early life. Then as the result of reflecting and contemplating on the destructive nature of anger and on the shortcomings to oneself of having such powerful negative emotions, and by cultivating the antidotes to anger and hatred such caring and respect towards others, gradually the person becomes gentler and more compassionate. This is something that we can all attest to. When one talks about this kind of transformation obviously one cannot expect change in terms of days or weeks. Rather one can only see results or fruits of mental transformation in terms of years; the possibility of change takes years.

Why is it that through familiarity the mind changes, that certain thought processes become more natural and spontaneous? It is a natural fact; it is the nature of reality just as a sprout comes out of a seed. Similarly there is a law of causation that through constant familiarity, through constant cultivation of positive thought processes certain emotions and experience become more dominant within one's mind. Therefore when one thinks about the cultivation of constant familiarity one is talking about in essence the practice of meditation. The Tibetan word for meditation is gom, which has the etymological meaning of deliberately cultivating familiarity with a chosen object.

Meditation is nothing but a state of mind that is derived as the result of consciously and deliberately cultivating familiarity with a chosen object. This kind of understanding, meditative understanding can only arise on the basis of deep reflection and contemplation, which is said to be the knowledge derived through contemplation or reflection. This must be grounded based on an understanding derived through study and learning.

So when one talks about cultivating understanding or Dharma, it is not adequate to simply have the information and say that such and such a lama says this in such and such a text. One should not leave one's understanding of the Dharma at only that level. Because at that level basically what one has done is gathered information but so far as one's own self is concerned, one has not taken a standpoint. One is acting as a neutral, dispassionate observer. What is required is to process the information, integrating it to one's own mind so that the understanding one gains is based on a personal understanding as the result of contemplation. This level of understanding is said to be the second stage of understanding known as understanding derived through contemplation. This then can lead to the third level of understanding, which is the understanding derived through meditative practice.

Although in actual fact it is the understanding derived through meditative experience that is the direct antidote of the mental afflictions but before one arrives there one must go through the gradual process of cultivating the first two levels of understanding. It is in this way that one can gradually bring about the transformation within one's mind. Otherwise if one leaves one's understanding purely at the level of information then if one is hard-pressed why it is the case by someone else then one exhausts any explanation quickly as one has not integrated that understanding. One ends up saying that such and such a person said so but one doesn't know for sure oneself. This is the danger that one may fall into if one's knowledge is not integrated and cultivated on the basis of understanding. (Break)

I spoke about the importance of how a spiritual discipline and mental transformation can take place as the result of deliberately cultivating prolonged habituation and familiarity [with a topic]. I am talking about the practice of Dharma. What is the actual procedure of the development of Dharma realizations from the Buddhist point of view?

It would be helpful here to reflect upon the meaning of a verse found in Nagarjuna's *Fundamentals of the Middle Way* where Nagarjuna pays homage to Gautama Buddha whose heart was compelled by great compassion and who taught the Sublime Dharma in order to dispel and eliminate all forms of distorted views.

**[I prostrate to Gautama
Who through compassion
Taught the true doctrine,
Which leads to the relinquishing of all views.]**

In this verse Nagarjuna encapsulates the essence of the Buddha's teaching. There he praised and paid homage the Buddha Shakyamuni by reflecting upon the Buddha's great qualities of wisdom and compassion. He suggests that the Buddha's heart is influenced by the powerful force of great compassion towards other sentient beings and out of this compassionate motivation he taught the path or methods that enables all sentient beings to eliminate the negativities of their minds. Through eliminating all of their mental afflictions and ultimately all of their distorted views they can attain perfect enlightenment.

What one finds here is that Nagarjuna paid homage to the Buddha Shakyamuni by explicitly identifying two of the Buddha's foremost enlightened qualities, the quality of wisdom and the quality of compassion. Another significance of this verse is that it suggests that even the teacher, Buddha himself was not fully enlightened from the beginning. The Buddha was just like us, a sentient being at the beginning, an ordinary being with flaws. But as the result of prolonged practice and the development of great compassion along with the cultivation of wisdom the Buddha eventually developed within himself these enlightened qualities. He eventually attained the perfection of both compassion and wisdom thus becoming a fully enlightened being.

When the Buddha taught the path to other sentient beings, his disciples and so on he taught the path from his own personal experience, setting forth the entire process by which one can go through this spiritual transformation. He drew from his own personal experience having gradually gone through the process overcoming various levels of negativities and mental afflictions. He gradually cultivated various levels of spiritual realization such as compassion, bodhicitta and so on.

One finds that the key aspects of the Buddha's qualities are compassion and wisdom. Similarly the essence of the path that he taught are the practices of compassion or skillful means and the practice of wisdom, the wisdom of emptiness. Together what one has here is a path that is the union of method and wisdom. Here again one can reflect on a verse from Nagarjuna's *Fundamentals of the Middle Way* where he stated that Buddha taught the Dharma by means of the Two Truths. These Two truths are the conventional truth and the ultimate truth. Ultimately the insight that is being cultivated is the insight into the ultimate nature of reality. The understanding of this ultimate nature of reality is then grounded in and also leads to an understanding of conventional reality, which is the world of multiplicity. In a way one can say that there are two aspects of the path, method and wisdom, co-related to each other and to the two aspects of reality, the conventional and ultimate truths.

When one talks about the idea of the Two Truths, I think one can relate this to one's ordinary experience. Even in one's day to day life one often confronts situations where one's perception on the situation does not correspond to the actual reality. This is a basic fact of one's life. If one goes further one can even also say that even in one's world view, one's understanding of the physical universe, there is often a gap between one's perception and understanding and the actual reality. For example, as a result in the advance of scientific knowledge particularly in the area of physics such as quantum mechanics and relativity theory, one finds that what was once thought to be an accurate representation of the physical world is no longer valid. One has had to modify one's understanding so there is often a gap between one's perception and reality. This is really the basis for the very idea of the Two Truths.

In fact if one looks at the philosophical traditions of ancient India, one finds that this model of approaching the understanding of reality within a framework of two truths is quite common including non-Buddhist schools. The term two truths is used also outside Buddhist philosophical circles. However when one looks at the understanding of Two Truths from the Madhyamika perspective then the concept of the Two Truths is related to the basic fact of the disparity between one's perceptions and actual reality of things and events.

One can also speculate that, given the limited capacity of one's ordinary levels of thought, one may perceive a situation or event being in one way. But given the limited capacity of one's ordinary knowledge the reality of the thing or event may be something else. Through subjecting one's perceptions to deeper analysis, one will then be able to find out whether there is a gap between one's perception and reality or that one's perception does correspond to reality.

In fact this is how we advance in scientific knowledge. Scientific knowledge of the physical universe does not arise simply by taking our perceptions of the world at face value. We do not stop at that but we ask questions and go beyond the level of appearance trying to penetrate to a deeper level of understanding of what actually is the true nature of reality. So in this way we have made advances in our scientific understanding of the physical universe.

The Madhyamika understanding of the Two Truths is also grounded in this appreciation or recognition of the disparity between one's perceptions and reality. The Madhyamikas would distinguish between these two levels of reality, ultimate and relative truth by the following way. Any level of understanding that is derived as the result of penetrating into the deeper nature of reality, not being content with the level of appearances

alone and probing into the actual essence of reality, what is discovered is said to be the ultimate truth or nature of reality. The knowledge that derives from the level of appearances or perception alone where one does not go beyond the bonds of convention or ordinary perception, this level of understanding is said to be the conventional truth. This is how the Madhyamikas would define ultimate truth and the conventional truth.

Again if one reflects upon the salutation verse of Nagarjuna's *Fundamentals of the Middle Way* one finds that Nagarjuna presents the theory of emptiness by the means of reflecting upon the characteristics of things and events. He analyzes such characteristics such as origination and cessation, one and many, existence and nonexistence, coming and going, and so on. He subjects these characteristics of dependently originated phenomena and then analyzes whether or not these characteristics are truly intrinsic to the phenomenon under investigation. So what one finds here is that dependently originated phenomena, things and events are taken as the subject under investigation. Their characteristics such as origination and cessation are then subjected to analysis of whether these characteristics are inherent or intrinsic characteristics or whether they exist as intrinsic natures of the things and events. As a result what one finds here is that although things and events possess these characteristics of origination, cessation, identity, difference, coming, going and so on, these characteristics are the relative nature of things and events. They are not intrinsic natures of the things and events.

The reason for this is that when one subjects them to analysis then one does not find them, their very identity or existence ceases to exist. For example when one subjects the idea of causation to critical analysis, when things come into being the question is that either they can come into being as the result of causes and conditions or they can come into being without any cause. Causeless production or the coming into being through no cause is untenable, which means things do come into being from causes and conditions. Now if this is the case are the causes identical to the effect or are the causes of a different nature than the effects?

Identical causes cannot produce an effect that is identical with itself therefore this is rejected. A cause that is independent of the effect again is untenable so this is rejected [as there is no link between cause and effect]. Both of the possible alternatives are rejected. One finds in Nagarjuna's *Fundamentals of the Middle Way* where he states there is nothing whatsoever at whatever time that something comes into being; from no cause, itself, by an independent cause or from both. So what one finds here is that the mind that analyzes the nature of things and events, so far as the perspective of that mind is concerned such diverse characteristics such as origination and cessation, singularity and multiplicity cease to exist. This is because the analyzing mind is the mind that probes into the essential nature of reality.

When one reflects along these lines then one will understand what is meant by the union of appearance and reality found in the various texts. Appearance here refers to the conventional level of reality and emptiness refers to the ultimate level of reality. These two, appearance and reality must be understood in relation to one and the same thing. One cannot talk about appearance on one basis and emptiness on another basis. So from the Madhyamika point of view the understanding of appearance and emptiness must be grounded on the basis of a single entity, thing or event. One needs to understand this as the unified nature of things and events.

To summarize, appearance refers to the dependently originated nature of things and emptiness refers the ultimate nature of reality. From the Madhyamika point of view in the final analysis the highest proof of emptiness is dependent origination. The fact that things are dependently originated suggests that things are absent of independent existence, things are absent of intrinsic existence.

When one also speaks about the idea of dependent origination, which is common to all Buddhist philosophical schools of thought, one needs to understand that there are different levels of understanding of this concept. First of all there is the level of understanding of dependent origination that is common to all Buddhist schools of thought. This is the understanding of dependent origination in terms of causal dependence, dependence on causes and conditions. Things and events come into being by dependence upon other causes and conditions. This is one level of understanding of dependent origination or *pratityasamutpada*.

There is a second level of understanding of dependent origination, which is common to the Madhyamika Schools, the Middle Way philosophical schools. Here the understanding of dependent origination is, in addition to the causal dependence, an understanding of dependence in terms of the relationship between parts and wholes, constituents and constituted. Every thing or every event when subjected to analysis will be found that their very existence or identity is dependent upon other factors such as parts that constitute the whole. This is a subtler understanding of dependent origination and it is also more universal. Whatever thing or event one takes to be the object of investigation, one will find that its very nature is in dependence on other factors, its parts or constituents.

However there is a third level of understanding of dependent origination, which is thought to be the subtlest and highest understanding of dependent origination. Here dependent origination is understood as interdependence, the nature of dependence is understood more in terms of the relationship between the designated basis and the designation. For example every event or phenomenon that has the capacity to function, a capacity to have an impact or to produce a result through either harm or benefit, whatever it may be, if one subjects it to analysis trying to discover what is the true referent to the term, the objective reality of the thing going beyond the label or designation then one finds that one cannot simply find the object.

This is the nature of things and events. When one thinks about a particular object one tends to believe that the term has some intrinsic relation to the basis of designation, one tends to believe that the thing has some kind of objective reality from itself, in and of itself. However when one subjects this to analysis one will find that actually that the very identity and existence starts to disappear. This of course does not suggest that the thing or object does not exist at all, it does exist, as one's own experience is the proof that it exists. One can come into contact with it, one can interact with it and one can experience pain or pleasure in relation to it. One's experience itself tells one or affirms its reality but when one searches for it, objective reality, one fails to find it.

This suggests that the thing does not exist in the way in which one believes it to exist. The object is devoid of the independent, objective reality that one believes it possesses. If this is the case then the only alternative left is some kind of conventional reality that one can accord to the thing. So one can only say that things and events exist only from the perspective of the unexamining, unanalyzing mind or consciousness. In a sense one can say that things and events exist only by means of a label, by means of a name or term.

In the Madhyamika literature when one finds references to name only, mere designation or mere imputation this is not suggesting that there are no things outside language. Rather it is suggesting that their level of reality must only be understood within the bounds of convention, within the boundaries of language and reference. What one finds here is a much more complex and subtle understanding of dependence of things and events, the dependent relationship between the designated basis and the designation.

Let us try to go further into the understanding of the first level of dependent origination, dependence in terms of causes and conditions. Here if one observes the natural world around one, one sees a multiplicity and diversity of changes and transformations. This is something that is obvious, that is very evident. The changes and transformations that one

sees all around, in order for these to happen there must be at a subtler level, a deeper level a subtle process of change that is taking place. If there were no constant and dynamic changing process in nature at the subtle level then there would be simply no way for accounting for the change and diversity one perceives at the empirical level. Therefore from the Buddhist point of view all things and events are in constant flux, at a very subtle level going through constant transformation and change.

If the question is asked, “Why do these things and events have this nature of undergoing momentary change?” then the answer is that the very factors that brought the thing or event into being also planted the seed for this change. Also the causes and conditions themselves, if subjected to analysis, one finds are also themselves are subject to constant change and are part of dynamic processes. If the causes themselves were not of the same nature there would simply be no way to account for their ability to produce effects. Therefore the causes themselves are subject to constant change and the dynamic process which suggests that the causes themselves are produced by earlier instances of causes and conditions. These in turn were produced by preceding causes and conditions ad infinitum.

When one pushes one’s line of reasoning this way, one comes to the conclusion that the actual chain of causation must be beginningless, must be infinite. The alternative to this would be to posit a beginning to the chain of causation and if one does so then one will have to either accept a beginning with no particular reason or cause in which case it undermines the very idea of causation or one has to say that the beginning’s cause was a permanent, eternal factor. Positing such a factor again contradicts the very basic idea of causation, the principle of causation. So from the Buddhist point of view to pursue the line of thought suggested by the theory of causation one is compelled to accept the idea of an infinite or beginningless process.

If one asks further, “Why are things and events in dependence on causes and conditions? or “Why is there the suggestion of infinity when the process of causation is analyzed” the answer from the Buddhist perspective would be that is the way it is. This is the nature of reality. (Break)

I will continue with a general overview of the path. I spoke of the fundamental factor of how causes and conditions bring into being a particular thing or event, which is also the very factor that implants the seed for the cessation of that thing or event. Also I spoke about how when one pursues the line of reasoning, the causes and conditions themselves are products of preceding causes and conditions. These in turn are products of preceding causes and conditions and so on thus leading to an understanding of the infinity of the causal chain and the beginninglessness of the causal chain. Now this is the case if one were to look at things and events in terms of their continuum.

Of course at the level of manifestation because of the diversity one can validly conceive of, for instance in the context of a particular event, a beginning of the event and the end of the event. At the level of the world of multiplicity and the world of manifestation of course one can talk about a beginning and an end. But in terms of the actual continuum of things and events, especially when viewed through the principle of causation, then one finds that it is beginningless, it is infinite.

This is the nature of things and events, the nature of reality that one experiences. This is the nature of the world of dependent origination. Within this world of dependent origination one finds that by nature one finds two principal categories or kinds. On the one hand are those phenomena, which have physical or material properties such as color, shape, odor, tactile properties and so on. On the one side are all of these material objects or things that possess obstructive, material qualities. On the other side is the second category of phenomena, which do not possess material qualities but exist simply in the nature of mere

experience, a nature of knowing and luminosity. This category of phenomena one calls the world of mind or consciousness.

Within the realm of mental phenomena, which is in the nature of mere knowing and experience called awareness or consciousness, the Tibetan term shepa, which means awareness by itself, suggests the quality of knowing. It has the subjective quality of knowing. Again within this realm there is diversity. For example when one sees something through one's visual consciousness, one has a vivid image of that object in front of one that is the sensory experience of visual perception. When one sees things through one's eyes, visual perception one also has because of this experience an immediate experience that "I am seeing" or "I see this". Now of course this does not suggest that the visual perception itself is the I or self yet the experience of that perception does give rise to the thought that "I see this" or "I am seeing".

A problem arises. If visual perception itself is the actual person, being or self then this cannot account for other observed facts of one's subjective experience. For example one may be seeing something with one's eyes at a particular instance but immediately thereafter due to some other circumstances one becomes distracted by hearing or smelling something. This distraction need not be an external object as one could withdraw one's mind focusing single-pointedly on a thought. This suggests that even though one perception may be dominant at a particular given moment, one has the capacity to be dominated by other sensory perceptions like auditory or tactile sensations. Similarly one is capable of directing one's focus inwardly to a purely subjective experience.

This suggests that underlying these diverse sensory and mental activities there is a continuing agent or subjective experiencer, a person or self that in a sense controls all of these various activities. There seems to be a person that is the true experiencer, that is the true perceiver. This is what is referred to be "I", self, mine and so on. If one examines this kind of sense of self or sense of "I", one finds that it arises in dependence on some kind of continuum. In the final analysis it said to be dependent on the continuum of the consciousness. Since as I discussed earlier, the continuum of the consciousness is beginningless and infinite, similarly the self or the I that is designated upon this continuum will also be accepted as beginningless and infinite in terms of its continuum.

As to what exactly the nature of this self, person, being or "I" is there is of course a diversity of opinion among the philosophers of ancient India. There is one camp of the ancient Indian schools of thought, a non-Buddhist school who on the whole accept some kind of independent entity that is unitary and so on, that is in the final analysis independent of the mind and body, independent of the mental and physical aggregates. This is one camp. The other camp to which all of the Buddhist schools belong to which reject the need to posit some kind of independent self that is independent of the physical and mental aggregates. Rather they accept the existence of a self in relation to the physical and mental aggregates.

Within these Buddhist schools there are some who maintain that in the final analysis the self has to be identified either with one or several of the psychophysical aggregates. There are then others who reject this kind of strict identification of the self with the aggregates but rather accept that the self or person must be understood only as a kind of a construct in relation to the psychophysical aggregates. Nothing within the psychophysical aggregates can be said to be really the true self. So the self is a construct that must be accepted in relation to the psychophysical aggregates.

Whatever the truth of these various positions the fact is that all of us have this natural sense of self, the natural thought of "I am". On the basis of this natural sense of selfhood all of us also have a natural aspiration to be happy and to overcome suffering. This is a fact of our existence. It is on the basis of this natural aspiration, this fundamental aspiration to seek happiness and overcome suffering that all of us exist and survive. We survive on the basis of

hope and this hope points towards the future although there is no guarantee that the future will be better than the present. But still we survive on the basis of hope and with hope we direct our thoughts towards the future. This kind of aspiration and hope is what lies at the root of our survival and existence. This is not something that is unique to human beings even animals also survive driven by this kind of instinctual aspiration to seek happiness and avoid suffering.

Among all sentient beings, this basic aspiration to seek happiness and shun suffering compared to human beings, beings in the animal realm have a limited pursuit of happiness. They are only able to pursue the fulfillment of this aspiration in limited circumstances and only related with the immediate moments of pain or pleasure. They have a very limited scope.

Unlike animals we human beings, because of our intelligence and imaginative faculties, we have the ability to project into the future and recall our experiences of the past. We are able then to make plans and build infrastructure for the future for others' wellbeing. Also what is normal for human beings to protect themselves from potential misery later in life by earlier in life we accumulate wealth or create the appropriate conditions for whatever we may need in the future. Also we are able to project beyond the concerns of our own existence and make plans for the wellbeing of future generations. Only we human beings have this capacity to project ahead and make long-term plans and try to pursue the fulfillment of our basic aspiration to seek happiness and overcome suffering.

If one examines carefully one's normal day to day experience, one's pursuit of happiness and suffering is dominated by the experience of the senses. The kind of happiness one seeks, the type of suffering one seeks to avoid are on the whole sensory level experiences. Whether it is attraction towards a particular object and its acquisition or avoiding physical threats, the type of fulfillment one is seeking is purely at a sensory level. One's pursuit of this happiness and avoidance of suffering is dominated by sensory level experiences.

However there is another dimension, a deeper level of the experience of happiness and the avoidance of suffering, which is a satisfaction and sense of fulfillment that one acquires as the result of reflective thought processes. Here the experiences are beyond the level of the sense and if one compares these two levels of experience, the physical and the mental, I would say that the mental level of pain and pleasure is more acute and more powerful. The reason for this is simple. For example if one has cultivated within oneself a certain degree of an inner sense of fulfillment or happiness based on mental composure then even if one achieves material facilities it is helpful. But if one lacks those material comforts because of one's inner qualities, one is able to sustain one's sense of wellbeing.

On the contrary if one lacks this inner sense of fulfillment and composure then even if one is surrounded by the finest material facilities then one simply cannot enjoy the benefits of those material comforts. This suggests that the mental level of the experience of pain and pleasure is more acute than the sensorial level.

So just as all of us, by virtue of our very existence have this fundamental, innate aspiration to seek happiness and overcome suffering, also all of us have the natural right to fulfill this aspiration to be happy and overcome suffering.

What one finds in the Buddhist teachings is the suggestion that so far as the nature of awareness itself and its continuum is concerned, it is beginningless and there is nothing that can obstruct the flow of the consciousness. There is nothing that can obstruct or bring about the cessation of the continuum of awareness therefore awareness is not only said to be beginningless but also in terms of its continuum it is also infinite and endless.

Compared to this suffering and pain are more relative and have a more circumstantial nature. Sufferings and pain come into being as the result of many other factors, many of

which are circumstantial conditions. If one examines the nature of suffering, it is fairly obvious that their nature is dependent on causes and conditions, the fact that the experience of suffering comes about as the result of other causes and conditions. Take the example of physical pain like headache or hunger pains. These very obvious types of pain are recognized as undesirable sufferings even by animals. There is universal agreement between humans and animals that those types of experiences are painful.

In the case of someone experiencing severe hunger and suffering for this, one could go into a detailed analysis of what the various causes are. Of course the immediate cause is a lack of food, something to eat. Now why is it that the person has no food to eat? One can go further into the causes. Now there is a level of causation that is very apparent but there is another level of connection that is not so obvious but which one can infer through some reasoning and reflection. For example one can talk about misguided economic policies of the country, the failure of the person's initiative and so on. One can bring in all sorts of factors that have helped lead to the poverty of this person.

When one thinks along these lines then one will appreciate the significance of the Buddha's teachings on the Four Noble Truths. One of my fundamental beliefs is that the purpose of our existence is to be happy, to seek happiness. In fact within the natural world the things that are of interest to us and the things that have a direct bearing on our experiences are the things that give rise to happiness and suffering. What matters to us is happiness and suffering. I believe that the fundamental purpose of our existence is to seek happiness.

When one talks of happiness obviously one is also talking about suffering as happiness and suffering are related. When one thinks along these lines one appreciates that what one does not desire instinctively, naturally and by one's innate nature is suffering and what one does seek and aspire to attain by one's innate nature is happiness. If this is the case then one needs to examine what are the origins, what are the factors that give rise to suffering that one does not desire and one must try to get rid of those factors, causes and conditions. What one aspires to attain is happiness therefore one must look into the factors, causes and conditions that give rise to the happiness that one seeks. One must then cultivate those causes and conditions, seek them and develop them. This is how one will pursue the fundamental aspiration to be happy.

Also one knows that happiness and suffering do not exist as absolutes. There is no absolute happiness and there is no absolute, independent suffering. Rather happiness and suffering, pain and pleasure come into being through dependence upon many factors, causes and conditions. Therefore one appreciates the significance of the teachings of the Buddha on the Four Noble Truths. Because one does not desire suffering it is in one's interest to seek the origin of suffering and try to eliminate the origin by finding the way to do this.

Earlier I spoke about the Dharma in the context of Buddhadharma, being nirvana or the liberation from suffering. Here it is important to recognize that in the Buddhist context where one is referring to happiness, the achievement of happiness as being the ultimate aspiration of a spiritual practitioner, one's understanding of happiness should not be confined to ordinary happiness of the senses. Rather here one is talking about lasting happiness, permanent happiness which is the total cessation of suffering and its underlying root or cause that are the afflictive emotions and thoughts.

This true cessation of suffering along with the mental afflictions is nirvana. Of course although one has to go through the gradual stages of attaining various levels of cessation, the highest cessation is the complete overcoming of all of the afflictive thoughts and emotions. This is the true nirvana. This is the Third Noble Truth, the Truth of Cessation and this can only be attained when one cultivates the right path, the true path that leads to the attainment of such liberation.

Given the happiness that is being sought in the context of the Buddhist practice is not the ordinary happiness of sensual experience but rather lasting happiness defined in terms of total cessation of negativity along with the afflictive thoughts and emotions, therefore when the Buddha taught the Truth of Suffering again one's understanding should not be confined to one's ordinary experience of suffering. Even animals can recognize ordinary suffering as painful and as undesirable. Rather the understanding of the nature of suffering has to be grounded in a deeper recognition of the nature of suffering, which is based upon the awareness of recognition that the mental afflictions are the ultimate root of one's suffering. Thus one generates an attitude that those are one's true enemies. Once one has this kind of deeply felt conviction in the recognition of the afflictions of the mind as being one's enemy then one will develop the genuine aspiration or desire to attain freedom from suffering and freedom from the afflictive emotions. In this way one will be able to understand the nature of cessation as well. In other words it is important to have a deep appreciation of the nature of suffering when one talks of the Truth of Suffering.

When one thinks along these lines one will appreciate the statement that all the eighty-four thousand sets of discourses taught by the Buddha, all of them converge on the teachings of Dependent Origination. What is the significance of this statement? It is first that the object of aspiration of a Buddhist practitioner is nirvana that is the true cessation of suffering and the afflictive thoughts and emotions. This requires the practitioner to have a deeply felt conviction that at the root of suffering lies the mental and emotional afflictions. Therefore any teachings of the Buddha must either directly or indirectly eventually converge on the point of teaching the techniques and methods for eliminating and diminishing the force the mental and emotional afflictions. This is the meaning of the statement that all of the Buddha's teachings converge on the teachings of Dependent Origination.

Once one has this kind of understanding and deeply felt conviction of the negativity and destructive nature of the afflictions of thoughts and emotions, then one will definitely have a genuine desire to seek freedom from them. One will seek to overcome those afflictions. Even for the skeptic who does not have a belief in any religious system, if this person engages in some sort of reflective thought, simply asking the question "What happens when powerful negative emotions occur within my mind?" for example strong anger or hostility. Sometimes it may be the case that some person when they become very angry towards another tends to have some sense of satisfaction thinking "I was able to show them". However generally speaking when strong hostility or anger arises within one's mind, it undermines one's wellbeing. It begins to effect one's thoughts, appetite as well as one's sleep. Thus these negative emotions effect one's physical health. It is said that if one is really angry, at that instant even if one meets a friend one may find that friend annoying. Such is the power of the negative emotions.

Similarly when one has strong attachment or desire for something, this begins to undermine the stability of one's mind. If the attachment or desire is very strong then one's mind will be totally dominated by this craving to attain the object of desire. One is willing to do anything, exploiting someone, deceiving someone, telling lies and so on until the object is attained. Such is the power of craving.

Similarly when one has strong pride or arrogance then when gripped by this pride and arrogance one falls into a self-congratulatory, complacent state of mind. Thus one neglects many other important purposes. When one has such arrogance one tends to look down upon others. One is competitive towards others as well as envious of others. Pride leads to envy and other negative emotions. So when powerful negative emotions arise in one, one knows even without any religious beliefs that they undermine one's sense of wellbeing and the underlying stability of one's mind.

The point I am trying to make is that when one thinks carefully, one will realize that the negative emotions are the destroyer, the ultimate cause that lets one down. If there is any possibility that these could be eliminated, could be rooted out of one's psyche then surely one must find the aspiration and that endeavor worthy of effort.

From the Buddhist point of view if one looks at the nature of suffering then one will appreciate that at the root of all suffering or painful experiences lay with the powerful negative emotions and thoughts. Whether the suffering or pain are the result of human creation or the results of natural events such as sickness, aging or death, whatever painful experiences or sufferings one encounters from the Buddhist point of view all are the products or consequences of the afflictive emotions and thoughts.

This alone would be a benefit to achieve total freedom as a result of the total overcoming of the negative emotions and thoughts. Even the very awareness that one cultivates as the result of reflecting upon the destructive nature of suffering and cultivates some feeling of distance from the powerful negative emotions and thoughts, this in itself has a powerful effect on one's mind. This in itself creates a strength within one and has a powerful effect upon one's mind.

Even in the case of ordinary human conflicts between individuals if one is able to have some kind of assessment of the power, strength and capability of one's opponent, although one may not be able to totally overwhelm one's enemy but this knowledge itself will give one confidence. Similarly in the case of a spiritual practitioner whose sole purpose is to combat the negative emotions, when one has a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the afflictive emotions, an understanding of their strength and destructive nature, this knowledge in itself can create confidence in one. This is similar to having performed an assessment of the enemy's strength.

As one finds in the Buddhist scriptures and also in the writings of the great Kadampa masters, it is said that the true practitioner must cultivate some kind of skillful relationship or understanding in the afflictive thoughts and emotions. These masters are not suggesting that one should be skilled in expressing these powerful negative emotions. All of us are so habituated to expressing these powerful negative emotions that we are all in some sense experts. We do not need to develop such expertise in the experience of the negative emotions, as we are all experts in expressing anger, attachment and so on. Just as the Seventh Dalai Lama stated in so far as one's being an expert in the experience and expression of negative emotions, all of us are equal with the only difference being one's external appearance. Some may have a holy appearance wearing impressive robes but in actual fact of being totally habituated and being an expert in the negative emotions we are all the same. The great Kadampa masters are suggesting that one develops a new expertise in understanding the nature of the afflictive emotions. By expert here is meant to have the insight into their deeper nature such as what factors give rise to what negative emotion, what are the conditions, what antidotes are to be cultivated or what are the dynamics between the negative emotions? This is what the Kadampa masters meant by becoming an expert.

If one looks at the world of emotions, one knows that it is a world of multiple experiences or events. Within this world of emotional activity and thoughts there is a convergence of opinion on one thing by the great Indian masters. This is that there are two principal underlying emotional types. One is attachment to oneself and as a result of this one has a feeling of attraction towards those whom one considers close to one or those whom one considers loved ones. Because of the attachment to one's self one also has a notion of separate others. There is a division between self and others and towards others often there is often a strong emotional repulsion which manifests in the forms of hostility, jealousy, envy and so on.

Primarily there are two principal driving forces, attraction towards things associated with oneself and a sense of repulsion towards things that are related with others. What is the dynamic that gives rise to this attachment to self and that associated with the self? Of course there are complex explanations for this phenomenon. As to the question of this dynamic, Nagarjuna suggested the following explanation. He wrote two lines, which read something like:

To a mind clinging on to an object
Why wouldn't powerful afflictive emotions arise?

He is suggesting that when one examines how one relates to the objects of one's attachment or anger, one will realize that underlying these powerful emotions is an assumption of that object having some sort of independent objective reality, some status of existence supported in and of itself. Because of this sort of projection of an objective and intrinsic reality to the object then when one relates with that object, one sees certain qualities that one immediately clings to developing powerful emotional reactions.

Therefore if the object did possess such independent, objective, and intrinsic reality then, say in the case of anger, the quality of undesirability would be an absolute characteristic of that object. In that case then there would be an objective ground for one's emotional reaction. Similarly if the attachment felt for an object was inherent, intrinsic and objective in that object then the quality of desirability that one projects on to the object would be grounded in reality. However this is not the case. Therefore what Nagarjuna suggested was that the belief in some kind of intrinsic and objective existence in an object, the belief that things and events possess some kind of independent and objective reality is what gives rise to the powerful emotional reactions to things and events. So the underlying root factor really is the conception of an objective reality or the independent existence of things and events.

Earlier I spoke about the gap between one's perception and reality. That discussion is relevant to what I am speaking about here. When one relates to things, when relates to them in a distorted manner. Although the reality of phenomena is the absence of such an intrinsic existence but one tends to believe in the intrinsic reality and identity. In this way it gives rise to powerful emotional reactions and so on. This suggests that this kind of conception of things as possessing some kind of objective, independent existence is a distorted perception and therefore this is said to be the fundamental ignorance. When one refers to ignorance here one is not talking about the simple and mere fact of not knowing but rather a distorted way of perceiving things. One is referring to a misknowing and therefore this kind of misknowledge has to be eliminated by cultivating the right insight and right knowledge. (Break)

Let us ask the question about this underlying root of fundamental ignorance that misconceives the nature of reality as possessing some kind of independent, objective, intrinsic reality that gives rise to all of the negative emotions and thoughts. Is this fundamental ignorance totally inseparable and totally indivisible from the basic nature of one's mind? Earlier I spoke about how the mere fact of knowing, the mere quality of knowing and luminosity is something that is beginningless and endless. The question is whether this fundamental ignorance because it is inseparable for the continuum of knowing and luminosity, is it also beginningless and endless? One needs to ask this question.

One knows from one's own personal experience that although when one experiences powerful emotions such as anger or hostility, at that instant the mind is completely dominated by the powerful emotion. But it is also the case that these powerful emotions do not reside in one's mind all of the time. Simply by virtue of being conscious does not entail that one is always angry or that one is always craving for something. So one knows that regardless of

how powerful these may be, they are occasional; sometimes they arise and at other times they subside. This suggests that these powerful emotions are separable in principle for one's continuum of consciousness.

Similarly in the case of fundamental ignorance although it is very deeply imbedded within one's psyche it is in principle separable from the basic mind, the simple continuum of luminosity and knowing. This is because it is not the case that one has this kind of belief consciously at all times. What one realizes here is the adventitious character or quality of the afflictive emotions; they are occasional, not ever present. This indicates that they are not inherent or an essential part of one's mind.

Another point to consider is that so far as the continuum of the basic mind is concerned, the basic quality of one's experience and mere knowing is concerned, as I mentioned earlier there simply is no factor, no condition that can bring about cessation. Therefore the mind will maintain its continuum infinitely. So there is a fundamental difference between, so far as the continuum of the basic mind and the afflictive emotions are concerned, the continuation of these two phenomena.

Another consideration one needs to bring into one's thought process here is how the fundamental ignorance, not only is it adventitious and occasional in terms of its occurrence but also it has antidotes. Fundamental ignorance is a misconception of reality as possessing some sort of intrinsic reality therefore the insight into emptiness that negates that kind of objective and independent existence of reality directly counters this fundamental ignorance. So there is an opposing factor or antidote for fundamental ignorance. Furthermore the more one habituates, the more one familiarizes with the insight into emptiness, the deeper one's experience of emptiness is the more powerful that insight becomes [as an antidote]. At the same time it also undermines the force of the fundamental ignorance. In this way one can see that fundamental ignorance has a powerful antidote. Furthermore fundamental ignorance and its derivative negative emotions, regardless of how powerful they may be, one knows that their power derives more from habituation or repeated experience rather than any grounding in valid considerations, reasoning or in reality.

In contrast the insight into emptiness has a much deeper grounding in valid reasoning and it is derived through rational thought processes. It also has valid grounding in reality therefore the more one cultivates the insight into emptiness the greater becomes its power. At the same time it undermines the force of fundamental ignorance. Moreover the true insight into emptiness is grounded in the simple fact of knowing and luminosity, which maintains its continuum infinitely. Therefore it is also from this point of view more powerful.

When one thinks along these lines one will begin to see at least the possibility that fundamental ignorance and its derivative negative emotions both have their roots in a distorted perception of reality. One will see that they can be eliminated by cultivating their opposing insight [the view of emptiness]. When one begins to see this possibility then one will be able to envision the possibility of obtaining moksha, true liberation from unenlightened existence, true liberation from suffering. When one can envision this then one can also envision a time when one can say goodbye to the negative emotions and thoughts. Also it gives one more hope and it empowers one with courage.

Otherwise if after the result of reflection if one came to the conclusion that there were no possibility of a way out from this unenlightened existence, that there was no possibility of true cessation then one would truly reach a desperate state of mind. If one concluded that there was no possibility of overcoming the afflictive emotions, no possibility of freedom then one might develop suicidal states of mind because of desperation. In fact if this were the case one could argue that it would be healthier not to reflect upon the nature of suffering, as it would only lead to pessimistic thoughts. In that situation it would be more logical then to seek solace in worldly pleasures like drugs forgetting about the nature of suffering.

This is however not the case. So one appreciates some kind of possibility of moksha then one's enthusiasm for attaining moksha will increase.

The main point is that by engaging in critical analysis examining the nature of reality and then analyzing whether one's perception of things and events as possessing some kind of objective, intrinsic existence is valid or not. One comes to realize that one's perceptions do not accord with reality because the actual reality is emptiness. Once one cultivates this kind of insight then one will be able to appreciate that there is as the result of this cultivation of insight and by means of applying this insight, there is a possibility of attaining cessation of suffering along with the negative emotions. So when this kind of understanding arises then one will be able to develop a genuine aspiration to attain this liberation.

Once one develops this genuine aspiration to attain liberation, freedom from suffering and the unenlightened existence then one will seek the right path, the true path leading to freedom, leading to that cessation. When one speaks about the true path through the context of the Four Noble Truths, the reference to true here is to emptiness; truth here refers to emptiness. So the true path, the essence of the true path must be understood in terms of a direct realization of the highest truth, which is emptiness.

In order for this direct realization of emptiness to take place one must first have cultivated a deeper understanding both intellectual and conceptual of emptiness. In order for this understanding to progress to the higher levels of the understanding of emptiness, it must be complemented with the faculty of single-pointedness. One needs here the higher training in meditation and concentration. Since the key practice of meditation and concentration is the development and enhancement of one's faculty of mindfulness, it is therefore important first of all to have a firm grounding in the training of morality. The key practice of morality is guarding one's body, speech and mind from negative conduct.

In other words the true path consists of the three higher trainings. The higher training in morality, which is the initial starting point. By observing a morally disciplined way of life one develops and enhances one's faculty of vigilance against negative actions. In this way when one's faculties of vigilance and heedfulness are further developed then one attains the higher training in meditation. When one has the higher training in meditation then one can enhance one's understanding of emptiness through the union of single-pointedness and insight. In this way one will be able to develop the wisdom of emptiness derived through meditative experience eventually leading to a direct realization of emptiness.

One finds that it is by engaging in the practices and paths of the three higher trainings, training in morality, concentration and wisdom that one actually eliminates and overcomes the afflictive emotions. The question can be asked, "Are there further levels of obscuration that need to be overcome?" Yes, although the manifest levels of the negative emotions may be eliminated through the practices of the three higher trainings still subtle imprints and propensities that were implanted in one's mind as the result of endless experiences of the negative emotions still remain.

It is these subtle dispositions and imprints that obstruct the individual from obtaining full perfection of the consciousness. Also they obstruct the subtle knowledge of phenomena. As to what these actual obstructions are, whether they are cognitive or not, there is a consensus that this obscuration is that which obstructs one from attaining total realization within a single instant of thought. This is a realization of the unity of the Two Truths, the conventional and ultimate truths. Because of this obstruction one's direct realization of emptiness is occasional. When one is directly experiencing emptiness then one's knowledge of the conventional reality is submerged and when one has direct knowledge of conventional reality one's direct experience of emptiness is submerged. This is what is meant by occasional.

It is also this subtle obscuration that prevents one from fully perfecting...

In so far as the actual path that directly serves as an antidote to eliminating even the subtle imprints and dispositions of the negative emotions is concerned, there is still the wisdom directly realizing emptiness. However here there is a fundamental difference in terms of the complimentary factor. First of all, previously although the wisdom directly realizing emptiness has been attained and the insight has been achieved, this insight was cultivated out of a motivation to attain liberation from samsara, from unenlightened existence.

However here that motivation alone is not adequate, the motivation needs to be altruistic, to be expansive. It is not only the attainment of one's own liberation but also the elimination of suffering for all sentient beings is the key motivating factor. There is a fundamental difference in terms of the motivation behind the practice and there is also the additional dimension of the accumulation of merit. In order for one's wisdom realizing emptiness to become powerful enough to serve as an antidote against the subtle imprints, not only need there be an altruistic motivation but also there needs to be the complimentary factor of the accumulation of great merit.

In other words what is required here is the path known as the emptiness endowed with all aspects. The key here is the aspiration to attain enlightenment for the sake of all beings. This aspiration to attain enlightenment is a major factor. The second major factor is that altruistic dimension that it is for the benefit of all beings so when one has this type of altruistic aspiration that embraces the wellbeing of all sentient beings, this in itself has a very powerful, expansive quality. Because of this it also creates a powerful basis for the accumulation of great merit.

When one refers to this altruistic mind one is talking about bodhicitta, the altruistic intention to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings. This is cultivated through a process of exchanging oneself with others, which is the essence of the path. This ideal of exchanging oneself with others, if thought through carefully is an amazing sentiment and an amazing, unimaginable aspiration. When such an amazing and unimaginable aspiration and sentiment serves as a complimentary factor then of course one's realization of emptiness, of the wisdom of emptiness becomes all the more powerful. As to the relationship between those aspirations and the wisdom of emptiness is concerned, how they become powerful factors for the accumulation of great merit is very clearly explained in Nagarjuna's *Precious Garland, Ratnavali*.

When one brings all of these points together then one really develops a deeper understanding of the passage I cited at the beginning of this talk, which was the salutation to the Buddha's enlightened qualities of compassion and wisdom. This was from Nagarjuna's *Fundamentals of the Middle Way*.

I suspect that many of you may have already heard this before so perhaps to those this may have been boring. I always point this out to others, as I strongly believe this myself that it is although wonderful and precious to have a deep reverence, faith and devotion but there is no guarantee that this faith in the Dharma can be reliable and firm. What is required is a grounding of that faith on a deeper understanding so that one's faith in the Dharma is genuinely a faith derived through understanding and a conviction. When one has this then the effectiveness of one's practice will tremendously increase but such faith grounded in understanding can only be developed if one has a basic understanding of the overall framework of the general path of the Buddha's teaching.

As to the practical methods or steps for cultivating and training one's mind in this powerful sentiment of bodhicitta, which is the ultimate courage, the source of all perfections and goodness and the source of all admirable sentiment there are two principal approaches in the texts. One is the method known as the Seven Point Cause and Effect approach and the other as found in Santideva's text is the Exchange and Equalizing of Self with Others.

Question: How can we teach children about afflictive emotions when they are young so that when they grow up they have a good starting point for eliminating these emotions?

Answer: Perhaps one thing that might be of help is to not to so much present the discussion as a spiritual teaching or as a religious practice but rather to simply relate it the child's own personal experience. Maybe one can find a way of pointing out the destructive nature of these afflictive emotions. For example one could ask the child to imagine what it would feel like to be angry, happy. Is it a disturbing experience? One could also try to relate the child's own experience with others. For example to suggest that if a family which is always expressing anger, shouting and yelling at each other, is that a good atmosphere or not? This is not to judge others but to simply observe the fact of the destructive nature of strong negative emotions. When one relates these ideas in this way maybe one can communicate the ideas to children.

Children also go through the educational system and know that they have a degree of ignorance in relation to a particular subject. As they learn more and more they discover this level of ignorance. Similarly they can, by recognizing the destructive nature of anger or hostility eventually be able to cultivate some kind of way of dealing with them, diminishing their force.

Question: In the beginning you mentioned briefly skepticism saying that someone who was too skeptical would not recognize the Buddha even if the Buddha were here in person. On the other hand if I am not mistaken it is encouraged to question and check the teachings and the teachers within Buddhism. Could you comment more on this? To what degree is it good to doubt?

Answer: Perhaps there might have been some confusion here with the Tibetan term, which I should have translated as a hardened skeptic as opposed to a mere skeptic. I was referring to an extreme form of skepticism but otherwise you are correct. Generally speaking Buddhist practitioners do need a degree of skepticism, especially at the initial stages when approaching scriptures and the teachings. In a talk in New York I pointed out the importance of the need for skepticism and the need for applying critical reasoning when approaching the teachings of the Buddha.

Within the Mahayana teachings there is an understanding that there is a category of teachings that cannot be taken at their face value; they must be considered as provisional requiring further interpretation. There is another category of teachings, which can be accepted as being definitive. Once one makes this distinction between provisional and definitive teachings the obvious question arises how does one determine the provisionality or definitive nature of a particular teaching. If one has to rely on another scripture for this kind of distinction then that scripture would need another scripture to validate it leading to an infinite regress. Therefore in the final analysis it is through applying one's critical faculties and developing understanding that one should be able to distinguish between what is provisional and what is definitive.

So obviously the final authority has to come from one's understanding derived through the application of one's critical faculties. This of course suggests the need for open skepticism right from the beginning. Therefore I personally believe, especially for Mahayana practitioners a degree of open skepticism is very critical at the beginning stages. Even in relation to the instructions given by the teachers, even the Vinaya scriptures, the monastic ethical texts themselves state that if a particular instruction of one's teacher does not accord with the basic Dharma teachings, then one must reject them. Similarly in the Sutras it is stated that for instructions given by one's teacher, those that accord with the general principles of the Dharma should be adopted and those that do not accord with the general

principles of the Dharma must not be pursued. However it is important that one should not develop a negative opinion of the teacher simply based on these instructions.

The point is that especially for Mahayana practitioners some degree of skepticism at the initial stages is very crucial. Extreme skepticism is a hardened skepticism that is also combined with self-righteousness which prevents one from seeking the opinion of someone else so much so that it has nothing to do with rational thought processes. This is simply a form of arrogance so that one is reluctant to listen to another person's opinion. This is the kind of skepticism that is negative and dangerous.

Question: How does one go about skillfully attacking the delusions without falling into the trap of self-hatred?

Answer: I think it depends very much on the fundamental perspective of the practitioner on the nature of the self and its relation to the negative emotions such as greed, anger and so on. Even when one is engaged in the task of attacking the delusions one is doing so because one does not want oneself to be overpowered and controlled by the negative emotions. So one is doing this for one's own sake, for one's own interest. This suggests that there is a caring for oneself.

Also it is helpful to reflect upon the teachings on the Buddhanature, which suggest that the essential nature of the mind is pure and luminous. One would also be helpful is to think through how it is important for one when relating to others, especially people who commit negative acts, that as practitioners one should be able to differentiate the person from the act. In this way one recognizes the negativity or suffering nature of the act but because of this one does not judge the person who commits the act. If one thinks through carefully one has this ability to distinguish between the person and the negative act along with the underlying motives that lead to the act.

Similarly one can apply the same principal to oneself. Instead of negatively judging a person in fact one can develop compassion towards that person because that person has committed a negative act because they were under the control of a powerful negative emotion. Instead of negatively judging another one can in fact develop compassion toward them while still recognizing the negativity of the act. Similarly one can again apply the same principal to oneself. When one is under the power of a negative emotion there is a negative dimension to one's actions. One can acknowledge this negative dimension but at the same time one should be able to distinguish oneself as an individual from a negative state of mind. Thus one is able to distinguish between the person and their mental activity.

Question: Since habituation to emotional afflictions leads to desperation leading to suicidal possibilities and it takes time rehabilitate to the insight in emptiness, what can one do to prevent a suicidal person from taking their life?

Answer: The question may be related to the point I made that if it were the case that there is no way out of unenlightened existence then contemplation on the nature of suffering could lead to suicidal tendencies. From the Buddhist point of view suicide is pointless due to the continuation of the consciousness. However if the question is purely from the conventional point of view not taking into account the wider Buddhist teachings this is related to the issue of self-hatred and self-loathing. These seem to be a problematic idea. As I understand the concept of self-hatred, I feel that even though there may be a level where an individual has a degree of hatred towards themselves, but deep down even that kind of self-hatred dynamic arises from an attachment to the self. There is an expectation for oneself and when this expectation is not fulfilled then one tends to judge oneself in an extreme way. This is how I understand the dynamic of self-hatred and self-loathing.

As to the question of suicide one thing that can be said is that so far as committing suicide is concerned as to what might lay ahead if one commits suicide, it is something that is obvious. One will cease to exist. The termination of one's being is the definite outcome if one commits suicide. But on the other hand if one does not commit suicide then there is the possibility of better days. If one chooses between the two, one is a result one knows with the other result having prospects for betterment. (End of day)

Morning Session, August 21, 1999

I defined compassion as the aspiration wishing that other sentient beings to be free from suffering and the focus of one's compassion are the suffering sentient beings. When one refers to suffering here one is not talking only about manifest suffering such as painful experiences but also one includes the causes and conditions that lead to suffering, including the imprints and propensities towards the afflictive emotions. These sentient beings who suffer in this way are the object of one's compassion. The actual apprehension of compassion, the sentiment itself is to wish these sentient beings to free from all those sufferings

If compassion is an aspiration wishing other sentient beings to be free of suffering and the causes of suffering then it becomes crucial for the practitioner to have some kind of deeper understanding of what is meant by suffering. What kinds of sufferings are there? Generally in one's normal daily interactions one's understanding of suffering, the nature of suffering is fairly limited. Although one may have spontaneous feelings of compassion and empathy towards someone suffering a painful experience but when one confronts individuals enjoying worldly success such as fame, wealth and so on one does not feel compassion. One does not see them as preoccupied with things and events, which are essentially causes of future suffering. Instead of feeling compassion towards these individuals one's normal reaction is that of admiration and adulation. If one lacks such excellent resources one can even generate envy and jealousy towards these individuals. This indicates that one's recognition and understanding of suffering is not deep enough, as one is unable to recognize the suffering of change as essentially being suffering. It is important to therefore have a deep understanding of suffering.

Finally in order for one to have genuine compassion that aspires for others to be free of suffering, one's understanding of the nature of suffering must even go further, extending towards the subtlest level of suffering. This is the suffering of pervasive conditioning. This suffering is the very fact of one's existence under the power and control of the negative emotions and thoughts and karma. It is important to cultivate such a deep understanding of the nature of suffering. Now when one has actually cultivated such an understanding it is much more effective when one does so by shifting the focus upon oneself, imaging oneself going through these experiences of suffering. When one imagines oneself going through these various experiences of suffering there is a greater effectiveness in cultivating a deeper understanding of suffering. It is important to cultivate this understanding of the nature of suffering in a gradual manner.

Of course even animals are capable of recognizing painful experiences as undesirable. So when one says that one must develop an understanding of the nature of suffering at the first level what is meant is that one needs to understand even the causes that lead to those kinds of painful experiences as being of the nature of suffering. These causes are negative actions, thoughts and emotions that lead to painful experiences. What are the consequences of engaging in such negative activity? One therefore needs to reflect on the sufferings of the lower realms of existence.

Once one has a deeper understanding of the nature of suffering based on one's own personal experience then when one shifts that focus on to other sentient beings, reflecting on

their suffering then there is the greater possibility of genuinely attaining compassion. When one meditates on the nature of suffering such as the lower realms of existence sometimes there is the danger that one may think that those sufferings may happen sometime in the distant future. If this kind of thought occurs it is important to counter it by meditating on impermanence, the transient nature of life, meditate on death. One will then develop a sense of urgency realizing that there is no certainty that one's lifespan will continue, that one's life is transient. So by reflecting upon death and impermanence one will be able to gradually let go of excessive attachment to and preoccupation with this life. One will then regard the fate of one's future lives as important and in this way one will be able to then move on to cultivating the genuine desire and aspiration to seek freedom from the unenlightened existence itself. It is important to approach these meditations in the right sequence and order.

It is in this way that one cultivates the altruistic aspiration to bring about the welfare of all sentient beings. Now once one has generated this altruistic aspiration then in order to have the actual experience of bodhicitta one must cultivate the aspiration to attain full enlightenment for the benefit of other sentient beings. Here it becomes critical to have some understanding of what is meant by enlightenment. In fact when one speaks about bringing about others' welfare in the ultimate sense, others sentient beings' realization of nirvana. This is the ultimate meaning of others' welfare. So it becomes crucial to have some kind of understanding of what is meant by perfect enlightenment.

Perfect enlightenment as I spoke about earlier is the state of total enlightenment that is completely free from all limitations and obscurations of negativities. It becomes crucial to cultivate the aspiration to attain this perfect enlightenment because otherwise although one wishes to bring about others' liberation but at the present one does not even have the capacity one's own aspirations. Therefore how could one, given one's current capacities and level of realization, bring about the ultimate welfare of all sentient beings equal to the expanse of space? Therefore it is only by attaining perfect enlightenment oneself that one will then be able to engage in fulfilling one's aspiration to be of ultimate benefit for all sentient beings.

Furthermore one should reflect on the fact that one will attain perfect enlightenment only as the result of engaging in the path where it is a union of method and wisdom overcoming all negativity and obscurations. Similarly when one speaks of bringing about others' wellbeing, others' ultimate wellbeing can only be attained by those sentient beings themselves engaging in the path that is the union of method and wisdom, perfecting themselves through that way by overcoming their own negativities and obscurations. In order to do that one must teach or show the path leading to enlightenment to all sentient beings. However given the diversity of the mental dispositions, interests, levels of mentality as well as individual inclinations, it is impossible to show this path unless oneself is completely enlightened, to be able to judge the appropriateness of what is to be taught to whom. Otherwise sometimes it is possible that one may, although out of a compassionate motive give a particular teaching which instead of being beneficial to that individual may in fact be harmful. Therefore in order to lead other sentient beings through the path properly to the state of full enlightenment, the aspects of the path should be introduced to individuals in perfect accordance with their level of mental faculties, inclinations, disposition, interests and so on.

Therefore even from this point of view although one's ultimate aspiration is to bring about the welfare of other sentient beings but in order to fully engage of that task it is a requirement for one as a practitioner to first attain the state of perfect enlightenment oneself. This is so that one will have no limitations or no obstructions that would hinder one from judging the appropriate teachings that one will give to other sentient beings. It is from these considerations that one must then conclude that in order to bring about the ultimate wellbeing of all sentient beings one must first attain perfect enlightenment. This state of mind when generated spontaneously is said to be bodhicitta, the mind for enlightenment. Maitreya in the

Abhisamayalamkara, The Ornament of Clear Realization defined bodhicitta as the altruistic mind that aspires to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings.

This altruistic aspiration which is an amazing and wondrous sentiment is the source of all excellences. Not only does it enable one to bring about the welfare of other sentient beings but also one's own self-interest is fulfilled as a by-product.

When one combines these two approaches together, the Seven-Point Cause and Effect method and the Exchanging and Equalizing Self with Other, the first step in the combined practice is the cultivation of equanimity. Equanimity here refers first to the equanimity as explained in the Seven-Point Cause and Effect method where equanimity is the cultivation of a level-mindedness towards all sentient beings along with a sense of equality towards all sentient beings. The key here is to try to find a way of overcoming one's normal discriminating and fluctuating emotions towards other sentient beings. Generally one tends to have a feeling of closeness and affection only towards those whom one considers loved ones such as friends and family. One then tends to have a feeling of distance and even hostility or aversion towards those who one considers strangers and enemies. This is how one normally interacts with other sentient beings.

Although the eventual aim is to cultivate of single-pointed love and single-pointed affection towards all sentient beings, however given that one's mind normally is so dominated by the fluctuating emotions and discriminatory thoughts, it becomes critical to bring about an even-mindedness or level-mindedness first. This requires one to level one's emotions of closeness towards one's friends and family. Even towards one's friends there is an element of love and affection, but that sense of closeness is heavily influenced by attachment and relatedness to one's ego. One needs to level these emotions as well as one's feelings of hostility and aversion that one has towards one's perceived enemies.

One needs to develop a feeling of equanimity towards all sentient beings. This then provides the ground for generating genuine affection towards all which is powerful enough even to extend towards those whom one considers to be enemies. Otherwise there is the danger that although one may use the words "May all beings be happy" but in reality when one reflects on this one may in fact exclude from "all sentient beings" one's enemies and so on. In fact those are beings who one sometimes actually wish harm and misfortune to occur to them. One's genuine affection that one is cultivating here towards all beings should be powerful enough to extend even to those whom one considers to be enemies. This is why cultivating equanimity, as the first step is so critical.

So when one actually engages in the training of this mind, in cultivating equanimity towards all sentient beings, it is helpful to do some kind of experiment or imagination where one imagines three different individuals in front of one. One is a neutral person, the others a friend and one whom one considers to be an enemy. Let one's normal reactions towards these three individuals arise. Of course in one's normal state of mind, one has a feeling of indifference towards the neutral person, feelings of affection and closeness for one's friend and feelings of aversion and even hostility towards the one whom one considers an enemy. This is the normal reaction towards these three types of people.

Once one has let the normal reactions occur then take the neutral person and try to cultivate a feeling of equanimity towards them. Follow this by taking one's enemy as the focus of one's meditation, trying to undermine the intense feelings of aversion and hostility towards that individual. One does this by reflecting upon the reasons why one feels this particular way for this individual by reflecting in the following way. Such a person who may be one's enemy was not born one's enemy harboring ill-will towards one; this is not an essential characteristic of that individual. This individual due to circumstances, incidents and conditions developed ill-will towards one becoming one's enemy. It is only those emotions and activities that define that individual as one's enemy. However circumstances could

change and this very person whom one considers an enemy may in fact be transformed by those circumstances becoming a close friend. There is no guarantee or absolute status to this person as always being an enemy so there is no ground for harboring such hostility and aversion towards this individual.

One then shifts the focus on to one's friend towards whom one feels attachment, whose company one wishes to keep. One examines the grounds on which one bases these feelings towards that individual. This person who may be one's closest friend may if circumstances change have the potential to become one's worst enemy so much so that one would avoid coming into contact with them but even just the mention of their name may annoy one. By reflecting on these unreliable and relative conditions and circumstances one labels one person a friend and another an enemy and to overcome this one needs to cultivate equanimity towards all beings.

It is important that one should do this by beginning the meditation first by taking individuals known to one so that there are concrete examples to whom one can relate to and then cultivate the various thought processes. Otherwise if one try to cultivate equanimity towards all sentient beings in a general way without any specific individual content to one's meditations, then when one actually confronts a situation where one is dealing with an enemy or friend, one will revert back to one's normal reactions. Whereas if one is able to cultivate equanimity by taking specific individuals as objects then gradually one will be able to extend this feeling of equanimity to all others regardless of whether one knows them or not.

Once one has cultivated this kind of feeling of equanimity towards all other sentient beings then what is required is to build on this level-mindedness towards all other sentient beings. The second step is to cultivate a feeling of empathy and closeness towards all sentient beings. Here one can take the model of someone who has been the embodiment of kindness towards you whether it is one's parents or a close friend. Take this person as a model and examine how one feels deeply grateful and indebted towards this individual. In a similar manner one tries to cultivate a feeling of closeness, empathy and affection towards all other sentient beings.

For example if there has been someone who has been good to you and you are grateful towards that individual, then so far as the time is concerned it shouldn't make any difference whether that kindness was performed this year or last. So far as you are concerned, you have been the beneficiary of the kindness of that individual, one in the past and one in the present. As far as you are concerned your respect and gratitude towards this individual is equal. In this is the case then one should then extend the thought process. Imagine that there isn't any individual in the whole universe who hasn't been at one point or another during one's countless lifetimes one's friend, parent, relative or mentor who has been an embodiment of kindness towards one. Therefore if one feels a sense of gratitude and affection towards those whom one considers as being kind to one in this life, one should also have a similar attitude towards all sentient beings who have been such an embodiment of kindness to one at one time or another. In this way one develops a feeling of affection and closeness towards all sentient beings.

Once one has done this then the next step, the third step is to reflect upon their kindness when they have been an embodiment of kindness to one. The fourth step is known as the special meditation on the kindness of other sentient beings. Here one's contemplation on the kindness of other sentient beings is not limited only to when they were one's close friends, family or mentors but rather a universal feeling of gratitude towards all sentient beings with the full recognition that all sentient beings have contributed in one way or another, directly or indirectly to one's wellbeing. Even enemies, for example give one an opportunity to cultivate patience, tolerance. Also even enemies give one the opportunity to fortify one's inner strength and so on.

If one reflects deeply every aspect of one's life, be it fame, food, shelter or everything that are conditions for one's happiness and survival, all of these have relevance to other beings' contributions. They are dependent upon contributions of other sentient beings. So one needs to realize that there isn't a single aspect of one's existence where there is no participation by others' contributions. Especially from a practitioner's point of view one can extend this interrelationship and one's dependence on others even further. Not only when one is in the unenlightened state of cyclic existence is one dependent on others but also even when one embarks on the path to enlightenment one again is dependent upon other sentient beings.

For instance even at the initial practice of the Dharma such as observing the moral discipline within the context of abstaining from the ten negative actions, even this ethical activity can only be practiced in dependence on other sentient beings. Whether it is refraining from an act of killing or refraining from telling lies and so on, the participation of other sentient beings is critical. One's dependence on others is obvious and furthermore the powerful sentiments such as great compassion and bodhicitta, these amazing altruistic sentiments, the cultivation of these rely upon other sentient beings. These sentiments can only be cultivated when one focuses upon the suffering of other sentient beings.

When one reflects along these lines, especially from a Buddhist practitioner's point of view one's dependence on other sentient beings is very deep. In this way one can reflect upon the kindness of other sentient beings in a very profound way. To summarize it is useful to reflect upon the passage in Santideva's *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* where he states that even the highest attainment of Buddhahood is dependent on half of the Buddha's enlightened activity and guidance and half the results of the contributions of other sentient beings. Therefore it is critical for a practitioner of bodhicitta to cultivate this kind of recognition of the kindness of other sentient beings.

Once one has developed this kind of powerful recognition of others' kindness then the next step, the fifth step is the equalizing of self and others. This kind of equalizing is very different from the first step of equanimity. Here one is cultivating a recognition of the fundamental quality of self and others by reflecting upon a basic fact. Just as oneself naturally and spontaneously aspires to happiness and to overcome suffering, similarly all limitless sentient beings equal to the expanse of space, also aspire for happiness and overcome suffering. Also just as oneself has this natural aspiration and the natural right to pursue the fulfillment of this basic aspiration so do all other sentient beings. So this fifth step of equalizing is the cultivation of a recognition of the fundamental equality of self and others.

One then moves on to the sixth step which is reflecting upon the pros and cons of self-cherishing thought and the thought that cherishes the welfare of all other sentient beings. By reflecting upon the shortcomings and disadvantages of excessive self-cherishing, judging from one's own personal experiences, one can conclude that the state one is in now reflects the excessive obsession with self-cherishing thoughts in the past. Whereas when one looks at the opposite examples of the fully enlightened beings like the Buddha and the great Indian masters such as Nagarjuna and Asanga as well as the highly realized masters of Tibet, all of these great beings embody this principle of cherishing the wellbeing of other sentient beings. What they represent is the fruition of cultivating the thought cherishing the wellbeing of other sentient beings.

So by comparing the pros and cons of these two thoughts, one cherishing the wellbeing of only oneself and the other cherishing the wellbeing of all sentient beings then one can conclude that it is critical to exchange oneself with others which is step seven. Here as the result of contemplating on the pros and cons of self-cherishing thoughts and the thought cherishing all others' wellbeing, one arrives at the point where one concludes that one must now reverse one's normal attitude towards self and others. From now on as the

result of this meditation when one thinks about self there is a lessening of intensity and attachment whereas when one thinks of others, one's meditation needs to be powerful enough so that from the core of one's being there is a genuine caring towards the wellbeing of other sentient beings. There is a genuine sense of commitment, a genuine sense of a willingness and commitment to bring about others' wellbeing. So this is the seventh step.

I received the teachings on Santideva's *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* from the late Khunu Lama Rinpoche. Santideva's text is really one of the key texts that presents the practices of Exchanging and Equalizing Self with Others. The source of these practices lies in Nagarjuna's *Ratnavali* where there is a passage that reads:

May I be able to take upon myself all the misfortune and the sufferings of others and may I be able to give to others all of my positive qualities such as health, resources, accumulation of virtues and so on.

Khunu Lama Rinpoche himself in turn received this transmission from a Dzogchen master and the lineage of this transmission is that of Dzapato (SP?) who was a great master, like a real Santideva himself. So this is the lineage of the transmission that I have.

According to one of the oral instructions of Dzapato Rinpoche there is a way of relating the entire ten chapters of the *Bodhicaryavatara, The Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* as an elaboration on the single verse of prayer that reads:

May the precious mind of enlightenment, which has not been generated, be generated; that which has been generated may it not decline but rather be enhanced higher and higher.

According to this instruction the first three chapters, the Merits of Bodhicitta, Compassion and Disclosure and Upholding the Altruistic Aspiration, are seen as presenting practices and methods for generating bodhicitta at the initial stages. This is for those practitioners who haven't yet generated bodhicitta. The following three chapters, the fourth chapter on Introspection, the fifth chapter on Conscientiousness and the sixth chapter on Patience and Tolerance, present instructions on insuring that one's bodhicitta does not decline. These three chapters present the practices and methods for safeguarding the already generated bodhicitta.

The next three chapters, chapter seven on Joyous Effort, chapter eight on Meditative Concentration and chapter nine on Wisdom, are seen as presenting instructions that enable the practitioner to not only safeguard bodhicitta but also to enhance it ever higher and higher.

The practice of joyous effort is of critical importance because generally speaking our relationship with the Dharma practice is like the following. At the initial stages one does not have much interest in the Dharma practice but then as the result of reading or listening to the teachings if one does generate interest in Dharma practice one often goes to the other extreme. One develops expectations of progress in the short term, immediate expectations and one exerts oneself beyond one's capacity, pushing oneself. Since the results are not easy to come by there is the danger of feeling disillusioned or discouraged, losing hope. It is therefore very critical to insure that there is a steady application of joyous effort that as the Tibetan masters say, one's effort in the practice should be steady like the flow of a stream.

It is important to recognize that when one talks about the Dharma practice that one is talking about bringing about inner, spiritual disciplines, an inner transformation within one's mind. This inner transformation of the mind from one point of view may be simple because unlike other physical constructions such as building a large house, the inner construction or transformation does not require all of those material facilities. However from another point of

view it is in fact more difficult because the inner transformation only occurs in a gradual process, one cannot bring about this transformation overnight.

Furthermore another difference between external construction and inner transformation is that in external construction, someone else can lay the foundation, someone else can initiate the task and then others can build on it completing the construction. In contrast when one talks about inner transformation, every individual has to begin the process and complete the process by themselves. There is simply no possibility that someone else can initiate the process and then one completes it for oneself. This simply isn't possible. So every individual has to go through this process of transformation in a gradual way, initiating the process themselves and complete it by themselves. Therefore it is very important to insure that one's application of effort is a skillful one as well as a steady application. Because of one's habituation to many negative aspects of one's mind there is an inborn procrastination within all of us therefore there is a hindrance to maintaining a steady application of effort. However it is important that one does so and that one applies effort in a steady and skillful way.

Once one has developed this sort of skillful application of joyous effort in one's practice then one is able to engage in the meditative practice which is the subject matter of Chapter Eight in Santideva's *Bodhicaryavatara*. Although in the eighth chapter many of the conditions and the various steps for cultivating single-pointedness of mind are taught but once one develops this single-pointedness of mind is attained, the main focus of maintaining this single-pointedness in this chapter is bodhicitta. The next chapter, chapter nine, the chapter on wisdom presents the practices for enhancing one's attainment of bodhicitta by the complimentary factor of wisdom and insight. It is important to realize that even from the beginning, even from the initial practices such as taking refuge in the Three Jewels and genuine renunciation, even for these practices the application of insight or wisdom is critical.

Of course in other texts such as *Madhyamikalamkara*, *The Ornament of Madhyamika* there is a discussion of two types of trainees. One type of trainee begins the practice with compassion and bodhicitta and then moves on to generating the wisdom of emptiness. However for the intelligent practitioner, the intelligent trainees with higher faculties it is said that they should proceed from the understanding of emptiness and then this understanding of emptiness will provide the basis for a powerful experience of compassion and bodhicitta. This kind of compassion and bodhicitta that is grounded in the understanding of the wisdom of emptiness is said to be more powerful and effective leading to the successive stages of practice. (Break)

I will now read from the chapter on Meditative Concentration, which is the eighth chapter of Santideva's text. The first verse of the chapter reads:

**Having developed joyous effort in this way,
I should place my mind in concentration;**

These first two lines refer to the earlier chapter, which is the chapter on Effort. Joyous effort is defined as a joyful enthusiasm to engage in virtuous activity. So here the virtuous activity is the activity of developing single-pointedness, focused on the altruistic aspiration of bodhicitta of exchanging and equalizing self with others.

The next two lines give the reason why it is critical to cultivate this single-pointedness of mind.

**For the man whose mind is distracted
Dwells between the fangs of disturbing conceptions.**

The text states that it is important to confront the obstacles to single-pointedness of mind, which are the internal and external distractions, distractions towards external circumstances and distractions towards inner experiences. Therefore one must seek solitude, isolating one's body and mind from the objects of distractions. The reason given here is because those whose minds are distracted give rise to the powerful negative emotions and thoughts. Such a person not only is deprived of the opportunity to cultivate single-pointedness but also remains vulnerable to all of the afflictive emotions and thoughts. Here the afflictive emotions and thoughts are compared to the fangs of a dangerous animal.

In the second verse Santideva identifies the importance of dealing with the obstacles, which obstruct one's cultivation of single-pointedness of mind. The key obstructions are distractions towards external or internal objects. It reads:

**But through solitude of body and mind
No distractions will occur;
Therefore I should forsake the worldly life
And completely discard distorted conceptions.**

What Santideva is saying here is that the root cause of one's distractions is attraction towards mundane concerns whether they are related to one's friends and family or whether they are related to certain aspirations such as fame, wealth and so on. One needs to discard these kinds of distorted, discursive thoughts and conceptions.

Verse three reads:

**Worldly life is not forsaken because of attachment (to others)
And due to craving for material gain and the like;
Therefore I should entirely forsake these things,
For this is the way in which the wise behave.**

What is being stated here is to identify what obstructs one from being able to let go of one's preoccupation with mundane matters. The two principal factors are identified here. First is one's attachment towards one's friend, family and so on. The other is one's attachment to worldly success such as fame, wealth, power and so on. One needs to find a way of letting go of attachment to these objects. For example by reflecting on the fact of friends and family that no matter how close one feels towards them, no matter how beneficial they are to oneself, from the ultimate point of view their effectiveness in bringing about one's ultimate wellbeing is very limited. They are also unable to contribute towards one's future lives. Even within this lifetime, at the time of death regardless of how many friends and family one may have, at the time of death none of them can be of benefit to one. One cannot take any of one's friends or family with one. So one needs to reflect in this way.

Similarly one's resources, wealth, fame, power or position are unable to contribute to one's ultimate wellbeing. In fact in some cases instead of bringing one benefit they are actually an obstruction, especially for a Dharma practitioner. These mundane concerns can be great obstacles. So by reflecting along these lines one therefore develops the thought that enables one to let go of one's preoccupation and attachment towards mundane concerns. It is in the following way that the wise practitioner judges their concerns.

One recognizes that the ultimate source of one's suffering and the ultimate source of one's downfall are the afflictive emotions and thoughts along with self-cherishing. Therefore it is only by cultivating meditative concentration that is the union of tranquil abiding and penetrative insight grounded in the altruistic motivation of bodhicitta, it is only this meditative concentration that can counter self-cherishing and the afflictive emotions and

thoughts. Therefore a practitioner who's ultimate aspiration is to attain the highest enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings needs to be able to let go of attraction and attachment to immediate mundane concerns such as attachment to one's friends and family. One must also relinquish attachment to fame, power, position and so on. Therefore the following verse reads:

**Having understood that disturbing conceptions are completely overcome
By superior insight endowed with calm abiding,
First of all I should search for calm abiding.
This is achieved through the genuine joy of those unattached to worldly
life.**

Question: You have indicated how we can effect personal change. How can we best be an example of change to those who serve at work, working with the homeless, domestic violence victims and so on?

Answer: Of course as is suggested here it is possible for an individual who previously may have been totally self-centered and had no concern for others' wellbeing or others' suffering, but as the result of spiritual transformation that person has become more caring. It is possible for such a person to become more tolerant and accepting of others and so on. In this way such a person if they are able to bring about such change in others by serving them, especially those unfortunate ones such as the homeless and victims of domestic violence and if this is done from a pure altruistic motivation with no regard of reward such as fame or recognition, then surely that act itself will become a powerful example and symbol for those whom one is working for.

However when one speaks of transformation of the mind here in the context of Buddha's teaching, one is talking about transformation in a deep sense where one envisions the possibility of totally eliminating or separating one's mind from the afflictive emotions and thoughts. When viewed from this perspective of the Buddhist practice it is certainly very important to engage oneself in the service of others through social work or whatever it may be. But at the same time it is important not to neglect the need for further development of one's own level of realization by occasionally taking time off to pursue single-pointedly in one's practice along side one's service to others. There is also a process of growth within oneself, spiritually.

For practicing Buddhists I think it is very important not to neglect this dimension of the practice, implementing the practice of compassion and bodhicitta in society through service. Otherwise there is the danger as it has been historically that Buddhists tend to have tremendous reverence and admiration for the ideals of bodhicitta but there have been shortcomings when it comes to the real implementation of this in real life. This I think has been a major shortcoming and in fact an old friend of mine who is himself a Buddhist once made the comment to me that especially in Nepal over the last thirty years there has been the building of many large and impressive, opulent monasteries and temples. However during those thirty years there hasn't been the construction of many new hospitals, schools or clinics. However if these temples and monasteries were to be Christian then along side these numerous monasteries and temples would also be numerous schools, hospitals and clinics. I think he has a valid point and once many years ago when I had the opportunity to meet with the supreme patriarch of Theravada Buddhism in Thailand, I made the remark that we need to learn a lesson from Christianity. This would be such that Buddhists would not only admire the ideals of compassion but actually have a program to implement such practice in the society.

Question: Aren't deep sleep and fainting for instance natural antagonists or enemy of mere fact of knowing and luminosity? By definition fainting is the absence of clear consciousness.

Answer: When one talks of the nature of consciousness one should look in the teachings of Highest Yoga Tantra for a deeper understanding of the various levels of subtlety of consciousness or mind. Generally or conventionally when one talks about states of the absence of consciousness like fainting, deep sleep and so on, one is speaking in terms of gross levels of consciousness, the more manifest levels of consciousness. As far as the subtlest level of consciousness is concerned this is thought to be never ending in its continuum. Even in states that are conventionally regarded as absent of consciousness, one can say that the subtlest level of consciousness is still present.

As for the grosser levels of consciousness one could say that there are natural antagonists to these. For example in the terminology of the Kalachakra Tantra one can speak of natural antidotes to the various levels of perception. Similarly in the terminology of the Guhyasamaja Tantra one can speak of the various levels of perception, of appearances which are indicative of different conceptual thought processes. So all of these subtle levels of consciousness can cease and eventually the subtlest level of consciousness, which is described as the innate, fundamental mind of Clear Light, is said to remain alone. But so far as the continuum of that subtlest consciousness is concerned, there is no natural antagonist, no antidote.

Also I think one needs to be sensitive to the distinction between what could be called the adventitious levels of consciousness and the ever-present or the fundamental dimension of consciousness. In fact in Longchenpa's writings, particularly in the text known as *The Treasury of the Wish-granting Jewel* he correlates the adventitious levels of consciousness and the subtle levels of consciousness with the idea of the Two Truths. He thus identifies the adventitious levels of consciousness as the conventional truth and the ever-present level of consciousness as the ultimate truth.

Question: If we are to be altruistic and care for others and their suffering how do we protect ourselves for becoming totally overwhelmed by others' misery?

Answer: In fact this problem was entertained by Santideva and responded to it in his text where he raised the issue by saying that since everyone has their own suffering, why should one as part of the practice of compassion further complicate it by taking upon oneself others' suffering? Why does one need to complicate one's own situation by taking on others' suffering? Wouldn't one become overwhelmed by it? Santideva responded in the following manner. If one has the full conviction or recognition that by taking upon oneself a particular pain or hardship that it can fulfill a long term benefit, a much higher purpose, then all have the capacity to actually confront that hardship and go through the experience without being overwhelmed. Similarly in the case of taking upon oneself others' suffering as part of the practice of compassion, since the ultimate aspiration that one has is the attainment of perfect enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings, a state totally free from all suffering, therefore as part of that practice it is valid to take upon oneself others' suffering.

Furthermore if one reflects carefully one will also see that there is a fundamental difference between the sense of unease and discomfort that one experiences as the result of taking upon oneself others' suffering and undergoing one's own suffering. In the case of undergoing one's own suffering, as a Tibetan expression puts it, they descend upon one without one having any say. There is a total lack of control when oneself undergoes one's own suffering. The sufferings just seem to descend upon one. Whereas when one experiences pain and discomfort as the result of sharing another's suffering, because it has not descended

upon one but rather has been voluntarily accepted as a part of one's practice, there is a deep strength and courage, a willingness to embrace that hardship and pain. So the state of mind between those two experiences of pain or discomfort is entirely different.

When one reflects deeply upon the powerful sentiments expressed in Santideva's prayers such as, "As long as space remains, As long as sentient beings remain, May I too remain and dispel the miseries of the world." When one truly engages in the thought processes expressed in these verses, in these lines and then reflects deeply, dedicating one's life for the sole purpose of bringing about others' wellbeing then as a result of engaging in such powerful, altruistic sentiments one experiences a sense of fulfillment. One will experience a deep sense of satisfaction as if one had genuinely fulfilled the purpose of one's existence, fulfilled the purpose of one's human existence in a precious way.

So when one reflects deeply in this way there is the genuine possibility of having a deep satisfaction. This kind of sense of fulfillment and joy is not connected with physical sensation, not sensations of pleasure but rather a powerful and deeply felt sense of satisfaction and fulfillment within oneself. In fact when one looks at the description of the first Bodhisattva level or bhumi, it is described as the Thoroughly Joyful One, the Joyful Path. This indicates that the sense of satisfaction and joy that is experienced as the result of the bodhisattva practice is so deep and profound that it can excel the joy and peace that is said to be experienced by the Arhats as a result of their attainment of liberation. One could say that the bodhisattvas on the first level of the Bodhisattva bhumis their joy is a hundred-fold more powerful and profound than the joy and peace of the attainment of an Arhat.

As you yourself confront a suffering, a painful experience, undergoing your experiences of pain and suffering, at that instant one's immediate reaction is that of anxiety. This anxiety leads to a sense of fear and insecurity. It also leads to unhappiness and a loss of confidence. On the other hand when one develops a deep sense of satisfaction by sharing in others' suffering as part of one's spiritual practice of generating compassion then instead of feeling anxious and insecure, deep down there is a real sense of confidence and courage.

Question: If in fact there is no full proof of rebirth, what aspects of Buddhist thought would remain valid?

Answer: Of course to a large extent whether or not something is a proof depends from one individual to another. Even in the Buddha's time there was no general agreement of everyone following the teachings of the Buddha or agreeing with his positions. In fact one finds references in the Buddha's own sutras such as, "Of the infinite number of sentient beings, those who consent to my teachings are as minute as the space of my thumbnail, whereas those who disagree and hold a divergent opinion are as numerous as the sands of the Ganges". Even Buddha himself had the awareness of the infinite diversity of opinions of sentient beings.

Furthermore when one refers to matters such as rebirth to a large extent one needs to understand these issues in relation to the Buddhist three categories of phenomena. The first category of phenomena is evident phenomena which more or less everyone can have some kind of consensus because they are directly visible or tangible. They are obvious to all of us. One could say that even in this realm sometimes due to some obscurations some people may have a divergent opinion but on the whole there can be a wide consensus of matters that belong to this category of evident phenomena.

However there are two further categories of phenomena. One is known as obscured phenomena and the other is very obscured phenomenon. Both of these require the application of inferential reasoning and rational thought processes to understand. So there is simply no way that a broad consensus on this or that standpoint can be reached.

At the same time one also needs to find a way of accounting for individuals who are capable of recalling past lives. Not only have these occurred in previous generations but even in current generations there are individuals who not only have memories but vivid memories of events from previous lives. So we must have some way of accounting for this phenomenon.

Furthermore I think it is important to realize that one should be able to make a distinction between not finding something and finding its absence. There is a fundamental difference between these two especially when one relates this distinction with regard to scientific knowledge. My personal feeling is that if in scientific discovery there are proofs for the existence of something, if as the result of scientific investigation one uncovers proof for the existence of something, then even Buddhist practitioners need to accept these. However on the question of not finding something even through scientific means then the question is whether the results of that research is the result of not finding it or whether it is a question of finding its absence, negating its existence. These are two very different outcomes. Because one simply cannot find something doesn't entail that the object does not exist. Here I think it is important to that distinction.

I feel that within Buddhist thought and ideas there are broadly two categories, one that lends itself to scientific investigation and verification and others that may not lend themselves to current scientific investigation. Ideas that fit into the second category are ideas such as rebirth and the attainment of liberation. However there are aspects of Buddhist thought which do lend themselves to current paradigms of scientific investigation and analysis. For example in the Abhidharma literature as well as the Kalachakra literature there are detailed descriptions of cosmology. In fact there are detailed descriptions of the size of the sun and moon, the distances between the planets and also a description of Mount Meru, the center axis of the universe. These descriptions of cosmology I feel, especially those dealing with the measurements of the planets and so on, are contradicted by current scientific understanding, negating these Buddhist teachings. It is not a question of not finding but rather of actually contradicting the descriptions in the scriptures in the Abhidharma and Kalachakra collections.

One way of reconciling these is to look at the discourse especially in the Kalachakra as a symbolic discourse and in the case of the Kalachakra there are grounds to read the descriptions as representing a symbolic discourse. This is because there is a very complex symbolism of correlation between the Inner and Outer Kalachakras and the Ultimate Kalachakra. There is also the co-relating the cosmological description to the symbolism of mantra OM HAM KHAH MA LA VA RA YA and also correlating the description of the Kalachakra cosmology to the generation and perfection stages of practice. In this way one can say that these Buddhist cosmological discourses are not meant to be taken literally as a factual description of the universe but rather they need to be seen as a symbolic discourse referring to the complex psychology of the Kalachakra teaching. (End of morning session)

Afternoon Session, August 21

In the following verses the method of transcending one's strong attachment towards one's friends, family and so on. The verse reads:

**78 Because of the obsession one transient being
 Has for other transient beings,
 He will not see his beloved ones again
 For many thousands of lives.**

In this verse Santideva is presenting one with the thought process and reflection whereby one understands and recognizes that oneself is subject to death and impermanence, the transient nature of life. There is the certainty of death but when death will occur is unpredictable. So just as this is the case for oneself so it is the case with all others as well. In short, one's life, bodily powers, fame, power and so on, are subject to the nature of disintegration, change and eventually coming to complete cessation. So here Santideva points out that since this is the case, what ultimate ground does one have as a transient being to feel so strongly attracted and attached towards other beings who are equally transient and impermanent.

Similar reflections can also be applied to overcome hostility. One can read this verse as saying on what ultimate grounds exist for one transient being to feel so hostile towards another transient being. One can extend this reflection on to other characteristics of one's existence such as the nature of suffering; on what grounds can one suffering being be so attached to another suffering being. Or on what grounds can one suffering sentient being be so hostile towards another suffering sentient being and so on. One can reflect upon the nature of one being under the control of negative karma and actions, the control of the afflictive emotions and thoughts and that all are subject to the sufferings of birth, aging, sickness and death.

In the two lines of the verse Santideva describes the negative effects of one's giving in to the power of attachment towards one's friends and family.

**He will not see his beloved ones again
For many thousands of lives.**

**79 Not seeing them I am unhappy
And my mind cannot be settled in equipoise;
Even if I see them there is no satisfaction
And, as before, I am tormented by craving.**

Santideva is suggesting here that strong attachment towards those close to one can give rise to other powerful negative emotions and thoughts. This then creates the conditions for engaging in negative karma which will then obstruct one from actually fulfilling the object of desire and attachment which is to close to one's loved ones. In fact this attachment becomes counterproductive and furthermore if one examines the nature of attachment carefully there is a seed of destructiveness within attachment.

If the feeling of closeness one has towards loved ones is grounded in attachment then one could say that at the root of that attachment and affection lies a projection of a quality of desirability or attractive quality on to the object of attachment. This quality may be entirely projected and there is an underlying belief that the quality of attractiveness is unchanging, immutable and intrinsic as part of the object. Once one has such a strong apprehension and grasping then attachment arises. Because of this when something happens that does not meet one's expectations and perception of that individual then one tends to react in a very negative way, a very strong way. So one can say that in strong attachment there is the seed for hatred and hostility as well.

This is very different from a genuine affection that is based on compassion for that individual. Compassion and genuine affection can never lead to that kind of negative reaction to an individual, the object of one's affection, whereas affection derived from attachment does lead to hostility, anger and hatred towards the very same being. So Santideva is saying that attachment can give rise to other negative emotions thereby giving rise to negative karmic actions that then have a counterproductive result of not fulfilling the very purpose of attachment which is to be with the loved ones.

Therefore when one's mind is dominated by that kind of fluctuations between extreme attachment on the one hand and hostility and anger on the other then there simply is no possibility of maintaining one's mind in a settled meditative equipoise. So a person who lacks this kind of equilibrium even if they are able to meet with the objects of their attachment there is no sense of satisfaction, no sense of fulfillment. Just like when one drinks salt water, the more one drinks the thirstier one becomes. In a similar manner when one relates to others with powerful attachment the more one associates with the objects of desire the greater one's attachment. Therefore one ends up being tormented by this chain of craving.

**Through being attached to living beings
80 I am completely obscured from the perfect reality,
My disillusionment (with cyclic existence) perishes
And in the end I am tortured by sorrow.**

Santideva goes on to explain that when one's mind is totally dominated by this kind of powerful and fluctuating emotions particularly extreme attachment then this will obstruct one from gaining insight into any aspects of the perfect reality. This reference to perfect reality should not be limited only to the understanding of the ultimate nature of reality, emptiness but rather one should also include in this perfect reality such as impermanence, dissatisfaction and so on. If one's mind is dominated by strong attachment then one's mind will be obscured from these insights into the deeper nature of reality.

In this way it will also undermine one's ability to maintain true renunciation which is the aspiration to attain liberation from samsaric existence derived from a feeling of disillusionment towards samsara. Eventually one will create one's own downfall. The point he is making is that if by leading one's life in this kind of perpetual cycle of attachment, if there is the possibility of fulfilling one's object of desire, completely and thoroughly then there would be justified grounds to pursue it. But this is however not the case. The result of lending oneself perpetually to being dominated by strong attachment is one's own downfall.

**By thinking only of them,
81 This life will pass without any meaning.
(Furthermore) impermanent friends and relatives
Will even destroy the Dharma (which leads to) permanent (liberation).**

Furthermore he states that those who are constantly preoccupied by objects of desire and attachment also spend their entire lives in meaningless pursuits. This is particularly a problem for today's age especially in the more materially affluent societies where one is constantly exposed to so many sensory images, which appeal to one's yearning for immediate gratification. This is so much so that sometimes one doesn't have the space or the time to be more reflective, withdrawing one's mind. One spends a great deal of time passively watching television and other powerful sensory images so much so that one has little opportunity to reflect or focus one's mind inward either on the nature of the mind or simply exploring deeper aspects of reality. In this way there is a danger of spending one's entire life on this sort of superficial pursuit of gratification. There Santideva concludes by saying that the result of being extremely attached to friends and family who are transient there is the danger of undermining the permanent Dharma which is not transient.

Verse nine reads:

**If I behave in the same way as the childish
82 I shall certainly proceed to the lower realms,**

**And if I am led there by those unequal (to the Noble Ones),
What is the use of entrusting myself to the childish?**

The word childish can be interpreted in many different ways. There is of course the distinction between a child and an adult, which is determined by the age. There is another way of distinguishing between the childish and the mature by judging the level of mental capacity. In fact those who are only able to think in immediate terms and not in the long term future are said to be childish. Those who are able to project beyond the immediate concerns and can reflect on the long-term future, having greater powers of judgement and discernment, these are said to be not childish. A further way of distinguishing the childish and those who are not, within the context of the Buddhist discourse, ordinary beings like ourselves whose minds are dominated by the afflictive thoughts and emotions and have not realized the insight into emptiness are said to be childish. The concerns of the childish are said to be limited to the limits of cyclic existence whereas the Arya beings who have gained direct insight into emptiness are said to be Superior beings. The Arya's vision of existence is not confined within the concerns of this life alone and they are closer to liberation than to samsara. There is that way of distinguishing between the childish and Superior in that way.

In any case what Santideva is suggesting here is that if one maintains one's way of life and outlook in accordance with the mentality of the childish, being confined and limited only to the concerns of immediate gratification and wish fulfillment then this kind of pursuit leads to birth in the lower realms. Since this is the danger of living that sort of way of life, the practitioner needs to question the whole wisdom of associating with the childish.

Santideva goes on to describe the characteristics of the so-called childish, those who are childish. In fact he suggests that even if one were to strive to make the childish happy, it is a pointless pursuit. He writes:

**One moment they are friends
83 And in the next instant they become enemies.
Since they become angry even in joyful situations,
It is difficult to please ordinary people.**

He is describing the irrationality of the character of those who are childish, who lack the ability to judge between long-term and short-term of their own interests. The reference to joyful situations is to situations where in order to gain long-term benefit one may have to sometimes let go of immediate gratification. Also one may have to adopt a certain discipline for example the practice of cultivating inner contentment or leading a life based on modest desires. These are ideals, which can contribute towards the attainment of long-term benefits but those who are childish, if one tries to teach them these ideals, instead of being grateful it may in fact annoy them.

Santideva goes on to say that the key point of this discourse on the dangers of associating with negative friends is not to suggest that one needs to abandon them, certainly not. One must insure that one's perspectives on life, one's vision of life and one's outlook and behavior are not influenced by those of childish temperament but that one need never abandon them from one's compassion. In fact even in one's behavior or daily interactions with them, he writes:

**When they are encountered, though, I should please them by being
happy.
84 I should behave well merely out of courtesy,
But not become greatly familiar.**

The term greatly familiar suggests that one should not immerse oneself in the vision of life that those of childish temperament have so that one does not become just like them.

An example is given in the following verse:

**85 In the same way as a bee takes honey from a flower,
I should take merely (what is necessary) for the practice of Dharma
But remain unfamiliar
As though I had never seen them before.**

It is suggested here is that a bee is able to extract the essence, the best part of the flower without destroying the flower. In a similar manner while interacting with those of a childish temperament one needs to insure that one's own outlook and behavior is not influenced by them in a negative way. This is how one needs to deal with persons of childish temperament.

Santideva then goes on to explain that by reflecting upon the negative effects of being attached to worldly objects of desire such as fame, wealth and so on. He goes on to say that it is important to recognize their true nature which is that in any case at one point one will need to discard them. There is no way that one can take these worldly objects with one when death occurs. So he writes:

**86 Although I may have much material wealth,
Be famous and well spoken of,
Whatever fame and renown I have amassed
Has no power to accompany me (after death).**

In the following verse Santideva explains the practices of countering one's attachment to fame and also one's displeasure at people who belittle one. This is very important because it is very natural for one as a human being to be susceptible to these kinds of feeling. All of us when we hear others praising us are delighted and when we hear someone speaking against us then we feel unhappy. This is very natural so basically one is talking here about the need to overcome one's attachment to worldly concerns.

For example in my own case if by sitting on this throne and giving a commentary on Santideva's text, if in the corner of my mind if I have the thought that I wonder if people will praise me, if that thought arises immediately it suggests that I have fallen victim to attachment for worldly concerns. When such thoughts occur then I immediately apply an antidote by saying to myself that I cannot think along such lines. I am a monk who is committed to the monastic way of life and furthermore I am a practitioner who believes in the ideals of Santideva's text presented here. Therefore I must not let myself be vulnerable to this kind of temptation. It is in this way that one has to tackle this kind of vulnerability.

I think it is very important to take to heart what is being taught to us by Santideva here which is the need for a serious commitment to the practice. One also needs the ability to tackle this vulnerability towards worldly concerns. In this regard I would like to make a comment on the impact images have on us. For example in my own case I find the image of the Buddha in the meditative posture after six years of his meditation practice in a semi-skeleton form very powerful. Normally one doesn't see this image of the Buddha quite often and in fact when I was little in the Potala I had a small photograph of this image of the Buddha that is found in the Lahore Museum. It has left a very powerful image in my mind. Later while in India I was able to acquire a slightly larger photograph of the same image of the Buddha and I find this a tremendous source of inspiration. It is also a powerful reminder of the need for true seriousness in one's commitment to the Dharma practice.

As the Tibetan masters say a successful Dharma practice based on an easy life will never get one very far. This is very true. If one wants to have real success in one's Dharma practice a certain preparedness to commit to a serious pursuit is essential.

Santideva then goes over the actual thought processes of how to overcome this vulnerability to becoming excited after someone praises us or being depressed when someone despises us. The thought processes are certainly very logical. He writes:

**87 If there is someone who despises me
 What pleasure can I have in being praised?
 And if there is another who praises me
 What displeasure can I have in being despised?**

He is suggesting a way of having the two viewpoints level each other as one cancels out the other. He suggests that there are no grounds to be either too excited over praise or becoming too depressed when someone despises you.

He then goes on to say that:

**88 If even the Conqueror was unable to please
 The various inclinations of different beings,
 Then what need to mention an evil person such as I?
 Therefore I should give up the intention (to associate with) the
 worldly.**

Santideva suggests here that one should not live one's life by becoming a victim to the tendency to seek pleasure through another's praise or become depressed by someone's belittling. This kind of vulnerability can actually effect one's interactions with others as well as one's entire way of life. What is crucial is to maintain an integrity within one's core so that so far as oneself is concerned there is a clear conscience that so far as one's heart is concerned there is a purity in one's motivation when interacting with others regardless of what others might perceive. Once one has this kind of purity of purpose or clear conscience, a sense of abandonment on one's own part then even if the entire world were to despise one and speak against one, as far as oneself is concerned, one's own conscience is concerned, it is clear, without stain. This I feel is a very important point.

Just as the Kadampa masters said in every act in one's daily life one must always maintain two witnesses, first is others and the second is oneself. Of these two witnesses, being witness to one's own actions and thoughts is more important. This is because we are the only ones who truly know ourselves as far as our own state of mind is concerned. Oneself is a better judge of this than others are, as one's own state of mind is not hidden to oneself. If one is acting as one's own judge and as one's own witness being clear with a clear conscience then even if the entire world were to speak against one that wouldn't alter the fact that one's own conscience is clear. On the other hand if deep down one's conscience is not clear and one is acting out of negative motivations and one is acting in a gentle and peaceful manner with the entire world singing one's praises, there is no clarity, no purity in one's own thought. One could say that such a person is rotten within although they wear a veneer of good appearance.

At the end of the day whether or not one has good character and conscience or not is a question of how many people like one. It is not a Gallop poll where the majority wins. It is a question of being true to oneself and one's own conscience.

Santideva goes on to say:

- 89 They scorn those who have no material gain
And say bad things about those who do;
How can they who are by nature so hard to get along with
Ever derive any pleasure (from me?)**

Here he acknowledges the difficulty of trying to please those with a childish temperament.
He goes on:

- 90 It has been stated by the Tathagatas
That one should not befriend the childish,
Because unless they get their own way
These children are never happy.**

(Break)

Thus having explained the negative results of being too attached to objects of desire and also having explained in great detail the negative results of being distracted by external and internal conditions, Santideva goes on to extol the virtues of seeking solitude. He writes in the following way:

- 91 When shall I come to dwell in forests
Amongst the deer, the birds and the trees,
That say nothing unpleasant
And are delightful to associate with?**

When one lives in solitude like the forest and among the animals then one can live in a state of total abandonment. One need not worry about what others think of you or what someone might do to you. None of these concerns effect one's state of mind.

Santideva continues:

- 26 When dwelling in caves,
In empty shrines or at the feet of trees,
Never look back –
Cultivate detachment.**

The point of never looking back is that when one's mind is occupied by mundane matters like wealth, livelihood, friends, family and so on, there is always something that holds one back. However when one seeks solitude then there is a sense of total abandonment so that one does not need to look back. In this way Santideva suggests that one needs to cultivate detachment.

He continues:

- 92 When shall I come to dwell
In places not clung to as "mine"
Which are by nature wide and open
And where I may behave as I wish without attachment?**

These are the characteristics and virtues of seeking a place of solitude which no one owns and where one remains free of any circumstances of having one's thoughts dominated by mundane concerns of what others think.

This sort of ideal is also reflected very strongly in Kadampa expressions. There is an expression whereby the Kadampa teachers say that the true Dharma practitioner needs to have such a simplicity of life and sense of abandonment that one should be like a stick of incense. It is either one piece sticking straight up or if laying flat it is the same one piece. Similarly the Kadampa masters said that the true Dharma practitioner who undertakes practice in solitude needs to be like a crow flying off from a rock. When a crow flies off from a rock there is nothing left behind. There is a directness there, a simplicity, a sense of abandonment. This is how one should seek solitude.

Santideva then goes on to explain in verse twenty-eight that it is not adequate to simply be physically present in a wilderness but one must also insure that the lifestyle one leads, even in such a solitary place is that of simplicity. It needs to reflect the ideal of modest desires and inner contentment. He goes on to write:

**When shall I come to live without fear
Having just a begging bowl and a few odd things,
Wearing clothes not wanted by anyone
And not even having to hide this body?**

The point made here is that even in solitude one must have a basic simplicity of lifestyle. In fact it is said that for a true practitioner apart from the single set of clothes that one is wearing all other possessions should not be regarded as belonging to oneself. One must not ascribe the first person possessive pronoun they are “mine” but rather even if one has a spare set of robes one must view them as belonging provisionally under one’s care, a common property which one can dispense with if the necessity occurs.

This is how one needs to cultivate the ideal of simplicity by practicing having modest desires and cultivating inner contentment. In this way one will be able to overcome attachment and craving. Generally one has attachment for things one already possesses and one wants to increase these possessions then craving for things one does not have. So by deliberately cultivating the ideal of modest desires and inner contentment one will be able to transcend these cravings and attachment.

I feel that this spiritual principle of living a life of simplicity, reflecting the principles of modest desires and inner contentment, is common to all spiritual traditions. For example one sees the same principle in the Christian monastic tradition. Some of the lifestyles recommended to Christian monks and nuns are truly reflective of the ideal of modest desires and inner contentment.

In the next verse Santideva points out the importance of letting go of strong attachment even to one’s own body. Of course everyone must seek to maintain one’s physical wellbeing and health but at the same time excessive attachment and obsession with one’s bodily appearance is an obstacle to one’s practice. Therefore Santideva writes:

**93 Having departed to the cemeteries,
When shall I come to understand
That this body of mine and the skeletons of others
Are equal in being subject to decay?**

One must reflect upon the transient nature of the physical body.
He goes on:

Then, because of its odor,

- 94 Not even the foxes
Will come close to this body of mine;
For this is what will become of it.**

When death strikes what was once held as one's precious body becomes nothing but a corpse. This is the true nature of the body that one is so attached to. So in these verses Santideva underlines the importance of having no attachment to one's body which can also become an obstacle to one's practice.

In the next three verses Santideva explains further considerations on how to let go of excessive attachment to one's body. He writes:

- 95 Although this body arose as one thing,
The bones and flesh with which it was created
Will break up and separate.
How much more so will friends and others?**

Compared to friends and others at least the body is one phenomenon that simultaneously emerged when one was born. So in some sense it is a more permanent but even this body at the time of death will separate from one.

He makes further observations:

- 96 At birth I was born alone
And at death too I shall die alone;
As this pain cannot be shared by others,
What use are obstacle-making friends?**

The point made here is that perhaps in one's existence the two most important facts of existence are birth and death. In both of these occasions one has no companions. When one was born from one unknown into another state of unknown that passage was experienced only by oneself. Similarly at the time of death when one dies one is again going into the unknown and at this point too one dies alone. So these two most important events of one's life one has to pursue alone.

Santideva then explains what is the most appropriate way of relating to one's body, what is the appropriate attitude that one needs to have towards one's body. He writes:

- 97 In the same way as travelers on a highway
(Leave one place) and reach (another),
Likewise those traveling on the path of conditioned existence
(Leave) one birth and reach (another).**

The point made here is that if one is passing by and stopping for a few day's rest, such a person because of the very nature of that person's relationship to that place is not going to invest time and resources building heavy infrastructure. Rather one insures that the little time spent in that place is spent in the most effective way. Similarly one attitude towards one's bodily existence needs to such that it is a medium through which one travels the path to enlightenment. One needs to view one's bodily existence in this way so that one does not excessively preoccupy oneself simply for the maintenance, glorification and sustenance of the physical body.

Santideva goes on to explain that by reflecting upon cultivating the right attitude towards one's bodily existence then one needs to think in the following manner:

- 98 Until the time comes for this body
To be supported by the four pall-bearers
While the worldly (stand around) stricken with grief,
Until then I shall retire to the forest.**

Before death strikes one needs to insure that one makes one's existence meaningful by engaging in the practice of the Dharma in solitude.

He then explains the kinds of thought processes one needs to engage in:

- 99 Befriending no one and begrudging no one,
My body will dwell alone in solitude.
If I am already counted as a dead man,
When I die there will be no mourners.**

- 100 And as there will be no one around
To disturb me with their mourning,
Thus there will be no one to distract me
From my recollection of the Buddha.**

- 101 Therefore I shall dwell alone,
Happy and contented with few difficulties,
In very joyful and beautiful forests,
Pacifying all distractions.**

Thus Santideva he extols the virtues of solitude.

He then goes on to explain the very purpose of seeking solitude. He writes:

- 102 Having given up all other intentions,
Being motivated by only one thought,
I shall strive to settle my mind in equipoise (by means of calm abiding)
And to subdue it (with superior insight).**

The point being made here is that the whole purpose of seeking solitude is to engage in the sustained practice of Dharma so that one directs one's mind on the practice of the Dharma. Here the key practice is the cultivation of mental equipoise, which is tranquil abiding. This is combined with the cultivation of penetrative insight the combination of which then becomes a powerful antidote for overcoming the afflictive emotions and thoughts.

Question: If all the arising moments of our lives are the fruits of past karmic seeds planted in our mental continuums, is there any free will or are we continually reacting to past karmic events?

Answer: In this context perhaps it is helpful to reflect upon the very sequence of the Twelve Links in the chain of Dependent Origination. One begins with fundamental ignorance leading to volitional action. Immediately after actions one doesn't talk about existence. So the cycle of the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination suggests that it is not adequate simply to have fundamental ignorance and volitional karmic acts. In order for the karmic acts to ripen into fruition, for it to have a fruition one needs other conditions such as craving and clinging. Whether or not the karmic seeds can come into contact with such activating forces again depend upon many other factors and conditions.

Even for Arhats who have attained liberation from samsara there are still karmic seeds but because they have destroyed the activating factors such as craving and clinging, these karmic seeds have no potency to produce their effects.

If one also looks at the way in which karmic potentials are activated especially at the point of death, although according to the *Abhidharmakosa* it is said that within each of us there are many karmic seeds that have the potency to take one to lower or higher realms of existence. Of those karmic seeds those which are powerful come into fruition first and within those that are equally powerful, those karmic seeds towards which one has the greater affinity or familiarity come to fruition first. However it is also possible that at the point of death even though one may have a greater propensity and inclinations towards negative actions, but if at the point of death either as the result of one's own deliberate contemplation or as the result of someone else reminding the dying person...

Also if one follows the principle stated in the *Pramanavartika* which suggests that when all the factors, the causes and conditions that are fully gathered then there is nothing one can do to stop the actual fruition of the effect. This implicitly suggests that although the seed may be there, the causes may be there if the right conditions are not created then the cause by itself cannot produce the effect.

All of this suggests that whether or not one creates the right conditions for a karmic action to be activated, whether or not one can insure that certain karmic seeds are deprived of the conditions needed to activate them to fruition, this is all in one's own hands. Let's take the simple example of someone taking a flight from here to New York. One may have booked one's ticket and will fly the following day. Of course the time to fly, which is the fruition of the act is coming closer and closer but even then there is the possibility of reversal of the causal chain. One then takes a taxi to the airport and the time for fruition is coming closer. There is still a scope for it to be reversed. One arrives at the airport but there is still there is a chance of reversal. Only when one has boarded the plane, the door shuts and is taking off, only then is the karmic chain fully activated and one has no ability to change the situation. But before one boards the plane even though one may have bought the ticket and actually arrived at the airport, through all those stages there is still the possibility that one can decide not to fly. There is always that scope for the reversal of the causal chain.

Also if one analyzes the whole issue of karma further, in the ultimate sense one can ask the question, who created the karma in the first place? The individual. So I feel that there is no contradiction with the concept of karma and that of free will. There is however an understandable danger that sometimes people misunderstand or misinterpret the theory of karma and feel that everything is karma so there is nothing they can do. So there is the danger of interpreting karmic theory as a form of fatalism so that the individual has no say in the matter. It is also sometimes used as an excuse especially by those who disrobe saying that it was their karma that forced them to disrobe.

Question: When dealing with afflictive emotions is there a method of overcoming strong emotions like anger before they take hold? Is it wrong to suppress our emotions?

Answer: I basically believe that in terms of handling one's emotions and on the question of whether or not one should express them, on this question I think there are actually two situations. There could be a situation where the anger and hostility are directed towards a past experience such as being hurt, abused or traumatized. In such cases keeping the resentment inside can actually be very negative. Just as the Tibetan expression says if the conch shell is blocked the best way to clear it is to simply blow into it. Under such circumstances it may be more effective and appropriate to let it out as it were.

But on the whole I think it is important that some kind of discipline with regard to these powerful emotions such as anger, hostility and so on. Otherwise if one simply lets oneself be overtaken by such powerful experiences without any degree of restraint then what

one will do is to repeat the experience of the emotions, habituating one more and more. This is such that one becomes more prone to anger and so on. Instead if adopts a certain discipline based on a full awareness of the destructive nature of anger then that clear realization of their destructive nature itself will create a certain distance between oneself and these powerful emotions. This in itself can have a certain effect.

Also this depends on the individual. In some cases if the person has deeper experiences of practices such as renunciation, compassion or bodhicitta then even if strong emotions like anger arise that person may be able to directly confront them by recalling their previous experiences of compassion, renunciation and so on. This is particularly effective if these are at a level where they bring about impact in the practitioner's mind. Otherwise when such powerful emotions arise in one's mind there is not much that one can do and in fact it may be more effective to divert one's attention towards a more neutral object such as focusing on the breath. In this way one can gradually divert attention from the negative emotions towards more neutral objects. Again it depends here on the individual.

Question: My spouse is a strong practitioner of Tibetan Buddhism and he has told me he would prefer to live by himself in the woods to practice the Dharma. He is not inclined to show me affection. Do you advise your followers to follow his example or to consider his wife's feelings also?

Answer: Of course one should consider the feelings of one's partner. There may be exceptional circumstances where the practitioner is so advanced that there is a real certainty that if they seek such solitude that there may be a tremendous increase in the pace of their progress. Under such circumstances it may be possible but otherwise there is the danger that one seeks the wilderness but there nothing really happens. In addition the person has disappointed and damaged someone's feelings in a very profound way. Under such circumstances one gains nothing.

My personal advice to Dharma practitioners is to try to be an effective and constructive member of society, to be fully engaged in the society. One should not isolate oneself from the society and in fact one should be part of the society. Occasionally it may be important to set aside specific periods of time to engage in intensive practices and meditation so that one can build strength. But in normal life one can set aside time to practice meditation either in the morning or in the evening. During the rest of the day one needs to be an effective and engaged member of the society. This is the most appropriate way in which one pursues one's practice.

Question: How is it possible to perform in human interactions any true acts of kindness in this lifetime since the true effects are not known at this point? Our moral judgement is relative and our best intentions sometime lead us the wrong way.

Answer: Any acts that are motivated by the wish to relieve others from pain and suffering can be regarded as positive from any standard of ethical theory. Of course from the Buddhist point of view if one goes further then one talks of the relativity of the content. For example in order to be of benefit to human beings if one sacrifices the wellbeing of many animals the ethical nature of that act from the Buddhist point of view is a questionable one. This cannot be considered a positive action because from the Buddhist point of view just like human beings animals are fundamentally equal in having the natural aspiration to have happiness and avoid suffering. Similarly animals are also felt to possess the Buddhature, the potential for perfect enlightenment.

Question: Will you please comment on the meaning of attachment with regard to friends and family? Certainly those relationships are very important in life. What is the proper basis according to the Buddhist view for establishing relationships?

Answer: I think the key here especially in a male/female relationship or partnership is respect. I think it is important to base one's relationship on firm respect towards the individual so that one's relationship is not entirely based on sexual attraction towards each other. Once one has deep respect for the individual or the person then if one has affection based on that, it will be much more stable. Also in one's affection and relationship with that individual there will be a recognition of other person in their own right. This I think is critical.

Question: It is said that rebirth as a man is more fortunate than rebirth as a woman is. Looking around it appears as if there are twice as many women as men here. If rebirth as a man is more fortunate why is it that fewer men seem to take advantage of it?

Answer: I think the point about rebirth as a man as being more fortunate needs to be understood within its proper context. I personally understand this in terms of the physical condition of the two forms of existence. It is generally believed that women are more physically vulnerable to harassment, abuse and so on because of the differences in strength. For example this is obvious in society as well that although there can be cases of men being raped we hear much more about the crime of rape against women. This suggests that there is a greater vulnerability on the physical level. I don't think this idea of rebirth as men as being more fortunate has anything to do with the deeper potential for spiritual attainment or spiritual practice.

If one looks at for example the Vinaya scriptures, the monastic codes, although in terms of hierarchy the fully ordained monk is said to be higher than a fully ordained nun, one would suspect a certain societal bias of a particular historical period in ancient India. Still one finds that so far as the full opportunities of a full ordination is concerned, just as there is full ordination for men there is also full ordination for women. Particularly in one looks further in Highest Yoga Tantra there is an acknowledgement that because there is a danger in society generally to despise women, in highest tantric practice belittling or despising women is explicitly counted as a root downfall. One can see a conscious and deliberate safeguarding of women's rights in Highest Yoga Tantra teachings.

In relation to this I would also like to make an observation about what will come later in Santideva's text that I will be covering tomorrow. There is a long discourse on the meditation on transcending attachment to women's bodies. One mustn't misread this discourse. In fact a Buddhist friend of mine often used to attack Santideva's text on the grounds that it is anti-women. I think such criticism is unjustified because one must appreciate the context in which this particular text evolved. This *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* was not taught at a public gathering, it was not written for the general public. It was presented within the context of a monastic environment to a group of monks who just like Santideva had to struggle to deal with attractions and desires, particularly sexual attachment as celibacy is a foundation of monastic life. This discourse, particularly the meditation on the impurity of a woman's body and so forth is specifically targeted for an audience of monks, one of whose main practices is to maintain a celibate life, free from sexual attachment.

Similarly if the practitioners are nuns then they need to reverse the gender of the object and subject the male body to the same kind of analysis and deconstruction so that they could transcend sexual attachment. I think it is important to carefully read the discourse in its proper context appreciating the intended audience. Otherwise there is a danger of misunderstanding the discourse.

In the dedication verse of Santideva's text in chapter ten and also in Nagarjuna's *Ratnavali* in the section on prayers and aspirations, one does find references such as may all women be reborn as men. Again here one can appreciate these from the point of view of wishing everyone to have physical strength and a body capable of performing many physical activities and so on. These are sentiments expressed in a particular context from a particular point of view. In any case these sentiments can not be fulfilled, they not realizable sentiments. Even if they were to be realized it would be disastrous because if such sentiments came to pass then that would mean the end of the human race.

I think it is important that the same sensitivity to context under which a particular text evolved needs to be appreciated. For example in Patrul Rinpoche's text *The Perfect Words of My Teacher* there is an extensive discussion on the negativities of eating meat. A tremendous amount of energy has been expended on that discussion but hardly any discussion has been spent on the disadvantages of alcoholic substances. This doesn't mean that the author of the text like alcohol but rather he wrote the text within the locality where the majority of the local people were nomads where there was an excessively reliance on meat. The dangers of eating too much meat were so evident and because the locals were not farmers they had few excess grains from which to make alcohol. This is why Patrul Rinpoche hardly mentions the negativities and disadvantages of drinking alcohol in that particular text. When approaching any text it is very important to try to have a sense of the overall intent of the text.

I would like to congratulate those who are attending here only for the preliminary teachings and not the Kalachakra. Because in actual fact the topics I am covering in the preliminary teachings are the more important elements of the practice. So I would like to express my appreciation for those who are just attending the preliminary teachings.

Those who do the opposite, not attend the preliminary teachings but rather come just for the Kalachakra Empowerment Ceremony, I must admit that these people are more clever than I am. When I announce a Kalachakra Empowerment, because Kalachakra is so popular it attracts people, but what I really intend is to spend time during the preliminary teachings and speak more about the general aspects of the path of the Dharma. So these people have in fact managed to fool me but of course if among those people who are just attending the Kalachakra teaching if they have a firm grounding in the common paths, the general practices of the Dharma then of course it is fine. But if people simply come for the empowerment with no real grounding in the preliminary practices then simply attending the Kalachakra ceremony alone, I do not know what benefit that can have. (End of the day)

Morning session, August 22, 1999

We will start today with the ceremony for generating bodhicitta, the mind for enlightenment. We will follow that with the continuation of Santideva's text.

The ceremony will consist of two parts. The first part is the ceremony that symbolizes the affirmation and stabilization of one's aspiration to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings. This will be performed on the basis of the reading of a few verses the English translation of which has been distributed. This will be the first part.

The taking of the Bodhisattva Vows will follow this. The text that I will use for the ceremony of conferring the Bodhisattva Vows is that of Asanga's *Bodhisattvabhumi* or the *Bodhisattva Grounds*.

For the ceremony one needs to imagine at the place in this thangka where the image of the Buddha is depicted, one imagines in this space the actual Buddha Shakyamuni. Imagine that the Buddha Shakyamuni is surrounded by the bodhisattvas such as Manjusri, Maitreya and so on who are in their celestial forms.

Also visualize that the Buddha surrounded by the great Indian masters such as Asanga, Nagarjuna and so on. All of these great masters have made a tremendous contribution towards the flourishing and continuation of the sacred Dharma of the Buddha Shakyamuni who is the embodiment of perfect kindness. These Indian masters particularly the one who made tremendous contributions and whose legacies we still benefit from today such as text composed by Nagarjuna and Asanga that we continue to derive tremendous benefit through studying, contemplating and meditating upon. So visualize all of these great Indian masters around the Buddha.

Also visualize the past great masters of Tibet, the lineage masters of the various traditions and so on. Imagine yourself being surrounded by all sentient beings and this is visualization one needs to perform to set the stage for the ceremony. We will now do the preliminary recitations as we did yesterday, the salutations to the Buddha, recitation of the sutras and finally dedication of the merit. This will then be followed by the recitation of the Heart Sutra as before. (Recitation)

The great master Nagarjuna stated in his *Precious Garland* or *Ratnavali* that those who aspire to attain the highest enlightenment of Buddhahood. All of the essential aspects of the teachings of the Buddha are contained within the teachings of the Lesser Vehicle, the Great Vehicle and the Vajrayana or the Diamond Vehicle. All of the practices of the Lesser Vehicle, Great Vehicle and the Vajrayana can be regarded as either as a preliminary or actual practice or as the completing aspects of the practices of bodhicitta, the altruistic aspiration.

One can say that bodhicitta, the altruistic mind aspiring to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings cultivated through the method of Exchanging and Equalizing Self and Others can be said to be the key or actual essence of the practice of the Buddha's teachings. So when one can cultivate this precious mind of bodhicitta, the altruistic aspiration to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings, it provide one with the basis for attaining highest enlightenment, the state of the omniscient, enlightened mind of the Buddha.

It also enables one to go through successive lifetimes of attaining favorable existences of higher rebirths. So one can say that the attainment of higher rebirths is in fact a by-product of the practice of bodhicitta. Not only that when one practices bodhicitta that one will go from one state of joyfulness to another state of joyfulness but even within this lifetime itself, the fruits of practicing bodhicitta are very obvious. As a result of practicing bodhicitta one will experience a sense of deep fulfillment, provide inner strength, courage and also a powerful basis for spiritual attainment. These are all obvious and evident fruits of practicing bodhicitta within this very lifetime.

If one thinks carefully, trying to examine the natural state of one's normal thoughts, one will find that at a deeper level all of us pursue life with a basic motive of trying to fulfill one's own self-interest. At the root of this is self-cherishment. One cherishes one's own interests and wellbeing so much and have gone through successive lifetimes trying to fulfill one's basic aspiration to be happy and overcome suffering. By pursuing this self-centered approach even in this lifetime if one thinks carefully, one will realize that throughout the twenty-four hours of the day one's thought are constantly motivated and influenced by self-centeredness. This is to the extent that even in one's dreams self-centeredness and self-cherishing play an important role.

However if one were to think carefully trying to figure out whether this pursuit of absolute self-centeredness really helps one to fulfill one's aspiration one is seeking, the answer is not really. For example one's thoughts are constantly plagued by feelings of discontent, dissatisfaction and unhappiness. Even Dharma practitioners have these feelings of dissatisfaction and unhappiness. The moment one starts having conversations with someone, even Dharma practitioners gradually one will begin to hear comments reflecting a lack of

satisfaction and so on. Similarly whether a person is rich or poor, educated or uneducated, all share these basic feelings of dissatisfaction.

This suggests that the way one has pursued and is pursuing one's aspiration to seek happiness and overcome suffering based on total self-centeredness is lacking. This is something one needs to recognize.

When one reflects along these lines one will realize that everyone deep down at the very core of their being, one cherishes two thoughts. On the one hand is the belief in some kind of objective, intrinsic reality of things and events that is self-grasping. On the other hand along side this self-grasping attitude is its ever-present companion which is the self-cherishing thought that cherishes one's own wellbeing oblivious to the wellbeing and concerns of other sentient beings. If one examines this carefully one will realize that one harbors these two thoughts within almost as if they constitute the core of one's inner essence or being. In fact one entrusts one's entire wellbeing to these two thoughts as if they are the ultimate source of one's refuge and protection, the source of one's happiness.

If the influence of these two thoughts are so powerful that even when one engages in the practice of the Dharma then their influence is felt. For example when one takes refuge in the Three Jewels often one's motivation in taking refuge is that one may gain some benefit for oneself. So the influence of self-cherishing thought is so powerful that it is felt even in the practice of Dharma. Having recognized this influence one needs to question where has this mode of being led one? Has it really helped one to fulfill the basic aspiration to be happy and overcome suffering?

No, there is something missing or wrong with this mode of being. Therefore one needs to now try and reverse this mode of being. In place of self-grasping one needs to cultivate the insight into no-self existence, selflessness. In place of the self-cherishing thought one needs to cultivate the thought that cherishes the wellbeing of other sentient beings. Since one has already recognized the failure of the self-cherishing attitude and self-grasping one needs to now give a chance to their opposites, the thought cherishing the wellbeing of others and the insight into selflessness.

Maybe I can say this here. If I give my own personal experience, although I cannot claim any high levels of realization nor find the time to engage in extensive Dharma practice, I can claim that I have undertaken some extensive practices. From my thirties I have paid special attention to developing an understanding the view of emptiness. Especially in my forties I paid special attention to the cultivation of bodhicitta. As a result of these practices, although I cannot claim to have actual realizations of bodhicitta or the perfect view of emptiness, one thing I can state is that I do feel that as the result of prolonged practice I have genuinely developed a deeply felt admiration for those ideals and practices.

This is based on a genuine conviction as the result of my prolonged practice and I also feel that my mind has an affinity towards these practices which is increasing always so that I feel closer and closer to these ideals and practices. Because of this even though my level of realization may be very minute, but the moment even this little experience starts to dawn, that in itself has a tremendously uplifting effect and freeing effect. So if one were to then continue to pursue these practices with total dedication month after month, year after year then certainly I get a glimpse that there is the possibility to genuinely develop, enhance and eventually actual gain a perfect realization of bodhicitta and the view of emptiness.

Similarly I would like to take the opportunity here to appeal to my fellow spiritual brothers and sisters, my fellow Dharma practitioners to engage in proper practice, dedicating oneself to the practices so that you too have a glimpse of the actual experience. Of course I must also point out that it depends on a large extent whether or not one finds an affinity or inclination towards these types of practices on one's own mental disposition, one's own interests, one's own inclinations and so on. In the final analysis it is the practitioner

themselves who is the best judge to choose whatever path that one wants to pursue. But I felt that giving an example of my own personal experience may be of interest here

One finds in Tibetan Buddhism the practice of the Vajrayana and within the practice of the Vajrayana there is meditation on generating oneself as a deity and so on. These practices have definitely profound effects and they also have the potential for developing and enhancing one's path towards enlightenment. If all of the preconditions for the practice of the Vajrayana deity yoga are complete then of course the practitioner will be able to derive those benefits. However the preconditions are that the practitioner must have a firm grounding in the practices of bodhicitta, the perfect view of emptiness and so on. If one lacks these foundational practices, the realization of bodhicitta and the understanding of emptiness then even if one were to engage in deity yoga meditation, visualizing oneself as a perfectly enlightened deity at best it will only be a self-conciliation. The basic fact remains that one is not fully enlightened and one is only imaging oneself in an enlightened form. So at best it is a self-conciliatory practice but at worst it will not have any beneficial effects in terms of enhancing one's own spiritual development.

In fact once a Sri Lankan bhikshu made an observation and said that if one looks at the sophisticated meditations in the Vajrayana relating to the visualization of mandalas and deities, of course they are very appealing and attractive. However the problem is that if one engages in these practices instead of benefiting they will undermine one's development as the only effect they will produce is that they will proliferate further conceptual thought processes. This will bind one ever more firmly within cyclic existence. This comment really has a point because if one looks at the literature of ancient Indian Buddhism one finds that this doubt has already been raised and addressed.

The issue was placed in the following manner in those scriptures. Since self-grasping at the intrinsic existence of oneself and the world is the root of unenlightened existence, the root of samsara, how can meditation on a deity or mandala such as deity yoga be of actual benefit in eliminating the root of samsara? Many explanations have been given as to how this is effective. So the Sri Lankan bhikshu's criticism does have a point and it is important to appreciate this criticism taking it as a warning or a signal, especially for Vajrayana practitioners.

This is because in Tibetan Buddhism one sees the Vajrayana very extensively taught. Just as I mentioned earlier, in order for one's practice of the Dharma to be successful one must insure that the Dharma practice becomes an actual Dharma practice. Similarly one must insure that the Mahayana practices must become actual Mahayana practices. In the same manner in order for the Vajrayana practices to be successful one must insure that one's Vajrayana practice becomes true Vajrayana practice.

What makes deity meditation a true Vajrayana practice? Here again the foundation truly is the generation of bodhicitta, the altruistic aspiration to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all beings and the view of emptiness, a perfect understanding of emptiness. Once one has these two prerequisites, these two foundational practices then when one builds one's Vajrayana meditational deity yoga on the basis of these two practices then of course one will be able to derive the profundity of the Vajrayana.

Having said this some people might then think that if that is the case then until one has accumulated the right conditions such as the realization of bodhicitta and a perfect understanding of emptiness there is no benefit or point in taking a tantric teaching and practicing it. This however is not the case. I think what is important is to have a comprehensive and holistic perspective on one's Dharma practice. So although in actual practice, the actual approach to Dharma practice one must place greater emphasis and focus on the specific aspects of the path that correspond to the level of one's own understanding

and realization. One needs to place emphasis on the development of that particular element or aspect of the path.

However at the same time it is important to gain or cultivate a familiarity with the entire spectrum of the path of Dharma. This includes the Vajrayana as well so that in a sense one is rehearsing with the entire sequence of the path, preparing oneself for the eventual realization of the higher levels of the path. So to conclude one must cultivate a conviction that bodhicitta, the altruistic aspiration to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings, is the foundation for all paths including the Vajrayana. Bodhicitta is the key practice, it is the foundation. With this recognition and realization I will go on with the ceremony of generating bodhicitta.

This ceremony literally means the ceremony for generating bodhicitta by taking a pledge, committing oneself to the aspirational aspect of bodhicitta. This ceremony is performed when the practitioner as the result of their prolonged practice has gained a glimpse of the actual experience of bodhicitta. At this point the practitioner affirms it and stabilizes it by taking a pledge in the setting of a ceremony.

Traditionally before the ceremony for generating bodhicitta is performed one undertakes the practice of the seven limbs. We will do this by reciting the section on the Seven Limb practice from the Prayer of Samantabhadra. For those of you who do not know this in Tibetan, reflect on the seven practices, paying homage to the Triple Jewels (the field of merit), making offerings, disclosing and purifying one's negativities, rejoicing on one's own and others' virtuous acts, requesting the Buddhas to turn the Wheel of Dharma, appealing to the Buddhas not to enter parinirvana and finally dedicating the merit accumulated through this practice. Reflect upon these seven limbs of practice and reaffirm one's visualization of the Buddha Shakyamuni surrounded by all the bodhisattvas and great masters. (Recitation)

As for the text that is normally used for the ceremony of generating bodhicitta, there are different versions of different lengths and so on. However the text that I am using here are two verses that are extracted from tantra. The first verse reads:

**With the wish to free all beings I shall always go for refuge
to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha
Until I reach full enlightenment.**

This taking of refuge in the Three Jewels is in the Mahayana sense where one is wishing for all sentient beings to be free from not only the emotional and mental afflictions but also from the subtle imprints and propensities towards those afflictions. These obstruct one's attainment of perfect knowledge and the perfectly enlightened mind. This is the purpose and one pledges to go for refuge to the Three Jewels until one attains full enlightenment, which specifies the time factor. So this is the Mahayana form of taking refuge.

The next verse reads:

**Enthused by wisdom and compassion today in the Buddha's presence
I generate the mind for full awakening for the benefit of all
sentient beings.**

Here one then acclaims that by engaging in a path that is the union of wisdom and method one will generate the mind to attain full enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. Not only is one making an aspiration but also one is making a pledge that one will generate this mind.

This is followed by a recitation of a quote from Santideva's *Bodhicaryavatara* that reads:

**As long as space remains,
As long as sentient beings remain,
Until then may I too remain
And dispel the miseries of the world.**

When one reflects upon the meaning of these verses, one here is committing oneself to making one's life, the sole purpose of one's life, the sole purpose of one's existence is to be of service to other sentient beings, to bring about the welfare of other sentient beings. One is suggesting that one's commitment to this ideal is such that one will pursue this goal for as long as space remains. When one cultivates this kind of powerful sentiment or aspiration and altruism then the time factor should not make any difference to one's commitment, to one's state of mind.

In fact whether one becomes fully enlightened or one remains unenlightened, one's sole purpose is to be of benefit to other sentient beings. So if this is the case, once one has dedicated one's life to this kind of ideal then every single instance of one's life so long as one is able to be of some benefit to others then one is serving one's purpose. When one realizes this, when one realizes that one is serving the ultimate purpose of one's existence then there is no sense of exhaustion, no sense of frustration or tiredness. When there is no sense of fatigue then the time does not make any difference whether it be one eon or innumerable eons. The time factor involved makes no difference.

This is something one can attest to from one's own personal experience when one undergoes a particular event or experience. If one finds a task exhausting, if one finds it tiring then even if the duration of the actual experience may be very short, one feels as if it was very long. On the other hand when one undergoes a joyful experience, something that gives one a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction then the time involved doesn't make much of a difference. In fact there is a sense of preparedness to go through with the task whatever may come. It is important to try to cultivate this kind of powerful sentiment and sense of commitment to the ideals of altruism.

The actual performance of the ceremony will be done by the audience reading these three verses, three times.

**With the wish to free all beings I shall always go for refuge
to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha
Until I reach full enlightenment.**

**Enthused by wisdom and compassion today in the Buddha's presence
I generate the mind for full awakening for the benefit of all
sentient beings.**

**As long as space remains,
As long as sentient beings remain,
Until then may I too remain
And dispel the miseries of the world.**

If you can now cultivate the thought within yourself that this altruistic intention that you have just generated, this powerful courage and sentiment that you have generated, then pledge that you will never abandon this aspiration at any time at all.

Please do not throw the paper away on which this was written. If you have an interest in practice try to read this on a daily basis and eventually memorize it. Reflect upon its

meaning on a daily basis so that you can actually continue with this practice. This is for the practicing Buddhists and those who have a genuine interest in the practice of the Buddhadharma. For those of you who are Christians or followers of other traditions you can also perform this practice by substituting in the place of the Three Jewels with whatever object of refuge that you find most appealing. Do the same practice but substitute the object of refuge.

In any case the cultivation of this infinite altruism, this powerful altruism is central to all spiritual traditions of the world. So the main point that I am stressing here is that this precious, altruistic aspiration, this precious altruistic intention that we have generated today, the kind, warm heart that we have generated today is not to be let go after the ceremony. Rather you should endeavor to sustain and develop it, enhancing it on a daily basis so that you build on it.

Now I will begin the ceremony for taking the Bodhisattva Vows. The mandala offering was already made at the beginning of this teaching so next is making a request to the teacher to confer the vows. Although the recitation will be done in Tibetan regardless of whether or not one can follow the repetition or not, one should develop the thought that one is making a request to the guru. This request is for the guru to bestow upon you the Bodhisattva Vows. (Recitation in Tibetan)

Having made the request to the master and having expressed an interest in taking on the discipline of the precepts of the Bodhisattva Vows. The master then asks to determine whether or not one has the right motivation for taking the Bodhisattva Vows. Since the ultimate aspiration of a bodhisattva practitioner is to attain perfect enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings, the master asks, “Do you have the aspiration to free sentient beings who are obscured by the obstructions to knowledge? Do you have the aspiration to free sentient beings who are caught in the cycle of existence because of their karma along with the mental and emotional afflictions? Do you have the aspiration to relieve those who are undergoing painful experiences?” By asking these questions the master determines whether or not one has the right attitude and motivation for taking the Bodhisattva Vows.

The master then questions further to determine whether one still has the right attitude. Are you taking these vows in order to compete with someone? Are you taking the vows under duress? Is someone forcing you to take these vows? To these two questions one responds no.

The master asks further questions. Are you familiar with the Avatamsaka Sutra, which is the root source of the Bodhisattva practices? Are you familiar with the *Bodhisattvabhumi*, the commentary on the Bodhisattva practices? To these questions one responds I am. Have you some understanding of these texts? To this question one responds yes I have. Do you have interest and admiration in the ideals of the Bodhisattva? To this question one responds I do. Do you commit yourself to the practices of these principles and ideals of the Bodhisattva? To this question one responds I do.

Especially to the first question of having familiarity with the sutras and the commentarial literature of the *Bodhisattvabhumi*, one responds I have some familiarity being very honest. For example in my own case out of a deep admiration and reverence towards the sutras I have actually received the oral transmissions of these. Also I try to read them and study them. However the key point is the practice of altruism so the key precept of the Bodhisattva Vows is to from this moment on refrain from harming others. If possible one needs to try and be of benefit to other sentient beings. This is really the key precept so one should cultivate this thought and determination within oneself that from now on from the depths of one’s heart one will strive as much as possible to be of benefit to others. One will never engage in any activity that is harmful to other sentient beings. Commitment to this ideal is the key precept of the Bodhisattva practices. (Recitation in Tibetan)

This is followed by the Seven-Limb Practice to again purify negativity and accumulate virtue. (Recitation in Tibetan) Next is requesting the guru out of increased eagerness to receive the Bodhisattva Vows. (Recitation in Tibetan)

Next the guru asks two questions to determine whether one has any obstacles for receiving the Bodhisattva Vows. The first question is “Are you a bodhisattva?” The second question is “Have you cultivated the aspiration towards bodhicitta?” Of course many of us here are not real bodhisattvas, as we have not gained the perfect attainment of bodhicitta, the aspiration to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings. However what is required is that on your part at least there is a deeply felt admiration and single-pointed devotion along with a sense of dedication to the ideals that are represented by the practice of bodhicitta. So one must have this kind of single-pointed admiration and dedication to the bodhisattva practices. One also needs a sense of joy for what the ideals of the bodhisattvas represent so this is a basic requirement on your part. Because of this single-pointed dedication and admiration in the ideals of bodhicitta, if one has undertaken some practice of compassion then this practice of compassion will have awakened the seed for enlightenment, the seed for Buddhahood that is in all of us. This is the basic requirement one must at least have a single-pointed admiration for the ideals of bodhicitta.

The second question is asking whether or not one has affirmed and stabilized one’s aspiration by participating in a ceremony as we did earlier. Having determined that one has all of the conditions necessary to take the Bodhisattva Vows then the guru asks some further questions. Why do you wish to take the Bodhisattva Vows from me because the Bodhisattva Vows can be taken in front of a representation of the Buddha or can be taken from any other lama? (Recitation in Tibetan) You respond by saying yes.

The actual main ceremony for taking the Bodhisattva Vows according to this text requires no repetition after the guru. Rather it is performed in the form of a series of questions asked by the master. The questions are asked three times. In the questions the master points out that since one has cultivated all of the conditions for taking these vows, one must recognize that all of the Buddhas of the past gained perfect enlightenment by dedicating their spiritual practices on the ideals of bodhicitta and the Bodhisattva Vows.

This is the path; this is the way by which all of the enlightened beings of the past have attained Buddhahood. Also this is the way and path by which those who at the present are gaining enlightenment engage. This is also the path and way by which the Buddhas of the future will attain perfect enlightenment. In fact one can say that the bodhisattva generating bodhicitta and taking on and upholding the Bodhisattva Vows is the sole door leading to perfect enlightenment. Therefore one must generate bodhicitta and observe and uphold the Bodhisattva Vows. Do you wish this and to do so?

This question is asked three times. On the third repetition it is finished. At that point imagine that you have received the Bodhisattva Vows. Among the members of the audience those who feel that they cannot commit themselves by taking the Bodhisattva Vows that they cannot observe the precepts then do not imagine that you have received the vows or that you uphold the vows. Rather during the ceremony imagine that by participating in this ceremony one generates a mind of altruism and then from the depths of one’s heart always revere and admire the ideals and principles of the Bodhisattva practices. By doing this one will have the benefit of generating altruism but at the same time there is no risk of any infraction of the root or secondary Bodhisattva Vows.

However for those who are taking the Bodhisattva Vows it is important to have some understanding of the precepts particularly the eighteen root precepts and the forty-six secondary precepts to insure that in one’s daily activities that one does not transgress these precepts. The key precept is to insure in one’s daily life not to be dominated by the self-cherishing attitude. Rather one needs to constantly cultivate the thought of being respectful to

others, to have a sense of concern and caring for others and to interact with others, acting out of this kind of altruistic motivation. If one has this basic observance of this precept then this will insure that one will not transgress any of the other precepts, the root and secondary precepts.

Since today we are participating in a ceremony where all of us are trying to generate this tremendous altruism, the sense of concern and compassion towards all sentient beings, I think it is also helpful to utilize this occasion to make some prayers together for the relief of pain and suffering of beings all over the world. I have heard that there was a recent earthquake in Turkey involving over ten thousand casualties. Reflect on the fact that similar to this incident there are people undergoing painful experiences and use this occasion to pray for all of these suffering sentient beings so that they become free of their pain. If one does this it can have some positive impact.

Those who have no problems with their knees please kneel down and those with problems please remain seated. (Recitation in Tibetan) Those taking the Bodhisattva Vows should now reinforce your altruistic aspiration to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings. Also reinforce your commitment to engage in the practices of the bodhisattva and reflect that just as all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the past had dedicated their lives to the practice of the bodhisattva and lived according to the ideals of the bodhisattva, so I also will generate this altruistic mind of enlightenment, never abandoning it, never letting it degenerate. Also I will engage in the practices of the bodhisattva and follow the ideals of the bodhisattva, in this way not only take the Bodhisattva Vows but also uphold the vows. By engaging in the ideals and practices of the Bodhisattva Vows I will soon attain perfect enlightenment so that I can serve the welfare of other sentient beings. It is very important to reinforce one's enthusiasm and joy for taking the Bodhisattva Vows. (Recitation in Tibetan)

Next the guru calls the attention of all of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions and requests them to witness for this important event. The guru appeals to them by calling out for their attention saying that today on this day, at this place I by the name of such-and-such have conducted a ceremony of the Bodhisattva Vows. The disciples by the name of such-and-such have all taken the Bodhisattva Vows so please bear witness to this event and note this important event.

So the guru calls the Buddhas' and Bodhisattvas' attention by making prostrations to the ten directions. (Recitation in Tibetan) I don't need to go into the details of the tremendous benefits of cultivating this altruistic aspiration and generating the mind for enlightenment. I personally feel fortunate to have the opportunity to perform this ceremony for generating the altruistic mind of bodhicitta and also to have the opportunity to give the Bodhisattva Vows.

Compared to conducting a tantric empowerment ceremony which requires high levels of single-pointedness, meditation and so on, I feel that giving the Bodhisattva Vows is not only highly beneficial but also less risky on the parts of both teacher and students. In fact whenever I find the opportunity I try to perform this ceremony of generating bodhicitta which is for me also a very powerful method for increasing my own accumulation of merit. Also for me this is a powerful medium by which I can help others to appreciate the value, importance and great qualities of compassion and bodhicitta. Therefore I feel tremendously fortunate to have this opportunity today to perform this ceremony and I would like to express my appreciation to you.

Next the guru instructs the students not to speak about their Bodhisattva practices and Bodhisattva Vows particularly the precepts in inappropriate situations. For example to people who simply have no interest, people who may be cynical, people who have no enthusiasm for spiritual matters nor people who have no admiration for the Bodhisattva ideals. Also one should avoid the temptation of simply bragging about the Bodhisattva precepts and the

Bodhisattva Vows so it is important to observe, when speaking about the Bodhisattva precepts that one does so in only appropriate situations.

I must remind you that because you have all participated in this ceremony of generating bodhicitta and taking the Bodhisattva Vows, do not be under the impression that when one walks out of this tent that you have become bodhisattvas, thinking that you are a bodhisattva. For most of us this is not the case, as you have not yet become bodhisattvas, so do not have a self-inflated illusion. In fact for many of us to be a true bodhisattva may take several lifetimes or maybe eons. However one can recognize that by participating in this ceremony, generating bodhicitta and taking on the Bodhisattva Vows, one has taken at least the first step moving towards becoming a bodhisattva, to becoming an Arya Bodhisattva. This is the first step towards becoming eventually a fully enlightened Buddha.

The text that I have used for the rite of giving the Bodhisattva Vows is from the chapter on ethical discipline from Asanga's *Bodhisattvabhumi*, the *Bodhisattva Grounds* so these are direct citations from Asanga's text. Now I proceed with the reading of Santideva's text. I will not spend time explaining each and every single verse but rather I will concentrate on selected verses from the text giving commentary on them.

In verse thirty-nine Santideva explains the importance of transcending one's attachment to the objects of desire.

Both in this world and the next
39 Desires give rise to great misfortune:
In this life killing, bondage and flaying
And in the next the existence of the hells.

He then tells how to create a distance within one's mind by distancing oneself from the objects of desire. When speaks of the various forms of distractions that are the key obstacles to cultivating single-pointedness of mind perhaps the most powerful obstacle is attachment or desire. In fact in the manuals on meditation one sees that mental excitement, which is a manifestation or form of attachment is identified as one of the key obstacles for generating single-pointedness. So what one finds here in this text are various thought processes and meditations that enable one to distance oneself from attachment to the objects of desire.

So when one speaks of the objects of desire here one is mainly talking about the five sensory objects such as attractive forms, attractive smells, tactile sensations, sounds and so on, the five essential sensory objects that can give rise to desire and attachment. Of all of the forms of attachment and desire, sexual desire and attachment are said to be very powerful and intense. Therefore in the following verses Santideva teaches methods of reflecting that will help one distance oneself from excessive attachment to sexual objects of desire.

In the case of a male practitioner the object of sexual desire arises in relation to a woman's body, her physical characteristics, smell, tactile sensations and so on. So one needs to find a way of transcending those desires. In the case of a female practitioner such attachment and attraction arise in relation to a man's body and physical characteristics. In the following verses there are methods given for distancing oneself from such powerful sexual impulses and attachment.

These thought processes, the meditations suggested in the following verses to try and distance oneself from indulging in excessive sexual attachment are of tremendous benefit to celibate practitioners, the members of the monastic order. This is true whether they are members of the Buddhist monastic order or Christian monastics where the order is based on a vow of celibacy. For these practitioners these contemplations that are suggested here by Santideva can be of very powerful benefit to sustain and affirm their own practice of celibacy.

For lay practitioners of course a total abstention from sexual activity is not expected. However even for lay practitioners occasionally reflecting upon these kinds of meditations can have a positive effect because these can tone down excessive attachment to sexual activity, which is in fact quite unhealthy. If one has a more appropriate and balanced attitude towards sex then that can establish a firm foundation for a long-lasting marriage and relationship. Whereas if one lets oneself become totally taken away by excessive attachment and preoccupation with sex then it creates a tremendous fluctuation in one's interactions with the opposite sex which can undermine one's long-term relationships. So even for the lay practitioner these meditations are of some benefit.

So in verse thirty-nine Santideva identifies the key problem, excessive attachment and he points out that it causes the downfall not only in this life but also in the future.

Both in this world and the next
39 Desires give rise to great misfortune:
In this life killing, bondage and flaying
And in the next the existence of the hells.

So the point Santideva is making here is that when one's entire life is dominated and dictated by perpetual wants and feelings of discontentment then that leads to all sorts of complications. Corresponding to one's attachments and desires for more there is also a greater complexity and complications in terms of anxieties, pains and so on.

What the great Tibetan masters have said is very true in that for someone, who possesses inner contentment, in that home is a true richness. However the wealthy whose thoughts are perpetually afflicted by ever increasing wants, they have not recognized this value and fact of contentment. This is true because the person who has a deep sense of inner contentment, such a person has a sense of fulfillment, a settledness. However if someone no matter how wealthy they are if their thoughts are constantly afflicted by wanting more and more, this perpetual wanting itself becomes a form of suffering and pain leading to more discontentment instead of contentment.

From verse forty through verse forty-two Santideva explains how attachment, particularly sexual attachment towards the body of the opposite sex arises. From verse forty-three onwards Santideva dissects and deconstructs one's excessive attachment and tries to undermine it by showing the irrationality of having excessive sexual attachment to a woman's body, an object of desire. He begins this analysis by asking is it the physical body that one is attached to and if that is the case he then suggests a particular contemplation. If it is the mind of the other that one is attached to then he suggests another set of contemplations and so on.

This is how by examining the nature and causes of the body and its effects and also by reflecting upon the fact that many of the constituents making up a body, if analyzed individually there are what were normally be regarded as impure and unclean. So by reflecting upon these constituents Santideva recommends a way of dealing with excessive attachment to the body.

From verse seventy-one Santideva goes on to say that even the object of one's desire that one feels so attached and which is in fact constituted by impure and unclean substances, is not an attitude acquired easily. He then goes on to discuss the difficulties and often the futility of seeking to fulfill sensual gratification together with seeking to increase one's wealth and so on. This whole contemplation on and dealing with excessive attachment, particularly sexual attachment concludes with verse seventy-eight. (End of morning session)

Some lustful people even cut their bodies,

**103 Others impale themselves on the points of sticks,
Some stab themselves with daggers,
And others burn themselves – such things as these are quite apparent.**

**Due to the torment involved in collecting it, protecting and finally
losing it,**

**104 I should realize wealth to be fraught with infinite problems.
Those who are distracted by their attachment to it
Have no opportunity to gain freedom from the misery of
conditioned existence.**

Afternoon Session, August 22

Question: If one is from a different religious background, follow the basic vows and believe in the concepts behind Kalachakra but are concerned about maintaining the daily ritual, should one take the initiation?

Answer: For such a person during the ceremony of Kalachakra empowerment there are two parts. One part is up to the entry into the mandala, which includes the preparatory empowerment ceremony and then the second part is the actual empowerment, once one is inside the mandala. Such a person can participate in the first part of the ceremony up to entry into the mandala.

While performing the ceremony I will actually point to the members of the audience those who are willing to take the entire empowerment can perform all of the visualizations. Those who wish to only participate up to the entry into the mandala can perform all of the visualizations up to that point and then after that point they can simply be present here as a witness, as an observer. Anyway I will point this out during the actual ceremony.

Question: When I am confronted by others' sufferings, I am saddened by it. Is this sadness the same as compassion or does true compassion have a different quality to it?

Answer: Certainly it is a basis for generating compassion but true compassion needs to be based on the recognition of suffering of all three levels that I spoke of earlier [suffering of suffering, suffering of change, pervasive suffering of conditioned existence].

Question: Please clarify the distinctions between that aspect of ourselves we call "I" or self that is illusory and that part of the individual's consciousness which is not illusory, absorbing karmic imprints and transcends impermanence and so on?

Answer: I think a discussion of this may come up later while I comment on Santideva's chapter.

Question: You have written that you have sighted a passage from a sutra that those who see dependent origination sees the Dharma; those who see the Dharma sees the Tathagata. In this context I would like to ask, is there any difference between seeing the Buddhanature and the attainment of wisdom?

Answer: I feel that if the realization arising from the experience of seeing the Buddhanature or whether it be the experience of the attainment of wisdom as the Chinese scriptures describe, if these realizations are genuine realizations derived through such practices I think they must converge ultimately on the same point. This is also the same for example if one looks at some of the meditative practices of Dzogchen or Mahamudra, there are methods by which the essence of the practices are distilled and then presented in a very concise manner.

However I do believe there is a difference in terms of the presentation. For example if one looks at the works of Nagarjuna and other Indian pundits there are extensive and elaborate discussions on how one can cultivate an understanding of the Buddhanature. However if one compares these writings to other Indian writings such as the Dohas, the experiential songs of the great Mahasiddhas then one will also find a different perspective, a different way of approaching the same issue from an experiential point of view. But ultimately I feel that all of these must converge on the same point.

Of course it is difficult for me to give a full explanation without completely being aware of what exactly you have in mind when you asked this question. There is otherwise the danger that if the question is asked with a fuzzy mind then the teacher might also give a response with a fuzzy mind leading to unnecessary complications and headache.

Question: You said only a perfectly enlightened being knows what teachings will help and which teachings will harm but I need teachings to stay on track with my practice. All of the lamas say they are not enlightened. Also I teach ethics and spiritual healing and I seem to help people. Is this correct? Can I teach my perceptions of the truth? How much harm am I doing?

Answer: For example in my own case here in this setting, I am giving explanations of the Buddha's teachings and the Buddhist path. When I do so I am doing this on the basis of texts which were written by great masters and also by grounding my explanations on the basis of the great Indian masters. All of these have their roots in the Buddha's own sutras so when I give teachings here I have no illusion that in some sense I am presenting you something that I myself have come up with, some new perspective based on my own intellectual views. Rather I see myself as a medium for what has already been written and what has already been taught.

In fact as is said in the Tibetan tradition, the authenticity of a teaching must have its roots so that it can be traced back to the Buddha himself. Just as the purity of a stream of water can be judged by tracing it back to its source, in the same manner what I present here as explanations are grounded within the parameters of the insights and knowledge that were presented by the past great masters. Some of these masters wrote texts out of their personal experience and some who had the knowledge to present these views.

Similarly if you are teaching ethics to others and then if your teaching helps people then of course it is commendable. But perhaps on your own part the most important thing is to insure that your own motivation is unpolluted, it is pure and altruistic.

Question: In taking the vows during the Kalachakra initiation does one also satisfy taking the basic Buddhist vow of refuge?

Answer: Of course. In fact right from the point where one participated in the ceremony of generating the mind for enlightenment and when you recited "I go for refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha" in that itself one has taken refuge. I think it is important however to understand how an individual becomes a Buddhist. One should not have the idea that only by participating in a ceremony of taking refuge in the presence of someone else that it makes one a Buddhist. This is certainly not the case.

One becomes a Buddhist even without participating in a ceremony once one has developed a deep conviction in the efficacy of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, the Three Jewels as one's ultimate source of refuge. Out of this recognition if one then entrusts one's spiritual wellbeing to the Three Jewels, from that point onward one has become a Buddhist whether or not one participated in a ceremony. Similarly if there comes a day when one loses one's faith in the efficacy of the Three Jewels as the ultimate source of refuge, at that point one is no longer a Buddhist. So do not have the notion that somehow there needs to be a

public ceremony that admits one into the Buddhist order or that there is a ceremony where people are expelled from the Buddhist community. Do not have that kind of notion.

However my personal view is that at the initial stage, I think it is possible for one individual to have deep admiration, faith and conviction in Jesus Christ, what he represents. Similarly at the same time one can have equally strong faith, admiration and devotion to the Buddha. So this is not a question of half-hearted faith in the Buddha or in the Christ. As far as the individual is concerned their faith and admiration is single-pointed in both Buddha and Christ.

However as the practitioner deepens their spiritual practice, embarking on the spiritual path further then the understanding dimension, particularly understanding based on philosophical contemplations play a tremendously important role. So one reaches a point where one needs to pursue a single path, like someone doing research exclusively in one field. For example if someone's spiritual inclination is more strongly theistic where the belief in a creator is a foundation then one needs to pursue that path. Pursuing that path deeper comes into conflict with the Buddhist idea of dependent origination.

Similarly within the Buddhist tradition itself, it is possible that at the initial stage someone may be practicing at the level of skillful means or method aspects of the path such as compassion and the cultivation of bodhicitta. At this level such a practitioner may not have any particular inclination towards any particular philosophical standpoint. However as that practitioner proceeds more deeply into the path then the insight dimension based on philosophical contemplation becomes crucial. At that point the practitioner needs to follow their inclination and choose one of the philosophical paths whether it be the Lesser Vehicle or the Greater Vehicle. Even within the Greater Vehicle there are subdivisions such as Mind-Only or Madhyamika.

Now back to Santideva's text. From verse ninety the main instructions for cultivating the practice of bodhicitta through the method of Exchanging Self and Other begins. I think it is ver beneficial if one combines the contemplations presented in the chapter on patience with the contemplations and practices presented in this chapter on meditation. If one combines them together it is very beneficial.

The practice begins with the following verse:

First of all I should make an effort
90 To meditate upon the equality between myself and others:
I should protect all beings as I do myself
Because we are all equal in (wanting) pleasure and (not wanting) pain.

This verse points out the practice that I spoke about earlier which is the practice of cultivating equality towards by recognizing the fundamental equality of self and others. Just as oneself, others also are fundamentally equal in having the aspiration to be happy and overcome suffering. Therefore one needs to cultivate the thought that in terms of one's willingness to be of service to others both through one's thoughts and actions, one will not make any discrimination between self and others. One needs to relate with others equally.

91 Although there are many different parts and aspects such as the hand,
As a body that is to be protected they are one.
Likewise all the different sentient beings in their pleasure and their pain
Have a wish to be happy that is the same as mine.

Santideva said that just as there are many different parts of the body but are all part of a single body. Similarly when one speaks of sentient beings or others although there might be a great diversity and multiplicity but all of them are equal, are one in sharing the fundamental aspiration to be happy and overcome suffering.

**92 The suffering that I experience
Does not cause any harm to others.
But that suffering (is mine) because of my conceiving of (myself as) “I”;
Thereby it becomes unbearable.**

**93 Likewise the misery of others
Does not befall me.
Nevertheless, by conceiving of (others as) “I” their suffering becomes
mine;
Therefore it too should be hard to bear.**

In the next two lines Santideva says that although one’s own suffering does not cause any harm to others but because one’s suffering is part of the thought “I am”, therefore it feels unbearable when one experiences it. Similarly others too, although their suffering may not materially be experienced by one, but because others’ sufferings are also objects of the thought “I am” of other sentient beings, one should also, if one cultivates the thought, be able to get to the point where one also feels it as unbearable seeing others suffer.

**94 Hence I should dispel the misery of others
Because it is suffering, just like my own,
And I should benefit others
Because they are sentient beings, just like myself.**

The rationale for this is that one should work to dispel that suffering simply because it is just like one’s own suffering, it is suffering and therefore one should strive to dispel it. One should benefit others because they are sentient beings just like oneself. The fact that others are sentient beings is enough justification for one to be of benefit to others.

**95 When both myself and others
Are similar in that we wish to be happy,
What is so special about me?
Why do I strive for my happiness alone?**

Santideva goes on to explain that oneself and others are equal in having the wish to be happy. Not only are both fundamentally equal in having this aspiration to be happy but also both have the same right to fulfill this basic aspiration to be happy. Also oneself and others both have the opportunity to be happy and fulfill this aspiration. If this is the case that both oneself and others are fundamentally equal in having the aspiration, same right to fulfill that aspiration and the same opportunities then what is so special about oneself? One’s own suffering and one’s own wellbeing that one cherishes so much instead of others is not special.

Santideva makes the same observation with regards to the basic aspiration to avoid suffering. He writes:

And when both myself and others

96 **Are similar in that we do not wish to suffer,
What so special about me?
Why do I protect myself and not others?**

-But why should I protect them
97 **If their suffering does not cause me any harm? –
Then why protect myself against future suffering
If it causes me no harm now?**

Sometimes one may have the opinion that since others happiness or pain has no direct bearing on one's own personal experience, why should one care for others? Why should one care about others' happiness or suffering? One may think that one should only care about someone else's wellbeing only if that person has some relation to one. If that person has been kind to me or if one is indebted to that person then one will care about them. If that is the underlying motivation for sense of caring and concern for others' wellbeing then one can also raise questions as to whether the motivation for caring about one's own wellbeing as far as future suffering is concerned. Future suffering does not cause one harm in the present.

One could respond to this by saying that although future suffering is not experienced now, it is valid for one to protect oneself against potential suffering. This is because when future suffering does occur it is oneself, the same person who will undergo that painful experience. Santideva questions this motive behind such thinking in the next verse where he says:

It is a mistaken concept to think
98 **That I shall experience (the sufferings of my next life).
For it is another person who dies
And another who is reborn.**

If one examines this carefully underlying such a motivation is a belief in a permanent, enduring self. In fact if one analyzes this in detail then the person who is currently committing the act and the person who experiences the result in the future are not exactly the same. One can refer to the sameness in an individual in terms of its continuum but the self of today is contingent upon particular circumstances and conditions as well as particular mental and physical characteristics. Whereas the self of tomorrow or the next life is another self that is contingent upon a different set of particular circumstances and conditions. The underlying belief that there is some kind of enduring entity is false. Still this does not undermine the validity of one preparing so that one protects oneself against potential future suffering, as there is a relationship between the current person and future suffering.

If this is the case then one could say that even though one's own experience of others' suffering may not be a direct link between the two but if one reflects carefully there is a sense of interrelation. Indirectly there is a connection between others' wellbeing and one's own wellbeing. If others suffer one also suffers as a result. Furthermore individuals live in societies in relation with other beings and so if the collective society suffers then of course the individual members of that collection also suffer. From these points of view one realizes that in fact there is a relationship between one's own interests and others' interests so that caring for others' interests is also in the interest of individual themselves.

One cannot say that one is kind to oneself or that one owes something to oneself. Still without question one pursues the task of fulfilling one's own aspiration to be happy and overcome suffering. One cares about one's own wellbeing simply by virtue of the fact that one has the basic aspiration to be happy and overcome suffering. If this is the case then others

too regardless of whether they have extended any kindness towards one or not simply by virtue of the fact that they are a sentient being. There is enough rationale for one to be concerned about others' wellbeing, their happiness or suffering.

Especially when one thinks about enemies who one feels no grounds for caring about, because from the point of view of that person as being an enemy because of certain acts committed against one. However from another point of view by the simple virtue of the fact that the enemy too is a sentient being, one has sufficient grounds to be concerned about their welfare. This is because an enemy, like all others has the basic aspiration to be happy and overcome suffering.

**-Surely whenever there is suffering
99 The (sufferer) must protect himself from it-
But the suffering of the foot is not that of the hand,
Why then does it protect it?**

Santideva also challenges the very idea of a need for any direct relationship between two individuals in order for one of them to take concern for the other's wellbeing. He wrote that if that is the case if there has to be a direct connection between the two for one to assist the other according to this kind of logic then it be illogical for the hand to come to the help a pain in the leg. This is because the hand and the leg, although they are part of one body there is no direct relation between the two. In fact however when there is a pain in the leg the hand comes down to rub the leg. One does so because the hand and leg are part of a whole body. Similarly when one cultivates the thought of self and others, within the category of sentient beings one can appreciate the oneness at a level where as oneself wishes to be happy so do all other sentient beings. From this point of view of the basic aspiration there is no difference only a fundamental equality.

In verse one hundred Santideva pursues further this issue by stating:

**-Although this may not be justified,
100 It is done because of grasping at a self-
But surely whatever is not justified for myself or others
Should at all costs be rejected.**

In fact when one examines carefully the rationale upon which one discriminates between one's own interest and that of others and take care only for one's own, is because underlying all of one's conduct is the strong belief is some kind of enduring self. There is the belief in some kind of substantially real, independent self and once one has this kind of belief in a substantial self then because of grasping to the self one feels that whatever appears to be in the interest of this self is of great importance. The suffering of this self needs to be discarded and the happiness of this self needs to be attained. So there is a degree of intensity because of this strong grasping to a substantial self.

Santideva states that if this is the rationale for clinging on to one's own interests then such a sense of self is false. In fact instead of strengthening the rationale for being concerned only about one's own wellbeing, it undermines it, as it is a false conception that one needs to discard.

I think there is an internal dialogue going on here. On the one hand one imagines an objective self that is capable of weighing the pros and cons of being concerned about only one's own interest. On the other hand is concern for others' wellbeing as well. In a corner of one's mind one can imagine this sort of objective perspective but at the same time one can view one's normal mode of thinking where one tends to regard one's own interest as most important ignoring the interests and happiness of other sentient beings. When one engages in

this kind of internal dialogue then as a result of seeing the perspective of the more objective part of oneself, one may at the level of the intellect feel convinced of the rationality of that kind of perspective. But because of one's strong grasping at a self along with its accompanying strong emotions, if one feels unable to actually integrate that knowledge, that awareness, this indicates one's reluctance to accept this perspective. It is more of an emotional reaction.

In the following verses Santideva continues to undermine the very basis for making the extreme discrimination between one's own interests and others' interests by getting at the root. The mind clings on to one's own interests on the grounds that it is in the interest of an enduring self, a substantially existing self with a real existence. In this internal dialogue the objective self tells that mind saying that if you continue to cling on in this way then you have no real logical grounds for doing this. In fact the very basis upon which one built this clinging self-interest is unstable because this kind of enduring self as one perceives it to exist is only a false perception. In reality the self is nothing but a construct in dependence upon many factors and therefore this kind of clinging on to an enduring, objective, independent self must be rejected.

Santideva goes on to give the example of other constructs such as the idea of a continuum or the idea of an aggregation. The very idea of a continuum or aggregation gives the notion that this is something that is constructed upon many parts or instances. The examples that are given are a rosary and a forest. If one examines the nature or identity of a rosary, one finds that it is made of beads, a hundred and eight beads in a Tibetan rosary. If one were to try to deconstruct the identity of the rosary, one will find a hundred and eight beads and a string. However none of these beads by themselves individually can be said to constitute the rosary. So it is only on the basis of the collection of the beads structured in a particular way that one can talk about a rosary. So a rosary is not identical to the beads which are its constituents nor does the rosary exist independent of the beads that constitute the rosary. One can still validly talk about the concept of a rosary, which is dependent upon, which is labeled on the basis of a hundred and eight beads.

Similarly in the case of a forest, one can talk of a forest only in relation to a collection of trees whereas the individual trees themselves cannot be identified as a forest. These give the idea of a construct. In the same manner the self is seen to exist as enduring, having some kind of real existence is also a false illusion. Santideva writes:

Such things as a continuum and an aggregation
101 Are false in the same way as a rosary and an army.
There is no (real) owner of suffering,
Therefore who has control over it?

Although in actual fact the self or the person exists only in dependence upon the aggregates that constitute the individual such as the body, feeling, perception, consciousness and volition, however when one has the idea of self or a person one tends to feel as if a self really lies at the core, that it is the real basis. All of the other aggregates such as the body, perception, feelings, volition and consciousness are in some sense characteristics of this self, something that which belongs to the self. One feels as if the self is the basis and all of the aggregates are in some sense qualities or characteristics of the self. So therefore one tends to use the possessive pronouns like my body, my consciousness, my thoughts, my perceptions, my feelings and so on.

However one tends to feel as if underlying all of these aggregates, body, mind and so on there is a real owner to which these physical and mental aggregates belong. But in reality the self is a construct that is dependent upon the aggregates of body, mind, feelings and so on.

Now it becomes crucial for the practitioner to raise the question as to whether or not this self that one tends to believe possesses some kind of substantial reality, an enduring nature. Whether or not such a self exists that lies at the root of one's clinging and grasping to the self's interests is a question that one needs to raise as it is a critical question. To examine this question it is helpful to reflect upon the arguments one finds in Nagarjuna's *Mulamadhymikakarika* or the *Fundamentals of the Middle Way* where Nagarjuna says that if the aggregates are the self then just as the aggregates go through a process of change, coming and going, then the self too must undergo such change. So just as one can talk about the body being cut or injured, one should also be able to describe these characteristics in terms of the self. This becomes problematic.

So the self cannot be identified with the aggregates in that they are not identical. Nagarjuna raised a second possibility that perhaps the self may exist independently of the physical and mental aggregates. But then he stated that if the self exists independent of the mental and physical aggregates then many of the conventions concerning the self again become untenable. One cannot talk about an individual person becoming sick or healthy as many of the characteristics ascribed to the self are also ascribed to the aggregates. But if the self exists totally independently of the aggregates then this becomes untenable. Nagarjuna then concludes that the self does not exist either as identical to the aggregates nor does the self exist independently of the aggregates.

- [If the self were the aggregates,
1 It would have arising and ceasing (as properties).
If it were different from the aggregates,
It would not have the characteristics of the aggregates.]**
Mulamadhyamikakarika, Chap. XVIII

Once having rejected the existence of an enduring and substantial self then Nagarjuna said that if that is the case how can the mind that is a possession of such a self exist? Again in the *Fundamentals of the Middle Way* Nagarjuna points out that if the enduring, substantial self does not exist then there are no grounds for having such strong clinging to the things that supposedly belong to this self as being "mine", my body, my thoughts and so on. This clinging as such is so powerful and intense that it gives rise to the negative emotions. All of this has no grounding.

- [If there were no self,
2 Where would the self's (properties) be?
From the pacification of the self and what belongs to it,
One abstains from grasping onto "I" and "mine."]**
Mulamadhyamikakarika, Chap. XVIII

These sorts of reflections attack the idea of an enduring self, the substantial and enduring self by examining in what way such a self can be said to exist. When one tries to integrate all of this rational analysis perhaps the summation in the *Ratnavali* or *Precious Garland* is the most effective. In it Nagarjuna writes that the person is neither the earth, water, fire, wind or space element and yet the person does not exist outside and independent of the elements. Nagarjuna does not proceed to say that the person therefore does not exist. Rather Nagarjuna says that since the person exists only in dependence upon an aggregation of

the elements therefore the person as possessing some kind of objective, substantial reality is false.

80 [A person is not earth, not water,
Not fire, not wind, not space,
Not consciousness and not all of them;
What person is there other than these?

81ab Just as the person is not an ultimate
But as a composite of the six constituents,

83d They like the self are false.]
Ratnavali

This realization I think is critical. In this passage Nagarjuna is pointing out that the true understanding of the non-substantial existence of the person is not constituted purely from a negative point of view. In this understanding there must also be an element of appreciation for the self's dependently-originated nature. So although the understanding of the negation of intrinsic existence is in terms of a negation and there is no apparent association with dependent origination but in one's understanding of emptiness there must be some potential for the appreciation of the dependent nature. In essence what is being pointed out here is that the self that one tends to believe in as existing possessing some sort of enduring nature, some kind of objective, intrinsic reality is a false perception. The self does not exist in that way; the self exists only in relation to the aggregates. Therefore Nagarjuna concludes again in the *Fundamentals of the Middle Way* that whatever is dependently originated that is to be known as empty. This is the middle way and this is also accepted as being dependently designated. It is in this way that one should try to undermine one's grasping to an enduring, substantial self.

18 [Whatever is dependently co-arisen
That is explained to be emptiness.
That, being a dependent designation,
Is itself the middle way.]

Mulamadhyamikakarika, Chap. XXIV

Nagarjuna writes further that there isn't anything that is not dependently originated therefore there isn't anything that is not empty. When one uses the logic of dependent origination as a proof for the emptiness of intrinsic reality then when one thinks about emptiness, in the very idea of emptiness there is a kind of a fullness. It does not suggest total nonexistence or nothingness but rather it suggests some sort of existence. It suggests origination.

19 [Something that is not dependently arisen,
Such a thing does not exist.
Therefore a nonempty thing
Does not exist.]

Mulamadhyamikakarika, Chap. XXIV

The emptiness of intrinsic existence is not being presented only by saying that when one subjects things and events to critical analysis they are not found, they are unfindable.

Rather the proof really is that things and events are devoid of intrinsic existence because things and events are dependently originated.

Of course one's understanding of reality should be such that one has the ability to distinguish between the reality of a real person and that of a dream person. Also one must be able to differentiate between the animals in one's dreams and the animals seen in real life.

So by using the reasoning of dependent origination what is being rejected, what is being negated is the kind of self that one tends to believe in as possessing some kind of independent, objective, substantial intrinsic reality. However this does not negate what is still left, the mere self that is a mere designation, the mere name and mere existence. Once one has this deeper kind of understanding of emptiness then one will be able to have a better appreciation of what is meant by self and others. This distinction between self and others will be recognized purely at the level of designation and purely at the level of convention.

In fact there is a way of understanding the Tibetan expression of the world of appearance and existence. Here one can read this expression is such a way that the appearance refers to the level of perception where one relates to things and events as if they existed purely on the conventional level. Existence then refers to their ultimate nature. So this expression, the world of appearance and existence can together be read as suggesting a union of emptiness...

This also responds to the question that was raised earlier about what aspects of the self, what degree of the perception of self is illusory and what degree of the perception of the self is valid. As I discussed earlier what one is to understand here is that the perception of self, the conception of self where there is a belief in some kind of objective, inherently existent self that element of the self perception is false and illusory. However one's sense of self that is based purely upon the recognition of the phenomenal reality, the conventional reality of the self which is not grounded in a belief in some kind of objective reality of the self, this degree of the perception of self can be said to be valid. This is how one can distinguish...

However it is said that in the perception of ordinary beings like ourselves there is no perception, which is not effect, by this assumption of some kind of enduring, objective and intrinsically existence of things and events. All of one's perceptions are influenced by this assumption. Therefore purely at the level of one's perceptions it is very difficult, almost impossible to be able to determine to what extent this perception is valid and to what extent it is affected by a conception of intrinsic reality.

However as one deepens one's understanding of emptiness and once one begins to have the experience of the absence of any intrinsic reality then in the aftermath of this insight when one relates to the empirical or conventional world then although one may be using the same terms like self and others but when one hears the word self it has a different effect on one's mind. The word is the same and refers to the same person and also when one uses the word others it is the same word referring to the same objects but because of one's prior meditative experience of the negation of intrinsic reality, it has a different effect, has a different meaning. It has a certain freshness to one and in this way one will also have a new perspective not only of the self but towards others as well, in fact with the entire universe, Buddhahood, cause and effect and so on. All of these, one perceives in a new light.

So one can say that or imagine that if this is the case that a person with such an insight has a different perspective when relating to the world can have a different impact because certainly they will have a lesser degree of projection on the world. Given that they have a lesser degree of projection then they will have a lesser potential for giving rise to powerful, negative emotional reactions such as extreme attachment, anger, hostility and so on in relation to others and the world.

Santideva concludes by the next two lines. In verse 101 he writes:

**101cd There is no (real) owner of suffering,
Therefore who has control over it?**

In verse 102 he extends this analysis of the non-substantial and unreality of self onto others. He goes on to say:

**102ab Being no (inherent) owner of suffering
There can be no distinction at all between (that of myself and others).**

So just as there is no real enduring, substantial self there also is no real enduring, substantial others. Similarly there is no real, enduring, objective or substantial happiness nor suffering.

He goes on to say:

**102cd Thus I shall dispel it [suffering] because it hurts:
Why am I so certain (that I shouldn't eliminate the suffering of others)?**

One can justify dispelling suffering only on the grounds that it is painful, that it is undesirable. Therefore he questions why be so certain that one cannot eliminate the suffering of others. There is no certainty as any certainty has been undermined by negating any enduring and objective self.

Santideva continues:

**103 -But (since neither the suffering nor the sufferer truly exist),
why should I turn away the misery of all?-
There is no ground for argument,
For if I prevent my own (sufferings), surely I should prevent the
(sufferings) of all.
If not, since I am just like (other) sentient beings, (I should not prevent
my own suffering either).**

Break

The next verse reads:

**104 -But since this compassion will bring me much misery,
Why should I exert myself to develop it?-
Should I contemplate the suffering of living creatures,
How could the misery of compassion be more?**

In the following verses, 107 through to the end of 110, Santideva underlines the essential point that through the training of the mind, through cultivating constant familiarity one can develop compassion. One can also develop the thought that cherishes the wellbeing of all other sentient beings.

As I often share with others that in my own personal case when I was in my thirties I took particular interest in deepening my understanding of emptiness. There was a time that whenever I thought about the truth of cessation I actually felt that I had a sense of at least what it meant from reading a great deal and meditating. My aspiration for the attainment of cessation was so strong that I had a feeling that once I attained true cessation only then could I afford to take a long respite and take a rest. Around that time I use to think about the ideals of altruism, thinking about the wellbeing of all other sentient beings.

Although I had deep reverence and admiration but in my mind those ideals remained so far away and so impossible to attain. However as I began to put in more effort into these practices, familiarizing my own thoughts with the ideals of altruism, bodhicitta and so on then gradually I felt that my own mind was getting closer. My affinity for these practices was also getting stronger and stronger so that later when I thought about altruism and its ideals of working for the benefit of other sentient beings then it no longer seemed impossible or distant.

One can see that there was a process of change occurring in myself. So just as I myself, all of you gathered here have exactly the same potential. There is nothing special about me; I do not possess any special capabilities or any unique potential. The potential that I have for inner transformation is exactly the same that all of you have.

Therefore if you also undertake the practices you will also go through this transformation. You will also benefit, gain the fruits of your practices. If one is able to do this then although at this point when one thinks about the ideals of cherishing the wellbeing of other sentient beings and regarding others' welfare as more important than one's own, such notions may seem impossible. They may seem impractical, beyond one's understanding and experience.

Gradually as one trains one's mind and develops constant familiarity with these ideals and practices then one will get to a point where they no longer seem inconceivable but in fact one will joyfully embrace them. One will joyfully dedicate one's life to the ideals of serving others and cherishing the wellbeing of other sentient beings. This will be so much so that service to others will be seen as one's very purpose for life. When this happens then one's service to others is totally unconditional and one's caring for others is also totally unconditional with no consideration for any reward or recognition from others. One's motivation will be completely altruistic and unconditional.

Santideva goes on to state in verse 111 that if through constant familiarity and also habituation one can shift one's attitudes and perceptions.

**111 Although the basis is quite impersonal,
 Through (constant) familiarity
 I have come to regard
 The drops of sperm and blood of others as "I".**

This contemplation goes on through the end of verse 119.

In verse 120 Santideva writes:

**120 Thus whoever wishes to quickly afford protection
 To both himself and other beings
 Should practice that holy secret:
 The exchanging of self for others.**

The protection that Santideva is speaking about here refers to a level of stability gained through spiritual cultivation. The person has a basic steadfastness and stability within the mind so that external circumstances or the environment does not have an effect to undermine that stability. Such a person who is wise and has the intelligence faculty should engage in the holy secret. The reason it is called secret is because it is a practice that is appropriate and effective for those of higher faculties, even among the bodhisattvas. This practice is the exchange of self with others.

From verse 121 to the end of verse 124, Santideva pays special attention on how to overcome attachment to the body. From verse 125 Santideva explains in great detail

contemplations on the pros and cons of the thought cherishing one's own wellbeing versus the thought cherishing others' wellbeing. So the disadvantages of self-cherishing and the advantages of cherishing others welfare is discussed.

In essence the four aspects of practice has been suggested in Santideva's *Siksamuccaya*, the *Compendium of Deeds*, which I think is very relevant here in relation to one's body, resources and so on. Santideva recommends that in one's practice, one must not only be able to mentally give it but also have an appreciation to protect the body and guard it. One must also purify the body and then enhance it. This kind of four-fold approach is important. One also finds in Aryadeva's *Four Hundred Verses on the Middle Way* where after having explained the impure nature and the uncleanness of the body, he then goes on to say that although this is the case it is important to appreciate at the same time the opportunities accorded by such a bodily existence.

From verse 125 Santideva explains in detail the disadvantages and the negative effects of cherishing one's own wellbeing and the positive effects of cherishing the wellbeing of other sentient beings. He writes:

**125 "If I give this, what shall I (have left to) enjoy?"-
Such selfish thinking is the way of [hungry] ghosts;
"If I enjoy this, what shall I (have left to) give?"-
Such selfless thinking is a quality of the gods.**

**126 If, for my own sake, I cause harm to others,
I shall be tormented in hellish realms;
But if for the sake of others I cause harm to myself,
I shall acquire all that is magnificent.**

If for the sake of oneself one causes harm to others' lives by killing or taking their lives this leads to rebirth in the hell realms. Causing harm to other's properties or resources such as stealing or taking their companions by sexual misconduct all are negative acts that directly harm others. These misdeeds lead to negative consequences. On the other hand if for the sake of others it is required that harm comes to oneself the result is that of magnificence.

Santideva continues:

**127 By holding myself in high esteem
I shall find myself in unpleasant realms, ugly and stupid;
But should this (attitude) be shifted to others
I shall acquire honors in a joyful realm.**

Santideva is presenting the Kadam ideal of maintaining humility, which I think, is very important as Dromtönpa has written. He wrote that even though the entire world elevates one with high esteem so far as oneself is concerned one must maintain a deep humility. Here when speaking about humility it is important that it really come from within. It should not be a false humility, a kind of a pretense that in public one tries to act very humble but deep down one has tremendous arrogance and self-importance. This is not the type of humility that I am talking about here. The kind of humility that I am referring to here is also found in the *Eight Verses of Mind Training* where one reads:

**Whenever I associated with others
May I think of myself as the lowest among all.**

This is the kind of humility that is being suggested here.

Santideva continues:

**128 If I employ others for my own purposes
I myself shall experience servitude,
But if I use myself for the sake of others
I shall experience only lordliness.**

He summarizes all of this by writing:

**129 Whatever joy there is in the world
All comes from desiring others to be happy,
And whatever suffering there is in the world
All comes from desiring myself to be happy.**

Finally he writes:

**130 But what need is there to say much more?
The childish work for their own benefit,
The Buddhas work for the benefit of others.
Just look at the difference between them!**

**131 If I do not actually exchange my happiness
For the suffering of others,
I shall not attain the state of Buddhahood
And even in cyclic existence shall have no joy.**

**132 Let alone what is beyond this world-
Because of my servants doing no work
And because of my masters giving me no pay,
Even the needs of this life will not be fulfilled.**

So these are the effects of excessive self-cherishing even in this world. He continues:

**(By rejecting the method that) establishes both foreseeable and
unforeseeable joy,
133 I cast magnificent delight completely aside
And then, because of inflicting misery on others,
In confusion I seize hold of unbearable pain.**

**134 If all the injury,
Fear and pain in this world
Arise from grasping at a self,
Then of what use is that ghost to me?**

This grasping at a self can be interpreted as referring to both at grasping at a substantial reality of self, the self-existence of the person and phenomena but it can also refer to the self-cherishing thought. In fact normally, in ordinary beings these two thoughts of self-grasping and self-cherishing are almost indistinguishable, reinforcing each other. In the case of say of

Arhats who have gained liberation from samsara, although they may have eliminated self-grasping there is still a trace of self-cherishing that remains in them. So here in this verse it refers to both thoughts.

In the following verses Santideva carries on with the contemplation of this. From verse 141 he then suggests a particular thought experiment whereby one imagines an aspect of oneself that is the embodiment of self-centeredness. This is the “former” self, the self that regards and considers one’s own wellbeing as the most important being oblivious to others’ wellbeing. One imagines one aspect of oneself as an embodiment of self-centeredness. One then imagines on the other side another aspect of oneself which has the ability to see the disadvantages of that kind of self-centeredness and that accepts the value of the thought cherishing other sentient beings.

Having imagined oneself in these two ways, one then tries to side oneself with other sentient beings particularly comparing the embodiment of self-cherishing with sentient beings who are inferior to that embodiment. One sides with inferior sentient beings going through a thought process mimicking feelings of jealousy, envy and resentment towards the embodiment of self-cherishing.

**141 “He is honored, but I am not;
I have not found wealth such as he.
He is praised, but I am despised;
He is happy, but I suffer”.**

This contemplation goes on until the end of verse 146. From verse 147 through to 150 it is a similar thought process but here one sides with sentient beings who are considered the equal of the embodied self-cherishing.

**147 In order that I may excel
He who is regarded as equal with me,
I shall definitely strive to attain material gain and honor for myself,
Even (by such means as) verbal dispute.**

One tries to go through this thought process mimicking a sense of competitiveness towards the embodiment of self-cherishing.

From verse 151 through 154 one sides with sentient beings who can be considered superior to the embodiment of self-cherishing. One goes through thought processes mimicking feelings of self-importance or conceit in relation to the self-cherishing self.

**154 “His happiness and comfort will decline
And I shall always cause him harm,
For hundreds of times in this cycle of rebirth
He has caused harm to me”.**

Starting with verse 154 lines c and d starts the rationale for why one needs to exchange self with others. The rationale is the recognition of the disadvantages and negative consequences of excessive self-cherishing.

**155 Because of desiring to benefit yourself, O mind,
All the weariness you have gone through
Over countless past eons
Has only succeeded in achieving misery.**

Contemplating the negative aspects or disadvantages of excessive self-cherishing goes on until verse 168. The main point here is to summarize all of this by reflecting upon from various angles the disadvantages and negative effects or consequences of indulging in excessive self-cherishing.

From the end of verse 168 through verse 173 Santideva suggests a harsher method for dealing with the mind that persistently continues to its habitual self-cherishing. He writes:

**168 However, mind, although you have been advised,
 If you do not act in a like manner,
 Then since all misfortunes will entrust themselves to you,
 You will only be destined to destruction.**

Now that one has recognized the negative consequences of self-cherishing, one needs to pledge that one will no longer allow one's mind to be overwhelmed by this self-cherishing. These harsher methods of dealing with the mind that persistently indulges in self-cherishing even after recognizing its negative consequences is suggested until the end of verse 173.

From verse 174 Santideva suggests a similar harsh method for dealing with excessive attachment to one's body that can obstruct one's pursuit of the altruistic aspiration. He writes

**174 To whatever degree
 I take great care of this body,
 To that degree I shall fail
 Into a state of extreme helplessness.**

Santideva goes on to point out that from the point of view of the body itself, its nature is that in the end it will turn to dust unable to move by itself, propelled by others. He is undercutting any basis for grasping or clinging to this body as mine. This thought process goes on until the end of verse 184 where he writes:

**184 Therefore, in order to benefit all beings
 I shall give up this body without any attachment,
 But although it may have many faults
 I should look after it while experiencing (the results of my previous)
 actions.**

Starting with verse 185 Santideva summarizes the whole contemplation by making the following point.

185a So enough of this childish behavior!

Basically Santideva is suggesting that up until this point in all of one's previous lives one has been guided and driven by this self-centeredness. What has been the result of this?

185b I shall follow in the steps of the wise,

The wise here refers to the bodhisattvas.

**185cd And having recalled the advice concerning conscientiousness,
I shall turn away sleep and mental dullness.**

One thereby will seek and cultivate single-pointedness of mind which can then be used for the development and enhancing of bodhicitta through the method of Exchanging and Equalizing Self with Other.

Santideva goes on:

**186ab Just like the compassionate Sons of the Conqueror,
I shall patiently accept what I have to do;**

Patently refers to the need for the application of continuous, concerted effort.

**186cd For if I do not make a constant effort day and night,
When will my misery ever come to an end?**

**Therefore, in order to dispel the obscurations
187 I shall withdraw my mind from mistaken ways
And constantly place it in [meditative] equipoise
Upon the perfect object.**

Thus ends the chapter on meditation. So the most important thing is to practice. Of course if one is not interested that is up to the individual and one can discard all of this. But if one is interested in this practice then it is important to deepen one's practice through constant effort. In this way one will then have the definite possibility of experiencing some change gradually.

Once one has a taste of the experience based on practice then just as one tastes a particular food dish similarly I think one will begin to get some sense of the experience, the experiential dimension of practice. For example when one reads the text now, one may have an admiration and also a kind of acceptance thinking that this is valuable and wonderful. But as the result of continued familiarity and cultivation of the practice one will get to the point where not only will one have mere admiration but one will be able to relate the text with one's own personal experience. In this way one will leave powerful imprints upon one's mind which will be carried over to many lifetimes in the future.

This concludes the teaching and unfortunately we do not have time for the silent meditation so you will have to do it yourself at your own place, joined with either half sleep or household chores. It is up to you. So among the members of the audience those who consider themselves to be practicing Buddhists what is important is to make a new beginning. From now on you should strive to turn a new chapter so that from now on you strive to be a better person, trying to find a new way of becoming a good human being. Also try to seek the fulfillment of your aspiration to happy in a spiritual way trying to integrate these practices on a daily basis. This is what I have to suggest and this is my appeal.

For those of you in the audience who are practitioners of other religious traditions then based on the explanations that I have given from the text here, there are many aspects of practices that I have discussed here that are common with all spiritual traditions. These can be integrated into your own practice and adopted. If there are certain forms of meditation or thought processes which are very specific to a particular Buddhist doctrinal view then these of course won't be compatible. You can leave them but all of the other reflections that have a common value can be integrated into your own spiritual practice.

Finally thank you to all of you.

Notes on texts

1. The translation of Santideva's *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* is the one by Stephen Batchelor, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives.
2. The translation of Nagarjuna's *Fundamentals of the Middle Way* is by Jay Garfield, Oxford University Press.
3. The translation of Nagarjuna's *Precious Garland* is by Jeffery Hopkins, Harper & Row.

COLOPHON

Transcribed and typed by Phillip Lecso from audiotapes obtained from Tibetan Cultural Center entitled *The Kalachakra Preliminary Teachings*. 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 Kalacakra even through these imperfect efforts.