

THE COLLECTED WORKS OF

# Chögyam Trungpa



*Volume Ten*

---

WORK, SEX, MONEY  
MINDFULNESS IN ACTION  
DEVOTION AND CRAZY WISDOM  
SELECTED WRITINGS



*Chögyam Trungpa standing in heruka posture in front of Taksang cave, 1968.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY KÜNGA DAWA.

# THE COLLECTED WORKS OF CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA

## VOLUME ONE

*Born in Tibet • Meditation in Action • Mudra • Selected Writings*

## VOLUME TWO

*Glimpses of Abhidharma • Glimpses of Mahayana • Glimpses of Shunyata •  
The Path Is the Goal • Training the Mind and Cultivating Loving-Kindness •  
Selected Writings*

## VOLUME THREE

*Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism • The Heart of the Buddha • The Myth  
of Freedom • Selected Writings*

## VOLUME FOUR

*The Dawn of Tantra • Journey without Goal • The Lion's Roar • An Interview  
with Chögyam Trungpa*

## VOLUME FIVE

*Crazy Wisdom • Illusion's Game • The Life of Marpa the Translator  
(Excerpts) • The Rain of Wisdom (Excerpts) • The Sadhana of Mahamudra  
(Excerpts) • Selected Writings*

## VOLUME SIX

*Glimpses of Space • Orderly Chaos • Secret beyond Thought • The Tibetan  
Book of the Dead: Commentary • Transcending Madness • Selected Writings*

## VOLUME SEVEN

*The Art of Calligraphy (Excerpts) • Dharma Art • Visual Dharma (Excerpts)  
• Selected Poems • Selected Writings*

## VOLUME EIGHT

*Great Eastern Sun: The Wisdom of Shambhala • Shambhala: The Sacred Path  
of the Warrior • Selected Writings*

VOLUME NINE

*True Command • Glimpses of Realization • The Shambhala Warrior Slogans •  
The Teacup and the Skullcup • Smile at Fear • The Mishap Lineage • Selected  
Writings*

VOLUME TEN

*Work, Sex, Money • Mindfulness in Action • Devotion and Crazy Wisdom •  
Selected Writings*

THE COLLECTED WORKS OF  
CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA



VOLUME TEN

*Work, Sex, Money*

*Mindfulness in Action*

*Devotion and Crazy Wisdom*

*Selected Writings*

EDITED BY  
*Carolyn Rose Gimian*



SHAMBHALA • Boulder • 2017



Shambhala Publications, Inc.  
4720 Walnut Street  
Boulder, Colorado 80301  
[www.shambhala.com](http://www.shambhala.com)

© 2017 by Diana J. Mukpo  
Introduction to Volume Ten © 2017 by Carolyn Rose Gimian

[This page](#): Chögyam Trungpa standing in heruka posture in front of Taktsang cave, 1968.  
Photograph by Künga Dawa. Used by permission.

See [Sources](#) for a continuation of the copyright page.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Trungpa, Chögyam, 1939–  
[Works. 2003]

The collected works of Chögyam Trungpa / edited by Carolyn Rose Gimian; forewords  
by Diana J. Mukpo and Samuel Bercholz.—1st ed.  
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 1-59030-025-4 (v.1: alk. paper)—ISBN 1-59030-026-2 (v.2: alk. paper)—ISBN 1-59030-027-0 (v.3: alk. paper)—ISBN 1-59030-028-9 (v.4: alk. paper)—ISBN 1-59030-029-7 (v.5: alk. paper)—ISBN 1-59030-030-0 (v.6: alk. paper)—ISBN 1-59030-031-9 (v.7: alk. paper)—ISBN 1-59030-032-7 (v.8: alk. paper)—

1. Spiritual life—Buddhism. 2. Buddhism—Doctrines. I. Gimian, Carolyn Rose. II. Title.  
BQ4302.T7823 2003

294.3 ‘ 420423—dc22 2003058963

ISBN 978-1-61180-390-7 (v.9: alk. paper)—ISBN 978-1-61180-391-4 (v.10: alk. paper)  
eISBN 9780834841055

v4.1

a

# CONTENTS

*Introduction to Volume Ten*

# WORK, SEX, MONEY: REAL LIFE ON THE PATH OF MINDFULNESS

## *Editor's Preface*

1. The Sacred Society
2. Meditation and Daily Life
3. The Myth of Happiness
4. Simplicity and Awareness
5. Overcoming Obstacles to Work
6. The Nowness of Work
7. Creativity and Chaos
8. Communication
9. The Flame of Love
10. Pure Passion
11. Family Karma
12. The Question of Money
13. The Karma of Money
14. Business Ethics
15. Regarding Money as Mother's Milk
16. Karma
17. Panoramic Awareness

## *Editor's Afterword*

## *Editor's Acknowledgments*



# MINDFULNESS IN ACTION: MAKING FRIENDS WITH YOURSELF THROUGH MEDITATION AND EVERYDAY AWARENESS

## *Editor's Preface*

### PART ONE *Making Friends with Yourself*

1. Meditation: An Intimate Relationship with Ourselves
2. Discovering Our Capacity to Love
3. How to Meditate
4. The Teddy Bear of Breath
5. Cool Boredom
6. Gentleness
7. Rhinoceros and Parrot
8. The Present Moment
9. The Bridge of Compassion

### PART TWO *Foundations of Mindfulness*

10. First Thought
11. Appreciation
12. Life Force
13. Spontaneous Discipline
14. Touching the Surface of Mind
15. Recollection

### PART THREE *Mindfulness in Action*

16. Touch and Go
17. Meditation and the Fourth Moment
18. The Sword in Your Heart
19. Galaxies of Stars, Grains of Sand
20. The Fringe of Our Emotions
21. The Heart of Emotion
22. A Mindful Society

*Editor's Afterword*

*Acknowledgments and Gratitudes*

*Sources*

# DEVOTION AND CRAZY WISDOM: TEACHINGS ON *THE SADHANA OF MAHAMUDRA*

*Foreword by Diana J. Mukpo*

*Introduction by Barry Campbell Boyce*

## PART ONE *The Embodiment of All the Siddhas*

1. Historical Commentary: Part One
2. Devotion and Crazy Wisdom
3. The Mandala of the Siddhas
4. Joining Insight and Devotion in the Ri-me Tradition

## PART TWO *The Sadhana of Mahamudra*

5. The Guru Principle
6. Crazy Wisdom
7. The Charnel Ground
8. The Crazy-Wisdom Body of All the Buddhas: Devotion and Blessings
9. Surrendering
10. Historical Commentary: Part Two

*Appendices*

*HUM: An Approach to Mantra*

*Joining Energy and Space: Comments on The Sadhana of  
Mahamudra*

*Editor's Afterword*

*Notes*

## *Acknowledgments*

## SELECTED WRITINGS

### *Articles from the Vajradhatu Sun*

Make Friends with Your Business

Attitude toward Death: Loyalty to the Dying Person Is Key

Vajra-like Marriage

An American Version of Sanity

View, Meditation, and Action

Another Year, Another Zafu

Cleaning Up Your Existence

Oryoki Tradition Enhances Sangha Lifestyle

Why Buddhism in America

The Ten Paramitas in the Development of the Vajradhatu Buddhist  
Community

How to Be a Warrior: Joining Mindfulness and Awareness Together

Mindfulness-Awareness: A Good Garden Where Buds and Flowers Can  
Grow

What Is Ngedön?

### *Other Articles*

A Sense of Humor

The Basis of Nonviolence

Appreciating the Practicality of Life

Truth

Working with Fear and Anger

Let Ego Have an Energy Crisis

A Meditation Instruction

An Element of Unreasonability

Jolly Good

Why We Meditate

Find Your Heart in Loneliness

*Appendix: The Sutra of the Recollection of the Noble Three Jewels*

*Fulfilling the Aspirations of the Vidyadhara, the Venerable Chögyam Trungpa  
Rinpoche*

*Glossary*

*Sources*

*Acknowledgments*

*A Biography of Chögyam Trungpa*

*Books by Chögyam Trungpa*

*Resources*

*Index*

*E-mail Sign-Up*



## INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME TEN

SUMMER 2016: The last two weeks of July have been dominated by the political conventions to nominate the Republican and Democratic candidates for president and vice president of the United States. The polarization of the two parties and discord within each are extreme. During the last few months, we have been confronted by more tragic police killings of African American men; police officers have been gunned down in American cities; mass killings in Orlando and Nice point to lone gunmen incited by hateful rhetoric or mental illness or both; Brexit stuns the European Union and the world; boatloads of refugees from the Middle East continue to arrive; a failed coup in Turkey leads to a crackdown by what appears more and more as a brutal dictatorship; in Baghdad, car bombs kill two hundred in early July, and a suicide bomber leaves twenty-one dead as we enter August. All this is just the tip of the iceberg of the unrest dominating the world scene.

As I sit writing the introduction to volume ten of *The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa*, all these events pass through my mind, or maybe I should say that they flood my mind—for I don't find that I can easily distance myself from all this intense chaos, most of it extremely painful. It's an interesting time to be contemplating and commenting on the most recent books by Chögyam Trungpa, in part because they seem strangely apropos, suited to this time.

I often think about the dharma as though it had independent agency, especially regarding the dharma teachings of Chögyam Trungpa. Like water flowing in a powerful stream, if you try to block it or dam it up, it will find a way to flow downstream via another path or course. And if it's needed at a particular time, it will well forth from the earth as a new spring, emerging in an entirely new spot that is lacking in moisture. This may be both wishful

thinking and a form of animism. Regardless, as a metaphor, it describes how auspicious and irrepressible Trungpa Rinpoche's teachings often are, and how fortunate it is to have his recent books available to us at this time.

Volume ten of *The Collected Works* begins with his three most recent books: *Work, Sex, Money: Real Life on the Path of Mindfulness*, *Mindfulness in Action: Making Friends with Yourself through Meditation and Everyday Awareness*, and *Devotion and Crazy Wisdom: Teachings on The Sadhana of Mahamudra*. Most of the material in these volumes is from talks given in the 1970s, and much of it is from 1975 or earlier—from forty years ago. Yet the material is still direct and hard-hitting. That was true at the time these talks were given, and it's still apparent. The editing of this material for publication sought to emphasize those qualities, stripping away the extraneous, especially in the two volumes published by Shambhala Publications: *Work, Sex, Money* and *Mindfulness in Action*. As well, there's plenty of sizzle in *Devotion and Crazy Wisdom*—one could hardly turn down the temperature on that material!

*Work, Sex, Money: Real Life on the Path of Mindfulness* is based on three seminars given by Chögyam Trungpa during his first two years in North America, with the addition of two talks on business ethics and wealth from 1979 and 1981. It may be fortunate, in some respects, that there was a long gap from the time the talks were given in the early 1970s to the publication of *Work, Sex, Money* in 2011, for it allowed for a reappraisal of the material. Although the discussions were particular to the time when they took place, they also speak to the current era. But in order to see that, it was necessary—or at least quite helpful—for the final edit, which I did, to divorce what Trungpa Rinpoche was saying from the particular questions his students were asking or discussing, which were focused on their immediate and deeply countercultural context.

*Work, Sex, Money* provides an analysis of some of society's woes of that era. Trungpa Rinpoche points to themes that are remarkably similar to modern-day dilemmas. In the first chapter of the book, Rinpoche suggests that “we should try to see the spiritual implications of society, the spirituality even within Madison Avenue or Wall Street.” Then he asks a rather different question than most of those raised by Occupy Wall Street: “What is the spirituality of a place like Wall Street? What is its healthier aspect? For that

matter, what does America altogether mean?...What does all this mean in terms of spirituality?"

He is not embracing Wall Street, but he is also not rejecting it out of hand. He is interested and, as always, open to whatever presents itself, seeing the dynamic energies at play, positive and negative, in situations. He makes it clear that he is advocating engagement rather than detachment:

Preconceptions come up in people's relationship to money, their relationship to work, their relationship to sex, even their relationship to their parents. We find it difficult to relate to these things, especially as they manifest in urban life. That doesn't mean, however, that we should run away from these issues. Because there is something difficult and destructive involved, there must be something creative involved as well. Relating to that creative aspect is the point here.

Further, he suggests: "As practitioners, we have to work with the karmic situation of America, to start with....Once a person is involved with meditation practice and with working on the spiritual path, then the problems encountered in engaging with society are not hang-ups anymore. They are creative opportunities."

On the one hand, this book gets into the details and the minutiae of our work life, love life, and financial life. On the other hand, the author is suggesting awareness and simplicity as tools that transcend those topical details—and will be helpful in every situation. In the end, we aren't going to totally "solve" the problems of work, sex, and money with external policies or dos and don'ts. We have to address our own attitudes, our concepts, and our attachments. For example, raising the minimum wage may be immensely helpful for many people. It may not, however, address the monotony, speed, distraction, and the often degrading aspects of our work life.

For this, Chögyam Trungpa suggests, we have to bring the experiences and insights of meditation into *meditation in action*. Overall, we need to bring awareness, intentionality, and a sense of the sacred into everyday life. This is a fundamental message of this book, and one that the author expands upon at length.

The basic importance of meditation in action, or applying a contemplative awareness to all areas of our life, is also the bedrock or the foundation of this book. Bringing awareness into our lives overall is a very contemporary sensibility and one that is strongly related to the explosion of interest in mindfulness in this decade. I don't know that people in the mindfulness movement would call what they are doing "meditation in action" or "mindfulness in action," but many of those drawn to meditation and mindfulness these days are seeking ways to bring a mindful approach into their work and into many aspects of their lives.

The next book in volume ten, *Mindfulness in Action*, was compiled, arranged, and edited with this interest in mindfulness and these adherents in mind. In searching for material for the book, as its editor, I turned to a number of unpublished early talks on meditation given by Chögyam Trungpa in America in the 1970s. When I reviewed the material, I found it fresh, appropriate, and alive.

As in so many other areas, Trungpa Rinpoche was one of the earliest Buddhist teachers in America to use the terms *mindfulness* and *awareness* to describe meditation techniques and approaches taken from the Buddhist tradition. English terms, rather than Sanskrit or Tibetan, are used throughout the book. It wasn't necessary to make too many changes or concessions to keep to this, as Chögyam Trungpa used very few foreign terms in most of his public talks and seminars. Instead, he sought equivalents for Buddhist terminology in the English language, and in doing so, he helped to establish the basic Buddhist-English vocabulary.

In editing *Mindfulness in Action*, I found that the "English-only" policy kept the material direct and made it more approachable for a new audience of mindful practitioners. For those interested in the process of editing this book, the afterword to the book offers more in the way of information and ruminations.

The early chapters of *Mindfulness in Action* include a thorough introduction to the practice of meditation, including instructions for beginning meditators, and several chapters speak to the motivation to practice. The technique that Chögyam Trungpa introduced recommends meditating with our eyes open, focusing on and identifying with each out-breath. This is a unique approach but one that works in a complementary

fashion with other approaches to mindfulness meditation. In contemplating the significance of Trungpa Rinpoche's approach and after practicing it for more than forty years, it seems to me that it is remarkably appropriate for the times we're in. It brings our meditation into the room (eyes open), and it takes our attention out into the environment (out-breath). It allows us to mix meditative mind with our basic experience of life. In that way, the technique itself is a link to mindfulness in action, or how we work with everyday life as we move through it.

Another strength of this book is that, in the last section, it also shows us a path for working with the emotions, both in our formal meditation practice and then throughout life beyond the meditation room. Trungpa Rinpoche, while not changing the basic technique for meditation, described an approach called "touch and go," which emphasizes the importance of acknowledging our emotions and looking directly at them rather than suppressing them. In addition to the touch-and-go approach, some of Rinpoche's very early talks on working with the emotions are included in the last chapters of *Mindfulness in Action*. I found these personally eye-opening, and while the material is a bit challenging, it's also rewarding.

The third book in volume ten, *Devotion and Crazy Wisdom: Teachings on The Sadhana of Mahamudra*, is published by Vajradhatu Publications. The book is based on two seminars that Chögyam Trungpa gave in 1975, the first at Karmê Chöling in Vermont and the second at Karma Dzong in Boulder, Colorado. In these two seminars, Trungpa Rinpoche talked about every section of the sadhana, as well as sharing two accounts of how he discovered this text in Bhutan. It was the first *terma*—or visionary and prophetic teaching—that he discovered after leaving Tibet. For an extended discussion of the sadhana and its significance, as well as a full discussion of the meaning of devotion, readers are advised to consult the introduction to volume five of *The Collected Works*, as well as the introduction to the book itself.

Genuine nontheistic devotion, which is exemplified in the sadhana and which Chögyam Trungpa discusses at length in the book, involves mutual commitment and surrendering between teacher and student. In this era, the development of authentic devotion to the teacher and even the teachings is ever rarer. We are increasingly suspicious of authority and hierarchy, often with good reason. Yet if we abandon the possibility of devotion, how are we

going to get to the heart of the teachings, especially those from the tantric or vajrayana tradition? For devotion is what opens the heart.

*Devotion and Crazy Wisdom* is both apt and applicable now, for we need the deepest and most heartfelt of responses to these outrageous times. The difficulties in the era in which we live may require and therefore call forth the manifestation of crazy wisdom, so often misunderstood and also often abused. Crazy wisdom is not a term invented to justify unconventional and outrageous behavior. Rather, it is about how wisdom goes beyond normal limitations, if a situation calls for such unbounded compassion. If someone is drowning, there isn't much time to save him or her. You can't hesitate, and you can't hold back.

The world may be approaching such a life-threatening situation, both the environment and its inhabitants. Some kind of extreme compassion—another name we might use for crazy wisdom—is called for. But the agent of that compassion, the compassioner, to coin a Chögyam Trungpa-like phrase, has to transcend egotism—or at this time, we might appropriately say, narcissism. In the vajrayana tradition, it is the devoted relationship between teacher and student that can break through the hard core of self-centeredness. Both teacher and student have to be genuinely and authentically committed to working together and to not ever giving in or giving up. *Devotion and Crazy Wisdom* shows us the world in which that is possible and what it might look like. It's both an inspiring and a somewhat terrifying picture, very raw and real.

That level of devotion and commitment begins with making friends with yourself, a fundamental teaching of Chögyam Trungpa's and one that is a core teaching in *Mindfulness in Action*. Making friends with ourselves is befriending all parts of oneself, not accepting or rejecting, but seeing it all, beyond self-deception. In that way, the emphasis on a true relationship with oneself, a relationship of both self-honesty and trust, is a nice overlap between these two books: the one intended to be as accessible as possible; the other, one of the more advanced presentations of Chögyam Trungpa's teachings. When a student adds devotion into the "making friends with yourself" equation, he or she can go deeper and deeper, and the spiritual demands simultaneously become much greater. The sanity of the teacher, which is the basis for one's devotion, becomes the benchmark for the student.



Depending on the teacher's realization, that really raises the bar. However, the achievement of friendship with oneself through the practice of mindfulness and awareness is no small feat. It is a noble goal.

The remainder of volume ten is comprised of selected writings. First there is a grouping of thirteen articles originally published in the *Vajradhatu Sun*, an in-house bi-monthly newspaper that began publication in the fall of 1978. It was replaced in the 1990s by the *Shambhala Sun* magazine. A number of articles edited for the *Shambhala Sun* also appear in the selected writings in this volume. The *Shambhala Sun* changed its name to *Lion's Roar* in 2015, and the final article included in volume ten is one that appeared in a recent issue of the *Lion's Roar*.

The *Vajradhatu Sun* reported to the Vajradhatu Buddhist community on Trungpa Rinpoche's teaching activity and travels, as well as the teaching activity of other teachers in the Vajradhatu mandala, as the community called itself in those days. The newspaper also covered community events and visits by major Buddhist teachers, many from the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, but also some from the Zen Buddhist world and other Buddhist communities.

When young children graduated from the Buddhist preschool, it was covered in the *Vajradhatu Sun*, often with a photograph of the graduates and their families. Births, marriages, and deaths were noted, and photo spreads of art exhibitions and community festivals often documented and celebrated such events.

After the *Vajradhatu Sun* morphed into the *Shambhala Sun*, the Shambhala Sun Foundation published *The Best of the "Vajradhatu Sun": Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche and the Vajradhatu Community 1978–1987*. This oversize volume presented a selection of full-page scans from each issue of the original newspaper. I was involved in establishing the criteria for what to select. In the end, we used only about 15 percent of the originals' pages. Our first criterion was to include all the lectures, dialogues, and addresses given by Trungpa Rinpoche that had appeared in the original newspaper.

A few of these articles made their way into the first eight volumes of *The Collected Works*, but many did not. In evaluating material for volumes nine and ten of *The Collected Works*, I found myself drawn again to these early pieces, and I chose quite a number to include. They show us how Chögyam Trungpa worked deeply and directly with many interest groups and

subsections of the community, and how he infused every situation with dharma, taking every opportunity to present essential teachings. The material published in the *Vajradhatu Sun* was more lightly edited than many other published talks, and the immediacy and the spontaneity come across. I think they are, in themselves, excellent dharma talks, and they also round out our view of the world that Chögyam Trungpa created with his students.

The first article, “Make Friends with Your Business,” was a talk to the Ratna Society, a group of businesspeople in Boulder, Colorado, started by Chögyam Trungpa and his students. He gave three talks to the society over several years, of which this is the second. The other two were used in *Work, Sex, Money: Real Life on the Path of Mindfulness*.

Trungpa Rinpoche saw every activity in life as an opportunity to practice mindfulness and to realize one’s innate wakefulness. The more the potential difficulties, the more interested he was in an activity or an area. So he embraced the discussion of business and business ethics and took the opportunity to help infuse his students’ entrepreneurial spirit with decency and kindness. He encouraged his students to start businesses, and he was a partner in several of them. For example, in “Make Friends with Your Business,” he talks about a business he was involved in, Triple Gem, whose main enterprise was buying and selling gemstones. The business also spun off a retail jewelry outlet, Kensingtons. Triple Gem had what one might call a mixed history: good at the beginning, okay in the middle, and pretty rocky at the end. It was certainly a huge learning experience for everyone involved. He started a design firm, Center Design, with a number of his students, which shaped the sensibilities of these artists and designers. He went into the oil exploration business, establishing Gold Lake Oil with several students who had a background in this field. He had a unique approach to finding oil, which I think was close to how dousers find water. There are mixed reports on how well it worked. He himself never profited much from this enterprise, but several of his students went on to have successful careers. He seemed to have a great time with these various endeavors, and I’m not sure that financial success was ever much of a priority for him.

In volume nine, in the interview with Kesang Ghetza Tashi, Rinpoche, referring to the time he first came to the West, to England, says:

Sometimes, it felt to me as though the force of the Western world was almost like an evil factor that was disrupting the continuity in one's practice and in dharmic situations. I wanted to challenge that. I wanted to find out whether, if I went along with that Western energy, how far I could go and still maintain complete balance. That was an interesting thing to do (Volume Nine, p 747).

The interviewer clarified with Rinpoche that he meant that he worked with the situations that presented the most challenge and the greatest obstacles to genuine spirituality. The candor of this statement is quite amazing. It's something that one felt with him: that he was working with—actually going toward and leaning into—absolutely the most difficult stuff. But I've never seen him lay it out in quite this way—admitting that much in the Western world seemed poisonous to him at the outset and therefore challenging and alluring.

A lot of what he went for most of us would have run from. And one might put in this category some of his students' enterprises. He didn't just put up with some rather hairbrained schemes, but instead he promoted them and often insisted that people go in a particular direction, embracing all kinds of ventures, adventures, and misadventures. You could not scare the man off. He was tenacious. If there was energy there, positive or negative, by and large, you could count him in.

The diversity of the material from the *Vajradhatu Sun* shows us how expansive his interests were. At the same time, he wasn't just skating on the surface of these varied enterprises. He was right in the thick of it, taking the time to listen and learn from people and also to support them.

The next article, "Attitude toward Death: Loyalty to the Dying Person Is Key," is the edited version of a long question-and-answer session with the staff of Dana Home Care in Boulder, Colorado. At the time, it was a newly formed nonprofit business established to provide compassionate home-care services for the elderly or people with disabilities. Many of the clients were in the last months or weeks of their life. *Dana* is the Sanskrit word meaning "generosity."

Dana Home Care was started by two senior students of Chögyam Trungpa's, Ann Cason and Victoria Howard, who both had a longtime

interest in this field. Dana Home Care had links to the contemplative psychology program at Naropa University, where both of the founders of the business taught. Many of the health-care workers came from Naropa or had taken some training there. A number of other programs and projects were spun off from the original agency.

In this long discussion, Rinpoche gets into the real nitty-gritty of the work these people were doing. Staff talked to him about their own resentment in working with demanding clients; they spoke of suicidal clients, how to approach the topic of dying with the elderly, and how their clients taught them about their own loneliness and alienation. Throughout, Trungpa Rinpoche is supportive of the staff but also incredibly supportive of the clients, encouraging the staff to see the goodness and sanity of those they work with. His main prescriptions seem to be about first trusting themselves and then helping others to find that same trust in themselves. He cautions people against laying any trips on the clients—his words—and suggests simplicity and openness, once again.

Next, we come to “Vajra-like Marriage,” remarks made by Chögyam Trungpa at the wedding of Lodro Dorje, aka Eric Holm, and Donna Bostrum. Both were close students of Rinpoche’s. Lodro Dorje was the head of the department of three-*yana* studies, which oversaw practice and study for the international Vajradhatu community.

The ceremony that Rinpoche performed for them was one that he had introduced in the early 1970s and one that was used hundreds of times in wedding ceremonies within his community. It involves the wedding couple making a commitment to practice the six paramitas, or transcendent actions of a bodhisattva, within their marriage. These six—generosity, discipline, patience, exertion, meditation, and prajna (or transcendent knowledge)—are briefly discussed in Rinpoche’s remarks.

Following his address, the couple would have offered six offerings to the shrine, representing the six paramitas. As they make these offerings, the wedding couple chants this “Offering of the Six Paramitas”:

I offer this flower so that we may develop transcendent exertion.

I offer this incense so that we may develop transcendent patience.

I offer this light so that we may develop transcendent meditation.  
I offer this perfume water so that we may develop transcendent discipline.  
I offer this food so that we may develop transcendent generosity.  
I offer this musical instrument so that we may develop transcendent knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

They conclude by chanting:

Having offered these, may we attain wisdom and compassion so that we may help all sentient beings on the path of dharma.<sup>2</sup>

Audio recordings of hundreds of these ceremonies are preserved in the Shambhala Archives. While there are many similarities in the remarks from one wedding to the next, there are also unique and personal touches. In addition to this Buddhist wedding ceremony, Chögyam Trungpa also created and conducted several other types of wedding ceremonies based on the Shambhala tradition. Lodro Dorje and Donna Bostrum Holm actually were married twice; the second ceremony was an elaborate Shambhala wedding at one of the Kalapa Assemblies, an advanced program of study of the Shambhala teachings, developed by Chögyam Trungpa. The ceremony was first composed and performed for David and Martha Rome. There was also a Dorje Kasung wedding ceremony, which Trungpa Rinpoche originally wrote for the wedding of James and Carolyn Gimian. All of these Shambhala weddings were introduced in the late 1970s. Whatever the ceremony, Chögyam Trungpa seized the situation to encourage his students to dedicate their marriage and their lives to helping others. Thinking of all these varieties and occasions of marital bliss makes me wonder if a book based on wedding ceremonies wouldn't be a fascinating publication—at least for some of us!

Next we come to “An American Version of Sanity,” remarks made by Chögyam Trungpa at his birthday celebration in 1980, held in the ballroom of a downtown Denver hotel. The celebration of Trungpa Rinpoche's birthday was often fairly elaborate, particularly as the years went on, and each year a special gift was bought for him. One year in the late 1970s I helped with the purchase and transportation of a large Japanese tapestry created by the

Tatsumara Silk Company. The Tatsumara family is very famous in Japan for their silk weaving. Trungpa Rinpoche had a number of ties that were created by Tatsumara. But this tapestry was on a whole other level. It is of a snow lion, about six feet high by ten feet wide. It hung in a store in San Francisco's Japantown, where Chögyam Trungpa liked to shop for Japanese clothing and textiles. He had admired this piece for several years. I think we purchased it for around seven thousand dollars, which seemed an astronomical amount at the time. He was really astounded when it was presented at his birthday party, delighted that we'd actually gotten this piece for him. It proudly hung in his office at Karma Dzong, the international headquarters in Boulder, for many years.

So the gifts at these parties were on that scale, although I don't know what the gift was in 1980. That year, I do know that life-size ice sculptures of Japanese samurai warriors were in the lobby of the hotel, as you entered the ballroom. Chögyam Trungpa; Diana J. Mukpo, Rinpoche's wife; the Vajra Regent Ösel Tendzin; and Lila Rich, his wife, were all on a raised stage. The entertainment for the evening included Japanese *bugaku* dancers. Telegrams containing birthday greetings from centers around the world were read aloud.

The creation of such an elaborate container or setting for an event was not that unusual during these years. For birthday parties, Midsummer Day festivities, New Year's celebrations, and other occasions, it was not uncommon to have days of preparation to create a formal and festive environment. It was like creating the right setting for a precious jewel, which is what the title "Rinpoche" actually means. The community provided the setting for the jewel—and then it could shine forth. These remarks are that brilliance embodied in birthday remarks!

Rinpoche talks here about coming to America and how he slowly developed his ways of working with students. He describes a process that is a bit like the experiments of a mad scientist, or a good scientist, depending on your point of view, working with test animals in a lab. As he says:

I put more of a dash of salt and pepper into their lives and further spices into their lives, experimenting with how to bring up so-called American students. It's quite interesting, almost scientific. You bring up your rat in your cage; you feed it with corn or rice or oats; you give it a little bit of



drugs; and maybe occasionally you inject it with a drug and see how it reacts, how it works with it. I'm sorry, maybe this was not the best way of describing this—but my approach was some kind of experimentation as to how those particular animals called Americans and this particular animal called a Tibetan Buddhist can actually work together. And it worked fine; it worked beautifully....In that whole process, we have followed the logic and inspiration of Buddhism, how the Lord Buddha taught the dharma in this world, and it has worked quite successfully.

He goes on to talk about how students are ready to take on more at this time and how they are developing greater sanity. He says that students may be worried about the legitimacy of what they are doing but that the legitimacy only comes from sanity.

“View, Meditation, and Action,” the next offering, goes right along with the message of developing an American version of sanity. Here, Chögyam Trungpa looks at the issue of discipline and suggests how his students should develop a three-part approach to discipline based on the Buddhist categories of view, meditation, and action. The view, as he puts it forward here, is not clinging onto ideas or concepts of right and wrong, not discriminating or judging in the wrong way, but remaining open and unbiased. The meditation is quite straightforward: Rinpoche stresses the importance of the sitting practice of meditation. He says that this practice underlies everything he does with his students and that, without the practice of meditation, there is no connection between his students and him. Finally, he stresses taking personal responsibility as the basis of action: not leaving dirty dishes, not asking others to clean up our messes. The message of cleaning up after ourselves is one that we'll see echoed in other talks in this section.

At the beginning of the talk, he speaks about the problems of charlatan teachers, who learn a little bit of this or that and then proclaim themselves as spiritual teachers. His prescription for discipline is pointing to the way to avoid such charlatanism and spiritual materialism in oneself.

This address was given as a community talk in 1979. In the early seventies in North America, Rinpoche held community talks with students at both Karmê Chöling and in Boulder frequently, weekly at times. He invited others to give some of these talks as well. I've spoken with a number of students

who attended these early community events, especially the talks in Boulder. They light up and show a great fondness when speaking of this era and these events. A number of the early talks were lightly edited and published as *Selected Community Talks*. This publication, which includes fourteen talks from 1972 to 1978, was originally published by Vajradhatu Publications and is still available from Kalapa Media.

“Another Year, Another Zafu” is Chögyam Trungpa’s address to the 1979 Dharmadhatu Conference. These were yearly gatherings that began in 1974, soon after the legal establishment of Vajradhatu as the overarching structure and international organization for Chögyam Trungpa’s work. All the meditation groups around North America, called Dharmadhatus and Dharma Study Groups (the smaller groups), sent delegates to the annual conference in Boulder, Colorado. The members of the board of Vajradhatu and various other international staff members gave presentations, as did the leaders of the meditation groups. Chögyam Trungpa gave a keynote address at each conference.

The main message that Trungpa Rinpoche has for the attendees in this instance is the importance of humility and how this can allow interested new people to come into the Dharmadhatu situation to explore it. He says: “Humility is necessary in dealing with people coming to the Dharmadhatus from the non-Buddhist world....Whatever the case may be, still we can afford to extend ourselves—almost, we could say, more than necessary. So we have to be very humble; we have to have lots of humility. It doesn’t hurt.”

Expansion and opening to a bigger world were very much on his mind at this time. He goes on to discuss the growing role that Shambhala Training will have in the Dharmadhatus. This program of secular meditation, which used the Shambhala warrior as the central image of the brave but compassionate practitioner, had been developing for several years by this time. But it seems that there were plans to bring the training into many more of the Dharmadhatu centers.

In 1980, Chögyam Trungpa and the Vajradhatu community celebrated his teaching for ten years in America with various celebratory events and a special issue of the *Vajradhatu Sun*. Rinpoche’s community address from February 1980 was included in this publication. It appears here as “Cleaning Up Your Existence.” A chronology of key events over the first ten years was

also included in the special issue, as well as a congratulatory proclamation from His Holiness the sixteenth Gyalwa Karmapa, who writes of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche that he “has propagated and further expanded the teachings of the Practice Lineage...in the powerful continent of America, just like a monsoon river.”<sup>3</sup>

Trungpa Rinpoche begins his talk by proclaiming: “In our community we have no other intention or purpose than to practice meditation and study the buddhadharma. That is our entire interest and goal.” Then he goes on to discuss all the other attendant complications and paraphernalia that go along with accomplishing this goal, and talks about how we can work on our personal neuroses so that we can help others. He stresses the importance of the three jewels—the Buddha, the dharma, and the sangha—as the basis for the community’s dharma activity.

The theme here, of cleaning up our act—or our existence—was also raised in the earlier article “View, Meditation, and Action,” which was based on a community talk in 1979. In this era, Rinpoche was giving many fewer community talks, sometimes just one or two each year. So it’s worth noting that the theme of cleaning up was repeated in both 1979 and 1980.

Here is how he presents this theme in the 1980 talk:

We have a problem in our community of people flipping between sanity and insanity—back and forth—all the time. We should be doing something about this situation. The solution is not to try to reach such a high level of attainment and equanimity that they can transcend the whole hassle. We are not talking about goal orientation: that once we become Buddha, the whole thing will be clean. We are talking about what to do before we become Buddha, and how to conduct ourselves on the journey.

He was tackling both a problem and a promise, as he often spoke of situations. There was something that needed to be cleaned up, and the time was right to undertake this task. Being able to see the problem actually signifies progress on the path. He points to this in talking about how you can only see the subtle layers of dirt when you have thoroughly cleaned your

mirror—or your mind. Then you notice the next speck of dust that lands on the surface of the mirror, and all that follow.

Cleaning up continues to be a theme in the next article, “Oryoki Tradition Enhances Sangha Lifestyle.” In this case, the cleaning up is partly that we are cleaning up what Chögyam Trungpa calls “our food neurosis” by practicing a mindful way of eating, exemplified by *oryoki*, the Japanese monastic practice. Oryoki is practiced in the shrine room with a special set of oryoki bowls and implements. These are wrapped in a special cloth, and they are unpacked at the beginning of the meal and packed up at the end. At the end of the meal, the students clean their bowls using hot water and a special cleaning implement, the *setsu*. Here, Rinpoche discusses how cleaning up is one of the fundamental and most important parts of the ritual.

Trungpa Rinpoche instituted the oryoki discipline first at the 1979 Magyal Pomra Encampment. Then, he brought it to the 1980 Seminary, and it was used at every subsequent seminary and at the monthlong *dathiin* meditation programs. The discussion that appears here was published in the *Vajradhatu Sun* after Chögyam Trungpa presented this material at the 1980 Seminary. A chant that is used as part of the oryoki practice is appended to volume ten, as well.

“Why Buddhism in America” is based on a talk given by Chögyam Trungpa at Naropa in the summer of 1980. It’s partly a brief review of the history of the Naropa Institute and partly a “tough love” talk on the nature of education, study, and learning. It challenges us to examine and rethink what we expect from education, especially at an institution like Naropa, inspired by the tradition of *buddhadharma*—or the fundamental truth of the teachings.

After stating that the system of education at Naropa should ideally be founded on the principles of buddhadharma but with a Victorian approach, Rinpoche launches this statement:

Recently, education in America has been based on entertainment. That is to say, the professors and teachers have become more and more cowardly. They don’t want to push their students to follow their instructions within the traditional educational format.

He continues to take a conservative tack, suggesting: “We have to push our children and ourselves to relate properly with the principles of education, which means discipline, respecting our elders—that is to say our teachers—and putting ourselves through a certain amount of painful situations.”

He doesn’t really let up. A few paragraphs later he states:

Comfort is not in the best interest of student or teacher. Where we begin to present education as a toy or a lollipop, we begin to devalue our wisdom, and we reduce school to a candy bar approach, as opposed to a university or a center of learning. When we pervert our imagination and vision, we would like to preserve the possibility of degrading our stack of knowledge into a candy bar.

I find this a provocative and inspiring piece, because it’s not just a critique or an attack but a proclamation:

When you follow these principles of education, you begin to use your logical, or critical, intelligence to examine what is presented to you. That critical intelligence is also critical intelligence about yourself. That critical intelligence is applied in two ways: toward what is presented to you, the educational material, as well as toward who is going to be educated. So you work with yourself as well. The two blades of the sword work simultaneously.

Whether one agrees or disagrees with this point of view, it wakes up the reader, encouraging us to think about what is really going on in education today. Rinpoche makes it clear that he is not promoting the study of Buddhist doctrine here, but rather suggesting that the open-mindedness of Buddhism should be brought to bear in education.

At the beginning of 1981, Chögyam Trungpa looked back again on his first ten years in North America. In a New Year’s Day address, he looks at how the development of the Vajradhatu community has reflected the ten paramitas, or activities of a bodhisattva. “The Ten Paramitas in the Development of the Vajradhatu Buddhist Community” reviews the history of major developments in the community, including the establishment of the Rocky Mountain Dharma Center (now Shambhala Mountain Center), the

founding of Naropa University, the visits of His Holiness the sixteenth Karmapa, and other milestones. Rinpoche stresses that looking back and surveying one's accomplishments is not enough. His invitation for the future highlights the emphasis he put on the Shambhala teachings in his later years: "I would like to invite you to put some effort into uplifting yourselves and building an enlightened society and energizing the vision of the Great Eastern Sun so that we can understand how to defeat the setting sun vision."

The next article, "How to Be a Warrior: Joining Mindfulness and Awareness Together," continues the emphasis on the Shambhala teachings. Here Chögyam Trungpa is presenting the discipline of *shamatha* and *vipashyana* meditation joined together on the spot. This combination of mindfulness and awareness is called *shikantaza* in the Japanese tradition and *shilhak-zungjuk* in Tibetan. This talk was given at the 1981 Magyal Pomra Encampment. The hard-hitting, direct tone and the way in which Trungpa Rinpoche cuts to the heart of the instructions are remarkable, but also consistent with how he addressed the members of the Dorje Kasung on many occasions. This piece is an extension of the teachings presented in *True Command: The Teachings of the Dorje Kasung: Volume One*, which appears in volume nine of *The Collected Works*. It underscores how important it could be to edit and publish volume two of *True Command*, which will be based on material from the Magyal Pomra Encampments. There are many valuable, unpublished teachings from the encampments.

In "Mindfulness-Awareness: A Good Garden Where Buds and Flowers Can Grow," Chögyam Trungpa also emphasizes the importance of manifesting mindfulness and awareness throughout one's life. This talk was given to parents, as part of a seminar that he taught with his wife, Diana Mukpo. He states:

Sitting on your gomden or your zafu is [not] the only form of practice. The general sense of practice is having constant mindfulness and awareness. That is the foundation of our life, which helps to free us from speed, chaos, neurosis, resentment and all the rest of our negativity. Therefore, awareness practice is the key point: awareness while you're cooking, awareness while you're driving, awareness while you're changing nappies and even awareness while you're arguing!



He suggests that the formal sitting practice of meditation can be the foundation of developing awareness that is applied to our life as a whole. In addition to bringing awareness into our lives, he also emphasizes the importance of seeing family life as sacred, even amid daily distractions, details, and difficulties. In the end, he sees the life of every day as the necessary link to any larger changes in society: “If we can’t build a good home situation, we cannot build enlightened society. Enlightened society must have a good foundation, a good garden, and good soil, where buds and flowers can develop and blossom.” The buds, by the way, are the children; and the flowers are the adults.

The final article included here from the *Vajradhatu Sun* is entitled “What is Ngedön?” It is the opening address of the Ngedön School of Higher Learning at the Naropa Institute, which was established by Chögyam Trungpa and his students in the early 1980s to help train students in the in-depth study of important Buddhist texts, sutras, and other teachings that are conventionally presented as the basis for formal learning in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition.

Phil Karl was core faculty at the Ngedön School from 1986 through approximately 2008, when it ceased to function. He was the administrative director from 1987 to 1989, and again for the online program from 2003 to 2008.<sup>4</sup> In a recent e-mail communication, he shared the following with me about the curriculum and about Trungpa Rinpoche’s inspiration for the school:

The school took two years to complete start to finish. The year-one courses were entitled Transmission, Abhidharma, Bodhisattva Path, and Madhyamaka. The second year included Yogachara, Buddha Nature, Mahamudra, and culminated in Maha Ati. We studied traditional texts as well as the growing body of commentaries by Tibetan teachers and some Western scholars and we drew from many sources including the *Bodhicharyavatara*, the *Uttara Tantra*, the *Vajradhatu Seminary Transcripts*, and many others. The curriculum presented the dharma in the context of what the Buddha and later the Indian and Tibetan lineages taught historically and, perhaps more importantly, gave us as students the opportunity to grapple with the progressive stages of understanding—the essential meaning of dharma. Rinpoche trusted us implicitly, his

students, to manage the school, to fully embrace the traditional dharma, and to teach it. Ngedön School was not available outside Boulder for a couple of years; then the first two courses—Transmission and Abhidharma—were offered in the major Dharmadhatus like Boston, New York, Chicago, and LA.<sup>5</sup>

Many Tibetan Buddhist teachers presenting the dharma to Western students focus their more advanced presentations on their commentaries on well-known teachings and texts from the tradition, and students also read the original texts and traditional commentaries, usually in English translation. Trungpa Rinpoche, even at the Vajradhatu Seminars (three-month advanced practice and study programs), had rarely taken this approach. He was certainly teaching from the tradition and consulting important texts and commentaries, but he usually taught without direct reference to the texts he was using. Why did he take this approach? We cannot definitively say. However, by examining what and how he taught, we can see that he was creating a set of teachings that were both a comprehensive presentation of the foundational teachings of all the yanas, and also an approach that was directly aimed at the Western practitioner. To appreciate this fully, one need only turn to *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma*, the three-volume compendium based on his teachings at all of the Vajradhatu Seminars from 1973 through 1986. Judith L. Lief, one of the most senior editors of Chögyam Trungpa's work, spent many years compiling, arranging, and editing this material for publication. It came out at the end of 2012, the twenty-fifth anniversary of Trungpa Rinpoche's death, or *parinirvana*. These volumes are one of Trungpa Rinpoche's landmark contributions to American Buddhism—indeed Buddhism altogether.

With the establishment of the Ngedön School, Rinpoche focused his students' attention on the traditional approach to dharma study and encouraged them to read the traditional texts and commentaries. As Phil commented in his e-mail:

Ngedön School was very much Rinpoche's creation. It was unique. Inspired by the traditional *shedra* (monastic college), yet updated, with enough rigor to stretch and penetrate the hard shells of our opinions about the dharma—but not so much rigor as to scare us off. At least not

all of us. I've heard an interesting story from several people in attendance at the talk you've included in volume ten of *The Collected Works*. Many people remember Rinpoche's request to people at the end of the talk: "I want you all to raise your hands to say that you are not going to drop out. Good." Apparently he knew it would be daunting.

In this talk included in *The Collected Works*, Rinpoche explains to his students the importance of following the approach of *ngedön*, rather than relying solely on *trangdön*. Using the famous analogy of a finger pointing at the moon, *ngedön* is the moon itself, while *trangdön* is the finger. Or, if the moon is reflected in a hundred bowls of water, seeing the moon is the *ngedön* view; while looking at the hundred bowls is *trangdön*. Trungpa Rinpoche wanted to be sure that his students would not mistake *trangdön* for *ngedön*.

Through the Ngedön School, he was training his students to look at the essence of the teachings, the moon itself, with direct insight. In the question-and-answer period in the talk "What Is Ngedön?" a student asks Rinpoche, if he is now inaugurating the *ngedön* approach, then what was he doing before this, all along? Rinpoche admits that his teachings have been *ngedön* style from the beginning, if the student can see them with that view.

Reading this, it struck me that, in fact, his whole approach at the Vajradhatu Seminaries and in many other teaching situations was giving teachings in the *ngedön* style—raw, direct, going to the heart of the truth. In fact, it seemed to me that Rinpoche had been, as he often did, doing things for Westerners in reverse order. He gave the heart teachings, in some sense, first, and then, having trained his students to see into the heart of the teachings, he suggested that they look at the traditional texts with that training. Sometimes people imply that he never delivered a thorough or complete training because he didn't present the traditional texts and commentaries—at least not overtly. On the other hand, he gave students the building blocks to understand the context of the traditional teachings while also going directly to the pith, so that his students could see the real meaning. What and how he taught provide excellent analytical tools and skills for studying in a more traditional context.

Another important aspect of the Ngedön School, which Phil Karl pointed out to me, was the emphasis on including practice as well as study. As Phil

writes:

He [Chögyam Trungpa] made the connection between study and meditation practice explicit, which differs from the shedra model. Sitting meditation was a part of each class, as well as practice of the short, brilliant Manjushri sadhana—*The Sun of Prajna*—which he wrote in response to a request of Lama Ugyen Shenpen. Sadly, this sadhana seems to have fallen into disuse. Rinpoche made completion of the Vajradhatu Seminary and receipt of the vajrayana transmission, or pointing out, a prerequisite. All of us in the school were practicing *ngöndro*, or the sadhana of Vajrayogini or Chakrasamvara. Meditation practice was integral to the understanding of the true meaning of dharma.

So many people benefitted from Ngedön School, which made the definitive view of buddhadharma accessible to the majority of our sangha in those times. And so many people contributed. It was another brilliant example of Rinpoche's transcendent kindness and creativity. He never wavered from the essential meaning.<sup>6</sup>

Having completed the material in volume ten from the *Vajradhatu Sun*, we turn now to the remaining articles, all of which were edited for publication since the appearance of the original eight volumes of *The Collected Works*, in 2004. The first piece that is included here is “A Sense of Humor,” originally published in an issue of *Inquiring Minds* in 2005. The issue itself was entitled “Gravitas Levitas” and was dedicated to exploring both humor and playfulness in the dharma, as well as the weight of truth, or gravitas. I was asked by Barbara Gates, the journal's editor, to compile and arrange some brief passages on a sense of humor from Chögyam Trungpa's books, as well as to comment on his use of humor in the presentation of buddhadharma, especially in personal encounters with his students.

Rinpoche definitely had a wise and wicked sense of humor, and he felt that humor was essential to the Buddhist path—in the sense that self-seriousness and the stern weight of ego had to be cracked open through dharma practice. “Sense of Humor” was indeed the title of a chapter of *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, and there Rinpoche talks about overcoming the weight

of the “Big Me” that is standing behind us waiting to strike if we make a mistake in our practice or in our life. In the *Inquiring Minds* piece, I brought together reminiscences about some of the jokes Rinpoche played on his students, along with four short excerpts talking about humor or exemplifying it, from several of Trungpa Rinpoche’s books.

The next five articles in volume ten were prepared for publication in *Elephant Journal*, during the years when it was a print magazine. Now it’s entirely digital, with over a million unique visitors to the *Elephant* site every month. The founder of *Elephant*, Waylon Lewis, approached me around 2006 to see if I would be interested in editing material by Chögyam Trungpa for the print journal. I agreed, seeing it as an opportunity to reach a new and much younger audience. Of the five pieces that are included in volume ten, only three were actually used in the journal. When *Elephant* went digital, the column of Chögyam Trungpa’s writings didn’t make the transition, so several pieces in process were never published. I thought it worthwhile to include them here, however.

The two unpublished short articles are “The Basis of Nonviolence” and “Appreciating the Practicality of Life.” They were edited from talks given by Chögyam Trungpa in Scotland in March, 1969, yet in 2006 and 2007 they still seemed applicable to current realities. The next piece, “Truth,” is based on material from talk one of a seminar entitled The Four Dharmas of Gampopa. It’s a powerful proclamation of how truth is connecting us to the reality of life. In the first paragraph Rinpoche says: “It is wrong to think that the truth is going to sound fantastic and beautiful, like a flute solo. The truth is actually like a thunderbolt. It wakes you up and makes you think twice whether you should stay in the rain or move into the house. Provocative.” It builds from there, talking about how we are all insecure and that truth is about facing that insecurity and facing up to the facts of life: “There is great room, on the other hand, for our minds to open, give, and face facts—literally to face the facts: the facts of reality, the facts of pain, the facts of boredom.” This is a hard-hitting piece, especially for these times, when truth seems so mutable and adaptable to what is “convenient.” Not so much, Chögyam Trungpa points out.

“Working with Fear and Anger,” the next piece, was based on previously published material from *Crazy Wisdom* accompanied by an excerpt from a

poem that appeared in *Great Eastern Sun: The Wisdom of Shambhala*. Here, Trungpa Rinpoche suggests that fear is intelligent and that it has a true message for us. However, this approach is completely different than giving in to blind fear and using it as a justification for lashing out at others—something we see so much of these days. Chögyam Trungpa’s approach is to become one with the fear, to let both fear and anger be in their own places, so that they become vivid but also so that they can diffuse into direct energy, which is powerful but free from aggression.

The final article prepared for *Elephant* is “Let Ego Have an Energy Crisis.” Here, Trungpa Rinpoche talks about how we have been collecting our thoughts, emotions, desires, story lines—all kinds of mental material—and keeping them tucked away in our mental garage. In the practice of meditation, all these things come up, and the challenge is to acknowledge what’s there, really looking at it, but then to let it go. This is the idea of letting ego have an energy crisis—not giving it fuel for its entertainment and survival. It’s interesting that these remarks, given in 1974 at the Naropa Institute as part of Chögyam Trungpa’s first class there, are still so apt today, especially concerning the ecological imagery.

We come now to four articles that appeared in the *Shambhala Sun* between 2012 and 2014. Following the publication of the original eight volumes of *The Collected Works* in 2004 but prior to 2012, a number of articles by Chögyam Trungpa were published in the *Sun*, but many of these are not included here because they were taken from existing books or later incorporated into new books by Chögyam Trungpa. Primary among these was a major article on fear and fearlessness that became a central part of *Smile at Fear: Awakening the True Heart of Bravery*. “The Fourth Moment” was also an original piece published in the *Sun*, based on material from an early seminar at Naropa University. In slightly reedited form, it became a chapter in *Mindfulness in Action*.

The first three articles included in volume ten from the *Shambhala Sun* were all part of a yearlong series in 2012 celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of Chögyam Trungpa’s death. The series, entitled Ocean of Dharma, began with a major retrospective by Barry Boyce on Trungpa Rinpoche’s life, teachings, and dharma activity. This was followed by an article by Chögyam Trungpa himself in each of the six subsequent issues of

the magazine, focusing on six areas of Rinpoche's teachings. The first article included in volume ten is "A Meditation Instruction." It was based on two talks given at Naropa in 1974, as part of Rinpoche's seminar on meditation. It was here that he gave public group meditation practice to a large audience for the first time. It is remarkable instruction, powerful and alive—and remarkably he did not deviate from this approach for the remainder of his life, although he did tweak the instruction a bit! Some of this material also appears in *Mindfulness in Action*, but the article is different in emphasis from the book, so it seemed worth presenting on its own.

The next two articles that appeared in the *Sun's* Ocean of Dharma twenty-fifth anniversary series were "The Teacher-Student Relationship" and "Glimpses of Mahayana." Both are drawn from books by Chögyam Trungpa, and here the material seemed too repetitive to include separately in *The Collected Works*. "The Teacher-Student Relationship" was based on a chapter in *Devotion and Crazy Wisdom*, which is the final book included in volume ten. "Glimpses of Mahayana" was based on the book by that title, which can be found in volume two of *The Collected Works*. The last article that appeared in the Ocean of Dharma magazine series, on dharma art, also was omitted from volume ten. It was an adaptation of some material in "Heaven, Earth, and Man," which is found in volume seven of *The Collected Works*.

The other two original articles published in the Ocean of Dharma series that year are included here. They were based on talks never before edited or published. As the editor of the series, I researched and found appropriate material, which I then edited into these two articles. "An Element of Unreasonability" was based on a talk given in 1973 in a seminar entitled The Life and Teachings of Marpa. Marpa was the first Tibetan-born holder of the Kagyü lineage. Although Chögyam Trungpa gave a number of short seminars on Marpa's life and teachings, these have never been published. Rinpoche did work with the Nālandā Translation Committee on a famous *namthar*, or life story, of Marpa, entitled appropriately *The Life of Marpa the Translator*. This was published by Shambhala Publications in 1995, and Rinpoche's preface and a poem that was the translator's colophon, appear in volume five of *The Collected Works*.

"An Element of Unreasonability" presents teachings from the ground tantra of the *mahamudra* tradition, as exemplified in Marpa's life. In particular,

Marpa's third trip to India is discussed, as well as the tragic loss of his son and dharma heir. In a way so characteristic of Chögyam Trungpa's approach—of blending and contrasting the approaches of various practice traditions prevalent in North America—he also talks about how the vajrayana teachings of mahamudra differ from the mahayana approach to nonexistence and emptiness, as practiced in the Zen tradition and specifically in the final achievement of shikantaza.<sup>7</sup> This article exemplifies how a great teacher's life embodies the teachings, in this case the profound teachings of mahamudra.

The other article from the twenty-fifth anniversary series that appears in volume ten is “Jolly Good,” which presents teachings from the Shambhala tradition. The article opens with this statement:

No matter where we are in the world, there is a need for enlightened society, wherever natural disasters hit. In this case, “natural disaster” refers to aggression, passion, and ignorance. These kinds of natural disasters occur in the minds of people. They may be easy or difficult to deal with, but nonetheless they are workable.

What follows is a rousing presentation of the principles of Shambhala warriorship, one that reinforces familiar themes for those who know the Shambhala teachings. This piece is also a good introduction for new readers, focusing especially on the principles of enlightened society. It is a fresh articulation, based on a never before published talk from Chicago in the early 1980s.

The last article from the *Shambhala Sun* in volume ten is entitled “Why We Meditate.” It is based on a talk from a seminar given in 1974 in Berkeley, California. This is a penetrating and elegant presentation on meditation, starting with the affirmation that “trust plays an extremely important part in the practice of meditation. The trust we are discussing is trust in yourself. This trust has to be recovered rather than developed.” The trust we need, Chögyam Trungpa tells us, is trust in our inner resources, rather than searching for validation outside of ourselves. He talks about the need for discipline in our practice, describing our commitment to practice as the only way to open the heavy door of our fixed approach to ourselves and to our life. “Nothing comes free, and nothing comes easy, either,” he says.



The last article in volume ten, “Find Your Heart in Loneliness,” evokes the power of the loneliness and sadness that one finds in one’s meditation practice and in the practice of solitary retreat. In places, the words seem like a prose poem. In describing Milarepa’s experience in retreat, Rinpoche says:

The way the sun shines, the way the moon sets, the way the clouds move.  
The wind breaking, the sounds of owls hooting at night. Mosquitoes  
landing on you. Everything you see becomes completely, totally, a  
gigantic world of romanticism—colorful and fantastic.

Judy Lief edited this piece with a beautiful touch, taking it from material she is shaping into a book of Chögyam Trungpa’s teachings on Milarepa. The article was published in *Lion’s Roar*, which is what the *Shambhala Sun* became in late 2015, changing its name and also changing its orientation to be more overtly representative of all Buddhist communities in North America.

As I complete the introduction to volume ten, I’m somewhat relieved to be coming to the end of compiling the manuscripts of volumes nine and ten of *The Collected Works*. Relieved is often how I feel at this stage of a demanding project! At the same time, I feel a bit of melancholy and empty-heartedness. There is a great deal more unpublished material in the archives of Chögyam Trungpa’s work. Of course, I intend to continue my efforts to make that material available through my own work and by supporting others, doing as much as I can for as long as I can. But how long is that? One never knows. As we age, it becomes obvious that the time we have is limited and fleeting. So I feel a little empty-hearted at the same time that my heart is full. Such are the contradictions of life.

Along with so many others, I feel an urgency to address the future of Trungpa Rinpoche’s teachings and to help support that legacy, to the extent that I can.

In September 2016, Judy Lief and I are leading a workshop, Opening the Dharma Treasury, at Naropa University to train about fifteen potential editors of Chögyam Trungpa’s teachings. (Other senior students trained by Trungpa Rinpoche will also be joining in to help.) We hope this will be just the first of many such programs, since there is a need for people to do this editorial work

well into the future. Many of those attending are under forty, with some in their twenties and a few oldsters. The workshop is an experiment. We're not sure exactly how to train editors. What is the skill set that people need? How much previous or ongoing study of the Buddhist teachings is necessary? How much study of Chögyam Trungpa's teachings is necessary? How much practice and what kind of practice do people need to do? Is the ability to edit something that can be taught, or are we looking for a basic aptitude, a karmic propensity perhaps, that can be nurtured and improved?

We hope to emerge from this week with plans for an ongoing program throughout the year, as well as our yearly gatherings. Any ongoing work will be largely distance training, with online meetings and consultations, as well as occasional regional or national gatherings in person. Our goal is to have material worthy of publication within the first year or two.

Support for this project has come from many places. Diana J. Mukpo, Chögyam Trungpa's widow and the copyright holder to all of his literary work, has given her blessing to this undertaking. Naropa University is providing administrative support and guidance and is providing the venues for us to meet in. The Hemera Foundation, Shambhala Publications, Kalapa Media (previously Shambhala Media), and the Chögyam Trungpa Legacy Project are all providing resources and input into the process. People realize that we *must* do this if we want the corpus of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's work to grow and continue to be available in the decades to come. Maybe our first efforts won't be a resounding triumph. But if we can spark a flash, a glimpse, of insight, that will be success, and from that, anything is possible.

Many authors, artists, poets, thinkers, and teachers—most perhaps—speak largely to their own generation. We need these people who guide us and inspire us as we go through life. Some are visionary but cannot communicate that vision beyond their own time. A few continue to inspire centuries after they are gone. I would bet the farm, as they say, that Chögyam Trungpa is one of these.

I hope and trust that there will be many future volumes in *The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa*. Certainly, there is enough valuable and unique unpublished work to make up at least another ten volumes. The bigger question is who will archive, transcribe, and edit this material so that it can see the light of day. His is the mishap lineage, so it's very hard to know from

where that light will come or who will take us on the next real step forward. It could come from plodding, planned, and premeditated efforts that some of us are making. It could just as easily come completely from left field. It doesn't matter who gets the credit or what succeeds. The interdependence of things is more to the point. We need to strive as mightily as we can—and then let go, so that there is space for others to step in. Likely we won't know the results of our efforts, but we can hope that through the dedicated work of many, his voice and his wisdom will continue to be heard long after we are gone.

With that aspiration, I leave you and invite you to explore volume ten of *The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa*.

CAROLYN ROSE GIMIAN

August 3, 2016

---

1. Excerpted from instructions for conducting a Buddhist wedding ceremony in the Vajradhatu Practice Manual, an unpublished sourcebook.

2. Same as previous.

3. Proclamation by His Holiness the sixteenth Gyalwa Karmapa, June 29, 1980, as published in "Ten Years in America," a special publication of the *Vajradhatu Sun*.

4. Although the Ngedön School began at Naropa, it later operated independently. Of this transition, Phil Karl wrote:

In 1985, Ngedön School was transitioning out of Naropa. The school was kind of homeless. Gabrielle Bershen was the coordinator. She said, "I'm running Ngedön School out of the trunk of my car!" She literally was. She showed me two or three file boxes of student records and source-book readings in her trunk, which she would show up with wherever classes were being held. She would welcome people, register them, and the talk would begin. It was Ngedön School, whatever the obstacles.

5. Later other parts of the curriculum were available as well.

6. All quotations of Phil Karl in this introduction are from a short essay on the Ngedön School, August 1, 2016.

7. For another way in which Chögyam Trungpa emphasized shikantaza, see "How to Be a Warrior: Joining Mindfulness and Awareness Together."

# **WORK, SEX, MONEY**

*Real Life on the Path of Mindfulness*

COMPILED, ARRANGED, AND EDITED BY CAROLYN ROSE  
GIMIAN AND SHERAB CHÖDZIN KOHN

## *Editor's Preface*

EACH DAY, we deal with the challenges of ordinary life: mundane experiences that could be summarized by the title of this book: *Work, Sex, Money*. We all hope these aspects of life will be a source of fulfillment and pleasure, and they often are. Yet, at the same time, we all have problems with these areas of our lives, and we search for practical advice and solutions to these concerns.

There are thousands of books, articles, websites, radio shows, and television programs that provide advice or self-help on these topics. Concerned about work? Innumerable books and articles will give you career advice and tell you how to dress for the workplace, deal with bullies or bosses, ask for a raise, or be an effective manager. Television has a plethora of news features and shows dedicated to solving problems in your workplace and showing you how to deal with work as it relates to everyday tasks in the home—how to cook, how to dress, and how to decorate your living room. Television also makes the world of work highly entertaining, from boardroom competitions judged by Donald Trump to solving kitchen nightmares or laughing through popular comedies about life in the office.

Sex and the related areas of family and relationships in general fascinate us, preoccupy us, and cause us a great deal of trouble. Here, too, there is copious advice offered in the literature of self-help, and our obsession with sex and relationships is titillated by film, television, the press, and the Internet, whether we prefer news, fiction, the tabloids, or reality TV.

For many of us who live in affluent societies around the world and for many others who are aspiring to affluence, materialism has become a virtue and a goal. Money has been viewed as glamorous, greed has been extolled as virtue, and wealth has been seen as the key to success and happiness. Lately,

however, with global recession looming, money has become an increasing source of anxiety. How to save, how to spend wisely, how to make more money, how to do more with less, exhilaration when the stock market rises, panic when we lose our job: we have lots of issues with money.

Generally, if we associate spirituality at all with how we deal with the challenges of everyday life, we are hoping for a magic bullet or maybe a mantra that will solve our problems and relieve our anxieties. Like Dorothy in the *Wizard of Oz*, we'd like to be carried off to a magical land where enemies can be conquered by simply throwing water on them. We'd like our everyday problems, like wicked witches, to melt through prayer and meditation. And once having vanquished the villains, we would like to be able to click our red shoes together to return home to the loving embrace of family and, we hope, a secure job and a healthy bank balance.

What are the chances for this kind of happily-ever-after solution? Not so good. A nagging feeling tells us that we are stuck with our lives and with ourselves. In fact, to cope with the anxieties and challenges of modern life, what we need is not temporary escape, because eventually we find ourselves back in the "real world." The best prescription is a dose of reality and a dose of respect for ourselves and our world of work, sex, and money. Enter Chögyam Trungpa with a book that celebrates the sacredness of life and our ability to cope with its twists and turns with dignity, humor, and even joy.

His gift to the reader is an inclusive vision of life, one that encompasses the biggest issues and the smallest details of every day. There are, in fact, few definitive answers in these pages. There is, however, lots of authentic wisdom offered, rather than pseudo words of wisdom or dogma. Instead, the author is providing us with tools to work with the toughest stuff in our lives.

If we look at the most extreme situations—such as the plight of people in a war zone or dealing with the aftermath of a disaster, as in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina or Haiti following the devastating earthquake—it's obvious that words by themselves are not the solution. A soothing message that "everything is going to be all right" will not solve the day-to-day problems of survival faced by people whose society has collapsed. This is, in fact, also true in ordinary, everyday life—which we may often experience as a disaster on a much smaller scale.

The tools that people need to deal with their lives are also more than the things the material world can provide. We have to harness fearlessness to overcome anxiety and panic. To approach our lives sanely, we need to bring our intelligence or awareness to bear on situations. We also need a panoramic view, a way to see how the details fit into a larger pattern so that we can discover and organize order amid chaos. All of these tools are available in the pages of this book.

Here, too, you will find the key to unlock an attitude of loving-kindness or acceptance toward yourself and compassion for others, which is one of the most powerful tools that we can bring to ordinary life. Underlying all of these resources, people must have the confidence or the will to help themselves and others, the willingness to engage the tough stuff of life, and the ability to appreciate the raw and rugged qualities of life as things of beauty.

Chögyam Trungpa was not a big fan of hope, but he was a fan of faith. By faith, he meant conviction in the sacredness of the moment, seeing that we can have faith in and commit to whatever is happening now in our lives. He contrasted this with hope, by which he referred to an attitude that looks for solutions in the future: we hope things will work out later, even if they seem hopeless now. It is faith in our direct, immediate experience that gives us the will, and the courage, to engage the most difficult moments and the most chaotic experiences.

*Work, Sex, Money* begins with several chapters that describe the general terrain of our discussion: problems in modern life with materialism on all levels—physical, psychological, and spiritual—and the need for formal meditation and a commitment to working with meditation in action, or applying meditative awareness to everyday life. Then Trungpa Rinpoche (Rinpoche is a title of respect that means “Precious One”) gets into the juicy details of work, sex, and money, with several chapters on each topic. The chapters on work are not just about the workplace and one’s career or profession. The author looks at general issues of conduct and discipline in everyday life, as well as how the smallest action or everyday activity can be either an expression of simplicity and wakefulness or a source of chaos, pain, and confusion. The section on sex includes both a broad discussion on sexual energy and passion, as well as discussions of relationships and relating sanely to family dynamics. In the section on money, Rinpoche looks generally at

money as a form of energy. Chapters on the ethical approach to money and relating sanely to economics while being in business are included. The book concludes with two chapters on karma and panoramic awareness that tie together the whole discussion of a meditative or contemplative experience of everyday life.

Chögyam Trungpa witnessed and immersed himself in many vastly different human circumstances and lifestyles. In Tibet he was an incarnate lama and the abbot of an important monastery in eastern Tibet. He was raised in the monastic tradition, which he fully embraced in his early years. Tibet was not a culture of luxury, but within that modest society, he lived a privileged life. With the increasing presence and dominance of the Chinese communists in the 1950s, he experienced the devastation and destruction of his culture, and he was forced to leave his monastery, his family, and his country behind, forever, in 1959. He became a poor refugee in India. He led a frugal life in England, and during his early days in North America he had very little money. In the 1970s, he married and started a family, and in his later years, he led a householder's life of material comfort and relative affluence. He was an artist, a playwright, and a poet. He was the president of a university and of a large association of spiritual groups, he sat on the board of many businesses and organizations, and he helped to start a number of nonprofit and for-profit enterprises. In all of the life situations Rinpoche encountered, he harmonized and demonstrated both nonattachment and engagement. He didn't shy away from life at all, yet he wasn't trapped in life either. He made many mistakes and had many transitions in his life, and he learned from his experiences. So when he speaks in this volume of the very human challenges of working in the world, being a sexual being, engaging in intimate relationships, and relating to wealth, poverty, and money, he speaks from a broad base of experience rather than preaching from afar.

Chögyam Trungpa had an enormous effect on the standard English vocabulary now used in connection with Buddhism, and on the practice of sitting meditation in the West. *Meditation in action* was one of the phrases he coined, and it was also the title of his first book of Buddhist teachings,



published in 1969. If that title had not been used then, it could have been the title or subtitle for this book. In 1973 Trungpa Rinpoche replied to a letter (from someone he had never met) with these comments about his personal life, in which he explains the meaning of meditation in action:

With regard to your inquiry about my lifestyle, you must understand that I regard myself as an ordinary person. I am a householder, who makes mortgage payments. I have a wife and three children whom I support. At the same time, my relationship with the teachings is inseparable from my whole being. I do not try to rise above the world. My vocation is working with the world....There is a fundamental idea which refuses to divide things into this or that, sacred or profane, right or wrong. That is why I write and speak of meditation in action. It is much easier to appear holy than to be sane. So the idea is to separate spirituality from spiritual materialism. This requires a practice and some courage.<sup>1</sup>

Rinpoche found life earthy, rugged, and grounding. At the same time, he found it inspiring, fascinating, and full of energy and magic. He helped others to experience life as he himself did: as totally real, not lacking in anything, and worthy of celebration. More than twenty years after his death, this book still speaks to our experience in an immediate and compelling manner. I hope that it will help many readers to find a path through life, one that blends spiritual and secular experience in a way that respects and actually enhances both. For like a bird with two wings, modern life must integrate the spiritual life with the life of every day.

In the 1970s, when the talks that form the basis of this book were given, Buddhism and the sitting practice of meditation were largely viewed, particularly in the West, as activities outside of the mainstream of everyday life. The idea of integrating mindfulness and awareness into ordinary activities was somewhat radical. Today, the application of mindfulness is being widely accepted as a helpful discipline in the management of pain, stress reduction, the treatment of depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, and other psychological problems, and in education, developing creativity—pretty much anywhere you look. In this volume, Trungpa Rinpoche talks extensively about why and how meditation and spirituality apply to work, sex, and money. Some of this may seem commonplace now, but at the time, it was

an eye-opener for many in his audience. Today, people may think of the application of mindfulness to a specific problem as important, without necessarily wanting to adopt the bigger view represented by a tradition like Buddhism. Without proselytizing whatsoever or putting labels like “Buddhist” on the insights he offers, Chögyam Trungpa nevertheless presents the big view, the vast view, a view that transforms every moment and the whole of life.

The world needs our help. But in order to help, we need to unlock and harness the spiritual wakefulness and inner resources we all possess. *Work, Sex, Money* can help us to bring the spiritual and the profane elements in our life together so that we can work with situations with cheerfulness, skill, and delight. I am personally grateful to the author for the insight he offers in this volume, and I pray that it may help many others, who in turn may help this world.

CAROLYN GIMIAN

*February 2010*

---

1. Excerpt from a letter to Steven Morrow, May 10, 1973. Used by permission.

## ONE

# *The Sacred Society*

THE DISCUSSION OF WORK, sex, and money is quite a big undertaking. Usually people see these subjects as very private. Nevertheless, we have decided to discuss them. However, the subject matter is not purely work, sex, and money, but something behind those things, another dimension that is connected with how we relate with life altogether.

As Buddhist practitioners or practitioners of meditation, we are supposed to be immersed in the contemplative tradition and spiritual practice. Why would we discuss work, sex, and money? If you are involved in spirituality, you may think you should transcend work, sex, and money. Perhaps you think you should live the contemplative life, a life in which those things don't apply because you spend the whole day meditating. You should have nothing to do with those things. You shouldn't have to think about work. Nobody should be involved with sex, because people shouldn't have such lustful thoughts at all while living the contemplative life of meditation. And money—you should be involved with that least of all! What money? Who has any anyhow? Money—that's the last thing we should think about. Spirituality, you may think, is not concerned with green energy.<sup>2</sup> Forget about money—we should have transcended that.

On the other hand, you may find that in spite of your spiritual intentions, your life is involved with work, sex, and money anyway. In that case, maybe there is something to be said about those subjects after all. On the whole, we are not strictly spiritual or religious at all. People have to look for work. They

have to find a j-o-b. We work for money. We may find that we are building our lives around sex and more generally on relationships.

Then the question is, are we really working on spirituality or not? If so, there is something that we might not have thought about: that spirituality isn't really "spirituality" in an idealized sense. Do you think spirituality is something purely transcendental? It's questionable. Real spirituality might have something to do with ordinary life.

If spirituality *does* have something to do with everyday life situations, then relating to spirituality means contributing something to society as a whole. We have to associate with society in order to offer something to society. For some people, that is not an easy thing to accept or do at all.

Society, as we tend to experience it in the West, functions largely on the basis of give and take. That is to say, we tend to think about our role in society in terms of what is demanded of us, or what we have to give, and what we can get out of the situation, which is the taking part. We could call this view materialism. Materialism can be physical, psychological, or spiritual. Physical materialism is quite straightforward. You measure your life, your worth, or your experiences in terms of physical gain, or literally how much money or how many nice things you can get out of something, or how much something will cost you. Psychological materialism is more subtle. It is based on competition and psychological one-upmanship. Finally, spiritual materialism is using the spiritual path to gain spiritual self-centered power or bliss. All of these approaches are based on propping up or reinforcing the ego. If we see society purely from these materialistic viewpoints, we might conclude that it has nothing much to offer us on the spiritual path.

However, from the genuine spiritual point of view, as opposed to an idealized viewpoint, society is an extremely potent arena, full of vibrant qualities of energy. That practical approach of working with the energy of the situation is the only access point we can find. Otherwise, on an abstract level, society may seem like an autonomous process without any cracks in it, no faults in its surface, no entrances and no exits. But if we see society in terms of the practicality of work, sex, and money, we can find ways of working with it. Sex is an aspect or attribute of society. Money is an aspect of society. Work is an aspect of society. From that point of view, we can see something relevant to us in society. We can see how we might contribute something to

society, or at least how we could work along with it. If we look at it in the concrete terms of work, sex, and money, society is not entirely dry and sterile; it is not insignificant for us.

The whole question boils down to whether we regard society as sacred. Society does contain profundity and sacredness. The sacredness of society is potent and powerful. I'm sure many ordinary people would not accept such an idea. They would think that we are trying to infiltrate; we are trying to sneak something into the idea of society, to impose some foreign element or idea on it. However, it seems genuinely important to see the spiritual aspect, the visionary, almost psychedelic, aspect of society.<sup>3</sup> We have to see not only the basic happenings but also their basic quality of energy, the energy that they contain. That is what we are looking into here.

Work, sex, and money are actually the energy outlet of society, its energy radiation, the expression of its sacredness. So we should try to see the spiritual implications of society, the spirituality even within Madison Avenue or Wall Street. What is the spirituality of a place like Wall Street? What is its healthier aspect? For that matter, what does America altogether mean? What does landing on the moon mean?<sup>4</sup> What does producing supersonic aircraft mean? What does all this mean in terms of spirituality?

You might feel that if we are discussing a spiritual approach to society, the discussion should be peaceful and have a lovely sense of equilibrium. You might think we should approach the subject matter in a detached, spiritual way, according to the picture that many people have of the Eastern tradition of spirituality as peaceful, nonviolent, gentle, genteel.

Should we approach it from that point of view, where everything is good and everybody loves each other, all is peaceful, and everything is going to be okay? Or should we take another approach, where there is energy happening, there is something to work on, and things are dynamic and provocative? There are flashes of negative energy, flashes of positive energy, flashes of destruction, flashes of hatred and love. All of this is happening within the big perspective of a mandala, a sense of totality or wholeness, a pattern and a structure that unify and contain all the parts. Can we approach our discussion from that angle as well? Can we approach spirituality and our relationship to society from that engaged perspective?

You are part of society. Otherwise you wouldn't be here reading this, and we couldn't communicate. If you were not included in society, you wouldn't breathe the same air as others; you wouldn't eat the same food. The main issue is whether you are genuinely open to relating with society as part of your personal journey of spirituality. Does society mean anything to you in your personal search, or do you purely want to attain liberation by yourself, without society? Do you really want to abandon all the others? Do you care how society suffers or how it might gain bliss?

Some of us find it almost impossible to appreciate the sacred aspect of living in a big urban center. We might want to escape and live in the country, where we can just laugh at the whole city phenomenon. How funny life is in the city, we think, how terrible, how ironical, but at the same time funny. We would like to step out of city life, have nothing to do with it.

In that situation, the whole city could become your guinea pig colony. Your guinea pigs are living everywhere, running around the city. Your relationship to the city is the same as that of scientists relating to their guinea pigs. They inject things into the guinea pigs and the guinea pigs have some reaction. That's the kind of attitude that some people involved in the spiritual scene have toward the city dwellers.

That's a very uncompassionate attitude. The city just reminds us of a big display of irony—irony in the negative sense rather than in the sense of natural self-irony. We are laughing at other people rather than seeing the contradictory and humorous aspects of our own lives. If that approach becomes part of a spiritual view, it's rather sickening, because that view regards normal citizens as terrible, as a failure of humanity, as embarrassing. That approach comes from preconceived ideas about life in the city, and we are not willing to communicate with those preconceptions.

More generally, preconceptions come up in people's relationship to money, their relationship to work, their relationship to sex, even their relationship to their parents. We find it difficult to relate to these things, especially as they manifest in urban life. That doesn't mean, however, that we should run away from these issues. Because there is something difficult and destructive involved, there must be something creative involved as well. Relating to that creative aspect is the point here. You don't have to abandon things because there is something destructive in them.

There is the Buddhist story of the arhat, one of the Buddha's disciples with self-realization, who goes to the charnel ground, a burial ground in India. There he picks up one human bone, and he ponders that. He sees that a bone comes from death, and death comes from birth, and birth comes from desire, and so on and so on. Finally he works out the whole chain of causality from this one bone. He realizes that desire comes from grasping, and eventually everything comes from ignorance. Just from this one bone, he is able to see the chain reaction of the twelve links of interdependent causality, known as the *nidanas*. *Nidana* is a Sanskrit word that means "cause" or "source." The twelve *nidanas* refer to twelve aspects of *samsara*, or the cycle of birth and death, often compared to twelve spokes of a wheel. In *thangkas*, or traditional Tibetan paintings, of the wheel of life, the twelve *nidanas* are shown as the outer circle of the wheel. Here in this story, the arhat is able to see the whole chain of causality of the twelve *nidanas* by just contemplating one bone. We could work in the same way in our own situation. We don't have to reject or abandon anything. We could work on the creative aspect of situations.

New York City might represent death to you, at times. I can see that. People on the street might look to you like walking corpses with no expressions on their faces. And there are urban jackals, which might manifest as cars with sirens blaring and policemen inside. The dry air of death is in your nose all the time and in your mouth. As an occasional way of cheering up, you come back to the deathlike displays in store windows with their lifeless mannequins. Gigantic buildings have been built; people are blocked off in boxes without any air—a further expression of death. The whole city could really be seen as an expression of death.

When I first came to America with my wife, Diana, and we visited New York City, the first impression I got was the smell of the city as a corpse—the smell of human bodies, of corpses. The first impact was that. But that's okay! It's perfectly okay. That could be the continuous starting point of your inspiration. Dharma teachings are not going to be romantic or beautiful—oh no! The teachings are going to be painful, even invoking paranoia. At the same time, we can work with the situation and find something creative in it. We can include all of these urban jackals, lying corpses, and expressionless faces as part of the inspiration. There's nothing wrong with that scene in the

city at all, absolutely nothing. It's just a demonstration of life. The whole thing is based on work, sex, and money.

On the other hand, perhaps you find the city entertaining. We try to entertain ourselves all the time, particularly in the Western world. There are hundreds of books and hundreds of pictures, and we have hundreds of different types of friends, friends who are eccentrics and into all sorts of exotic things. Then there's the telephone—you can always make a call. And there's the news.<sup>5</sup> All sorts of things are happening for our entertainment. Right now we are being entertained. Entertainment constantly occupies our time. Visiting a big city like New York, that quality becomes obvious. Entertainment proclaims itself—to the extent that we find it too irritating. That kind of self-deception is too obvious; it's too painful, because it's too true to be true. So we have to crawl back to our suburban home, to our own familiar deceptions. That way we can be entertained in a more genteel or spiritual way rather than a gaudy and flashy way.

We don't have to completely eliminate entertainment. The problem is a tremendous lack of sense of humor throughout the whole thing. We are *so* serious about our entertainment. We are entertained seriously even by comedy. But if you are no longer self-seriously looking for results, you see the ironical qualities of situations as they are, as they come and go. If you watch a whole television show beginning to end, including the ads, without changing the channel, and you have a sense of humor, you can enjoy it. This doesn't have to be a cynical sense of humor. You can enjoy everything as play. Whereas if you impose your own likes and dislikes, then you laugh occasionally, but you also turn things off when you don't like them. When you begin to select things like that, the whole situation becomes very tiring, because you're seriously selecting all the time.

We should look into all kinds of life situations. Take the case of people whose goal in society is to become rich and have color television sets, plush carpeted rooms, central heating and cooling in their houses, and lots of cars. They hope to become more powerful and happier by having those things. Or let's consider people whose politics are extremely conservative, who support America's being involved in foreign wars and all sorts of conservative causes. Some of them are almost fascists, from a liberal point of view. In the West, you might find ranchers and cowboys, who are supposed to enjoy the natural



life, living in contact with cows and horses, but at the same time their political mentality might be totally reactionary. How would you relate with that scene? If you are a liberal, you probably would want to raise yourself above the whole thing. You don't want to be like one of them. However, we should look more closely at that scene, evaluate it without immediately dismissing or judging it.

From your point of view, you may observe that many people with conservative social values don't want to get into the nitty-gritty of work, sex, and money. Their approach to their life is very sterile. It's not potent. It's largely based on the reproduction of concepts, and it's a very serious view—but so is the view of those who reject life in the mainstream.

For many of us, regardless of our politics or our status in society, money is a private thing, sex is a private thing, and so is work. We don't want to discuss them with others at all. We would like to find something transcendental that raises us above those situations. People don't want anything to do with death either. Most of us still have the dualistic notion of death as bad and birth as good. That kind of notion is pervasive, and that is precisely why we need to talk about these subjects.

As practitioners, we have to work with the karmic situation of America, to start with. A certain reformation can take place by natural force—not through carrying placards or staging demonstrations or anything like that. On the other hand, change is not going to happen in an easy or luxurious way. To begin with, we don't know what the reformation is going to look like. We have to work on our own inspiration.

The city could reform. The whole world could reform. Our duty is to help. You might try to get away from the city, to create your own ideal city, so to speak, your own alternative living place in the country. But you'll still have to relate with society there, in any case. There will be the conflicts of how to get your food supplied, how your mail is delivered, problems with your milkman, and all kinds of details like that.

On the other hand, you might find it necessary to have a certain separation from society at large at times, in order to gain perspective. Without a comparative point of view to see society from, there's no working basis. When you step back for a little while, you gain perspective on your life. However, engaging with society is also necessary, so that you have the

perspective from that side also. So the process of stepping back and then reengaging should alternate or be joined side by side—like the idea of wisdom and compassion being side by side. Meditation can provide that nondual perspective.

Once a person is involved with meditation practice and with working on the spiritual path, then the problems encountered in engaging with society are not hang-ups anymore. They are creative opportunities. Those everyday-life situations become part of meditation practice. The situation slows you down, or the situation pushes you. It depends on how much you engage. If you are too engaged, then something will slow you down. If you are not involved enough, there will be some reminder that pushes you to get more involved.

We have to work on our own attitude, to develop an attitude of openness. That will create an entirely new approach to working with situations such as life in the city. Then the city will reform in its own way. We can't really think that we are going to do this and that thing, and then the city will reform according to our wishes. We have to relate with a much bigger world that includes everyone, including the cowboys and cops. They are a source of inspiration, definitely. They are beautiful people, unique. We should work with them. In fact, at a certain stage, we won't be able to escape working with them. They will appear on our path, definitely so.

We don't want to undermine the culture. Cultural situations provide a focal point, a focus for us to relate with. Therefore, we will work with them. We may begin to realize that both we and others make inaccurate evaluations of situations. However, the inaccuracy or the accuracy doesn't really matter. If you work along with situations, things become clear. The initial evaluation doesn't have to be the ultimate landmark. Any evaluation, any conceptual view, is just a relative landmark. We can use it and work with it as we go along.

The more you involve yourself with society, the more experiences you have, the more workable situations will become. The intensity of your engagement brings space. The more intensity there is, that brings out more space. When you involve yourself with situations such as the overpopulation and the overpowering experience of being in the city, your involvement acts as a guardian. It helps others. It helps to protect them, because you refuse to abandon them. You can find inspiration within work, within sex, within

money. Within those things, you can find a connection to the sacredness of society.

---

2. Chögyam Trungpa used the term *green energy* to refer to money. Today it has a much different meaning, connected with the use of renewable resources and energy that does not have a negative impact on the environment.—Eds.

3. In today's parlance, the term *psychedelic* implies distorted perception and hallucination. At the time, however, Rinpoche was using this term to refer to genuine visionary insight into the energy of a situation.—Eds.

4. The first manned moon landing (Apollo 11, July 1969) was still a fresh and hot topic at the time of this seminar.—Eds.

5. Today, of course, there's also the Internet.—Eds.

## TWO

### *Meditation and Daily Life*

SHOULDN'T THE BASIC POINT of spiritual practice be to inspire an understanding that permits us to relate with life in the fullest way? From that point of view, work, sex, and money could be said to be the highlights of the spiritual experience of everyday life. Further discussion may be necessary for you to accept that the daily living situation should be regarded as a main means of practicing spiritual discipline. So we should look into what we actually mean by spiritual practice.

A prominent idea of spirituality is that the point is to surrender, give away, or renounce the world. Relating with the world, accepting it rather than renouncing it, goes against that view. In almost all spiritual traditions, renouncing the world is regarded as one of the first steps in spiritual practice. Spiritual practice is often regarded as a means of salvation. According to that conception, spirituality should provide a permanent shelter where we can be happy and free; and since our daily living situation does not provide permanent shelter, we have to look for something higher or safer. The idea here is that spiritual practice should lead us to some form of eternity—eternal happiness or eternal youth.

This popular and, we might say, rather primitive notion of spirituality is based on searching for happiness, a sense of security. It tells us we should practice meditation in order to attain enlightened mind or union with God, or something of that nature. All the developments in our practice are regarded as steps toward that permanent happiness, which will lift us above misery, pain, and suffering. We will find a final home or nest to dwell in. The attitude of

maintaining oneself in permanent happiness is actually the expression of ego or confused, neurotic mind. It is the neurotic desire to maintain myself, me, my whole being, as a solid entity, as ego. This approach could be called spiritual materialism.

Spiritual materialism is a further step on top of physical and psychological materialism. This materialistic attitude comes about because there is uncertainty about oneself: Am I a definite person? Am I a complete person the way I always wanted to be—do I have power and security? This wishful thinking invites unhappiness, confusion, and dissatisfaction with our way of handling ourselves. We feel that there is something not quite solid about our life, and because it does not seem solid, the possibility arises that *me* and *myself* do not exist in a long-term way. This doubt as to whether we exist or don't exist as an individual entity is a big threat to us.

We are constantly baffled, bewildered, and confused about this. When this confusion crops up, the only way to prove to ourselves that we do exist as an individual entity—as myself, with such and such a name—is to act something out, to make an emergency or extreme move. Such a move may take the form of defending ourselves by means of aggression against what is threatening us, which is a repelling technique. On the other hand, we may defend ourselves by grasping whatever can be used to maintain us, to prove that our existence is a reality. So our choices are either repelling or grasping. Repelling is aggression, hatred. Grasping is passion, desire. Those emotional principles are the main mechanisms ego uses to maintain itself. On the basis of those two mechanisms, we develop all sorts of other emotions, such as fear, hope, pride, jealousy, and so on. Those further means of maintaining ego are accessories on top of the basic hatred or desire.<sup>6</sup>

However, these tactics might not work. In fact, there are constant failures, because maintaining the continual awareness of ego is such a big task. There are constant gaps where we slip up, we forget to relate to our ego, we forget to defend ourselves, or we forget to control ourselves. This is not entirely bad news, because in fact these gaps, which occur continually in our mental state, are the only way to see the nonexistence of ego. They expose us to the fickleness of ego. Seeing this, we can say that though the ego does exist in some sense, it does not exist as a solid entity. Its nature is transparent. We see the transparent quality of ego through these continual gaps, which again and

again brings fear of losing our identity, which automatically provokes further fear and paranoia.

This fear and paranoia result in psychological materialism. There is the constant attempt to maintain ourselves by using external pretexts, ideas, and concepts to prove that I do exist, that the functions of ego are right, that they are a definite thing. I constantly have to prove that to both myself and others, and this produces a particular competitive attitude, which is psychological materialism. By constantly looking for external sources of praise and blame, we hope to reinforce a solid sense of existence.

Spiritual materialism, which uses a similar logic, comes into play when ego feels that psychological materialism has failed to prove ego's existence adequately. At that point ego looks beyond or above—it looks for a higher level of proof. One might try to meditate, to develop mental power, a greater level of concentration. But this approach to meditation is based on securing ego's territory rather than going beyond it. The hope is that in this way ego can become a more intense and continuous ego rather than just the ego in the form of patches of consciousness that we have been experiencing, which is not really satisfying. Such a patchy ego is not really foolproof in terms of defending itself, so a person looks for all kinds of spiritual ways of maintaining or strengthening the awareness of me, myself, ego. That is spiritual materialism.

The whole problem with these materialistic approaches is too much centralization. There is too much concern with the nature of one's own games as opposed to concern with the external projections of the world around us. One is preoccupied with *here*—wrapped up in the self-consciousness of “What is the best way for me? How should I do it? How should I overcome? How should I achieve thus and such? How should I defend myself?” So one tends to reject the messages from the projections of the world outside. To overcome this self-centered situation, we need to gain an understanding of egolessness, centerlessness, the nonexistence of ego. We cannot just start on ego itself. We cannot rely on ego to discover the folly of ego. We need to recognize our actual experience of egolessness.

Ego is dependent on the confirmation from the relative situation outside. When external phenomena become problematic, as the paranoia of ego begins to rise up, gaps begin to appear in ego's game. So the best way to see

the absence of ego is to use the confusion that arises when ego relates to the daily living situation—the projections of the world outside. “Projections” in this case refers to the output of ego, which constitutes or makes up our seemingly solid, everyday, bodily situations. These interchanges are made up of all kinds of interactions with people and physical situations, which automatically include the sources where ego’s passion and aggression begin. Now, if we are fully in touch with the phenomenal world and see its play completely and thoroughly, then the self-consciousness of ego ceases to be our focus and to play such an important role. By being fully in touch with external situations, we are no longer totally preoccupied with ego’s centralized games. We begin to realize that security is not all that important. So relating with our living world, our daily living situations, becomes a way of transcending psychological materialism.

Therefore, the meditative disciplines that have been recommended to us by great teachers should be accompanied by interaction with the world. Meditation practice could be described as the training ground, and the actual application of those training-ground exercises occurs in working with the situations of daily life. That is why the topics of work, sex, and money become our immediate concern. Spirituality is all about how to handle the situations of daily life.

If you look methodically through the history of the Buddhist tradition, you see that hermits don’t stay in retreat their whole lives. This is true even though they may take vows to remain in retreat. It has been said that retreat doesn’t end completely until you come back into your old life situations. Then your retreat is completed. For instance, Milarepa, a great Tibetan Buddhist practitioner and teacher, took a vow to regard his retreat cave as his tomb. He went into retreat with that attitude, but in the end he couldn’t avoid the world altogether. There were huntsmen passing through collecting feathers for their arrows, and other people occasionally dropped in to ask him questions. Finally he had to move on, leave his retreat and walk out into the world. He had to step out of that retreat situation.

There is also the story of Anathapindika, who was a disciple of the Buddha and a great supporter of the community of monks. He provided meditation centers for the monks and food for them, and he created environments in which the Buddha could teach. Without him, there would have been no

possibility of propagating the teachings on such a wide scale at the time of the Buddha. Anathapindika asked the Buddha if he should give up his work serving the sangha and devote himself purely to meditation practice. If he did, it might be good for him, he thought, but on the other hand it might not be a good thing on the whole because he would no longer be providing situations for other people. The Buddha's answer was that he should remain a householder. The best way that he could serve the Buddha, the dharma, and the sangha—and follow his own path to enlightenment—would be to practice within the householder's life.

For each of us, the answer to this question depends on our individual situations. Your choices depend on what you have gotten yourself into already. There is a Tibetan saying that it is better not to begin things, but once you begin, you should finish properly. So once you have gotten into the householder's life, you may not be able to undo that, and there is a way to practice within it. However, there are other possibilities: if a person is free to do anything he wants in life, he might choose to respect the sacredness of that freedom by putting restrictions on himself and living the contemplative life of a retreatant or a monastic for a period of time. In the Buddhist tradition, retreat seems to be approached quite differently from some Christian traditions of monastic enclosure, where you take a vow to lock yourself behind a grill for the rest of your life. In the Buddhist tradition, there is respect for the principle of retreat and the contemplative life, but still there is some allegiance to samsara, to the ordinary confused world we inhabit. It's almost like an allegiance to paying back the world's kindness.

As it stands now, we have a lack of clarity about relating with our ordinary life situations. Should we abandon everyday life as a bad job? Should we try to do our best with it? Should we just muddle through? None of these questions is based on a firm and clear understanding at the beginning. It's just guesswork. We think there must be some real and right way of doing things, but we don't know what it is, so we just push ourselves into situations and hope for the best. This haphazard approach lacks the basic discipline of meditation practice, which is the only way to develop a continuity of insight and clarity.

Meditation practice, in this case, is not at all a matter of building something up, which is the approach of spiritual materialism. Rather,



meditation is allowing ourselves simply to be and to open by using certain techniques that take away the self-conscious preoccupation with tactics and strategy. Through meditation we develop a way of doing nothing, absolutely nothing—physically nothing and psychologically nothing. The only way to do nothing is to pick some focus and treat it as though it were nothing. This is the technique that meditation has traditionally developed. We pick something like breathing or walking to meditate on. But these are transparent things. They have no individuality. Everybody breathes. Everybody walks. So we choose breathing and walking techniques as ordinary and transparent techniques.

Through relating fully with such techniques, we reach a point where psychological upheavals will arise in our practice. Subconscious hidden emotions begin to come through, to come up to the surface. In other words, meditation practice using transparent techniques such as working with the breath becomes the practice of doing nothing, and that provides a clear place in which whatever comes up will be noticed and recognized.

This is a way of relating with phenomena in the internal sense. In meditation, you don't have interactions with people or the world outside verbally or physically, but still the practice is a way of relating with phenomena directly, rather than being caught in the centralized games of ego. Meditation is not a matter of withdrawing—you are not drawing in, retreating from the world. In fact, you are getting into the world. Until now the world hasn't been able to show us its fullest expressions, because we never let it happen. We were constantly seduced by this or that. In the meantime, we were missing the boat all the time. Whenever there is an upheaval or uproar—all kinds of energies coming up—our minds are preoccupied with something else. We never become conscious of those things properly. But in meditation there is a sense of forthcoming, opening. Meditation allows us to see the hidden things, so we don't miss one moment of energy or upheaval. We see them clearly, precisely because we don't evaluate them in a self-conscious way. Evaluation requires more self-consciousness, and in the meantime, while we are evaluating, we miss something else. We miss the implications that happen around those energies that arise in our minds.

So in this case, meditation is a way of developing clarity, which allows us to see the precision of daily life situations as well as our thought process so

that we can relate with both of them fully and completely.

From this viewpoint, meditation is also associated with how we approach work. A person should be able to carry out his or her job without interruption, and meditation supports this approach. In this way, the meaning of work becomes part of our spiritual practice rather than purely a part of our daily struggle. Work in this case is actual physical involvement with objects, people, and the energies around that involvement. In this sense, working is a constant tutorial. The teacher, in the form of the work situation, is always there: if you do something badly, it shows; if you do something well, it shows. There's no way of fooling this process.

There is no need here to get involved with the self-conscious rigidity of a deliberate artistic approach to work or to dealing with objects. At the same time, one has to have respect for the importance of life situations. Things around us always have an association with us, whether they belong to us or not. Once we begin to feel that association, we begin to feel things and relate to them directly, properly, and fully.

With this approach, if you are making a cup of tea, you are in complete contact with the process: with what kind of tea you are going to brew and what kind of kettle and teapot you are going to use. It is a matter of relating with those little things, which is not a big deal particularly. It's not a matter of life and death if you make a bad cup of tea. At the same time, in some sense it *is* a matter of life and death, because relating with each individual thing is important. This is what I mean by work. It doesn't particularly have to relate to a job, although this same style of relating fully to things could be used in the job situation as well.

The little things we do in life may not seem to have a direct bearing on spirituality; maybe they seem quite unspiritual. Nevertheless, it is your world you are dealing with; it is your environment. So the things you are doing should be felt fully rather than rushed through.

That doesn't mean doing everything slowly and deliberately. Rushing doesn't necessarily mean doing things quickly. You can rush slowly—no matter how slow you go, you are missing the point all the time. However fast or slow you rush, there is a sense that your mind is preoccupied with something, constantly preoccupied with hopes or fear or passion or

aggression, or something of that nature. Because of that, you fail to relate directly with objects, as in making a cup of tea.

If you're going fast, just trying to go slow doesn't help; nor the other way around. You see, the point is not particularly to change your pace. The main thing is to become aware that you are not in contact with what is happening, because you are so concerned with getting ahead. Whether you do something slow or fast, there's a sense of absentmindedness. So what is necessary is to learn to relate with what you are doing completely. If you relate completely with what you are doing, then you can't rush. You don't have to think about the future particularly; you are content with what is there at that very moment. Not rushing is having complete contact with what is happening at that very moment. In other words, a sense of *nowness* is necessary. Some humor or light touch is also helpful. Then you begin to see the present situation fully and completely, because the rushing process is a very serious one, very earnest and honest, in some sense quite solemn.

When you relate to situations directly and simply, you realize that body and mind have a very close relationship. Mind and body are one thing rather than separate. Body is mind, mind is body. The expressions of body are also constantly the expressions of mind. Work, which is an expression of everyday life, brings the body and mind into play equally. We do not have to develop a special philosophical attitude in order to make our work spiritual, even if our activity appears to have nothing to do with spirituality. We do not have to try to interpret it in a special way. We do not have to find appropriate ideas or ideologies to fit a particular job.

On the other hand, many people's work is largely intellectual. This is not a problem. You can appreciate the ordinariness of life in any situation. However, I think some physical discipline is also necessary in a person's life. Without that, you could become totally wrapped up in your ideas, like an absentminded professor. There's always a need for some grounded perspective like physical work or doing artwork—something where you can use your hands as well as your intellect. Once you get in the habit of using the intellect constantly as a means to understand things, there is a tendency to become completely lost in ideas. One might tend to become aggressive, feeling that all the scientific ideas one has are right and foolproof. One fails

then to pay attention to ordinary life. So there's an incompleteness to working entirely with the intellect.

There's no need to philosophize work in order to make it spiritual. It has spiritual bearing anyway. If you regard yourself as a person on the spiritual path, then whatever you do is part of the path, an expression of the path. Decentralization, the absence of ego, the lack of searching for happiness and not avoiding pain—all of that brings us into the reality of dealing with things directly and thoroughly. Dealing with things in this decentralized, egoless manner is known in the Buddhist tradition as *upaya*, skillful means. Without that, there is no means of discovering the inner guru, or inner teacher, as one might call it, which is the constant instruction that you begin to receive on the path. The daily living situation becomes the teaching; it becomes a constant learning process. There's no way of developing that sense of inner teacher if you fail to relate with daily living situations directly, because without that there's no interchange with your world.

The experiences that are part of the learning process in everyday life do not have to be particularly mystical. They do not have to be anything like a voice telling you to do this or do that. They are not like seeing spiritual symbolism everywhere. It's not as literal as that. The spiritual path is profound in itself—it's just a matter of things being seen as real and direct and simple, but that means a lot. Because of the simplicity, we are able to work with whatever comes up. Because situations are simple, they are pure. There are no alternatives involved at all. It's a direct situation.

Dealing with the physical situations of the world also means dealing with emotions at the same time. The emotional expressions of body, of physical engagement, are obvious, and we can work with them in a direct and simple fashion. The point is that we cannot reject the situation we are in now. We won't necessarily achieve spiritual advancement by changing our lifestyle. In fact, we could almost expect the opposite. We should have continuity in our lifestyle, a continuity of experience, and we should get into that and try to find the follow-up, the next step, within that, rather than trying to get into a prefabricated environment that is supposedly conducive to spiritual advancement. Such an environment might be conducive temporarily, but at some point we become weak because that situation is ideal and softens us up. Then, when a problematic situation finally arises, we won't be able to deal

with it. We will find ourselves trying to re-create that ideal, beautiful situation. We will end up with a constant yearning for the future and an inability to relate with the present situation of nowness. So transcending spiritual materialism has to be based on working with the daily living situation. That is the basic point.

---

6. Here, Chögyam Trungpa explains ego's activity of maintaining its ground, referring to its use of passion and aggression (or desire and hatred) as the basis for developing all the emotional states. In most traditional accounts, three principles—passion, aggression, and ignorance—are given as the fundamental mechanisms that power ego and our confusion. They are known as the three poisons. However, it is not rare, as in this talk, to mention only passion and aggression, since these are the active and obvious ones out of the three.—Eds.

### THREE

## *The Myth of Happiness*

WE ALL WANT TO DISCOVER the meaning of life. Some people say the meaning of life is to be found only in spiritual practice. Others say the meaning of life is to be found in the human dignity that comes from dealing with the world successfully. Still, the meaning of life remains under dispute. It is the subject of philosophical struggles and metaphysical doubts. Those go on and on; the question is still there, and the answer remains uncertain.

I myself do not expect to fully answer this question. As far as the meaning of life is concerned, I think we could say I am no further advanced than you are. So we have something in common, myself the author and you the readers. We are baffled about the real meaning of life. We do not know. We are completely uncertain. A lot of people would like to hear definite answers, and I could make up some things to say. I could say that the meaning of life is only found in spirituality, or the meaning of life is getting down to earth and being a good citizen. However, I feel that producing answers is not particularly a kind thing to do. Quite possibly, it is not necessary to solve the problem as such.

However, since we have to start somewhere, let's start with this thing that we have in common—our confusion. We are bewildered, baffled, so let us start with this. Maybe the language of confusion can be understood. In this inquiry, the author does not regard himself as superior to the readers. Let us consider that we are relating on an eye-to-eye level. There is a Sanskrit term, *kalyanamitra*, which means “spiritual friend.” This term seems appropriate

here. We can relate to each other as friends rather than as student and master. We are equals, and the rest of the world is also on an equal level with us.

The physical living situation is the only way we can relate with our lives. I do not believe in a mystical or etheric world—the world of the unseen, the unknown. There's no reason to believe in that, because we don't perceive it. Belief comes from perception, so if we don't perceive something, we don't believe in it. Belief does not come from manufacturing ideas, although millions of arguments and logics have been set forth to that effect. For example, it is said that there is an unseen world that operates on the higher levels of consciousness. Supposedly this higher world fulfills human concerns, and it punishes those who don't believe. But from the point of view of physics, that world is unreal. I'm afraid I'm not brave enough to say there's another world. This world that we live in is the only world. Of course, we have the psychological world too. This world where we are, which has these two aspects, the psychological world and the physical world, is the only world we live in.

We have problems in dealing with this physical world. Fundamentally, we become too centralized in relating to it. When we see things in physical terms, we feel we must prove ourselves in that physical realm. We take a materialistic approach, trying to gain something from the world. We want our activity to produce a good end result; thus our relationship to the physical world becomes one of materialism.

There are two types of materialism here: indulgence in physical materialism and indulgence in psychological materialism. Both are concerned with the achievement of comfort and happiness. However, we want to achieve not only momentary happiness but ultimate happiness. People feel that physical materialism concerned merely with temporary happiness is not sufficient. They feel that if they indulge themselves purely in immediate pleasure, they won't end up with complete, ultimate comfort. Therefore they feel they must work and sacrifice their partial, momentary pleasure in order to achieve greater pleasure. To achieve this, we must all go to our jobs, earn money, have a good roof over our heads, the best food to eat, and close friends around us.

A certain number of people want to go beyond mere happiness, and they seek fame. They feel that they are special people. They wish to become

famous actors, famous musicians, famous artists. If you are such a person, you feel that your life is a work of art, and that it is worth a great deal. Your life brings a lot of pleasure for yourself as well as others, and you feel that your intellect and manipulative mind cannot be rivaled by anybody. You possess a high IQ. In business ventures, you are successful. As a successful businessperson, you have more money, comfort, and power than others do. You are respected in your neighborhood or even in the nation as a whole—if your dream goes beyond the level of the neighborhood. Some day you hope to become an internationally recognized person.

Physical materialism at this level is believing in physics on a literal level, in terms of literal gain. Initially, seeking to become a bigger, more powerful, more highly successful person is physical materialism. This becomes psychological materialism at some point, because you plan all of these projects of becoming famous on a psychological level. In fact, psychological one-upmanship is always an important factor here. You are constantly seeking to outwit your competitors. Physical materialism and psychological materialism in this sense amount to the same thing. The physical situation comes along with the psychological attitude toward it.

Then we have the third type of materialism, which we've already discussed somewhat, which is spiritual materialism. Spiritual materialism always has the same logic. In order to achieve a higher level of spirituality, an elevated spiritual goal, in order to attain enlightenment, union with God, and so on, we feel we should become better persons spiritually. We should become conscientious and willing to put up with problems and discomforts of all kinds. We should be willing to give up this and that and become a hardworking and genuine person who is reaching for spiritual attainment. The object, from a spiritual materialist's point of view, is to achieve a permanent spiritual home. We want to reach heaven. You want to reach a permanent place where you don't have to maintain yourself anymore at all. You want permanent happiness, to be happy ever after. You hope to achieve this by means of all sorts of sacrifices. You're willing to sacrifice this and sacrifice that, inflicting pain on yourself; you are willing to submit to discipline, as you call it by way of euphemism. You give up this and give up that, thinking in this way to gain this and get that. You inflict the pain of sacrifice on yourself because you think your present volume of pain will be equal to your volume



of happiness in the future. When the time comes, you will be rewarded by heavenly beings, or whatever.

In aid of this kind of process, new techniques are continually being introduced in our society; new books are constantly brought out. You think the books might tell you how to become a better person, a happier person. The whole time, you are looking for a happy, permanent relationship to something. You want to be happy forever, permanently and independently.

This also seems to be the idea that many people have of freedom, but this is a misunderstanding of what genuine freedom is. You are being entertained by the idea of freedom rather than truly becoming spiritually free. This idea of freedom actually means bondage, in this case. In your mind, your happiness becomes tied to the idea that sometime in the future you will be free. Once you are free, you think, you will be able to indulge in your spiritual achievement. You will be able to see the future; you will be able to see the past. You will have telepathic powers and be able to read people's minds. You will have power over others. You will be able to wipe out their pain, regardless of karmic situations. Something in you thinks you might take over the whole world. Becoming a spiritual emperor is the essential idea of spiritual materialism.

In short, from the materialistic point of view, spirituality is another dream of happiness. You have the idea that you won't have to pay your electricity bills or your phone bills. You will be able to take off into the mountains and live in a cave. Life will be much simpler and more pleasurable. You will live on natural food and be healthy. You will not be bound by any kind of obligations whatsoever. You won't have to answer the phone; you won't have to maintain a household. You will be perfectly "free." Living in a cave in the mountains amid the beauties of nature and the fresh air, meditation will come naturally because there will be no disturbances. Everything will be quiet. Silence will reign. There will be no one to irritate you, because you've left the nasty associations of your past history behind. You've forgotten your past, you've given it up. You don't care who you were, you think; you only care who you are now. Live in the mountains, enjoy nature, fresh air, fantastic vibrations...blah, blah, blah.

There is something uncertain about this whole vision. There may be some wisdom in it, but it has been said that it is not only wisdom that is important

but also compassion. If we take the need for compassion into account, the scenario above doesn't completely address the problem. It is in connection with compassion that the difference between the materialistic approach to spirituality and the natural, genuine quality of spirituality begins to break through. The spiritual approach without spiritual materialism is based on compassion. Compassion tells you that finally you have to return to the world. Not only just finally, but the whole time you have to work with the world, relate with the world, because enlightened mind contains wisdom and compassion simultaneously. You have an obligation to the world you were brought up in. This is the world you belong to; you can't give it up altogether. You can't dissociate yourself from the past or whatever irritates you.

In fact, compassion brings us back to dealing with the world as the only way. We have to work with people. We have to work with our fathers, our mothers, our sisters and brothers, our neighbors, and our friends. We have to do that because the people with whom we are associated in our lives provide the only situation that drives us to the spiritual search. Without those people, we would not be able to look into such possibilities at all. They provide irritations, negativities, and demands. They provide us with everything. Because their energy, possibly even their kindness, inspires us, we should feel indebted for the opportunity to work with them.

So, after all, our spiritual journey is not such a romantic thing at all. It has nothing to do with a vacation or a holiday whatsoever. It is connected with our ordinary, sometimes irritating, everyday life. From that point of view, the spiritual search is a very sober thing. It has nothing to do with special pleasure or transcendent happiness.

Of course, this does not mean that you should seek out pain. Basically, spiritual practice means coming back to the world, working with the existing, living world. If you were brought up in the suburbs, come back to the suburbs and work with the people. If you were brought up in the city, come back to the city and work with the people. Come back. Come back. That is the only inspiration there is. You might read scriptures, the sacred writings of great teachers, but those writings can become no more than a myth. They tell the story of somebody who lived in the past, who lived a particular kind of life back then and wrote about those things. The true scripture, the true text, lies in the living situation in which we were brought up. It lies in this living

situation of dealing with the world we are familiar with, our irritating world. It might be quite uncomfortable, but nevertheless that's where the inspiration lies.

This is where compassion leads us. Compassion is not trying to feel charitable, as many people think. Compassion is the basic generosity that means that you don't have to hold anything back. You relate to the living situation around you generously, without defending yourself.

Sometimes there are problems with how we try to apply compassion and how we try to help others. There's subtle one-upmanship involved when you are *trying* to be skillful and compassionate to others. Let's say I would like to see you become a very together person. I have an idea of what it means to be a together person, and I want to mold you into that. So I lay my trips on you, rather than letting you be as you are. That's often the problem in the relationship of parents and children. Your father is a lawyer and you have a family history of famous lawyers, so automatically the idea is that you should be a lawyer too. Your great-grandfather was president of this country, so you should be a prominent politician as well.

The real idea of skillful means, or upaya, is to have a direct, almost scientific or detached understanding of things as they are at this very moment without projecting the past or the future onto the situation. Your understanding is almost at the level of a mechanic repairing a car. It's not a question of what used to be wrong with your car or what might go wrong with your car in the future. In order to fix the car now, you have to know what is wrong at this very point. Certain parts are defective, certain parts have deteriorated—or whatever the circumstance is. Just relate with that actual situation. That is skillful means. The situation speaks for you, rather than your having to strategize anything. It's what is there at that very moment.

The popular, confused notion of compassion suggests a certain idea of charity, which is trying to be kind because you feel that you are well off and therefore you should be kind to others who are not well off. You might go off to underdeveloped nations or join the Peace Corps. Your country is wealthy, but those other countries are not. The people are illiterate, so you will teach them how to read and write and how to manage things. In this approach, you actually look down on those people.

Or you might think in terms of psychological volunteer work. You are supposed to be psychologically well balanced, so you can work with those who are mentally unbalanced. You can function as the model of sanity. Perhaps we like the idea of improving the world. But when we manage to turn an underdeveloped village into a highly sophisticated industrial town, we expect to be rewarded. We expect something in return. We could play all kinds of games of charity, but those are not real charity at all. They are one-upmanship games.

Real compassion is not a matter of “I would like to make this person happy by making the person fit into my idea of happiness”; rather, it is a matter of actually seeing that a certain person needs help. You put yourself at the disposal of that person. You just get into a relationship with that person and see where that leads. That is a more demanding and a more generous approach than following your expectation that the person should end up thus and such a way.

This is the genuine approach to compassion, which is very powerful. This is what we are going to examine further in this book: compassion beyond psychological and spiritual materialism. It is the genuine approach to things, the true approach to our living situation. We have to distinguish between the ordinary approach to spiritual practice, which is spiritual materialism, and true spiritual practice. We have to see this difference clearly.

The notion of spiritual practice can easily be misleading. People think they are embarking on the spiritual path, but they soon find themselves into spiritual materialism. It is much easier to get into the spiritual materialism that is associated with the competitive world than to get into true spirituality, which means giving up our ambitions and aggression. This is much harder and not particularly appealing. I would say it is not particularly colorful either. Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, it is not particularly entertaining.

In working with others, the approach of genuine spirituality is to just do it, just help. If you're doing it unskillfully, you'll be pushed back. A direct message is there always, unless you are dreaming, in which case you don't receive any messages. But if you are relating with things directly, even with ambition, that's okay. There will be messages coming toward you automatically. It happens on the spot. This could be called genuine mystical experience.

Mystical experience lies in our actual living situation. It's a question of relating with the body, the physical situation. If you put your hand on a hot burner on the stove, you get burned. That's a very direct message that you're being absentminded. If you lose your temper and slam the door after a quarrel, you may catch your finger in the door. You get a very direct message—you hurt your finger. In that situation, you are in direct contact with things, with the energies that are alive in the situation. You are in direct contact rather than strategizing a result or thinking in terms of molding or remolding your experience. Then the situation automatically provides you with your next move. Life becomes like music. You dance in accordance with life. You don't have to struggle to remold anything. That is precisely the idea of the absence of aggression, which is one of the key ideas of the Buddhist teaching. Dancing to the music of life is not an aggressive situation at all. It is living with the four seasons, to use the metaphor of how a plant grows throughout the year. This is the idea of *lalita*, a Sanskrit term that means “dance.” We might also translate *lalita* as “dancing with the situation.” Situations inspire you, rather than you create situations.

Again, this approach is not based on strategizing how to help someone. Instead: just do it. If you throw a puppy in the river, it automatically swims. Basically, the underlying intelligence is always there, but we tend to dismiss it and look for something else that is more profound and accurate. As long as we relate with our underlying primordial intelligence and as long as we push ourselves a little, by jumping into the middle of situations, then intelligence arises automatically. When you're in the middle of a situation, you automatically pick up on what is needed. It's not a question of how to do it—you just do it. And you find yourself doing it perfectly, even surprising yourself. That can happen. If, on the other hand, we fixate on *how* to do it, that automatically makes us more self-conscious. The approach of “how to do it” automatically contains two ideas: how not to do it and how to do it. Your mind is already split into two sides, involved with possibly making mistakes and possibly accomplishing your result. So taking the approach of “how to do it” can be negative, whereas just doing it is very positive.

The technique of meditation is the way to just do it. In meditation, life exposes itself to you, so you find yourself in the middle of a living situation. This definitely requires an intuitive approach. Using your intuition in this way

requires a positive attitude, a conviction that you are a basically healthy person, you are not condemned, and you are not regarded as a sinner. You are already a healthy person, fundamentally. Despite the projections that may be cast on you, despite the shadow that may be cast on you, the point is to see through the shadow and just do it and live it. That is intuition.

Confusion is a split, a kind of schizophrenic attitude, confused between this and that. You can't get confused unless you have two sides to get confused about. When you are confused, reasoning just clouds things even more so. Sometimes people confuse the application of skillful means based on intuition with impulsiveness. Impulse is frivolous. You think of something that you want to do, and then immediately you do it. Impulsiveness is mindless. It's based on fear and confusion rather than the direct style of "just doing it" that we are discussing. In the case of intuition, you feel out the situation completely before you do something, but you don't create a split. There's a very big difference between applying intuition versus fixating on "how" or "what" to do in a situation.

The whole point is that you can't get directions in advance for specific first-aid techniques to apply in *every* situation you will encounter. That is why we speak of applying your intuition. There are no directions to tell you how to deal with every specific situation. The question is how to deal with situations *altogether*, before the particular highlight you're involved in has occurred. So if your ongoing daily living situations are related to with intuition rather than impulse, then any particular challenge can be accommodated. There are no set guidelines for how to handle yourself at cocktail parties, for example. If such guidelines were provided and you tried to follow them, you would have to switch on the spot to being a different person, which is not possible. Skillful means and intuition are a matter of your continual process of working with life, even when the cocktail party is not happening. You have to relate with a continual process of intuition and try to sort out the difference between the qualities of frivolous impulse and intuition. If you're able to relate with that during the day, when the party begins in the evening, you'll already be well equipped. There's no quick programmed answer at all. The whole endeavor has to be seen as a long-term process. We have to meet ourselves for the first time completely and properly. We have to make friends with

ourselves. I have to get to know who I am, what I am, and what the world is in relation to me.

Intuition is trusting yourself. You feel that you can *afford* to trust yourself, which is making friends with yourself. Then you feel that you are not a dangerous person, as you might have believed. You may have been told that you are a dangerous person, that you have to watch out for yourself, but now finally you can relax, you can work with yourself. The very existence of yourself is not all that outrageous or dangerous or suicidal.

You are good; fundamentally, you are healthy. Moreover, that particular health is capable of accommodating your badness as well as your goodness. When you're good, you're not particularly bashful about your goodness, and when you're bad, you're not particularly shocked by that either. These are simply your attributes. When you begin to accept both aspects of your being as energy, as part of the perspective of your view of yourself, then you are connecting with the fundamental goodness, which can accommodate all of these energies as part of one basic being. This is very solid and earthy. It is invincible in fact. That is the basic idea of good: that good can accommodate both wrong and right at the same time. Because of that, it is good. It is solid soil, solid ground.

You have nothing to transcend, in the final sense, when you begin to relate with both good and bad. You do that on the basis of the nonexistence of the solidity of good and bad. When you looked at them as solidly existing, you saw good as being finally hopeful and bad being finally hopeless. You don't see it that way anymore at all. Now, when you find yourself bad, that doesn't mean hopelessness; when you find yourself good, that isn't definitively hopeful either. You can accommodate the energies of both light and dark on this basic ground. This is not exactly transcending, but it is accommodating—acknowledging that there is good and bad at the same time. The basic ground is not infected or influenced by either one of them.

From ego's point of view, solidity means that you do not allow any space for flowing qualities to develop. The whole space is concretized. In other words, space becomes antispaces. There's no room at all to move about. But there is another idea of solidity. In the positive sense, it means being fully in contact with nature. You know how to relate with things directly. You know the laws of nature directly. You are not likely to be influenced by

frivolousness of any kind, because your ground is definite. You have no doubt about yourself.

The genuine spiritual search is not purely looking for happiness. However, this limited approach is still very prevalent. In this prevailing idea of spirituality, a person who attains realization looks very happy. He is smiling all the time and saying nice things about everybody. When people follow this approach to the spiritual path, they say “I love you” and they kiss you, throw flowers, wear white, and everything is beautiful and smooth and happy. Their point of view is that spirituality is ultimate happiness, and the idea presented is that once you join their club, you will be happy forever, because they don’t believe in badness or unhappiness. Everything’s going to be beautiful and full of flowers. Spiritual life is colorful, happy, and bright.

That’s the “trip” of spirituality, and the important thing is to get off that trip. Once you do that, your compassionate attitude might still be somewhat fake to begin with. Practitioners have to learn to push themselves overboard to communicate with other people. In the beginning, you may not feel like communicating, so you might have to push yourself to communicate, communicate with the world, communicate with pain and pleasure and all the rest. After all, the spiritual world is not all that happy a world; it also contains tremendous pain, suffering, and misery—along with happiness and inspiration, of course. But relating with the real world is not a matter of pure happiness alone. So the practitioner might need some stepping-stone to begin with. He or she might have to do some playacting, which is not perfect. It could be said to be ego activity, but that doesn’t really matter at all. If a person is able to proceed in that way, then she will gradually develop conviction and confidence. Her way of working with situations will eventually become real. She will be dealing with the real world.

At the beginning, even your meditation is not real meditation in the complete sense. You are imagining yourself meditating. Initially, whatever spiritual disciplines you may be practicing are not real at all. You are just imagining yourself doing them. But that kind of limited deception and that kind of acting out have to be accepted as a stepping-stone. We have no other way of doing it. We cannot start perfectly, not at all. We have to use imperfection as a way toward the perfect. That’s all we can do. We have to use poverty in order to become rich. There’s no other way.



Mysticism usually involves the mysteriousness of something hidden that you can't approach. But a true approach to mysticism would involve appreciating the mysteriousness of the play of phenomena, which is not really hidden from you. Mystical experience in this second sense is often playful and contains a great deal of humor. There is something that is not quite solemn and solid but rather operates on the level of the delight of experiencing things as they are. In the Sufi tradition, for example, there are hundreds of stories about the great mystic Mullah Nasruddin. Nasruddin's approach to the world was very humorous. He discovered humor in every situation. Real spirituality has that same quality, because it realizes that the world is a spiritual world already. You communicate with life as it is rather than trying to invent some new spiritual approach to it. Taking delight in things as they are is genuine humor.

Real spirituality is an acceptance of the world as spiritual already. So you don't have to remold the world. For those who believe in a traditional view of mysticism, the world is mysterious. They can't experience mysticism in its fullest sense because they expect too much. They become deaf and dumb to the teaching. It is highly mysterious for them. But it isn't mysterious for those who actually relate to mysticism in its fullest sense. The reality of the world could be called self-secret. Something spiritual or mystical in this sense means something that strikes the truth. True spirituality is an absence of frivolity, an absence of belief in good and bad in the religious sense, an absence of religiosity. So spirituality seems to transcend the religion of an established church. It is that which is contained in the living situation, which speaks truth, which reminds you of the natural situation of things as they are.

## FOUR

### *Simplicity and Awareness*

WE HAVE TWO quite common approaches to work: filling the space so there is no room for the creative process, or being afraid of the creative process and therefore being unwilling to embark on it. These are two examples of ego's approach to work. By filling the space instead of letting be and letting a creative process develop, ego automatically imposes the next clue on our awareness about what is taking place. This is because we are afraid of a gap, which would allow us to look back and see our basic origin. It is very disturbing for ego to see its own nakedness, which brings the sense of a defeat for the ego. Therefore, when you see this open space, you become afraid of embarking on any further creative process that might reveal the space again.

Understanding this process could help us go beyond the usual commonsense approach that we apply to work. Generally, if we feel that we have to work to make money, then we just work in a mechanical fashion. If we no longer feel that we need to work, then we do something else. With this mechanical approach, we do not have a proper relationship to the work itself. Work doesn't just mean earning money and doing a job or purely getting something done efficiently. Work is a creative process.

Resistance to creativity also comes from being unwilling to relate to the earth. Not allowing yourself to associate with the earth means not being able to appreciate things properly as they are, not being able to really feel the relationship between you and the objects you are dealing with. If you feel the relation between yourself and a flower in the wild, you might bend down and smell it. You don't feel lazy about it.

If there is that kind of fluid communication going on between yourself and the object, then ego doesn't get a chance to digest anything; it doesn't get a report back from you and your work. When your work becomes natural and spontaneous communication, ego doesn't get a chance to act as a middleman. Generally what happens, however, is that ego has messengers that bring information back to its switchboard. Then ego accepts or rejects. Everything depends on the pleasure of ego. On the other hand, if you have good, fluid communication with the work, then you are working without ego's authority, which is very humiliating for the ego.

Ego comes from our confusion, and confusion comes from panic and fear. There is no such thing as a definite ego as such; rather, ego is made up of different ingredients. Therefore, I wouldn't say ego is particularly bad, but it is not a very healthy thing, because starting with confusion, ignorance, and fear is like trying to plant cement dust as a seed. It is a feeling of being totally separate from the rest of things. That's why there is panic. You feel apart from everything else, and therefore you feel tremendously insecure. It's like you are alone in the middle of the Sahara Desert. You begin to be threatened by everything. Then the panic starts, and once panic starts, confusion comes as well—because when you panic, you don't know what you're doing. Ignorance takes over, to put it very crudely. So ego is not creative.

Wanting to fill space is a common neurotic response to panic. Work then becomes a means of escape. If you are experiencing depression or fear, or life is simply not going smoothly, then immediately you start polishing your table or weeding your garden. You immediately try to find something to do. This is a way of physically acting out the mental pattern of ego. In this case, the worker has no real communication with the actual work at all. The work is a way of escaping, or on the mental level, it is a way of avoiding looking into the basic problem. Here the person is involved with the process of momentum. He or she is seeking a kind of pleasure in the moment. In one way, she is living in the now, living in the moment. But this is the wrong way of living in the moment, because she doesn't feel able to cope with analyzing the basic problem, with looking back and learning from it. Automatically she tries to fill the space—the physical space as well as the mental or spiritual space. Space—any empty corner—seems to frighten her.

Often this approach can be seen in the way a person decorates his house. Wherever there is an empty wall, he puts something up on it. If a space becomes empty, he puts up another picture or fills it with furniture. Every time there is a feeling of space, he fills up the gap. So his style of interior decoration becomes one of completely filling up the rooms. The space becomes crowded with more and more things. The more crowded his place is, the more comfortable he feels, because he doesn't have to deal with any unknown, undetermined areas.

Another aspect of this kind of ego manifestation is that whenever a person sees a bit of dust somewhere, he feels that bit of dust represents so much that he has to clean it away immediately. Every speck of dust becomes an intrusion into his space, and he has to clean that space up and put his things in it. He is busy trying to fill the gaps all the time.

Many people have this filling-space kind of neurosis. If their job has come to an end and they are living on an old-age pension, then they immediately try to find another job to keep themselves occupied. Without that, they are afraid of losing their speed, their sense of constantly going forward. Just moving forward, going on with something, becomes their occupation, which is a very neurotic process.

The other approach, based on the fear of creativity, is that of a person who resists taking a job or working. That approach shows a kind of blindness, not using one's intelligence. In the 1960s and '70s, many young people reacted against having to get a job. That protest is a way of refusing to associate with the practicality of life, refusing to associate with the earth itself. This refusal is very significant. Any human being, young or old, has tremendous intelligence. And because of this intelligence, they see the problems that would be involved if they embarked upon any creative process. The main problem they see is: once you start, you can't stop. You have to go on and on being involved. One kind of work leads to the next kind of work, and that would mean continually having to work on oneself.

The whole point of discussing these approaches to work is to realize that whatever we do physically also happens in our state of mind. Every move that we make on the physical level has spiritual significance. That may sound airy-fairy, but it is so. When I speak about spirituality here, I am not referring to anything pious or religious. Here spirituality means the truth, the isness of the

natural facts of life. Every situation has bearing on one's psychology, on one's true psychology, the absolute aspect of mind.

A person could be very, very intelligent and refuse to work. He is too lazy to apply himself to anything. He would rather daydream or think about something. This is, I suppose, a kind of anarchistic approach. If you do something constructive and practical, it is connected with society. It means taking care of something. That seems to be very threatening for this type of person, because he does not want to help maintain or develop society.

Even if you are against the materialism of society and you do not want to support it, refusing to work is still grasping the wrong end of the stick. Not taking part in work and practical activity is not going to achieve anything. More than anything else, it will simply magnify your own negativity. By not doing anything to help, you will merely feel the sense of being useless in society. If you really take this kind of nonparticipation to its logical conclusion, it means that you shouldn't eat, you shouldn't even breathe, because the air you breathe also belongs to the world or society. This approach could become quite extreme. If you take it all the way, it means you shouldn't exist at all.

There's a great deal of confusion about materialism and society. Just taking care of one's business or even running a business doesn't amount to materialism. There's nothing wrong with that at all. What really produces the materialistic outlook toward society is *psychological* materialism. Materialism has a pervasive kind of philosophy connected with it that is passed from one person to another orally and taught to everyone through examples. One person catches it from another. This is how psychological materialism works. However, trying to reject that contagion by purely not doing anything, not caring for anything at all, simply doesn't work.

Not doing anything takes the form of laziness, and in order to be lazy we have to develop a certain kind of intelligence. Laziness has tremendous intelligence in it, in fact. When you are lazy, as soon as you have the urge to do anything, immediately a kind of answer comes to you that you can present about why you don't have to do it. Later you can say: "I didn't do it because I didn't have time. Thus and such happened and I didn't have a chance to do it. It was because of this and that." This automatic answer that comes to you is

very convenient. One has to be very intelligent to find these kinds of excuses. There is tremendous intelligence in laziness, but it is misused intelligence.

The best way of using our intelligence is to learn to feel what the skillful action in a situation is. To do that, we have to relate to the earth as directly as possible. Interestingly, we call this being “grounded.” In this approach, we do not regard work as just a job but as a way of expressing ourselves. It could be work in the garden or work around the house—cooking food, washing the dishes—whatever. These are not really jobs, but they are what has to be done because nature demands attention. It is very interesting that if you leave something undone or do not relate to even a small matter like, for instance, cooking with full and proper attention and clear thinking, then some kind of chaos is going to come up. This will happen because you are not relating properly; you are not expressing your love properly toward the earth. Either you’re going to break a dish or you’re going to spill something, or the food you’re cooking is going to turn out badly, or something else will go wrong. Nature tends to react very sensitively this way. If you don’t feel the relationship between the work and yourself, then chaos is going to arise.

A balanced state of mind depends on the way you do things, the way you pour a cup of tea and the way you put sugar and milk in it. It may seem to be a really insignificant thing, but it means everything. You can always tell whether a person feels the activity she is engaged in as dealing with the earth or whether she feels it as just some casual thing or something she is doing because she *has* to. If the person is not relating to the earth, then you can always feel a certain clumsiness, even if the person’s action appears to be smooth. This is very evident and easy to sense.

This also applies to how to deal with your life in general. Every situation has spiritual significance. If you do not feel every step you take, then your pattern of mind becomes full of chaos and you begin to wonder where these problems are coming from. They just spring out of nowhere, because they are a signal that attention is needed. They are saying, “Something’s wrong, and we want attention.” Situations demand attention because you refuse to see the subtlety of life. But if you are able to see the subtlety, if you pay attention, then they do not demand attention. Here it is impossible to cheat. You can’t pretend that you can pour a cup of tea beautifully. You can’t fake it. You can’t cheat; rather, you actually have to feel it; you have to feel the earth and your

relationship to it. Then, having started this way, you also have to finish everything else in the given work process. I've just been talking here about the domestic situation, but this relates to other situations as well.

It is very interesting to watch a Japanese tea ceremony. It begins with bringing together the necessary elements: the bowl and napkin, the whisk, the boiling water, and so on. Everything is deliberately and properly done. Then the tea is served, and the guests drink the tea deliberately and with the feeling of dealing with things properly. The ceremony also includes the proper way of cleaning the bowls, putting them away, clearing everything away. Clearing away is just as important as setting up at the beginning. Generally when we first get an impulse to do something—let's talk about cooking again—we tend to collect a lot of ingredients, and we chop them and cook them with a lot of enthusiasm. Then, having chopped and cooked, having churned out the dish, we often just leave everything lying around. We don't think in terms of cleaning up. We hope that perhaps some other wise person will come and help us clear everything away. If he's wise, he doesn't say anything at all. He just quietly washes our dishes and puts everything away before we even know he is there. Don't we wish!

In the materialistic round of life, there are endless advertisements for things to buy, and endless things are produced, but nobody explains how to clear everything away—how to dispose of the garbage. That seems to be the biggest problem that we have. This is another take on the Tibetan saying we already used: "It's better not to begin anything, but if you begin, don't leave a mess behind." So the challenge is not just the work itself but also how to end the work properly.

Our approach to a job in the world outside, beyond our domestic situation, is also extremely important. As long as you don't use the job as an escape or as a way of ignoring your basic existence, then it is good to work. Whether you run your own business or work for somebody else, work is important. It is tremendously important if you are interested in spiritual development, because the difficulties in working with yourself always come up in your relationship with other people and in your relationship with the mess associated with your relationship with other people, objects, and things. If one is able to deal with these things, that is one of the most subtle ways of bringing discipline into yourself. If you work in a factory, you shouldn't look

down on the others as merely factory workers or as merely producers of material things. You can learn a tremendous amount from your factory job and your coworkers.

Many of the problems people have in relating with work come from a pseudo sophistication of analytical mind: you don't want to engage physically at all; you purely want to work intellectually or mentally. This is a spiritual problem. The problem occurs when anyone interested in spiritual development thinks in terms of the importance of mind. We would like to have a deep understanding or higher understanding, that mysterious, highest, and deepest understanding of things, whatever it may be. In fact, the highest and deepest, most profound transcendental things exist in the kitchen sink or at the factory. Those situations might not be particularly blissful. They might not be as fascinating as reading about spiritual experiences, but the actual reality exists there. Working with people and encountering their simplicity as well as dealing with all the problems that come your way bring tremendous depth of experience. If you're actually working in a factory or running your own business, then you encounter all sorts of people and things that resonate with your own state of being. There is a subtle simplicity in dealing with ordinary working situations. Spirituality of the earthbound, and we might almost say peasant-kind, is something we are often very much lacking. That sort of tribal quality, or peasant quality, is one of the most beautiful, sane, and balanced qualities there is.

If you have this earthbound quality of simplicity, then, in fact, you won't have problems dealing with your mind at all. Everything will work in a balanced, earthbound way. Everything will be dealt with properly, thoroughly, and simply. When we encounter, say, the native peoples of India or Mexico, or Native Americans, we find they have an earthbound sanity. There is something sane about them, because they have worked with situations with their own hands. They have a rough and rugged and powerful quality. If you look at their faces, it is almost impossible to imagine that they might freak out. There is something solid and practical about them. People of the past such as Buddha or Christ were that type of people. They spent a long time with peasants and simple people. The people who wrote and gathered the Vedas and the *Dhammapada* and all the great scriptures were not high-strung intellectuals.<sup>7</sup> They were simple people. They lived a very simple life. They



fetches their own water and chops their own wood so they could boil the water to make their tea and soup. They learned to deal with domestic matters and to live in an earthy way.

To truly develop spiritually and become capable of skillful action, we have to simplify our approach to life a great deal. If we are able to do so on a bodily or physical level, we will be able to work with our psychological aspect as well, because this simplicity also makes a tremendous difference in our state of mind. Our whole pattern of thinking will change. The internal game that goes on will become much less of a game; it will turn into a practical way of thinking in situations.

So work and our relationship with work are based both on our state of mind and on how we relate to the earth. Meditative awareness is very important to this. We can describe meditation in terms of taking a leap. Taking a leap means experiencing the openness of space. You can take this kind of meditative leap while you are working. It is connected with bringing air and earth together. You can't feel the earth unless you feel the air. The more you feel the air, the more you feel the earth. Feeling the air and the earth together is feeling the space between you and the objects you are working with. This becomes a natural awareness of openness. You automatically begin to feel peace and lightness. The way to practice this is not to try to concentrate or try to be aware of yourself while managing the task you are doing at the same time. Rather, you should have a general feeling of acknowledging existence with openness while you work. Then you feel that there is more room to do things, more room to work. By cultivating a continual meditative state, you are acknowledging the existence of the openness. You don't have to try to hold on to this or try to bring it about deliberately. Just the pure acknowledgment of that state is enough. Acknowledge the vast energy of openness. Just flash on it; just acknowledge it. Flash on it for a second. A flash of acknowledgment is all it takes. Having acknowledged it, don't try to hold on. You almost ignore it after that. Continue with your work. The feeling of openness will also continue, and you will begin to develop the actual feel of the situation, the feel of the things you're working with.

So the awareness we are talking about here is not constant awareness as an object of mind. Instead of taking awareness as an object, you become one

with awareness, one with the open space, which of course also means becoming one with the actual things you're working with. Then the whole process becomes a very easy one-way process, rather than a situation in which you're trying to split yourself into different levels of awareness, with one level minding the other. With this easy one-way, one-step process, you begin to make a real relationship with objects and with the beauty of objects as well.

Don't try to possess the openness, but just acknowledge it and then turn away from it. It is important to turn away, because if you try to possess the openness, you have to chase after it. You try to follow it, which you can't actually do. You can't actually possess it at all. If you let go of it and disown it, and then continue working, this feeling stays with you all the way along.

Openness here refers to a meditative state of simplicity or lack of complication. The absence of complications becomes simplicity. Within simplicity there is room to do things, to move about. This is true of everyday actions as well as formal meditation itself.

Psychological materialism is also related to openness and complication. It is the opposite of the spaciousness of meditative awareness. In general, psychological materialism is a tremendous feeling in the background, behind your activities, that you want to fulfill something. You relate to situations through grasping and possessiveness. In other words, you take your logic of what's happening too seriously and you try to follow up on it with deliberate grasping. It is an ongoing painful state of wanting to fulfill certain goals. You are caught up in a competitive state of mind. There is a general heaviness in your way of pursuing things. This heaviness of mind feels almost like your mind is filled with heavy metal. It is almost a metallic state of mind. You might try to get away from this by rejecting it, but then the alternative becomes pure fascination with objects, with things. Rather than feeling them in an earthy way, you are fascinated by them. This produces a kind of plastic world.

So the materialistic mind can have these two qualities: heaviness or fascination. To put it in terms of the modern world, we might compare these two qualities to metal—one might say ironlike metal and plastic. The plastic approach is fascinated with colors rather than the actual qualities of things as they are. The heavy or metallic approach pursues things very seriously, almost demonically. In this state of mind of heaviness, there's no room at all for a

sense of humor; there's no room to create fresh thinking. Everything has to be numbered and worked out. The mind here has a powerful demanding aspect to it. This may lead to action, but that action is a product of the mind that is caught up in the heaviness. In fact, such action is less horrific and less demonic than the state of mind, which is so heavy and so solid.

With the materialistic approach, it is as though the whole of space were filled with cement, with metal, or with plastic! This is the reason people feel such tremendous claustrophobia about materialism. It is not only because of all the material things that surround them. It is much more because they feel their whole psychology has turned into aluminum and plastic. There's no room to move, no room to do things. Instead of open space, their space has become solid space.

I am describing the heaviness of the state of mind of psychological materialism as almost demonic because there is something terribly cruel and self-destructive about not allowing space. We could almost describe this state of mind as evil, because that state of mind is so self-destructive. It never allows any kind of freedom at all. When you are in this state of mind, the more you feel there's something to work on, the more you are driven to put energy into it. This becomes an endless chain reaction. It feels demonic in the sense of being without air, which is connected with a feeling of death, really. It's as though there were no windows in a room at all. It's completely suffocating. This is deathlike because there's nothing thriving, nothing growing, nothing developing further. Everything's purely being drawn in and collected, and you never let anything develop at all. Although the space has already been totally filled, one collects more and more stuff until situations completely break down. So psychological materialism is the suicidal process that results from ego's hunger. It doesn't have any sense of humor or any exuberant quality. It is mean and possessive.

The whole point of discussing this is that while we may not have to run the world exactly, we do have to run ourselves, whether we like it or not. We are the world. So that simplifies things a lot. The notion of evil isn't that something exists outside us that is fundamentally all that bad, as we know, but evil is that state of mind which destroys our capacity to develop or grow. Evil is solidity, with no room to develop anything at all. The confused mind, which we all have, tends to be self-destructive, collecting things and not

digesting them. Simply by continuing the process of collecting things, we are not letting ourselves digest them. We could destroy ourselves if we keep that up. You might end up in a kind of eternal mental hospital, which would be called the confused state of hell. I don't mean a physical mental hospital on this earth. Rather, I am referring to what is known in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition as *vajra* hell. It's the personal hell that perpetuates the hallucinations of confusion all the time. At this level, there seems to be no way of getting out of this confusion. It could be called the ultimate egohood.

However, even at the level of the greatest intensity of this psychological materialism, our primordial intelligence does not cease; it does not give in. Ultimately, we begin to find something wrong with materialism. This is happening now in the Western world—we are looking for something beyond the materialistic outlook. The heaviness and crowdedness we all feel automatically brings doubt. The doubt inspires people to search beyond this heaviness, and they begin to discover something beyond materialistic thinking. This is happening now, but the result is that people tend to condemn this world as a complete failure, as completely bad. Here, they go too far, because buddha nature, or spiritual intelligence, thrives all along the way. That is never going to leave, never going to abandon us; it is never going to give out or give in. Whenever we find something that takes the form of an answer, then automatically our intelligence works and sees that this answer is not the real answer—which means that you have found the answer, in the form of a question.

Similarly, life continues, or the consciousness continues. I'm not referring here to actual reincarnation, physical birth and death. That's actually a very crude example of rebirth. Rebirth occurs in every moment. Every moment you die and you are born again. This birth and death takes place all the time on and on and on. So as long as there's consciousness, which dies and gives birth to the next moment, then that is continual reincarnation, continual rebirth. The next moment depends on one's state of consciousness in this moment; then you give birth to a similar next moment as well. The next moment depends on whether this moment of consciousness has a negative quality or a positive quality. That quality continues as you give birth to the next moment. The minutes and seconds of the hour continue as minutes and seconds in the night as well as during the day.

You may not remember your past life. There's nothing to prove or disprove it, particularly. However, you can't stop your consciousness; you can't kill your consciousness or stop the consciousness of this moment. This exists continuously.

Many ordinary people have had experiences that they feel confirm the existence of reincarnation. In England I knew a Catholic family whose daughter died in an accident. They had another daughter a few years later. One day the second daughter was crossing the road with her father, and suddenly she said: "I don't want to cross this road. This is where the accident happened last time, isn't it, Daddy?" And indeed it was where the accident had occurred. Similar things have happened to a lot of people, but I don't want to speculate about that or try to make people believe this. The main point is that consciousness continues all the time. It can't be destroyed. Whether we are asleep or we are unconscious, consciousness continues, all the time.

As long as we feel some sense of empty space and openness, there is something to work with. It's not so very difficult to find this sense of space. It just requires taking a leap into the empty space by not questioning or second-guessing ourselves. This feeling of empty space might be unpleasant to start with, but just leap into it. See what happens.

Meditation, in particular, provides us with the inspiration to relate to the spaciousness of life. To begin with, this comes from working with our thoughts. In your meditation practice, you might find that thoughts are constantly rushing through your mind. If you see them as purely thoughts rather than focusing on the subject of your thinking, then there is more space. When you think of your thoughts purely as a thinking *process*, rather than focusing on the contents of the thoughts, that will make your attitude toward thoughts very impersonal. If you were watching a crowd, and within this crowd you saw your friends and relatives walking around, then immediately you would associate yourself with those people and you would name them and fixate on them, apart from the crowd. Then you are caught up with the whole thing, and it becomes very crowded. Whereas if you just notice the people and don't try to identify with them, it's more impersonal. It's the same thing with your thoughts. In meditation you develop this impersonal way of looking at thoughts.

In our modern approach to work, I think we use too many automatic devices, which makes it more difficult to appreciate space. Once when I was living in Scotland, some of us were trying to scrape the old paint off a wall. We were using manual paint scrapers and making quite good progress. There was a person working with us who didn't particularly like doing this kind of work. Nevertheless, I had asked him to work with us, and he joined us. After about half an hour he said, "Let's buy an electric tool and get it done faster." So we bought one, and we tried to use it. Then he said there was something wrong with the sandpaper we were using. He convinced us we needed to buy a coarser kind. So we bought some very rough sandpaper, but the result was that we ended up with a kind of dimpling in the wall.

So at times we are spoiled by using too many gadgets. This is why I am suggesting that we cultivate the kind of peasant quality of just working, disregarding whether you are making good progress or not. If you only think in terms of finishing a job, you don't actually make a good worker. If you are enjoying the process, then you make a good worker.

I wouldn't say that human society is going downhill, but human beings have created more and more substitutes for all kinds of real things. All of these tools that human beings have created can be overwhelming. The tools become bigger and bigger, until finally you find yourself in a house filled with gigantic gadgets. All the factories and machinery must have started from a few simple tools: a sickle, a knife, a spoon, and maybe some chopsticks as well. Now instead of using simple things, we use complex, gigantic tools. Instead of our using the tools, the tools are using us. I think we are missing the point. We have to come back to simplicity.

However, if you tried to go back and imitate the life of the Stone Age, that wouldn't cure the problem at all—because then leading the Stone Age life would become a new form of chic luxury that would have to be overcome. Instead, we have to work with the situation we have and try to develop the peasant quality in the midst of working with all the machines. I think we can do this. There may be very few examples of this type of earthy mentality in America, but we could be among them. If we're able to overcome psychological materialism, then we'll be able to work properly with the machines. Because materialism isn't the machines; it isn't things. It is the

psychological aspect, our materialistic mentality. We have one of the greatest chances ever to discover simplicity amid the complications. That is the greatest discovery we could make. That would be a wonderful achievement for human beings, and we are just about to do it.

There could well come a time when the heart of spirituality will be discovered in more advanced countries. One day, instead of students going to India, Tibet, or Japan to study under great spiritual teachers there, the Indian, Tibetan, and Japanese students will come to America to study here under great wisdom teachers. The cycle works like that.

---

7. The Vedas are the most ancient sacred writings of Hinduism, written in early Sanskrit. Traditionally, they are believed to comprise four collections: the Samhitas, the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas, and the Upanishads. The term *Veda* is from the Sanskrit word for knowledge. The *Dhammapada* consists of a collection of 423 verses in Pali believed to be spoken by the Buddha for the benefit of a wide range of human beings. These sayings were selected and compiled into one book because of their beauty and relevance.—Eds.

## FIVE

# *Overcoming Obstacles to Work*

## FRIVOLITY

WHEN YOU BEGIN SOMETHING HAPHAZARDLY, frivolously, the whole process is going to end up as half-finished work. Before you begin, if you don't approach the situation properly, you get into it in a frivolous way. I don't mean to say that you should be solemn, but there should be respect for the sacredness, the perpetual sacredness, of the situations you are in. Those situations are sacred because of the unique fact that you are there. The situations you are in are part of your reminders, part of your way of expressing yourself. If you ignore the tremendous opportunity they provide to express your true nature, then your whole approach to life becomes frivolous.

There could be confusion between frivolity and a genuine sense of humor. A real sense of humor without frivolousness is a state of confidence, fearlessness, because you know the situation as it is. You leap into it and you take part in it. Because you know what you are doing, it is a joyful situation, rather than being solemn or too serious. In the case of frivolousness, that whole area of confidence has been obscured. Instead, there is a facade of impulsiveness. Partly embarrassed and partly lacking in confidence, you get into something. Then you become like an amateur comedian trying to please the audience. In such cases, it is better not to begin.

Frivolity is secondary rather than your inborn nature. It would be hard to find someone who developed his whole personality around being frivolous all the time. Everybody has a dignified style, which is inborn and available to us. When a person's behavior is based on expressing something genuine and



human, there is always dignity involved. It doesn't matter what you are doing, even if the activity is sleeping or defecating. Again, frivolity is a secondary thing. That is why it is possible for a person to tune in to the primordial state of his whole being, whatever he may be doing. That is always possible.

Frivolousness is obvious. It is a sort of semidetached state of being. There's a fundamental self-conscious and self-apologetic quality present in frivolity. That's why you have to bring a serious element into any frivolous situation. That need should be obvious to you when it is happening. There will be a point in the frivolity where there's room for temporary seriousness. This seems to be the only occasion where seriousness or solemnity could act as an entryway for a genuine sense of humor. That moment, where you can replace the frivolity with real humor, will be obvious.

You don't have to conceal your frivolousness and pretend it's not there. First there's the act of being frivolous. Then a sudden awareness, a double take about being frivolous, brings you back to seriousness. Then that leads to developing the real, ultimate sense of humor.

Frivolity doesn't become irrelevant. What happens is that you realize it is taking place. When the frivolity has been caught, spotted, then it can transform into something else. The alternative, of trying to rule out frivolousness altogether, could lead to a very static attitude—like very orthodox parents who don't allow their children to enjoy themselves or play at all. Anything frivolous, any excitement the children try to express, is regarded as childish. The parents try to push the children into an adult state, which ends up being quite negative, because then the children have no chance to become aware of the frivolous state as it is. Also, apparent frivolousness could be purely an expression of enjoyment or spontaneity. So there's no point in trying to suppress frivolousness. Rather, frivolousness can ignite a sudden understanding of the situation, and that could lead to a sense of humor.

## **SPEED**

Another obstacle to work comes from speed, which prevents you from developing a relationship with the actual work. There is often a misunderstanding or confusion between accomplishment and speed. They are very closely related. The genuine energy of accomplishment tries to go along with the patterns of that moment in the work, so that you don't miss an inch. You are dealing all the time with every corner and every detail that occurs, so what you do is very efficient. In the case of speed, there is also a tendency toward accomplishment, but accomplishment without relating with the situation—just purely speeding along for the sake of action alone. Quite possibly that will cause inefficiency, because you don't see the details of the work when you are more involved in your speed than in accomplishing something. It is difficult to generalize, but in this situation you have to experiment and try to examine your whole approach: whether your approach is based on communication with the work or whether it is based on speeding. Speed has a lot to do with expectations. You set your mind to accomplish things to the level of what you expect, and when things don't meet that level of expectation, you speed up further. Speed is also connected with a territorial feeling, a feeling that you are involved with your speed; therefore anybody around you should clear out of your way; they should draw back into their own territory.

## DAYDREAMS

Another obstacle is purely thinking about the things you need to do rather than actually doing them. You can almost convince yourself that you've accomplished things just by thinking about them. In that case, the alternative is to be more realistic. At some point, as a Buddhist practitioner, you might do visualization practice. In the beginning, when you first do such a practice, you might start at the wrong end of the stick. You might visualize yourself as the Buddha, already enlightened, and you are sending out your emanations to help other sentient beings and save them, and in your mind, you become a great world figure. But when you wake up from your daydream and return to your practice, you find yourself in the same old situation. You don't necessarily regard the dreaming process as bad or an obstacle, but you have to realize that it's not realistic enough. Action speaks louder than words. You should regard the daydreams as pure thought patterns.

In this situation of fantasizing, you need to relate with earth, the physical situations of life. Usually daydreams and imagination come up when you are in a seemingly comfortable situation, a secure situation. Then you get a chance to extend your tentacles, stretch your legs, and dream about a lot of things.

You don't have to torture yourself to overcome this problem, but at the same time, you should include physical activity, actual manual work of some kind, in your daily life. You might even dig trenches or direct traffic. In Calcutta in the 1960s, after I left Tibet, for the first time I saw women directing traffic on construction crews. They had to be right on the point, directing which car could pass next. There was no chance to dream.

I have a friend who is an outstanding Buddhist scholar, and he invited me for tea one day in Oxford. I went to his place, and he had hired another friend to make tea for the two of us. She made the tea, and then she put the teapot, the cookies, and all the tea things there on the table. Then she left, because she had to go somewhere. So my friend had to pour tea for both of us, and he was actually shaking as he did this, so that he couldn't pour the tea properly. He was spilling the tea all over the table. He is a great thinker, supposedly.

When I finished my cup of tea, he was hesitant to offer me another cup of tea. I let him pour another cup! While we were having tea, he was giving me a long talk about how Tibetans roll up thangkas, Tibetan paintings, and he seemed completely oblivious to the fact that I was a Tibetan. It was as though he were talking to some unknown nobody without any idea where Tibet is. He was showing me, actually demonstrating: “This is what Tibetans do! They roll up thangkas this way. This is a Tibetan thing they do.” He was telling me all about it. This is an example of what happens when there is no earth or groundedness in the situation.

## INTERPERSONAL CONFLICTS

There is another problem that arises when people work or live together and they are in conflict about how something should be done. For example, some people may want a place kept tidy, but others don't mind if it's a mess. In that situation, it's not really a question of what you mind or don't mind, but it's a question of what's applicable to the actual situation as it is.

Such conflicts can be a tremendous opportunity for us to realize that we can't hold on to our concepts of the situation. You may have all kinds of conversations with yourself: "I don't mind having an untidy place, but at the same time, it may be necessary for me to put my effort into doing something about it. Maybe I am getting too relaxed, partly because I don't want to clean the place, and partly because I like being untidy. It's more casual and spontaneous that way." You bring up all sorts of discussions in your mind. The real question is: are you putting your view, your particular idea, out there for the sake of contributing something to the situation or not? One has to step out of one's own comforting situation, one's comfort zone. You have to learn to step out further, to feel the panoramic view of the whole situation, the whole community, the whole group of people. You should try to work accordingly, rather than purely sticking to your view. Your view is this way, their view is that way, and therefore, there is no meeting point. But others can step out of their point of view as much as you can step out. If they're not willing to step out, then you should set the example of stepping out into the general aerial view of the situation. Then something can come from the mutual meeting of the two views of the situation.

In fact, you could point out to the person who is dogmatically involved with keeping the house completely, absolutely clean that there's something not very healthy about that approach. That person might respond that your style of being messy is not healthy either. At that point, you might say, "Okay, that's true; both situations are not very healthy. So let's find a new ground to work on this." It's not quite compromising in the sense of reaching a happy medium alone, but it's realizing that there is a great chance to relate with each other.

If the relationship between two people is absolutely simple and direct, then you can reach such an understanding. If the relationship entails more fundamental problems, and if the other person is approaching you and raising an objection to your behavior or style on the basis of other subtle aspects of the relationship, then you have to deal with that subtle relationship as well. You can't just act stupidly or simpl-mindedly. That would not be creative or honest.

In many situations, people know that they have subtle conflicts in their relationships with each other. But in order to approach each other, they pick on mundane things, small details, on the pretense that the relationship exists purely in those mundane situations. Since the other person doesn't want to relate with the subtleties either, he or she will also approach the relationship from that mundane point of view. That small disagreement over who takes out the trash or cleans the pots in the sink may be solved by common sense, but something greater is still not solved. Even saying something like "Good morning, how are you today?" could have all sorts of implications behind it. Once you begin to focus solely on the simple situation as the problem, without acknowledging the larger disagreements, this situation becomes more and more complicated. I'm not acting as a psychiatrist here or trying to solve people's problems for them. You have to respect the situation and use your intelligence. Everything we've discussed already is a rough guideline.

## VIEWING PROBLEMS AS UNIVERSAL

Sometimes people try to look at the issue of conflict from some view of universal consciousness. You say to yourself that your problems are everybody's problems, and your happiness is everybody's happiness. Actually, when you have to think about it in this fashion, the problem or the promise ceases to be universal. It becomes very personal. On the one hand, I'm sure everybody's problem is everybody's problem. The pleasure is everybody's as well, but that approach to problems actually makes them harder to solve. It might seem easier to understand things this way, but practically speaking, how are we going to put our understanding into practice? You have to find somebody—one person—to make the first move, not everybody. As we said earlier, action speaks louder than words. One person has to make the first move; it's not everybody acting together because it's a universal problem. The whole problem must be reduced to a single stepping-stone by somebody. Somebody finds the stepping-stone, one particular person. It would be very difficult to divide things up so that everybody could do the same thing at the same time, like everybody trying to pass the salt at once. From the practical point of view, it's impossible.

## CONCEPTUALIZING GOOD AND BAD

Once we become involved with a spiritual path and spiritual teachings, there's often a fundamental problem of conceptualizing good and bad. This can be our biggest problem in relationship to work or activity: immediately, when a situation presents itself, we think in terms of the Teaching, with a capital *T*, which makes us self-conscious. Then we act in accordance with that self-consciousness. We act in terms of what will feel better or feel worse or will make us feel we've behaved clumsily or beautifully, from the viewpoint of a conceptualized and reified view of the Teachings. Then nothing real happens in the way of a genuine human relationship. This is one of the biggest of all problems throughout history: trying to act according to the capital *T* Teaching, according to ideas rather than the actual teaching contained in our experience. The clumsiness or self-consciousness connected with conceptualizing situations can only be freed if a person breaks through the barrier of self-consciousness, the watcher. Then a person can act truly and properly—as it is. Then our action becomes like buddha activity. A person doesn't do things a certain way because he's a buddha, but he acts as the situation calls for.

There is no simple solution to any problem until conceptual evaluation drops away, which requires tremendous loosening up. A person might feel that he or she is absolutely self-conscious about everything. This person might have studied all the teachings about being spontaneous. However, the more information about spontaneity that is presented to him or her, the more self-consciousness develops. Finally the tension becomes unbearable. The only thing to do is just to give up the whole attempt and be an ordinary human being.

When you begin to give up your concepts about how things should be, you may begin to question your obligations and commitment to the teachings altogether. However, giving up your conceptualizations doesn't mean you have to be disrespectful toward the teachings. You could still respect the teachings while giving up your personal concept about them. That would help each of us to become a true person, a real person, as opposed to a person



according to the books. I've been talking here about giving up preconceived ideas about the Buddhist teachings, in relationship to how you conduct yourself in everyday life. But this can apply to any system of thought or ethics that you try to apply in a narrow way, if it takes you away from the immediacy of your life and prevents spontaneity in your response to situations.

That doesn't mean that you give up basic sanity. In fact, that is what you embrace. You have to give up your limited personal views on it. Your basic sanity is a part of you anyway. If a person is in a state of mind where he is brave enough to give up the conceptualization of the teachings, that person has an earth-grounded quality already, which allows him or her to give up the hang-ups of the teaching. At that point, he or she becomes a teacher. This is true whether we're talking about a teacher of meditation or a master gardener or a chef.

Although some people feel that the trip, the concept, of the teachings should be given up, they feel it is far from a possibility for them. You never know. One should never underestimate oneself. That might be your big step. It was for Gautama Buddha. He gave up the teaching that he received from other great Hindu yogis, and that caused him to attain enlightenment. The ability to take that step is as available to us as it was to the Buddha. In any case, when you are working with yourself and come to that kind of crossroads, you can't really step back; you can't regress. What you are giving up is the concept. Since you are on the path anyway, you can't really give up your whole journey at all. You just give up the concepts. On the other hand, it would be dangerous to be too sure of yourself: "I have the confidence to give up the trip. I can do without the concepts. I can stop now." That could be ego double-crossing you.

The point is that you don't have to be one hundred percent faithful all the time, like a professional following the formula expressed in the teaching. If that profession begins to be a hang-up, then you give it up. That's why we have levels of spiritual development like the ten *bhumis*, or stages, of the bodhisattva path. The bodhisattvas move from one *bhumi* to the next by seeing that their previous involvement was a trip and then stepping out of it. Then they get involved in another trip, and they step out of that one as well. And so it goes, on and on.

The attitude we are discussing here is quite different from the hinayana approach of following very specific, concrete precepts, like always being friendly and generous and never killing anything. The ordination in Tibetan monasteries into the monastic discipline is called *dompa* [*sdom pa*], which means binding. The discipline binds you constantly. You feel that you are permanently bound by the precepts. You are bound by the discipline and bounded by it; you don't have a chance to act spontaneously and then push yourself over the line, because the whole thing is set and completely patterned. That is a necessary part of monastic discipline and very important to follow in that situation.

The hinayana precepts are very much based on rules to deal with whatever physical situations arise. Once a monk lost his begging bowl washing it in a rushing river, and that resulted in a new rule: in the future monks shouldn't wash their begging bowls in rushing rivers. When you take monastic ordination, you have to get into all the little details, all those little rules that developed throughout the life of the Buddha. You're not supposed to sleep on a mattress filled with black wool; you're not supposed to sleep on somebody's roof; you can't have a pointed post on your bed.

Bodhisattva precepts are different from these hinayana precepts. Bodhisattva precepts are based on working with human psychology, and beyond that, there are the vajrayana, or tantric, precepts, which are connected with a highly sophisticated psychological state of being. All three approaches to precepts are valid, but we should understand that there are differences between them. We are not all going to live like monks or yogis; in fact, very few of us will do either. The mahayana or the bodhisattva approach to working with daily life may be particularly helpful and applicable for lay practitioners at this time.

## OBSTACLES TO GENEROSITY

Continuing with the discussion of how to go beyond our concepts of good and bad, we could look at the approach to generosity, which is the first paramita, or transcendent action, of a bodhisattva. Real generosity is generosity without expectation. Usually when you're being generous, you expect something in return, some expression of gratitude or some gesture in return. If you don't expect anything in return, you could be transcendentally generous. Real generosity is like being rich and poor at the same time. You are rich: you can afford to give lots of things. But you are poor at the same time: you appreciate whatever you receive without feeling entitled to it. The sutras mention practicing generosity just by stretching out one's arm and bringing it back again. Give, receive, give, receive, give, receive. It is worthwhile to practice being generous even though there might be a conceptual component in it. The first step is sometimes painful for people to take. It seems ridiculous to give in such a simpleminded fashion, because one is afraid to be a fool. What possible reason could you give yourself for trying to be generous? It could allow you to realize that you are a fool. It says in the *Dhammapada* that a person who realizes he is a fool is a wise man indeed.<sup>8</sup>

If you're being generous for a reason instead of being genuinely generous for no reason, when you realize that, you can go ahead and still be generous. You work from where you are; you don't have to stop being generous. If you stop, it's another double-cross from ego. Instead, you go along with whatever happens. You are just following the pattern of the path. You pass tigers and poisonous snakes on your way. You don't stop for them, you just go along. When your impulse is to hold back, maybe because you feel that your generosity is purely conceptual, you should push ahead, as though you were an actor. That doesn't mean that you forget the impulse to retreat; that could still be there. However, you push ahead and take a generous action nevertheless.

Maybe inside your circle of comfort, generosity feels very natural. Then when you step outside that zone of comfort, generosity may feel unnatural. As you step out, you feel uncomfortable, and it feels as if you were playing a

game or acting out a part. Just go ahead and do it—push a little bit. You don't have to go as far as to make your activity into a complete game. Actually, at the moment you're about to step out, the idea that there is a game going on doesn't come into your mind—because you actually see precisely at that very point of stepping out. After that point, the idea of generosity as a game and all sorts of conceptualized notions might come along, but they are of a secondary nature. You begin to realize that real generosity is possible. In fact, you are doing it!

Pushing yourself overboard in this way is very powerful. Often, because you are so involved with maintaining your territory and your resentment, you don't want to step out, and doing so may seem like a big deal. In fact, it has a tremendous impact on you to step out even a little bit. In certain situations, the best way to loosen up is to step out of the psychological situation into the physical situation of actions, which is very concrete.

A further obstacle to developing generosity is our preoccupation with so-called personal dignity, of the sort that comes from being brought up as self-centered people. This is sometimes reinforced in our experience in school, through the course of our education. Nobody likes to give up that game of self-importance, because it is something we can hold on to; it's our handle. So the first time you try to be generous, you give up just a little bit of that space. Then, the next time, you can give much more, and then more and more. The process develops over time, but eventually fundamental honesty begins to develop from those gestures of generosity.

The first time you try to give up, try to open, you may know there's no reality there. You're just acting. Then quite possibly the thought might come up: "This is just acting, this is not a serious thing; this is not real." Thoughts like that might close you in and make you feel that you shouldn't try to open to others. Analyzing yourself at the point when you are about to open is not important; in fact it becomes destructive. Just go ahead and give. If they arise, step over those doubts and second thoughts. Being generous in a concrete, physical way is very healthy and opportune. That doesn't necessarily mean that a person has to start with a full smile, but she could. She might find that she's smiling at her own full smile. Then the next smile becomes a more spontaneous one.

## ACKNOWLEDGING THINGS AS THEY ARE

There are many ways to overcome the obstacles to work. What you need to do depends on the basic pattern you have. Easing up or slowing down becomes useful in some situations because that's the only way to keep your speedometer related to the earth. In other situations, it's less useful because your downtime becomes fantasizing, a dream of nonexistence, where you spend your time anticipating how your dreams will come true. That doesn't really help.

On the whole, it is difficult to give definite prescriptions about how to relate with situations of the moment. A person simply has to be awake and open to her situation and work along with it one way or another. You have to relate with situations as they are, absolutely. Then the whole situation of work becomes more friendly, because you can relate to work in terms of your own state of being, where you really are. If you can't relate directly with the situation, all your efforts become a waste of energy. Then the direct feedback from the situation may actually seem uncompassionate, and it can sometimes even seem cruel. The feedback can definitely be very sharp and heavy, but it is definitely true.

You can't fundamentally improve things by thinking that last time you did badly; therefore this time you should do better. If you're comparing now to last time, you can't improve at all. Things have to be measured on the merits of the present given situation, and that situation can actually seem very cruel to you. If you're out of touch, the situation rejects you. If you're right there, it accepts you infinitely, beautifully. However, if you are disconnected from what's happening, the situation rejects you painfully. It may even destroy you. Dealing with the chemistry of a situation is like that. If it's the right medicine, it cures you. If it's the wrong medicine, it poisons you. Relating directly is very sharp, pointed. However, it is helping us, in the fundamental sense, because we can't con situations. We can't change them at all by trying to work around them or approaching them by the back door. Things don't work that way. Our approach has to be honest, direct, and very precise.

A lot of people complain about the feedback from the world. Some people may think: “If God is love, why should I have such bad luck? I have had such a succession of mishaps, and yet I haven’t killed a fly. I’m honest, a good citizen, a good person, a religious person; how could this happen to me?” They may go on thinking: “Sometimes I have to question whether God exists at all. I wonder about that, but that’s an evil thought.” People do question themselves like that. There were a lot of questions like that after the two World Wars, because so many misfortunes befell seemingly good, faithful people. People began to complain about the injustice of it. However, somehow justice isn’t based on maintaining such general concepts of good and bad. It’s much more intelligent and finely tuned than that. Justice is based on the minute details of your approach to things. In some sense, people deserve their painful or pleasurable situations, as difficult as this may be to accept.<sup>9</sup>

Buddha was criticized by one of his attendants as being wise but lacking in compassion. This attendant, Lekpe Karma, spent twenty-four years with the Buddha. After serving him for so long, the attendant said to himself, “I could be a buddha myself if he is the so-called Buddha. Except for his calmness and methodical way of approaching things, there’s no difference between us.” Those were the only differences he could see between himself and the Buddha. At one point the Buddha told him, “You are going to die in seven days.” The attendant felt very apprehensive, saying to himself, “Sometimes what this devil says is true.” He fasted for seven days to avoid any cause for illness and death. On the seventh day, he was on his way to see the Buddha to show him that he wasn’t dead. He was very happy, but as he was going along, he suddenly felt a powerful thirst and drank some water, which turned out to be poisonous. He died on his way to see the Buddha to prove to him that what the Awakened One had said was not true.

As a Buddhist teacher, you can’t always present things gently, because situations are not gentle. You may have to say, “You’re going to die, and that’s a fact.” There’s no point in saying, “Oh, I’m very sorry and upset about it, but you’re going to die in seven days.” I’m sure the Buddha didn’t go to the trouble of manufacturing such apologetic language. Instead he acted as a reflection, as a complete mirror. He spoke from his true psychological state rather than trying to provide a cozy home, which he couldn’t have done

anyway. On account of that bluntness, the Buddha was accused by his attendant of having wisdom without compassion, knowing everything but being without emotion.

The softness in the situation has to come from you rather than someone else adding it in. If someone falls in love with you, it doesn't help if you aren't in love with that person. Nothing can be manufactured from the outside. You have to be in a state of softness or openness to the situation; the outside situation can only act as a reminder. Outside situations can only act as landmarks. That is true of your relationship to a spiritual teacher as well. The teacher can only tell you where you're at. She doesn't say, "This is where you are at; therefore you're a beautiful person," or "This is where you're at; therefore you're a terrible person." That extra phrase doesn't help. The message is purely: "This is where you're at."

---

8. From Chapter Five, "The Fool," Verse 63.

9. According to the Buddhist view of karma, or the law of cause and effect, situations do not arise randomly in one's life, but they come about because of our former actions, or the karmic causes and conditions that lead to a situation. In a later chapter, Chögyam Trungpa talks about how one can step out of this perpetual creation of good and bad karma. For most of us most of the time, however, we are reaping the results of past actions and creating the seeds for future conditions to arise.—Eds.

## SIX

### *The Nowness of Work*

EGO IS VERY GOAL ORIENTED. With ego you have somebody *here* on this end who is going *there*—to the goal. If you are fixated on an aim, an object or a target, then your search becomes a battle. Then the whole spiritual journey becomes a battle, a matter of hope and fear. The problem with having a goal is figuring out what to do after you get to the goal. As long as there is a goal, that means there's a dead end. It's like receiving your PhD. After you receive your degree, you have to look for a job. All roads lead to a dead end, even if the road is a highway. No matter how big the road is, there's always an end to it. At last you come to the ocean, and you can't drive any farther. You have to turn back.

The spiritual search should be aimless. Otherwise it ceases to be spirituality, because spirituality is limitless. For that matter, this applies to anything in life, not just the spiritual journey as such. Bodhisattva activity is a model of action without ego's goal orientation, at least theoretically. Ideally, bodhisattvas—mahayana practitioners who have vowed to help all sentient beings—would say: "I surrender myself, and I see a glimpse of egolessness. Egolessness has a much greater territory than I ever imagined. It extends to all sentient beings, as far as space reaches. I'm going to help them all." As a bodhisattva, you have to have this greater vision, an absolute vision that goes along with infinite feeling. That infinite feeling—that you're going to save all sentient beings—has no end because you have seen the infiniteness of the inwardness as well. There's no end out there, and there's no end at this end either. In that sense, both sides are equal.



You might think this means the bodhisattva is just working on himself or herself. But no, the bodhisattva is just working *there*. He's fulfilling needs everywhere. Wherever help is needed, he is providing help. There's actual infinite space. The bodhisattva is identifying with the person who needs help, not with himself. That's the whole point. If you are helping others just to make yourself feel good—"I want to help people because I want to see those people happy"—that is just entertaining yourself. Instead, you help others because help is needed.

The bodhisattva vows to save all sentient beings, but that is not a goal in the relative sense. The bodhisattva realizes that what she is saying in that vow is completely impractical. You can't really do it. We see this from the mythical story of the great bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. He had a literal goal in mind in the beginning. He took that vow, "Until I save all six realms of existence, I will not attain enlightenment." He worked and he worked and he worked to fulfill his vow. He helped beings, and he thought he'd saved hundreds of millions of them. Then he turned around and saw that an even greater number than he had saved were still suffering, and he had flickers of doubts at that point.

At the beginning, when he took the vow, he had said, "If I have any doubts about my path, may my head split into a thousand pieces." This vow came true at this time. His head began to fall apart. He was in tremendous pain of confusion, not knowing what he was doing. Then, according to the myth, Amitabha—a great buddha of compassion—came to him and said, "Now you're being foolish. That vow you took shouldn't be taken literally. What you took was a vow of limitless compassion." Avalokiteshvara realized that and understood it. Through that recognition, he became a thousand times more powerful. That's why the iconographical image of Avalokiteshvara often has twelve heads and a thousand arms. You see, once you take the meaning of saving all others literally, you lose the sacredness of it. If you're able to see that compassion applies to every situation, then compassion becomes limitless. You don't try to attain enlightenment at all, but you find yourself enlightened at a certain stage, because you continuously put in such a concentrated effort.

You realize that the path is also the goal. The bodhisattva is quite happy with the path he is treading on. The path is what there is to work with, and

that work is there eternally, because sentient beings are numberless, and we have to work with them eternally. That realization manifests as vast energy. The bodhisattva vow is really an acceptance of the energy. It is saying, “I take a vow to commit myself to work with this limitless energy.” It is a commitment to work twenty-four hours a day without time off. You can’t have part-time bodhisattvas.

When we say that spirituality has to be aimless, this is saying that spirituality is recognizing that unlimited energy. From that, you begin to develop a clear and precise understanding of nowness. Now is everything. Whatever you do in this very moment is everything; it’s the past, it’s the future, it’s now. So you develop tremendous confidence that what you are doing is true and honest and absolutely realistic.

For example, you can’t hear a piece of music in advance. When you listen to music, you are hearing the present music at that time. You also can’t undo the past, the music that you’ve heard already. You can’t do that; you hear the music of the moment. Now is a vast thing. Past and future can’t exist without now. Otherwise, without the criterion of now, they cease to be past and future.

Now is all the time, and it is choiceless. There is always now, always now. The forms and memories of the past are always in relation to now. The future also is a situation relative to now. There’s always this precision of now, which is there all the time and which helps us to relate with the past and the future. With now, we know where we are, and therefore how we relate with other things. Of course, by the time you’re trying to relate with a situation, the actual experience has gone past. Still, there is some anchor somewhere, of now, now, now, which goes on all the time. From this point of view, the choices we make depend on how much we are accurately in the now.

Conceptions come from either future or past. Somehow they don’t apply now. The absence of conceptions is very helpful, and the absence of conceptions also becomes the source of learning, which is now. The minute when you begin to speculate, that moment is past already. You perceive now rather than think it. Now can only be perceived, rather than thought of. The minute when you think of now, that’s a double take. It’s useless already. So you may think that conceptions from the past are helpful, since they provide helpful reference points for what we are doing now, but also their absence

helps, not only their existence. In the present moment, you may feel that you are going back and forth into the past and the future. However, the present moment is really the only thing. It's the one thing, the choiceless choice.

Work takes place now. Now is never careless. If you perceive now as it is, it's always right on the spot. If you have to make a choice, you can only make a choice of whatever is now, at that moment. In some sense, you may feel you make a choice, but actually you don't really make the choice; it just happens that way because you see the situation precisely. Precision comes from now. Any possibilities of a careless choice come from past and future. They are purely dreams.

Let's talk more practically about work. The point of view of nowness provides a very good ground for our discussion of work. First let's look at some of the ordinary attitudes toward work. There's the impulsive approach, as for instance, when you feel like being helpful to someone, and you get up and do their dishes. At that moment, you're keen to help. More often, you see the work in front of you as something you must do. It's a chore, a drag. Once again, it may be better not to begin something in the first place, but if you do begin, then accomplish it properly. However, a lot of people, after already having become involved in a work situation, start to question it, asking themselves whether they should really be involved in this project or not. That undermines the present situation they are in already. As long as we are working and being of potential service, we have to face the situation as it is. Unless we pack our bags and escape, we have to deal with circumstances directly. Even if we do escape from one situation, then we will have to find another. Circumstances are perpetually arising where we have to deal with work of some kind.

You might have to run a household, or you might be working with an organization. When you are doing any kind of work, there is a need to open up and relate with it. There are often relationship problems to be faced. There may be uncertainties as to who the authority in the household is or who your boss in the organization is. You might find yourself waiting for an authority to tell you what to do, or you might find you are trying to avoid the boss's eyes so you can work less. In any case, you have a sense of "them and me."

You can't escape those situations. At home or at work or in any community you join, you will find that effort and help are needed. Even though you may not have been approached by anyone to pitch in, you are right there at that very moment. You are present in that space. You are breathing the same air as the other people in the office or your home, and you're sharing the same roof. At that point you have the choice of being a nuisance or being open. That choice is always there, in any situation.

Suppose you decide to be a nuisance. You want to have a good time in that place without working. Okay, you go ahead and take that approach. Soon you find that your approach does not provide a very luxurious result. The moment you say, "I'm just going to have a good time and not do any work," every corner of the place begins to haunt you. You continually have imaginary housewives coming at you, or imaginary bosses, wardens, or trustees of the community. They're continually coming at you with horns and tails. You are not having a good time at all, unless you have developed tremendously skillful insensitivity, the absolute insensitivity of just camping out by yourself as an independent unit.

Even being totally insensitive requires a certain amount of inspiration and intelligence, which basically means that you are not a blunt and insensitive person at all. There has to be some intelligence there to maintain that insensitivity. As long as there is intelligence, that means there will be paranoia. So it seems that being a nuisance is not particularly fun, even though you think it might be fun to do nothing, just breathe the air and be there, just present yourself as a lump sum.

Of course, the other alternative is trying to communicate, trying to be of service. However, trying to be useful may not be that inspiring either. You walk up to somebody and say, "What can I do for you?" For some people, this comes naturally. But for some people it's incredibly awkward to extend themselves. You feel so heady; you feel like a gigantic head on two feet. In spite of this awkwardness, you should try to help.

Another situation you encounter in the work environment is the innuendos of who's playing a game with whom. All sorts of little suggestions of games going on might come up, but at the same time, there is a way of adapting oneself to all of that. On the whole, working with others is based on

relationships. It's not so much a matter of producing useful work all the time as it is a matter of communicating.

It doesn't really matter whether you are working in an office or as a housekeeper, whether you are a secretary or a manager, or even whether you are a guest in a house or living in a community somewhere. All of those situations involve communication. They all present the same challenges in relating to others.

When you are looking for work, all kinds of questions arise, such as, "Will I be accepted or not when I have my interview?" If you have a job interview, you try to present yourself as very respectable; maybe you cut your hair and shave your beard. Still, the right haircut, a clean shave, a decent suit, and polished shoes do not address the whole question. The interview presents a deeper challenge than that. The challenge is how to have actual communication with others and with the situation as a whole. Indeed, in any aspect of the work environment, the challenge is how much communication we can actually have.

There might be patterns of behavior or activities in the workplace that you don't agree with. You might find that you do not agree with the basic philosophy, the end-product, or the whole atmosphere of the place. In spite of those things, there is still room to communicate, room to associate yourself with that scene, since you are karmically already involved with the situation.

There is constant checking back and forth with ourselves when we are newcomers to the workplace. Bewilderment plays a very important part—not knowing who you are, why you are here. We are constantly asking ourselves, "Why am I here at all?" Then we try to go beyond bewilderment and make a move. That move often becomes fraught with paranoia—we are eager but anxious about being accepted, eager to be included in the conversations of the in-group in that place. Or if we have been newly accepted as a manager in a firm, we want to be sure we have all the information about what is going on. A lot depends on fellow managers or maybe even shareholders—how much do they trust and accept us? How many dinner invitations and cocktail-party invitations have we had? The more of those we have had, the more our confidence builds that we are being accepted. Still, the whole approach is based on distrust or paranoia.

At a certain stage, a person may finally begin to relax a little bit more, make friends with people, begin to smile a little bit, exchange occasional jokes. “Here I am,” you think, “exchanging jokes with people.” After you begin to relax, you might become more daring. You feel braver; you might begin to make little decisions—in a diplomatic fashion, if you are a diplomatic person at all. You try to present your ideas. You associate yourself more with the whole work situation. You try to do everything following the basic principle of faith in the firm, and all of your decisions are based on good intentions. You make decisions very seriously, of course. These little decisions you make are appropriate and pleasing to the boss. All the while you are becoming more relaxed, less self-conscious.

You are becoming more fundamentally ingratiating, but this requires subtlety. If you are too ingratiating, that might also be fishy from the point of view of your employers. They might suspect your motives; think you are up to no good. Nevertheless, you go on being more daring. You make small moves. You begin to stretch and yawn in front of people. At this point, you are still wondering if you are really communicating at all. Some people can extend this phase of relationship on and on, even for twenty years—if they spend that long at a corporation. They continue to take the same approach: They remain officially paranoid persons. They try to keep up the same image, exactly the same as when they had their first interviews. They try to maintain this same continuity, which is stale and plastic in nature.

On the other hand, more adventurous people will try to get into new areas. They will try to drop the mask that they originally presented. They will try to get into the nitty-gritty of the job, try to get into the aim and object of what they really want to achieve. They begin very officially, but then they relax after they finally learn to identify with their particular organization. However, even if they reach that point, there is still something wrong, something missing. Real work has still not begun at all. The whole situation is a stage prop. What is the actual work that hasn’t begun?

You seem to have the whole realm or situation of relationship happening in your job, and you are so involved in the games you are playing. However, suppose you want to relate to somebody in another department. You need to get some information from someone, but it’s not going to be easy to find out what you need to know. You can’t just send the person a memo. It won’t

work. You need some human contact with the person. But that is very awkward. You invite the person for a meal or for a walk. Somehow it doesn't happen smoothly. It's obvious to him or to her—and to you—that you have an ulterior motive. Some basic thing is still lacking there. Where's the magic? What is missing? If you knew that, you could become the heart of the whole organization. You could become the very much needed missing person.

What is lacking is a sense of humor, which means getting along with yourself. Once you have that, you begin to see the joy of working in a situation. When I talk about sense of humor, it sometimes seems complicated for people. In the West, people usually don't laugh unless you're being rude or cynical. People don't laugh just from seeing the natural humor of a situation. When you laugh, people can get very paranoid and think they are being laughed at or that you are making fun of them. I am not talking about that kind of humor or humor used to bring comic relief to a situation that is too intense. I'm talking about basic delight.

The whole play of the scene you are involved in is delightful. Whatever scene it might be, it has its own qualities and characteristics. In fact, the situation you are in is unique. If you had to create that situation deliberately, nobody could do it. Spontaneous humor can only come about through appreciation of a situation as a unique work of art. The situation really is beautiful. When you are genuinely enjoying working somewhere, you see the uniqueness there that brings out your sense of humor. At that point, your work is going to become creative, and you are going to be very helpful to the firm, the organization, the society, or whatever it is—maybe even a meditation center. You see the irony in situations. That very healthy interplay within the environment is self-enlightening.

That is why we need work. It seems that such a rich situation cannot come about for us at all unless we put ourselves into the discipline of the work process. Discipline means getting into what is happening. In the Buddhist scriptures an analogy for our affinity to discipline is that a swan is automatically drawn to water and vultures are automatically drawn to the charnel ground. That is just saying that you have to involve yourself in the situations you encounter in life. We have to go through the process of being part of a situation; otherwise we will not be exposed to this richness. In order to see the delight in a situation, we have to become involved in it. We have to

really feel it; we have to touch the whole texture of the complete situation. Then we will be able to relate properly with the actual work involved. Then, automatically, the efficiency of dealing with all the little details will happen naturally.

Again, this requires a certain amount of humor, which is related to having a certain amount of openness, of seeing the whole situation as it is. Unless whoever is taking part in the situation has an aerial view of the whole thing, a real connection to the details does not take place. Even though a particular person may only be standing at the gate checking the visitors coming into the building, even in such an uninspiring position, that person needs to take a panoramic view. He has to have the whole feeling of inspiration for the entire environment of that institution. The more a person is able to relate to that whole feeling from as far away from the center as the entry gate, the better he will be able to see what is necessary to fulfill his job. He will become very efficient. Not that he will be trying to impress other people; it is just that he will see what is needed. You could be the gatekeeper, or your activity could be as small a thing as emptying the ashtrays or cleaning up a little bit of dirt; nevertheless, that simple occupation becomes everything. As long as a person has that panoramic view, the paranoia we have been talking about will be absent.

Once you have a sense of humor in the work situation as it is, you will be able to relate with all the human situations around that. Each person is unique. I don't mean by that that there is only one John Brown who was born in 1967 and that's why he's unique. Each person has his own characteristics and his own way of handling his style, which is beautiful and inspiring in its own way. It doesn't have to be your style alone that inspires you; any style of being can be inspiring. If you are involved with a community, appreciating other people's styles could lead to a very beautiful sangha sort of feeling, a feeling of group connectedness. We all enter into a learning process with our own styles, our own habitual patterns, our own points of view, and all of that provides spice in the life situation we are sharing. If we are not able to work with situations in this way, then we are missing valuable training.



## SEVEN

### *Creativity and Chaos*

ONCE A PERSON IS ABLE TO CONNECT with the basic creative environment of work, then the rest of the process becomes less of a struggle. Creativity is the key to work. Strangely enough, it seems to be the key to sex as well, which we will discuss later. Both are a process of communication as opposed to purely relating with material objects or people as objects. Once you have understood the basic philosophy of work as we discussed it earlier, then somehow work becomes very simple. It's not a matter of tit for tat but a continual process of open exchange.

When work is based purely on ambition, it's as though you have a target that you want to destroy, or else you want to build something very big with your ambition. There's a Tibetan story about a local landlord who wanted to cut off the peak of a certain high mountain because it prevented him from getting sunlight in his residence in winter. He ordered his people to do the work. Then halfway through the job, they had a realization and rushed down to his residence and chopped off his head. They said they had realized that it was much easier to chop off the landlord's head than to chop off the head of the mountain. So ambition can backfire on you. If your whole approach is based on ambition, then you may lose your connection to the real meaning of work.

A lot of people find work negative, particularly if they have uninspiring work, regular day-to-day work to which they have no personal commitment or link. The trouble is that somebody has to do the routine work. Not everybody can be a craftsman or an artist. That would leave nobody to do the

routine jobs. The public wouldn't get its regular services. Somebody has to be willing to be a milkman and deliver the milk; somebody has to be willing to be a security guard and hang around a huge building all day. There is always that need.

However, as we discussed in the last chapter, even routine, uninspiring work can be approached from the point of view of humor and communication. Otherwise we end up with a division in society where talented people feel extremely proud, and so-called untalented people feel useless and purely functional. That's like applying a distinction among humans as though it were a division between human beings and animals. There is a big problem when people are unable to relate to all kinds of work with a sense of communication. If you really communicate, if you are able to see the creative process in an apparently uncreative situation, you are constantly inspired. In that way, everybody can be a talented artist—in fact, much more of a talented artist than the kind of official artist who has the very limited scope of purely awakening her own potential. Those who are not artists as such, who are doing manual labor and ordinary jobs—repetitive jobs—are extremely skillful artists indeed when they are able to see and use the pattern of creativity in their work. We have to look into all kinds of work situations. The Buddhist teachings are not intended for genteel society or intellectual society alone at all. The teachings are presented to anyone, everyone. There should be a universal quality to the teaching. Of course, we can't achieve anything purely by talking about it. We have to apply the teachings; people actually have to do it.

If a person had been a manager and then he took a job as a simple office worker, he might take days and months to get used to being in his new position. As long as he is open to the situation of being an office worker, he can express the same kind of individual style there as in his previous managerial work. There's no doubt about that—you can express your work of art in any situation. This is true as long as you are not offended by being put in a lower situation, as long as you don't resent that, thinking, "I belong to a higher class of people. I should have a higher position, because I am more artistic or more intelligent." That kind of thinking creates a tremendous barrier.

When the communist invasion took place in Tibet, many great teachers were put in labor camps. They had never swept a floor or carried bricks before. It took them a long time to get used to manual labor, but apparently once they did, they remained great teachers because they were good workers. They were often made leaders of ten groups of workers. They were shifted to that kind of post because they were ordinary about their work and kept their equilibrium. That kept the work going, so they automatically became leaders.

I'm envisaging something more creative here than purely getting into the meaninglessness of the situation. Things are not really as bad as that, although we might think so. Things could be bad, they could be the epitome of bad, the worst, but what we are trying to point out here is that there will still be some stepping-stone in the situation, in any situation.

There's a big advantage if you are dealing with people, even repetitively. Then it's always a creative situation. People often ask me how I find giving interviews all day long, hearing the same thing over and over again. People have their own individual style, and each style is distinct, so it's quite creative. The greater problem seems to be when we are talking about a repetitive, mechanical job where you don't see people, where it's purely a matter of pressing buttons or dealing with the constant repetition of objects coming through on an assembly line. Even then, there should be a creative way of relating. A person could explore even a situation like that. One should not seal it off completely and give up all hope. Look into the situation and find some way of working with it.

Your basic attitude toward work is very important. If you feel that you are completely trapped in a job, then you fail to see the interesting aspect of it. People in boring, repetitive situations who don't expect to stay in those jobs forever don't feel so trapped. They feel that they could get out at any moment; it's purely a temporary measure. Therefore, their minds are open, and they can see their job as a creative situation. Your attitude may come down to how much you fear that you are trapped in something, or how much you feel that the present moment provides freedom to you. Again, it's a question of the future and the past. If you view the future as a closed future, then there's no room for inspiration at all. If you realize that the future is an open future, then there is room for inspiration. It is a matter of opinion, from that point of view.

A person might find it inspiring to spend the rest of her life doing some particularly simple work. She's purely living on simplicity. She could find it extremely rewarding and secure in some sense. She doesn't have to step out into another territory and explore any wholly strange situations anymore. On the other hand, if she wants to explore other territories and she hasn't had enough excitement yet, she might feel completely trapped. Our attitude depends on some sort of acceptance.

The same thing happens in monasteries. Monks or nuns feel that the rest of their life is committed to doing the same regular thing, getting up in the morning and doing the religious services, chanting and meditating, and then going to bed at a certain hour. Since they feel their whole life is based on that pattern, they might feel trapped. At the same time, they might feel inspired. Of course, for monks and nuns they clearly feel that they are doing something spiritual, something super-mundane. In reality, that may not mean very much. The actual physical work is often repetitive in the monastery. For the Carthusians and the Benedictines, for instance, the schedule and routine are quite fixed.<sup>10</sup> You are not supposed to miss Mass in the morning. Your life may largely consist of taking communion, making daily confession, eating food, saying your prayers, and then going to bed, except for celebrations like Easter and Christmas. Life is very routine; you do exactly the same thing, over and over, on and on all the time. Perhaps some people would find that satisfying or even exciting, because life is so simple. The whole flow of daily life is designed to be smooth and repetitive. People appreciate it. However, suppose such a lifestyle were not a spiritual situation but something designed as a daily routine in a therapeutic community established for the treatment of addiction or mental illness. Then it's quite likely that the clients or inmates would react against such an approach. They would regard the whole institution as unworkable, an enormous imposition. So it seems our attitude is very important to how we experience a work environment.

I'm not suggesting that we seek a work situation that is more meditative in nature. Rather, what way of working in any situation will have more human potential, so to speak? What approach to work will provide more potential for you to put your effort and your style into the situation and become creative? The work doesn't have to be meditative in the sense of being repetitive or simple. There could be a great deal of room in the work environment for

inspiration and communication, which is outer meditation or meditation in action.

Creativity in your work comes from your mind. The idea of work being creative is that the mind can connect with the sharpness or the inspiration within any situation. There is always something acute and precise happening in a situation, which can lead you to other possibilities. That quality of mind connecting with the potential could be called imagination, I suppose, but it's not dreamy imagination; it's practical imagination. It is seeing that every step contains possibilities of furthering whatever your process is. That includes your contribution and the whole environment around that particular job. There is room to learn, room to develop.

When you don't feel the creativity or workability in a situation and you have a lot of negativity happening, it begins to seem as though the whole situation is negative. This is true not only in work situations but in any situation. You get into a situation that seems ideal to begin with, and you get used to that. At a certain stage, however, you detect a faint hint of chaos. That hint does not remain faint; it intensifies, and soon you find that you want to step out of the whole scene. That happens in all kinds of situations in life, but it can be particularly heightened when you are engaged in spiritual practice. This is because you expect spiritual practice to provide something profitable and convenient to your ego, something secure. Often, when you realize that it does not provide security as expected, the situation becomes excruciating. You feel a sudden sense of doubt, a loss of independence and security. Such situations are unique ones that cannot be strategized. They are in fact very opportune and precious.

To work with those situations, you need intelligent patience, not naïveté. You need some understanding that the situation is saying something. It's saying something that you have been ignoring for a long time, and finally it's beginning to speak up. If you try to strategize in that situation, by telling yourself that the negativity is valuable, you turn it into a stage prop in which you view the negative things coming to you as positive, and it loses its direct quality.

In fact, no matter what you tell yourself, you don't really believe that the negativity is helpful. You are not really convinced, because things are so painful. You would like to use strategy to control the chaos, but in reality, you

can't control the chaos in any way. If you try to control it, then you're asking for more chaos by trying to control it. That's a well-known effect.

Self-confidence does not come from control. If you have a certain conceptual notion of self-confidence, that view has to be constantly maintained. That kind of self-confidence is going in the wrong direction. If it is built on the wrong foundation, then automatically, it is weakened.

Chaos is actually a sign that there is tremendous energy or force available in a situation. If you try to blindly alter the energy, then you are interfering with the energy pattern. For one thing, you become much more self-conscious. Then you are not able to see where the energy is actually occurring in the situation. The alternative is to go along with the energy. This means, in a sense, doing nothing with the energy, as though it were some independent force. When you go along with what is happening, you uncover the real energy in the situation and then you are able to relate with situations fully, in a true way, a complete way.

In order to accept or reject something in your experience, you have to see the complete picture to begin with; otherwise you have no idea what the right thing to do is. Acceptance might be the skillful choice, or rejecting might be skillful. Before you make a choice, you should find the choiceless quality, which exists as an element of the situation. It's like buying merchandise. Before you buy something, it is best to know the qualities of the merchandise, its value, and everything about it completely. If you fail to investigate it, then you won't make a good buyer or seller.

If you blindly accept something, you might be inflicting pain on yourself or you might be overindulging in pleasure, which brings future pain. Blindly rejecting things, on the other hand, is usually based on aggression or fear. Before you make *any* choice, you should try to see the choiceless aspect, which is always there in any situation. You have to feel it. You have to relate with things as they are, and then you can reject or accept. Within the overall experience of seeking to understand things as they are, you actually include all the possibilities of rejecting and accepting the situation altogether.

To clarify, you have to learn to see situations first, completely, before you make any decisions. First you feel the situation and open yourself to it without anticipating rejecting or accepting. Without any idea of rejecting and accepting, you deal directly with the whole situation. If you can work that

way completely, then rejecting, if necessary, becomes a natural process, and accepting, if necessary, becomes a natural process. You communicate with the situation completely, without any judgment. Communicating thoroughly inspires sound judgment, by itself. You might think that people are unpredictable, but a person actually can't react to you in an unpredictable way. If you are actually one with the situation, you will see why and how that reaction happened.

The main idea I would like to get across here, in terms of how to relate with work, is that no matter what job you have, no matter what work situation you are involved in, it is necessary to see the whole thing with an open mind, without preconceptions. Earlier, we were talking about transcending concepts. That applies very much to this view of relating to work. You have all kinds of choices, and you might well have a blueprint in mind for the life you want. That is one source of preconceptions. There may also be a certain snobbishness that says, "I'm not designed for certain kinds of jobs." This is not particularly a matter of money; rather, in this case you become indignant because you feel a job is beneath you.

This kind of snobbishness often came up in the monastic life in Tibet. If a monk or a great scholar or even a great teacher in the monastery got too carried away with himself, the abbot might ask him to work as a tea server or wood collector until he corrected his arrogance or transcended it. This was much more effective than an alternative such as asking the offender to do five hundred prostrations in front of the sangha. That would have been more acceptable to him than a lowly job, because it was a religious practice allowing him to redeem his mistake. Being a tea server or wood collector was harder to swallow. Of course, in Tibet there was a great deal of social consciousness within the strict hierarchical structure. The need to save face was greater than it is in North America. Tibet is similar to Japan in that respect. Both of those countries have a much thicker mask of social propriety than we have in the West. People want to belong to certain pigeonholes in society. Strangely enough, the communists worked quite well with that. They had daily exercises in which the president and prime minister had to go out and do gardening and collect rubbish and excrement from the street. They had to carry that in a basket on their back and bring it to the rubbish heap. Of course, this remedy was off the mark in getting beyond preconceptions,

because there was a game involved, the game of “the humbler you are, the more respected you are.” This was a reverse version of the problem it was trying to cure.

Whenever there is a game like that connected with work, the whole approach is based on concept, and your ability to relate to the work situation openly and directly is undermined. In the case where you feel a job is beyond your intelligence, or more likely, beneath you, you feel resentful toward it or uninterested. The result is that you automatically prove the job does not suit you by not doing it well, by not being a good worker at all. The reality is that you would benefit from more of that kind of work.

Another conceptual approach to work is that of an ambitious person who is intent on doing something, on achieving his own glory, yet he lacks commitment to the discipline involved. He desperately wants to do some specific kind of work, without knowing what it is really like. He may have tremendous romantic expectations, and then he doesn't find the actual work romantic at all; he finds it disappointing. Maybe he wanted to be a professional photographer, and he loved the idea because he saw some other artist's beautiful photographs. However, he never realized how much discipline had to go into becoming such a skillful photographer, and he ended up doing badly at photography because he didn't actually want to go through that discipline at all.

There are many examples of people floating from job to job because of concepts they have in their minds about what they would like to do. When they encounter the actual work situation, they are not able to stick to it; they are not able to work through it patiently and explore the whole area. They are unable to painstakingly work through the challenges. As a result, instead of proving themselves, they disprove themselves; they humiliate themselves personally and in front of other people. They give up the work they wanted so desperately to do, and perhaps they tour around different countries, getting involved in exciting or exotic things. This lifestyle is, perhaps, a youthful or exuberant expression of life, but without depth. Quite possibly, during their travels, they get involved with meditation and visit ashrams and religious centers where they meet interesting people.

At a certain stage the money runs out, and they have to come home and do something constructive. Maybe you plan to write a book about your travels,



but you never get around to it. You might write two or three chapters of a book, but then you stop. You are not able to stick with a situation and patiently go through it, explore the whole area and patiently, painfully go through the process to achieve something. There again, you are back to square one. “Shall I go back to photography, which wasn’t beautiful? What other sorts of excitement can I find?” Strangely enough, many such people end up being teachers of yoga, meditation, or Buddhism, because that’s the easiest work, in a certain way. In that lifestyle, you don’t have to produce a sample or a product of your work. You can just go on talking, and you find that your background of tourism also helps tremendously.

Work usually involves producing an end-product, whether that product is a thing that you make, a degree that you receive, or a project that you complete. You might say this orientation goes against Buddhist philosophy, but that’s not true. The fact that work produces a product is different from the problems of goal orientation, where you ignore the value of the process, which we discussed earlier. I mentioned many times already the Tibetan proverb that it’s better not to begin something, but once you do, you should finish it properly. In a work situation, having begun something, you should pursue it to the point of its final achievement. People come up with many excuses for not doing that, particularly people who want to “explore themselves.” They might say the situation does not give them opportunities for self-exploration or that the place where they are working has bad vibes. They make all kinds of excuses that don’t mean very much. The problem is that those people have become too cunning. Their laziness has become very active and resourceful; in fact, it has become very intelligent and awake. Their sort of laziness is not at all sleepy or dull. It’s very sharp and precise in its ability to find excuses. It becomes a spokesman for the fundamental ego.

Particularly people on the spiritual path are in danger of not being able to persevere in the work situation. They can be particularly apt at finding excuses not to work and very clever in developing the practice of laziness. The moment they don’t feel like doing something, the appropriate spiritual quotation comes to their mind.

The basic problem in all of these cases is that people have some concept about a job or project, and when it does not fit that concept, they do not want to go through with it. As I have said, they often find the work beneath them.

The great teacher Guru Rinpoche, Padmasambhava, did all kinds of different work. He was ordained a monk, but as he traveled around, he learned poetry, he learned mathematics, and he learned carpentry and other handicrafts. Also, the traditional Indian way of training a king was to give him lessons in many kinds of work, such as painting, sewing, carpentry, poetry, and physical exercises. Princes also studied warfare and the use of weapons. They learned how to ride on a horse and on an elephant. Building houses was also part of their education. All of this was part of a royal upbringing. If a prince had to be a blacksmith, he could do it and do it beautifully. He still maintained his dignity as a prince—not through pride but by his example.

These days people sometimes say they can't do certain work because they haven't taken a course in it. A lot of things in life don't have to be taught in courses. You don't need a degree to do the work. You just need to drop your hesitation and use your intelligence. You need to get into it and just do it. You can achieve the same end result as those who have received a degree in that particular thing. There are many areas where people's intelligence has been undermined by systematized study. They read books on how to make a fire, how to mend their shoes, how to hike—all sorts of things like that. However, getting into work you haven't done before can be an awakening experience when you have to use your basic intelligence to feel the ground. You use your basic common sense to get things together. Just apply it and work, and you will find that the process is opening and enlightening. Fundamentally, we are capable of anything.

You might say that a certain person would not make a good fighter because he isn't aggressive enough or that someone else would make a bad watchman because she hasn't got the right kind of concentration. If you look at things from that angle, choices become very limited. That supposedly bad watchman could be quite a wakeful person if the situation required it of her. She might be able to do the watchman job beautifully. I remember an incident that occurred during my escape from Tibet. One night when we were getting close to crossing the border into India, we came over a ridge and suddenly saw a Chinese-built road just five hundred yards away from us with military trucks moving along it. We made a plan to creep up to the road and have everybody in our party cross simultaneously, with one person going behind with a

branch to wipe out all of our footprints, because it was a dirt road. We got everybody set and made our move. We thought the people who were usually the toughest would get across first, with the slow people coming later. However, when the time came, the slow people were much faster than the tough people. It's a matter of how awake someone is at a given time.

If there is enough interest awakened in a person to communicate openly with the work situation, I'm sure he or she will be able to do the job quite beautifully. We shouldn't categorize people too much. There's always potential. Everybody has basic intelligence that is capable of surprising us. If a person is able to reach the point of breaking the conceptual barrier to open communication, his or her work becomes open and creative. That possibility is always there. There are hidden qualities in us, always.

---

10. Chögyam Trungpa visited Pluscarden Abbey during his honeymoon in 1970. The abbey is home to a community of Roman Catholic Benedictine monks. On the abbey's website, it is described as "the only medieval monastery in Britain still inhabited and being used for its original purpose." Elsewhere on the site, the atmosphere is defined as one of "quiet reflection and of work dedicated to the glory of God." In *Dragon Thunder: My Life with Chögyam Trungpa*, his widow, Diana Mukpo, speaks of Trungpa Rinpoche's great appreciation for the genuine contemplative atmosphere at Pluscarden Abbey. For more on this, see *Dragon Thunder*, pp. 81–82.—Eds.

## EIGHT

### *Communication*

TO REVIEW, BASICALLY, spiritual practice is dealing with our psychological state of being. The difference between the enlightened and the confused state of mind depends on whether you see situations as they are or you fail to see them as they are and are confused or frightened by them. The kind of spirituality we are talking about is not at all a matter of faith born from the revelation of an external entity. In this case, faith and understanding are born out of the precision and clarity of perceiving the universe as it is. Therefore, there is no point in trying to make a getaway from the world by entering into a trancelike state of absorption and trying to make the best of that as a home, a dwelling place.

The tendency of spiritual materialism is to try to find some dwelling place where you are secure and satisfied. True spirituality should not be based on that sort of aim, which seems to encourage establishing set patterns that one can identify with and disregarding spiritual development itself. For instance, you take a vow to go to a solitary place and practice meditation for ten years. You go to a quiet place, and you settle down and start going through your ten-year period of, so to speak, development—ten years of practice anyhow. Then you count every hour, every day, every month, every year that has gone by and also how many are still left to go. Those ten years go by very fast. One day, you find yourself saying, “Tomorrow is my time to come out.” Then you come out. For ten years you haven’t heard any news of what’s happened in the world, and you have to adapt to all the changes that have occurred. In addition, you have the difficulty of adapting again to a normal living situation after having lived in solitude for all that time. It probably doesn’t take too

long to make those adjustments, maybe a month or so. You begin to visit your friends and relatives and get involved again in the lifestyle you used to have. You are back to square one, except that ten years of your life have been different from everybody else's—I mean physically different.

The same thing could also be said for practices like a hundred thousand prostrations, a hundred thousand mantras, and other traditional Tibetan Buddhist practices. You do them very diligently, very fast, competitively, and soon you have accomplished your hundred thousand thises or thats. In the end, after you finish them, you still have your old familiar problems. You still have the same old hang-ups and the same old clumsy style you used to have. The same situation is still there.

Quite possibly, you might get some kind of credit or credential for the practice you accomplished. People might be inclined to say, "She has achieved something. She *must* be different." But that's purely a concept, just words. I wouldn't say that such practices are not valuable, but if we approach them from an external point of view of heroism, or if we have a material or physical commitment to those practices without the attitude of working on our basic psychology, that makes them rather futile.

What's wrong here is that spirituality is regarded as something extraordinary, something completely out of touch with everyday life. You step out into another sphere, another realm, so to speak, and you feel that this other realm is the only answer. That is why it is so important for us to talk about spirituality in connection with all the aspects of relating with our familiar world. It is possible for us to see ordinary situations from the point of view of an extraordinary insight—that of discovering a jewel in a rubbish heap.

You have to start with what you are, where you are now. Concept cannot exist in the present state, but awareness is very much there. You are aware of the present state. You are *now*; you are not past, you are not future, but you are now. In that state of awareness, you don't need to cling to a concept about who you are or who you will be. Before you even go to college, you don't have to say to yourself, for example: "I will be a professor when I graduate from school. Therefore I *am* a professor, so I should behave like a professor right now." That approach is the source of a lot of problems. That's what is wrong with a lot of dictators. Hitler, for instance, hadn't conquered the world,

but he behaved as though he had. That's partly why he failed. Everything came back on him because he was not realistic enough about his present strength, his own physical, mental, or spiritual health. When doctors tried to tell Mussolini that he shouldn't overwork because he was a sick man and needed rest, he just brushed them off. He ignored the present state of his health. He behaved as though he were strong and in good health and a universal conqueror. And he failed.

That doesn't mean to say that you can't do or plan anything. You can plan everything, but you plan in accordance with your present state. You don't plan something in terms of what you would like to be. No one can do that. You can only plan based on what you are now. Now you need a job; therefore you are working on finding one. The real way of being without aim or object is dealing with the present situation, the completely present situation. The more you are realistic about the present situation—how much money you need, what kind of job you are capable of doing, what state of health you are in—the better your chances when you look for a job. If a person is off the track of relating with the present moment, consumed with what might be, then quite likely her job search would be disastrous.

I'm a very ambitious person myself, extremely, dangerously so! However, I relate with *now*. On that basis, you see how far you can go, how far you can't go. Your ambition isn't focused on the future. You may think, once you get a job, you'll get a house, you can have all of these nice things and this and that, and *then* you could get *this*. Instead of actually going through the whole process, you just mentally jump to your conclusion—what you would like to be rather than what you are. Then you are in trouble. There's nothing wrong with ambition, as long as you stay with *this* situation, this very realistic thing.

In terms of work, sex, and money—which is our broad topic—if work becomes a practice in the present moment, it becomes an extremely powerful one, because the regular daily problems are there anyway. But now these problems cease to be problems—they become a source of inspiration. In the case of money, with this approach, nothing is rejected as too ordinary and nothing is overvalued as sacred. Instead, all the substance and material that are available in the life situation are simply used. We know basically what money represents, what money is for. If we know that and are able to work along with that understanding, if we can approach the ordinary situation in

this extraordinary way of not rejecting anything or overvaluing anything either, that will provide quite a surprise for the habitual pattern of ego.

Usually our whole approach is based on conceptualization. Once we begin to operate with the concept that something connected with our life is good for us, with the notion that we are supposed to gain something from it, that approach turns into a process of trying to find a suitable, comfortable nest to dwell in. We begin seeking an enriched environment created for our ego, for the maintenance of *me*, myself. When, on the other hand, there are no concepts, we just throw ourselves overboard, off the cliff, so to speak. We just let go into the situation and into the learning process as it is; then openness can begin to develop. Other people might say that this is ludicrous, impractical. They might tell us that we should have more self-respect, that we should be a proud person, and we should have an aim and object, a goal in mind. However, they have never approached the situation from the other, nonconceptual, angle. The people saying those things about a goal orientation, in fact, have no authority, because they've never seen the other side of the coin. They don't see it because being without concept is too dangerous, too frightening. In fact, although they haven't seen it, there is another way of approaching life beyond defensive self-respect, beyond pride. The only way to discover this may be to make friends with ourselves. Then we don't have to put ourselves through the torture of the competitive process at all.

Sex, like work and money, is usually based on preconceptions. The notion of being faithful in sexual relations is based on preconceptions about husbands and wives and lovers. The main notion that governs sex seems to be a sense of *debt*. That seems to determine what behavior is expected. However, the basic point of sex, its fundamental meaning, its essential philosophy, is already lost once we begin to approach it from this obligatory angle. Sex or sexual experience should be considered the essence of human communication. Communication here, of course, is dependent on a physical body. Sexual communication can only be carried out by the obvious means of physical gestures or words. However, implied behind those gestures is mind, which is very difficult to perceive.

In Buddhism, there is a mythological description of the god realms that are connected with the four *dhyana* states, the four states of meditative absorption.<sup>11</sup> Supposedly, as you progress higher from the first dhyana state

toward the fourth, each of these realms has less solid bodily substance than the one below. There is less and less solid body until eventually everything is based on the meditative body, the body connected with the highest, trancelike state of absorption. This is said to be because the higher you go, the less ego-clinging there is. In the realm corresponding to the first or lowest of the four states, the way the gods communicate sexually is by means of sexual intercourse. In the second realm, sexual communication consists purely of holding hands. Beyond that, in the third realm, sexual relationship consists of smiling at each other. And finally, in the highest realm, sexual communication is purely gazing at each other.

This description of communication in the dhyana states relates to the human dependence on body as the basis for relationship, the need to communicate in accordance with the solidness of the physical body. The human way of paying respect to a spiritual teacher or teaching, for example, can be by prostrating; or in the Catholic tradition, by kissing the bishop's ring; or in stories of Buddhist renunciation, through sacrificing one's physical, bodily energy to the teaching, as in the case of Milarepa carrying stones on his back to build a house for his teacher. I don't mean sacrifice in the ordinary sense. It's an act of offering. It is as though you are acknowledging that there is solid substance there, which is the body, and you are using that as a vehicle or method. Physically surrendering is an expression of commitment.

As human beings, it seems that our approach to body is a rather clumsy one, at least from the point of view of god realms, or more ethereal realms of being. In some sense, however, the description of sexual communication in the four god realms or dhyana states is a description of human experience. Viewing it as anything else is just speculation or imagination. As a human being, how you communicate depends on how heavy you are. I don't mean heavy in terms of being physically fat or anything like that. It's a matter of how heavy your mind/body is. In fact, tantric visualizations of yourself with your consort reflect a similar approach to communication as is described in the dhyana states. As you go higher and higher into more formless levels of tantra, you have higher means of communication with your visualized consort: the *dakini*, or female consort; or the *heruka*, or male consort. In more everyday, ordinary terms, this is just saying that there are many levels of



subtlety in human communication. There are many means of expressing affection, not all of them based on a gross or heavy sense of physicality.

The physical act of sex has often been described in scriptures and other teachings of Eastern spirituality as *abrahmacharya*, an act of noncompletion.<sup>12</sup> Sex is seen as a clumsy way of releasing your *bindu*. Bindu in this case is the essence of the body; often it is equated with semen, but that is not necessarily a good definition. Both men and women possess bindu. Bindu is the essence of the mind and essence of the body. This is like describing the money system as the essence of society. Bindu is another type of currency in the context of human communication.

The Indian teachings in both the Hindu and Buddhist traditions agree that abusing bindu is an act of *abrahmacharya*, of noncompletion. When the body contains the bindu essence, you are a completely healthy person. When you abuse that, when you throw that away, that becomes *abrahmacharya*, disrupting the completeness of Brahma, who is the complete one, the wholesome one. Brahma represents or contains the wholesome, healthy, unified situation of your life and body.

The question comes down to how not to abuse bindu, how to use that particular type of currency properly and with respect. The idea of conserving or not wasting bindu could be twisted into a kind of bindu materialism: “I have to hold on to what’s mine rather than give it up, so that I can be complete.” That approach, however, in itself would be losing your bindu anyway. You are bargaining your bindu; you are losing it because you are not giving psychologically, not communicating completely. That could also be described as abusing bindu. Supposedly, that kind of holding back mentally can cause a certain amount of physical pain and sickness, which your body produces in response to your holding back.

Abusive attitudes toward bindu could be compared to abusive attitudes toward money. For instance, we have stories of millionaires who use dollar bills to wipe their bottoms, or they roll bills into cigars. They abuse their money. As far as sex is concerned, there is a certain tendency to think that sex, unless you are married or in some other prescribed situation, is something naughty. If you have sex outside the usual or conventional pattern, it is something you have to do on the quiet. The whole attitude toward sex is

very frivolous. A lot of people have a guilty conscience about sex: “I shouldn’t have engaged in such an act, but I couldn’t help it. It just happened.”

Such attitudes automatically undermine the sacredness of sexual communication. Society and culture and the conventional moralistic pattern often do not acknowledge the sacredness of sex but regard it as a superficial act. We are somehow indoctrinated into this view. We fail to see the sacredness of sex, the actual communication quality. Once someone begins to regard the sexual act as a frivolous thing, the whole approach toward sex becomes very cheap. The attitude of people toward each other becomes frivolous as well, as though they were using each other purely as property, purely as a functional element.

We should have the attitude that sex is basically sacred; the spiritual implication should be there. By spiritual quality, we mean here the aspect of communication. Communication cannot always be carried out by a verbal or mental process alone; sometimes the communication has to be physical. This should not be purely a biological matter of releasing pressure sexually but should be a question of learning psychologically to open one’s whole being to somebody else. Sexual expression is an act of communication and openness. That seems to be the essence of the whole process.

The same thing could be said about eating food. In the Tibetan monastic system, there are elaborate mantras and visualizations connected with eating. Through those, food is made into an offering. There is also an awareness of sacredness with regard to wearing clothes. Walking up or down stairs is even seen in a spiritual way. Any physical act has spiritual implications, from this point of view. For example, if you are a Tibetan monk, when you are putting on your belt, you say, “I am putting on the belt of discipline.” Or you say, “I am putting on the shoes of energy and patience” or “I am walking up the steps to the awakened state. I’m coming down the steps so I will have compassion for all sentient beings” or “I’m closing the door of samsara. I’m opening the door of wisdom.” All of these actions are regarded as sacred things. There used to be a posting above the toilet reminding you of the sacredness of that function. While you were on the toilet seat there were certain visualizations to do and mantras to say, to the effect that your urine and excrement feed *pretas*, or hungry ghosts—the elixir of your life coming from your body feeds them. That’s a profound thing. At this point, however, it

would be premature for us to try to do a practice like that, since the teaching is still very little known here in the West in relationship to the depths of people's psychology. A practice like that could become a special cult of its own, which wouldn't be good. However, such an approach contains tremendous truth in it—that anything to do with life contains sacredness.

Still, one doesn't have to have a prescribed ritual for each thing. Otherwise the whole thing becomes religion rather than spirituality. It is more a matter of relating to this very moment, whatever it is.

Basically, any kind of unwholesome behavior comes from frivolousness, not having enough respect. You just let things happen haphazardly, casually, with no respect toward life of any kind. Respect is one of the very important things that spiritual disciplines and rules and regulations are based on. To realize sacredness, you have to be deliberate, open, and prepared for the experience to be sacred. You have to, so to speak, prepare the right vessel to contain the sacredness so that you can understand it. You have to have preparation that is beyond frivolousness. This is a very important point, because more accidents and chaos happen in the world because of frivolousness than anything else. Frivolousness is quite simple. It is being disrespectful toward situations and unwilling to use them as part of your development.

On the other hand, if you try to use sex as a self-conscious spiritual act, you are ignoring the actual relationship that is taking place in the moment and trying to impose something on top of it. It's another double-cross of ego, and of course it wouldn't work. You are no longer relating to the present situation. You try to put an extra thing on it, which just becomes a nuisance. When we talk about sacredness, we are talking about a personal experience of a state of nonselfishness, a state of pure giving, pure action beyond watcher.

In the tantric Buddhist teachings, it is said that when you have a real orgasm, you don't exist and the other person doesn't exist either. That's possible to experience. In the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, it talks about how, with a complete orgasm, you have a glimpse of clear light. There are four situations where you can experience that vision of the clear light. One is sudden awareness. If you are frightened, panicked, or shocked, you may enter into a complete state without thoughts. The second experience is connected with death. The third one occurs when you are half-asleep, just going to

sleep; there is a glimpse of clear light. Finally, this experience occurs in the state of orgasm, complete fundamental orgasm. There is complete openness that is beyond thought. In fact, it's known as "beyond joy."

The joy of communication is described altogether in tantra as the four types of joy. There is joy, supreme joy, beyond joy, and finally coemergent joy. Joy here is related with the yogic practice of dealing with the chakras, or the various centers of energy in the body. Gradually communication moves into a more and more subtle state, which is less physically oriented. Finally the whole thing becomes coemergent, almost joyless, joy, which is, I suppose, the equivalent of smiling. We could almost call it a smileless smile, or maybe a smile without a face, like the Cheshire cat.

In talking about sex, we are getting into a very big topic. We are getting into the fact that every life situation has meaning behind it, or a process of communication *in* it. Communication can't be established unless there are two parties, one of whom is the activator and the other the receiver. On that basis, any communication could be said to be sexual, although I'm not being Freudian here. The passionate quality of sex, the gross level of sex, doesn't have to be involved necessarily. In order to communicate anything, however, you do have to have the true element of union. From the tantric point of view, everything is interpreted that way—in terms of union. There is the union of samsara and nirvana, the union of phenomena and consciousness. We interpret it all in terms of the feminine and masculine principles.<sup>13</sup> Everything is seen that way.

Sexual communication doesn't have to be physical communication alone. When two people are attracted to each other, they have a tendency to want to open to each other as much as they can. However, if there are no opportunities to open physically, they don't have to become frustrated. Subtle communication that has the element of ultimate friendship in it seems to be the crux of the matter. When that is present, being faithful becomes a natural situation—if one is particularly keen on that discipline. That is because the communication between the two of you is so real and so beautiful and flowing that you can't communicate the same thing to anybody else, so automatically you are drawn together.

However, doubts and negative suggestions can come up and present temptations to drop out of this communication process. They can cause us to drop our faithfulness and friendliness toward each other. At that point, you become more afraid of losing the communication than attracted to enjoying it moment by moment. You begin to feel threatened. Although your communication is going beautifully just now, still you feel threatened by something, some abstract possibility of something going wrong. The seed of paranoia has been sown, and you begin to regard the communication purely as ego entertainment. Then all sorts of chaotic things happen.

At that point, communication and naked openness toward each other could quite easily become naked aggression, hatred. That is when the dynamics of what is known as a love-hate relationship become quite obvious, quite natural. Once the seeds of doubt are sown, people become rigid and terrified, because their communication has been so good and real, and they are afraid of losing it. Then at a certain stage, they begin to find that they are bewildered as to whether this communication is loving communication or aggressive communication. This bewilderment means losing a certain amount of distance and perspective, and neurosis begins to arise from that. When you lose the right perspective or space within the communication process, then love can become tremendous hate. Then it is natural, in the hatred process as within the love process, to want to communicate with the other person physically. In this case, it means that you want to kill the other person, physically injure her or him. In other words, in any relationship that we are involved in personally—a love relationship or any relationship—there is always the danger that it will be turned the other way around. The moment there is a sense of threat or insecurity, that relationship could be turned into its opposite.

There is a story of a disciple who murdered his teacher. Because of his personal feeling of communication with his teacher, when he began to reject his master's teaching, sudden bewilderment occurred. The bewilderment automatically began to look for another, alternative way of achieving communication. That sense of sudden communication turned to hatred, and he murdered his teacher on the spot.

Sometimes frustration arises in a relationship when you give and you watch yourself giving. Then you begin to feel that you deserve to receive also. That

brings tremendous resistance from the other person; the other person feels you are demanding rather than actually opening yourself. The whole relationship becomes a case of overcrowding. Then you begin to wonder whether you are really opening properly, so you try to open up much more, beyond what you've already done. The whole relationship becomes more and more difficult. Again, the principle that applies here is generosity without expectation.

In terms of working with sex and communication in everyday life, it would be too much to ask everyone to become a perfect lover. That would definitely be too much to ask. However, the profundity of the emotional level in an ordinary relationship could be seen properly and completely, and that could bring you into a meditative state.

In meditation, ultimately there's no dwelling place anywhere. In the Zen tradition, you may learn to meditate by focusing on the abdomen, or what's called the *hara*. Maybe you use a koan to burn out your intellectualizations. Then, finally, you reach the state of shikantaza, just sitting without doing anything, not even meditating as such. As long as you are relating with any particular focus in connection with your bodily situation in meditation, you still have an aim and object. You might think that meditating by focusing on an object such as the *hara* provides a better sense of balance. It stabilizes you. Supposedly then your mind is clearer. However, this approach can sometimes be a problem. When you relate your sense of balance to a particular focus, then the balance is dependent on something. So, fundamentally, it's not really balance at all. You still have a division into *that* and *this*, even more strongly than usual. When you have an expansive sense of awareness, you do not have a process of relating to "this" at all. Then meditation becomes much more spacious. Rather than focusing on what is "here," your focus is totality, everywhere. This applies to communication in general. When we say "everywhere," of course that includes *here* as well, but "here" is not particularly important. Here is just here. This is just this. But "that" permeates everywhere.

When you relate with particular centers of energy connected with the symbolic mandala of the body, whether in meditation or in sexual yoga or whatever it may be, you are dealing with specific and very powerful energies. Those energies could become accentuated and very demanding, very fussy.

Unless you pay constant attention, it is likely you might psychically blow up, or explode, so to speak. It has been said that a yogi who is purely working on psychic phenomena is like a drunken elephant—unpredictable and quite likely to step on anything dangerous that might be around. To avoid that wildness or to tame it, you work on space. That way you will not be treading on any toes at all. You will just be using the space that permeates everywhere.

The point is to go beyond any faint handle on our experience, anything that keeps us from being an open person. The subtle reference points keep us from being creative, because we have something to nurse, something to hang on to. Anytime meditation depends on even the faintest quality of dwelling on something, then something is still not quite free. However, somehow freedom arises from or depends on imprisonment. First you have to recognize your fundamental imprisonment. Then, if you cease to imprison yourself, you are truly free. So whenever there is an experience of faint imprisonment, you are free to give up that imprisonment—just a little bit. In order to experience freedom, you have to give an inch.

I suppose we could describe stepping out or leaping out of conceptual reference points as some kind of blowing up in the positive sense. However, the notion of a leap may hold you back from *being* leaping. Something there is still not quite free. What we are trying to relate with here in terms of communication altogether is not only about egolessness. We are working on the basis of the absence of *anything*. You see, once you develop the egoless state, you remain aware of egolessness. The absence of ego itself becomes a dwelling place. There are all kinds of dwelling places. So it would be a good idea to let go of any dwelling place whatsoever.

There is an Indian story—I think it's a Punjabi story—about a follower of the Sikh religion who was trying to meditate on the name of God. Each time he tried to think of the name of God, the name of his lover came up in his mind. He found himself repeating the name of his lover again and again instead of the name of God. He was very frustrated, and he went to his teacher to try to solve the problem. The teacher said, "It doesn't matter; repeat the name of your lover." So he continued to do that. In the meantime, an accident occurred in which his lover drowned or died in some other way. The Sikh found now that in his meditation, although there was some sense of emptiness about her, his lover's name kept coming through. Then at last he

realized that there was no longer any lover to relate to. At that point, suddenly the name of God started coming through in his mind constantly, and he developed a state of meditation then.

The important point is getting into the situation and completely feeling it without a watcher. Initially you have a watcher in your meditation. You have the sense of watching yourself meditating, up to the point that the watcher herself begins to take part in the space; then the watcher is not required anymore. The watcher loses her function. Emotionally, you can get into a state of complete absorption without the watcher. Although, in the long run, that experience may be an ego thing, temporarily it could be a useful stepping-stone. In that absorption, you might not distinguish between love and hate. There's a point where the criteria begin to wear out. The particular experience you are involved in begins to become *everything*. You lose criteria of all kinds, and the experience becomes like a state of bardo, like an obsession without gap, a constant obsession.<sup>14</sup> That may be very confusing. Then you may find that the confusion may be something more fundamental than ordinary confusion.

Passion as the ground of communication could be extremely dangerous, like riding on electricity. However, in some situations, that's the only means. You might think that if it reached the point of being like electricity, the passion would be so intelligent that it wouldn't be dangerous at all. However, it could go either way, equally. It depends on how you deal with it. The most dangerous things have the greatest potential.

---

11. *Dhyana* (Sanskrit) simply means meditation. The term is often used to refer to forms of meditation based on absorption, which are still egocentric experiences, no matter how refined they may be. In particular, *dhyana* refers to the four states of absorption, sometimes called the "four dhyanas." See the glossary for further information.—Eds.

12. In Hinduism, *brahmacharya* has two main meanings. Broadly, it refers to control of the senses. More specifically it refers to celibacy or chastity. So *abrahmacharya* is the negation or violation of that.—Eds.

13. The feminine and the masculine principles are concepts in mahayana and vajrayana Buddhism that refer to qualities of one's mind and one's world. These may be joined in nondual experience. Wisdom and skillful means make up one of the common pairings that refer to the feminine and the masculine joining together. Here, wisdom is the feminine and



skillful means is the masculine. In the chapters on sex and relationships, the author gives us more information on these two principles, which have nothing to do with gender per se. However, in the vajrayana, the practitioner may visualize the masculine and feminine as a heruka, male deity, and dakini, female deity, joined in union. For more on this topic see the glossary and also *Glimpses of Space: The Feminine Principle and EVAM*, Vajradhatu Publications, 1999.—Eds.

14. *Bardo* is a Tibetan word that means an “intermediate” or “in-between state.” The idea of bardo is most commonly understood in connection with teachings in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, and generally people associate bardo with teachings on what occurs at the moment of death and in the after-death state. The traditional teachings on bardo speak of six bardo states, several of which are associated with the process of dying and experiences that occur after death. Other bardo states include birth, the dream state, and the state of meditation. In this chapter on communication, Trungpa Rinpoche is describing bardo as a solid obsession of some kind. To understand this view, we might look at Judith Lief’s introduction to Chögyam Trungpa’s book *Transcending Madness: The Experience of the Six Bardos* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1992). Lief, the book’s editor, clarifies the meaning of bardo and how it relates to the six realms of existence: “This volume...is based on the interweaving of two core concepts: realm and bardo. The traditional Buddhist schema of the six realms—gods, jealous gods, human beings, animals, hungry ghosts, and hell beings—is sometimes taken to be a literal description of possible modes of existence. But in this case the schema of the six realms is used to describe the six complete worlds we create as the logical conclusions of such powerful emotional highlights as anger, greed, ignorance, lust, envy, and pride. Having disowned the power of our emotions and projected that power into the world outside, we find ourselves trapped in a variety of ways and see no hope for escape.” She continues: “The six realms provide a context for the bardo experience, which is described as the experience of no-man’s land. The bardos arise as the heightened experience of each realm, providing at the same time the possibility of awakening or of complete confusion, sanity or insanity. They are the ultimate expression of the entrapment of the realms. Yet it is such heightened experience that opens the possibility of the sudden transformation of that solidity into complete freedom or open space” (p. xi).—Eds.

## NINE

### *The Flame of Love*

OUR SUBJECT IN THIS CHAPTER IS SEX, which is a part of the larger question of love. We can only discuss this topic if we understand how it relates to ego. Like everything else in our everyday life, sex and love can be based either on the central reference point of ego or on a more centerless approach that is beyond ego. It is very important to understand the role that ego plays—or doesn't play—in all of our activities.

Ego contains ignorance, which refuses to look back at its own origin. From that fundamental ignorance or confusion, fear or panic arises. Ego expands from fear or panic into the further processes of perception, impulse, concept, and consciousness.<sup>15</sup> Why, after ignorance, should perception and impulse and all the rest follow? It is because there is a vast store of energy that is being processed here. That vast energy is not ego's energy at all; it is the energy of the primeval background, which continuously permeates whatever is going on.

The primeval background of the universe (or the unconscious—whatever you would like to call it) is not at all just a blank, vacant state of nothingness. Rather it contains tremendous energy; it is completely filled with energy. If we examine this energy, we find it has two characteristics. One is the firelike quality of consuming heat, and the second is the quality of direction. The primeval firelike energy has a direction, a particular pattern of the flow, such as you might see in a spark. A spark contains heat, and it also responds to the air that directs it toward a particular location—the spark takes on a pattern of movement within the atmosphere. The whole process of the primeval

background energy follows a pattern, which is the same whether it passes through the confused filter of ego or not. Its pattern goes on and on, continuously. It cannot be destroyed; it cannot be interrupted.

This spark, this energy that contains heat, is mentioned in connection with the yogic practice known as *tummo*. This is one of the six yogas of Naropa.<sup>16</sup> Tummo practice has been described as the development of inner heat. The energy involved here has a consuming quality, an ever-burning quality, like that of the sun. It continuously burns and consumes until it reaches that point where, psychologically speaking, it no longer allows any room at all for doubts or manipulations. This vast power goes on and on and on, leaving no room to manipulate, leaving no room for confusion or ignorance or panic or doubt. However, when this heat is filtered through the ego process of ignorance, a very interesting development occurs. Rather than remaining a pure consuming process, it becomes slightly stagnated as a result of ignoring the basic ground, as a result of ego's refusal to look at its own origin.

This, one might say, is where the basic twist of love occurs. Ordinary love, love as we usually encounter it in our lives, seems to contain a basic twist, just as the other aspects of our ordinary lives do. This is the basic twist of refusing to see the vast, all-consuming energy we have been talking about. As a result of refusing to acknowledge this energy, ego is forced to accommodate this vibrant energy in some sort of container. Ego accommodates that energy in the form of confusion.

Confusion is a kind of network, like a wire net that forms a container. Once that network of confusion has been created, we try to contain the vast primeval energy within it. Once the energy is caught up in the net of confusion, the basic twist of ego starts to occur. However, the intelligence of ego is not the equal of the power of this burning heat of love. It is only capable of distorting that burning heat. Ego can distort it, but it is unsuccessful in getting hold of it completely. The result of ego's unsuccessful capturing of the basic energy is that the energy churns out a partial burning heat, a partial flame of love.

When the heat of love is captured in the net of confusion, it still churns out an outward-directed flame. However, this outward-directed process is only an expression of fascination, because the flame has not been completely let loose into the open. Only a partial aspect of the flame has managed to escape the

net and extend its tongue. That fascination with the other, or the object of love, is the basic burning energy that has been unsuccessfully filtered through the confusion of ego.

The reason I say ego is unsuccessful is because the ultimate wish of ego is to completely control all the energy, to capture it entirely so that no aspect of the basic flame escapes through the gaps in its network of confusion. Something does escape here, however, but this flame is only a partial manifestation of the energy. So the flame must retreat, or come back into the net, in order to replenish itself. That is how our ordinary confused passion works.

To repeat, ordinary passion extends outward, but because of the network of confusion that entraps it, it has no capability of extending in a limitless way, so it automatically falls back. When it comes back, it has already been somewhat programmed, or readjusted, because of the confusion that runs through it. But strangely enough, this love, desire, or passion hasn't been completely captivated by the ego. It is the one emotion that partially escapes, that is able to operate outside the realm of ego—unlike anger, pride, envy, and the other *kleshas*, or emotions, which have been successfully captivated. Passion is a very powerful thing. It is the powerful expression of the basic origin. We haven't actually managed to captivate or spoil it one hundred percent.

Ordinarily, when we project ourselves onto external situations, we extend our passion or desire, and then we try to possess that object of desire. So we extend our desire, our passion, and we would like to draw something in. If our attempt is unsuccessful, we feel very frustrated; if we could only possess the object of our desire, we feel we would have conquered something. It is rather like someone who sets out to do some window-shopping on a busy street filled with expensive stores. She admires the displays, but she also wants the items for herself. She would like to buy a lot of the merchandise, but she realizes she hasn't got enough money, so each time she sees something that she admires, she feels terribly pained. Still, she looks, because she enjoys the first glimpse. Another person would slowly walk along, simply admiring the displays in the store windows. So we have these contrasting approaches: the possessive way of seeing and the admiring way of seeing.

The possessive approach applies to relationships as well, much more than to objects, because relationships between people are extremely sophisticated. In a relationship, not only does one person have the means to extend his flame out toward the other, in an effort to consume the other, but at the same time, the other person has the same possibility. As soon as one person wants to possess another, the whole process of relationship becomes an intense game. It becomes a question of who has the more powerful and overwhelming personality, which one of the two people is able to subdue the other. Once we take the possessive approach, that is generally the way we look at it.

Trying to possess another person has a primitive, almost apelike, quality. You might want to possess someone purely because of the person's physical beauty. Because he or she is handsome or pretty, you would like to possess the person. Or maybe the person has particular interesting and subtle qualities in his or her psychological makeup, and you would like to possess those aspects of the person. Both cases are extensions of an apelike approach. Possessive sexual relationships are very apelike, that is, purely driven by the basic structure of ego. You see the other person as a kind of juicy steak, and you would like to gobble the person up and be done with it—nothing more than that. It's the animal instinct continuing on our human level.

I'm not suggesting that people should be more sophisticated and develop a particular art of possessing the other. Once our approach has that possessive setup, the more we try to be sophisticated about it, the more we make fools of ourselves—because everybody knows everybody else's tricks. In this field, everybody is a professional, and we know that very well. Trying to be subtle here is rather like the Chinese story of the man who wanted to steal a bell. The story goes that a fool sets out to steal a beautiful bell, a very expensive one with a beautiful sound. He sneaks quietly into the house where the bell is, and he finds it and picks it up. The bell rings and he panics. It keeps ringing because he is panicked and keeps moving it around. He tries to cover both his ears, while still hanging on to the bell with one hand. He keeps on saying, "I don't hear it; I don't hear it."

Not only in sexual situations but in all kinds of situations, we play this bell game. We are quite sure the other person realizes what game we are playing, but we still don't want to let on. We just continue playing the game pretending nobody knows.

Karma plays a role in this game. Karma is a natural law of cause and effect. Whatever you do now, you are planting seeds for the future. This particular chain reaction started from confusion or ignorance, the creation of ego at the beginning. You decide to act in order to get a result. When you decide to do something to benefit your existence, to ensure your security, then the duality starts right at the beginning of that action, and that is called relational action or dualistic action. Because there's duality involved at the beginning, there is also dualistic action involved throughout that process as well. So whatever you've done in the past has a bearing on your present moment—up to now. Whatever you do in the present moment will also have a bearing on the future. The process of karma cannot be eliminated in the past. But what you do in the future is connected with the present moment. Karma is like growing a flower. If you plant a certain kind of seed, a certain type of flower is going to grow from those seeds. It's a natural force that happens everywhere, all the time. If you hit something hard enough, you will break it—that's karma. It's a natural chain reaction that always happens.

Within the Buddhist monastic tradition, there is a traditional, orthodox, and very disciplined way to work with passion in order to go beyond possessiveness and grasping. You find this approach in many spiritual schools of thought that acknowledge the existence of passion but also seek to control it. It is interesting that at the beginning stages of this orthodox approach, controlling the passion does not decrease its intensity at all. In fact, in trying to control it, one learns to live with it on a more intense level. The experience of passion increases until you reach the point of passionlessness, where you realize that putting passion into action and not putting passion into action are the same. You have to achieve this kind of passionlessness before you get to the point of learning to live with passion.

This approach acknowledges the existence of this passion mentally. In your mind, you develop your relationship to passion to the point of controlling it. Through tremendous discipline of this kind, you can develop passionlessness. You do this, not by expressing the passion, but by learning to live with desire. Where you can go wrong here is by suppressing the passion. If you try to suppress it, you are not acknowledging the existence of such passion anymore at all. Whatever comes up, you suddenly shut down, because you feel guilty that you are committing a sin or whatever. Then, because you refuse to look

into it, it tends to bottle up. It collects like air in a balloon and one day, sooner or later, it will tend to burst out.

Repression is a very unskillful way of dealing with passion. It is not that there is something wrong with the traditional teachings, but you take them the wrong way. If you panic, if you feel terribly shy about your passion, this doesn't let you see it. It doesn't let you examine it. If you do see it, you realize that physically carrying out your passion is not the point. Acting on it seems to be a secondary matter. What is important is seeing the passion clearly.

So in the Buddhist monastic tradition, celibacy is a powerful way of dealing with desire, not by suppressing passion, but by examining the mental aspect of it. In the Buddhist tradition altogether, rather than suppressing any desire that comes into your mind, you look at it. You have to become familiar with the desires; then the need to express them physically automatically wears out. You see that the physical expression is no more than an extension of the desire itself—you see the childish as well as the chaotic quality of the expression. However, the basic communicative quality of the desire has to continue. You channel your energy into the process of communication. In this way, the basic monastic tradition simplifies life.

Again, monasticism here is not based on suppression or pure asceticism. It is based on simplicity, the simplicity of noninvolvement and the simplicity of being alone. You become familiar with desire and then relate to it with the simplicity of aloneness, or even loneliness. Eventually, loneliness itself becomes a kind of consort, a companion. That is why, in the Buddhist tradition, tantric practitioners who are leading the celibate monastic life continue practicing the inner discipline of yoga, which involves relating with the principle of sexual union, on the mental level. In any monastic situation, both monks and nuns could have an experience of loneliness as their consort or companion. There has to be a way of working with passion, even in monastic life.

Sometimes laypeople believe that it is best to save their sexual energy for spiritual purposes. They think that if they expend their sexual energy, they won't have it available as spiritual energy. As it is explained in yogic texts, that all depends on how individuals relate to sexual relationships altogether. It depends on whether they put all their possessiveness—their greedy quality—into the process or not. If they do, then that transforms their energy into a sort

of heavy passion, and that affects their spiritual lives adversely. However, if someone can relate to the physical, sexual expression of passion as part of a process of communication, I don't think sex will adversely affect the spiritual life at all. In fact, it will be an inspiration, because the physical expression of desire then becomes a symbolic gesture, the same as doing prostrations and various other yogic exercises, or circumambulating a stupa or the like. All sorts of physical exercises have been recommended in the traditional teachings to learn to use your energy properly and bring your body into contact with the earth in a way that inspires further spiritual energy.

In the Tibetan monastic tradition, first you receive the *samanera* ordination, which is becoming a novice monk or nun. Then you receive *bhikshu* ordination, which is becoming a fully ordained monk or nun. Then beyond that you receive bodhisattva ordination, which is connected with the practice of compassion. Then you also receive the initiations of the Buddhist yoga tradition connected with the vajrayana. These can also be taken outside of the monastic ordination. A lay practitioner can take vows in the Buddhist yoga tradition as well as bodhisattva vows. You are then committed to practicing compassion, while you remain a householder who continues to live an ordinary secular life. In the case of taking the monastic vows, you uphold the monastic discipline of celibacy as long as you remain a monk or nun, which may be for the rest of your life. However, in the Tibetan tradition, there is no punishment for giving up your robes. If a lama wanted to give up his or her robes and cease to be a monastic, then the next choice would be whether to continue his or her spiritual work or whether to become a businessman or a householder or even a hunter, for that matter. That choice depends on individuals. Still, after giving up the robes, the practitioner's bodhisattva practice as well as his or her yogic practice continues. The monastic tradition is very much based on a physical relationship to simplicity, such as we have been talking about. The other disciplines are more connected with the state of mind. So even if a monk or a nun decides to disrobe, his or her mind shouldn't be affected. Spiritual health will continue.

---

15. Chögyam Trungpa is referring here to what are known in Sanskrit as the *skandhas*, the five building blocks of ego. These are form (where ignorance first arises), feeling, perception,



concept, and consciousness. Impulse is an aspect of the third skandha, perception. For a complete description of the evolution of the skandhas, see the chapter “The Development of Ego,” in Chögyam Trungpa, *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1973, 1987), pp. 121ff.—Eds.

16. The six yogas are meditation practices transmitted by the great Indian *mahasiddha* Naropa to his disciple Marpa. They are practiced widely within the Kagyü school of Buddhism. They are the practice of tummo, or inner heat; the illusory body; dream yoga; the yoga of clear light; the transference of consciousness at death; and the practice of bardo, or the intermediate state. Many other Tibetan schools of vajrayana Buddhism also incorporate similar yogic disciplines.—Eds.

## TEN

### *Pure Passion*

CELIBACY, AS AN ORTHODOX DISCIPLINE, is only applicable to certain types of people. Not many people can achieve passionlessness by totally denying the expression of passion. Most people are still left with the desire to express their passion physically. If we don't embrace this orthodox discipline, how do we manage our passion? There is another view of passion and relationship, which takes another approach to the subtlety of the basic primeval energy we were talking about in the previous chapter. We could call this second approach working with pure passion. In many ways pure passion is just passion in the ordinary sense, but at the same time, it is what is called vajra passion. It is vajra, which means indestructible in nature.<sup>17</sup> It is called vajra passion because it is wild passion, in that it has no egoistic networks or wire mesh around it. It is free passion, wild passion, *unleashed* passion. It is passion that hasn't been directed by any sort of switchboard, passion that is more powerful than the apelike quality we discussed in the previous chapter. It contains qualities of sparkling light—a wisdom quality—as well. It has tremendous consuming energy, which does not pass through any filters or networks. That kind of passion, whether it is connected with sex or anything else desirable that arises in life, is genuinely wild passion.

Ego and its intelligence are living in a world that does not acknowledge any other dimensions. From ego's point of view, it's all ego's world. That complicates our efforts to liberate this pure passion. The more we try to step out of ego's game, the more logical answers ego supplies, attempting to block

our efforts. These solutions are all very limited, based on the fundamental twist of ego.

The world of real passion is a different atmosphere, a limitless world. When you have a glimpse of this, when some unprogrammed moment of ventilation allows you to feel something outside the ego, that could inspire you to try to step out altogether. You realize that it's possible to go beyond your habitual patterns—the maze of ego.

However, just continuing to wander through the maze of ego and trying to find your way out doesn't solve the problem, because once you get out of one maze, a further maze or contraption will start up. While one is going through the maze, one is also producing more and more karmic force. The only way out is to directly see another parallel dimension, outside the egoistic setup. That could appear as a momentary perception, which provides a parallel way out, one that doesn't rely on ego's logic. In one moment, you can step out of the maze completely.

The pure or liberated dimension of passionate relationship relies on the energy of no-mind. In other words, in the experience of pure passion, mind transcends logic. It requires courage to access that dimension of life. Generally, logical answers provide security. Logical conclusions bring us some comfort. Our logic tells us that if we do this, then that is going to happen. It creates a seemingly predictable world. One tends to plan everything out, program oneself altogether. One has to learn not to indulge in that particular comfort of overlapping answers. It requires bravery to stop doing this kind of obsessive logical analysis and abandon the chain reaction of answers. It requires the bravery that is willing not to involve itself with that comfort. One must stop fantasizing for one's security and come to the point of no-mind, or nonlogical thinking.

The only way to turn off that process of logical thinking is just to step out of it. When there is no logic, we begin to see things very clearly, but we also begin to feel cold. That area, which is free from habitual mind, may feel very bleak and cold because it seems so unfamiliar. So when we experience it, we usually try to reestablish our familiar territory further and further. In order to liberate yourself from habitual patterns, whenever you feel any kind of cold and bleak mysterious corner, instead of trying to fill that mysterious area with anything else, you should just step into that cold and bleak area—because it is

not participating in the logical process of ego. That's all you can do. In a way, what you do is to just not do anything.

Whenever there's a mysterious dark and bleak corner where there could be mental spiders or mosquitoes or bats, we tend to manufacture some logic, some kind of alternative to explain away those scary things in the dark. There could be anything in that space. Instead of investigating these terrible things, we would like to make everything homey and cozy. We try to reassure ourselves that everything will be okay. We're always trying to avoid those dark areas.

When you feel this fear of the void, that's exactly when you need to leap. Just go into that space. I don't think you'll be afraid while you're leaping. You're afraid beforehand. The leap itself transcends fear. It is rather like a parachute, isn't it? You are terrified by the thought of parachuting, but once you are in the air, you are ready. The fear dissolves, and the open space of no-mind opens up.

When we talk about wild and free passion, we may tend to think something neurotic and erratic is meant. With vajra passion, however, this is not the case. If we let primeval passion loose, it isn't neurotic anymore because of the very fact that it has been let loose. There's no boundary that resists anything, and passion that operates beyond the question of any boundary automatically acts with wisdom and intelligence. In such an approach, intelligence automatically finds its way. At that point, you are able to have proper communication, real communication, because your basic nature is allowed to come out.

When we talk about wildness and freedom, we tend to think in terms of an almost animal or apelike quality, as we have discussed. We think of something like a gorilla escaping from the zoo. That, however, is a description of ego's passion. If you really let loose properly, however, this basic nature is comparable to the gorilla in the wild, at the stage before it has ever been captured, before it has ever been put in a cage, as though it were still in the primeval state of roaming in the jungle. If you really let that primeval aspect of passion loose, it isn't going to destroy anyone, because that passion has a balanced state of being as part of its natural instinct.

If our approach to sex, or anything else in our life, is connected with that primeval quality, we find there is a possibility of wonderful skillful

communication. At the beginning of such communication, we wouldn't feel self-conscious as we do with the neurotic, ego-oriented approach. If at first, at the very starting point, you are completely natural and open, then in the process that follows, you won't feel any self-conscious inhibition. In that case, you will find that your process of communicating, of meeting and seeing the qualities of your partner, is quite extraordinary. This is because you are not judging him or her in terms of the rugged and juicy aspect alone. You are seeing in terms of the whole, the whole quality of the other person, which is like pure gold. Like pure gold, it is beautiful, solid, majestic on the outside, and it is also solid, beautiful, and majestic on the inside. This is because you are not seeing just surfaces, but you are seeing the whole way through. This is the open and skillful way of relating to passion.

Say you're married and you are attracted to somebody else. You might think that is very free passion. However, I don't think that is really free passion at all. It is a reaction against something in your marriage that is making you feel attracted to someone else outside the marriage. Because you are married, you feel that you are stuck together, and therefore you psychologically begin to feel an anarchist attitude. That is not real freedom at all. It is a kind of dissatisfaction, feeling that the relationship is not right—and the sooner the relationship could be abandoned the better.

*Free* is a very interesting word. It could be “free-free” or it could be “free-wild.” “Free-free” is that you are free not because you have been freed by somebody else but because you discover that you can do what you like—you discover that you have the space to move about. “Free-wild” is that you begin to feel you have managed to snatch freedom from somewhere else; it is reacting against imprisonment. Then, instead of creating space, you tend to fill up the space with all sorts of other things. It becomes wild because it is like an echo—once you shout more, the sound will come back to you more as well. That is a continual creation of your own spider's web. It becomes wild at the end. It has to be wild because it is frantic. It is wild in the sense of neurotic. Immediately when you realize you've got freedom in the “free-wild” sense, you begin to shout, you begin to fill the whole of space, and the sound comes back to you. You shout more and more until finally the whole thing becomes complete chaos. You are creating your own imprisonment under the

pretense of freedom. So freedom is a question of whether you have real space or not.

When you apply passion with wisdom, you see the whole process and are not fascinated and overwhelmed by the exterior alone. Instead, when you see the exterior, that simultaneously puts you through to the interior as well. You go the whole way, completely and thoroughly, so you reach right to the heart of the situation. Then, if there is a meeting of two people, that relationship will be very enlightening. You don't only see that person as pure physical attraction or pure habitual pattern, but you see both—the outside along with the inside. This applies to any form of communication, not only sex. Such communication is whole-way-through communication.

Now we have another problem, quite a grave problem. Suppose you see all the way through somebody, and that person doesn't want you to see all the way through—he or she might be horrified by you and run away. What do you do then? Well, since you have made your communication completely and thoroughly, you now have to see that this is the other person's communication. Running away from you is that person's way of communicating with you. So you don't pursue matters further. If you do, if you chase that person, sooner or later you are going to turn out to be a demon from that person's point of view—a vampire, in fact. As that person sees it, you have seen all the way through his or her body to that fat, juicy meat inside that you would like to eat up. The more you try to pursue the person now, the more you are going to fail. You have to realize that there must be something else wrong with you if that person reacted that way. You can't always be completely right. Perhaps you looked through the person too sharply with your desire. Perhaps you have been too penetrating. Since you possess beautiful keen eyes of penetrating passion and wisdom, you don't want to abuse that.

I'm not necessarily talking about how to win that person over. If the person runs away from you, there must be something wrong with *you* in your application of that unleashed passion. If people possess some particular power or exceptional energy, many of them might be inclined to abuse that power, to misuse it by trying to penetrate to every corner, every remote part of the other person. Something is lacking there, which is quite obvious—a sense of humor.

Humor in this case also means panoramic awareness, a feeling of space, of openness. A lot of stories from the Buddhist scriptures tell us that the work of bodhisattvas failed because they were lacking in a sense of humor. They have been too honest, too deadly serious in their application of the teachings. Even if they had a good understanding of how to apply the teachings, they didn't provide the necessary accompaniment to that, which is a sense of humor. They became blunt bodhisattvas.

In a situation where you want to open completely to someone but the person resists you, it is similar to the bodhisattvas. You may have wisdom, compassion, and everything you think you need to communicate with others, but you lack a sense of humor, which is an expression of dhyana, meditative awareness. If you are insensitive and try to push things too far with another person, that means that you don't feel the area properly. You only feel the space as far as your relationship to it takes you—you see what's wrong there, but you don't see what's on the other side. You don't see the other person's point of view, and you don't see the silhouette of the whole situation. Such an overall vision should accompany your relationship to any situation. That is what provides a sense of humor, which is very much needed.

Sometimes people run away from you because they want to play a game with you. They don't want a straight and honest, serious involvement. They only want to play a game. If they are lacking in a sense of humor and you are too, then you both may become demonic in each other's eyes.

This is the point where *lalita* comes in. *Lalita*, which is a Sanskrit term mentioned earlier, means dancing with the situation. It is the dance with reality, with phenomena. Dance here means exchange. When you want something very badly, you don't just reach out your hand to take it. In the case of vajra passion, you don't extend either your eye or your hand automatically. You just admire what you desire. You wait for a move from the other side. That is learning to dance with the situation.

Often we are very blunt. If we don't like something that is going on in our life, we feel tremendously self-conscious. We don't know how to end the scene that is troubling us, because we are creating that scene, putting it together. It is our unskillful action. You don't actually have to create that whole scene at all. You can just watch it, you can work with it. In that way, it doesn't become *your* scene; instead it becomes a mutual dancing together, of

you and your world, your phenomena. If you take this approach, in fact, you end up with an ideal situation. No one ends up being self-conscious because it is a mutual scene. Self-consciousness means stagnation. You are stuck because you don't know how to go beyond that scene, but if you go beyond self-consciousness, the situation becomes very creative. Relationship becomes tremendously creative and dynamic.

In vajra passion, which is passion combined with wisdom, a relationship between two people can be very beautiful, because both partners are completely relaxed. Both are participating together completely, so no one has to take the lead. Sexual relationship can be one of the most important examples of this kind of communication, though the same approach also applies to other forms of communication. All types of communication always include both the feminine and the masculine principles, the chaotic or seductive aspect and the skillful aspect. These are present in any communication, whether it is conversation or correspondence or even just communing with nature. In any communication, these qualities of prajna and upaya, wisdom and skillful means, are always present.<sup>18</sup> In the sexual relationship, this is particularly vivid, particularly obvious.

The symbolism of the yogic tradition of deities in sexual union is applicable here. This symbolism is not purely a metaphor for something; in sex it becomes a real, living application. Sexual relationship is a living, basic example, a living symbol, or mudra as we call it.<sup>19</sup> In all communication, whether in a relationship between two partners, or friends, or any other communicative situation, the feminine and masculine principles are there. There is all-pervading openness—open space is created or the communication could not take place at all, and in order to communicate, a leap into that space is also necessary. The leap is skillful means, the masculine principle, and the open space that you leap into is the feminine principle of wisdom. The open space that is present must be met with skillful action, action that deals with that wisdom, knows how to swim in that ocean of wisdom.

The interplay of masculine and feminine principles is the basis of inspiration in all aspects of life. If a proper foundation is in place, allowing harmonious interaction of the principles, then the masculine and feminine principles act together very creatively and beautifully in situations. Relating



harmoniously, they develop a mode of activity that is known in the vajrayana tradition as the four karmas, the four enlightened actions. Through these actions you can bring about peace and gather richness; you can magnetize situations, and you are also able to subdue or conquer or destroy whatever you need to.<sup>20</sup> In other words, the relationship between the masculine and feminine principles is the basic formula for a mandala.<sup>21</sup> The ground where you build the mandala is the feminine principle of openness, and the skillful way you use that ground in constructing the mandala is the masculine principle. In this case, the two principles are also called prajna and upaya. If you examine the vajrayana tradition, I'm sure you will always find the two basic principles in action. Understanding this could be tremendously inspiring.

You might ask why we say that wisdom represents the feminine principle. Wisdom contains an inquisitive quality: wanting to learn, wanting to know everything, wanting to survey every corner. The feminine realizes she's the ground of everything, and she would like to explore that ground. That is what you call the dakini principle in the Buddhist tradition.

Wisdom is learning, knowledge, isn't it? Knowledge can be creative, producing further knowledge, so it is the mother principle. Knowledge can also be destructive, because you know how to create chaos as well. Therefore, there is a destructive quality to the feminine as well as a creative quality. It's the mother principle, basically.

The masculine principle shows the feminine principle the skillful move to put its pattern in the right order, so to speak. Wisdom is knowing, pure knowing. It is not connected with action. The contrast between masculine and feminine here is rather like the contrast between practice and philosophy, or theory.

We might wonder how passion is related to compassion. Compassion is also communication, the ultimate communication. It doesn't necessarily mean feeling sorry for something; rather, it is basic communication that is not hesitant to become involved. In compassion we are willing to put ourselves into the situation of helping others, no matter what is required. Compassion sees the nature of the samsaric game that is being played, and whenever

action is required to cut through that game, the action of compassion comes into play very accurately, right on the point. If necessary, it can be ruthless. The four karmas mentioned above are actually a description of the different aspects and qualities of compassion. When the feminine and masculine principles act together in harmony, that is also the essence of compassionate action.

*Mahasukha*, or the great bliss, represents the union of the feminine and the masculine principles. It is the ultimate communication connected with vajra passion. When you are able to establish complete communication, there will be tremendous joy, because there is no chaos within the dance anymore. It is like the meeting of teacher and disciple, which is the ultimate meeting point that expresses great joy. Such joy exists as the sudden realization or experience of vajra passion.

Vajra passion doesn't inspire you to fill the space at all. When you constantly have the neurotic desire to express your passion in this and that way, then whenever any space is created, you try to fill those gaps by doing things, which is a result of panic. If you try to approach limitless passion from the point of view of filling space, you can't do it at all. With that limited approach you are completely powerless. But vajra passion, open passion—or we could even say transcendental passion—does not inspire you to fill the space. It just inspires you to create more space. You don't necessarily have to do anything. You just enjoy the space more.

---

17. *Vajra* is a Sanskrit word meaning “diamond,” “adamantine,” or “indestructible.” The thunderbolt scepter held by Indra, the king of the gods in Indian mythology, is known as a vajra. In the adjectival sense in which the term is employed here, it refers to absolute indestructibility that is beyond all conditioned existence.—Eds.

18. *Prajna* is a Sanskrit term meaning “transcendental knowledge,” which is knowledge that sees through duality and recognizes emptiness. *Upaya* is also a Sanskrit term. It refers to compassionate action that is actually effective in situations. *Prajna* and *upaya* are associated with the feminine and masculine principles, respectively. Enlightenment is sometimes defined as the unity of the two.—Eds.

19. *Mudra* is a Sanskrit word that literally means “sign, symbol, or gesture.” A mudra can be any sort of symbol. Specifically, mudras are hand gestures that accompany various Buddhist practices, which express different moments of realization or aspects of the practice. Here the

author is referring to the more general sense of mudra, in which the symbol and the symbolized are inseparable.—Eds.

20. *Karma* refers to the law of cause and effect in general. The four karmas referenced here refer to the four enlightened and advanced actions that are practiced by a realized yogi or teacher, which arise from the understanding and ability gained through prolonged practice. The four karmas are pacifying, enriching, magnetizing, and destroying, which the author describes here. He has sometimes characterized the four karmas as the expression of crazy wisdom.—Eds.

21. *Mandala* is a Sanskrit word. The Tibetan term *kyilkhor* means “center and periphery,” or “center and fringe.” While we often associate mandalas with two-dimensional Tibetan diagrams used as an aid in visualization practice, in general, a mandala is the unification of many vast elements into one view through the experience of meditation. Seeming complexity and chaos are simplified into a pattern and natural hierarchy. *Mandala* can sometimes be almost synonymous with *world* or *worldview*. Here, the author describes how the relationship between the masculine and feminine principles gives rise to a complete pattern of energy, or a world.—Eds.

## ELEVEN

### *Family Karma*

I THOUGHT I MIGHT SAY SOMETHING about relationships in the family, starting with the relationship between parents and children, both in the West and in a traditional society like Tibet's. This could be a bridge to our discussion of money, actually, because it starts to look at the bigger situation of how relationships function within society.

In Tibet, when the parents got old, the adult children usually remained with them in the house. Children would eventually take over the running of the family business, and the parents would become like their children's advisors. They expected to be given very good hospitality in the home, being well cared for and having their occasional advice acknowledged. Children were dedicated to their parents and very obedient. In traditional Tibetan society, the elders wouldn't be put into old-age homes or any situation like that.

There might be feelings of resentment, hostility, and guilt between generations, but still, the whole family situation was contained and prescribed by the society. The practice of that society was to give as much hospitality as you could to your parents and to look after them until they died. Young people may sometimes have found the situation painful, and sort of ghostly. Your parents might be watching you, behind your shoulder all the time, which could be extremely discomfiting, but still the children put up with it. Socially, to remove your parents from the home would be regarded as a disgraceful thing to do. So the children tried to be patient with their parents.

However, it wasn't always easy. There is a story that exemplifies this. A man and his wife had his blind father living with them. The father was very

nosy, and he listened to everything. Because he was blind, his hearing was very sensitive, and he could catch every subtlety of what was being said. He always tried to mind his daughter-in-law's business. She finally decided that the solution to this problem was to kill him, but she didn't want to kill her father-in-law by obvious means. She wanted to find a subtle way of doing it. Then she heard about a snake whose venom was very poisonous, and she thought: "Well, now there's an opportunity!" She caught one of these snakes, and she cooked it. She made a broth out of it and served it to her father-in-law. Surprisingly, a certain chemical in the snake broth cured the old man's blindness. When the grandfather ate the snake broth, he began to regain his sight. After that, he was even nosier. So her plan backfired completely.

Our situation in the West is quite different from the approach in traditional societies like Tibet's. However, the relationship between parents and children is still an important one. The only way to relate with your parents in the current situation is to acknowledge them and to try to communicate with them. The relationship between parents and children is absolutely beyond money. It's a relationship that can't be calculated in terms of dollars. I don't know whether anybody has attempted to quantify such a thing or not, but it's impossible. The karmic debt is impossible to pay back, from either side. A huge sum or amount of energy has been put into the relationship. That energy would be worth an incalculable sum of money. Children and parents need to relate to one another in terms of that energy, which means relating to one another as persons.

In many cases, when the relationship with the parents breaks down, children begin to give up hope about the relationship, or they resent it. They might even resent the fact that their parents gave birth to such a child. "It was a terrible thing to do, creating me." That's quite tragic. It's necessary to go beyond that attitude and relate with your parents in terms of a human situation. A lot of young people haven't been able to do that successfully. However, it could really help. When parents realize that their children are not just frivolous and reactionary toward society and toward what their own parents have done, then the parents begin to appreciate their children. They can see that their children have some gratitude for their upbringing. Then children may be able to share with their parents what they have learned in the process of their life.

Interestingly, the problems with your parents are also connected with your money problems or your money karma. One could say that 25 percent or even 50 percent of money karma is bound up in that relationship to your parents, their way of bringing you up, and their way of relating with you in life situations. Your neurosis in the money situation is partly based on your neurosis in dealing with your parental situation. Because of that, the money situation becomes much harder and more difficult to deal with.

Altogether, our family relationship to money is a very, very powerful thing. The fundamental attitude that people have toward money seems to pass down through the generations, century after century. Whereas other aspects of parents' relationship with their children can be shuffled around, somehow money remains an inflexible point. Other things may change, but the attitude toward money is usually left intact from generation to generation and passed down as it was; a very old-fashioned approach still goes on. Karmically, money becomes a binding factor between the generations.

Parents as well as children need to work on their relationship with one another. If parents don't regard their children as guests from the moment when they are born, then they will begin to regard their children as property. With that approach, you lose valuable opportunities of relating with the person who is your child. When the child grows up, you feel that *your* property, your territory, is enlarging, expanding, rather than feeling that your guest is doing well.

Regarding a child as a guest means that you appreciate him or her as a friend, a human guest, not a pet, not just "my son" or "my daughter" but a friend who also has his or her own independent intelligence. Ideally, you should be honored that this particular person, your child, has decided to accept you as her parents. Often, parents lay heavy trips on their child rather than regarding the child as a guest who could make up his or her own mind. If the guest decides to leave tomorrow, you thank this guest for having visited. "We hope you enjoyed your stay here. What else can we do for you? Could I call a taxi for you, help you book your air tickets?" If you can go ahead and do that, it's beautiful. The guest might come back and accept your hospitality again and again.

On the other hand, children may come home purely out of obligation, although they don't feel welcome. Or sometimes when children come back,

their parents regard it as a chance to talk to them and remold them. “I would like to have a word with you. Mommy and Daddy would like to have a word with you. You have to think about what you are going to do next.” In that situation, we expect children to do what we think is good for them, so that they won’t be social outcasts. We threaten to withhold their inheritance. That is a problem. There’s no sense of generosity at all. Viewing a child as a guest is a mark of generosity. Then the whole thing is open. You let the child know that he or she can take off anytime the child likes, and you are willing to help with the journey, whatever you can do. Then the whole relationship becomes more direct. Fundamentally, if you regard one another as friends, the concept of family—father and mother and children—opens up tremendously.

As a parent, you can’t ignore the child’s independent quality. When you see a child purely as an extension of yourself, then whatever the child does has some bearing on you, and you’re not appreciating the child as an individual person who is growing up. Acknowledging others’ independence is part of developing generosity toward them altogether.

Beyond that, children can actually help their parents in many ways. So the birth of a child should be regarded as a teaching or learning process for the parents. It works both ways: parents learn from their children, and the children learn from the parents. It should be normal for children to relate to their parents. This indicates that their destination, or their karmic situation in life, is all right. If after they have grown up, children fail to relate with their parents, there is something not quite right about the karmic situation for the child. He is trying to escape or ignore the reality of the karmic situation.

When your children are young, if you take the approach of seeing them as guests, then discipline is quite straightforward. You can tell your children exactly what’s wrong in a situation or what’s required, but there’s no further implication behind it. Discipline arises in that moment. You may say, “That’s a dangerous thing to do” or “That’s a chaotic, confused thing to do.” That’s it. There’s no further antagonism behind it. Of course, you can’t quite take this approach at the beginning, when a child is only a year or so old. At that age children are just starting to walk, and they pick up everything in sight methodically, and throw things around. You can’t expect them to respond logically at that point. As time goes along, however, this approach to discipline becomes quite workable.

As a parent, you may find it irritating and painful to see that your child is dirty or has made a mess. With that thought, you rush in and give him or her a bath and good clothes, and make things tidy. Then you can say, “Isn’t he cute—such a nice clean person!” Helping someone in that way is for your own entertainment. It’s part of your pride. You are relating to that person exactly the same as owning an object. On the other hand, situations could be related with directly. That person needs a bath and new clothes, so you provide those things, but it doesn’t matter to you what the outcome is. You just do it, without any demand.

Later, after the children have grown up somewhat, if problems haven’t become too extreme or gone on too long, then both parents and children can connect to one another and work on the relationship. If the situation is only halfway stuck, then either the parents or the children are intelligent enough to approach the relationship from a different angle. Or sometimes another element could be introduced by someone who has been closely related to the family. This person could present another version of how the parents and the children could relate. But once problems have gone unresolved for too long, solving them is like trying to stop an arrow that’s been shot. It’s on its way already. You can’t change the course; it’s done already. So it’s better to work on the relationship earlier.

When children don’t listen to you, it’s usually because something fundamental in their view of you has been set in their mind. It’s difficult to change the situation unless parents and children are willing to work with the situation, willing to give up their view, willing to say, to a certain extent, that they were wrong in the past. You might have to go as far as that, and then you can relate to one another as grown-up persons. There is no other way.

As a parent, the only way to work with the relationship is to approach it *outside* of already existing expectations. In other words, your son or daughter has a certain fixed idea of you, and he or she will approach you from that view, and you probably do the same thing. However, you can approach your child from beyond that usual style, outside that style, as though you had just met him or her. It would be as though you were meeting her for the first time, as somebody else, or as though she met you as somebody else. The two of you meet and become friends. One can approach one’s relationship with an adult child from that angle. Otherwise, as much as you may have words of wisdom



to say to her, you will run into the worst pigeonholes of her expectations of you, and your advice is not going to help her at all. You *could* approach her from a different angle, from a different direction, with a different style and see the situation differently. That is possible.

We can't deny that there is biological continuity between generations. That continuity can be worked with on the basis of pride and obligation or in terms of direct contact between people. Pride is saying, "Look what a good son I produced." Obligation is saying: "I must relate with my father because he is my father." However, both sides can approach the relationship more directly. The continuity between generations is there, and you don't have to fear losing that continuity at all. It's impossible to lose it. It will be there in any case. It could be the basis for becoming good friends, the basis of an absolutely beautiful friendship.

The karmic situation is the source of the whole subject matter we are discussing. As children, we have a certain karmic link with our parents and a certain karmic relationship with them, just as we have a karmic link with money and a certain neurotic relationship with money. The karmic situation is the reason we find ourselves in inescapable situations. If you are skillful and selfless, relatively selfless—or at least a candidate to be selfless—some thought should be given to the relationship with your parents and trying to work with them, trying to work with their situations and understand them. In some cases, parents have preconceptions of you as a child and won't listen to anything you say. But in other cases, the parents are trying to understand and trying to learn, trying to take an interest in your livelihood. Then there are tremendous possibilities of approaching them and trying to work with them as selflessly as possible—relating with them rather than trying to push yourself into their territory.

Some of the major difficulties between people, especially different generations, come from a feeling of guilt. This doesn't serve any good purpose, but nevertheless it always seems to be there. Guilt serves to perpetuate the difficult situations that brought the guilt on in the first place. Parents feel guilty toward their offspring, and children feel guilty toward their parents. Some individuals are aware of the cause and effect of their actions, and this type of person seems to feel the most guilt. Then there are those who purely want to grasp their own opportunity, just run away and do their own

thing. With such people, there's little or no guilt at all. They just go ahead and do what they like without consideration for how it affects others. Although they might have to go through a long period of struggling to get what they want, and they might have to inflict a lot of pain on others to accomplish what they want, still they are delighted once they've attained their goal.

Still, I'm not recommending guilt. Guilt is not fundamentally healthy, because it has the quality of condemning whatever happens and not seeing the inspiration or positive aspect in things. Often a guilty conscience comes from self-hatred, constantly condemning oneself. The only way to overcome guilt is by seeing that there is nobody to blame for the chaos or the difficulties in life. Chaotic situations are not punishment, but they are stepping-stones. Then you can see the positive within the negative.

I also have some advice for practitioners of meditation or those who join a spiritual community. The Buddha required his students to have their parents' permission to become monks. These days, I don't think it's absolutely black-and-white that a young adult needs his or her parents' permission to practice or be involved with a spiritual community, but you should have some attitude that sooner or later you are going to communicate with your parents about your spiritual path. We have to recognize that the karma of those people, your parents, has to be taken into account by you as a practitioner. If you try to tell your parents why you are involved with meditation, you may run into their lack of knowledge about what meditation is really about. (This could apply to anyone you try to talk to about your practice.) There are lots of misunderstandings resulting from a lack of knowledge, a lack of education about what meditation really is. It could be difficult to communicate. The misunderstanding could come from you or from your parents. One misunderstanding is that spirituality automatically means giving up anything to do with the world, thinking that we should run away from the world and get absorbed in a state of bliss and happiness. If we talk like that to our parents, we are not providing them with accurate information. It's an educational problem on our part.

Another wrong approach is knowing better but letting your parents be ignorant and just providing some basic logic they can relate to, because you think they would be happier if they had some simplistic logic to go on, something to believe about meditation. So you provide a stepping-stone of

ignorance for them. In fact, you allow your own ignorance to become that stepping-stone for them. Whenever anything is mysterious or beyond your comprehension, you immediately go back to the original confused state of mind, and this is what you share with them.

For the time being, when you first start to practice meditation, you might not tell your family what you are doing if the environment is totally unsympathetic. But that shouldn't be regarded as a permanent situation. If children cannot talk to their own parents, then friends of theirs may be able to talk to their parents and explain things, because your parents will be less defensive with your friends. In any case, you should have some hope of communicating with your family at a certain stage, relating with them rather than abandoning them altogether. You can't give up all hope for the relationship. By the way, this applies not only to children telling their parents about meditation but to any of us who decides to do something that is not "sanctioned" by our family and friends.

The Buddha himself found that there was no way of explaining to his parents why he wanted to leave his situation as the crown prince, so he escaped from the palace. He ran away in the middle of the night. Later, after he practiced and attained what he wanted to attain, he returned to his parents, and he began to teach them. As a result, his father became devoted to him, and his own son, Rahula, also became his follower, his disciple. So the Buddha went back to his family and talked to them.

What we are discussing here is not black-and-white prescriptions. You can't really follow any kind of party line. You have to work things out very flexibly.

I would also like to say something about the situation of marriage. To begin with, let's look at the problems that sometimes develop. We can't just talk about the ideal. Relationship problems arise when people feel they are in an obligatory situation rather than relating to each other as friends. Two people find they get along extremely well before they get married, but after they get married the relationship often begins to deteriorate. They may begin to lose their friendship. They are not friends anymore; they are husband and wife. Friendship doesn't seem to apply anymore, because their relationship has

become obligatory. Partners stop referring to each other as friends. Instead they say “my husband” or “my wife” to refer to each other. They lose the playmate quality they used to have. Quite possibly during the honeymoon period, they may have the sense of being two kids playing together. But as soon as they get home to the kitchen-sink level, they lose that sense. They are serious citizens now. They begin to exert their willpower and conviction to maintain their marriage by working at the whole thing very seriously and faithfully. They tend to lose their sense of humor about everything. Legality has turned their relationship into a solemn situation rather than just being a statement of the continuity of what is already so.

If the friendship continues to develop in a marriage, the husband and wife may eventually develop a level of common understanding where they no longer even have to finish their sentences when talking to each other. Just a word or two, and the other person already knows what her partner is going to say. In marriage, ideally communication takes place very freely between the husband and wife. They are able to communicate with each other more fluently and openly than they can with other friends. They know one another very well because they spend so much time with each other, so they are able to let loose completely and be open about anything. Perhaps they can also do that with other people, but it is much more challenging and tiring. Other friends tend to have their own interpretations of what is being said, much more strongly than the two partners do with each other. Their relationship can sometimes reach almost to the level of telepathy because they have gone beyond any kind of inhibitions.

In a relationship, if you feel a sense of generosity, that is the ground for good communication. We could say that generosity is the real ground of monogamy, or commitment. The committed situation makes you feel that you can accommodate whatever there is. You have a sense of safe ground, and you can afford to expand. You don't have to be frugal with your feelings anymore. If you begin to feel poverty in a relationship, however, things become very tight. You begin to question how much attention to pay to this or that situation in the relationship.

Commitment can provide generosity and openness. You share your experiences without making a big deal out of them. You are not particularly defeated or threatened by the other person. There is a sense of security, but

the security mentality in this case comes from a sense of having nothing to lose. Therefore, you have nothing to gain, but things are so, as they are. This is the highest sense of generosity.

Marriage is about two individuals sharing common ground. When one of the partners is in trouble, the other one is there to help. When the partners help each other, that maintains the common ground of the relationship. There's an almost computerized sensitivity in a good marriage. When one person is in trouble, the other one comes along with solid help and works the problem out. Or as the vows in some marriage ceremonies say, "For better or for worse, in sickness and in health." You vow that you are going to take care of and accept the other person as your husband or wife. You swear you are going to take care of the other person's whole being, be responsible for his or her welfare. If you are in a better position than the other person, if your partner is in a low-energy state and your energy is normal, you will influence or help that other person to bring her or him up to your level. The idea is to influence each other in a healthy way.

However, as we know, marriage can become completely different from that. Marriage can develop a pattern in which, when the other person is low, you take advantage of that to lay your trips on your spouse. At that point, I'm not sure that a marriage is really a marriage. Who knows who's laying heavy trips on whom? That's where the trouble begins. One person feels that he is on a higher level than the other, that he is more mentally balanced, and he pushes his game. That game can go on and on, and finally there is apt to be a split.

As I have already said, in a healthy marriage two people don't particularly relate as husband and wife. In a genuine marriage, you accept the other person as a friend, a beautiful, communicative friend, and your partner views you as a good friend as well. Then, when you have a child, you actually do regard that child as your first guest. You have to feed and clothe this guest, bring her up, and educate her. You are the host and hostess. That would be the ideal.

## TWELVE

### *The Question of Money*

**M**ONET PLAYS a very important part in our lives. These days it seems to control the whole process of our lives. We have to earn a living. Earning a living, earning money, is what allows us to make choices. The question of whether we will be able to study or whether we will be able to meditate coincides with the question of money. If we have money, then we can study more or meditate more. If we run out of money, we can't meditate as much, because we can't afford to pay a meditation center to accommodate us. It seems to be a very simple thing: if we have enough money, then we can live luxuriously, and if we don't have enough money, we have to work and we might have to submit to hard conditions.

That's the way money seems to us—very, very simple. Do we have money in our pockets? We do? That's great. We have enough money to get back home. Isn't it nice that at least we are quite sure that we will be able to sleep peacefully in our bed tonight? We're also going to have enough money to buy new socks. Isn't that great?

Actually money isn't as simple as we think. You see, money is more a matter of thoughts than anything else, those thoughts that are constantly cropping up as we go through life. Do we have enough money to go to a restaurant to eat? If we don't, we don't go to the restaurant—it's back home for us. Do we want to see a particular movie? Yes; but no, we don't have enough money—back home for us. We want to go to a meditation center. Do we have enough money? No? Then we have to go back home. Or we have to

start working to make enough money to go to the meditation center, because the people at the meditation center want money as well—they're hard up.

It is interesting that money seems to have so much controlling power. I have experienced this power of money myself. Whole organizations, whole institutions, are based on money. The entire authority in certain organizations is based on money. Let's take an example. Say you saw an ad in the newspaper for a meditation center, advertising an ideal place to meditate. Very factually, that newspaper advertisement happens to be there because the meditation center had the money to pay the newspaper for the ad. Because of that, you happened to see the ad, and this also happened because you bought that newspaper. You paid the money, so you got the paper. Everything seems to operate through money. Because they paid money to put the ad in the paper and you paid money to buy it, it all comes to the point where you're filling out a form applying to go to that meditation center. You write them and say: "I can pay to stay at your meditation center." Or you say: "I am a poor student, and I can't afford your rates—will you accept me on a work-study basis?" And you get the answer: "You are welcome at a discounted rate, but you will have to work. We need you to work, because we need to keep our center alive, and your work means a lot to us. If you work in the vegetable garden or doing construction on our new facilities, you will be saving us money. On that basis, you are welcome. Please come, you are welcome."

Then, the moment we set foot in this meditation center or ashram, or whatever kind of place it is, the first thing we realize is that we have fallen under institutionalized control. We realize that the organization is in control of the money; they control the financial matters. We are somewhat upset and irritated to find that we are actually in the hands of an institution rather than those of a spiritual leader. Immediately, we begin to think: "I haven't got any money. How long are they going to let me stay here?" Then we go ahead into the program, and we study and practice and work. We find that the whole process is worked out exactly by the organization on a financial basis. Everything you do depends on how much you've worked and how much you have failed to work. It's all based on whether you generate a profit for them or not. All of these things are worked out in a very matter-of-fact way, because

the comptroller or the administrator of that particular organization is very conscious of money.

Of course, the spiritual leader of this organization is also very aware of money, but he is also conscious of human relations, because he has had to recruit people and build the organization. He tries to be polite and make conversation, and he tries to inspire people as much as possible—because he feels guilty about the money thing. As you go along, he tries to put you at ease. He says: “Please make yourself comfortable. Our place is unlike any other place. It’s different—we don’t think about money at all. Our focus is very much on the individuals who are here. Get to know the rest of the people in the community. Relax and meditate. Do whatever you want to do. In fact, you don’t even have to meditate if you don’t want to. It’s voluntary.” He says all this because, underneath, he is conscious about the money.

Or another approach might be: “I would like you to take part in my organization. However, anybody who stays on my property must participate in the yogic exercises and take part in the meditation. If you don’t do that, you are not worthy. We cannot accept you here. Whether you have money or not, I don’t regard you as worthy if you have come here for frivolous reasons. You are too frivolous because, number one, you don’t have any money, and the second thing is that you don’t want to take part in the meditation.” Now you feel obligated to take part in the meditation and yoga sessions because you don’t want to be rejected, and by now you care less about your spiritual development than you do about your acceptance in the center and successful financial arrangements. You say to yourself: “I would like to stay in this center. I like it. It’s a nice setup, the people are nice. So I have to follow the rules, otherwise I’ll be chucked out.” So you take part in the yoga, the meditations, and everything that they do there.

In one center I know of in California, you not only have to do the practices, but you must take part in discussion groups as well. In such places, the leader of the place, who conducts the discussions, develops very keen eyes. He checks out the new arrivals to see if they have a link with him or whether or not they are likely to have faith in him. He checks this with his sharp keen eyes, like a vulture looking at a fresh corpse. Then his approach in discussions is based very much on whether the newcomer has long hair or short hair, whether he is smartly dressed or dressed in the colorful hippie style. What he



says is mostly based on impressing the newcomer, because he wants to convert him. If the newcomer has come in the hippie costume, then he will accommodate that. If the newcomer is more of a business type, he will present the religiosity of his community in a matter-of-fact way and try to show in a businesslike fashion that his philosophy is valid.

If you have newly arrived, by the time the discussion finishes, you are terribly tired. You have encountered and talked to so many people. You are completely tired out and want to relax in bed. But before going to bed, you would like to make yourself a cup of herbal tea or have some hot milk. However, the moment you try to do that, the light in the kitchen switches off. "It is eleven o'clock. Our institution does not allow people to stay up any later than that. Go to bed or you'll be out, no longer a part of this community."

The moment people have their hand on the switch, they feel a great deal of control or power. They can do that because they are in control of the money. They have the authority, which is based on their dignity of controlling the money, which now amounts to the status that goes with controlling basic factors like light. It could well be that this place has fancy chandeliers with lots of lightbulbs. In any case, the authorities control the setup in this particular little society. They are in control of that room where you want to make your tea. They are going to switch the light off, so you have to go back to your room and sleep. The next day you wake up feeling somewhat awe-inspired by this place, and on some level, you are in awe of the authority connected with controlling the money here. You are interested in all of this, and you want to be on the good side of this authoritative and impressive organization.

However, when you come out of your room, someone tells you that you didn't get up early enough. They had a morning service this morning, and you slept late. So you feel guilty about that; you even feel guilty about having breakfast now. However, somebody working in the cafeteria might feel sympathetic to you, and that person provides you with eggs and toast. Maybe he gives you breakfast because he feels that he has to keep up a certain standard of behavior in the organization. He gives you breakfast quite nicely. So the morning goes quite smoothly, with no confrontational problems, and lunch goes in a similar way.

These are the kinds of institutions and situations, particularly within religious or so-called spiritual institutions, we encounter in this country or any other country. They express the weight of the power of money.

If you start an organization, you will experience this tendency for the power of money to take over. It's true that you do have to take money into account; you have to be practical. Soon your practicality begins to be associated with a sense of authority. That authority becomes associated with your qualities of a dignitary, your status—where your house is located, its impressiveness, and the colorfulness of its display. The whole situation begins to reflect the power of money. That's complete nonsense. It's completely mad in a sense. You may think that as the person who started the organization, you are special. You may think that this is connected with where you came from, your exotic place of origin. However, whether you come from Tibet or whether you come from Afghanistan, Timbuktu, Ceylon, Polynesia, or wherever you come from, it doesn't mean anything. The mysteriousness of a place doesn't make it important at all. What is important is what we are in this country. In this particular place, we are interested in human relationship, human basic contact. The place you came from doesn't make you important at all. Whether you come from Moscow or the North Pole or anywhere else is irrelevant. Where you came from is just a place on this earth. We all know about this earth. We have everything marked on geographical maps. Everybody knows the names of places; whether they pronounce them right or not doesn't matter.

The whole problem here arises from trying to make money out of confusing people, out of creating awe-inspiring environments for them. I am particularly talking about religious organizations and institutions, because I myself come from one of those, and that's what I have the most experience of. Indeed, in my life I also made the mistake of creating a religious institution. I didn't mean to do it, but it happened like that.

When we create institutions to confuse people, the results are very sad, terribly destructive and evil—but funny. Creating such an institution is very similar to a child building a sand castle and then selling tickets to it. We could say that it's all child's play, but there is a difference between when children do this and when adults do it. That single factor is—money! A child doesn't talk about money, but those of us who have achieved adulthood think of this

game as a very serious, solemn game. We would like to charge other people money to get into our game.

It is degrading to think in terms of selling the dharma, selling the teaching for money, selling the Buddha. Dharma means truth. If religious centers have the mask of truth and the image of the Buddha, they can exhibit the combination of the two and sell it. They can exhibit it externally and sell it, and it becomes a cheap commercial practice, very much based on ego. Ego is striving to attain its reward. The thinking is: "If I start this organization, can I use it to build myself up further?" This sort of competitive attitude is based on ego, and it also becomes involved with money. Whenever we invest our ego in a particular formula, the question we are trying to answer is, "How much are we going to gain from that?" That easily ends up connected with money. Here it ends up in the spiritually completely disillusioning process of selling the truth for money. In this kind of environment, complications in the relationships among the people involved in the organization automatically develop because no one is fundamentally being cared for. All we care about is money. The whole focus is on developing the community, the institution, into something prosperous that has a dignified exterior that can inspire awe in people. The whole thing is falsely dignified, and the leaders talk about how much money has been collected, how much wealth has been gained, and so on.

In the ordinary case of just earning a living, money is not a problem to begin with. We may be inspired to do certain work. We would like to get an interesting job. That's fine. The result of the job is that we get some money, and at the same time we continue to enjoy the work. Once we accumulate a certain amount of money, our concentration may begin to drift away from the work and begin to move toward what we can do with the money. We think of travel destinations, and we begin to calculate whether we will be able to go first class or will have to settle for business or coach class. Those kinds of preoccupation develop.

While we are working, before we actually accumulate a sum of money, our work process may seem very creative. When the money actually is handed to us, it seems very flat. Just getting money in exchange for our work feels very flat; it's just a piece of paper in our hand. We don't know what to do with it. We immediately want to exchange it for something else that is more creative,

but doing that is difficult for the very fact that we have to consider our money situation.

Ego's reaction to the physical presence of money is interesting. Suppose I hold up a hundred-dollar bill. Whether it is one hundred pounds, one hundred euros, or one hundred dollars doesn't make any difference. You have an attitude when you see this bill, an immediate psychological attitude. It doesn't matter whether you are a millionaire or penniless. You get a certain feeling on seeing this, this bill with the design on it; a certain attitude immediately comes into your head, which is psychological materialism. I'm talking about your psychological reaction to this hundred-dollar bill, the psychological implications for you of seeing it. This kind of attitude is very silly, isn't it? In fact, my showing the money, handling the money, seems very silly, absolutely silly. I'm sure you would be thinking: "What is he going to do with this money? Is he going to put it back in his pocket or is he going to tear it up?" It's not necessary to do anything exhibitionistic. Just by my holding up a hundred-dollar bill, you see the psychological implications of perceiving this banknote.

Before, when you were working, the work might have been very creative, but when you are handed a bill like this at the end of your work, when you see that you've been presented with so many dollars in your hand, the whole thing is flat like a flat tire. The whole result is very flat—because you have worked, you got *this*. People's creativity is very much alive, but then when they get paid for their creativity, they often experience that as rather meaningless. Money is the reward for their creative process, but it is very one-dimensional, a tremendous comedown. That's why it is sad to reduce every creative force to monetary terms. It's terribly sad, sacrilegious in a sense. It's quite shocking but quite fascinating. The psychological attitudes that can be observed here are extremely interesting.

For people who have it, money represents a potential for ruling the world. It is potentially so in their minds, but it is not actually so. For example, a person who has a great deal of money might think: "Because I have a lot of money, I can make a donation to such-and-such a place, and by making that donation, I will be able to manipulate the people there into giving the place thus-and-such a form." That is a kind of game that a rich person might play. Suppose, however, that the place you are planning to contribute to refuses

your money. This goes against your automatic expectations; you presume they would love to have your contribution instead of refusing it. If they refused you, you would be completely suspended in midair. Such attitudes are so interesting.

What I have been saying doesn't at all mean that I think money should be regarded as unimportant. It is a very important force in our lives. Money shouldn't be regarded as something that just comes and goes. That's very naive. No divine administration prints banknotes for you and disburses them. Money doesn't just come and go like that. Money comes and goes along with your greed and attachment. You sometimes avoid spending money because, strangely enough, you have such a strong sense of worship toward it.

You may have a feeling of the divinity of money. However, the moment you see something you really want to buy, you forget about the divinity of the money and you spend it. Before you know it, you have just a few pennies left in your pocket. It is interesting that if you are not careful all the time about the process of giving and receiving money, you don't spend your money properly at all. If you handle your money without awareness and mindfulness of how much you are giving out and receiving, then the money just flies away, even if you have millions of dollars in your pocket. If instead you are aware of how many people worked hard for this particular banknote, how much energy they spent for it, then you begin to think more carefully about buying and selling. You begin to develop a relationship to money. It is another relationship in which we can see how much we waste our energy. We see—not necessarily in money terms alone—how much we abuse our energy in situations. We would like to get some kind of response in a situation; therefore we spend more energy than necessary. Often we do get some kind of response but not a complete one.

In this case, money represents the energy principle; you can connect with that when you're aware of how much you're spending. It's no good thinking, "If I spend more, I'll get more" and thoughts like that. You won't. You have to understand the cause of spending as well as of taking in money. The cause of your expenditure is very important. Do you have a feeling of balance and love, or are you exerting your energy in order to get power over another person or to make a demand on another person? This kind of expenditure of

energy is in a sense a spiritual currency of its own, which is represented in a mundane sense by money.

From this point of view, every dollar you make or spend represents your energy of the moment. If you misuse the dollars, if you just dish them out, spend inattentively, then you are disregarding your energy. You lose track of how much energy you have to spend in order to get one package of some product.

If we look at it this way, the way we deal with money connects with a basic characteristic of our state of mind. We should see it in terms of the expenditure of energy and how we are going to transmute that energy into a proper use. Obviously communication and exchange are taking place all the time. How are we going to use that?

It seems that money makes a huge difference in the process of our communication and relationships—because of our preconceived attitudes toward it. Money becomes a key point. If your friend refuses to pay his part of your restaurant bill, automatically you get a feeling of resentment or separation from your friend. Immediately you experience a break in communication. So money is not just a physical thing, but it has much to do with the energy principle—which is connected with our attitude toward it. The energy flow of our preconceived ideas becomes the currency of exchange. Our preconceived ideas actually take the place of money. So the question of money becomes the question of how you relate to the energy of your preconceived ideas. In that situation, money is related with the pride of ego as well as the energy expenditure of ego. But what happens when you transcend these egoistic fixations through the generosity of helping other people?

In that case, when you take the point of view of openness and space, you don't think in terms of money at all. Instead, you produce money in order to free other people who are thinking in terms of money. You can do this by offering another person a cup of tea and a piece of cake or giving the person a box of chocolates. If you pay for a cup of tea, money doesn't come into it at all—it's just a cup with tea and hot water in it. It very much depends on individuals, whether they think in terms of money, which is preconceived ideas, or in terms of actual things. If you think of ordinary things as they are, rather than relating them to a monetary value, you can destroy the

conceptualized idea of money. You can bring about real communication, which brings with it a loss of ego.

You can just see things simply and directly rather than thinking in terms of how much money things cost. When it comes to things as they are, it doesn't matter what you pay for them. The value of something isn't a question of a price tag. You value it because you feel that you have a basic link with that thing. Then it's also meaningful or powerful to just give it away. That particular object may not be valuable at all, from a monetary point of view, but because of the emotional context, it has much more value.

To develop detachment from money, you don't particularly have to cut down on your expenditures. The whole thing is about your attitude toward money. You can see that attitude when people buy things. If you see people buying diamonds in a jewelry store and you watch their faces as they negotiate and choose a particular diamond, you can see that they have a very definite preconceived attitude. It's a very fixed mentality. They go through their motions very "meaningfully"; the whole transaction is weighted with significance. However, if you happen to have a lot of money and would like to buy diamonds, you don't have to negotiate with this heavy meaningfulness. If you see a diamond you want, just spend the money and buy it! It may cost a lot of money, but that doesn't mean that you have to make a big deal out of the whole thing by doing it very meaningfully. You don't have to spend your preconceived ideas.

In this case, preconceived ideas are expressed in terms of the monetary system. The weight of your preconceptions is the value. The number of layers of preconception you are laying on the situation is what you're spending. When you spend, you feel the loss of your preconception, but you gain another preconception, because of how much what you have just bought cost you. There is often that kind of attitude behind buying and selling. That attitude tends to make everything into a family heirloom. It all comes from how serious you are, how lacking in a sense of humor. That is the basis of the evolution of this kind of monetary system—no sense of humor. When you see a big banknote, you have no sense of humor about that. It becomes a solemn thing—very embarrassing in a way. Handling money becomes a solemn, meaningful, very serious game. If you have a sense of humor, handling this hundred-dollar bill doesn't seem like a heavy thing anymore at

all. It could be anything—just a piece of paper. It is interesting to see it as just a piece of paper with this meaningfulness added to it. The mere contrast of seeing just a piece of paper and at the same time the added-on meaningfulness provokes tremendous humor. We see the lightness and the heaviness at the same time. We could have a completely different attitude.

In the example of people buying diamonds, it seems that they are buying things in a very meaningful way. They are very invested in that exchange of richness. One person is selling the diamond, and one person is paying thousands of dollars for it. This exchange shows on their faces. They look like babies who are about to receive rich ice cream in their mouths. There is a very centralized intense feeling about it. The same intense face can be seen in gambling casinos.

I'm not approving or disapproving; I'm just remarking on the funny side of this. Altogether, I'm not recommending that you do something or not or that you do something else. I'm just illustrating the contrast of this and that. In this case, one sees the greedy quality of the situation, the greedy quality of the face, the intense quality of it, as opposed to an attitude toward money in which one could give casually, with a casual sense of exchange. You could quite easily go to the jewelry shop and spend thousands of dollars buying one diamond. Just like that—you could do it, with a less solid attitude toward the whole thing. I suppose I'm not millionaire-minded myself, particularly. I spend money very easily, but I get what I want and I enjoy those things thoroughly, very beautifully.

However, the whole process is not mindless. You choose particular qualities. You can compare the quality of one thing with another. When I'm buying a suit, for example, I go to a lot of shops and compare one suit with another suit. I go through that process myself. That's quite all right, as long as you aren't thinking very greedily and heavily. There's nothing heavy about this approach. Each time you see another suit, you smile; you laugh. You comment on that suit.

To work with your attitudes toward money, I wouldn't recommend extreme measures, such as tearing up a dollar bill as a spiritual exercise or using it as a cigar wrapping. Whether you do it privately or publicly, tearing it up doesn't help very much, because you tear it up meaningfully. You wouldn't tear up a plain piece of paper meaningfully, would you? But this banknote paper you



would tear up meaningfully, which amounts to the same thing as avoiding tearing it up. I think the point here is illustrated by Mahatma Gandhi's attitude toward the lower-caste people in India. The lower caste was called untouchables. After Mahatma Gandhi's movement, they were called *harijan*, which means the "sons of gods." However, somehow it amounts to the same thing. If you give these people this special name of "sons of gods," then you still have the same attitude toward them—you are just changing the name. I'm not disparaging Gandhi here; I'm simply pointing out that you may be turning black into white on the surface, but underneath, nothing may have changed. It's the same thing with tearing up a dollar bill as opposed to a plain piece of paper. When you tear up the dollar, you still have a special attitude toward it. So I don't believe in this little bit of exhibitionism.

In the case of tearing up the bill, it's just a matter of trying to change your ego clings to a different fashion, a different approach. They still start from the same place, however. You are purely changing the locality of your grip. When you let go in one place, you begin to grip the next area.

Generally when we spend money, we are paying for a certain psychological result. As long as we don't have the attitude that we are buying a particular energy by paying money, then that's all right. We try to buy preconceived ideas with our money. It's like exchanging a lump of earth for air. Because money is very flat and stale and ordinary, we pay out the money in order to get hold of some kind of creativity. That's the wrong attitude. If you think of spending in terms of expanding your energy, that's fine. However, very few people actually think that way. Spending money to get into something creative soon becomes reduced to numbers and quantities. The minute you start to measure the quantity of your wisdom, that's the wrong approach. Measuring the quantity of your wisdom is the last thing you want to do.

We could say that money is just money or that money is a symbol—but both of those are saying the same thing. Money is money, but because of that, it's a symbol. Therefore, the discussion of money is very flat. Nothing happens. It's very depressing. On the other hand, it's nice to have money, isn't it? Having money shouldn't be a burden; it should be a delight. It's nice to have money, because you can spend it on worthwhile things. You can channel your energies in worthwhile ways. You don't have to feel guilty because you handle money. That's the whole point. Feeling guilty about handling money is

like feeling guilty because you breathe air. Some people might feel they're being extravagant because they're breathing other people's air. That doesn't make sense. Handling money is nothing negative, nothing bad.

Nevertheless, a lot of us tend to think money is connected with solely materialism and therefore is bad. I was having dinner in New York with a prominent businessman and some of his colleagues. All through the meal he was apologetic about being a materialistic person. Actually, being a materialistic person often just means being a practical person. You don't have to feel guilty about money and dealing with material objects at all. There's nothing wrong with that. You can do your business completely and properly. The problem comes from something behind that. It comes when you think of building up your business as building up your empire. Money has a very interesting temptation to it, the temptation of imperialism. You begin building up all sorts of other things with the money—your personal realm. Then you tend to relax when you have enough money to play with. At a certain point, when you're relaxing into the pride of having enough money, corruption takes place. It is dangerous when you begin to feel you can afford to play in the field of ego; you can just play around with things.

Ambition is not a problem in relationship to money unless you are trying to build your empire. If you are working factually, with the facts and figures of a situation, I don't think there is anything wrong with trying to succeed. The problem arises when you would like to look down on other things, celebrating your own achievement. When you begin thinking that your achievement is greater than somebody else's, when the competitive quality comes in, then your ambition becomes part of ego, because ego's process views things as a battle.

You might have intense emotions about succeeding at the things you're doing. There could be intense longing to accomplish something that uses your intelligence properly and fully. That has a certain uplifted feeling to it, a feeling of putting things into practice. That could be said to be emotion, or enthusiasm in a sense. But in another case, your emotionality could be egotistical. You get emotional because you would like to win the game. Whether ambition involves ego or not depends on whether you are involved in a competitive game. If you're involved with competition, then you are connected with ego. If you don't involve yourself with the competitive game,

if you are purely keen to put your practice into effect, that isn't ego. Bodhisattvas might have a tremendous desire to help others to find their path, which could be said to be an expression of emotion. Compassion could be said to be emotion, an intense longing to put things into practice. That wouldn't be ordinary emotion in the sense of ego.

If you have money, you don't have to use it every minute, every step you take. You can learn to use the things you already have, as well as paying for things with money. The psychology should be that you could have lots of money, but you could still hitchhike occasionally. You could ask someone for a ride. You don't hitchhike because you're desperately poor. In this case, hitchhiking—which is not necessarily literal here—would be enjoying every moment of your relationship with people, enjoying walking and being independent. If you have money, you may feel completely prohibited from doing anything naturally, simply. That's a very sad thing. If you have lots of money, you might buy expensive silk flowers rather than just having ordinary flowers in your house. You could buy ordinary flowers or you could grow them. They needn't be expensive, particularly. The point is to work with what is, whether you have lots of money or very little.

In Asia there is the tradition of the monks wandering through the countryside and begging for their food, which is a little like hitchhiking might be in this country. I don't think we can practice this approach in America, particularly. For one thing, it is not socially acceptable. Also, if you started doing this without the proper background, you might begin to feel you are a special person. You might make a spectacle of yourself, which would just create a self-conscious egotistical problem. Generally, in Buddhist countries in Asia, mendicant monks are part of the community. They are accepted in society. In Tibet there were lots of monks doing the practice of begging, and they had no problem of survival at all. They didn't have to go to more than ten doors begging for food. They would get chunks of meat and butter and bags of barley flour and all the other things they might need. If they went to more than ten families, they would get more than they could carry. The relationship to giving food was very different in Tibet. People weren't hesitant to give. They were concerned about taking care of the person who needed food, and they cared about the relationship. They gave large quantities automatically. It

was just the habitual way of doing things. Somehow I don't think we can really practice that here, sadly.<sup>22</sup>

For the monks, this way of life expressed simplicity. It wasn't an expression of poverty mentality. With this monastic approach, you don't worry about survival. You live day to day. You think just of today; you don't think of tomorrow. Tomorrow comes, it doesn't come—either way, you don't worry. You continue to live in a very simple way. It is an everyday life of simplicity.

When you have very little money, it can in a sense simplify the whole process of life. You have to be quite efficient in calculating how much you have and how much you can spend on food or anything else. But, similar to the practice of begging, one doesn't particularly have to fight for anything. I faced this situation myself when I was living in Oxford. We had something like nine pounds a week to feed three people in our household. Life can be quite simple if you know exactly how much money you have in the bank and that's all you have to spend for the basic things you need. It might feel harsh or bitter if you are fighting to gain more, trying to squeeze other things out of that small amount of money.

The problem is not always how little money you have to spare but, rather, whether you are allowing enough space for yourself. The sense of poverty often seems connected with a lack of space. It may seem pretentious or insensitive to suggest to a destitute person that they need to create more mental space, if they are living in financially troubled conditions. However, if you can appreciate the aspect of simplicity in your life, then you don't have to involve yourself with money more than is really necessary.

You should try to create a space of loneliness as much as possible in your lifestyle, whether you are rich or poor. When everything is crammed into you, when all the undesirable things in life seem crowded within you, you are putting yourself through all sorts of unnecessary pain simply because you are not able to see the space and the open situations that exist.

---

<sup>22</sup>. This talk was given before the advent of most food banks in America. Contributing to food banks, food drives, church suppers for the homeless and working poor, and other

practices like this might be a contemporary way of practicing the kind of community generosity described by the author here.—Eds.

## THIRTEEN

### *The Karma of Money*

MONEY ACTS AS A LUBRICANT for all kinds of material interchanges in our lives. It's like karma. You can't say that karma is an entity of its own, but at the same time it has its own energy characteristics. Other situations are a part of its force. From the Buddhist point of view, karma is just mechanical and reacts to the natural chemistry in situations. Money works along with that.

Karma has many different aspects, and one of those manifests in our karmic relationship with money. Almost everyone has an unresolved problem with money, just as they have an unresolved problem with life. That seems to be their money karma. In some cases people have a lot of money, but still they are always short of it; or else they have very little money, but it lasts for a long time. There are all these different and intricate relationships with money. Some people can manage money very well; they have less neurosis about it. Some people find dealing with money very difficult. For them, every penny has to be fought over.

One's money situation is part of one's karmic relationship with life, definitely. For instance, you might want to be free of obligations, but one thing is holding you back—money. You find you have to resolve your money problems before you can move forward. Then, being held back to resolve the money problem brings you to involvement with another situation. So you are hurled back into your life in that way. Or you might be pushed ahead. You might have an inclination to do certain things or to go certain places and suddenly out of the blue somebody sends you a check. It's as though the

check were saying, “Go and do it; here you are.” That kind of event is always quite mysterious.

For some people, it seems very difficult to get free from a sense of hoarding money, like always wanting a bigger house, cars, and material things like that. One wishes that one could drop that mentality. In a lot of cases, people get an impulsive sense of renunciation, a sudden impulse to give everything away. You want to give away your car, your wristwatch, your camera, your house—everything. When you do that, you feel much better, temporarily. You feel heroic. However, even after you have given everything away and you think you are free, somehow your money karma still follows you. Just giving things away, getting rid of them, doesn’t help. You still have a problem.

Usually people are not aware that money is karmically related to them. Some people may be more aware than others, but the usual tendency is to think that giving your possessions or your wealth away will be like having an operation to remove a malignant tumor, and then you will be free of it. Money doesn’t work that way. That whole karmic situation comes back to you, always. So again the same old saying is true, “Better not to begin, but once you do begin, do it properly.” We have to be able to have money and work with it but not be attached to it. It is similar to any transmutation process. You have to make a relationship with money and a relationship with possessions and not get into an extreme, impulsive renunciation kick.

In the Buddhist monastic tradition, monks and nuns renounce having personal belongings beyond the bare minimum: your robes, your begging bowl, your practice materials. However, the basic point is renunciation and simplicity. Certain contemplative traditions of Christianity might say that monastic life should be the equivalent of living in the same way as the poorest person in the country. In the case of Buddhism, however, poverty is not the criterion, nor is the idea to live like this or that kind of person. Rather, the idea is to be fundamentally simple. You do only the necessary things in life, without introducing extra complications. Eating, sleeping, and defecating are the necessary things, and apart from those, you do not have to engage with anything else. Doing only those three necessary things is what is called in Sanskrit the *kusulu* tradition.<sup>23</sup> So in Buddhism that ideal has to do with leading a simplified life rather than with any notion of being rich or poor. It’s

about being content with simplicity and not introducing further entertainment.

In the previous chapter, we talked about the mendicant practice in India and Tibet of monks begging for food as an expression of simplicity. Today one would feel self-conscious adopting this lifestyle in the West, saying that one has renounced worldly things and is asking for food. Some young people have suggested to me that receiving welfare here in America is the equivalent of monastic begging in Asia. However, deciding not to work and receiving welfare is quite different. In the case of monks begging in Tibet, they had to spend much of their day walking outside, and they had to endure a lot of cold weather and other hardships. You had to lead the life of a beggar in a complete sense. Doing that thoroughly and properly could be a karma-free practice. However, if you are taking money from the nation, then you are collecting heavy karma. There is a Tibetan term *kor* (*dkor*), which means a gift through trust. Such a gift has powerful karmic debts connected with it, because somebody gave you that gift because they trusted you. Such a gift should be spent properly, used properly.

There are many stories about the karma connected with this kind of gift. There is a well-known Tibetan story of the lama with a black horse who was quite successful at collecting gifts. His monastery became extremely rich and had gold roofs, and he had a golden saddle, and so on. When he died, he was reborn in the ocean as a giant fish with hundreds of little fishes nesting on his body and eating it. Those who had given him gifts became those little fishes that were feeding on him. They ate him up down to his bones, but they never managed to get at his brain and his heart. He kept regenerating and getting eaten up again and again.

There's a sort of Robin Hood idea in the youth culture today, the idea that it's all right to rip off a big corporation or a supermarket or some institution that's impersonal. People feel that sort of thing could be done without heavy karmic repercussions, just because of the impersonality of the situation, but it could also involve a sort of vandalism or basic hatred toward society. A basic, subtle, psychological aggression is coming out. You feel it is a safe way of expressing aggression, a convenient way. Generally, destroying public or government property—even though it may be cloaked as a statement that these big institutions are corrupt—is going in the wrong direction and is not



beneficial to people. That kind of relationship with national karma could be extremely heavy. You are sharing in everybody's karma, but at the same time you are being destructive and creating more karmic debt.<sup>24</sup>

Another reason for resenting money, as we have already discussed, is a general tendency to view spirituality as being away from the world, apart from worldly concerns. People with that view find it irritating that they still have to deal with money in relation to spirituality, which means to them that spirituality is also a worldly concern. However, spirituality *is* a worldly concern, in fact a much more subtle one. Without samsara, there couldn't be nirvana at all. By getting into spirituality, people are not getting out of anywhere; they are not escaping from anywhere. The ubiquitous Mara or Yama still follows them everywhere.<sup>25</sup>

Often people's attitude toward spirituality is based on searching for escape or at least relief—seeing spirituality as the ultimate pleasure, as we talked about earlier. And when money is brought into the search for ultimate pleasure, it's a tremendous shock. Even in a spiritual context, money still catches up with you—it's a terrible thing. We make too big a separation between spirituality and living in the world. We make such a separation that we are making spirituality the goal itself rather than relating to it as a way of living.

In the Tibetan monastic tradition, entering the monastery was not a way to get away from dealing with money. In the monastery, the monks often didn't all live in one building. Many times, you had your own house on or near the grounds of the monastery. You were supposed to find three sponsors: one for your education, one for your spiritual development, and one who was responsible for your financial welfare after you joined the monastery. One of these people might put you up in his house. So you lived with that family and took part in the householder's life. There might be six or seven people living in the same house. At the beginning, you might be asked to cook for the family or to fetch water or collect firewood. Your parents also might provide you with your share of food and other supplies to contribute to the household or to the monastery.

As well, there was a certain time of year that you went out collecting food. You might do that twice a year. In the early winter, you would go out into the lowlands and collect grain. You would visit family after family. You might

give them spiritual instructions and help them that way. In the summer, you would go up to the highlands and collect butter and cheese and things like that. Or else you might become the family's teacher in a particular household, in order to pay for your monastic training. You would spend three or four months participating in that family's household, and you were their meditation teacher. Each member of the household would come to you separately to receive instructions. In return, you were given bulk food that you could bring back to your monastery. In general, people would give you a gift of food or money in exchange for teaching. The rest of the year, you would live on those gifts of food, and you would also share it with other monks, who had all been doing the same thing. If you were a novice monk, you might go back to your own home for a period each year, particularly in the autumn, and help your family with the harvest or do other work like that. You were supposed to maintain contact with your family.

The monasteries also held winter festivals, New Year's festivals, and other ceremonies and celebrations, all of which required a monetary base. When a monastery decided to have a festival, the people in charge would meet and decide either to buy property or to request some land from a landlord. The property for the festival would often consist of three or four fields of barley. The monastery would also be given twenty or thirty head of stock, as well as a certain amount of money to help finance the festival. Then the property would be turned into a household, and often the poorest people in the vicinity would be asked to take charge of it and run it as a business. They would sell the grain and the butter and whatever else was produced on the land. In return, they were given a certain amount of the profit for themselves. The remainder—a fixed amount of grain, butter, and tea—was then offered to the monastery for their use during the festival. During the ceremonies, tea would be offered to the whole assembly of monks, which might be anywhere from a hundred to three thousand monks. Some meals were provided to the monastic community, as well as various materials that were needed for the festival, including such things as objects for the shrine. Guests from the neighboring monasteries were also fed and entertained out of the profits from the festival property. So each festival relied on its own property, and this was one of the ways that the central finances of the monastery were maintained.

Working with money is always part of the psychology or the philosophy of a situation. So we need basic criteria for working with money. Working with money requires discipline to know how much money you need for a week, how much money is required to live for a day or a month. Living in any society requires this process of discipline. We have to work along with the pattern of society. In that context, it seems that a relationship with money is necessary. We have to actually face the whole problem of money as it is.

In this country, I have met many young people who have a general hesitation to work. When you are short of money, you have to put in effort and go through the whole pain of getting a job and committing yourself to situations that are not appealing to you and are often a source of more pain. That pain is seen as worldly pain without any redeeming quality. You see it purely as suffering. If you have the attitude that you fundamentally don't want to work with pain, then when you become interested in spirituality, you don't want to deal with any pain whatsoever. You are seeking transcendental pleasure, and work and money seem unromantic. They're too close to home. They're contradictory to your whole idea of spirituality, which is to receive the highest pleasure, bliss.

However, you find that you have to go back to the original pain that you wanted to escape. You begin to see that spirituality is not pleasure seeking and that your work situation is also spirituality, but not spirituality with pleasure or any reward. You are not trying to gain anything, but you are trying to go deeper and unlearn, to undo yourself. It has nothing to do with pleasure at all, actually. The point of spirituality is to face the facts of life, and you might learn the facts of life through working. Then maybe your relationship to money may change. Because your fundamental attitude toward work is different, money becomes a naturally easier matter. There's nothing evil about it.

Work is also something *real*, just as much as spiritual practice. So work doesn't have to have any extra meaning behind it, but it is spirituality in itself. Work doesn't need another philosophical reinforcement. You may want to work for a good reason, something that proves that what you are doing is valid. Maybe you think that you can't relate to work unless you have a good philosophical reason, and without that, your work remains mechanical. Then quite possibly you are missing the point of spirituality altogether. Spirituality

is not other than work, just to make the point clear. Work is spirituality, work is real—as much as anything else.

Pain and pleasure in relationship to work seems to be a relative question. If you think about somebody on a yachting vacation in Europe, you will resent being stuck with your little job, doing repetitive work. Our outlook is definitely connected with ingrained criteria. In fact, that's exactly what we are working on: to see how you fundamentally relate to pain and pleasure, good and bad, how they come about. Never mind about what you've been told, but how do you actually relate with pain and pleasure?

Fundamentally, we need to relate with the earth, with our actual work situation. Then, situations are going to tell us quite bluntly: "I reject you" or "I accept you." In both cases it's quite painful.

The pain is that we have to deal with many different things that we really don't want to relate to. Fundamentally, we'd prefer that *they* would relate with *us* rather than our having to open ourselves up to them. That is because we prefer to stay within our shelter; we want to keep our basic ego shell intact. Once anything demands that we step out of the shell and communicate, then the situation becomes too complicated for us.

The basic pain is losing security, losing the sense of maintaining your ego intact. You can't have pain unless you have associations with things in life. The association itself, the duality itself, is the pain. It's the basic notion that you can't maintain yourself by yourself; you need something else. In the case of a hungry baby, being hungry makes her insecure, and not being hungry makes her secure. In the case of this young child, ego is not that big a thing. It is an experience of simple duality.

When a baby is hungry, he or she will cry. There's nothing wrong with that. We are not trying to get rid of *that* level of fundamental duality, necessarily. However, that simple situation also contains other possibilities. It wouldn't continue to be as simple as that. In other words, we are not trying to get rid of ego, but we are trying to get rid of the chain reaction of ego.

On the one hand, a simple ego could transform into wisdom. It *is* wisdom. Ego has basic instinctive awareness of this and that. However, the simple ego also has the tendency to get into "I" more, and that goes with aggression. It seems a baby doesn't even have the "this and that." The baby doesn't even know that it's hungry. However, it feels insecure. Instinctively, it feels that

way. Hunger is connected with loss and death, and being fed is connected with gaining and surviving. That's quite simple, but we tend to complicate things way beyond that. We come to have a fixed notion of pain as being pain, and pleasure as being pleasure. We acquire limited and particular conceptualized ideas of pain and pleasure. We are not able to retain that childlike quality.

So we need to look at the karmic complications that develop in our relationship to money. Sometimes, when people feel that something's wrong in their relationship to money, they become very shy about dealing with money. These days, some people are so embarrassed by money that they refer to it as "bread." Someone might say, "How much bread do I owe you?" They don't want to use the word *dollar*.

Referring to money as bread is very sneaky. People would like to have synonyms for money. There's something funny about that. Working with money is ultimately a proud path. Referring to money as bread implies that it is something dirty, something obscene. Straight talk about money is too embarrassing. In French the word for bread is spelled *p-a-i-n*. So you might say to someone, "How much pain do I owe you?"

Even our actual physical currencies reflect our larger relationship to money. On American money it says, "In God We Trust." That communicates quite a lot about American society. On Tibetan money, we used to have the eight auspicious symbols and the six symbols of longevity. The writing on the bills said something like: "The currency of the heavenly appointed government, the ruler of the temporal and spiritual domain." That communicates another worldview entirely. The last Tibetan coins circulated before the Chinese takeover had three symbols of friendship on them. That money was very short-lived! It lasted only two or three years.

Money in Tibetan society was thought of in terms of what is called *yün* in Tibetan. *Yün* means "prosperity" or "fundamental wealth." It is actually the *force* of wealth rather than actual concrete wealth. There is a belief in abstract energy that can pass from one person to another. It is an abstract magnetizing quality that gathers and radiates wealth. That quality could pass through you to other people. There is an old custom in Tibet that if people have to give somebody money, they take the bills or the coins out of their pocket and rub them on their collar before giving them to the other person. The idea is to

transfer the yün to your collar so you don't end up giving the fundamental wealth away to the other person—you just give them the money.

Even the great Tibetan lineage holders had to deal with the karma of money, in a sense. If you have read the story of Marpa, one of the great forefathers of the Kagyü lineage, you will remember that when he met his teacher, Naropa, Naropa asked him, “Before I transmit the teachings to you, how much gold do you have?” Marpa gave him eight solid gold pieces, each in the shape of the knot of eternity. Naropa said, “I know you have more than that. Give me some more!” Finally Marpa had to empty his whole bag of gold coins and give them all to his teacher. Then Naropa threw the gold into the air and stamped on the ground. The whole ground turned into gold; every pebble turned to gold. Then Naropa said, “I have much more gold than you, actually, but I'll give you teaching anyhow.”<sup>26</sup> There are many stories like that about receiving the teachings. When Tibetans went to India, they always had to bargain for the teachings. (Actually, India hasn't changed that much.) Of course, the student always had to give in; otherwise he or she didn't get the full teachings.

The teaching becomes more expensive, or perhaps we should say more valuable, as the lineage goes on and on. The longer it continues, the more people have had to work hard for it and sacrifice their lives. So the teachings become more valuable.

It has been said that the best gift from a student to a teacher is practice, full commitment. Then second comes physical service. The third best gift is giving money or gold for the teachings you receive. Even in the case where the student is providing the gift of practice or service, the student still has to support himself—the teacher is not going to support him. That's what we see in the story of Marpa's disciple, Milarepa: he provided service to Marpa, and he also had to support himself.

Any gift is a symbol of commitment. In the old days in Tibet, if you were going to give gold to the teacher, you had to work for it; you had to gather it. Its value came from the fact that it cost you a lot of effort and energy to acquire it. Giving a gift was a sign of committing your energy in the right direction, in the direction of the teaching. This was true in those old days when Tibetans went to India to receive teachings, just as it is true here nowadays.

---

23. The term *kusulu* is sometimes used pejoratively to refer to someone who is ignorant, but there is also a use of the term that refers, as the author does here, to a practitioner who profoundly simplifies his or her life. According to another great Tibetan Buddhist teacher, Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, as well as others, there are two approaches to the spiritual path: one is to study the Buddhist texts extensively and is called the path of the scholar (*pandita*), and the other is to meditate directly with less emphasis on study and is called the path of the kusulu or the simple meditator.—Eds.

24. The talk on which this chapter is based was given in the early 1970s. Today the culture of corporate greed might be identified as the prevailing source of equally heavy karmic repercussions in North American culture and could also be said to be based on aggression and lack of respect for others. In either case, there is a feeling that one can take advantage of others, or profit from others' resources, without karmic consequences.—Eds.

25. Mara, in the Buddhist tradition, is a personification of the seductions and deceptions of the dualistic view of reality. Yama is the mythical Lord of Death, but also the ruler of the six realms of existence, under whose dominion the ravages of time—including birth, old age, sickness, and death—are pervasive. Rinpoche's point here seems to be that no matter how one may try to twist and dodge, no matter how spiritual a context one may try to cook up, the factors that haunt samsara remain to be dealt with.—Eds.

26. The first four teachers in the Kagyü lineage (one of the main schools of Tibetan Buddhism) were Tilopa (988–1069), Naropa (1016–1100), Marpa (1012–1097), and Milarepa (1040–1123). Their life stories, which illustrate how the awakened state of mind is transmitted from guru to disciple, are well known to practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism and are regarded as exemplary.—Eds.

## FOURTEEN

### *Business Ethics*

AS AN EXTENSION of how we work with money altogether, being in business can be an activity that develops our sanity and thus helps to propagate the dharma. Beyond that, the world of business expresses richness, in the sense of expanding the vision of the buddhadharma into our lifestyle and activities. I have been presenting a series of what I call the Shambhala teachings, which are precisely about how to extend the vision of Buddhism into the understanding and practice of everyday life.<sup>27</sup> The Buddhist view is based on overcoming ego and dedicating ourselves to helping others. The Shambhala view is extending that understanding and those values into a complete way of life and into the creation of a whole world, starting with a society based on dignity and wakefulness, which I call the Great Eastern Sun. With that view, developing a business can provide people not just with a job but with a social structure and a way of life, so that everybody involved can benefit.

We have to look at what kind of human power or economic power in our approach to business will produce genuine accomplishment. First we need to consider the question of value, in terms of richness, poverty, and politics. In your mind, the value of your business might have to do with achieving your dream of striking it rich. You want to come up with something that will make you a millionaire. Or you might want to set up your individual economic kingdom, so that you can have people running around working for you. A third notion of value is based on establishing a business that will be an expression of personal accomplishment and an expression of your individual freedom. You don't want to commit yourself to any higher ideas of the truth,



such as the dharma. Your business will speak for itself, and hopefully, it will rescue you from poverty. The fourth approach to value is that you value your business because you're excited about the project you're working on, which makes you feel good and creative. For a long time, you have wanted to express yourself, and this is your chance to express your talent, your genius.

There might be problems with all of these approaches. There is, however, one value system that is workable and helpful, without question. The basis of the approach to business, in this case, is to relate with your everyday life situation and with the economy as neither a burden nor a promise. Rather, you feel a sense of duty, from the point of view of the bodhisattva ideal of putting others before yourself. You think in terms of providing resources for yourself and for others. You accommodate all sorts of people, and you employ them in your company. The basis of this approach is bravery, which is also connected with the basic Buddhist vision of helping others. Along with that bravery comes skillful means: being resourceful in working with the situation around you in terms of economics, human power, and whatever other issues you might have in your business.

You can also trust that, if your approach is true to yourself, it will be true for others. With that introduction on the value of the economy, or the value of wealth altogether, we can look at the question of ethics in business.

## **OBSTACLES TO DISCIPLINE**

Let us begin with the obstacles to discipline, or to what is called *shila* in Sanskrit.

1. *Habitual patterns.* The first obstacle in your business is your habitual patterns. We cannot separate our business from our general practice of sanity or our relationship to the principles of truth, or dharma. You might be extremely well mannered and civilized, soft-spoken and gentle. When you walk into the office, however, you are a problematic person who expresses neuroses right and left. There your personality is entirely different. In that situation you are trying to mimic or express the notion of "job" and "duty" in the wrong way. The schizophrenia in relating with sanity and insanity becomes evident. This is due to your previous habitual patterns. You have a

kind of nervousness, which needn't be there, but which comes out when you relate with your employees, your partners, or your clients.

When you see this pattern of behavior, you feel that you don't want to go on behaving this way. To overcome this problem, you need to develop a totally unified behavior pattern or psychological state of being that includes every activity. You should relate to your sitting practice of meditation and your business deals in exactly the same way. That is absolutely necessary.

If you're the boss and you don't have this unified approach of discipline, the employees see what's happening and are subject to the transformations that you are going through. You have a psychological problem, and your insanity shows through. Falling back into habitual patterns of this kind creates a problem for everyone in the office. Even if there is a lot of prosperity and working capital, if the staff members don't feel enough trust, they will also express the boss's insanity. You begin to find that the entire business establishment goes berserk during working hours.

In the evening, when you go home, you might take a shower, change your clothes, and go out to eat in some civilized place. You might go to a party, or you might give a talk to some group, or you might have to meet with one of your clients—or even a meditation student. In any case, you try to change your mask.

That whole setup becomes ludicrous. If somebody could see your daily performance from morning until you go to bed, it would be very embarrassing. And in some sense, people do see what you are up to. Often you think you can hide, that you can lead a double life, but in fact, everybody knows what you are doing. People are not all that stupid. They can pick up on your behavior patterns. That pattern of leading a double life and indulging your habitual patterns is one of the biggest obstacles to discipline.

2. *Slander*. When there is a lack of discipline in the workplace and you are indulging your habitual patterns, this leads to employees bad-mouthing others in the establishment. Again, if you are the boss and you are indulging your habitual patterns at work, then you influence the other employees. Eventually they feel that they can't contain themselves. They can no longer just watch what's going on. They begin to speak out; then those in charge speak slanderous words to their employees. It can become a messy situation. Before long, the employees begin to lose their feeling of basic loyalty to the business,

which is quite natural in that situation. If no real sanity is expressed and preserved in the working situation, then the notion of genuine hierarchy, or any respect for authority, falls apart altogether.

If you work with someone who is indulging his or her habitual patterns and neuroses in this way, you should try to find a supportive way to speak with this person. A business endeavor only works when everyone has good intentions, which means making a commitment to manifest sanity beyond your habitual patterns. If the situation is not founded on that kind of good intention, then slandering or bad-mouthing arises naturally, because people have to release their negative energy.

3. *Lying*. In that kind of schizophrenic work environment, we find ourselves not telling the truth. We might end up adding more zeroes to our profit figures, inflating the value of the company so that we can get another bank loan or arrange more financing for the company. There is only one saving grace, which is to return to our own sanity. The practice of meditation is very important in this kind of situation. Sitting practice might add 50 percent to our sanity. It can prevent us from doing something totally crazy.

4. *Laziness*. When you wake up in the morning and you have to go back to the establishment that you have created or where you work, you feel tremendous hesitation. You try to delay stepping into your office as long as you can. You try to have as good a time as you can outside your work. That attitude creates an unhealthy situation, because you have no real enthusiasm for work.

If the owners and the employees don't show up on time and don't work together, a lot of underlying depression is created. Everything becomes a hassle. You wind up not working hard enough to see projects through. The only time you really work hard is when you have to push something through because your whole business is in danger of falling apart. Then you must do something. But other than that, you have no incentive to work, no motivation to celebrate doing business at all.

The opposite of these obstacles is to be free from habitual patterns, free from slandering, free from telling lies, and free from laziness. These are the basic disciplines that we need to apply in business. Maybe the examples I gave are

not applicable to you, but if you look at your own business situation from this point of view, you can see how these principles apply quite vividly. If you look at what is going on in your state of being, in relationship to your work environment, then you can overcome what needs to be overcome.

## MEDITATION

Next I'd like to discuss the application of meditative discipline in the workplace. We're not speaking here of literally meditating at work but rather of how to bring this state of mind into your business. Meditative discipline is working with our state of being altogether. In this case, we can talk about positive attributes.

1. *Gentleness*. We should understand the need for gentleness. Gentleness means being free from aggression, and it also means extending ourselves further, in our business and in our life altogether. Again, we are talking about having no separation between business and domestic life but seeing that everything is related. When basic discipline has developed in you and you are free from habitual patterns, slander, falsity, and laziness, then you can be gentle. You are free from depression. Therefore you can afford to smile. You can afford to be kind and inquisitive.

2. *Free from hypocrisy*. At this point, we can also be free from hypocrisy. We do not regard our business as a way to run away from the truth or the sanity of the buddhadharma. We also do not regard our business as a way to entertain ourselves, a way to build an economic kingdom, or a way to build up our personality.

3. *Free from competition*. Because of having developed the qualities of the previous categories, we can be naturally free from competition in dealing with colleagues or other businesses. We don't have to jump into situations immediately and twist the logic around. We don't need to think that we are the smartest businessman because we can pull some trick before anybody else thinks of it. Such competitiveness is problematic and it leads to conflict. The problem arises when there is not enough steadiness in the sense of samadhi, or the basic meditative state of awareness. Things become very jumpy, jumping back and forth. Your motivation is purely based on passion, aggression, and ignorance. It's necessary to overcome that state of mind.

## DISCRIMINATING AWARENESS

The final topic is how to apply discriminating awareness or appreciation in your business. Discriminating awareness is called *prajna* in Sanskrit. It is connected with seeing situations clearly and distinguishing, or discriminating, all the details of what is taking place.

1. *Loyalty*. The first category of discriminating awareness is loyalty. In this case, loyalty is based on developing appreciation for your colleagues, which comes from your discriminating awareness. You don't regard other people in the workplace as objects, and you don't regard them purely from the reference point of being in business together—in the negative sense. Rather, you appreciate their unique qualities. Developing this sense of trust and loyalty is connected with gentleness, which we discussed already.

Gentleness brings a basic sense of loyalty, because you are free from aggression toward others. Loyalty manifests as harmony between the staff members within the working situation. When that is present, you can expand your vision. You can develop further discriminating awareness in terms of acquiring the technical knowledge that is required to run your business. If you lack adequate information or vision to conduct your business, that manifests in a lack of professionalism. However, you can gain the knowledge you need. In part, you can learn from other people who have already developed knowledge in your field.

Sometimes, however, there's a problem if you base your vision purely on someone else's knowledge or success. You want to mimic them, to get on their business bandwagon or their artistic bandwagon, or whatever it may be. If we have basic discriminating awareness, that will provide potential choices and ways to improvise that aren't purely based on adopting someone else's cultish concept of success. It will also allow us to connect with all kinds of people beyond our sphere. We could employ them or work with them quite freely.

Because we have developed our basic discipline, or *shila*, already, which includes not lying or slandering, we are able to tell the truth in the work situation. In our business, we can use the familiar atmosphere or environment surrounding us for support; at the same time, we have to expand constantly beyond it. It is always necessary in business to bring fresh blood into the

system, as well as fresh capital, so that we don't just recirculate things all the time. If we did that, our business might dry up altogether.

We have a small planet. There is a limit to how much we can pee on it and still have fresh water to drink. If we pee too much, we might wind up with very salty water. Similarly, we need to bring fresh blood, fresh resources, into our system as much as we can, but without losing our integrity.

I have noticed that when people encounter economic problems in their businesses, they often freeze. They act as if they were completely cornered. Frequently you feel you have no other choice but to shout something out. In such situations, you need to extend your vision, based on discriminating awareness, and then you will see how to improvise with whatever resources are available to you.

On the other hand, sometimes when people have a small success in a business venture, they think they can run around and go wild. Often successful businesspeople think that they do not need the protection and friendship of their long-standing colleagues. They feel that they can make friends with new people who might appreciate them more than their old friends.

Those are two extreme positions, both of which require the application of discriminating awareness. They are the problems of eternalism and nihilism that arise in our business ventures. Eternalism is thinking that you have conquered the situation completely and you no longer need any support. You can't imagine that anything will go wrong. Nihilism is feeling fatalistic when you have a problem in your business, thinking that the immediate obstacle will destroy you.<sup>28</sup>

2. *Tell the truth.* In relating to your employees in a business, it's very important to tell the truth. If you try to act like a guru with your employees, by trying to find various devious ways of dealing with the situation, it won't work. You have to be quite straightforward, particularly in business. This is based on the further application of discriminating awareness. Here it is sharing what you know quite straightforwardly and without pretense.

In any business situation there are facts and figures, the mechanics of how things are put together. Out of sharing that, you can relate with people quite

straightforwardly. The facts and figures are plain and ordinary. You should make your communication very plain and straightforward to begin with.

If you are having a problem with an employee who doesn't contribute much to your business, even if you share the dollars-and-cents perspective with him, it may not help. At some point, you may have to tell your employee that he doesn't have the capability of dealing with those facts and figures, and then you may have to tell him to find another work situation. However, you don't have to reprimand him beyond that. The less innuendo, the better. A straightforward message is best, because business is very direct. It is full of facts and figures, and the logic of that provides evidence of someone's workmanship on the spot. If you don't relate to the facts and figures, you won't be a good businessperson. If you begin to philosophize the whole situation, it will create difficulties.

## **BASIC INTEGRITY**

When you run a business, your task may seem gigantic, monolithic. When you begin to look at everything you need to do, you might have a list of five hundred problems that need to be overcome. But you can do it, as long as you have basic integrity. You can do it and you've got to do it. It's choiceless.

There is no other way than to have basic integrity. Without that, you will have lots of problems. Basic integrity is the outcome of applying all the categories discussed above. Through the aspects of discipline, meditation, and discriminating awareness we have discussed, you arrive at a situation of basic integrity in your business.

There are many different situations in which we need to apply basic integrity. For example, a businessperson may feel that there are chapters and chapters of things he or she has to straighten out at work. You don't know where to begin, so you pick one thing at random, something that seems easy to accomplish. You try that approach for a few weeks. Then that initiative falls apart, and finally, the whole business or your whole life falls apart. At that point, to compensate, you might buy a new hat or a new car or a new suit, to try to make yourself feel better. On the whole, however, if everything is charged on your credit card, then somebody else owns you, rather than your

owning yourself. So there is a need for basic integrity rather than spending money to make yourself feel better.

You can help other people through your business to relate to money and ownership with a sense of integrity. For example, if someone needs help getting a loan, you could help or sponsor him or her by cosigning a loan, which is much better than encouraging someone to lie about their credit. In the Buddhist tradition, at a certain point, people may take a vow to devote their lives to helping others. When a teacher lets the student take such a vow, the teacher is cosigning for him or her. The person is not a bodhisattva yet. The teacher is saying, “You are becoming a bodhisattva now. You can develop all the transcendent qualities you need to help others. I am your spiritual friend, and I’ll help you to do so.” So the teacher is the cosigner. Step-by-step, the person learns to be independent. He or she doesn’t come back to you for advice all the time, because as a spiritual friend you are harsh as well as friendly at the same time. We can take a similar approach in our business relationships.

There is a danger in business, and I have found this in Buddhist businesses in our community as well, of falling back on old habitual patterns and trying to find out how much you can cheat monolithic organizations such as your bank. You hope they will make mistakes in your favor. That is twisting the logic, and businesses suffer a lot when they have that kind of limited vision. It is very important not to twist the logic of business ethics at all. You will feel better afterward.

The question of how to approach carrying debt in your business is very interesting from this point of view. If you own your own tie one hundred percent and you own your own suit one hundred percent, you feel good that you have them. They are yours, all the time. When I first got credit cards, I was hesitant to use them. Although I had a credit card, I preferred to use cash. Taking on debt should be viewed as your choice, rather than feeling that you have to get into debt more. It’s also good to feel that something is yours, that you’ve paid it off. That gives you good credit.

One of the problems that we face in business is the notion of a quick turnover and a constant turnover. You juggle things around all the time until you are a million dollars in debt. Even then, you think you are rich and you acquire more debt. We have seen that logic applied in many disastrous



business situations in this country. The business appears rich, but it's a gigantic paper tiger. In that situation, you are frightened of how much you owe, yet you don't really own anything.

People should work for and own what they have. You can acquire genuine value or credit that way. You collect some things of value, like buying antiques for your home. From owning a Ming vase and putting it in your house, the economic value in the situation grows altogether. What you own provides an economic base. So, for example, I would recommend that you own your own home and not turn it over or sell it right away. If you move somewhere else, rent out the original house.

When you have a quick turnover, you are riding on a roller coaster. You have no ground. You don't have the principles of heaven, earth, and humanity operating properly. You just have heaven, but it's a funny heaven, not even a good heaven. You have no earth at all. Humanity is floating around up there in heaven, with no earth, no working basis. So bring something of real value into your business and into your home, as much as possible. If somebody offers you a good deal, if they offer to give you a million dollars for something you own, I wouldn't take it.

Whether it's a house, or jewelry, or even your shoes, you should have something of substance in your business. Personally, you should have something you can bring home, something that is actually yours, not something that belongs to somebody else, which you are going to sell for them. The expression "You lost your shirt" is quite appropriate from this point of view.

If you keep busy making quick financial transactions all the time, you might feel rich. But the dollars and pounds and euros purely pass through your hands. It's as though you had a form of financial diarrhea. It's like flushing your food down the toilet without eating it, which is a terrible thing to do. It is ultimate poverty. Quick transactions cause lots of problems, as we have seen in many businesses in the past.

Of course, borrowing money is appropriate in many situations. It's based on your vision and your resourcefulness. The point is not to cheat people and not to tell tall stories but just do what is necessary, on the spot. You respond to the whole situation, but everything has to be based on the truth. You have to learn to tell the truth. That is very important.

What I would like to avoid is encouraging any lower-level mafioso concept of doing business. That would be making a really bad job out of your business, and it's not at all connected with bodhisattva vision. As long as you don't exaggerate the figures and don't add extra zeroes to your profit figures, it seems all right. But business deals have to pay for themselves. That's how you should evaluate a business offer.

To begin with, you should ask yourself, is this a clean job? Does it work? If it doesn't work, it would be better to give it up. That's Buddhist ethics. Of course, in order to ensure that a business transaction goes forward to begin with, you may have to inspire somebody else. You might have to tell your client or your business partner that this will work before it's proven to work. As long as you are confident about it, that's fine. In fact, you could be opening up a new world for somebody else. However, that person should be filled in completely, so that you are doing a completely honest job of working with the person. You shouldn't feel that you might have to improvise another explanation six months later.

Ideally, all businesses should be without blame. Once you are one hundred percent without blame, then you become tremendously prosperous. Perhaps the idea of juggling things around rather than being straightforward is a leftover, something borrowed from counterculture. It's like taking pride in getting into a theater without paying, trying to avoid the ticket taker and using the back door. Things like that might be profitable for a few weeks, but as time goes on, you find that you have problems. Honesty is the best wealth.

We should try to expand on the basis of being friendly with others. We should try to employ as many people as possible, because it's helpful. There are certain people who get into business because they would like to be admired. They want to become important people on the spot. They would like to rule a little bit and give orders. When people use their business to create a personal economic kingdom, they are usually hungry to be somebody to their friends. They would like to perk themselves up by making themselves the center of the organization. They think that because they are an economic force and employ people, they can push them and pull them around and fire them at will. When people want to set up their own economic kingdoms, they have the worst notion of hierarchy. They would like to hold on to the nerve center in a crude way. The basis of working with people should be

comradeship rather than false charisma. Comradeship and wisdom together should form the base, along with the fundamental notion that everybody is respected. It would be good to understand those principles as they apply to business. Please don't try to play funny games.

---

27. For an overview of these teachings, the reader may wish to consult *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior* by Chögyam Trungpa, which is also published by Shambhala Publications.—Eds.

28. In the study of Buddhist philosophy, nihilism and eternalism are often discussed as fundamental obstacles on the Buddhist path. They refer to problems in one's view of reality altogether. It is interesting here to see the author apply this to a problem in the relative, everyday world.—Eds.

## FIFTEEN

### *Regarding Money as Mother's Milk*

BASED ON HOW FAR our understanding has come, it is my intention to make this discussion of money and wealth into a good celebration. It is like the springtime: trees are beginning to bud, the green grass is shooting up, and flowers are about to blossom. It is like Midsummer Day, the summer solstice, which represents the center of the year, the time when things can grow and evolve further. So this is the appropriate time for this discussion.

Through the application of the Buddhist teachings, we learn to practice, to be disciplined, to be well groomed, and we learn to beautify ourselves. As a result of practice, people recognize their dignity, and everybody is brilliant and glowing.

However, aside from helping us to discover our dignity and improving our physical appearance, practice works with other factors related to our individual survival. In connection with entering the Buddhist path, we have to learn to support our community altogether. We have to support our husbands, wives, and children, our house, our motorcars, even our bicycles. We have to send our clothes to the dry cleaners. We have to maintain our meditation practice. All of that requires a lot of money.

Occasionally we would like to go to a restaurant and have a drink in the bar. Or sometimes we can't prevent ourselves from buying a nice dress, nice tie, or nice shirt that is displayed in the store window. We also have to go to the hairdresser. Driving up to the mountains, going to the movies—little things like that seem to be necessary for us. We do those things, in any case.

Particularly when we feel uplifted, when we feel basically good, we tend to treat ourselves better, which automatically costs a certain amount of money.

Money is a burden, in some sense, and at the same time, it's a delight to us. That's why we are having this discussion. *Ratna* is a Sanskrit word that means "richness," especially from a vajrayana perspective. This kind of richness is free from poverty mentality. However, that doesn't necessarily mean that we have to be frivolous. The issue of money or ratna in our individual lives is complex, confusing, and many times burdensome. But at the same time, beyond our individual hassles and financial difficulties, we are trying to expand ourselves, our lives, further.

Your livelihood might involve organizing a business, or you might work for someone else. Early in your life or career, you may start by working for someone else. You might be a waitress or work in a gas station. As your vision becomes greater, you want to train yourself so that you can help yourself and others further in life. You learn to survive, and eventually to do more than survive.

The basic training in Buddhism and the Shambhala vision of enriching our own lives and of society as a whole can help us to accumulate fundamental richness in ourselves. Apart from receiving the teachings of the Buddha, the dharma, and learning how to sit with a good posture in our meditation practice, we also learn how to project goodness, brilliance, and richness, which is what we call Shambhala vision. That training might cause other people to think that you have a lot of money. Someone might look at you and think, "That guy must be very rich because he's so happy, well groomed, and not shabby anymore." You might not really have that much money. But on the other hand, you are truly wealthy. Through our practice, we actually become ratna, wealthy.

When the Buddha attained enlightenment, he went around the cities and collected small pieces of cloth that were thrown away by other people. Apparently he was a good tailor, so he sewed all those little squares of cloth together and made a beautiful monastic garment out of them. When people saw him wearing this robe, they remarked, "Look! Who is that well-dressed, well-clad person?" A tradition of sewing monastic robes out of small pieces of cloth came from the example of the Buddha. He projected some kind of richness, power, and strength. It was not a question of having expensive cloth

sewn into robes; the sense of richness came from the way the robe was worn, the way it looked on him.

Richness is not purely a result of dollars and cents. When a person is worthy of wealth, he has it. The logic is as simple as that. My attendant often tells me, "You can't wear that shirt for the fourth time." I say, "Of course I can." I've worn a single shirt without laundering it many times, and it has looked fine. That's what we call merit. Merit means that somebody is deserving and able to reflect that in the situation. A person doesn't have to be extravagant in order to become ratna, wealthy, but he or she does have to have a karmic sense of basic sanity, basic worthiness. That is the general principle of how one deserves and actually acquires and reflects wealth.

When we come to business enterprises, there is a little bit of a problem, even for someone who has individually attained this kind of basic wealth. We might have educated ourselves in a Shambhala understanding of economy and our role in the economy. However, when we get into business, we tend to borrow the concepts of how other people have made money in the past. We have understood natural richness, but going into business, we may forget the merit involved. We forget that we are glowing as we are, wearing our shirt for the umpteenth time.

The land in America was invaded, which is particularly heartbreaking. It is absolutely heartbreaking to study the history of Mexico and how the Spanish gained their wealth by devastating the wealth, culture, and beauty of Montezuma's kingdom. I changed my mind about that a little bit after I learned how the Aztecs sacrificed a person to their gods every day and threw the body down in the temple. What happened to their culture could be partially a result of that bad karma. At the same time, the way the Spaniards related with the native peoples was heartbreaking. They were purely greedy for gold and willing to kill for it. We have a similar problem in the United States. Although we have a nice Thanksgiving celebration to remember how we exchanged food with the Native Americans and thanked one another, at the same time, most of this place was snatched. That has brought all kinds of karmic consequences to us, as Americans, that is.

To put it in a nutshell, in America, when we run a business, we have habitual tendencies, based on how others made money purely by cheating. It

is not necessarily cheating directly, but cheating in the sense of figuring out how you can get around things.

As Buddhists, however, we are immigrants who have arrived here out of nowhere. (Maybe some of us were in Tibet together in our past lives. Who knows?) So we can change the possibilities and the ways of doing business here into something different from the American heritage. The situation has changed at this point. Vajrayana has been established in this country. The karmic situation in the United States has changed altogether. Maybe some of the karmic debts connected with the Native Americans have been paid off. In any case, it is a very good time to set up a business.

When we go into business, we should take the attitude that the reason to establish a business is to provide us and others with the financial resources to practice. We should think about how we can help our fellow brothers and sisters, our friends. Finally, we can have a positive influence on this continent. Cutting down aggression and greed is itself a tremendous contribution. We might tend to think that our contribution is insignificant, but we are extremely powerful, and we can actually do this.

In our business ethics, we should think in terms of friendship. When we deal with somebody, we should not think in terms of cutting his throat, but we should have good faith in the person. Whether we are buying land from that person or just a T-shirt, there should be tenderness toward him or her. That goes a long way.

On the whole, we should regard money as mother's milk. It nourishes us and it nourishes others. That should be our attitude toward money. It's not just a check or a dollar bill that we have in our wallet. Each dollar contains a great deal of the past. Many people worked for that particular one dollar. They worked so hard, with their sweat and tears, as Churchill said. So that money is like mother's milk, very precious. At the same time, mother's milk can be given away, and we can produce more mother's milk. So we shouldn't hang on to it too tightly. When there is more gentleness, more kindness, and more willingness to share with others, that brings tremendous gratitude, nonaggression, and the wealth of mother's milk.

The main point is not to borrow the habitual tendencies of passion, aggression, and ignorance, and not to cheat anybody. We are trying to

establish a financial mandala, a financial world altogether. That world is not only a local world but a vast world that we can share with others.

When we deal with people in business from that perspective, they will be surprised by our nonaggression and by the fact that we're not relying on habitual tendencies. When we speak of developing a financial mandala, we are not just talking about creating a tight world for ourselves. Instead we are talking about a general sense of how we work with the world altogether, how we work with aggression, how we work with our behavior patterns. We should learn from our mistakes and use those conclusions to develop ways of doing business that are pure, open, and fresh.

Such vision can be expanded beyond dealing with the financial situation of the United States. This vision can be expanded to Europe, Japan, China, and other parts of the world. Money brings people together. On the other hand, money is also the place where passion, aggression, and ignorance are brought together. By working with money, we have wonderful possibilities of exploring the depth of the confused world, samsara. Money is actually the equivalent—and not even the equivalent—money *is* the workings of the twelve nidanas, the twelve steps in the chain of conditioned existence that I discussed in [chapter 1](#). It is how things work, how things evolve, how things come to fruition in samsara.

In working with money, we should break that chain, and we should set up a new chain. It's possible. The paramitas, the transcendent actions of a bodhisattva, are a different chain. When you break the chain of the twelve nidanas—which come from greed, ignorance, and all the other expressions of our confusion—then you have a new situation, based on generosity, discipline, patience, and the other bodhisattva activities.

First of all, we have to utilize the knowledge, wisdom, and customs that exist in this country. From there, we can work step-by-step with people. You begin to make friends with them, and things evolve beyond that.

In working with money as mother's milk, we are definitely talking about maintaining our integrity and our morality. It is not going to be a quick moneymaking adventure right away. However, we can achieve some success in business with this approach. On the whole it is very helpful to communicate and share with others who are also taking this approach.



Please come along and join us. *Us* means you. If anybody is going to turn off the wheel of life, the wheel of conditioned suffering, it has to be us. That is our job. It is also our job to enrich ourselves tremendously for the sake of those who practice meditation and meditative awareness. That tradition of practice will survive for at least another five hundred years, if we support it. We are the first immigrants, the pioneers. We have just come off the boat, so to speak. It is wonderful to be that way.

## SIXTEEN

### *Karma*

NOW THAT WE HAVE DISCUSSED the details of work, sex, and money, we can address the fundamental question of karma. In order to do so, we need to review a little bit. As we discussed already, some meditators ask themselves, “If we are meditators, why should we work? Why should we include sex on the spiritual path? Why should money come into it?” When people take spirituality from a very idealistic point of view, they may think that work doesn’t need to be included in the discussion of the path, except perhaps in terms of some bare minimum of work that might be necessary to survive. Sex shouldn’t be included because it is a source of pain because of all the complicated relationships it involves. Certainly money shouldn’t be included because that’s the thing that grabs people and brings them down, rather than letting them get high on spirituality. Money involves relationships where one person owes money to another; it represents worldliness itself.

When people talk like this, I think they are talking about a different kind of spiritual path than the one we are discussing here. On that ideal path, the idea is to create good karma to try to escape from anything ugly, bad, or painful. That kind of spirituality is oriented toward pleasure. You enter into a state of meditation; you reach a state of absorption and go into all kinds of ecstasies. You get drunk, high, on meditative absorption, which as we discussed earlier is called a dhyana state. Then once you are high and into the ultimate bliss of dhyana, of course you don’t have to work, you don’t need money, and you don’t need sex. When your bliss runs down, you just recharge it again.

Of course, on this path you are not a nuisance to other people. You don't have to talk about anything but your state of bliss, which you can do with a pious smile while being nice and kind. There's no fear of treading on anybody's toes, because you are not involved with sex, not involved with money, and not involved with work. You don't have to protect yourself from anything. You're a free man or woman. It's a beautiful world. That is the classic view of people engaged in pleasure-oriented spirituality.

Beyond that, in society in general, it seems that everybody wants to work for good karma. Of course! Everybody is searching for something in life. We try to gain something. We try to attain something. What we try to attain is happiness.

When we apply this search for good karma to spiritual practice, we try to reach happiness through the back door, by a shortcut, which is dealing with the mind. We think that if we can get into a meditative state, we will have attained happiness. We will have fulfilled all the desires that exist in the world—in a transcendental way of course.

Many religious approaches have that element of searching for bliss in them—Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity. For example, people could misunderstand the writings of the great Christian mystic Meister Eckhart where he talks about the beauty of the all-pervading presence of being. There is the danger in Christian mysticism—any kind of mysticism—that it might turn purely into a search for pleasure, bliss, or eternal kindness. You begin to think that you are on the side of God, defeating Satan.

Buddhism begins quite differently from other religions, in that it begins from an atheistic standpoint. The whole revelation and inspiration for the Buddhist path comes from pain, suffering. Then you look for the origin of suffering, you discover the possibility of the cessation of suffering, and then you discover the path.<sup>29</sup> The whole Buddhist path could be geared toward antisuffering, which is exactly the same as what is being taught in other religious traditions: that the ultimate aim and object is pleasure. Insight consists in how to make pleasure last longer. In order to do that, we avoid sowing bad karma. Our perpetual good karma will grant us good results so that we can live in that good-karma territory perpetually. But of course, the trick is that we have to *maintain* that.

You have to have criteria for pleasure based on some contrast, in order to enjoy it. The pleasure of meditative absorption always contains a faint trace of paranoia. Without that, you wouldn't enjoy the pleasure. There is the sense that something unenjoyable is just about to approach; therefore we are happy because it isn't here yet. It's sort of like banging your head against the wall, so that it feels better when you stop, though it's not quite as crude as that. However, there is always a slight hint of having to maintain, always a sense of maintenance.

It's like enjoying having a huge house—centrally heated, beautifully decorated, with everything in order. You enjoy your house, your domain. Only an efficient, paranoid person can create a place so beautifully in order. You can't achieve that immaculate order unless you look in every corner to make sure that everything is pleasurable and perfectly set up. You have to make sure that the insurance is paid up in case of fire and that everybody involved in the maintenance of the house has been paid. The house has to be kept clean, and the central heating and air-conditioning have to be looked after. Everything has to be taken care of, constantly. You can't have the pleasure unless there is the possibility of pain, at least some subtle pain. Without that, the person wouldn't appreciate the pleasure at all. In order to have perfect pleasure, there must be absolute and perfect paranoia to go along with that.

Maintaining spiritual pleasure relies on the same logic, including the insurance policy. That desire for insurance or assurance is always there, because you want to be sure you can remain in your blissful state in the face of any nasty alternatives. You try to seal yourself off completely so that you can remain in that state of absolute equilibrium.

The question comes down to this: do we want to adopt this approach of perpetually creating good karma purely for the sake of not getting involved with work, sex, and money? If so, then quite likely we will have to maintain some safe haven so that we can stay in this meditative state, which is very pleasurable, all the time.

On the other hand, is there any possibility of ending the rat race of continually maintaining that? Can we take an approach that is not directed toward higher pleasure or higher pain but is just seeking to become more realistic? There are actually possibilities of transcending both good and bad

karma. Both, as we have already explained, come from a repetitive pattern. No psychic powers we might be able to develop, no higher spiritual powers, can transcend both good and bad karma. That has to be worked out on the earth level, on the basic ground of earth.

You possess the intelligence to work with this. That intelligence sees the foolishness of searching for good karma or bad karma. Somehow the karma that exists has to be worked out in its basic nitty-gritty, which is where relating with work, sex, and money comes in. However, we do not get into work, sex, and money purely for the sake of relieving our karma; rather, we get into them to see how they can present actual contact with reality. It is very scientific. That reality depends on our body, speech, and mind, our behavior, our emotions, and everything that is part of us.

You might wonder: as long as there are emotions, as long as there is body, as long as there is mind, doesn't that mean that there's also some karma that we have to work through? Not necessarily. Body is just body, free of karma. It's a mechanical thing—it's just a certain chemistry that exists on this planet. Mind perpetually goes on developing itself—it needn't be connected with karma. It perpetually develops flashes of all sorts of ideas instantaneously. Speech is the interplay between mind and body. As long as body and mind are active, speech happens.

Body and mind are not necessarily connected with karma, because volitional action, which creates karma, begins with attitude, with concept. When we have an attitude, we have conceptualized body and conceptualized mind, which brings conceptualized speech. The necessary condition for karma is concepts. Once concepts begin to operate—including such concepts as “high” and “pleasurable” or “low” and “suffering”—those concepts continually sow a seed in the basic mind, a seed for the growth, or the start-up, of energy. With that condition of concepts in operation, karma then functions and assumes its place. It produces physical or mental results. Physically, you might be injured or in a pleasurable state, and mentally, you get either painful or pleasurable karmic results.

The key point here is concepts. Concepts come from bewilderment, from not knowing where we are, who we are, what we are doing—from absolutely knowing nothing. This complete bewilderment is called ignorance. That bewilderment of not knowing what we are or who we are makes us seek the

nearest situation to get a foothold in. We describe that foothold as, “This is me, and this is the situation. These are my projections, my house, my family, my enemies, my friends.” We immediately create this pattern. When there are any interchanges going on, it is very convenient to have this set pattern to work through them with. However, adopting those patterns doesn’t solve the basic bewilderment at all. The whole inspiration for karma keeps arising from this unresolved bewilderment. That is why it is so pleasurable to find spiritual pleasure and so painful to find samsaric pain. Of course, the notions of spirituality and samsara are also concepts that we happen to have very conveniently found.

There we are. That is the situation that we have been talking about throughout this book. What can we do about it? In some sense, you can’t do anything about it. We might try to find some happy medium, but that doesn’t seem to work here. A happy medium is where you make a compromise; you cool down the pleasure and cool down the pain. Then you get a mixture of the two in a very toned-down way. That doesn’t really solve anything.

Perhaps we need to ask *who* it is that is staying in the bewilderment. That may be the key: Who is bewildered? You might say, “I’m bewildered.” But then we might ask, “What do you mean ‘I’?” We can’t seem to catch the “I.” You can’t catch it! That’s it, in fact! So nobody is in bewilderment. Is that true? We can’t catch anybody in bewilderment, and when we do, we’re back into the game of paranoia and pleasure.

Interestingly, bewilderment is an expression of wisdom as well as an expression of ignorance. The situation of bewilderment implies that you can’t label anything. That’s why you’re bewildered. If you can’t put a label on anything, however, there are also possibilities of space. There are possibilities of a gap, open space. On the other hand, there are possibilities of not discovering space, which also creates its own bewilderment and paranoia. It goes on and on. That is the source of bewilderment: not having any ground, absolutely not having any ground.

Bewilderment is not knowing whether you are or you are not. You may know that you don’t know, but that just makes it more bewildering. Basically, bewilderment is uncertainty about who’s who—fundamentally, really. Do you exist? Nobody knows actually. You can read books, but that doesn’t give you

any answers. You can ask people, but they don't give you any clear answers. You're always back to square one.

There is a difference between bewilderment and confusion. Bewilderment is the first stage. It is the ground of not knowing what's happening. There are many elements coming through you, passing through you, and there's a tendency for this utter bewilderment to become solidified as confusion. Confusion is the second stage. Confusion arises when you try to relate with your projections, or how the bewilderment is expressed in your projections. There is a conflict between the simple expression of bewilderment versus identifying with the bewilderment. There's a very subtle difference between these two. Confusion only arises from a realization that you are in a state of bewilderment and then creating an identity out of that.

The first stage is the bewilderment or not knowing whether I exist or not. And the second stage is being confused about how to relate with that or this. Bewilderment doesn't contain self-consciousness at all. It's a completely egoless state. Then after that, you begin to establish some identity. When bewilderment becomes confusion, it's a very cunning trick in which you give up searching for anything: "I don't care whether I exist or not, but there is something here, so let's call that 'me.' And then my relationship to that is confusion." You still don't know exactly what's going on, but you stumble along.

You accept that there is an ambivalent self, in a sense, by innuendo. You know that you are actually a selfless person, but at the same time, by innuendo, you want to establish that you have a self, to provide you with some identity. To undo this confusion, one must go back to the original bewilderment.

There is an alternative to confusion. Although there's no ground in the bewilderment, there are still flashes; there are still gaps. Basic bewilderment is not as efficient as we think. There is the peak experience of bewilderment, and then there is also a gap—absolute space beyond that bewilderment. Bewilderment also has its ups and downs.

When we experience basic bewilderment without confusion, we are touching in just barely before the start of the volitional process that creates karma. That's where meditation can play a part. Meditation acknowledges basic bewilderment and the space in which basic bewilderment forgets to

create its tantrum. So there's some gap, some room somewhere. However, it seems it's a long, long way from there to the everyday simplicity of dealing with work, sex, and money. When we discover this space in meditation, it's as though we have gone to the peak, to Mount Everest. Then what? It seems to be a long way down to the ground.

There are actually many opportunities for relating with bewilderment. There's the opportunity to finally stop everything. We decide not to rush, not to run anymore. And we stop for a moment, just to be quietly with the meditation technique, whatever it may be. Then there are just teeny-weeny stars shining through the darkness—an occasional glimpse.

Usually, when bewilderment happens, we manufacture a lot of other things. We build a whole world or identity around it. However, there's another possibility. Something's missing in our discussions here. There's something else that hasn't come into the picture clearly yet, which seems to be the root of work, sex, and money, something else that's vital.

Let me explain again. Basic bewilderment is, in a sense, intelligent, but it is passive. In a way, it is carefree because it doesn't have to be involved with karmic chains. It's an open thing. But we need something else. Once we are in an open state, how do we leap? Try to see what it is. It is the governing force of work, sex, and money.

*Energy.* That's it. Some schools of Buddhism refer to this energy as *chandali* or tummo, a term we mentioned in our discussion of sex. What I want to emphasize here, however, is not the connection to esoteric aspects of Buddhist yoga but that it's possible to have energy that is free from karma.<sup>30</sup> That's what I'm trying to point out. There's original bewilderment. From that original bewilderment, in which you experience space of some kind, energy arises. Through that energy, you can work with all the troubles with work, sex, and money. It is fresh energy without a debt.

You might think that fresh energy is going to collide with a karmic seed and create karma, good or bad. It could, but it doesn't necessarily have to, because you get this energy directly from the basic bewilderment, without going through the conceptualized idea of volitional action. It is energy run wild in its own sanity. We have discussed the relative problems connected with work, sex, and money. Now we know that within those situations there is a basic tool—the basic energy of wakefulness or bewilderment, which is



saying the same thing. That energy is a force that is constantly operating in the situations of daily life.

Of course, there is intelligence in the bewilderment. This intelligence is going to search for bliss or express pain. But that is just mechanical, part of bewilderment's mechanical-reaction system. It's sort of a guided missile, a missile guided by the bewilderment. But the handle on basic bewilderment, its exit, is energy.<sup>31</sup> Bewilderment's way of relating with situations is energy.

That energy has direction, which we might call the absence of panic. Energy functions on its own in situations. Wherever the energy is needed, it happens. So energy doesn't have to be guided consciously. Once you begin to guide it consciously, then the whole situation becomes karmic force. However, if you are in contact with that basic bewilderment in its positive quality and if you are in contact with the energy, panic doesn't arise anymore. Panic is not relevant there. The panic comes from ego, from trying to hold on to something, which is ego's game. The whole reason one can transcend both good and bad karma is that panic is not relevant in that situation of fundamental energy. If panic arises, you feel that you have to suppress it, and by then you are already working with dualistic concepts of this and that. From that point of view, karma is a conscious thing. Karma comes from concept. Concept is a very conscious thing. So if there is a state of absence of concepts, you are free of karma.

The basic nonconceptual energy of bewilderment can be the inspiration for spending or making money, engaging in sex, and being able to work. This might be difficult to grasp fully, so I'll go over it again: Bewilderment is energy, or has energy; and the most basic thing about bewilderment is that there's nobody there. Therefore, the volitional action of karma doesn't apply to it.

Fortuitously, people have flashes of this basic bewilderment occasionally. We may catch a glimpse of that basic bewilderment of being nobody—and that should be the key to dealing with work, sex, and money. In that way, the whole way we work with our life is approached in a very sane way, with nobody trying to save anything or anybody, and nobody labeling anything as good or bad. Work, sex, and money are not regarded as good or bad, but are seen in a very awake way, because fundamentally there is nobody there.

To put it more bluntly, egolessness is a kind of momentary flash. There are occasional breaks in our experience of ego. It's from there, those breaks in ego's game, that we can approach work, sex, and money. In that case, work, sex, and money become part of a very natural process.

---

29. Here Chögyam Trungpa succinctly summarizes the four noble truths, the first teaching and one of the most fundamental teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha. For Trungpa Rinpoche's in-depth discussion of this topic, see *The Truth of Suffering and the Path of Liberation* (Shambhala Publications, 2009).—Eds.

30. For more on tummo, see the discussion on p. 101 and the accompanying footnote, as well as the glossary entry.—Eds.

31. The word *handle* here is used in the sense of getting a handle on something. Specifically here it relates to coming to an understanding of bewilderment or finding a starting point for action.—Eds.

## SEVENTEEN

### *Panoramic Awareness*

THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF POSITIVE THINKING. One kind is thinking that the future is going to be all right, which is based on panic and concerned with security. The other one is not living in the future but living in the present. The present situation is open—you could almost say solid—and real, definite, and healthy. There is an appreciation of the richness in the present.

Believing in the present is antipoverty, because it doesn't involve wishful thinking of any kind at all. It is there already and you don't have to wish for anything. It's solid and real, in a sense much more real than "me" and "myself." In the Buddhist tradition, we have a belief in buddha nature, *tathagatagarbha*, which has been described as the most positive thinking of all. Some schools of Buddhist thought would say that *tathagatagarbha*, or buddha nature, is not some kind of abstract "nature" but rather a living buddha inside you. Sometimes people visualize the buddha within, with a complete body. Certain other schools within Buddhism have said that it is too dangerous to believe in such a real thing's being there, because that approach could also be taken toward ego as being something solid and real inside you. These schools criticized that approach as being eternalism, one of the two extremes, the other being nihilism. In some sense, however, eternalism is more positive than nihilism. However, buddha nature has nothing to do with a solid, egoistic sense of self. Basically, it is the essence of being awake, which is already there. We don't have to think up something positive and make the best of it.

This kind of positive doesn't try to push away the negatives. Even perceiving the negatives is a vision of the positive. That's why we speak of panoramic awareness, which is basic positive thinking. Relating with panoramic awareness could be said to be a way of freeing ourselves from the chain reaction of karma, which is based on hope and fear. As we discussed, karma is a chain reaction that is based on panic or uncertainty, on one hand, or also a chain reaction of goodness in the smaller, one-sided sense of good versus bad. On the other hand, the positivity of panoramic awareness is restful. It opens the situation and brings spaciousness and a meditative state of being. At the very moment that is present, there is no furthering of karmic cause and effect; no karmic seed is planted or developed. When that positiveness is there as we are dealing with situations, we can speak of meditation in action. In that way, meditation in action is just as important as sitting meditation.

Panoramic awareness is the basic trust that the space is there already. The whole point is that we don't have to get it; we have it. When we say, "How do we get it?" that is the voice of poverty. Panoramic awareness *is* buddha nature. It may depend on the intensity of the awareness, how fully it is developed, but in any case it is some state of "awake."

To say that panoramic awareness is free from negativity sounds like there is still some poverty there. However, we are not imprisoned at all. This positive state of being is so fundamental that it doesn't need relative support from anywhere. It's the positive of transcending positive and negative. It is transcendental.

It's not a naive possibility, like saying, "Everything's okay," meaning that things are defensively okay. You tell yourself defensively, "Keep smiling," and you tell yourself, "I am happy," and you try to believe that. Instead, panoramic awareness is realizing that everything is healthy, everything is fine, but you don't have to make a big deal out of that. Your awareness provides you with basic understanding that doesn't involve defensively proving anything to yourself. Rather it is believing, having faith in, and seeing the situation *as it is*.

Being in an egoless state sharpens your intelligence because there's nothing in the way. You don't have to manage two things at the same time anymore. There's always just one thing to deal with—that's why it's called nonduality.

So your skill in dealing with any situation becomes sharper and more precise. Your sensitivity in dealing with other people is also heightened.

We hear so much about the egoless state, but then when we experience it, we might feel doubt: “There must be something more than this!” It is said that the secret of mind seems too easy to be true. Egolessness doesn’t mean thoughtlessness, a state without thoughts. There will be thought patterns anyway. For instance, when you read sutras, there is prose in them that you can follow; they contain thought patterns of the Buddha—how he views things, how he thinks, how he presents a situation. Also, in many cases when questions were asked of the Buddha, he supposedly just smiled and didn’t answer; he left the questioners to work out the answers. Even then, a subtle thought pattern is still there. So of course, there can be thought patterns without ego. As we read descriptions of enlightenment, it sounds very dramatic and glorious, but actually when we experience a glimpse of it, it doesn’t seem to be as glorious as the descriptions. The descriptions make us expect too much.

Once panoramic awareness is there, it grows. Or rather it is gradually uncovered; the dirt is gradually removed and the awareness shines through. It shines through. You can’t really nurse it. Panoramic awareness has to grow by itself. It’s like the description of the *garuda* hatching. The garuda chick grows inside the egg, and when the shell breaks, the garuda can fly without further nursing. Once the space is there already, you don’t have to do anything with it. Just go along with the action. It is self-fulfillment. That’s why the notion of spontaneity comes in here.

If you solidify the space, then that becomes the watcher, the abstract quality of your intelligence. Then there’s really no space at all. The watcher is like a chemical that solidifies things. There are various degrees of intelligence, and at a certain stage, the intelligence could become the watcher. That’s a limitation we are facing. First there is duality, this and that, and then we begin to be aware of that, which could be said to be a very healthy step toward awakening. But then we begin to identify with that duality so much that there is a danger of making the space into characters with personalities. So what one has to do is sort of undo everything. First of all, depersonalize the awareness of duality, and second, the natural duality should also be dissolved. It’s a going-backward process, an undoing process.

Once you begin to relate directly with the basic intelligence, once you have already acknowledged that, then as the situation develops, that basic intelligence becomes stronger and stronger, more real. It grows by itself. It's like when you first begin to awaken from sleep. You open your eyes; then you begin to hear sounds. That process of waking up continues until finally you get out of bed and walk about.

Taking a leap, which we discussed earlier, is the beginning of acknowledging basic intelligence. We struggle with that. You don't want to believe that there is something fundamentally secure that doesn't need to draw security from anything else. When you begin to realize there is such a thing, that could be frightening as well as pleasant. In many cases, we feel that if we acknowledge that, we will lose our occupation, the basic occupation that keeps ego busy. So we have to push ourselves into it.

There is a subtle journey going from the *shunyata* level of recognizing the emptiness of our habitual patterns to the mahamudra level, the attainment of vajrayana vision in which one is working directly with the energy of a situation. First of all, you perceive space, and you are in the space but still conscious of it. Then, at a certain stage, you lose even the notion of space. Sometimes you become heavily involved with "that," and you lose track of "this" altogether. That's just fascination taking over, rather than a realization of egolessness. The difference is that in the case of being one with the situation, there is no sense of being off balance, no sense of being on either side of the this-that equation. In that case, there is no need of a scale. In the case of fascination, there is a scale, and the weighting toward the object is heavier, but there are still two sides of the scale. In the case of being one, there's no scale at all. There is no sense of power on one side or the other.

There is also a difference between being awake and being overpowered by your experience. That sense of being overpowered means that there is still a scale with two sides. When you are overpowered by the situation, you are captivated, and there's a sense of stupidity. You may feel very calm, but there's no sense of dignity and no sense of sharpness.

With ego in the picture, it's more a case of overcrowded ground than not having any ground. There are so many things between you and the ground that you can't perceive the ground at all. There's a spiky quality to the ego-oriented experience. First there's irritation and then a larger sense of

irritation, and then losing a sense of direction, and then finally, being completely flipped out.

Whenever anything irritates us, it's trying to communicate with us. Usually we are looking for an answer rather than trying to communicate with irritation. There is sanity operating, but usually we don't try to learn from that at all. We try to do something with that irritation rather than just relate to it. There's no point in trying to ignore irritation completely. It's a matter of experiencing the basics of the irritation. The point is to acknowledge its presence rather than try to suppress it. The approach is not analytical particularly; it's more instinctive.

When we talk about relating with irritation here, we are talking about how to handle it at the beginning. When the first flash of irritation comes, just try to feel the abstract quality of it, the presence of it, and in that way you set a proper balance. Then the irritation doesn't become overpowering, and you don't become overpowering toward the irritation either. The next step is then dealing with the specific nature of the irritation. At this point, you have already set up the right relationship with the irritation, which allows you to handle it in a much easier way, as opposed to a confused way.

When the first flash of irritation occurs, it throws out a cloud of confusion, of bewilderment.<sup>32</sup> You are so shaken up by it that you do something sudden or panicky and upset the whole possibility of skillfulness and dignity. Then everything becomes very pathetic. Then each subsequent time you try to deal with the irritation, because you handled it wrong at the beginning, the whole situation becomes an ongoing emergency. When you try to deal with that emergency, another emergency pops up on top of the first one. Then the whole situation becomes very spiky or freaky, or whatever you want to call it. If you are able to relate with the irritation properly at the beginning, then it doesn't throw out bewilderment or confusion; rather, irritation presents itself as it is. Then the emergency doesn't arise at all, so you have time to deal with the situation. There is space, room to move about, slowly.

Generally when irritation pops up, we automatically think that we are obliged to do something with it, without knowing what to do. However, we could work with it in the same way that we work with everything in meditation. That's the whole point about meditation: you can be doing nothing but still remain brilliant. This takes away the fundamental speed

connected with the irritation, which is not speed in any real sense anyway. It's like rush hour. We call it rush hour but actually we are not really rushing—just the opposite.

The courage to work with ourselves in this way comes as basic trust in ourselves, as a sort of fundamental optimism. In the beginning, you act like a warrior, and then you actually become brave. It's like the visualizations in tantric practices. When you visualize yourself as a deity, for example, first you have your belief, your version of you, which is called the *samayasattva*. You visualize yourself as the deity; it is your version of you. Then along comes what is called the *jnanasattva*—the body of wisdom, the buddha-nature quality—which arises as another visualization in front of you. That visualization comes to you and is united with your basic notion of yourself. So finally you become Buddha completely; you become the deity completely, and you begin to act like one. That is called vajra pride. That's an important part of visualization. The important part of that pride is to believe that you *are* that—you have three eyes, you have three tongues, and you have flames around you, or whatever it is that you are visualizing. You *are* that, you really are! Visualizations are not just fantasies. They are a part of you, so the pride is believing in that part of you. If you have the potential of growing a beard and you don't shave, then the beard grows. It's part of you.

In the process of visualization, finally you begin to visualize the whole world as a mandala, a sacred space, and every sound as mantra, or sacred utterance. The whole world and everyone in it is included. Such vajra pride, or indestructible pride, does not need any relative reference point. It is inborn belief that doesn't need relative support. In fact, once you begin to check back to your relative reference world, once you begin to doubt, you lose the vajra pride. You might be afraid that you can't survive without relative support, but you survive better if you don't have to question your talent, if you don't have to compare and look for relative support. You just work with what you can do. It's a fundamentally positive thing. Relative support actually diminishes your talent, because you begin to question yourself, you begin to compare yourself, you begin to have doubts. Comparing yourself doesn't help. It diminishes your confidence.

Vajra pride might seem to be a dangerous path that could easily stray into a kind of false enlightenment. The danger of vajra pride's turning into ego



pride comes when you start using it to suppress the negative things you feel about yourself, your irritation with yourself. You try to use the logic of vajra pride for that. Then it ceases to be vajra pride anyway. It's impossible to turn one hundred percent vajra pride into ordinary pride. But once you try to use it for mundane purposes, it is no longer vajra pride.

At the beginning of the path, ego may seem to be in control of the situation. In fact, the whole spiritual journey may start out as a gigantic ego trip. The ego brings us to the dharma by saying, "Gee, I'd like to get enlightened and do all this stuff I've read about." We have to use that. You just begin where you are. It's quite a simple process. You start with ego's version of enlightenment, and at a certain stage, ego finds that it is threatened by your commitment to the path, and it begins to wear away, to drop out. At that point, we are approaching the cliff we need to leap from, which is suicidal for ego.

There is actually a succession of sudden shocks until you fall off the last cliff. Whenever there is a cliff, ego tries to avoid it, tries to come back to a safer place by using the same logic constantly and by not being willing to take any chances. At a certain point, ego begins to find that its version of enlightenment doesn't match the teachings, the genuine dharma. But it ignores that. It creates its own teaching. Whenever there's a cliff, it says, "No, I'm not going over that cliff. I'm going to survive; so I'll make my own teaching." When a situation feels very uncomfortable, I would say there is *more* reason to approach the cliff then, because there is some gap, some crack that has appeared. When neurosis is coming up more vividly, there is often a gap. So that's a great opportunity.

When you actually make the leap, there is no landmark at all, not even limitlessness. It's completely all or nothing. Or you could say it's either one or everything. You can afford to leap; therefore you don't have to hold on to anything.

At the same time, when we talk about *all*, or unity, that doesn't mean to say that the situation becomes completely depersonalized. There is still *all* of that particular person's point of view, even when we are speaking of the buddhas, the awakened ones. That's why there could be different enlightened realms, which we often refer to as the three *kayas*: *nirmanakaya*, *sambhogakaya*, and *dharmakaya*. Even within the ultimate realm of dharmakaya, Samantabhadra,

Vajradhara, and many different types of dharmakaya buddhas exist.<sup>33</sup> They are *all*, therefore they are *one*. They are all; therefore they are individual, personal.

I hope that you will be able to put into effect what we've discussed, in practical ways. No doubt what we've talked about might clarify your problems, but at the same time, the discussion might confuse us more. That confusion is the starting point. It is what we have to work with in everyday life.

We have been talking extensively about the importance of appreciating and working with our mundane life as a source of sanity and awareness. Often there is a perceived conflict between our ordinary life and sitting meditation. Seeing a conflict between those two comes from the inability to perceive the background of panoramic awareness that is present in our daily situations. There is always an undercurrent of panoramic awareness that acts as guidance. That is the source and inspiration for being skillful in daily life. Relating to that does not mean having to be rigid and careful, or overly watchful. Nevertheless, there should be some acknowledgment that the space of awareness is there. There should be just a fraction of a second of acknowledgment. Through this acknowledgment, a sense of spaciousness spontaneously arises that provides the right perspective, or distance, between action and reaction.

For the beginner, relating to this awareness may require some level of watching oneself or deliberateness. In the long run, however, watching doesn't come into the picture. For instance, if a chaotic situation happens, there is uncertainty about how to deal with that, and that uncertainty flashes back on us. That uncertainty itself becomes space. In other words, each time there is doubt, the doubt itself brings a kind of bewilderment, but that bewilderment becomes space, spaciousness. In that way, a sort of natural, inbuilt understanding of the situation happens. In that sense, there is a shock absorber that is always present.

That kind of awareness is based on a certain amount of trust, or optimism. Basically, nothing is regarded as a failure or as dangerous. Rather, whatever arises is experienced as part of a creative and loving relationship toward oneself. That subtle confidence and optimism automatically bring skillful means, because we realize there is no need to be panicked. We have a

warrior's attitude toward life, which could also be described as faith or belief in our life, or possibly as devotion to our experience and our world. Whatever happens, we always have a fundamental positive quality about our experience of life. Such faith could be said to be the source of an almost magical performance. If a person relies on that confidence, it is almost as though she is going to perform a miracle, and she is taking quite a chance that the miracle might not happen. However, because she has confidence, she almost knows it will happen, and she does what she has to do, and the miracle does happen. That kind of fundamental positive approach runs right through all situations in dealing with life. It also becomes a meditative experience, because it is a purely optimistic attitude without watcher, without ego, without centralizing in the self or being careful. This whole positive flow can only happen if there is no centralized security. Instead, there is basic faith and belief in one's wholesomeness, in one's fundamental healthy situation.

---

32. In the last chapter, the author was speaking of bewilderment as a groundless state before ego or karma is solidified. Here he is speaking of it in a more conventional sense of equating bewilderment with confusion.—Eds.

33. The three kayas, or the *trikaya*, refer to three fundamental aspects, or bodies, of enlightenment. *Kaya* literally means “body.” Dharmakaya is the ultimate realm of wisdom beyond reference points. Sambhogakaya is the realm of compassion and communication. It literally means the “realm of enjoyment.” Nirmanakaya is the buddha that takes human form, which refers to the historical Buddha but also to the enlightened teachers we may encounter now. In Tibetan vajrayana Buddhism, the dharmakaya is personified in visualizations. Two of the most important dharmakaya buddhas are Samantabhadra and Vajradhara. The point the author seems to be making here is that even in the realm of ultimate truth, there is still an immediate, personal quality to wakefulness or sanity, as personified by these buddhas. In fact, the universal quality gives rise to the personal quality of enlightenment.—Eds.

## *Editor's Afterword*

THIS BOOK IS PRIMARILY BASED on three seminars, each of which was entitled Work, Sex, and Money. The first seminar was conducted at the East-West Center in Boston in September 1970, less than six months after Chögyam Trungpa arrived in the United States. Rinpoche gave one talk on work, one on sex, and the third on money.<sup>34</sup> The second seminar took place in the summer of 1971 at Tail of the Tiger, a rural residential meditation center in Barnet, Vermont, that today is called Karmê Chöling. The seminar was a series of nine events, which consisted of lively discussions between speaker and audience, punctuated by Rinpoche's remarks or short talks, some of which came at the end of several hours of questions and answers. The first few talks of this seminar were an introduction to the view of the importance of meditation in action in general, how karma operates and can be ultimately transcended, and the problems of materialism—physical, psychological, and spiritual—and how they affect our everyday experiences. Then Rinpoche conducted several discussions on each of the three themes of work, sex, and money. The entire seminar lasted ten days.

The third three-talk seminar, given in April 1972 in Burlington, Vermont, takes a slightly different approach to the material. The first talk describes the mechanisms of physical, psychological, and spiritual materialism and how these affect the normal course of work, sex, and money. The second talk looks at how the practice of sitting meditation and joining that with meditation in action can help us to begin to dismantle ego's games. Finally, in the last talk, Rinpoche looks at how work, sex, and money are often an expression of klesha activity, or confused emotions, and how that approach can be overcome.

The editing of this material was quite challenging, especially regarding the second long seminar, which was so dominated by free-flowing discussion and a question-and-answer format. Sherab Chödzin Kohn completed the first stage of the work, the monumental task of editing the original transcripts. If one has not grappled with this kind of editorial work, there may be a tendency to underestimate the editorial expertise needed to create a group of transcripts that have readability and coherence while maintaining the original voice and language of the speaker. Sherab is a master of this craft, and he produced edited transcripts that capture the “wild and woolly” character of this period of Trungpa Rinpoche’s teachings.

It then fell to me to organize and, to some extent, manicure this material further, shaping it into the structure it now has. In this final form, there are no longer questions and answers, but much of the material from the discussions has been incorporated into the narrative structure of the book. In the section of the book on money, I also added material from two later talks that Chögyam Trungpa gave to Buddhist businesspeople in Boulder, Colorado, in 1979 and 1981.

The editorial perspective I adopted was to look at what Rinpoche was saying from the view of universal wisdom, separated somewhat from its original cultural milieu. Put more bluntly, there were a lot of hippies and counterculture people in the audience in the early seventies. Rinpoche spoke absolutely directly to them. There was no sense of distance between him and them, but at the same time, he always addressed the larger view, speaking from the perspective of universal dharma and its applicability to any situation.

Sometimes, I had to divorce the questions asked from my reading of Trungpa Rinpoche’s answers in order to see how to edit the material. His answers were always taking the large view, although he also spoke directly, responding intimately to the most personal queries. He had a gift for addressing minutiae and the cosmos at the same time. I don’t know how he did it, but you can see the results here, which to my mind are up-to-date and very helpful in dealing with current realities.

In the early seventies in America, Rinpoche taught many visionary seminars in which he laid out fundamental principles about how mind, energy, and reality work altogether and how this leads to both the normal confused pattern of our lives and the possibility of uncovering brilliant sanity

in the midst of this confusion. In that light, this book gives us a comprehensive and profound approach to the view, practice, and action of meditation in action. I believe that the view Trungpa Rinpoche articulates in *Work, Sex, Money* is also, in many respects, the underpinning of the Shambhala teachings he emphasized from 1976 until his death in 1987. The approach presented in this book to work, sex, and money can be seen as the necessary foundation, within one's personal discipline, for creating an enlightened society, a theme he came back to over and over again in the eighties.

Sherab Chödzin Kohn and I were serial editors on this project, meaning that we didn't collaborate extensively, although we did consult. Sherab accomplished the beginning beautifully, and I then took the book over the finish line. It was a bit like working together in a relay race. For both of us, the more we worked with this material, the more we fell in love with it. We hope that it will speak to you, the reader, as well. May you have success on the path, and may you meet with Buddha himself, in the form of the marvelous opportunities for wakefulness afforded to you by experiences of work, sex, and money in this life.

---

34. There may also have been an introductory talk that was not recorded.—Eds.

## *Editor's Acknowledgments*

EXTENSIVE TRANSCRIPTION of the original talks and correction of unedited transcripts were necessary in order to undertake this book. In addition to the considerable work that Sherab Chödzin Kohn did himself, several other transcribers were involved. Thanks especially to Barbara Blouin, who has a long association with the transcription and editing of Chögyam Trungpa's work.

The Shambhala Archives has recently completed the remastering and digitization of more than three thousand lectures and other recordings of Chögyam Trungpa's teaching in the West. Its continued work to preserve and make available this large corpus of material is greatly appreciated. Special thanks to the staff of the archives, Gordon Kidd, Chris Levy, and Sandra Kipis, for their work altogether and for providing us with excellent MP3 recordings to refer to throughout the editorial process.

Sara Berholz was the editor for this project at Shambhala Publications. I appreciated her enthusiasm and her editorial input, which was to the point and forced me to grapple more than once with the complexities of the material in ways that I hope are a benefit to readers. Peter Turner held a view of this project that inspired all of us, and he negotiated the various twists and turns of the editorial process with sensitivity and aplomb. It was a pleasure working with both of them. Thanks, too, to Jonathan Green for assistance with contracts and letters of agreement. Thanks also to the copy editor, DeAnna Satre; the designer, Lora Zorian; and the assistant editor, Ben Gleason.

Without the students who gathered around Chögyam Trungpa in the seventies and inspired him to teach in wacky and wonderful ways, we would not have this precious collection of dharma teachings. So thanks to those

pioneering practitioners, many of whom are now senior teachers and practitioners in Shambhala International, the association of centers created by Trungpa Rinpoche and now led by Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, and other Buddhist communities around the world.

Thanks to Diana J. Mukpo, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, and all the members of the Mukpo family for their continued support of the publication of the work of Chögyam Trungpa.

And finally, deepest thanks to the author himself for sharing this profound, brilliant, and practical dharma with us, pointing out how each moment of life is infused with wisdom and panoramic awareness.

CAROLYN GIMIAN

*May 2010*



# **MINDFULNESS IN ACTION**

*Making Friends with Yourself through Meditation and  
Everyday Awareness*

COMPILED, ARRANGED, AND EDITED BY CAROLYN ROSE  
GIMIAN

*To the vast family  
of all those who practice and live mindfully*

## *Editor's Preface*

JUST WHEN WE THINK that life couldn't get any more disconnected or accelerated, another technology or another shift in our worldview propels us even faster into the future. We often feel that we can't keep up and we can't slow down—but we know that we must find a way to connect. Paradoxically, we are constantly connected through our devices and our social media, yet with all this interaction, many people report feeling more lonely and alienated, lacking a sense of community. So we need other ways to connect with ourselves and with the world. We need connections that will ground us.

Many people have discovered that mindfulness offers them a down-to-earth yet immediate way to connect with themselves. It is simple acceptance, described here as making friends with yourself. It is, as well, a means to unlock creativity and compassion. Meditation is a powerful technique for developing mindfulness, which can help us discover a way of being that is authentic, relaxed, and gentle. Meditation also offers a way of reexperiencing and investigating our world, as well as providing the means to develop greater awareness and to work with our emotions.

*Mindfulness in Action: Making Friends with Yourself through Meditation and Everyday Awareness* is, as the title suggests, a book about mindfulness and its application in the context of our whole life. The book focuses on the practice of meditation as a tool for developing mindfulness and explores how mindfulness and awareness influence our everyday life. It is a book for people who want to explore mindfulness through the practice of meditation and also apply meditative insight in their lives. It includes instructions for the practice of meditation, as well as an in-depth look into the principles of mindfulness.

Tens of thousands of us in the Western world now practice various forms of meditation and mindfulness regularly, as well as other contemplative

mind/body disciplines. Mindfulness techniques are being effectively used in schools, hospitals, the military, and many workplaces. This book is not about the specific application of mindfulness to any one profession, problem, or sector of society. Rather, it's about the fundamental experience of mindfulness and awareness, which can be applied in many settings.

The technique of meditation that is offered here is unique but closely related to other approaches to mindfulness meditation. It is a form of meditation that stresses openness and engagement with our world. This technique for mindfulness meditation is compatible with other approaches in that it emphasizes a sense of presence, simplicity, and the development of peace. It is also about developing insight and clear seeing in one's practice and daily life. The author invites people to try his approach, but the insights offered in this book apply to whatever approach to mindfulness meditation you employ.

Part one of the book introduces the practice of meditation in some detail, connecting it with a sense of heart and with experiences of gentleness, clarity, a positive experience of aloneness, and the discovery of compassion. In part two, the author offers us further perspectives on the foundations of mindfulness, which are presented here as strategies for deepening and enlivening our practice of meditation as well as for linking practice with everyday experience. In part three there are additional meditation instructions that address working with the emotions, as well as a discussion of walking meditation and working with our awareness in group retreat situations. There is also an exploration of how meditation makes us less self-centered, enabling us to be more open and available to our world. The final chapters of the book focus on working with the emotions in practice and everyday life, as well as touching on the intriguing possibility of a mindful society.

The author, Chögyam Trungpa, was a meditation teacher, originally from Tibet, who in the 1960s, '70s, and '80s taught extensively in English in Great Britain, the United States, and Canada at a time when this was rare for Asian teachers. He introduced tens of thousands of people to meditation. I undertook the compilation and editing of the material for this book out of an inspiration that he shared with these thousands of others and with me: that mindfulness and meditation are the means to make friends with ourselves in a fundamental and transformative way, and they can lead to mindfulness in

action throughout our entire life. They can deepen our understanding of ourselves, increase our ability to work with the challenges in our lives, and enable us to be kind to others.

Chögyam Trungpa taught in a profoundly heartfelt fashion that still resonates in our situation today. He allows us to see that meditation is a potent and inspiring discipline, yet that it is also simple, effective, and ordinary. He shows us that mindfulness and meditation are worthwhile disciplines and that they work. The practice of meditation works with us and on us, making us more available to ourselves and to others. The practice is demanding, it can be challenging, it shows us the truth of who we are, but that is all part of the beauty of human life.

There are hundreds of books today on mindfulness and meditation. The early seeds that were planted by Chögyam Trungpa and other pioneers are truly flourishing in this era. *Mindfulness in Action: Making Friends with Yourself through Meditation and Everyday Awareness* joins these volumes as an impassioned offering to help us find a genuine and joyful path through the speed, the heartbreak, and the confusion of life.

I hope that readers will find something special in these pages and that this book will prove both helpful and inspirational. I know that the author would wish that his presentation of a full and complete approach to mindfulness will help and inspire people, now as much as ever.

CAROLYN ROSE GIMIAN  
*November 2013*

*A note on language: the practice of meditation is referred to here as the “sitting practice of meditation,” “meditation” (with no qualifiers), “sitting practice,” “practice,” and “sitting.” All refer to the same practice, which is explained in detail in the book.*

*Part One*

MAKING FRIENDS WITH YOURSELF

## ONE

# *Meditation*

## AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH OURSELVES

MEDITATION IS ONE OF THE MAIN TOOLS we have to develop and practice mindfulness. It is a way to look at ourselves scientifically, so that we can see our psychological situation precisely. Meditation practice is not an exotic or out-of-reach approach. It is immediate and personal, and it involves an intimate relationship with ourselves. It is getting to know ourselves by examining our actual psychological process without being ashamed of it. We are often critical of ourselves to the point where we may become our own enemies. Meditation is a way of ending that quarrel by making friends with ourselves. Then we may find that we are not as bad as we thought or had been told we were. Before we look at other aspects of mindfulness, I'd like to give you some idea of the benefits of meditation, as they relate to our relationship with ourselves and our everyday life.

If we label ourselves as hopeless cases or see ourselves as villains, there is no way to use our own experience as a stepping-stone. If we take the attitude that there is something wrong with us, we must constantly look outside ourselves for something better than we are. That search can continue indefinitely, on and on and on.

In contrast to that approach, meditation is contacting our actual situation, the raw and rugged state of our mind and being. No matter what is there, we should look at it. It is similar to building a long-term friendship with someone. As part of the process of becoming friends, you get to know things that you do not like about someone, and you encounter parts of the relationship that are very uncomfortable. Acknowledging the problems and coming to terms with them is often the foundation for a long-term friendship. Having included those things from the beginning, you won't be shocked by

them later on. Since you know all the negative aspects, you don't have to hide from that side of the relationship. Then you can cultivate the other side, the positive side, as well. That is also a very good way to start making friends with yourself. Otherwise, you might feel surprised and cheated later on, when you discover the things that you've been hiding from yourself.

Whatever exists in us is a natural situation. It is another dimension of natural beauty. People sometimes go to great lengths to appreciate nature, by climbing mountains, going on safari to see giraffes and lions in Africa, or taking a cruise to Antarctica. It is much simpler and more immediate to appreciate the natural beauty of ourselves. This is actually far more beautiful than exotic flora and fauna, far more fantastic, painful, colorful, and delightful.

Meditation is getting into this organic natural situation of what we are. It requires manual labor, individual effort, to do this. We can't rent a helicopter to fly us into the heart of the matter, without any inconvenience. We have to walk on our own feet. We have to walk into the countryside of this intimate natural beauty. That is the first step in developing mindfulness: going directly into our natural psychological situation without renting a fancy vehicle to get us there. We can't use an SUV or a helicopter. To begin with, we have to walk, which turns out to be worthwhile.

The practice of meditation presents us with straightforward techniques for the development of mindfulness that are valid for our actual psychological situation. We work with the resources that we already have. Our present situation, what we are, is our stepping-stone. We start with simple techniques such as sitting, walking, and breathing. These are natural things. We all have to breathe, we all have to sit down, and most of us can walk. These natural things are the starting point of developing mindfulness through the practice of meditation.

We have to start small, in an ordinary, simple way. In that sense, meditating is like collecting vegetables from your backyard rather than going to the supermarket to buy them. We just walk out into the garden and collect fresh vegetables and cook them. That is an analogy for the direct, personal, and immediate quality of meditation. It involves simplifying our basic psychology and our basic problems. Simplifying in this case means having no expectations about what you will gain by meditating. You just begin.



It might be best to think of developing mindfulness through meditation as a way of life rather than as a one-shot deal. To benefit from meditation you need more than a taste of it. You need to train yourself over a period of time. Otherwise there will be a lot of unnecessary confusion. So it's important to stick with the practice and follow the instructions that you receive.

The practice as it will be presented in this book is not necessarily more enlightening or promising than other techniques. However, if you stick with this approach and you apply exertion and patience, then regardless of your background or beliefs, you will have a chance to understand yourself better. I should warn you that such understanding might be extremely boring. Also, such understanding might include seeing some things you don't want to see. Nevertheless, we can't reject ourselves before we know who or what we are. So I encourage you to be brave. Please don't chicken out. It won't help to reject yourself—or congratulate yourself. Rather, try to work simply with the technique as it's presented to you in the following chapters.

Meditation is extremely down-to-earth, irritatingly down-to-earth. It can also be demanding. If you stick with it, you will understand things about yourself and others, and you will gain clarity. If you practice regularly and follow this discipline, your experiences won't necessarily be dramatic, but you will have a sense of discovering yourself. Through the down-to-earth practice of meditation you can see the colors of your own existence. The earth begins to speak to you rather than heaven sending you messages, so to speak.

I personally learned something from this practice. This is not intended as a testimonial, but I want to share with you how I have benefited personally from the practice of meditation. In [chapter 3](#) I will give you instruction in the technique of meditation as I learned it myself.

Meditation as I was taught it has several stages. The first stage is the development of basic mindfulness, which you can practice in a group or individually. At the beginning, this practice helps you to develop mindfulness by teaching you to pay attention to your breath, your ordinary breathing. When you're running around, you may get out of breath. Then, when you stop and sit down, the first thing you do is to try to regain your breath. At that point, you pay attention to your breathing. Or if you want to relax, you sit in a comfortable chair and say, "Phew." So breathing is part of what we naturally

associate with both exertion and relaxation. In [chapter 3](#) we will talk specifically about how to work with your breath in the practice of meditation.

The technique of mindfulness meditation is associated with the development of peace. In fact, we might call it peaceful-living meditation. Peace here doesn't mean a state without war. It has nothing to do with politics. Here we are talking about peace as nonaction. Say we are having an intense time with some situation in life, such as our relationship with a friend, with our parents, or with our business. When we step back from the intensity, we might also sit down and say, "Phew!" Peace is that kind of flopping down. But please don't misunderstand what I'm saying. In the practice of meditation, you can't get this kind of peace without applying discipline and exertion.

Mindfulness is a specific and almost eccentric application of effort. It is like building a staircase. Making a set of stairs requires a precise measurement of the boards, so that the steps are built properly. All the angles must be carefully measured and cut, and the right nails must be used and hammered in precisely. The staircase has to bear the weight of people walking up it. We might ask: a staircase to what? At this point, the destination doesn't really matter. Just building the staircase is good, with no promise and no blame. Let us simplify the situation. Let us build this staircase very simply and directly. That is the essence of mindfulness.

Meditation can be a rather demanding process, but it is a very joyful situation, because we have the conviction that we are going to help ourselves by relying on our own effort and abilities. In that way, celebration is the heart of the practice of meditation.

When you begin to practice meditation, you may find yourself asking a lot of questions. You may ask yourself, "Is this going to work? Am I doing the technique correctly? Am I making mistakes?" As we continue to practice, we relax and go along with it more fully. Many of these concerns start to seem less relevant. The practice speaks for itself.

As time goes on, however, we may discover a whole new level of questioning. We may find ourselves creating elaborate intellectual, psychological, emotional, or sociological preoccupations for ourselves while we meditate. We find ourselves looking, questioning, lying back, analyzing, and trying to make sure. We will look at many of these responses and at how they can be worked with. However, you may also be encouraged to suspend

those questions, especially when you are first learning the practice of meditation. When you suspend such concerns, your practice can be a simple statement that is direct and deliberate.

The basic point of mindfulness is this deliberateness. You are actually doing something. You are getting into the process, without needing to make sure that what you're doing is okay. We can discuss the philosophical and metaphysical aspects later on. For now, let us simply begin to make friends with ourselves.

## TWO

### *Discovering Our Capacity to Love*

BEFORE PRESENTING THE DETAILS of the technique of meditation practice and explaining how it leads to mindfulness—before we even begin to meditate—I'd like to look at our mentality. We often approach life as though we were defending ourselves from an attack. Many of us, when we were growing up, were frequently reprimanded in ways that made us feel bad about ourselves. Whether the criticism came from our parents, a teacher at school, or someone else, it tended to reinforce a feeling that there was something wrong with us. Criticism often produced a feeling of isolation, a feeling of *you* and *me*, separated by a great divide. We learned many defense mechanisms at an early age, thinking that a good defense would be the best protection from further reproach. We have continued this approach as adults. Whether it's a confrontation with a stranger on the street or an argument with our partner in the bedroom, we believe that we need good excuses to explain ourselves and good logic to defend ourselves. We behave almost as though we were professional negotiators, our own little lawyers.

In Western psychology, some approaches stress the importance of reinforcing ego to enhance self-esteem. We may misinterpret this to mean that we should promote ourselves at the expense of others. A person may become very self-centered with this attitude. It is like you are saying to the world, "Don't you know who I am? I am what I am. If I'm attacked for that, that's too bad. I'm on the side of the right." You feel justified in what you're doing, as if you had God on your side, or at least law and order on your side.

When we're first learning these techniques for self-defense, our logic may be somewhat feeble, but eventually we become powerful and convincing negotiators for ourselves. The whole process is based on one-upmanship. This sort of self-justification may be quite successful, but it is very aggressive.

We learn to apply this approach throughout much of our lives. We try to gain the upper hand with everyone, from university registrars to our boss at work. When we join an organization that collects dues, we might try to negotiate our way out of paying them. Maybe a few things are not negotiable, such as the price of a movie ticket, but if we don't like the movie, we'll try to get our money back. We try to negotiate everything in life to get the best deal for ourselves. It can become the basis for even our most intimate relationships: raising our children and dealing with our spouses, relatives, and friends.

Much of this goes back to our education and upbringing. We're still afraid that we'll be criticized or we'll fail if we don't assert ourselves. On some level we worry that we won't be functional if we aren't assertive. We might not be able to brush our teeth or comb our hair properly. We might never leave the house if we don't pump ourselves up.

Perhaps we should reexamine these assumptions, to see what really works. We need to investigate whether it's beneficial to build ourselves up, especially to do so by putting others down. We need to seriously question what is harmful and what is beneficial. In my own experience, I have found that employing a self-centered approach and being constantly on the defensive are not helpful.

Rather than reinforcing our "me-ness" and justifying ourselves constantly, we should base our lives on something more powerful and trustworthy. If we develop real trust in ourselves, constant self-defense is no longer required. That may sound good, but what are we going to trust in ourselves? To begin with, we need to conduct another examination. We need to look within ourselves. When we look, what do we see? Ask yourself: is there something worthwhile and trustworthy in me? Of course there is! But it's so simple that we tend to miss it or discount it. When we look into ourselves, we tend to fixate on our neurosis, restlessness, and aggression. Or we might fixate on how wonderful, accomplished, and invulnerable we are, but those feelings are usually superficial, covering up our insecurities. Take a look.

There is something else, something more than all that. We are *willing*: willing to wait, willing to smile, willing to be decent. We shouldn't discount that potential, that powerful seed of gentleness. Even the most vicious animals possess natural affection and gentleness for their young. That element of gentleness exists in every being. We don't have to be embarrassed about it or try to hide it. We don't need to cast ourselves as bad boys and girls or as heroines or tough guys. We can afford to acknowledge and cultivate gentleness and, first of all, to treat *ourselves* better. If we don't appreciate ourselves, we have no ground to work with ourselves.

The alternative is extending aggression, arrogance, and resentment—to our parents, our teachers, our relatives, our colleagues, our employees, our friends, and our lovers. The whole world seems full of thorns that cover the ground around us, and poisonous fumes are everywhere. Aggression is blind. Whenever there's a blind spot produced by your aggression, you don't see anything. Then, no appreciation or friendship is possible.

When you don't accept yourself, you often feel that you have to lie and scheme in your self-defense. Once you start lying, you have to remember which lie you told to which person. But if you've told hundreds of lies, it takes a lot of energy to keep them straight, which puts a huge strain on you. It's neither effective nor maintainable in the long run. Eventually, you get caught in your own web of lies.

There is a much simpler way. If you decide to buy a shirt, you go to a store and pick one out on the basis of the cut, the fabric, the size, and the pattern. If the shirt fits, you generally feel good in it. Your new clothes feel clean and fresh. They don't come with dirt on them. Everything in life comes that way, without any need for logic to defend it. You might have trouble seeing this sometimes, but you yourself are also fine—excellent, in fact. Rather than deceiving other people and, more important, deceiving yourself, you can be as you are, which is more than good enough. It is worth appreciating ourselves, having affection for ourselves, and taking care of ourselves. Genuineness, goodness, and appreciation are extraordinary gifts. Ultimately, that is where we place our trust. This truth is so true that we don't have to pretend at all. It is real.

Every one of us is capable of loving ourselves. We are also capable of falling in love. We are capable of kissing our loved ones. We are capable of

extending our arm to shake hands. We may offer a meal to someone, welcoming him or her to the table, saying, “Hello. How are you?” We are capable of these simple things. We’ve been performing such ordinary acts of kindness for a long time. Generally we don’t make a big deal about this capability, but in some sense we should. We should celebrate or at least acknowledge our capacity for simple acts of generosity and gentleness. They are the real thing, and in the end they are much more powerful and transformative than aggression, egomania, and hatred.

When you appreciate yourself, you realize that you don’t have to feel wretched or condemned. You don’t have to artificially puff yourself up, either. You discover your basic dignity, which comes along with gentleness. You have always possessed this, but you may never have recognized it before. You don’t have to be an egomaniac to appreciate yourself. In fact, you appreciate yourself more when you are free of the ugliness of that egotism, which is actually based on self-hatred.

Look in the mirror. Appreciate yourself. You look beautiful in a simple, humble way. When you choose your clothes, when you comb your hair, when you take a shower, you are expressing an element of complete and fundamental goodness, wakefulness, and decency. There is an alternative to feeling condemned. You actually can make friends with yourself.

This friendship with yourself is the basis, and the goal, of the practice of meditation. Meditation helps us to develop mindfulness and awareness, which allow us to gain another dimension of understanding ourselves. This makes us better friends to ourselves and to our world. Even before meditating, however, we can cultivate basic kindness toward ourselves. Without it, we have no way to move forward.

When I was first studying in Tibet, I sometimes thought that my tutors were trying to make me into a charlatan, a fake wise man, because what I was studying seemed divorced from my experience. However, when I received meditation instruction from my teacher and started to practice meditation myself, things began to make sense. I began to realize that there was something real that I could connect with. My experience and I myself were part of the teaching that I was receiving, rather than my only being taught something abstract from a book. Here, in this volume, I have tried to present an approach that reflects this understanding of the personal nature of

meditation practice. I hope that you will have a similar experience in your own practice of meditation.



### THREE

## *How to Meditate*

IF YOU ARE GOING TO MAKE BREAD, you need both flour and water for the dough. The practice of meditation is like the water, while your daily mindfulness and awareness, or your practice of mindfulness in action, is like the flour. To make the dough you combine the two. In this book, meditation is our starting point. Later on we will talk more about applying mindfulness in everyday life and about how meditation and the postmeditation situations work together.

### ATTITUDE

The basis for the practice of meditation is appreciation. Every breath we take is a gift, naturally pure and good. We appreciate every pebble in the riverbed, every apple on the tree. Ordinary activities are in themselves powerful and worth appreciating. From this point of view, there is no such thing as a contaminated or polluted situation. When we begin to view the world in this way, seeing every situation as part of a natural process, we bring this attitude to our practice of meditation. We see meditation as a process of natural evolution rather than seeing it as a highlight or something extraordinary.

We might say that the practice of meditation is a process of developing faith—not faith in something greater or beyond, but having faith in the immediate situation. We have faith and trust in the activity of meditation itself. Our approach is not frivolous at all. We are here to practice meditation, not to indulge ourselves.

## **TAKING YOUR SEAT**

With that attitude you take your seat in meditation in an ordinary but deliberate way. As you approach your seat, you should feel that it's good, trustworthy. You should arrange your chair or your meditation cushion carefully. If the space has already been arranged for you, check to be sure that your chair or cushion is in the right spot and that you have what you need, including extra cushions or things of that nature. Then sit down and experience yourself sitting there. Every time you sit down to practice, it should begin in the same way, with an attitude of appreciation.

How you sit down and begin your practice is very telling. Sometimes when you go into a restaurant, you storm through the door. There's a sign that says, "Seat yourself." You can sit wherever you like. You walk to your table with a garish swagger and sit down with a big plop. Hopefully, the chair or the booth doesn't collapse under you. You slump in your seat, and as you look at the menu, you blot out the world completely.

Taking your seat in meditation is quite different. You choose your spot with respect. You bend down gently to sit on your cushion or chair, keeping that sense of respect. As soon as you put your weight on the seat, you feel that good posture is possible, and almost automatically you are inspired to sit up straight.

When you are meditating, whether you are alone or sharing the space with others, you always hold your seat properly. Then you feel that you are doing the practice with dignity. When you sit down to meditate, you are making a connection with the earth, whether you sit in a chair or on a cushion. It's almost as if a message is coming from the earth, encouraging you to hold your seat properly.

## **POSTURE**

Posture is very important in the practice of meditation. This is equally true in everyday life, whether you are meditating or not. You may be driving a car, sitting in your living room, or reading a magazine in the dentist's waiting room. Your posture should always reflect an uplifted presence, wherever you take a seat.

Your posture in meditation can actually produce a psychological change in you. You begin to understand that your purpose is already accomplished, just by taking the posture of wakefulness. In a certain sense there's nothing more to do! You don't need a future goal. You can accomplish your goal on the spot, simply by sitting with good posture.

### *Posture in a Chair*

When you practice meditation, you can sit in a chair or you can sit on a cushion on the floor. If you sit in a chair, your feet should touch the ground, or you should put a cushion under your feet. This provides a sense of touching the earth or being grounded, having some foundation for your posture. Also, if possible your knees should be slightly lower than your thighs. Depending on the chair, you may need to sit farther forward or you may need a cushion under part of your bottom. If you can, sit up straight so that your back is not leaning against the back of the chair. This will give you a more upright posture and will place less strain on your back and neck. It's also better not to use armrests unless absolutely necessary. You want your arms to be able to hang loosely from your shoulders.

### *Posture on a Cushion*

When you sit on a meditation cushion, you cross your legs very simply. Your knees don't have to touch the ground, but it's helpful if they are at least slightly lower than your thighs. Otherwise, it causes a lot of strain on your lower back, and it's difficult to maintain an upright posture. If you find it difficult to lower your knees below the thighs, you probably need a higher cushion.

Once you have taken your seat and adjusted your legs, you straighten your back, not to the extreme but in a deliberate fashion. If you usually have a tendency to hunch over—which could give you a hunched outlook—in meditation you may find that you can straighten up. You sit well balanced in the middle of your seat, not leaning too far forward or back. You feel that you are sitting up straight, almost as though there were a thread attached to the top of your head, which tugs on your head if you aren't sitting up straight and

encourages you to sit upright. At the same time, you have a slight concave curve in your lower spine, which helps you to have a solid base where your hips and buttocks touch the cushion. You relax your belly. Your shoulders and your neck are also relaxed but held beautifully in place, so that there is no strain. You tuck your chin in just a little bit.

The quality of your posture in meditation is similar to how you might hold yourself if you were going to ask someone to marry you. Your approach would be semirelaxed, friendly, and slightly seductive, but also somewhat formal. That's how your posture should be here.

I've noticed that when people see something very interesting or exciting in a movie, they all sit up with perfect posture. When the movie gets even slightly dull and uninteresting, people begin to slump and do all kinds of things with their hands and feet. But at first they have perfect posture. In meditation, we should feel like the moviegoer at the beginning of an engrossing scene. It is happening, it is your life, you are sitting up, and you are breathing. It is personal and direct. You are sitting upright, and with your head and shoulders you assume a dignified posture. Posture is extremely important.

## *Placing Your Hands*

Whether you are sitting in a chair or on a meditation cushion on the ground, your hands should rest lightly but deliberately, palms down, on your thighs, a little bit above or just touching your knees. Placing your hands is a statement of deliberateness, and it, too, brings a feeling of dignity. This is sometimes called the mind-relaxing posture. Your hands are somewhat open—not clenched—and your fingers are not held tightly together. There's a little space between them. The tips of your fingers are a little ways back from the bend in your knees. You want your arms to be relaxed, not pulled forward nor held too close to your hips. You may have to experiment to find the right spot to place your hands.

## *Gaze*

Your eyes are open, but you are looking somewhat down, about four to six feet in front of you. A traditional description is that you look ahead as if you were holding a plow yoked to a team of oxen.<sup>1</sup>

Your eyes might even be half closed, so that they're relaxed, but it is not a spaced-out approach. You are just there, looking ahead with an attitude that combines humility and positive pride, if you can imagine that.

Sometimes if you pay too much attention to visual details and colors, you develop tightness in your neck and a headache. In ordinary life we walk and move and look around quite a lot, so the whole process is balanced. In this case, you sit without moving around. Often there's not much noise, either, so everything is concentrated visually. This may result in visual tension, which can become a problem. The idea is not to focus too intently on the visual situation, but just to open your eyes without focusing too precisely on anything. Your gaze should be somewhat soft. In your practice you can experiment and discover for yourself what this means.

## *Mouth and Tongue*

When I was at the dentist recently, she encouraged me not to grind my teeth and not to hold my jaw too tightly. She gave me a technique to help with this, which is to rest your tongue on the roof of your mouth. That coincides with the approach we take in meditation. The instructions for meditation encourage you to open your mouth slightly when you meditate, which helps you to relax. If you rest your tongue on the roof of your mouth, you can relax your whole face and jaw. You aren't clenching your jaw. The tip of the tongue is lightly placed on the roof of your mouth, just behind your teeth. That way your mouth is relaxed. Your mouth is slightly open, as though you were saying the syllable "ah."

## **MINDFULNESS OF BREATH**

Once you establish your seat, all the aspects of your physical posture help you to focus your mind on the breath. Having a good seat and good posture almost automatically brings mindfulness of the breath.

The ground beneath you is solid and it supports you. Once you settle in your seat, the main thing that is happening is your breathing and a unified sense of your body and its systems all working together. Everything falls into place, into its *real* place. It feels so good. You find that you fit perfectly into the jigsaw puzzle of the awakened world. There is no struggle or artificiality involved. The situation feels good and precise—almost ideal.

Your breath is constantly going in and out. You can feel yourself inhaling and exhaling through your mouth and your nostrils. Just pay attention to your breath, your natural breath. It might be rough or deep if you had to run to get to the meditation hall. Or your breathing might be quite shallow. It doesn't really matter. Just feel your existing natural breathing. Sit quietly and listen to your breathing. To begin with, just listen to it. In that way you can settle down for a few minutes.

When you feel a little familiar with the breath, without straining too much, put your attention on the out-breath. Go out with the out-breath. Out-breath is an experience of the life force. In the Lamaze method of natural childbirth, they talk about breathing out and letting go as you are giving birth. This is a similar approach. The out-breath in meditation is like giving birth to the universe. You just let go.

You follow the out-breath very simply. Go along with it. Don't particularly try to feel the temperature of the breath in your nostrils or anything like that. Just breathe out, and as your breath goes out, you go out, very simply.

Then you are automatically willing to breathe in. You breathe out, and then you have a gap. Without extra effort, you will breathe in naturally. When you look at a beautiful flower, you take in what you see, and then eventually you blink. That's like the gap at the end of the outbreath, which goes along with how you perceive your world. You project out, you perceive something, and then you give yourself a break: you blink. The break allows your brain to sort out and integrate your perceptions.<sup>2</sup> So the whole process is project, perceive, and take a break. That's how we experience our phenomenal world altogether.

Don't try to be too rigid and solemn about working with the breath. Keep everything simple and to the minimum. Working with the breath is a straightforward practice that is direct, real, and also revealing. You are simply being there.

## WORKING WITH THOUGHTS

When you are in that space, holding your posture and following your breath, your mind will start to raise its own questions: “Now what? What does this mean? What does that mean?” When all those questions arise, you are reacting to hearing the sound of emptiness resounding in your mind. It is empty in the sense that there is no content in meditation. I’m not speaking literally about hearing a sound but about a reaction to slowing down and emptying out.

Your reaction, or the echo of emptiness, may take the form of anticipation, anxiety, or questioning. You are sitting without an object, without an agenda. You have nothing to do. Your mind begins to question what is going on because it’s not used to the stillness. It will start to manufacture all kinds of entertainment.

You begin to realize that you have all sorts of thought patterns. What are you going to do about those? So many thoughts of past, present, and future will arise in your practice of meditation: thoughts about your life, your future plans, conversations with your friends and your relatives, all sorts of self-conscious gossip.

Let all these things come through. Let them just come through. Don’t try to say whether they are bad or for that matter whether they are particularly good. Just let them come through, as simply as you can. That approach brings a sense of openness. You don’t find your thoughts threatening or particularly helpful. They just become the general gossip, the traffic of your thoughts. If you live in a city, you hear the traffic coming through your windows: there goes a motorcycle, there goes a truck. There goes a car, and then there’s somebody shouting. At the beginning you might get involved in or distracted by the noise, but then you begin to think, so what?

Similarly, the traffic of your thoughts and the verbosity of your mind are merely part of the basic chatter that goes on in the universe. Let it go through. You relate to sound, smell, sight, and every experience that you have in the sensorial world with exactly the same mindful approach. You see things simply and directly. You’re just there, with them and with your breathing.

### *Labeling Thinking*

It doesn't matter what comes up. You don't have to analyze anything when you are meditating. You can simply maintain your dignified posture and pay attention to your breath. The technique is that you look at the thoughts as they arise and say to yourself, "Thinking." Whatever goes through your mind is purely thinking, not mystical experience. Label it thinking and come back to your breath.

So you are there. You are thinking. You don't try to get away from your thoughts, but you don't stick with them or encourage them either. Thought patterns are just ripples on the surface of the pond. They come and they go. They merge into each other, and you take the attitude that they are not a big deal.

## *Aches and Pains*

Bodily aches and pains and physical irritations also come and go. They may seem more problematic than your thoughts. But in meditation practice you regard physical sensations as also thought patterns. Label them thinking. Aches, pains, pins and needles—all thinking. This keeps everything simple and straightforward, so that you can appreciate everything as part of one natural process. There might be a loud noise outside, the sound of a train, traffic, or a jet engine. For that matter, you might be sweating or you might feel cold and chilled. It's all thinking, from this point of view.

When you begin to simplify everything in this way, it allows you to relax. However, often you come up with further complaints. You probably know the story of the princess and the pea. She couldn't sleep because there was a pea under her mattress. You may have a similar experience when you are meditating. You might think there is a little metal ball stuck in your cushion or on your chair that is causing you a lot of pain. Or you feel as if someone is sticking a knife between your shoulder blades. All kinds of discomforts arise. It doesn't matter. The discomfort comes and goes. Just be precise, label it thinking, and return to the breath.

If you take this too far, you could strain your leg, your back, or some other part of your body. So don't ignore the discomfort entirely. Rearrange your posture if it is necessary; it's good to do that at some point. But at the same time it's a thinking process, so relate to it as a thinking process.



## **IRRITATION AND EXERTION**

Even though everything is quite simple and straightforward in the practice of meditation, you are still likely to develop irritation. You are getting the best of the best, but you still think that there is something better, something more. It can be very frustrating. At that point, you need to apply exertion. You have to stick with what you have already. You can't ask for more. There's nothing more to give you, in any case! So you have to be content with what you have.

## **GROUP SITTING**

Many people will receive their initial instruction in a group and may begin their practice of meditation in a group setting. One very helpful thing about practicing meditation with others is that it shows you that you can actually sit for a longer period of time than you imagined. Sitting with a group encourages you to keep going. You find that you can do the meditation, and you can enjoy it, even when it's difficult! When you meditate with a group, the length of the session will be determined for you. Many groups schedule daily or weekly meditation sessions for the same set period of time: twenty minutes, half an hour, forty minutes, or an hour.

I have found that during group retreats of several hours, days, or weeks, it can be helpful to vary the length of the meditation sessions. Not always knowing the length of the sessions can also be good training for you. For example, you might know that you will be practicing meditation from 9 a.m. until noon at your group retreat, but you don't necessarily know how long each meditation session will be. Sometimes you will sit for only fifteen minutes. Other times you might meditate for an hour. This unpredictability encourages you to sit with fewer expectations, and it will help you find out just what your expectations are.

## **SITTING BY YOURSELF**

### *Daily Practice*

If you meditate by yourself, especially when you are trying to establish or maintain a daily meditation practice, it's helpful to have a set time to meditate, usually at the beginning or the end of your day. It's also helpful to have a separate space for meditation in your home or workplace, if you can. The length of your meditation session may vary from day to day, and the length of time may have a lot to do with family and work obligations. If you can only set aside ten or fifteen minutes a day to sit, start with that. You may find that you can set aside more time on the weekends or when you have time off of work. Although the amount of time you sit from day to day may vary, before you start your session each day, it's important to decide how long you're going to sit, and keep to that. If you don't give yourself a set goal, you might give up after five minutes. So decide before you start how long you're going to sit. If you have a meditation instructor, you can also discuss your daily sitting practice with him or her, and come up with a plan to increase the amount you practice each week. Or if you don't have an instructor, you can make your own plan to start with fifteen minutes a day and work up to an hour.

### *Personal Retreats*

You can also do an "in-house" retreat by yourself, where you set aside part of a day or a longer period of time that you can devote to sitting practice. Before you start your retreat, you can write out a schedule for your meditation sessions. If you do an in-house retreat for several days, you can also include meal breaks, readings, and free time in your predetermined schedule. It's good to push yourself a little, in terms of how long you sit, but don't be too ambitious. Be kind to yourself! This is usually something you would only do after you have been practicing meditation for some time.

There is more information on group meditation practice throughout this book. See especially [chapter 16, "Touch and Go."](#) For a discussion of personal and group retreats in relationship to aloneness, see [chapter 7, "Rhinoceros and Parrot."](#)

Altogether, meditation teaches us that we can handle ourselves—our bodies and our minds—properly. Meditating in this way is thoroughly enjoyable. For the first time we are doing something real, something that is totally free from deception.

---

1. In this day and age, your eyes would be at a similar level as for pushing a Rototiller, a baby stroller, or a lawn mower.

2. Chögyam Trungpa seemed to be anticipating modern developments with these comments on blinking. In January 2013, researchers at Osaka University in Japan reported findings that suggest that “blinking does more than stop our eyes drying out: it is an active process that causes the brain to go off-line, into a more reflective mode, before giving renewed attention.” See Catharine Paddock, “Blinking Causes Brain to Go Off-Line,” *MNT (Medical News Today)*, January 3, 2013 ([www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/254543.php](http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/254543.php)).

## FOUR

### *The Teddy Bear of Breath*

THE PRACTICE OF MEDITATION is a process of taming and training. This does not mean immediately calming ourselves or curing our problems. This process is more like training a wild horse or plowing very rocky, hard soil. We should expect lots of challenges, and we have to be willing to go through the whole process.

In order to tame ourselves, body and mind have to be synchronized. First, when you meditate cross-legged on the ground or upright in your chair with a straight back, the body becomes much more workable. Then, once the body has assumed this posture, we have to convince the mind to go along with it. Mind is basically restless and uncertain. So there is a tendency for our minds to shift around a great deal, jumping from one thought to the next.

When this happens, the best way to tame the mind is to give it a toy. The best toy we can provide is something that is similar to the mind. It's not mind itself, but it feels familiar to the mind, almost like a portrait of it. It is like giving a child a doll or a teddy bear, which is small and cuddly and somewhat like the child. It's not too big nor too small, and you can take it to bed with you, or you can throw it around and play with it. You can dress it up and have a tea party with it. It's like an image of yourself, almost like a surrogate.

In meditation, the teddy bear is your breath. Just like the mind, your breathing is by no means still. Of necessity it is somewhat restless. Once you breathe out, you have to breathe in. Once you breathe in, you have to breathe out. That restlessness is similar to how our mind operates, constantly looking

for alternatives, constantly generating content. Breathing has a very similar energy to the way the mind operates.

So this toy of breathing is given to the mind. I was taught that only about 25 percent of your concentration should be put on the breath when you're meditating. This is just a rough estimate, so please don't fixate on the percentage. The point is that in this approach, working with breath is just touching the highlights of the breathing. You don't remain completely one with it all the time.

This is very much like a child playing with her teddy bear. When the child is restless or unhappy, she is cheered up by her teddy bear. Then she once again becomes interested in other things. However, there is always something to come back to—her teddy bear. That is your breath.

Putting more attention on the out-breath, which I recommend, is like going down a slide. You slide down, and then you have to walk around and climb the stairs back up the slide, and then you can slide down again. Going down the slide is similar to riding the breath out. When you finish your ride, there's a gap, and you breathe in, which is like climbing back up the slide. Then you ride the breath out again, and there's another gap. This process occurs over and over.

Breathing occupies the mind quite easily. Out and in and in and out happen constantly. Breathing also encourages you to step beyond the emphasis on the body. Your out-breath takes you out into the world. Then naturally you breathe in. Then you want to step out again into the world, so you breathe out. There is a constant process of going in and out. In my tradition this is known as mixing mind and breath together.

The practice of mindfulness meditation is also a way to sharpen your mind. In many cases we are so stunned by the speed and the demands of reality that our minds have become dull. We have lost a lot of our mind's precision, and our perception is somewhat foggy and unclear. Our mental faculties have been overused, overtaxed. Jumping back and forth with thoughts of all kinds and trying to integrate a million thoughts at once makes us numb.

The practice of meditation helps to sharpen our minds and allows us to see and experience things much more directly, by going along with the breathing and getting extraordinarily bored. There is nothing else happening when you practice, other than your breath and your body and the flickering of thoughts

and visual entertainment. Even those flickers eventually become somewhat uninteresting.

When the mind has no outside entertainment, interestingly enough, it becomes much sharper. If a child only has one toy, just one teddy bear, then he will know it from top to bottom, from outside to inside. He will completely investigate and memorize the look and feel of every inch of that toy. If you entertain him with hundreds of toys, he'll lose interest in all of them. He'll become cranky and demanding and throw tantrums. So having one thing at a time is better.

When a person begins to work with the out-breath, without any other entertainments, the connection between mind and body becomes very real. Your mind becomes precise and sharp.

The out-breath is like a whetstone, and the mind is like the knife or sword that is being sharpened on that stone. When you sharpen a knife, you draw the blade of the knife across the sharpening stone. Following your out-breath is like drawing the blade of mind across the breath. Then you breathe in, which is like bringing the knife blade back so that you can draw it across the stone again. You always sharpen the blade in the same direction, which is like placing the emphasis on the out-breath over and over again.

When you sharpen a knife, you need a light touch. If you put too much pressure or incorrect pressure on the knife when you draw it across the stone, you may actually dull the blade. Similarly, in working with the breath, trying too hard to stick with mindfulness of breathing can result in feeling hypnotized by the breath or alternatively feeling unable to follow the breath at all. This is one reason that the recommendation is to place only 25 percent of your attention on the breath. You need that kind of light touch to sharpen the mind.

Working with mind, body, and breath in this way is training ourselves in mindfulness. We sometimes think that being mindful means being critical of ourselves and very watchful. We think that meditation provides us with a big brother who is going to watch over us or whip us into shape if we do something wrong. But mindfulness practice is not about punishing yourself when you lose track of your breath or your thoughts. Mindfulness does not criticize or set conditions for you. Nor is it about rewarding you. Rather, it is

helping you to discover the alertness that already exists in your mind, by dispelling the dullness that has covered it up.

Working with the breath in your practice of meditation is very important training. It might seem insignificant at first. We might say, “Who doesn’t know how to breathe? What’s the big deal?” However, sharpening our minds through working with our breathing develops tremendous precision. We often say that meditation practice is about the development of peace. By peace, we mean this experience of being precisely on the dot, which cools down the jumpiness of our minds and the heat of our emotional neurosis. Experiencing this precision is analogous to sitting under a waterfall and letting a cool mountain stream pour onto us, washing away our dirt and sweat. We need to take this shower and relate with the water pouring onto our body from head to toe. That is how we develop peace in meditation.

## FIVE

### *Cool Boredom*

IN EVERYDAY LIFE, we habitually try to conceal the gaps in our experience of mind and body. These gaps are a bit like an awkward silence around the table at a dinner party. A good host is supposed to keep the conversation going with his or her guests, to put them at ease. You might talk about the weather or the latest books you've read or what you are serving for dinner. We treat ourselves similarly. We occupy ourselves with subconscious chatter because we are uncomfortable with any gaps in our conversation with ourselves.

The purpose of the practice of meditation is to experience the gaps. We do nothing, essentially, and see what that brings—either discomfort or relief, whatever the case may be. The starting point for the practice of meditation is the mindfulness discipline of developing peace. The peace we experience in meditation is simply this state of doing nothing, which is experiencing the absence of speed.

Often, in considering the practice of meditation, the question arises as to what you are meditating *on*. In this approach, meditation has no object. You do work with your body, your thoughts, and your breath, but that is different from concentrating wholeheartedly on one thing. Here, you are not meditating upon anything; you are simply being present in a simple way.

The practice works with what is immediately available to you. You have your experience of being alive; you have a mind and you have a body. So you work with those things. You also work with whatever is going through your mind, whatever the content is, whatever the current issues are, whether painful or pleasurable. Whatever you are experiencing, that's where you



begin. You also use your breath, which is part of the body and is also affected by mind. Breathing expresses the fact that you are alive. If you're alive, you breathe. The technique is basic and direct: you pay heed to breath. You don't try to use the mindfulness of the breathing to entertain yourself, but you use the mindfulness of breathing to simplify matters.

You develop mindfulness of the rising and falling of the breath. You go along with the process of breathing. In particular, you go along with each exhalation. As the breath goes out, you go out with it. And when the out-breath dissolves, you feel that you are also dissolving. The in-breath is a gap, a space, and then you breathe out again. So there is a constant sense of going out and slowing down.

At the beginning, the technique may be somewhat fascinating, but it quickly becomes boring. You get tired of sitting and breathing, doing nothing again and again and again—and again. You may feel like an awkward fool. It is so uninteresting. You might resent having gotten yourself into this situation. You might also resent the people who encouraged you to do this. You may feel completely foolish, as if the cosmos were mocking you.

Then, as you relax a little bit, you start to call up past experiences, memories of your life as well as your emotions, your aggression and passion. Now you have a private cinema show, and you can review your autobiography while you sit. Then, after a while, you might come back to your breath, thinking that you should try to be a good child and apply the technique.

In meditation we have the opportunity to meet ourselves, to see ourselves clearly for the first time. We have never met ourselves properly or spent this kind of time with ourselves before. Of course, we take time for ourselves; we go off to the country or the ocean for a vacation. But we always find things to do on vacation. We make little handicrafts or we read something. We cook, we talk, we take a walk, or we swim. We never just sit with ourselves. It's a difficult thing to do.

The practice of meditation is not merely hanging out with ourselves, however. We are accomplishing something by being there properly, within the framework of the technique. The technique is simple enough that it doesn't entertain us. In fact, the technique may begin to fall away at some point. As we become more comfortable with ourselves and develop more understanding of ourselves, our application of the technique becomes less

heavy-handed. The technique almost seems unnecessary. In the beginning we need the technique, like using a crutch to help us walk when we're injured. Then, once we can walk without it, we don't need the crutch. In meditation it is similar. In the beginning we are very focused on the technique, but eventually we may find that we are just there, simply there.

At that point, we may think that the efficient system we've organized around our practice is breaking down. It can be disconcerting, but it's also refreshing. We sense that there is more to us than our habitual patterns. We have more in us than our bundles of thoughts, emotions, and upheavals. There's something behind this whole facade. We discover the reservoir of softness within ourselves.

At that point, we begin to truly befriend ourselves, which allows us to see ourselves much more honestly. We can see both aspects, not just the bright side of the picture, how fantastic and good we are, but also how terrible we are. Good and bad somehow don't make much difference at this point. It all has one flavor. We see it all.

As your sympathy toward yourself expands, you begin to appreciate and enjoy simply being with yourself, being alone. Or at least you are not as irritated with yourself as you used to be! As you become ever more familiar with yourself, you find that you can actually put up with yourself without complaint—which you have never done before. Your thought patterns, subconscious gossip, and all of your mind's chatter become much less interesting. In fact, you begin to find them all very boring. However, this is slightly different than our normal experience of boredom, because behind the boredom, or even within it, you feel something refreshing: cool boredom. You're bored to death, bored to tears, but it is no longer claustrophobic. The boredom is cooling, refreshing, like the water from a cold mountain stream.

Hot boredom is like being locked in a padded cell. You are bored, miserable, and irritated. You will probably experience lots of that in your meditation practice. Beyond that, however, with cool boredom, you don't feel imprisoned. Cool boredom is quite spacious, and it creates further softness and sympathy toward ourselves. In that space, we are no longer afraid of allowing ourselves to experience a gap. In other words, we realize that existence does not depend on constantly cranking up our egomaniacal machine. There is another way of existing.

## SIX

# *Gentleness*

THE PRACTICE OF MEDITATION allows us to experience the depth of our heart. We discover that our basic being contains gentleness, kindness, and softness. There is a need for such gentleness throughout life. It allows us to be kind to ourselves and to relate openly with others.

Especially if you meditate intensively over a long period of time, you might feel very sad at times, for no particular reason. The process of breathing out, dissolving, and being mindful while you maintain a good seat brings a feeling of sadness and aloneness. You might end up shedding a tear on your meditation cushion. You feel vulnerable and raw. The more you sit, the more you experience this kind of sadness.

Externally you maintain your posture, but inside you begin to dissolve and become like gelatin. You feel jellified and droopy all over. That is a good sign—fantastic, actually. When we practice meditation, we should feel who and what we are. For the first time, you are experiencing yourself as a thoroughly human being. This is how human beings should feel.

We are nothing but human beings, pure human beings, who possess tenderness in our hearts. At the same time, we feel totally bored: tender and bored. You are a real person, a soft person, but also a bored person who doesn't need neurotic problems to entertain or justify him- or herself.

You feel as if you might dissolve into your chair or your meditation cushion. You might become the best jellyfish, the very best. That softness and droopiness might be regarded as corny or unnecessary, but it's good that we feel that way. That softness is in us already. We have that kind of droopiness

and those jellyfish-like possibilities of being gentle and soft, raw, without skin, without even bone or marrow.

In meditation we continually rediscover ourselves as authentic human beings who are capable of loving ourselves, and others as well. We are finally beginning to subjugate our intense aggression and toughness. The pretense of toughness is finally being resolved, dissolved, jellified. We find that we can also extend this softness and gentleness to the rest of the world. We can extend ourselves to our father, mother, sisters, brothers, our friends, and to the whole world, the world that we usually hate, the world that irritates us so much. When we look at people, we realize that there is no need to be hateful toward anyone. Our tough exterior is dissolved into a compassionate jellyfish, so soothing, so soft.

This realization only comes from the sitting practice of meditation. Holding our posture, following the breath, working with our thoughts: that is the only way. We begin to find our soft spot, our gentleness. This is one of the best types of gentleness the world has ever experienced. That gentleness is called compassion.

When you look around you, you may see signs in harsh neon lights that say, “Come to our restaurant. We serve the best food.” Or “Shop here. You’ll get a great bargain.” You turn on the television, and there are the ads saying, “Get your money’s worth. Only ten dollars.” Statements of this nature pop up all over the place in your life. They try to convince you to buy the latest gadget or indulge in the latest fad, whatever it is. You may be interested, even tempted, but regardless of whether you get sucked in to the latest thing or not, you continue to be soft and gentle in relating to your world. You can work directly with such situations in quite a sane way. You don’t have to buy someone’s aggressive salesmanship. You don’t have to bargain them down. You can work with whatever the world offers, without aggression.

The practice of meditation should not lead to an aggressive approach to life. It also shouldn’t be an endurance contest or a way to prove yourself. It’s not the spiritual version of Outward Bound or of doing pushups. Our approach to meditation has to be ordinary, mundane, and down-to-earth—directly connected to what we do throughout our lives.

To begin with, every aspect of the practice reflects the continual manifestation of gentleness. You begin to realize that the sound of the

meditation bell or timer, to signal the beginning or the end of meditation practice, is the sound of gentleness. Your meditation cushion or the chair that you sit in to meditate is the embodiment of gentleness.

From there, the experience of gentleness begins to affect the rest of your life. Whatever you do in life, you can always find a soft edge, rather than sticking with the hard edges. You find that the entire world is being transformed. In fact, the world stays the same, but you are transformed. And that transforms your experience of the world. It can be done.

From that experience we discover clear vision, perspective, and sharpness, which show us a fresh way to handle the world and relate with our experience as a whole. People think that clarity and brilliance come from having lots of reference points to connect and refer back to. But the truth is that clarity does not need any originator or author at all. Constantly going back and forth between central headquarters and the reference points out in the world makes for a very busy, speedy, and heady journey. It actually makes you dizzy, and then you lose track, in the negative sense. When you drop this drama, it's an extraordinary relief. You don't have to maintain a reference point to your headquarters. You don't have to check back to where you think your mind is coming from. You are left completely loose, open, and fresh. Then there is tremendous clarity, like the sky without clouds. The sun can shine much brighter that way.

This is a personal experience, one that you have to feel before you can fully understand it. However, it is true. It can be done. There can be clarity and brilliance without any reference point, which makes our experience precise, direct, and superior. You are no longer caught up in little problems. You have complete command of the whole situation at that point. It is like rain coming from a cloudless sky. You could actually make rain without having any clouds.

When you have softness and precision at the same time, the lotus of awakened heart is blossoming within you. The lotus always blooms in the mud. You are willing to give birth to this beautiful lotus flower in the muddy waters of your life. For the first time, you realize that you are a candidate to be a wakeful person.

## SEVEN

### *Rhinoceros and Parrot*

SOME OF US PREFER SOLITUDE and individual meditation practice; some of us are drawn to groups. A meditator sitting and practicing meditation alone is like a rhinoceros, which is generally a solitary animal, while a group of meditators practicing together is more like a flock of parrots. These are the two prominent styles of working on oneself in the practice of meditation. Both are valuable, and I would recommend that you combine both approaches, perhaps emphasizing one or the other at various times.

In a sense, rhinoceros and parrot are attitudes that you take, regardless of whether you are practicing alone or with others. When you practice meditation with a group of people, you are still alone. Everybody in the meditation hall is in his or her own little vehicle, which is called a body. There's no room for anybody else in that particular body. Everybody has her own car, her own body—you cannot hitchhike. On the other hand, when you practice by yourself, you are still connected with the community of people who meditate.

You may spend time meditating alone in your home, or you may even do a solitary meditation retreat. A formal solitary retreat can be very valuable, but you need to talk with someone experienced in this kind of retreat practice before you undertake your first retreat. People usually have a meditation teacher who supervises their retreats. It can be a very intense experience, even if you are used to spending time alone.

When you practice alone, it may generate creative energy, and it also generates loneliness. In a solitary retreat, nobody organizes or programs your

life, except you. So there is both freedom and demand. You have to improvise everything for yourself. Being in solitude is like a love affair: sometimes you like it; sometimes you don't like it at all. The echo of aloneness is always there. You have no opportunity, none whatsoever, to indulge in anything. There are no candy stores or movie theaters. You are just being by yourself, just simply being you, at that point.

To develop a real feeling for community, at least in terms of a community of meditators, you need to have experienced loneliness and aloneness. We reject that idea. We don't want to be alone. Being with others makes us feel secure. We want to have someone to call. We always want to have a phone, so that our friends can reach us and we can reach them if we feel isolated.

The point of being alone is not so much to experience nature by appreciating the beauties of the sunrise and the sunset, the chirping of birds, or the diversity of leaves, trees, rocks, and brooks in the countryside. Those things are delightful, of course, but being in retreat or in solitude is just about being alone, completely alone. You can do a solitary retreat in an apartment in the middle of Los Angeles.

You came into this world alone. Newborn babies are quite helpless. It's quite lonely for them. You feed them and change their diapers, you give them love and nurturing, you care for them, but all of that is an expression of loneliness, as far as the baby is concerned. A child is still alone, even with its parents. There is an echo of loneliness when a child calls out: "Mommy, Daddy!" There's an aspect of warmth and love, of course, but when that powerful little voice calls out, "Daddy! Mommy!" that little voice is filled with loneliness.

It's the same thing when you die. You are going to leave this world alone. If you die in a hospital, you may be surrounded by doctors, friends, and relatives. They may be afraid to admit to themselves that you're going to die, let alone to tell you, or they may decide to tell you that you're in bad shape and you might die. All of that is an expression of loneliness, that you are alone.

Of course, other people are also alone and have to go through this, but that doesn't particularly help. You are one single individual experiencing this world. Sharing opinions, attitudes, practices, and all sorts of disciplines with

others is not regarded as security. A group of people working together is still working with aloneness.

This could actually be very promising, but we usually regard it as a problem. When we feel lonely, we try to recruit other people so that we can forget our loneliness. We fall in love, we recruit sympathizers, we read books, we listen to music, we cook a good meal: those are often expressions of rejecting our loneliness. This failure to acknowledge and accept our aloneness is the source of the most fundamental confusion in the world. It keeps confusion spinning: trying to escape from ourselves and not accepting aloneness.

The point of the practice of meditation is to relate to that big problem. Simple aloneness is nondual. Trying to escape from aloneness produces duality. We produce the illusion of something that is *other* than us, so that the other can entertain us constantly.

You don't practice meditation and you don't do a retreat to prove something to yourself or to others. You don't do it to show how committed or macho you are. Some people are very proud of all the retreat practice they do: "I did a retreat for ten days!" "That's nothing. I did three months." "I did a whole year!" "I did four years!" Whatever...So what? Finally, ultimately, we are alone with the echo of our loneliness, so we can't really impress anybody at all. You might report your exertion and your achievement, but no one is really impressed. Your glorious report is still an expression of loneliness. Understanding loneliness as the basic premise of solitary practice is extremely important. You are alone and lonely, and you can't escape from that situation.

Strangely enough, sometimes loneliness is described as union. That might sound hopeful, but in this context union is not about uniting that and this and living happily ever after. In terms of your loneliness, union is about indivisibility. If you are really properly lonely, you might recognize that situations are indivisible. They can't be divided up into this and that or you and other. It's not that everything is one. Everything is zero. That is the realization that comes from experiencing loneliness.

When a lonely person has some acceptance of his or her aloneness, it can actually be very spacious. Then a person can relate directly to other lonely people. Many lonely people are confused because they don't accept aloneness. You can help others to see that loneliness is part of their innate nature, and



you can encourage lonely individuals to get together and create a community that practices meditation together.

At that point, having worked with your own aloneness, you need to join the flock of parrots. In this flock, people don't provide one another with false security. Actually, making friends with other practitioners constantly reminds us of our original loneliness. At least we have that in common! When lonely individuals work together and practice together, it produces enormous energy and vigor, because the energy is not conditioned. It is not about establishing security or ground as such.

Accepting our loneliness and working with it could be very romantic, even heroic. We should appreciate and praise the beauty of being in solitude, whether we are alone with ourselves or alone with others. You can't solve your basic problem of loneliness. It is always there. The good news is that it is the seed of wisdom.

## EIGHT

### *The Present Moment*

ONE OF THE EFFECTS OF MEDITATION is that you become more open-minded, and this gives rise to an interest in working with others. In that way, meditation practice can transform your lifestyle and your relationships with other people. Then, mindfulness practice becomes a reference point in dealing with the rest of the world. So we should look further at how to relate with the experience of everyday life.

Sometimes we talk about the postmeditation experience, which refers to our experience after we meditate. We could say that it extends to our experience of our work life and our home life—the boardroom and the kitchen sink—when that experience is influenced by mindfulness.

Beyond that, by applying mindfulness in postmeditation, or mindfulness in action, you begin to transcend or break down the boundary between meditating and not meditating. The benefits of meditation also begin to help you in your daily life. Daily problems and the pain of daily life may often feel almost poisonous. However, meditative awareness can help you to convert that poison into medicine, the medicine of cheerfulness. You begin to develop the ability to transform difficulties into delight, something delightfully workable. This transformation comes from appreciating your life, including its irritations and challenges.

In order to work with difficulties from a mindful perspective, you need to be present in your life. So it is important not to dwell too much on your memories. You may have good memories or bad ones.

Whatever has occurred, whether pleasurable or painful, you can't reside in that memory, or you will be stuck in the past. The basic thrust is to live in the present situation.

The present is direct and straightforward. Your experience of it is heightened through mindfulness. When you are mindful of your breath in meditation, when you are mindful of your thoughts, or when you are mindful of going from the practice of meditation to dealing with the kitchen sink, all those situations are in the present. You don't borrow ideas from the past, and you don't try to fund-raise from the future. You just stay on the spot, now.

That may be easy to say, but it's not so easy to do. We often find it satisfying to have a reference point to what might happen in the future or what has happened in the past. We feel more relaxed when we can refer to past experiences to inform what is happening now. We borrow from the past and anticipate the future, and that makes us feel secure and cozy. We may think we are living in the present, but when we are preoccupied with past and future, we are blind to the current situation.

Living in the present may seem like quite a foreign idea. What does that even mean? If you have a regular schedule, a nine-to-five job, you cycle through your weekly activities from Monday to Friday, doing what is expected of you and what you expect of yourself. If something out of the ordinary occurs, something that is completely outside of the routine of your Monday-to-Friday world, it can be quite disconcerting.

We are bewildered when something unexpected pops up. A flea jumps on your nose. What should you do? You swat at it or you ignore it if you can. If that doesn't work, then you search for a memory from the past to help you cope. You try to remember how you dealt with the last flea that landed on you. Or you may try to strategize how you'll prevent insects from bothering you in the future. None of that helps much. We can be much more present if we don't pay so much attention to the past or the expectations of the future. Then, we might discover that we can enjoy the present moment, which is always new and fresh. We might make friends with our fleas.

A lot of us find it difficult to make decisions. It seems sensible, responsible, to base our decisions on what happened in the past or what is likely to occur in the future. On the other hand, we would like to be more spontaneous, but the idea of making a decision based on the present moment seems almost

incomprehensible. Looking at the process of decision making may help us to understand how to be in the present moment in everyday life.

I can't tell you exactly how you should make decisions, because it's a very personal thing. I can tell you what I do myself. I wouldn't suggest that you mimic or copy me, particularly, but you might find my approach helpful. When I have to make a decision, I look closely at what is occurring right now, at the very point when I have to make up my mind. The idea is to approach looking at the situation with a complete freshness of mind. After that, consideration and responsibility come into play.

Sometimes people ask my advice. Someone comes to me and asks, "I have this problem. What should I do?" I look at the person's face, at the messenger of the problem and how he or she manifests. I look directly at how the person presents the problem. From that I develop some understanding about what is really going on, on the spot. Only then do I ask the person what the case history of the situation is or what he or she thinks might happen in the future. The past and the future are like the cosmetics, so to speak, on the present situation. Then, when you put all that input together, you make your decision accordingly.

Sometimes, after all that, you still don't have any idea how to proceed. You are still bewildered. You haven't come up with an answer, for yourself or anyone else. If you meet the situation directly, if you engage it and look at it straight on, you will discover some idea of what to do.

Ultimately, decisions don't just come from the present, either. There's another twist, which we call the fourth moment. There is past, present, and future, and then there's the fourth moment, beyond that. It's a gap. Your decisions could actually come from that gap. I suppose this sounds rather esoteric.

When you reach a critical juncture, you ask yourself, "Should I turn right or left? Here I am at the fork in the road." What should you do? If you pay enough attention to that fork in the road, there will be a gap, and you will develop some feeling for how things *are*, and whether you should go left or right. Then, you will develop some feeling for the present situation, and you can also look at the past and the future, to make sure that your decision is a good one. But first, there has to be a direct connection with what is happening

now. Otherwise, if you purely study the case history of the situation, that will lead to failure and bankruptcy in almost every case.

Being in the present, as opposed to living in the past or the future, is an important way that mindfulness helps to clarify the problems that we experience in our everyday lives. Bringing everything into the present allows us to purify or transform our habitual patterns and preconceptions.

Almost every great religious or spiritual tradition has techniques for purifying yourself to overcome problems or difficulties. Some traditions make use of contemplation, meditation, or prayer as forms of purification. Some approaches are based on a physical discipline, such as special diets or yoga. Physical purification is like being put in a washing machine, but then you discover that the washing machine is you. Or the approach to purity may be more like sitting in a sauna. The longer you sit in that atmosphere, the more the pores in your skin are going to open, so that you can clean out all the dirt.

Some forms of purification are severe, like exposing a wound to the air, or even washing it with water or vinegar to remove the germs. Some methods or rituals of physical purification may involve intentionally inflicting pain on yourself, such as walking on hot coals. When you have suffered enough pain, the absence of pain brings tremendous relief. When there is a gap in the pain, you feel so relieved and relaxed. You experience a gap in your self-centeredness. That approach underlies many mystical traditions. The practice of mindfulness may lead to a similar experience of a moment free from habitual thought, but it begins with an understanding that the purity is already there, within you. From that point of view, there is nothing to purify; therefore, you don't have to deliberately inflict pain on yourself.

Of course, sometimes you may find the practice of meditation painful. If you're used to sitting in a chair and you decide to meditate on a cushion, the cross-legged posture may be uncomfortable. You may experience back pains when you meditate, or all kinds of physical discomfort, as well as visual or auditory distractions and extreme states of mind. None of that is regarded as a problem, something that you have to solve. We are not starting with the view that we are bad and we're trying to compensate for that by being good. In the practice of mindfulness, we are simply trying to let our basic quality of goodness shine through. So although you might find the practice painful at

times, the pain that you experience is more like labor pain. It is as though you're about to give birth to a child.

Mindfulness is working toward uncovering self-existing kindness and goodness. It may take a lot of breakthroughs; it may be painful to uncloud the sky in order to see the sun properly. But you can do it.

As we discussed in earlier chapters, your journey begins with personal appreciation, with kindness, gentleness, and making friends with yourself. The more we trust ourselves, the more we acknowledge our friendship with ourselves, the more we uncover gentleness and kindness throughout our lives. That is the only way to overcome the fundamental obstacles in our lives. The breakthroughs won't come from combat. We won't uncover peacefulness by going to war with ourselves or others. We don't have to attack anybody, kill anybody, or destroy anybody in order to feel better about ourselves. The obstacle of self-hatred will fall away, by itself, when we have trust in ourselves. In that way, the experience of mindfulness can transform pain into freedom.

Finally, we begin to feel that who we are and what we are is worthwhile. We are doing the right thing. We are being completely honest with ourselves, in spite of the temptation to deceive ourselves. Still we are here. We are doing our job fully, properly, and we are so delighted. Because of that delight, we can free ourselves. Freedom comes with a feeling of both dignity and of sadness, which help us to remain genuine.

If we regard our problems as attacks from the outside, if we think that struggle or revolution is the solution, we are perpetuating aggression, and we can't free ourselves, let alone help anyone else. We don't gain freedom by fighting or paying our jailers to liberate us from our confusion. The more we think that liberation is based on aggression, the more we imprison ourselves and those we are trying to help. Rather, the only way to free ourselves is to be kind to ourselves and kind to the rest of the world. With that approach, we can do an excellent job.

So the domestic, psychological, and sociological difficulties and irritations in everyday life are not regarded as imprisonment. There might be all kinds of inconvenience. When you want to meditate, you might be stuck with a screaming baby, and you might not be able to afford a babysitter. On your way to an important meeting, your car breaks down and you need to take a

taxi, but you don't have the money for the cab. All kinds of situations like that will arise, but none of them are unworkable. Rather, life requires a sense of humor. There are always going to be problems. In fact, it would be very suspicious if things were smooth all the time.

It's better not to be a millionaire. If you are rich, you may think you can pay your way into heaven. You think you can take a helicopter to the enlightened world. But it doesn't work that way. You have to improvise and do things manually in life. You have the choice and the chance to convert your problems into promises. Hopefully, you will take advantage of this opportunity.

## NINE

### *The Bridge of Compassion*

IN THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER we discussed the connection between our sitting practice of meditation and our day-to-day experience. On the one hand, there is your familiar everyday life. You know it quite well. You can see it clearly, filled with all the things that you have to handle in your life. On the other hand, you have your comfortable or uncomfortable meditation. Meditation could give you an inkling of self-indulgence, of feeling self-satisfied. To remedy that, mindfulness also extends to the domestic situations of life, the kitchen-sink problems that we face constantly. Practically speaking, however, how do we link our meditation with the everyday challenges that we face all the time? How do we build a bridge between the sitting practice of meditation and meditation in action, or the postmeditation practice of mindfulness in everyday life?

In order to communicate from one side of the bridge to the other side, a sympathetic attitude is required, an attitude of charity, in the original sense of that word. The word *charity* is derived from Latin and Sanskrit words for warmth and love. That is the real meaning of compassion: fundamental warmth. That, too, is the link between meditation practice and everyday life.

The practice of meditation is about trusting yourself. As the practice becomes a more prominent feature of your daily life, you not only learn to trust yourself but you might begin to actually love yourself, or to have a compassionate attitude toward yourself. As much basic space as you discover in your practice, there is that much *warmth* in the space as well. There's a delightful feeling of positive things happening in you, constantly. Your



meditation is no longer mechanical or a drag, but it is a delightful thing to do. Meditation is making friends with yourself.

Having made friends with yourself in the practice of meditation, you can't just contain that warmth within yourself. You have to have an outlet for it. That outlet is communication with the world outside, with the other side of the bridge. Compassion acts as the bridge. Otherwise, it is possible that your practice of meditation might become self-satisfying. It might even become aggressive: "Don't touch me. I know what I'm doing. Just let me meditate!" You might become like an arrogant professor who thinks that she knows everything. If you ask her a question that she thinks is stupid, she will get angry at you rather than trying to answer your question. So if you exclusively practice meditation with no element of compassion in it, that kind of self-contained, self-satisfying practice could contain aggression.

Compassion is not logical. It's basically spacious and generous. A compassionate person might not be sure whether he is being compassionate to you or whether you are being compassionate to him, because compassion creates a total environment of generosity. Generosity is implied; it just happens, rather than *you* making it happen. It's just there, without direction, without me, without "for them." It's full of joy, a spontaneously existing grin of joy, constant joy.

This joy also contains wealth and richness. Compassion could be said to be the ultimate attitude of richness. It is antipoverty, the ultimate war on want. It contains all sorts of heroic, juicy, positive, visionary, expansive, bigger-scale thinking. It is a much bigger way of relating to yourself and to your world, your projections.

The attitude of compassion is a larger way of thinking, thinking on a larger scale. The attitude is one of being born rich rather than becoming rich. It is a world of plenty.

Without compassion, meditation cannot be transferred into action at all. We have a tendency, which almost feels automatic, to freeze up, to keep things frozen within ourselves. We preserve things in ourselves because we are afraid of losing them, afraid of losing our wealth. When we begin to experience fundamental warmth in our practice of meditation, that generous attitude and experience invite us to relate more openly with people. We begin

to thaw out. People are no longer regarded as a drain on our energy at all. People recharge our energy. They make us feel wealthy, rich, plentiful.

When you have to perform difficult tasks in your life, which may involve dealing with difficult people, you no longer feel that you are running out of resources. Each time a difficult task is presented to you, it's a delightful chance to demonstrate your richness, your wealth. With that attitude, you no longer draw into yourself or pull away. Rather, you become generous and available. Meditation in action, which we can also call mindfulness in action, comes from this mentality of richness. From this point of view, there is no poverty.

Something is lacking in meditation if there is no compassion in it. Then meditation becomes isolated and unrelated. You feel orphaned with no father or mother to take care of you. You feel abandoned, and you cut yourself off from the world, because you don't like the rest of the world.

So we need the bridge of compassion, to connect our meditation practice with everyday life. The cultivation of compassion begins with experiencing a cooling off of passion and aggression in the sitting practice of meditation. Passion implies urgency: you want to acquire something right now to satisfy your desire. When there's less desire, there's also less aggression and speed. The moment you start to relate to simplicity in the practice of meditation, you don't have to rush anymore. You're self-contained in that sense. Because you're not in a hurry, you can afford to relax. Then you can get to know yourself, and eventually you begin to love yourself. That is the source of warmth and compassion. It's quite simple, from that point of view.

Everything that arises in your meditation practice, all the thoughts and emotions, lend an earthy quality to meditation practice. Meditation practice is realistic—it takes place in the real world, rather than on some ethereal plane. This earthiness in your practice is also embryonic compassion, because compassionate warmth is grounded. It's not in a hurry. It is not being hasty but instead relating to each situation in life as it is. There was a famous Native American leader in the nineteenth century, Sitting Bull, whose name is a vivid example of the earthiness of compassion. That name implies something solid, organic, and definite. It exemplifies definitely being there, resting.

Action without compassion is like planting a dead tree. It will never grow. But any action that contains compassion is planting a living tree that grows

endlessly and never dies. Or even if the tree dies, it always leaves a seed behind, which will grow into another tree. That organic quality of compassion goes on and on and on.

You don't have to nurse compassion. It is like making yogurt. You add the culture to milk, and then you keep the milk warm until it becomes yogurt. Sometimes you try to speed the yogurt along by increasing the temperature of the milk. But that usually doesn't make good yogurt at all. If you had left it at the right temperature and just abandoned it for a while, it would have made good yogurt.

Similarly, you needn't constantly micromanage your life. Disowning is necessary at a certain point. You don't have to constantly meddle in situations that don't require further maintenance. Part of compassion is trust. If something positive is happening, you don't have to check up on it all the time. The more you check up, the more possibilities there are of interrupting the growth. It requires fearlessness to let things be. In a sense, it's a form of positive thinking. It's the true mentality of wealth and richness.

Fear comes from panic and the bewilderment of uncertainty, which is related to lack of trust in oneself. You feel inadequate to deal with the mysterious situations that constantly seem to be threatening you. If you have a compassionate relationship with yourself, you trust yourself and you know what you are doing, at least fundamentally. Your projections, which are just a mirror reflection of yourself, become methodical or predictable, so you know how to relate to a situation and also how to leave it alone. Then there is no more fear.

There's a distinction between emotional compassion and direct compassion. Ultimately, you don't have to *feel* compassion. You just *be* compassion. If you are open to situations, compassion just happens, because you are not wrapped up in self-indulgency at that point. You don't have to maintain compassion, but you acknowledge it. That is the mentality of richness: acknowledging that the bridge of compassion is there and available. You don't have to do more than that.

Meditation without concepts, without sidetracks of any kind, is our practice. Within that basic practice there should be a friendly attitude toward oneself as well as a sense of radiating that friendliness. This friendliness can

permeate our environment, which includes our living situation and all the people in our lives.

Compassion also contains wisdom, which is a primordial intelligence. We could say that it is discovering unoriginated, or primordial, trust in ourselves. We don't have to logically work out that trust. It is there already. In some sense, it has no beginning. It is a kind of wisdom eye that we innately possess.

*Part Two*

FOUNDATIONS OF MINDFULNESS

## TEN

### *First Thought*

IN PART ONE, we explored the meaning of making friends with ourselves in the practice of meditation and in life in general. The basic practice of mindfulness meditation was introduced, and we looked at some of the most important components of that practice, such as working with the breath, as well as the experiences of gentleness, cool boredom, aloneness, and the discovery of compassion. Now in part two, we will delve more deeply into this thing called “mind”—as in the word *mindful*—and investigate the qualities that characterize mindfulness and lead to its maturation. These aspects of mindfulness also provide us with the foundation, or the ground, for our practice. Additionally, they show us ways that our practice may deepen and evolve.

It is often said that meditation is concerned with taming and training the mind, but what do we mean by that word *mind*? Many philosophical, psychological, and spiritual preconceptions arise when we try to define mind or consciousness, and they can get in the way when we’re working directly with the practice of meditation. If we want to find out more directly what meditation is and what happens when we meditate, we might want to ask, “*Who* is meditating?” This will get us into the nitty-gritty of what we mean by mind. To understand what we are doing when we meditate, the seed or the fundamental question is “Who are we?”

Ask yourself that question, “Who am I?” You may find that you don’t have an answer. From that nonanswer, that simple gap or open space, you may experience a flash of who you are. I refer to that glimpse as “first thought.”

That first thought may be a realization of confusion or neurosis, not necessarily a pleasant or highly evolved thought. It is an unconditioned reaction or thought. There's a gap, and then there's this first thought.

That first thought is not regarded as a particularly enlightened thought, but it *is* a true thought. It is your raw-and-ruggedness. It might reflect confusion or insight. This first thought may be shocking, or it may be quite complimentary. Don't ask too many questions about it. Just let it be there as your first thought.

We're usually circumspect about the first thought we come across, so we drum up a second, more reasoned, thought. This second thought reviews the first and makes us feel safer, more legitimate. Sometimes we don't even trust *that* thought. So we go out of our way to ask someone—a parent, teacher, or perhaps a friend—to reassure us that our insight is legitimate: "I have this thought, but I don't know whether it's good or not. What do you think?"

We have created layer after layer of these security mechanisms. In fact, life often encourages us to do things this way. We are taught to consult authorities or experts about almost everything. If you feel sick, you ask a professional for advice, who is called a doctor. If you feel mentally unwell, you ask a professional called a psychiatrist or a therapist to help you. If you have a leak in the roof or something is wrong with the plumbing in your house, you call in a professional roofer, a plumber, or a general contractor to fix the problem. In our practice of meditation, this need for professional advice may lead us to reject our first thought.

First thought is an intuition that we pick up on in ourselves, but we often don't accept it. We're not prepared to accept our own experience without outside validation. We ask ourselves, "What is the proof?" Or we ask, "Is it okay to feel this way? If I go along with this first thought, something might go terribly wrong. Then what?" That second-guessing of ourselves is precisely the problem, the second thought that gets in the way.

First thought is a direct experience before good, bad, and indifferent arise. You are still in "no-man's-land." The area is not yet occupied by *this* or *that*. There is still a field of openness.

Working with first thought is not a matter of practicing something or rehearsing something until you get good at it. It is much more immediate than that. It is a spontaneous starting point. First thought is a flash or a spark of

what you are about, who you are, and what you are. On the spot, you can rediscover your mind, what your mind might be, what your mind really is.

The approach of seeing “first thought as best thought,” a phrase that I coined for accepting the workability of our first thought, is a very ordinary, sensible way of looking at oneself and finding out what one’s mind is. Do we have a mind at all or not? Look and see. That first thought, the first thing you see, is your mind. The experience of first thought happens simply and directly. It is not some higher ideal state. Rather, in order to begin training the mind, we need to start with seeing the basic ground, the foundation.

The only way to find out who we are is to just look. There you are. You might hate what you see or you might love it. So what? That’s it. That’s you. That’s good old you. That is the basic mind that we’re talking about. Look at you and find out about you. Just look.

What you find doesn’t particularly lead to ecstasy or depression. You know yourself already anyway. The basic point is to have an attitude of openness toward who you are, what you are. You might want to ask me or someone else whether what you discover is good or bad. My response is “No comment.” We haven’t gotten to the level of good and bad. We have to find out who we are at the beginning. We really have to look into that.

In your everyday life or as part of your upbringing, you may have been told that you should try to be good before you had any idea who you are. This just creates obstacles for you. If you try to reform yourself before you look into who you are, you already feel condemned; you feel terrible. That approach undermines your intelligence, sharpness, and insightfulness. You can be crippled by condemnation. “You don’t know how to carry yourself. Try to be more graceful.” Or, “Try to be intelligent.” If you follow that advice, you end up with no idea who you actually are or who is doing those recommended things. So before we acquire any of those affectations, so to speak, we need to examine ourselves. Or, if we’ve already been conditioned in that way, we need to let go of that baggage. The way to do that, or at least to begin to do that, is simply to see our first thought. And that’s why it’s the best thought, because it comes before any discussion of good and bad.

The word *best* here is neutral; it’s about fundamental insight and energy. It is the best flash you can have of who you are, without any reference point. It doesn’t tell you whether you are a good person or a bad person.



On a very ordinary level, if someone asks you who you are, you might give her your name and tell her where you were born. You provide that kind of information when you fill out a form to apply for a passport or a visa to visit another country. However, that kind of information is irrelevant here. We're planning to settle down in our own country, in our own spot, and practice meditation where we are.

When we look inside ourselves and examine what we feel, we might discover that there is something in ourselves that feels "I am myself." You feel yourself so powerfully, so strongly. It seems that there is no other choice: "I feel that I am what I am, beyond even my name. I feel my thingness inside me. I feel me!"

This is fundamentally an emotional statement. If you feel lonely, you make a statement of your aloneness: "I am what I am, all by myself." If you are angry, you assert yourself in another way as "me." "I'm angry and I have the right to fight, to show my stuff and share my story line with the object of my anger." If you feel lustful or passionate, you want your lover to acknowledge you. "I feel so passionate. You should surrender to me. We have to work things out together." In all of these cases, the main point is "I am what I am. I have this strong message of me, which I'm going to tell you."

You have this first strong flash of who you are, acknowledging yourself before you do anything further. Then you might try to be generous to another person. You might say, "Maybe you would like to say something about me? Please come and say it!" You become more ingratiating, but that's largely an afterthought. We try to show interest in what others think about us or even think about themselves. That interchange, however, just whets your appetite to talk more about yourself with your friends. You want to get together with someone again because the discussion makes you feel very powerful. To continue the dialogue, you might try to make a deal: "You can make me happy, and I will make you happy!" Or, "You can make me feel wretched, and I'll make you feel wretched." Or, "Let's have a duel, a fight to the death."

What is that really about? It is about discovering *this*, this particular point, *this*, this thing that is highly strung like a wild horse or a paranoid dog. *This* is in us; this is us. It is so tough and so seductive. It is sometimes extremely good and sometimes extremely wicked. We have this thing, we talk about this

thing, and this thing that we are talking about is *mind*, obviously. We are not talking about our body or our situation in life. We are talking about our mind.

The definition of mind being used here is “that which experiences the sense of separateness.” As long as that attitude of thisness is involved, there is also the otherness, automatically. *That* could not survive without *this*, and vice versa. We are always hanging on to something or other; that something is called mind. Mind in this sense also has a quality of heart, actually, because our emotions and connections to others are involved.

The fundamental idea of mind here is “that which feels the need for something”—the need to reinforce your existence. We are eagerly looking for enemies and lovers in life, to different degrees. That’s what it boils down to. Your enemy is not necessarily someone you hate to the nth degree. You don’t even have to feel totally sick of that person. On the other side, you don’t have to be in love with everyone you like. There are large areas of love and hate, and sometimes it’s a mixed bag. The borderlines are mixed up. The main emphasis is your need to reinforce your strength. You can show your enemies or your friends that you are a powerful person. If you strike somebody, literally or metaphorically, that person has to acknowledge you, and you hope that he or she will give in to you. Or a person could be seduced and come into your territory and begin to give in to you that way, in the realm of passion or desire.

This description of mind relates to a psychological description of ego or egotism. The term *ego* can be used to describe egomania, which is self-indulgence and a style of self that is looking for security and survival, trying to establish the certainty of one’s existence. That is the confused and aggressive part of ego, which is completely blind. However, there is also another view of ego as intelligence and being assertive in a positive sense. When we speak of mind here, we’re not only talking about the negative side of ego. Mind is just awareness that exists within our being. It is awareness that is capable of relating with reference points of all kinds. Passion and aggression, love and hate, are included in those reference points, but the basic idea of mind here is that which is capable of experiencing reference points altogether. It is just a mechanical thing.

Mind in this sense is like using your antennae. It is a basic mechanism, although the idea of mind being mechanical dilutes its power somewhat. It is

basic intelligence, something constant, which exists in us all the time. *Then* we begin to color it, by saying that if that or this is the case, we want to change ourselves in *this* way or *that* way. After the first thought, you begin to change your mind—which is second thought. You begin to make it into something else, rather than acknowledging what you have actually seen.

When we use the word *mind* as a noun, it sounds static, somewhat isolated from action. The verb form *minding* expresses the sense of mind as a continual activity. Your mind is minding constantly. It is constantly looking for a reference point, looking for a connection to something. Why is that? Fundamentally, in spite of all our assertions of “me-ness,” we fear that we may not exist. We feel inadequate. We don’t feel so good about ourselves, basically.

Your sense of self is like a hat you see in a store window. You think it looks fantastic and you want to buy it, so you go into the store and ask the salesperson to show it to you. When you can actually hold it, try it on, and look at it up close, it turns out that it’s not so great. You feel that you were conned. You change your mind about that fantastic hat.

Similarly, you may say, “I’m having a fantastic life. I’m doing lots of exciting things and having a great time. I feel terrific; I feel like a new person.” Sure. Still...Why do we have to keep telling ourselves those things again and again? Why? If everything is so amazing already, there is no reason to say so and to reflect back, again and again, on those highlights. Why do you need to reassure yourself? That need for reassurance is precisely the point: We feel that something is leaking, but we don’t want to acknowledge it as such. There is a hole somewhere in our life that we try to plug up. All our posturing is a sign that we are just about to realize that we don’t exist in the way we thought we did. We actually know that intuitively. Yet we keep on trying to prove ourselves to ourselves, to ensure that we will survive.

In the practice of meditation and contemplative discipline in general, it is important to admit at the beginning that this fortress, or shrine, of our self-existence doesn’t hold true. If we are honest with ourselves, we may realize that we are trying to turn a sand castle into a permanent structure. It keeps getting washed away, but we make many attempts to rebuild the castle, hoping to reassure ourselves. Many people use meditation to make themselves feel better or more uplifted. Some people like the idea of a spiritual search

because if we are searching for something, at least we have purpose in our lives. But *search* here is a euphemism for uncertainty and panic.

You may tell yourself that you'll find something, once you begin to search. You *can* exist. You don't have to give anything up after all. You will get something out of your search. You slowly sneak in the back door of your existence so that you can retain your hard-line individuality. You say to yourself, "I can stay on top of the world. I can become a little dictator in the name of my achievement of mindfulness."

To avoid that problem, we have to look very closely into what mind is and how our minds function. There are all kinds of holes in us. Even when we acknowledge them, we might still try to create a patchwork to cover them up. You think you've exposed yourself and become a completely pure, clean, and reasonable person. You've penetrated all the deceptions. You've seen all the holes in your logic. But if you then try to sew patches over the holes, it becomes an endless game.

The alternative is first thought: continually looking closely and acknowledging exactly what is happening. When you practice meditation, you need to understand your motivation and look at what you are doing. How are you going to work with yourself? Exposing oneself to oneself without pretense and without patches is the real working ground and the genuine motive for practice.

## ELEVEN

### *Appreciation*

THE DISCIPLINE OF MEDITATION is a dignified approach to learning how to be here. Engaging in a practice that is so definite, concrete, and personal brings a feeling of joy. This is somewhat selfless joy, because it is not glorifying anybody, oneself or others. You are just appreciating that you have made a genuine connection to the practice of meditation and to yourself.

Experiencing the fresh first thought, as we discussed in the previous chapter, has enabled you to discover something basic about who you are, what you are. We shouldn't exaggerate that experience. In meditation, you don't try to jazz things up because you are in a bad state of mind or in bad spirits. You don't have to pretend that life is a fantastic rose garden where everything is pleasurable. The practice of meditation is sometimes presented as a way to achieve a blissful state of mind or as a form of positive thinking. However, you don't have to convince yourself that meditation is a good thing to do. You don't have to suppress your conflicted feelings or questions. You don't have to build yourself up. You can simply appreciate.

Genuine appreciation is acknowledging yourself as a person who is committed to the practice of meditation and to the basic mindfulness and awareness that arise from the practice and continue throughout the rest of your life. It is simple appreciation of a sense of being. Physically, you are sitting in a chair or on your meditation cushion. You are practicing mindfulness. You are here. That is enough.

When you are sitting on the floor or in a chair meditating, it is a simple situation. No mystical connotations apply here. You are here, sitting on the

earth, quite rightly so. There's a physical awareness that you are meditating, and there is mental awareness, which includes all your mental states, including your daydreaming world. Once you make the commitment to practice, it's a total commitment, which includes the psychological aspect of things. Your thoughts may wander around all over the continent, to Alaska or Mexico, Vancouver or New York City. Nevertheless, in actual fact, you are here. Being psychologically present may be a big project, but it helps that you are physically here in your body.

When you practice meditation, you should sit without a plan. It should be meaningful without it being a big deal. You simply sit on the floor or in your chair. If you question whether you are sitting properly or not, then you might begin to perch. Instead, just sit, very simply and directly. If you are waiting for something to happen, that is a problem of future orientation. If you are oriented to the present, you just do it. It's a very blunt approach to life, blunt and realistic. There's no romance involved, except for the joy of the present.

You feel that you are there, you are breathing, you are sitting. You feel your head, your shoulders, and your arms. You don't have to go through a special sequence or program of building up your awareness. Keep it extremely simple. There is almost a quality of carelessness. It's not frivolity or mindlessness, but a positive experience of relaxation and not overthinking what you're doing. You just sit and do it.

When people decide to do a long group meditation retreat, over a number of days, weeks, or months, they come to such a retreat with many ideas about what they're going to achieve. They bring a lot of questions about what they're doing, why they're doing it, and how they will benefit from the retreat. During the retreat, they throw those questions back on themselves. They could decide to leave the retreat anytime. They are not required by anyone to stay. Strangely, although many people lose heart at some point during the retreat, they usually stay through the whole thing. And they usually regain their heart. They may feel quite heroic when they finish. People meditate for many days with no promise and no particular purpose, but still they do it.

At the beginning, they may have many ambitions, but then something turns that around. Their expectations begin to fall apart, through the practice of meditation. Someone who is seriously interested in meditation should not expect any feedback or promises from the practice. Most people come to

realize that the point of the sitting practice of meditation is just to sit, to actually sit properly. The complications of thought patterns and confusion of all kinds about the technique—no matter how these thoughts arise, no matter how meaningful or devastating they may seem, and no matter how they dissolve or go away—are all just mental creations rather than meditative insights as such.

When you practice meditation, you have a choice. You can take the attitude that you are just doing it, or you can take the attitude that you are waiting for something to happen. Maybe you think *nothing* will happen, but you still secretly think that nothing is “it.” So you’re still waiting for something or other. The other attitude is just to be, which is the recommended approach. One should just sit and be.

A great teacher of meditation once said, “Meditating is trying to look at your own eyes without using a mirror.” That’s a very mysterious statement. How can we look at our own eyes without a mirror? The idea stops us in our tracks. But maybe we can explore that in our practice. The only way to solve this riddle is just to be there.

*Nowness* is a good word to describe the experience of simply being present. There is no other reference point involved. You might think that nowness is a choice between now and then or between this and that. But the state of nowness is choiceless. Now includes emptiness and nonexistence as well as fullness, all at the same time. Now is powerful because it doesn’t have any connections with past or future. We might feel threatened by now, because we prefer to stick with what has occurred or what might occur. We have difficulty ungluing ourselves from past and future. It’s not particularly pleasant to be now. It is demanding, but it is also very genuine.

In the practice of meditation, the development of peace is the expression of nowness. Peace is the experience of simplicity rather than pleasure or happiness as such. We are not discussing lofty ideas about peace, such as peace on earth. Being in a state of peace or tranquillity is being simple, direct, and uncomplicated. The state of being of nowness has no extra attachments, and therefore it is peaceful. Peace is like a rock simply sitting on the ground. In the state of peace, you don’t need to make an inventory: “Now I am feeling my toes; now I am feeling my ears, my temple, my shoulders, my

heart.” You simply feel your body as a whole. Body is sitting there on the ground, and you are that body.

In discussing meditation, sometimes we talk about the psychosomatic body, which is made up of both the somatic part, the body, and the psychological or mental part, the mind. Your mind and your body are sitting together. In meditation, it isn’t important to sort out which part is mind and which part is body. Really, what difference does it make? The point is that, altogether, life is experiential. If you don’t have an *experience* of life, you don’t have life. As long as you are not a corpse, you have experience. You might experience life as 75 percent pleasurable and 25 percent painful, or the other way around. Those percentages are not purely abstract measurements; they are in reference to your *experience* of pain and pleasure.

You may draw logical or “objective” conclusions from your experience, to prove that you exist or that things exist independent of your imagination or your mind. That may be the scientific approach. However, scientific observations are also experiential. In order to have an observation, there has to be an observer or at least an observing of something, which is an experience.

In meditation, we work directly with our experience, without having to draw conclusions. When your body sits, you have that experience of body sitting. Don’t complicate it more than necessary. Bodily sensations come and they go. You don’t do anything with them. As questions arise about our experiences in meditation, this approach is to see those questions as thought patterns, or thinking. In the practice of meditation, you label everything that happens in your state of mind as discursive thought. You say to yourself, “This is thought, this is thought, this is thought, this is thought.” No matter what arises, everything is labeled as thinking.

Regarding everything as a thought pattern is quite demanding. It requires a certain amount of bravery, or heroism. When you take the approach that everything is thinking, you begin to realize that right and wrong, good and bad, safe and not safe, actually don’t exist. Therefore, it is also a very freeing experience. So regard whatever arises in meditation as thinking. Let the thoughts pass through. “Easy come, easy go” could be our motto.

In your practice, you will have many experiences of body. You may imagine that there is a big hole underneath the ground, so the ground could



collapse at any moment. You worry that you might find yourself in a dark pit. Or you may feel the solidity of the earth that you are sitting on. You may feel as though you were sitting on crystal rock, which can't be penetrated and has never been explored. Even if you're very shy or afraid, you can't dig a hole to hide in, because you are seated on solid crystal rock.

So many experiences arise when we practice. They are all relevant. We can't just say that such experiences are neurotic. For that matter, we can't say that they are expressions of sanity, either. Such experiences are just experiences. Our experience is real, true, and direct. Appreciating that is the best way to begin.

Sitting in a chair or on a meditation cushion, feeling your body and experiencing your breathing: this experience is yours to appreciate. You just sit there, experiencing your form, your atmosphere, experiencing a sense of life, purpose, time, and temperature. The unnecessary complications should be simplified into one-pointedness. Appreciating your experience in this simple way is the development of peace, which is the starting point in the practice of meditation.

## TWELVE

### *Life Force*

THE BASIC POINT OF MINDFULNESS is to be completely, totally in touch with what happens in your body and the environment around you. You are not reduced to an inanimate clod of earth while you are meditating. You may feel your pulse or your heartbeat. You feel your breathing. You hear sounds and see sights. You feel the temperature around your body. You feel vividly that you are alive.

Surprisingly, this experience is often reinforced when we have physical difficulties. They trigger a survival mechanism in the body that can make you feel very alive. If you are meditating while you have a fever or the flu, you may feel wretched, and you may wonder why you bother to practice meditation at all when you're ill. You may find, however, that meditating in the midst of physical discomfort actually helps you to be in your body, and it may help you to connect with the aliveness or the living quality of your practice. Similarly, when you have pain in your joints while you're sitting, in your legs, your knees, your back, or your neck, those sensations provoke awareness.

The experience of pain may remind you of the possibility of death. We know that we usually get sick before we die. So sickness or any kind of physical weakness or unpleasant sensations in the body may trigger an almost automatic warning system. You might be dying! When you're sick or injured, people may treat you as if you're quite pathetic, even if you just have a splinter in your thumb. Your friend might say to you, "Poor thing!" Somebody rushes to pull the splinter out with tweezers, as though he were

saving you from death. Any chaos that comes up in your life may remind you of your inevitably approaching demise. However, when you feel concern or even panic in reaction to sickness, it also triggers a feeling of life. It awakens your life force and inspires you to push back. You try to reestablish your feeling of well-being or balance. Particularly in the practice of meditation, discomfort can increase an appreciation of being alive.

In fact, the fear of death can only be experienced in relationship to the appreciation of life. An unpleasant feeling that reminds you of death also reminds you of the preciousness of life. In the sitting practice of meditation, when you feel an ache in your body, which makes you feel crummy, it may also inspire you or fuel your practice. So there is a sympathetic interchange between pain and pleasure here.

When you are in pain, something in you takes over and drives you to survive. That's the life force. In fact, you are not all that delicate. You are somewhat tough. You have the force of life within you. Obstacles may evoke the force of death, and there is a constant struggle between the two. But there's a lot of vigor in that interplay. When you feel affected by pain, when your legs hurt while you are meditating, for example, a certain vitality comes out of trying to compensate for the pain. Working with this interplay in the practice of meditation is working with the life force, which is also referred to as the mindfulness of life.

Sometimes, physical discomfort in meditation goes beyond one focal point and becomes generalized. You may feel as if a powerful sickness were being transmitted from the earth through your body. Your entire body hurts. You feel the pain in the base of your body, your seat, and then this painful irritation comes up your spine, your arms, and your legs, until it reaches your head and even your eyelids. This is just one of the natural—and somewhat unpleasant—ways in which we experience pain and discomfort. At the same time, this experience evokes a powerful sense of life. It's like holding a hot cup of tea and feeling the heat being transmitted from the teacup through your hand. It's as though you can feel the magic of reality transmitting the heat. It's very real and personal. When you feel the heat, you might be afraid of getting burned. You may worry that you might spill the tea on your chest or in your lap. Should you hold on or should you let go? If you panic and let go, you'll spill the tea, but if you hold on more tightly, the cup might get so

hot that you will also drop it and spill the tea all over yourself. It's an uncertain situation.

The sensations of being alive may be threatening and a bit confusing, and we may develop a powerful reaction or survival instinct in relationship to them. We might prefer to ignore them, but if we ignore the reality of pain and pleasure as part of life, then when we encounter difficulties or more extreme situations, we panic much more. That's when we spill our cup of tea.

So from the beginning, our approach to working with sensations should be direct, simple, and literal. In the practice of meditation, we don't try to gain a pleasurable state of happiness by ignoring pain, nor for that matter are we deliberately seeking pain or trying to punish ourselves. We are just being mindful of whatever arises.

Although things should be down-to-earth in our practice, this is not to say that there is no inspiration there. We can be genuinely inspired by being with the earth, with the body, with the trees, the rocks, the grasses, the water. Inspiration also comes from being with the highway, with the traffic lights, being with your father, your mother, a policeman, your doctor, or even your lawyer.

Those everyday experiences are usually regarded as somewhat mundane and unimportant. If you are seeking a transcendent experience in meditation, then daily life may seem too ordinary to associate with. You may think to yourself, "I am above all this." By doing so, you cut yourself off from the magic of reality and from what I would call basic sanity, the basic experience of things as they are. Instead, you are developing a personal dream world.

The antidote is to have more contact and connection with the earth, by realizing and cultivating the life force, the power of being alive. You have a pair of eyes, a nose, ears, mouth, arms, and legs: you have this thing called a body. People refer to you by a name: Jack or Jill, Michael, Judy, or Joe. That is you, whether you like it or not. The more we drift away from this thing called our body, our basic existence, the more problems we have.

Maybe we feel that we're confused. Therefore, we try to get away from our confusion. Then we become more confused, trying to get away from the confusion of the confusion. It's endless. Running away from one confusion after another creates a chain reaction, endless echoes. Finally, you find

yourself nowhere, painfully nowhere. It can be completely claustrophobic, like being trapped in the nest of a black widow spider.

One morning while I was preparing to teach a seminar on mindfulness, I stepped out of a little trailer in the mountains where I was staying, to sit on the porch and look around. I had a beautiful view of the hills in the distance, and I could see a big tent in the valley where people were practicing meditation. I said to myself, “How beautiful this place is—so many beautiful clouds and trees and greenery. There is the tent where people are meditating. It’s fantastic, ideal—a perfect world!”

But then...a message arrived that someone was coming up to the trailer to talk business with me. That beautiful world suddenly didn’t exist anymore. It had shrunk up into a concept of feeling hassled. The clouds and the trees were still there. Everything in my ideal setting was still there, but somehow they didn’t exist for me anymore. They’d been reduced to irritation and timing, programming and scheduling.

After a little while of being in that irritated frame of mind, I found myself smiling at myself, as I reflected on my upcoming talk that evening. I realized that, since I was going to talk about life force and the mindfulness of life, the message I had received was the best possible one. My dreamy level of appreciating nature was brought down to the ordinary level where one has to relate with one’s schedule. That was the best possibility of all.

You can’t hover in your dreams forever. Eventually, you are going to be brought down to earth. I realized that it was my duty to keep to my schedule. There was no choice. People had arrived for the seminar. I couldn’t kick them out or ignore them.

Sometimes, the truth of life makes us indignant. We feel that we deserve more happiness, less hassle, or whatever it is that we want. So we complain about our life. But in the midst of that complaining process, we find that we are suddenly quite connected to reality, quite sane. In the midst of enormous bundles of insanity, there’s a sudden realization of sanity. We have to face facts, simply and precisely. That is what we’re talking about in terms of the mindfulness of life. It is the experience of being alive, which can happen in the midst of irritation or chaos.

When there is more chaos, we have a tendency to check back with ourselves, to be sure we’re coping okay with the chaos. The process of

checking back or checking in with ourselves connects us with immediate reality. It's good to do this: just check in, without any purpose. The checking in is a kind of jerk. When you check in and evaluate the whole thing, the situation may seem extremely messy. You may find some leaks in your pipes. But just check in. Just look, look, look, constantly.

This checking-in process is part of the practice of meditation. When you meditate, you may find a lot of chaos in your thoughts and feelings, as well as conflict, uncertainty, and a feeling of being a fool. At the same time, you begin to hear sounds more clearly, you begin to see more clearly, and you begin to feel your body more distinctly. When you check in with this process, you realize that there is a feeling of being very alive in the midst of all this chaotic activity. You also begin to recognize that this feeling of being so alive is connected with being sane, being fully there. If you check in again and again, then slowly, slowly, you connect with sanity. Sanity in this case is being in contact with reality at its fullest, as much as possible. It is being fully mindful, to begin with, and beyond that, there might be a greater experience of freedom.

Feeling your life force is an experience of being. It brings your mind into focus, into one-pointedness. You may wonder if it's really this simple, or you may feel that you've learned a new trick. In fact, it is the first trick and the last trick at the same time. It runs throughout the practice of meditation, from top to bottom, beginning to end.

When you meditate, you actually are meditating even when you think you're not. You have no choice, in fact. In your mind, you may be miles away from your meditation cushion, but you're still sitting there. There is still communication between your body and your mind. It might seem like a schizophrenic level of communication to be aware of both the irritations of your body and your distant thoughts. However, you are having a real experience of life, a real experience of reality, whether you like it or not. There is some magic, if you'd like to put it that way, some force of life that takes place. It doesn't matter whether you have an enormous pornographic show going on in your mind or whether you are having a delicious mental meal miles from the meditation hall. In actual fact, you are still sitting on your meditation cushion or in your chair. If you check in with yourself, you'll realize this.

When you have a lot of mental distraction, it is very helpful and necessary to relate with the breath. The awareness of your breathing accentuates that you are sitting on the cushion. Breathing is also a powerful symbol of being alive. If you stop breathing, you are dead, so experiencing breath is experiencing life, constantly. When you mentally lose track of where you are, that's precisely the point where you need the discipline of following your breath. Then, as you begin to notice that you are breathing, it brings you back to the aches and pains in your body. You are actually alive and struggling.

There is a connection to your life, some sanity that truly takes place when you meditate. Sitting on a cushion or in a chair and practicing meditation is more than a token gesture. It is an expression of commitment, an expression of truth, honesty, and genuineness. That commitment is the basic aliveness in our practice.

There is so much speed in our society. We have so many things to do. We jump back and forth from one thing to another. The practice of meditation teaches you to slow down and appreciate your life. Appreciate your partner's cooking. Appreciate your kids. Appreciate your job. Appreciate the weather. Experience everything in its own way.

When you drink hot tea, it burns your lips and your tongue. That's reality. There's a good lesson: how to drink tea. Everything in life is literal, direct, and personal—and very demanding. But that demand seems to be necessary. Your commitment is to be present. You're going to experience life as it is, rather than your expectations from the past or your desires for the future. You're going to relate with life in the fullest sense.

## THIRTEEN

### *Spontaneous Discipline*

SPONTANEITY IS THE EXPRESSION of directness and fearlessness, in both the sitting practice of meditation and in life altogether. It is taking continual delight in our life, by connecting with the first fresh thought, which is present in every moment. Spontaneity also brings freedom from physical and psychological tension. When the energy of wanting to let go and the energy of wanting to hold on are in conflict, it produces tension. Spontaneity is an expression of nonaggression and a celebration of what you are, so it is not connected with push and pull or give and take. It is the expression of humor, joy, and delight.

Although spontaneity opens the doors to freedom, a truly spontaneous approach can't take place without discipline. We might think that there is a contradiction between the two, but in fact, spontaneity and discipline go together. Spontaneity itself is possible because you are *there*—which is the discipline. The discipline of being in the present relates not just to the practice of sitting meditation alone but also to our general life situation, our experience throughout the day. Joy and humor in everyday life come from being fully there.

Sometimes when we're disorganized or don't plan ahead, we say that we have a problem with being too spontaneous, and that we need to be more disciplined. However, discipline is not a remedy you apply after the fact. It works hand in hand with spontaneity right from the beginning. When you feel delighted, resourceful, or open, you experience those spontaneous qualities because you're already being disciplined. Otherwise, you couldn't actually



connect with them. They would be like slippery goo gliding through your hands, too slippery to catch. Discipline doesn't hold you back; it actually allows you to make the connection with spontaneity.

Spontaneity and discipline also work together in the creation of art. Artists have made many attempts to fight against or emerge from established tradition to make a totally new statement. Trying to escape from the means, or the media, is very difficult. But the attitude behind the creation of a work of art can be spontaneous and direct. For example, the brushstrokes used in Asian schools of brush painting and calligraphy are part of established traditions, but each painting is unique.

I believe that aspiring artists should be trained in an almost orthodox conservative way so that they incorporate the technical knowledge and the wisdom of the traditions they are working within. This also applies to meditation and contemplative training. At the beginning, your training should involve strict discipline. Later, you should feel that you can afford to open yourself and express yourself freely. Spontaneity is possible in part because of the exertion and the discipline you have experienced. Then, spontaneity will also have a sharp eye. It will be clear seeing, which is the expression of discipline.

Applying direct exertion brings you back to square one, to the first thought level. You work with what is there simply and directly. Real spontaneity allows everything to be out in the open. You are not shielding yourself from the sore points. There is nothing to play games with anymore.

When we first practice meditation, we don't begin "properly." We begin as we *are*. We may even begin in a somewhat distorted or confused way. Having no idea how to begin properly, you begin somehow or other. You just do it. People are often bothered by this haphazard way of beginning. They are looking for perfection right from the start. But there is no such thing. You have to start on the spot with the confusion and the imperfection. Spontaneity begins with the clumsiness, the imperfection, by making a fool of oneself. Let us be fools; let us do it.

Our primitive way of beginning, whether it is in our sitting practice or the application of awareness practice in everyday life, is the first glimpse we may have of spontaneity. From the beginning, it needs to be linked with exertion. Having discovered the practice of meditation, if we hope to gain something

from our practice, we need to make a commitment to continue, to stick with the practice. Exertion is becoming acquainted with and becoming accustomed to working hard. It provides the routine discipline that we need in our practice and in our lives.

Most of the challenges and the questions that we face in life are about communication, honesty, and our skill in working with situations. Focusing on possibilities for some higher attainment or transcendence can be a hindrance and a distraction in meditation and in life. We become more self-conscious, and we start to second-guess ourselves. We can't let ourselves be proper fools. Then we are stuck in the middle, not being wise and not being fools. We need a more direct approach that helps us with the down-to-earth problems and challenges in our lives.

Demands of all kinds arise in life, and we may have to deal with successive seeming dead ends. Problems often appear to be unsolvable. They manifest as obstacles, as a thick wall in our way, and we don't know how to go beyond the wall. The wall always has an opening, but sometimes the doorstep in front of it appears to be very high, and we have to decide whether to climb over it or whether to try to avoid the problem altogether. Sometimes we'd rather peer through a hole in the wall rather than having to go through it. But it is necessary to step over the doorstep and walk through.

Often even pleasurable situations are reminders of a mental or emotional blockage or difficulty. You might be enjoying yourself at a restaurant with a friend, but it reminds you of the difficult day facing you at work tomorrow. Rather than trying to smooth things over or trying to ignore what's coming tomorrow, exertion is directly becoming acquainted with the problems after problems that come up.

In our practice and in our life, working with all the challenges is an ongoing journey, not just a one-shot deal. When we meditate over a long period of time and make a commitment to meditation as an ongoing part of our life, we discover that meditation provides us with a path to work with the obstacles that present themselves. We could speak of walking on the path of meditation. This is taking a lifelong journey through the obstacles and the challenges that arise. In fact, the path is made out of obstacles.

The path exists because of what we don't know as well as what we already know. If you want to go to New York City, you take the journey to New York

because you are *not* there. Otherwise, it would be unnecessary and redundant. But because you are not there, therefore you go on this journey. You have no idea what will happen once you get there. Still, you are inspired to make the trip. You usually don't know exactly what the goal is, but you keep going.

As you walk on the path, at the beginning your vision may be clouded, but still you are seeing *something*, which encourages you to keep going. Then, as you go along, you start to see certain aspects of your experience quite clearly. So you can look at your journey in both ways: you are ignorant, so you go on a journey to become better informed. On the other hand, some existing intelligence or insight inspires you to make the journey in the first place.

Experiencing physical or psychological weakness in yourself is an obstacle that frequently arises on the path. Sometimes, you feel that you have run out of resources—you don't have enough energy to take another step. That experience is like running out of gasoline on the road. Or you may have a feeling of being a helpless child calling for his mommy. You feel so confused. The way to deal with feeling weak is to just *be* with it. Just be weak. Then you will begin to regenerate energy. In fact, when you let yourself be weak, you start to appreciate that some energy is already there. You realize that your weakness is very energetic.

In fact, one doesn't have to put out that much effort. One just has to be open, and then the reference points, the effort or the energy, will come to you. You acknowledge the effort and go with it, rather than working yourself up, or cranking yourself into high gear.

You may view your practice as overcoming obstacles that appear on the path, or you may regard the obstacles themselves as the path. Perhaps this is a subtle distinction, but it's an important one. Experiencing physical and psychological blockages in your practice is discovering the textures of the path. Sometimes, the road is smooth and covered with asphalt; sometimes it's rocky and strewn with boulders; sometimes it's a dirt track through the forest. You should try to follow the path rather than destroy it. In fact, if you want to have a path to follow, it has to be made out of something! So you've got to have those problems. They are not particularly regarded as bad or good. They simply bring you down to earth, so that you feel that you are actually there, rather than drifting up among the clouds.

We've talked a great deal about just letting yourself be, but in fact, when you encounter doubt or a blockage on the path, some exertion is required. You have to exert yourself to let go. We often think there's a conflict between exertion and just letting ourselves be there. However, exertion *is* letting yourself be there, in this case. To experience openness and letting things be, you yourself have to let go, which is the exertion part. Freedom—the spontaneity we've been discussing—is the outcome of taking a leap. You have to push yourself to leap into freedom.

The language here could be problematic. Exerting or pushing yourself to let go doesn't imply being aggressive. Aggression would be pushing against something to get what you want. In this case, when we push, we are not getting anything back. Rather, we find ourselves having leaped and being freed, but we can't even hold on to that. You can't freeze yourself in midair. Try it.

The leap we're talking about here is not deliberately pushing yourself on an extreme physical or mental level. Rather, it's your attitude. You take the attitude that a potential leap is available. Then the opportunity will actually approach you, so that you can let go, still with a certain amount of exertion. It's as though you are walking along a path, and then you find that there's no more ground ahead of you. You arrive at an enormous cliff. You've lost your ground, and the only way to proceed is to leap, to go along with the groundlessness. I'm not speaking literally, but metaphorically or psychologically, of course. I wouldn't recommend actually jumping off a cliff.

In working with obstacles on the path of mindfulness, outside feedback is not always that helpful. It's often better to rely on the internal feedback from your struggle or obstacles. Our own efforts in our practice and in our life show us the path. We certainly don't need to get outside advice too often. Rather, we can work with our immediate experience. There is a pattern to our experience; there is a texture to our path. There is a style in which the energies begin to flow by themselves, so there is constant feedback built into our experience, which is quite apparent and obvious. So you don't need to be dependent on a parental or authority figure.

When you ask yourself a question about your practice, you often find that the answer is already available to you, if you really look into the situation. Rather than checking with someone else for confirmation, you should be

willing to stick your neck out, relying on your own impetus and insight. We do this all the time. We stick our necks out, we take chances, but then we pretend that we're not doing so. If we feel that we have the safe, reliable security of relying on our parents, a teacher, or another authority figure, we pretend to be helpless and wretched in order to get their help. But as soon as we are out of their sight, we stick our necks out again anyway. Everybody involved knows what's going on, so we might as well admit it to ourselves.

The adviser in your life will often give you the same advice that you can provide to yourself. The fluctuations of life are always there, situations are always there, your experience is always there, and you will find that there are predictable or obvious patterns. Instead of being preoccupied with asking somebody else to confirm what this is all about, you might rely on your own experience. The purpose of a good teacher in any case is that he or she will push you back on yourself, to square one.

From this point of view the practice of mindfulness is particularly designed for people who practice meditation on their own. Some people live in remote areas, where contact with a meditation instructor or teacher is limited, and only limited contact with fellow meditators is possible. This approach is also aimed at people who are consumed and challenged by their domestic lives and may be under financial, career, and family pressures. They don't always have a lot of time to attend meditation programs. The practice of mindfulness is applicable precisely when there are constant demands in your life. You might be working in an office, a restaurant, or a factory, or you might be a college professor. Mindfulness can be applied in all the many occupations that exist in the world.

The practice of meditation is geared for lonely people—and everybody's a lonely person, from this point of view. As soon as your umbilical cord was cut, you were alone. As you began to grow up and dissociate yourself from your mother and father, you grew into a lonely person. The more poetic or maybe polite way of saying loneliness is "aloneness," I suppose, but actually the two words are pointing to the same thing. Loneliness is both an attitude that we can cultivate and a given fact of the human situation. If you can accept that it is part of life, loneliness can be a source of some solace. You find that you can keep company with your loneliness.

It is quite amazing that there is human wisdom that addresses our loneliness. Human beings have been so kind to us, the lonely people. Someone actually came up with the practice of meditation, which is very kind, and remarkable of them. It is fundamentally what is called compassion.

It is necessary to work with these areas of loneliness, exertion, spontaneity, and discipline in our lives. These aspects of our experience can provide a very *real* path, because these experiences are connected with everyday life and its challenges, and the mindful approach is designed for that life.

## FOURTEEN

### *Touching the Surface of Mind*

ANOTHER FOUNDATION OF MINDFULNESS PRACTICE is being mindful of the mind itself. This is not as mysterious as it may at first sound. Mind reflects our thoughts, feelings, sensations, and emotions, which is its experiential or experience-based aspect. Gaps, or glimpses of clarity without any particular content, also appear in our minds. I refer to these as the intuitive aspect of the mind. These glimpses are just part of our basic makeup, rather than being particularly insightful.

We experience both aspects of mind—the experience-based aspect and the intuitive glimpses—in the practice of meditation. It may be somewhat challenging to sort out how to relate to these two qualities in our practice. We may wonder whether we should focus on the experiential or the intuitive aspects of our minds. Should we pay attention to the mental and emotional upsurges or to the momentary clarity without content? This can be a source of restlessness in the practice of meditation. We are unable to decide which of these to rest with.

In the sitting practice of meditation, thoughts and emotions come in the form of memories, habitual thought patterns, fantasies, and expectations for the future. This experiential aspect of our minds is quite provocative and entertaining, and it is an easy source of preoccupation. The intuitive aspect, or the clarity, is refreshing and provides relief from the torrent of thoughts and emotions. The emotional reference points in our minds change from one topic to another, and they also alternate with this sense of relief. We

experience the gears shifting from one mood to another. Occasional clarity occurs between one mood or fantasy and the next.

We ask ourselves whether we should pull back from those preoccupations and try to be a good boy or girl, clean and pure. However, sometimes our boredom suggests to us that we might enjoy these little entertainments. If we can involve ourselves in fantasies of this and that in our practice, it almost provides a break from the tension of sitting. Sometimes we feel hypnotized by our memories, and we find that we can kill time this way. Three minutes go by, five minutes go by, or maybe even ten minutes go by. When we indulge in this way, we feel both some satisfaction and a sense of guilt at the same time.

Is there a conflict between the emotional and mental content and the occasional gap? Which should we focus on? When you experience mental confusion and emotional cloudiness, you might hesitate to come back to the awareness of the breath. You might like to remain there exploring, finding out about the emotional cloudiness. In fact, you can relate to both of these situations: the empty clarity and the emotional and mental content. In working with the mindfulness of mind, you don't need to choose one or the other.

The intensity of our conflicting emotions is a workable situation, and it is also a source of developing our mindfulness. Without some juicy material to work on, as we discussed in the previous chapter, there's no journey. The practice of meditation consists of working mindfully with those conflicting thoughts and emotions as well as with the occasional gaps that may create a feeling of relief. Without those two, there is actually no meditation. I think people often have the wrong concept of meditation, thinking that once you become a professional meditator, you won't have to think a single thought. The only activity will just be to b-r-e-a-t-h-e. But that could be quite zombie-like, quite horrific. You utilize the conflicting emotions; you don't cut them off. You may cut through the hard core of ego. But the emotions are just the tentacles, which could be pickled!<sup>3</sup>

So the technique of mindfulness of mind is to be with whatever happens. The movement of breath, the experience of the body, and the fickleness of thoughts all take place simultaneously. Obviously, you don't stop breathing when you think. Mindfulness here is a larger notion of covering all the areas of breathing and the thought patterns.



Concentration usually implies that we have one focus rather than splitting our awareness between more than one object at a time. But in this case, at the level of mindfulness of mind, our concentration or overall awareness can develop a more panoramic quality. It's a beam of light that expands or widens when it reflects off an object. With our light beam of mindfulness, we touch the highlights of the emotions and the thoughts, we touch the highlights of the breath, and both are seen simultaneously by the mindfulness of mind. You may hear sounds; you may see visions and sights of all kinds; you may have thought patterns of all kinds. All of those are connected by a binding factor, which is the mind. Therefore, whenever there is mind, there are possibilities of being aware of whatever is happening, rather than reducing the focus of our concentration to one level alone. Overall, this is what we mean by mindfulness of mind, where the cognitive mind is actually functioning in its utter precision.

Awareness of the glimpses of clarity in the mind is also direct and simple. When mind is preoccupied with an emotional theme that involves you personally, you are very taken up with those preoccupations that arise. In contrast to those thoughts there are gaps, which don't make a big deal about *you*. The gap is just a change or a shift. It's like transferring the weight from your right leg to your left leg. When that transfer is taking place, there's a gap where the weight isn't exactly on either foot. It is not particularly mystical. It is just a shift, a change of emphasis. That gap in our meditation is also touched by the presence of awareness.

The totality of the mindfulness of mind is like sunlight simultaneously reflecting on both the mountain peaks and the valleys. Such awareness isn't regarded as a big deal, as such. You don't constantly refer back and tell yourself, "I'm being *aware* now." "Now, I'm being *fully* mindful." Nevertheless, a quality of being there takes place, which goes along with a quality of what could be called "touching." One touches the thoughts. One touches the emotions. One touches the gaps. An even distribution of mindfulness takes place, in that whatever one is touching, there is also the simultaneous experience of touching the other aspect, or the other shore.

You are gently touching everything throughout your state of mind. It's like stroking a kitty cat. As your fingers move down the cat's back, you feel the individuality of each hair, but you also feel the continuity, the totality of the

hair. This approach involves sharpness, precision, and simultaneous awareness of many different individual components. It's like looking at your toothbrush. You don't have the actual, literal, gross awareness of each bristle on the toothbrush. Yet you see all of those bristles, all of the toothbrush, completely, at once. Your mindfulness is direct and literal, but at the same time it is panoramic.

There is total awareness without being selective. You might find this idea of mindfulness rather perplexing, and you might ask what being mindful really means in this context. Are we still talking about being fully committed to the very moment? In the practice of the mindfulness of mind, if you try to be selective and find *the* famous experience of mindfulness, as you look harder and harder, you begin to lose the sense of mindfulness altogether. There seems to be no such thing as real mindfulness at all. The whole thing becomes illusory. You find yourself peeling away the layers of the onion. You think you are being mindful, but you are *watching* yourself being mindful. Then you're watching yourself watching yourself being mindful. And then you're watching yourself doing all that. There's a constant, constant, constant reflection back and forth, and finally you get completely bewildered. At that point you may have to give up the idea of developing or cultivating "true" mindfulness as such. You just accept what goes on and make the best of it, so to speak. In this way, you leave the world undisturbed, rather than trying to disentangle everything too efficiently.

This approach, from one point of view, is not at all demanding. It's a light touch rather than hard work. From another point of view it is *extremely* demanding. If you put all of your effort and energy into something, it occupies your mind, which makes you feel better. However, if your mindfulness practice is touching and experiencing everything without being heavy-handed, you feel suspended in the middle of nowhere. It seems very dubious. You may feel that there is more to go, more to develop in your practice. You may feel that you've only done something in a halfhearted way rather than being fully engaged. But you are there, constantly, at the same time, without any aggression.

If we push ourselves to the level of enormous concentration, if we try to push ourselves painfully and exert ourselves more than is necessary, it

becomes aggressive rather than meditative. Meditation practice, however, is regarded as the action of nonaggression, which is a light touch.

Nonaggression is quite different from an absence of conflict. When you look from the meditative or mindful point of view, you see how even conflict can contain nonaggression. You might discover how the rugged desert of conflicts in your life could be quite still, quite peaceful. Cactuses are sticking up with thorns growing out of them, but those seeming threats are very earthy.

It's difficult to explain this logically. However, it's possible that the ups and downs we experience can in themselves become the evenness or equanimity of our experience. They can actually be a symbol of peace. The textures of conflict are not gentle, smooth, nor particularly soft. But *how* the challenges exist and how they present themselves is more important than the texture. Seeing in this way is precisely the meaning of mindfulness. You learn to look from an existential point of view—allowing things to exist—rather than trying to even them out or bulldoze the whole landscape. With this view, fighting or resistance isn't necessary.

It is possible to glide through the different landscapes of mind without becoming distracted or woolly-minded, because there is an actual experience of each moment. You develop enormous appreciation of the little things that happen in everyday life. Life becomes humorous and workable. Sound, sight, feelings, and experience altogether become *real*. Then, you never tire of looking at the same rock sitting outside your door. Each time you see it, it's refreshing.

If you paid less attention to what is happening, you might become dreamy. Things might become vague. In this case, however, there is actual contact, actual touch. You are touching the surface of mind very gently. At the beginning, it doesn't seem like a particularly heavy dose of mindfulness. However, in the long run, as you go on, this light touch makes a big impression on your mind.

---

3. Spoiler alert. Don't read this footnote if you want to work out the wordplay for yourself. It seems, to this editor, that the author is saying that our emotions can be preserved (pickled),

rather than eliminated. He appears to be making a wordplay on the idea of pickling. Pickles are also called preserves.—Eds.

## FIFTEEN

### *Recollection*

THE PRACTICE OF MINDFULNESS MEDITATION is beginning from the beginning, using body, breath, and mind as the mediums for our practice. These are the only mediums that are available to us in this world, on this planet. One purpose of meditation is to develop a feeling of stillness and solidity in one's practice. In order to become more open, one needs to establish the ground from which one will open. From the simplicity of mindfulness we begin to develop clear seeing, and we begin to make a transition to insight meditation. We are attempting to prepare ourselves for a path that is dedicated to working with other people as well as ourselves. The first step in that direction is to work with our awareness in postmeditation, our everyday awareness or mindfulness in action, as well as in the formal practice of meditation.

This term, *postmeditation*, is used to remind us that meditation is a reference point in everyday life. The sitting practice of meditation is the starting point for developing mindfulness. It establishes a reference point for awareness of yourself as well as a general awareness of your environment and your experience as a whole. From the general pattern of basic awareness in your practice, you step out and expand yourself into everyday life, using the mindfulness you develop in meditation as the starting point for mindfulness throughout life. Meditation is the source or the basic inspiration, and from there, slowly, mindfulness and awareness begin to emerge in your life as a whole.

At some point you may begin to realize that there is very little difference between sitting and not sitting. The idea is that the practitioner of meditation

should eventually develop a fuzzy boundary between meditation and postmeditation. In that way, there is continuity, which is the continuity of mindfulness, or the precision of one's practice, throughout one's life.

The basic postmeditation practice is to cultivate glimpses of awareness in everyday life. The approach of postmeditation, or mindfulness in action, is not so much trying to re-create the meditative state of awareness in everyday life, but it is reflecting back on the awareness you experience in mindfulness meditation. You might wonder how to reflect back and what you reflect back on. It's rather vague at the beginning. One has to try it and see what happens.

The recollection of awareness throughout the day is an unconditional experience. By that we mean that it's a sudden glimpse of something that doesn't have a description. It's not a certain, particular experience that you remember, but simply remembering to be aware, so this practice is called the practice of recollection. Awareness does exist, and the memory or the recollection of that awareness acts as a reminder. From that memory a jerk takes place, a very short glimpse, in a microsecond.

When you have that glimpse, you might want to hold on to it or possess it and try to inquisitively investigate it. Holding on is not advisable, because then you might try to create artificial awareness based on reinforcing a watcher or self-consciousness—which is not what we're trying to encourage. This experience of recollection can't be captured. We can't even sustain it. In fact, you should disown it. So, first there is recollection; then you disown this glimpse; and then you just continue whatever you are doing—cooking or brushing your teeth or driving your car. You don't have to be startled or unsettled by the glimpse.

Sometimes there is some slight recollection that is hardly noticeable. Some awareness happens, but you may think it is just your imagination. You think that probably nothing is happening at all. It doesn't really matter whether something is happening or not. You're not trying to document your awareness. You are trying to practice it.

The practice of recollection may seem like an insignificant thing to do. You might wonder what it does for you. In our lives, the chain reaction of our mental processes and the network of our habitual reactions often create a whirlpool of confusion. We are not just subject to or living in this whirlpool at this moment; we are also manufacturing confusion for the future. We keep

generating a chain reaction of confusion because we think that it provides us with security for the next minute, the next month, the next year. We want to make sure that there is something to hang on to.

It's quite amazing that we manage to manufacture our own future confusion using our present experiences of hanging on to neurosis. With our present actions and attitudes we create the seeds that blossom in the future. The present situation is inescapable. You are somewhat settled or habituated to it, so you don't want to do something different in the future. You don't want to have to change gears. Generally people enjoy living in the world of confusion because it is much more entertaining. Even suffering itself is entertaining in a strange way. Therefore, we create further neurotic security over and over again on that ground. Although we may complain and we suffer, we also feel quite satisfied with our lives. We've chosen our own self-existence.

The practice of recollecting awareness throughout the day is the main way that we can prevent ourselves from sowing these further seeds of habitual cause and effect. In the present moment we can disrupt these chain reactions. The memory or recollection of awareness creates a gap. Earlier we talked about the gap between one mood and another. Here we are talking about another kind of gap: awareness that can cut through the continuity of our struggle to survive. The practice of recollecting our awareness shortens the life of that fixation. And that seems to be one of the basic but powerful points of meditation practice.

With meditation we don't reject the present situation. Beyond that, the application of awareness is the way to sabotage confusion's hold on the future. Awareness is a simple matter. It just happens. You don't have to analyze it, justify it, or try to understand it. In the midst of enormous chaos, recollection is a simple action. There may be problems, but you can simplify the situation rather than focusing on the problems. Natural gaps in our experience are there all the time.

Our postmeditation experiences will be clouded with all kinds of ups and downs. Sometimes there is a sense of enormous excitement. You feel that you are actually making some progress, whatever that is! Sometimes you feel that you are regressing and that everything is going wrong. And then there are neutral periods where nothing happens and things are somewhat flat. Those

signs of progress or regression are just temporary meditative experiences, which occur both in the practice of meditation and in our daily awareness practice.

Sometimes people worry that their practice is actually regressing, but that never happens. Sometimes, if you push yourself too hard, your ambition will begin to slow down the speed of your journey. But as long as meditation is not conjuring up something imaginary, there aren't any problems with regression. You can't fail at practicing meditation. You would have to give up your mind, and you can't do that. Meditation practice is a haunting experience. Once you begin, you can't give up. The more you try to give up, the more spontaneous openness comes to you. It's a very powerful thing.

Often, having practiced mindfulness for a while, people describe temporary meditative experiences of pleasure or joy, emptiness, and clarity, which is sometimes called luminosity. It's as though light is finally being cast on your life. These three experiences—emptiness, clarity, and joy—are not regarded as extraordinary signs of progress. They are simply experiences or phases in your practice. When these experiences arise, you just go on practicing and cultivating the continual practice of awareness. What you work on is checking your basic awareness, cultivating that jerk of awareness.

You don't have to have complete comprehension of what awareness is all about in order to experience a glimpse of awareness. It may feel like a very primitive glimpse, but that's why it's workable in some sense. In fact, recollection is almost a memory of bewilderment, which brings a jerk of awareness and puts you back to square one each time it happens. You don't work on awareness like collecting a paycheck and putting the money in the bank. Rather, you have the awareness, and then you disown it.

If one is open to these glimpses and to the possibility that they might recur, they come much more frequently. The effort of the discipline here is not so much direct or deliberate effort but rather that you are accommodating possibilities of recollection. This effort doesn't save you from the chaos of a given day. It is a much more long-term approach.

The recollection of awareness throughout our lives is the preparation for beginning to help others. Initially we are purely working on ourselves in order to develop mindfulness and awareness. When you have developed some stability within yourself, there are possibilities of working with other people



and dealing with many situations. Our ability to help other people is largely based on our ability to sabotage the self-centered background of our own lives, through the development of mindfulness and awareness. When our orientation is less self-centered, wisdom and skillful means, or skillful action, will begin to appear.

You might think that terms such as *wisdom* or *skillful means* sound either very advanced or quite abstract, but they are completely present, immediate possibilities, not something that might happen to you one day in the future. Wisdom and skillful action are possible even at this point. It's not truth as a myth of the future, but the truth of the living situation.

*Part Three*

MINDFULNESS IN ACTION

## SIXTEEN

### *Touch and Go*

AT THIS POINT IN OUR DISCUSSION I'd like to introduce some further instructions for the practice of meditation. These instructions could be especially useful in relation to the discussion of working with the emotions in this section of the book. The touch-and-go instructions were first introduced to be used by people attending a monthlong practice retreat or a three-month practice and study retreat, so these instructions are attuned to issues that arise in the intensive practice of meditation. However, they are also applicable to daily practice and they help us in working with our daily lives, or mindfulness in action.

## ATTITUDE

As we've already discussed, in the practice of meditation there is an attitude that brings about possibilities of mindfulness. This attitude is not a matter of forming an opinion. Rather, it is directly cultivating the awareness of mind, which is precisely what mindfulness is. You are aware that your mind is aware of yourself. In other words, you're aware that you're aware. You are not a machine; you are an individual person relating to what's happening around you.

## TOUCH AND GO

We could use the phrase *touch and go* to describe the cultivation of mindfulness and awareness. Mindfulness in this case is being mindful of the sense of being. The *touch* part is that you are in contact, you're touching the experience of being there, actually being there, and then you let *go*. This approach applies to awareness of your breath in the practice of meditation, and it also applies to awareness in your day-to-day living situation.

In the practice of meditation, touch and go works with how we directly *feel* our experience. The idea of *touch* is that you feel a quality of existence; you feel that you are who you are. When you sit down to meditate in a chair or on a cushion, you *feel* that you are sitting on your seat and that you actually exist. You are there, you are sitting, you are there, you are sitting. That's the *touch* part. The *go* part is that you are there, and then you don't hang on to it. You don't sustain your sense of being, but you let go of it.

With touch and go, there's a feeling of individuality, a feeling of yourself as a person. We are here; we exist. We feel this, directly and simply. Then, we let go, which is a sense of carelessness, of not feeling too much concern.

## *Working with Emotions*

Then, there is a further *touch* that is necessary, which applies not only to awareness of a sense of being but also to the mindfulness of emotional states of mind. That is, one's mental state of aggression, lust, or whatever you are feeling has to be acknowledged. Those states should not just be acknowledged and then pushed off. You should actually look at them. This is an important point. There should be no suppression or shying away. You have the experience of being utterly aggressive and angry, or being utterly lustful, envious, jealous, or whatever you feel. You don't just say, "Oh, it's okay. This is what's happening." Or, very politely, "Hi. Nice seeing you again. You are okay. Good-bye, I want to get back to my breath." That is like meeting an old friend on a train platform, someone you haven't seen in a while, who reminds you of the past, and saying to him or her, "Well, excuse me, I have to catch the train to make my next appointment." That attitude is somewhat deceptive.

In this approach to practice, you don't just sign off. You acknowledge what's happening in your state of mind, and then you *look at it* as well. The point is that you don't give yourself an easy time so that you can escape the

embarrassing and unpleasant moments, the self-conscious moments of your life. Such moments might arise as memories of the past or the painful experience of the present. Or you may feel the pain of future prospects, what you're going to do after this. All those thoughts and feelings happen, and you experience them, you look at them, and only then do you come back to your breath.

This is extremely important to do. Otherwise, there is the possibility that we could twist the logic all around. If you feel that sitting and meditating, coming back to the breath, is a way of avoiding problems, that *is* the problem. You might feel your practice is extremely kosher, good, sensible, and real, and you don't have to pay attention to all those little embarrassments that happen around your life. You can regard them as unimportant and just come back to the breath. If you do this, you are creating a patchwork; you are bottling up problems and keeping them as your family heirloom. Instead, it is important to look at those embarrassments and only then to come back to breath. And even then, after you have looked at them, there's no implication that, if you look at them, it's going to free you and provide an escape from one painful point to another, or that it's the end of the story.

In fact, most of the problems in life do not arise because you are an aggressive or lustful person. The greatest problem is that you want to bottle those things up and put them aside or patch over them, and you have become an expert in deception. That is the biggest problem. Meditation practice is supposed to uncover any attempts to develop a subtle, sophisticated, deceptive approach. It is designed to uncover those patches.

### *Working with the Breath*

The attitude toward breathing in meditation is also related to working with touch and go. Once you are set properly in your posture, you begin to naturally focus on the breath going out of you. As the breath is going out, become the breathing. Try to identify with the breath, rather than watching it. This is the *touch* part. You are the breath; the breath is you. Breath comes out of your mouth and nostrils, goes out, and then dissolves into the atmosphere, into the space. You touch that process; you put a certain energy and effort toward that.

Then, as you breathe in, you boycott your breath; you boycott your concentration on the breath. That is the *go* part. As your breath goes out, let it dissolve. Then, just abandon it; boycott it. So breathing in is just space. Physically, biologically, one does breathe in, obviously, but you don't make a big deal of it.

Then another breath goes out—be with it. So the process is: out, dissolve, gap; out, dissolve, gap. It's constant opening, abandoning, boycotting. In this context *boycotting* is a significant word. If you hold on to your breath, you are holding on to yourself. Once you begin to boycott the end of the out-breath, it's as though there were no you and no world left, except that the next out-breath reminds you to tune in. So you tune in, dissolve, tune in, dissolve, tune in, dissolve. This is another way of saying touch and go, touch and go, touch and go.

## LABELING THOUGHTS

As we know, many thoughts arise in the midst of practice. “Well, back at home, what are they doing?” “When should I do my homework?” “What should I write about next?” “What should I paint?” “What's happening with my investments?” “I hate that guy who was so terrible to me.” “I would like to make love.” “What's the story with my parents?” All kinds of thoughts arise naturally. If you have lots of time to sit, endless thoughts occur.

We have already talked about labeling thoughts as part of the practice of meditation. It is a very simple technique: we reduce everything to thinking. Having discussed relating to the emotions in terms of touch and go, we should address the importance of also labeling emotions as thinking. Usually if you have low-level mental chatter, you are willing to label this as thought. But if you have deeply involved emotional chatter, or fights and struggles in your mind, you call those *emotions*, and you want to give them special prestige. Acknowledging emotional states of mind through the technique of touch and go does not mean that emotions deserve special privileges in our practice. We might say to ourselves, “I'm actually angry, it's *more* than my thought.” “I feel so horny, it's *more* than my thought.” That can easily become self-indulgence or a means of avoidance, a way of avoiding the realm of actual mind. In the practice of labeling our thoughts, it's important to view

whatever arises as just thinking: you're thinking you're horny; you're thinking you're angry. As far as meditation practice is concerned, none of your thoughts are regarded as VIPs. You think, you sit; you think, you sit; you think, you sit. You have thoughts, you have thoughts about thoughts, and further thoughts about those thoughts. Call them thoughts. You are thinking, you are constantly thinking, nothing but thinking. Everything is included in the thinking process, the constant thinking process: thought, nothing but thoughts and thought patterns.

## WALKING MEDITATION

Up to this point we have been focusing entirely on the sitting practice of meditation. However, there is also a practice of walking meditation. If you take part in a group retreat, it's very likely that you will be introduced to walking meditation as a practice that you do between sessions of sitting meditation. You may also do walking meditation practice at home by yourself, between sessions of sitting meditation, when you want to practice for a longer period of time.

In group situations, sometimes people treat walking meditation as an opportunity for dramatic display, to compensate for the fact that when you sit, you can't do very much, whereas when you stand up and walk, you can at least exercise your self-existence. That is regarding walking meditation as comic relief, a time to do something extraordinary, or self-exploratory, self-expressive. That is not advisable.

Walking practice is still practice. Instead of paying attention to your breath, you work with the movement of your legs and the overall awareness of walking. Your body still has good posture. You raise your right leg, taking a small step forward. Then you touch the sole of your foot to the floor, and then your toes. Then the left leg takes a step: your heel presses down, then the ball of your foot touches the ground, and then your toes; then the right leg steps forward again, and it continues like that. It's a very natural, ordinary walk.

Your eyes are open while you're walking, of course, but generally you lower your gaze, rather than looking up or looking around at everything. Usually, during walking meditation, you are moving in a circle with other

people around the room. Sometimes people walk quickly, almost racing relative to everybody else, or a person may walk *very* slowly. So you have to maintain an awareness of those in front of you and behind you.

In walking meditation you fold your arms at the level of your belly, with the right hand over the left. You tuck the fingers of your left hand in, making a fist around your thumb, and the fingers of your right hand cover your left fist. So your arms aren't just swinging or hanging at your sides.

Walking practice relates to your everyday life situation much more closely than sitting practice. It involves movement, and it is a transition from the sitting practice of meditation to what will happen at the end of meditation, when you rise from your meditation cushion and begin to move into walking in the street, speaking, working, and so on. So walking practice is an important link to postmeditation and mindfulness in action. However, it's still part of formal practice. Regarding it that way, as part of your mindfulness practice rather than as a break, you have to pay heed to it. You can do it somewhat deliberately but at the same time freely.

## **GROUP RETREAT**

### *Awareness between Sessions of Sitting*

If you plan to do a group retreat for an entire day or over a period of several days or more, you may have questions about how to handle yourself during the periods when you are not sitting. Should you just tiptoe around as if you were walking on eggs, still trying to hold on to your meditation experience? Or should you make a big splash in your interactions with people? Or should you be somewhat dumb and hesitant and try to play along with other people's energy? You will undoubtedly be given instructions for how to behave between meditation sessions. You may be asked to observe silence. Even when silent, however, you are still interacting with others and responding to situations. The point is not so much that you should tiptoe, or make a big splash, or be hesitant. Instead, you should try to recollect the sense of meditational awareness that has developed in your state of being; just continue that way. This doesn't mean especially working with the breath or



working with your walking during the breaks, but there is a *flash* of awareness, the *memory* that you sat. This was discussed in the chapter “Recollection.”

Also, remember your commitment to this particular course, this retreat. You have set your intention in being here. The attitude is not particularly moralistic or a question of behaving like good boys and good girls. It’s a basic recollection of why you are here. And you *are* here; you have sat and meditated; it’s simple and factual.

Another general recommendation for group retreat situations—one that I strongly recommend, as a matter of fact—is to minimize unnecessary chatter. This means you should refrain from conversing or commenting among yourselves. You limit your verbal statements to what is purely functional and necessary. For example, one might say, “Pass the salt,” or “Close the door.” Of course, you may be doing your retreat in complete silence. Functional talking is a kind of middle ground between that and just chattering away. It can be more challenging than silence, because you have to decide what is functional!

Another challenging aspect of a group retreat is the mealtimes, even if they’re conducted in silence. Mealtimes, I have observed, are often seen as a moment of release, a moment of freedom—which is unnecessary. I think we can approach this differently. One problem during meals can be unnecessary chatter, but even if that is not taking place, there can be a quality of meals as time off, a gap, a vacation. You are eating and drinking—no doubt having a relatively pleasant time—and you regard it as completely outside of what you are doing in the meditation hall. There’s a dichotomy, a shockingly big contrast, which is unnecessary. If you cultivate such an approach during the mealtimes or during personal time—thinking that this is your free time, your time to release energy—then obviously your sitting practice is going to feel like imprisonment. You are creating your own jail.

You might feel that the meditation hall is where serious practice takes place, and when you get out the door, everything’s free, back to normality or something like that. The physical environment may be somewhat isolated and restricted in a retreat setting, but you still may feel that you can indulge in your own free style during your personal time and proclaim your individuality in some way, even if you do so silently. By doing that, you might develop a

negative reaction toward the meditation hall, considering it a jail, while the other places, away from practice, come to represent freedom and having a good time.

The suggestion here is that we could even out the whole thing and have a good time all over the place. *This* is not so much a jail, and *that* is not so much a vacation, freedom, a holiday. Everything should be evened out. That is the basic approach: if you sit, if you stand, if you eat, if you walk—whatever you do is all part of the same good old world. You are carrying your world with you in any case. You cannot cut your world into different slices and put them into different pigeonholes.

We don't have to be so poverty-stricken about our life. We don't have to try to get a little chocolate chip from just one part of our life. All the rest will be sour, but here I can take a dip in pleasure! If your body is hot and you dip your finger in ice water, it feels good. In actual fact, it's painful at the same time, not completely pleasurable. If you really know the meaning of pleasure in the total sense, this dip in pleasure is a further punishment and an unnecessary trick that we play on ourselves.

In sum, the practice of meditation is not so much about a hypothetical attainment of enlightenment as it is about leading a good life. In order to learn how to lead a good life, a spotless life, we need continual awareness that relates directly and simply with life.

## SEVENTEEN

### *Meditation and the Fourth Moment*

MINDFULNESS IS A PROCESS OF growth and maturing that happens gradually rather than suddenly. You may celebrate your birthday on a particular day, but this doesn't mean that you suddenly go from being two years old to being three when you blow your candles out at your party. In growing up, there is a process of evolution and development. Meditation practice is a similar evolutionary process, one that takes place within you in accordance with your life situation.

There is continuity in the journey. You begin solidly, you progress solidly, and you evolve solidly. Don't expect magic on the meditation cushion. The idea of a sudden magical "zap" is purely mythical.

In reality, nothing can save us from a state of chaos or confusion unless we have acknowledged it and actually experienced it. Otherwise, even though we may be in the midst of chaos, we don't even notice it, although we are subject to it. On the path of meditation, the first real glimpse of our confusion and the general chaos is when we begin to feel uncomfortable. We feel that something is a nuisance. Something is bugging us constantly.

What is that? Eventually we discover that *we* are the nuisance. We begin to see ourselves being a nuisance to ourselves when we uncover all kinds of thought problems, emotional hang-ups, and physical problems in meditation. Before we work with anyone else, we have to deal with being a nuisance to ourselves. We have to pull ourselves together. We might get angry with ourselves, saying, "I could do better than this. What's wrong with me? I seem to be getting worse. I'm going backward." We might get angry with the whole

world, including ourselves. Everything, the entire universe, becomes the expression of total insult. We have to relate to that experience rather than rejecting it. If you hope to be helpful to others, first you have to work with yourself.

The first step, as you certainly know by this time, is to make friends with yourself. That is almost the motto of mindfulness experience. Making friends with yourself means accepting and acknowledging yourself. You work with subconscious gossip, fantasies, dreams—everything that comes up in your mind. And everything that you learn about yourself you bring back to the simple awareness of your body, your breath, and your thoughts.

Beginning to make friends with yourself brings relief and excitement. However, you should be careful not to get overly excited about your accomplishment. If last night's homework assignment was done well, it doesn't mean that you are finished with school. You are still a schoolboy or a schoolgirl. You have to come back to class, you have to work with your teacher, and you have to do more homework, precisely because you were successful. You have more work to do.

You begin to experience a greater sense of fundamental awareness. Such awareness acknowledges the boundaries of nonawareness, the boundaries of wandering mind. You begin to realize the boundary and the contrast. Your mindfulness is taking place, and your confusion, your mindlessness, is also taking place. You see both, but you don't make a big deal about it. You accept the whole situation as part of the basic overall awareness.

Not only are you mindful of your breath, your posture, and your thought process, you are also fundamentally aware. There is a quality of totality. You are aware of the room; you are aware of the rug; you are aware of your meditation cushion; you are aware of what color hair you have; you are aware of what you did earlier that day. You are constantly aware of such things.

Beyond that there is a nonverbal, nonconceptual awareness, an awareness that doesn't rely on facts and figures. You discover a fundamental, somewhat abstract level of awareness and of being. There is a feeling that "This is taking place. Something is happening right here." A sense of being—experience without words, without terms, without concepts, and without visualization—takes place. It is unnamable. We can't call it "consciousness" exactly, because consciousness implies that you are evaluating or conscious of sensory inputs.

We can't even really call it "awareness," which could be misunderstood. It's not simply awareness. It's a state of being. Being what? It is just being without any qualification. Are you being Jack? Are you being Jill? Are you being Smith? One never knows.

This may sound rather vague, but the experience is not as vague as all that. You experience a powerful energy, a shock, the electricity of being pulled back into the present constantly: here, here, here. It's happening. It's really taking place.

There is an interesting dichotomy in this situation. On the one hand, we don't know what it's all about. On the other hand, there is enormous precision, directness, and understanding. That is the state of fundamental awareness, or insight. You begin to see inside your mind on the level of nonverbal awareness. Nonverbal cognitive mind is functioning. You may say, "Now I hear the traffic; now I hear the cuckoo clock. Now I hear my wristwatch ticking. Now I hear my boss yelling at me." But you also have to say, "I hear, but I don't hear at the same time." Such totality is taking place. A very precise something or other is happening. That is the ultimate state of awareness. It is nonverbal, nonconceptual, and very electric. It is neither ecstasy nor a state of dullness. Rather, a state of "here-ness" is taking place, which we have referred to earlier as *nowness*.

*Nowness* in this sense is very similar to the fourth moment, which was introduced in [chapter 8, "The Present Moment."](#) This term, *the fourth moment*, may sound more mystical than what is meant. You have the past, present, and future, which are the three moments. Then you have something else taking place, a gap in time, which is called the fourth moment. The fourth moment is not a far-out or extraordinary experience. It is a state of experience that doesn't even belong to now. It doesn't belong to what might be, either. It belongs to a noncategory. We have to call it something, however. Thus, it is called the fourth moment. The fourth moment is the state of non-ego, going beyond the limitations of your habitual self. It is a very real experience, an overwhelming experience, in which nothing can be misunderstood. It is sometimes called the knowledge of egoless insight. The experience comes at you rather than you searching for it.

You are able to work with yourself and your life on the basis of that experience, through the constant reminders arising in everyday life, all your

little daily hassles. You forgot to pay the telephone bill, and the message from the phone company is getting heavier and heavier. They are about to turn off your phone or sue you. Your motorcycle is about to catch fire, because you are over-revving the engine. Your grandmother is dying. Your family is demanding your attention. You can't afford to forget about them. All kinds of past and present reminders appear.

Many problematic situations or even a general state of turmoil may arise in your life. When you look closely at where the problems came from and what they are all about, you may begin to experience the fourth moment. Problems come and problems go, but still remain problematic. That may seem like a cryptic statement, but in that enigma you may encounter the fourth moment. Even when you appear to have solved it, a problem remains a problem. Nothing dissolves into a love-and-lighty, beautiful, creamy honey-lotus lake. The problems remain potent, slightly painful, and sour—as if the world, the universe, were staring at you with a disapproving look. You haven't been quite as good or as wakeful as you should be. The world gives you that look of disapproval. When the sun shines, it looks at you. When the rooster cries cock-a-doodle-doo, it is saying the same thing. When someone's car honks, when the telephone rings, they are saying the same thing. There are ironic mockeries all over the place.

It is not that the devil is against you and trying to destroy you. It is not that some magicians have put a spell on you and are trying to get at you. Rather, the world is very powerfully in a subtle way trying to remind you to remember your fourth moment—*the* fourth moment.

That moment is the essence of insight and awareness. Experience becomes so real and precise that it transcends any reference point of any doctrine that you are practicing. Whether you are practicing mindfulness, Christianity, Buddhism, or psychology, you are practicing life. In fact, ironically, you find that you can't escape. You find that life is practicing you. It becomes so real and obvious.

Experiencing the fourth moment is quite important in the development of meditative awareness. At this point in your journey on the path of mindfulness, everything in your life begins to haunt you. Sometimes the haunting process takes the form of pleasurable confirmation. Sometimes it is painful and threatening. There is the feeling of a ghost haunting you all the

time. You can't get rid of it; you can't even call someone to exorcise it. That state of insight and simultaneously of being haunted is the experience of the fourth moment.

You feel that you are sitting and camping on the razor's edge, making campfires quite happily, yet knowing that you are on the razor's edge. You can't quite settle down and relax and build your campfire, yet you still stay on that point, on that spot.

That state of hauntedness is the state of ego, actually. Somebody in your internal mental family, some part of your being, is beginning to complain that they are getting uncomfortable messages. The awareness of the fourth moment cannot materialize unless there is that slight tinge of being haunted by your own egotism. The hauntedness of ego and the egoless insight work together. That is what creates our experience.

On the whole, we should regard our practice and our journey as experiential rather than as being based on programmed stages of development. At the moment you may be following a particular program of practice and study. You've made it to the first level, and now you want to progress to the second level, which begins on September 2. Although we do all kinds of things in that fashion, we should understand that in reality our experience isn't programmable in that way. Often students try to examine themselves so that they will know where they are on the path of meditation, but this doesn't seem to work. We have no way of knowing where we are in our practice or how we are doing on the path of mindfulness, as far as some standard evaluation is concerned. However, we do know that we started on a journey, that the journey is continuing, and that the journey takes time and requires real commitment to our individual experience.

Experience cannot happen unless both black and white, sweet and sour, work together. Otherwise, you are just absorbed into the sweet, or you are absorbed into the sour, and there is no experience. You have no way of working with yourself at all.

We should be a little circumspect, however, when we use the term *experience* to describe our journey on the path of meditation. Conventionally speaking, when you refer to a future experience, you have an idea and an expectation, some premonition of what the experience might be. Somebody tells you about it; you know roughly what it is and you prepare for it. You wait

for that experience to come to you. When it does, you exert yourself to fully experience whatever arises. In this scenario, everything is quite predictable.

But the experience of the fourth moment is not a programmable experience at all. It is an unconditioned experience that comes from the unconscious mind. This underlying consciousness, or the unconscious, is an abstract state of mind, a state of literal thinking that doesn't have logic formulated yet. It is an ape instinct or a radar instinct. In fact, we don't know where this experience comes from. It just comes. There is no point in trying to track it back to a source. The fourth moment doesn't come from anywhere. It simply exists.

It is as if you are taking a cold shower, and suddenly hot burning water starts to come out of the showerhead. It is so instant and so real. For a moment, when the hot water first hits your body, you still think it's cold. Then you begin to feel that something is not quite right with that particular coldness. It begins to burn you. It is unprogrammed experience, where you simultaneously experience hot and cold water, each in its own individuality.

The present is the third moment. It has a sense of presence. You might say, "I can feel your presence." Or "I can feel the presence of the light when it's turned on. Now there is no darkness." The present provides security: you know where you are, right here. You keep your flashlight in your pocket. If you encounter darkness, you take out your flashlight and shine the light to show yourself where you are going. You feel enormous relief, created by that little spot of light in front of you.

The fourth moment, on the other hand, is a state of totality and total awareness that doesn't need reassurance. It is happening. It is there. You feel the totality. You perceive not only the beam of light from the flashlight but also the space all around you at the same time. The fourth moment is a much larger version of the present.

The experience of the fourth moment sharpens your intelligence. Without this experience of egoless insight, you may just accept things naively, and such naiveté may be the basis for self-deception. You turn on the cold shower, and you expect everything to be okay. Everything seems predictable. You are not prepared for any reminders. Then this little twist of hot water takes place. Whenever there is that kind of a reminder, it is part of the fourth moment. If there is a reminder, everything becomes very real. If you don't have any



reminders, you are at the mercy of chaos and confusion. The sitting practice of meditation provides constant reminders, and that is why it is so important. It boils down to that.

## EIGHTEEN

### *The Sword in Your Heart*

AMERICA, LIKE MANY OTHER parts of the world, suffers from excess. There are too many cars, discarded plastic containers, jet fuel, and other sources of pollution and waste. There are too many choices in the supermarket. We have so many brands and varieties to choose from that we can't decide which particular flavor of which kind of food we want to eat. So we buy too much, which creates further garbage, further pollution. The more passionately interested we are in every detail of every thing we might buy, the more choices we have, that much more junk we acquire. Then, all this "stuff" begins to make us claustrophobic. This applies to our psychology as much as to physical belongings. Having so many choices of this or that psychology or approach to self-improvement encourages us to jump from one approach to another. It can become self-destructive. We end up producing further neurosis rather than further sanity.

Our basic makeup is a conglomerate of mind and body. We are intelligent, methodical, logical, perceptive, intuitive, and emotional—with a touch of animal instinct thrown in. Sometimes human beings are referred to as beasts or creatures, but there is more to us than that, and therefore hope, promise, and salvation don't have to come from outside. They come from within ourselves.

This country has more than enough raw material to work with: information collected and collated, books written, conflicts generated, and problems identified. Now is the time for us to get back to the source, back to reality.

That reality provides all kinds of clues, and all the clues encourage us to wake from our dream world. They bring us back to square one.

We have to look into what we are, who we are, and what we are doing, basically speaking. If we do not investigate our makeup, we could encounter many difficulties, misunderstandings, and blind corners. Before we can solve our problems, we have to introduce ourselves to the problems. Otherwise we might think we are doing something special, something good and even liberating, but we might find ourselves doing the reverse. When we have considered the problems and the possibilities, we will be in a much better position to commit ourselves to a discipline such as the practice of meditation, which can provide us with the backbone, or foundation, and the confidence for our journey.

Each one of us has particular aspects, unique characteristics. You might have a tendency toward passion, aggression, or ignorance, or other emotional styles. You might be turned on a lot of the time, or angry, or spaced out. None of those qualities is rejected; all are included as part of our investigation into who we are.

Most of the time we play at being stupid, exceedingly stupid. That stupidity manifests in a number of ways. When we don't want to hear or see the real truth, we close ourselves off and make ourselves deaf and dumb to situations. We play at being extraordinarily naive, with no interest in exploring the sharp points in our world. We ignore any uncomfortable messages provided by the world. We become completely numb. On the other hand, sometimes we use our intellect to confuse the whole issue, which becomes another form of numbness.

Those habitual patterns are ways that we reject parts of ourselves and prevent ourselves from discovering inherent wisdom. Such wisdom could penetrate the shell that we usually create around ourselves. But it's very painful to actually tear away the shell, the skin that provides security and protects our sense of me-ness, I-ness. So we tend to close ourselves in as completely as we can.

We sometimes blame our reluctance to open ourselves on lack of experience: "I'm not learned enough." "I don't have enough practice." But in fact our hesitation is usually based on an unwillingness to do the hard work of

relating with ourselves. We find it too painful and unpleasant. We don't actually want to go through a process of unmasking.

We might call ourselves by a different name, put on different clothes, and even move to a different geographic or social environment to totally shield ourselves from criticism or exposure. The necessary "unskinning" process is covered over and replaced by gigantic wishful thinking. We don't really want to give in, give up, be exposed, or become naked at all. Instead, we often add extra baggage. In the name of a self-exposé, in the name of nakedness, in the name of complete openness, in the name of selflessness or egolessness, we put on a suit of armor. We proclaim, "This is it; this is the way to make yourself naked." You pronounce your new suit of armor, your further mask, as your vision of what you should be.

Ever since we were separated or popped out from the fathomless, nonexistent, beginningless, endless *That*, the wholeness of being, we've been trying to create our suits of armor, our masks, and shields of all kinds. If we have enough bravado, we also strategize and collect suitable weapons so that we can defend ourselves if anybody tries to penetrate our defenses. We might kill someone on the spot if he or she is too nasty or comes too close to us.

Isn't this going a bit too far? Really. But who's kidding whom? How much can you actually kid yourself, your colleagues, and all the others, whoever they are? Such a self-deceptive approach not only affects us but also begins to affect our children, our parents, our spouses, relatives, and friends. Then we're all brewing this neurotic soup all the time. We may finally manage to achieve the ultimate neurosis. We might achieve a monumental world of neurosis, speed, craziness, aggression, passion, ignorance, and jealousy, in the name of peace, war, religion, education, government, the police force, the proletariat, students, schoolteachers, professors, poets, writers, and everyone else.

We can achieve a lot in the name of our deception. But no matter how beautiful the paintings may be; how fantastic the poetry may be; how smoothly your car runs; how economically successfully your household is functioning; how great the relationships may be with your parents, your wife, and your husband; and how beautifully educated your children may be, growing up like beautiful young flowers—something is still missing. Something doesn't quite click. Something is absent.

I'm not saying that what we do in this world in our social and economic setups is not worthwhile. Rather, I'm pointing to the style of our behavior when we don't want to open ourselves to others. We may introduce ourselves to each other as if we were good friends. We may fight with each other as if we were bad enemies. Nevertheless we don't manifest completely who we are and what we are. We don't fully reveal ourselves. We still want to preserve and protect ourselves from the big wound, the big heart, within us.

I once saw an exhibit of swords at the Japan Society in New York. It took a craftsman a year to make each one, and each was exquisitely beautiful. These works of art express the sharp, penetrating, and naked qualities of reality. That sharpness and directness are what is missing in our lives when we are afraid of ourselves. The artful dignity of a Japanese samurai sword also symbolizes how we can cut neurosis from within rather than striking an outer enemy.

Such a fantastic sword is in us *already* as our awake nature. We should be proud that we possess such embryonic swords in our hearts. A lot of the time, however, we're trying to make sure that the sword in our heart isn't disturbed. We don't want to wake it up. We're afraid to jump and walk, let alone leap, in case that sword might awaken and might cut through us, from inside out.

Our self-protective mechanism is really the expression of ego's mania. In the sense in which I'm using the word here, ego is not the actual heart of who we are but instead is the shield that surrounds the penetrating sword that exists in our heart. Since we don't want to awaken or reveal the sword, we develop all kinds of shielding, a whole process of covering it up.

We're also afraid of demands from the outside, anything that might get inside us and encourage our inner sword to come out. We're very careful not to hug anybody too intimately. We don't want to do anything that might bring out the sword in our heart. We've become afraid, cowardly, and deceptive, so fearful of our own sanity.

However, ultimately we can't get away from our own wisdom. The penetrating sharpness that exists within us is an irritation that can't be ignored. Because this beautiful sword exists, because such a sharp blade and fantastically tempered sword is already in our heart, we have to work hard to avoid noticing it.

We make a shield out of concrete, foam padding, newspapers, whatever we have, to make sure that this truth within us can't get out. We don't realize that if that truth were allowed to come out, there wouldn't be any problem with it at all. When you begin to realize how sharp and penetrating your intelligence is and how open you could be, it is such a revelation.

Once you begin to experience the truth, you don't find your habitual occupations that interesting anymore. We use them as entertainment, a way to kill time and reinforce our sense of survival. When we entertain ourselves, we don't have to expose ourselves completely. It would be messy, and we're somewhat afraid of that messiness.

As well, there is some arrogance that prevents you from opening up completely. If you let go of your self-centered watcher, you won't be able to see yourself becoming a fantastic person. What would be the fun of that? You tell yourself that, in the end, when you see how great you are, *then* you'll actually give up your self-centeredness. That's your story line, your theory, but the truth is that, if you feel you're becoming great, you'll want to hold on to that experience. Your egomania reinforces itself. It's like becoming a little dictator, a short-lived Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, or Mao Tse-tung.

The alternative, which is called egolessness, doesn't actually mean having "less" ego as opposed to "more." We are talking about discovering the nonexistence of such a thing at all. What we usually call "me" or "myself" is just the padding we put around our heart. That padding has to be, not rejected, but pulled away or penetrated. Often we think of opening as something that results from an external force coming into us, making a slit in our skin, and finally opening up our heart. In this case, our heart opens from within.

However, opening is not automatic. There has to be a definite commitment to actually surrender, give, open up, and abandon the usual securities around us. That ongoing dedication to openness is an important part of the journey, or the path, of meditation. Sometimes you might waffle in your commitment, feeling that your goal or destination is unclear. You hope that if you just keep on going, you'll get somewhere. You'll achieve something worthwhile. In actuality, if you aren't willing to work on yourself and you don't have a desire to open and to shed your self-centered egotism, you are getting nowhere.

All the meditation instruction that is provided to you may be fantastic, wonderful. Nevertheless, it could be a waste of time. It's up to you. How you make your journey will determine whether you make junk out of a genuine treasure. You aren't going to be zapped or saved on the spot. If you take such an attitude, you won't get anywhere. This doesn't apply just to meditation. It's also true in the everyday world. If you are a businessperson who thinks you are going to be a millionaire tomorrow—you think you will be zapped into "millionaire-ship"—well, that does not often occur. If you are working on a difficult relationship with your parents, your husband, your wife, your boss, or your children, there is no sudden zap that will solve everything. You might hope for a breakthrough, so that tomorrow you can just relax and smile and everything will be all right. That's not going to work.

A sudden zap only works in your microwave oven. You put your food in, you zap it, and it gets cooked instantly. Even that requires preparation, however. You have to buy the food first. Then you can put it in the oven, but the result may not be all that exciting. Often, the dish tastes rather strange.

Similarly, in the realm of mindfulness and meditation you can't expect a transcendental microwave oven. No achievement happens all of a sudden. There is a process of growth, a gradual process of developing ourselves. The process is systematic. No one is going to save us on the spot. Our progress is up to us. We need to ask ourselves if we are willing to undergo the complete operation. Do we want the sword to come out of our heart or not?

## NINETEEN

### *Galaxies of Stars, Grains of Sand*

ONE OF OUR GREATEST FEARS is the fear of losing our identity, our selves. We may associate the loss of self with mental instability or with dying and our fear of death. However, being less self-centered and discovering a more open state of being, one that isn't so rigidly defined, could be viewed as a very positive and sane development. On a very mundane level, we may experience a momentary unexpected gap in our story line or thought process. We might consider this a moment of freedom, but our usual response is to panic and try to cover up the fact that we've lost the thread. Our panic takes the form of bewilderment and confusion, which enable us to play deaf and dumb, ignoring what we've seen.

In meditation practice, people sometimes equate dwelling in bewilderment with a meditative state of being. They may confuse being spaced out with experiencing openness and relaxation. They may try to make bewilderment into a comfortable home or nest in their practice. We often have a tendency to try to solidify our confusion as the proof that we exist, not just in meditation but in many aspects of life. We try to maintain the solid sense of self because we mistakenly think that we can't function or thrive if we don't have a solid, self-centered ego. As we discussed in the previous chapter, this is mistaking the mask and the suit of armor that we're wearing for the real body, the real birthday suit.

At some point, in order to maintain ourselves, we may even decide to upgrade our armor, because the original patchwork is not doing a perfect job. Occasional glimpses of uncharted territory are getting through, which is



disconcerting. So we look for a brand-new and improved stainless-steel suit of armor, beautifully painted, with an expressive lacquered mask. We may try to buy our armor wholesale, or we may have to pay a hefty price for it. We may be able to use mail order or get it at a spiritual supermarket. Sometimes we can even get our armor for free. But whether we pay for it or receive it as a personal gift, we are still purchasing a way to shield ourselves from our basic bewilderment about ourselves and our lives.

Then, we learn to incorporate that new armor into our lives, so that we can walk around in that suit and even fight in it. Our approach is like that of the medieval knights, whose armor was so cumbersome and heavy that they had to be cranked up onto their horses, and then their spears and swords were handed to them. Similarly, we try to protect our facade all the time, at any cost, in the name of religious, social, educational, technological, and domestic realities.

There are a number of aspects or stages in the development of this mistaken sense of self or ego. This development does not take place over time, like a baby growing up into an adult. We create all the complications almost simultaneously, all the time, over and over again. We solidify the fundamental basic deception into a patchwork suit, and then we layer on other patchworks immediately, one after another.

The first patchwork is connected with the panic that was already alluded to. It is based on our reaction to our basic bewilderment. Altogether, the construction of the false self, or the ego, is a response to feeling confused and lost. We want to find ourselves. We think that we can prove ourselves to ourselves. The truth is that we cannot say that we are one entity, one existence. Our individuality is really a heap or a pile of experiences. We are made out of experiences of achievement, disappointment, hope, fear, and millions and billions and trillions of other things. All these little fragments put together are what we call our self and our life. Our pride of self-existence or sense of being is by no means one entity. It is a heap, a pile of stuff. It has some similarities to a pile of garbage. When we refer to something as garbage, we are speaking not about one thing but about a collection of many different things that make up the garbageness. All these elements are collected and mixed with one another. As they decay, they become extremely

smelly. What we call our selves or our ego is similarly an amalgam of many things put together.

So who we are and what we are is uncertain. We think we exist; we think our name is so and so; we think we have a soul or ego of some kind; but really we have no idea how and why and what is exactly the case. Logically we may be able to justify our existence in detail, but experientially, we are much more uncertain. This me, this seeming experiencer, seems to be experiencing its me-ness, thisness. Something seems to be happening here. Something is cooking, as they say. This uncertainty and our attempts to secure ourselves in response to it make up the first aspect or layer of ego, which is a sense of form.

The creation of form here is like a blue cheese that is constantly fermenting, growing one mold on top of another, all the time. Because you don't really exist in the way that you think you do, you are constantly trying to secure your existence. You are like that blue cheese, which tries to maintain itself by continually growing more mold, until the mold consumes the cheese, which dissolves into nothingness, a pile of moldy dust. We are not one wholesome, whole entity at all. We are a collection of things, all of which are uncertain as to whether they exist or not. So every cell of this consciousness is defeating itself and uncertain about itself. It's a dream we unsuccessfully try to maintain. That is the basic quality of form: a fermenting blue cheese that eventually consumes itself.

Although the struggle is futile and illusory, we still fight for our existence, trying to gain our glory by existing. We may even try to implicate religion in our plot. The essential wisdom or truth of most great religions is basically egoless to begin with, but that can be twisted, not just individually but on a societal level as well. Societies may grow out of a particular religious outlook, and then the state may become the instrument to protect religion and persecute nonbelievers.

I'm not talking in terms of a particular tradition as ego-oriented, but I am speaking in terms of how egotism affects people's minds, affects them personally. I'm not saying that we should tear down the churches or knock down the idols. That approach won't work. If we are at all interested in a genuine contemplative or meditative journey, we can't start by attacking things from the outside. We have to start from within. We need to look at

where something went wrong or where something went right. We have to start from the inside, which is our mind, our consciousness, our state of being.

We may ask ourselves, how on earth did we get ourselves into this mess? And *who* did it? Whom can we blame? Who made the first big mistake? Who's responsible? You may ask these questions, but I don't think you'll find a single individual who made a gigantic enormous mistake. You might be tempted to blame organized religion. You could blame Christ; you could blame Muhammad; you could blame Moses; you could blame Buddha. However, trying to place blame distracts us from understanding how we got into this mess. Just between us, I'll tell you a secret: the problem came from being unable to relate to *ourselves*. Christ is here within us, and Moses is here, and Buddha and Muhammad are here, too. They're all here. We might be able to think of several hundred key religious figures and other paragons of human wisdom, and from some point of view, every one of them is in your head. Neither am I saying that religion is the answer nor that we should blame religion or tradition for our human predicament. We can't avoid the real issues by placing the blame on history, psychology, politics, or religion, and then turn to meditation as a clean and pure alternative. More to the point: whatever we're into, if we say that it's the only way, the only promise, it's very suspicious.

The development of our confused self or ego that I'm describing here is related to this sense of feeling out our lives, trying to find out who is for us and against us, who is to blame and who or what will save us. You try to *feel* the sense of tradition, *feel* the resentment, *feel* the confusion, *feel* how we can actually identify ourselves, our conceptualized ego, with some concept or security that we can latch on to.

So the first stage in ego's development is latching on to form, trying to create a home in our confusion and bewilderment. The second stage is feeling. Or we could call it a sense of touch. We try to feel out or reach out to touch, to determine who is on our side and who is against us.

If you are in your bedroom in the dark, and the electricity isn't working in your house, you try to find your way out of the room by using your hands to touch the walls and things around you. You feel your way out of the room, as though you were a blind person. When you're feeling your way in the dark,

you're trying to avoid running into things, and you want to find the door. If there is a big column, a sharp corner, or a piece of furniture that you might bump into, you try to avoid it. You also want to avoid tripping over anything that might be in your way. You might try to find your way to the bathroom. You might try to reach the closest window, so that you can pull back the curtains and see the moon, or open the window and let some fresh air in. So there's a quality of feeling out whether things are for or against you, good or bad. This primitive sense of feeling your way around in the dark is like ego's primitive attempt to feel out the textures of life. Altogether, this nonentity called me, myself, and I is trying to create a bag or a container for itself. It is trying to survey and secure its territory.

The next aspect of this project is impulse. Having developed some rough relationship or connection with the phenomenal world, and knowing which textures are smooth, which are rough, and which are irrelevant, we have reactions to those things on a very primitive level. We have the impulse to respond to situations. Whatever message seems to be coming to us, we want to latch on to that information and secure it as a reinforcement of ourselves. Our impulsive response to situations is to draw them in, push them away, or ignore them. Whatever appears, we are ready to leap forward, leap back, or stand our ground.

Having developed a rough sense of form and some feeling for our world, and having developed an impulse to respond, or crudely communicate, now we reach a stage where we manage to put our feelings into categories. If you stayed in that dark house groping around for a long enough time, you would begin to form an idea of what was in the space. You know that there's a staircase down over there, so you won't go in that direction. There's a stone column in front of you, so you have to be careful not to bump into it. The window is in one direction, food is in the kitchen over there somewhere, and the bathroom is down the hall. So although we are basically completely blind, we still develop some sense of direction, almost as an animal instinct. That very basic sense of categorizing is the beginning of concept, which is the next stage in developing a solid sense of self. It is not the product of wisdom—it is just labeling and naming things, quite stupidly.

It's as though we had given birth to a son or a daughter. Realizing that we are the parents of this particular child, we look around and try to find a name

for him or her. The first thing we see is a piece of rock, so we say, “Let’s call him Rock.” Or if we see a spider, we say, “Let’s call her Spider.” We feel pretty good about that. We are making ourselves so smart out of our stupidity. This approach is devoid of any vision or dance. We’re merely finding the most convenient label or name for our child. We don’t want to do any research or think about it anymore. We’re playing it extremely safe.

Then we might go beyond that crude conceptual framework, trying to intellectualize the whole thing further. At this point, you develop further concepts, further reference points for what you are doing. “What happens if I fall down the stairs? I’ll hurt myself.” You refresh and embellish your concepts again and again. “If I run into a stone column, what will happen? I might hurt my forehead.” We begin to put our feelings and impulses into more developed, almost scholarly, categories: “If I find my window, I get fresh air. If I get to the bathroom, I can relieve myself. And if I can find the kitchen, I can satisfy myself by eating food.” Soon everything is neatly conceptualized.

The last process is what’s known as consciousness. This is seemingly far from the fundamental bewilderment. Here, consciousness develops as a sense of totality and emotionality. We learn how to love and hate the whole process of our lives. “Those stairs are terrible. I hate them. And the column is bad, too. I don’t like it because it might cause me to break my nose or bang my head and see stars. And that bathroom is good; it gives me relief. Food is fantastic; it will feed me, sustain me.” So we begin to not just label things but to enshrine them as very good or very bad, for *me*! Although we possess all these faculties—our nose, our eyes and our ears, our body, our tongue and mouth, and our brain and our heart—still, basically we are not using them to see the world in a way that is clear, sharp, or unbiased. We are still playing blind, deaf, and dumb. We are essentially asleep. We may think we’re having a good rest, a good sleep, but we’re really operating out of a combination of self-indulgence, delusion, and horrific nightmares all put together.

We also develop further mechanisms within consciousness. If we feel bored, we manufacture dreams of the past, expectations of the future, and a private cinema show. We can manufacture the illusion of a whole continuous scheme, which allows us to survive in this dark house, with the stairs, the column, the window, the bathroom, and the kitchen. We also generate

subconscious gossip, as well as intense visual imagery and sensory experiences, quotations from the past, glimpses of past experiences, and future expectations all coming to us. The thought process acts as a screen, a thick shield to protect us. Finally, we not only have our heavy armor, but we have our whole castle secured; we have foot soldiers and subjects. We have become the king or queen, the ruler of the ego realm. We build a whole kingdom out of nothingness, which we call the world, actually.

Even after all this work, however, we still might find ourselves and our world disconcerting. We can't seem to put our finger on what is me, what is you. It all seems very uncertain. It's not because we are confused or stupid. Even the most intelligent and wise people couldn't figure this out. We all find ourselves lost in the piles of stuff that make up our experience of life. We feel completely lost much of the time, which is a true experience, in some sense. On the other hand, we could say that we were never lost because there was never anything to be found. The process of ego formation is like the constant churning out of galaxies and galaxies of stars, or grains of sand. Things are forming their own shape, dissolving, forming their shape and dissolving again. Recognizing that is the basic point of reviewing these stages or components of the self.

It's not that once upon a time there was the first bewilderment and now we exist on the fifth level of consciousness. The experience of a separate self or ego is a personal experience that happens all the time, constantly, in our state of being. Every moment has form, feeling, impulse, concept, and consciousness. That process is taking place on the spot, over and over again. This experience of our world is not bad. This is not about the Fall of Man, or anything like that. The stairs are not bad; the column is not bad; the bathroom and the dining room are not good. Those are just reference points we create. And without those, we can't actually experience anything at all. So they are necessary and important for us to relate to, in order to see how bewildered we are at this point. It's important to know and understand these facts of life, these patchworks.

The practice of meditation provides a way to work with this complicated experience of mind. In meditation, our attitude is not to label the self or ego as a villain or an evil force that needs to be destroyed. It is our stepping-stone. The only material we have to work with is our experience of ourselves, so it is

our starting point. From this point of view, we should celebrate that we have ego. Therefore, we have some hope of discovering sanity.

## TWENTY

### *The Fringe of Our Emotions*

IN THIS CHAPTER we are going to talk about how to work with our emotions from both a narrow egotistical point of view and from a more open perspective. The characterization of ego here basically highlights its confused and self-centered side. As we have seen in the previous chapter, when we are trying to maintain the illusion of a fixed, permanent self, or ego, we occupy ourselves by constantly looking for new ways to prove the validity of its existence. One of our most powerful strategies is our involvement with emotional projections. We use aggression, passion, ignorance, and other confused manifestations of our emotions as ways to maintain our story lines about ourselves.

Building up these projections is like creating a sculpture of a dog and then deciding to dress it up. We make a costume for it. We put different clothes on the dog, based on whether we decide it's a boy or a girl dog, and whether we decide it's a priest dog or a fashion model dog. We dress it up, and then we gaze and gaze at it. Then, suddenly, to our surprise, the dog begins to move. Why, if *we* made this sculpture, should it be able to move on its own? It begins to haunt us. We created a naked dog, but then we decided to dress it up, which is laying further concepts or projections on it. To our surprise, our concept seems to take on a life of its own and begins to haunt us. You might say that's how we built New York City.

Sometimes our emotions produce dramatic upheavals. At other times, we feel quite calm, almost absent of any emotionality. However, no matter what is happening in our state of mind, ego wants to reinforce the undercurrent of



the emotions flowing, because the energy of the emotions helps to fortify a bloated sense of self. To restate this: When we are filled with emotion, it seems that something, possibly something quite exciting, is happening and that there is a substantial entity at the center of the activity. When ego co-opts the emotions in this way, they function like the limbs of ego's enlarged mental body, extending its reach and reinforcing its hold. Attaching the thought process to the emotions is the key here. Thoughts are employed as the veins and arteries that circulate the blood of ego through the limbs. Thoughts also function as the nervous system that carries impulsive messages back and forth from the limbs to central headquarters, the apparent heart and brain of ego.

Using thoughts in this way, ego hopes to become powerful and self-sufficient, generating its own energy, no longer needing to communicate or reach out to any foreign elements to maintain itself. Once this system is well established, then when there is an absence of emotional upheaval, ego generates its own dramas—so that even within a relatively calm state, fundamental panic and feelings of irritation and paranoia are generated, which cause us to initiate self-protective mechanisms. Ego's scheme is to appear constantly vulnerable to attack. When we feel this kind of vague vulnerability or anxiety, we guard ourselves and reinforce the whole area of ego. From ego's point of view, this is the ideal situation, creating a complete world that uses our thoughts and emotions to maintain our self-centeredness.

Meditation is a powerful tool to work with this pattern of projection. To cut through the efficient work of ego and dismantle the barriers it throws up to protect its central headquarters, we begin by working on the circulatory and the nervous systems of ego, that is, by working on the thought process. The complications and confusion of our thought process are there to ensure that ego's extremities, the conflicting emotions, remain securely connected to ego's heart and brain. If the efficiency of this system is disrupted and set into chaos, then it becomes easier to work directly on dismantling the fundamental structure of our egotism. By applying mindfulness, the basic technique of meditation, we bring the existing thought patterns into a simple situation, as opposed to the complicated one that ego has constructed. The practice we already have, the practice of meditation, undercuts ego's circulation system, its manipulation of the thought process. We do this by relating simply to posture, breathing, and labeling our thoughts.

We have many kinds of thoughts. There is the heavy-handedness of case-history thoughts. There are cunning foxlike thoughts and slippery fishlike thoughts, as well as grasshopper-like thoughts, leaping from one highlight to another. The way to work with all these aspects of our thought process is to simplify them into the basic practice.

This approach to meditation is not introspective or inwardly focused. If we try to work on ourselves by penetrating the depths or so-called deeper levels of thought, we may become introverted and we may intellectualize or complicate the whole process of meditation, rather than simplifying it. The tendency to centralize everything within ourselves by focusing on “me” and “my” and “my meditation” may be encouragement for the ego. It makes the ego feel that somebody is home, or somebody’s at the office conducting business. This approach supports the illusion of centralized authority and efficiency within us.

To work with the problem of self-centeredness, the practice of meditation should get us out of the red tape of ego as much as possible. The basic practice is to relate with sitting, breathing, and walking from the point of view of awareness. This approach is outward facing. It is engaging our actual living situation. In the practice of meditation, physical sensations, movements, and our breathing all relate with the environment around us, the world outside. These aspects of our practice aren’t purely focused within the body.

Centralizing energy inside the body is trying to hold on to the energy, which may increase tension and tightness. In the end, a person may begin to hate himself, because he hates the struggle that he’s going through. In extreme cases, he may even want to destroy himself, to release himself from this internalized experience.

The alternative, stepping outside the ego, is boycotting the centralized idea of oneself. This approach is a refreshing process of opening by applying the principle of right mindfulness. This is not just ordinary mindfulness but mindfulness that is right on the spot. This applies not only to formal meditation practice but also to everyday life, to mindfulness in action. Here, mindfulness is complete identification or oneness with your technique and your activity. You don’t try to be mindful, but you recognize that you are in a state of mindfulness already. It is a way of working with yourself in which you become one with whatever techniques you are using.

In our daily lives there are many routine tasks that involve repeating an action over and over again: swimming laps, stacking wood, vacuuming, washing dishes, brushing our teeth, shoveling snow, filing papers in a drawer or on your computer. Any repetitive, routine activity can be an aspect of our mindfulness practice. These activities provide opportunities to begin working with mindfulness in everyday life. Eventually, all activities can be part of the practice of mindfulness in action. This is not a replacement for formal practice, but our daily lives should also not be separate from mindfulness.

If you identify with the action that you are repeating over and over again, it can be an experience of mindfulness. You can experience being absolutely right there, on the spot and being one with the action. It is the expression of right mindfulness in ordinary life.

Applying mindfulness in everyday life makes our experience much more spacious, and it also brings an awareness of the whole environment. That is the sign or hallmark of developing insight: starting to see the situation as a whole. If you are stacking wood, you are not only mindful of piling one log on top of another, but you are also aware of the whole woodpile and the space around it. If you're swimming in a lake, you have an awareness of the whole expanse of the water. There is greater awareness, as distinct from simple mindfulness. Mindfulness is primarily the aspect of the technique that is being right on the spot, and awareness is feeling the environment around that mindfulness. Awareness is more panoramic.

If you are watching the road too intently when you drive on the highway, you might miss your exit, because you're only paying attention to the road in front of you and you don't see the exit signs. You may be watching the car in front of you and the car behind you very mindfully, but if you're not aware of the bigger space, you might miss your exit. New drivers are often very cautious, paying a lot of attention to the speed limit and being very mindful of other cars on the road. When you first learn to drive, that may be a very good idea. Eventually, however, in addition to being mindful of the details, you also need an overall awareness as you drive.

If you purchase a new automobile, when you first drive it, you are very caught up in how the car accelerates, where the gearshift is, what all the lights on the dashboard mean, and other little details. But as you get to know your vehicle, you begin to tune in to the size of the car and how it operates, how

easy it is to accelerate or to stop, and things like that. At a certain point it's as though your awareness becomes one with the car, so to speak. It's as if the car is your body. You are no longer calculating each movement, but you intuitively know how to handle your car, how to park it and drive it. You begin to feel as though the car is almost driving itself, rather than that you are driving the car. You feel that you are just making little adjustments to how it's driving. That's if you are a good driver. If you're a bad driver, then there will be lots of *you* involved in your driving.

In a similar way, in the practice of meditation, if you are tuned in to the environment, awareness or insight becomes part of your basic being, part of your ordinary behavior pattern. Awareness dictates to you, from that point of view. And at a certain point you may feel that you don't have to apply a technique in the formal practice of meditation. You almost feel as if meditation is conducting you rather than you are conducting the practice of meditation as such. You develop natural awareness as you start to relate to the total environment. This occurs as you become more acquainted with the practice and feel more relaxed with the breathing as well as other aspects of the technique.

The continuity of awareness links meditation practice with everyday life. Whether you're talking, eating, or walking—whatever you are doing takes place within a larger environment. With awareness, you recognize that you and your activities are all part of the environment. Connecting with the wholeness of the environment brings oneness with the action, making each activity more precise and direct. Then there's no room for ego's panic. You are able to cut the chaotic aspect of the thinking process, because at that point you are completely joined with the situation, not separate from what is there. That enables you to step out of the complicated thought process.

As this awareness expands, you also gain insight into your emotions. To begin with, you may only be able to approach the fringe of your emotions, not yet the heart of them. However, you are already able to see the emotions much more as they are, with their dynamic qualities and their simplicity as well. You also see that there is more to the emotions than just the intense highlights. You become aware of the larger emotional environment, realizing that the emotions have to function in a wider space. Anger and hatred come out of an environment of aggression. Passion and grasping come out of an

environment of seduction. As you see this larger space, the emotions no longer have a cloudy, mysterious quality, but they are part of a living situation. Then, eventually, the emotions can be seen in their complete perfection—which is something we'll talk more about in the next chapter.

But to begin with, we should understand how meditation practice is a simple way of stepping out of the neurotic and chaotic aspects of the thought process. We can simplify everyday life, as well as bring simplicity to the sitting practice of meditation. Relating to both practice and daily life as fully as possible, being right on the dot in terms of technique, will bring us into an open situation where we don't have to guard against anything or concentrate on anything, either. We find that the meditative aspect of the situation is there already. That is the basic principle of how meditation allows us to step out of fundamental self-deception.

This approach is not cutting off the thought process altogether but is loosening it up. Thoughts become transparent and loose, so that they can pass through or float around in our minds more easily. Thoughts are often very heavy and sticky, and they hang around, demanding that we pay attention to them. But with this approach, the thought process becomes relaxed and fluid, fundamentally transparent.

In this way, we learn to *relate* to our thought process, rather than trying to attain a state without thoughts altogether. Thoughts have fundamental intelligence and energy to them, so you don't want to cut off the thought process. Rather, thoughts maintain their energy, but they become less solid and less irritating.

When our thoughts are less connected to maintaining egotistic self-centeredness, we appreciate life much more fully. Existence seems more colorful and beautiful. In terms of the projection of the dog that we started with, when you realize its nonexistence, you gain much greater appreciation for the real thing, the real dog.

It is like the difference between plastic and real flowers. Real flowers are much more beautiful, in part because of their impermanence. People appreciate the seasons, the autumn and the spring, because the seasons are a process of change. Each season is a precious time. In this way, impermanence is beauty.

We could also call this living quality nowness. Nowness is so fresh. It has nothing at all to do with the past or the future. It is absolutely pure, primevally pure. The present is right here.

## TWENTY - ONE

### *The Heart of Emotion*

THERE IS NO SUCH THING as an ideal state of meditation. Awareness allows us to relate to our mental processes and to see the fundamental expression of mind as it is, including our thoughts. The meditator may find that many thoughts recur during the meditative state. These thoughts should be seen as waves on the ocean. They are part of our intelligence. When they aren't armed or heavy-handed anymore, they have a transparent quality. Thoughts also develop an evenness when we recognize that, fundamentally, nobody is trying to fight against anything.

From this experience we learn a different way of looking at life. Life is no longer warfare. Rather, it contains a quality of dance, and we develop an appreciation for its flowing process. With that basic attitude, we find that it's quite easy to relate to thoughts. Nothing is being conquered, and nothing has to be destroyed. Instead we develop a friendly attitude toward ourselves and toward our thought process. We realize that nothing has to be subdued or suppressed.

Seeing the transparent quality of things as they are brings us into a new dimension of life. It also brings an absence of aggression and speed, so that finally we are able to fully enter into the territory of our emotions, both in their conflicted and in their pure state. We have discussed how the practice of meditation works with the thought process in dealing with the fringe of our emotional structure. The emotions are the basic mechanisms that trigger grasping or a battle mentality. Being friendly to ourselves, nothing has to be regarded as gain or loss, hope or fear, anymore. In our meditation practice,

things are then easy and smooth, accompanied by a certain amount of discipline.

This also makes our projections less heavy-handed. Usually the projections tend to haunt us, and we feel that either we have to conquer them or we have to give in to them. That attitude is based on distrusting ourselves, not having a compassionate attitude toward ourselves. Often we think of compassion in terms of feeling sorry for someone or thinking that we are in a superior position to someone who needs our help. Here we are speaking of basic, fundamental compassion. The quality of this unconditional compassion is warmth and spaciousness. We don't have to push ourselves into extreme situations anymore, because we contain a spacious situation within ourselves. So nothing has to be pushed, and we can afford to let ourselves be.

This doesn't mean to say that a compassionate person will be very subdued and deliberate, speaking or acting slowly all the time. That kind of deliberate gentleness and slowness is a physical facade. It is not fundamental warmth and gentleness.

The discovery of compassion brings an understanding of the emotions as they are. The emotions become a decentralized process rather than a central force to maintain confusion. The emotions have their own space and their own creative process. When you realize this, you can actually become one with the emotions.

It's very tricky to talk about this. Becoming one with our emotions is not acting out or indulging in them, but it is connecting with the experiential quality of the emotions as they are. Trying to either subdue the emotions or put them into practice, by acting them out, is really two sides of the same coin. Both approaches are trying to escape from our real emotions, because we can't relate to them in their true nature. We think that we have to do something about them, either bottle them up or explode out with them. This is, as we've already discussed, largely based on not having enough faith or trust in ourselves—fundamentally not having a kind attitude toward ourselves.

The more intense our emotions, the more reason we have to get to the heart of the matter. However, we often feel that there is something terribly wrong with our feelings. For example, our anger may seem almost evil. There is something terrifying about it, which makes it seem impossible to relate to.



We distrust ourselves. We think we might do something foolish if we allow ourselves to fully experience our anger. In fact, it's the opposite.

When we don't trust ourselves, we do random things to avoid our emotions. "Me" and "mine" and "my desires" or "my problems" seem outrageously overpowering. We feel that we have to do something about our feelings. However, when you are feeling angry, you don't have to act out your anger, say, by getting into a fight with someone. Nor do you have to suppress your anger, trying to forget it by going shopping for a new hat. There's another way, which is to actually relate to the bubble of energy that arises. This is connecting with an almost abstract quality of the emotions. By abstract, I mean the feeling that the emotions are almost an independent force, a primal energy. You relate to that simple, most basic quality of emotion, its abstract aspect, rather than getting involved in all the projections. You can almost see the visual, colorful aspects of your anger, the redness of it, the hotness of it. If you can experience that basic quality of emotion thoroughly, you begin to realize that it's not such a big deal anymore.

We don't see the emotions in their own true state because we don't trust that we have the insight or the sensibility to relate to them that directly. Even if we have a sudden insight about how we might do so, we automatically seal off that thought, that possibility of understanding them.

The essence of the emotions is primordial wakefulness. That's a very powerful way of looking at them. We might think of mind as wakeful, as containing wakeful intelligence, but not the emotions, because we distrust them. We often see them as something overpowering, unnecessary, or dreadful, something that we should cast off or find some way of getting rid of. But in fact, the basic nature of the emotions is that they are awake in themselves. They are like a snake curled to strike that unwinds itself in midair. That is the transcendental quality of the emotions, when we trust ourselves and we really enter into the emotions completely.

When we are not able to approach the emotions in their own true nature, they tend to cause all sorts of casualties, on the fringes of emotion. Emotional outbursts have a lot of speed or intensity. When they are spinning around, and when you just touch the fringe, you are pushed away, cast off.

The alternative is getting into the heart of emotion. For instance, the point of aggression is to arouse anger and hatred. If there is a "you" as a central

person, a central reference point, your anger will overpower *you*. But if you become completely part of the anger, if you get into the isness of the anger, then anger's ability to overpower you disappears. There's no one there to overpower. Then anger becomes just a bundle of energy.

To take another example, the point of fear is to frighten you. If you become part of the fear completely, right in it, then fear has no one to frighten. So it's a question of absolutely getting into the heart of the matter.

Another way of seeing this is that you lose the concept of fringe and center altogether, in terms of your experience of your emotions or your identity as a whole. When you have a sense of being at the center, right in the middle or in command of an experience, you should regard the center as including the fringe of your experience as well. Sometimes you can only touch the fringe of an emotion or an experience, which might mean that something is threatening and you're trying to keep it at a distance. At that point, try to regard the fringe as also being right at the center. If the fringe becomes the center and the center becomes the fringe, there is no conflict between the two at all. There is no conflict within you or within your experience at that point. That is how the snake unwinds itself in midair. The emotions free themselves, rather than your trying to find a way to alter or destroy them.

We have to deal with the heart of the matter, the heart of situations. We have to work with both the cause and with the seeds of whatever develops in our life, rather than immediately jumping to conclusions. At the heart of the emotions we find emptiness, actually. When we realize that the forces at the fringe are also the center, we realize how much space there is. It is everywhere, all the time. And wherever there is space, space *is* the center in itself, as well as the fringe in itself, because there is no way to divide space into pieces. That realization breaks down the barrier of duality of "me" and "my projections" completely. There's no solid wall between us and our projections anymore. The wall between the two has been removed, because it never really existed. Finally we are able to perceive things without concept, without conceptualizing and judging, and without extreme emotional reactions. Things are seen as they are, because there's no fear of losing control of the center or control of the fringe. They have already been pacified or seen through.

This experience enables us to relate with other things in our everyday life. Whatever we perceive or experience in life is spacious, full, and complete when we don't have ulterior motives. If you don't perceive things with hunger anymore, your basic sense of poverty is removed. You trust things as they are.

This enables a person to act skillfully as well. Here, when we talk about skillful action, it's a question again of trusting in space, trusting the basic qualities of things as they are, rather than being skillful in creating or strategizing a particular outcome. Without ulterior motives, you can relate very accurately to situations. It's almost as though you yourself are a good speedometer that registers the speed of your vehicle or a good thermometer that registers the temperature of a situation accurately and precisely. You automatically become an accurate or skillful part of the process. From this point of view, if you are trying to be very clever by planning or reorganizing something, you are heading for complication and confusion.

Ignorance is refusing to accept things as they are, trying to impose a secondary meaning or trying to interpret things according to your wishes. When you artificially try to reinterpret something, your intelligence becomes feeble and freezes up. This frivolous intelligence binds itself, like a silkworm that binds itself with its own silk thread. You are creating your own bondage. When you see the absence of the barrier of duality, there is no room to be cunning or clever. There's no purpose to it, when things have been seen through thoroughly.

Rather, you begin to enjoy the details of your life as part of your path. When your journey is informed by meditative insight, then whatever happens in life becomes living insight. Situations themselves begin to act as reminders. They shake you, they slow you down, they warn you, or they may inspire you.

If we become more generous and open by removing the fundamental obstacle, or our facade, we are much more kind and loving to ourselves. Then our outside projections become kind to us as well. So the whole world becomes a loving world, one without aggressive conflict. Therefore, you discover that the world is filled with compassion. This inspires you to be friendly to others and to try to help them. You aren't trying to convert them to your ego. That approach doesn't apply anymore. Rather, because you see the other person's situation as it is, your chemistry and the other person's

chemistry mingle together extremely well, absent any elements of aggression or passion.

I wouldn't call this an absolute state without extreme emotions. You could still have your emotional upheavals, but you also could have glimpses of openness. Those glimpses help you to become a more awake, open, and generous person. These glimpses of openness and generosity become the working basis, because they contain the qualities of compassion and skillful action. Then, each moment is a unique and beautiful opportunity to work on yourself. You don't want to miss the boat. Each moment is precious.

## TWENTY - TWO

### *A Mindful Society*

I DID NOT COME TO North America to find a cozy home in the United States of America or because I appreciated elevators, aspirins, and all the other comforts available in this culture.<sup>4</sup> I came here initially and the teaching situation took shape because of people here. My arrival here was a response to an invitation, one that is becoming ever more powerful. It seems that this invitation might be extended indefinitely. Quite possibly, the practice of meditation and the appreciation of mindfulness will stay on this continent for a very long time—for generations and generations to come.

I wasn't invited here because something was missing. It's not as if any one approach alone presents the truth. Many contemplative and meditative disciplines are applicable and helpful. However, as the fundamental psychological confusion in this country has become heightened and thickened, increasing frustration, fear, and anger have developed. In particular, the American spiritual neurosis, both individual and group, has become, in some sense, a world monument. It deserves a gold medal. So, introducing disciplines for seeing the world in a very simple, ordinary, and basic way seems helpful and refreshing, and very much needed. That's why I came here, and that's why the meditative tradition of mindfulness is so appropriate for this country, as well as the rest of the Western Hemisphere.

People here have worked very diligently to develop themselves and to develop their country. People have achieved a lot in this populous country. Everything is supersized here, including the problems. To coincide with that, the award-winning neurosis of America deserves award-winning treatment.

Mindfulness in particular can address the problems generated by our individual ignorance and self-centeredness, which is what I have here called ego. To address this, we can use a personal means or discipline such as the practice of meditation. We can't blame this problem on anybody else. We might think that others made the mistake. However, our basic bewilderment is *ours*.

We would like to maintain this bewilderment. It becomes an occupation, one that we attempt to perpetuate. In truth, we can't maintain the confusion throughout our lives, twenty-four hours a day. At first, there seems to be a smooth pathway, but there are lots of gaps. There are big holes in the road that we might fall into, and we're afraid of those holes. We would like to have smooth living, with our neurosis operating seamlessly, simultaneously with our paranoia, all the time.

However, there is also interest on our part in understanding the meditative and contemplative disciplines that present alternatives to enshrining our confusion. These disciplines, which present a non-egotistical approach, are still fresh and new to us at this point. Until we have actually sat and practiced, however, we will never completely know the truth of what's happening in our heads and in our hearts. That is why we practice meditation.

We have become extremely lazy and indulgent about our own problems. We have never stopped to look at ourselves to find out who we are or what is happening in our ordinary life situation. Although we are extraordinarily interested in hearing some word of wisdom, if it is slanted toward personal demand, we shy away from it. That is not to say that every one of us needs to be converted into some particular faith, but every one of us needs to slow down and sit, just slow down and sit. That is not a religious message, particularly. That is not recommending membership in a particular club. But, how long can we go on this way? I am not talking in terms of submission, but I am talking about working on ourselves. How long can we go on being window-shoppers on the path of life, rather than making a real investment in our innate sanity?

We can't be professional dilettantes forever. At some point, this thing called death will happen to us. We can't be dilettantes at that point, saying, "Oh, this is interesting—I am dying! My parents have gone through this. Well, good-bye. Adios. Here I go to the next life." When we encounter

sickness, we can't be dilettantes. We are stuck with our aches and pains, our stuffed nose, or our cancer. We can't say that life was a rehearsal, and we would like to move on to the real show. At some point we have to stop and actually work on ourselves. We need some experience of a breakthrough, a gap, or a space, where we can sit and experience ourselves, review our lives but also see through our preoccupations and projections and uplift ourselves.

Every one of us has opportunities to do this. There are possibilities all the time. And it is about time! It would be terrible to have regrets later on. Regret is a very intense emotion, particularly when you had a chance that you ignored. "Five years ago I had the chance to do something about my life." "Ten years ago I had the chance." "A few seconds ago I had a chance." In other words, life is in our own hands. It is up to us to work on it. We are with ourselves all the time. It is time. You are always available to yourself. We can always work on ourselves and do something about our life. This might sound to you like a granddad's advice to his grandchildren, but nevertheless I am saying this for your own good! It's the voice of experience and the voice of my heritage speaking.

We have talked about the various strategies that we employ to keep ourselves comfortably confused and to construct an ego or self that seems solid and secure. The first level of this construction, form, is the basic dualistic fixation of me and other. The second stage, feeling, is trying to feel out yourself and your world fully, to make sure you know who is for and against you. The third aspect, impulse, is continually jumping to conclusions, trying to stabilize the situation. The fourth aspect is concept, where you put everything into a pigeonhole. And the fifth stage is the general situation of consciousness, in which your ego can actually operate in a complete network, where every entertainment is provided. If the big entertainments run out of steam, we produce little entertainments, which are known as subconscious gossip. Hopefully, everything is covered and everything's hunky-dory. We think that nothing can go wrong.

But there are always maintenance problems, not having enough entertaining subconscious gossip to occupy ourselves or enough larger-scale entertainment to fulfill our wishes. We have to find many babysitters to keep us occupied. You might find babysitters for three or four hours a day, but can you get a babysitter for twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week? Who's

going to provide that level of entertainment for you all the time? That is an infantile, very soft approach. We might present ourselves as macho and try to look tough and self-reliant. We act as though we know how to deal with our business; we know how to deal with our boss, our subordinates, or our lovers. But if we haven't made friends with ourselves, it is a complete pretense. Actually, we are infantile, rather weak, soft, and pathetic.

On the other hand, this is not to say that the practice of meditation will make you macho, the real macho warrior, at all. The point is to grow up rather than becoming a bandita or bandito. The technique of meditation is part of the process that undoes or dismantles our egotism very simply.

With the practice of meditation, to begin with, it is important to cut through the outskirts of the security ring of ego's scheme, as we talked about in the chapter on working with the fringe of the emotions. If you want to defeat a political regime, it is much wiser not to make the leader your enemy to begin with, but to work with his henchmen first. Similarly, we don't immediately try to intercept the basic fundamental bewilderment that is the core obstacle. That would be completely impractical. It's much better to work with situations on the fringe, which is working with the subconscious mind and all kinds of superficial neurosis that we generate. Simply work with the fringe, as we've already discussed, rather than trying to be too ambitious at the beginning. We have fantasies and realities. So go beyond fantasy and reach reality.

We can't play cowboys and Indians in the name of meditation at this point. You need to pay more heed in the sitting practice of meditation, as much as you can. It is important to practice in the basic tradition of mindfulness. Without the mindfulness practice of peaceful living, other techniques or approaches that you apply are quite liable to create further pollution in this country. So, please be careful.

Having penetrated the outer ring of ego's fortress, how do we actually work with the fundamental dualistic fixation or basic bewilderment? There's no easy answer to that, no easy way to deal with that situation. But I would say that the best way to begin is by seeing through all kinds of self-deception in our life. This is done in the everyday practice of mindfulness in action.

We can observe the style and intentions of our everyday life situations: the way we brew tea or cook an egg, the way we walk down the street. This is not



watching with an intensely critical attitude, trying to catch ourselves before we do something wrong. This watching is based on unconditional mindfulness, which is seeing things as they are, very precisely. That is the way to cut through our deceptions.

This may seem a little vague, and you might question how you can know if you're actually watching yourself correctly or whether you're deceiving yourself. The truth of the matter is that there's no telling. There's absolutely no telling. There's no list of dos and don'ts. You may make a list of things to accept and things to avoid, but if you do something with the wrong attitude, a do can become a don't. It's all based on ourselves, our personal attitude and the details of how we actually conduct ourselves. If you load the dishwasher very precisely but with intense aggression or irritation, is that a do or a don't? It's all up to you. Having that kind of somewhat unclear, relative reference point makes things much more interesting and instructive. From this point of view, you can't just rely on what's written in a book, whether it's this book or the Bible, the Buddhist canon, the Koran, or some self-help literature. We actually have to pull up our own socks and be much more individually aware. In terms of developing mindfulness and awareness, you don't have the absolute security of inviolable dietary laws, spiritual commandments, or any other laws of behavior patterns to fall back on, particularly. You simply have to work with your basic sanity. That's asking a lot, but it can be done.

Purely working on the mindfulness-in-action situation alone is also not enough without the formal practice of meditation. This may seem somewhat doctrinaire or arbitrary, but I have found that it's the case. When the practice of meditation has a footing in your life and becomes a regular practice, a regular discipline, the contrast between sanity and neurosis in daily life becomes clear and precise. So working with both the formal practice of meditation and the postmeditation practice seems to be the only way to dismantle the fundamental core of ego's game. One of the main things that I would like to encourage is our confidence that we can actually do this ourselves. We can't simply rely upon prescriptions. But the one prescription, the one choiceless choice, is the need for the sitting practice of meditation. That is essential, absolutely. Without that, we don't slow down. Without that, we might be wholeheartedly interested, but we will theorize and drive ourselves nuts.

Basically, nobody can help the world without individual, personal discipline. However, when hundreds of individuals personally commit themselves to developing themselves through the practice of meditation, then, when they're all put together, it makes an orchestra of group sanity. As well, when we develop gentleness and softness through the process of sitting practice, it provides a kind attitude toward other individuals, not just toward ourselves. So some form of comradeship develops through sitting practice. Working together with each other, we begin to develop a mutual understanding of our confusion, our neurosis, the ache in our back, or the pain of our stiff neck. When we sit together, we develop mutual appreciation and mutual concern for one another.

Individuals begin to contribute their little portion of sanity to the bigger situation. Your contribution might be just a drop of sanity, but if everybody contributes, there will be lots of drops in the ocean. And it helps. From developing personal warmth toward ourselves we generate warmth and kindness to others in turn.

There are pitfalls to the group approach. Belonging to certain organizations, becoming members of the distinguished blah, blah, blah, saying that you're the student of the greatest blah, blah, blah, or that you're a scholar of the great blah, blah, blah, doesn't seem to go along with shedding the arrogance of a bloated ego. So becoming a practitioner of meditation is different than self-promotion or encouraging group neurosis.

Having established genuine friendship, camaraderie, and fellowship with our fellow meditators, we still might be looking for credentials and security. We may wake up one morning feeling that we belong to a big meditators' world, a big syndicate or corporation of people who practice. However, when you get dressed, turn on the stove to cook your breakfast, and check your daily schedule, you find that you are alone, nevertheless. Trying to establish credentials based on belonging to a group shouldn't occur if you are working diligently on your own discipline. So if you look into the level of details, there's no problem. Without that, there are possibilities of cranking up self-deception.

We are also not talking here in terms of meditative discipline as a revolutionary act, regarding our meditation group as a little fortress from which we can launch our guerrilla warfare movement to change society. But

we *are* talking about infiltration. Such infiltration can only begin with ourselves. We have to let meditative awareness infiltrate our being. In that way we can develop genuine comradeship with other practitioners.

Being together with each other, we are creating a society of its own particular type, an unconditional society, we might say. We don't necessarily all subscribe to the same political theories, sociological concepts, or religious ideas. The solidarity comes from our mutual understanding of mind, which comes from sitting together. Whether you are in a different physical location from other meditators doesn't matter. We feel some connection with others who also plop themselves down to sit every day. That sense of working together is not particularly heroic or exclusive—we don't condemn the nonsitters.

We have to work with ourselves first, so that we do not become a nuisance. So we work on our own discipline and life to begin with, so that we might exemplify the practice of meditation and mindfulness in action. That is how a meditative or mindful society, a genuine meditative tradition, could develop free from concept.

Mindfulness is an ancient approach, centuries old, millennia old. The practice of meditation and the discovery of fundamental mindfulness and awareness have arisen in many different cultures at many different times. The strength of the tradition relies on giving up every credential, every minute. There must be hundreds of thousands of people who have endeavored to give up their credentials throughout the world over all those years. Without their efforts we wouldn't have anything at all: no teaching, no discipline of meditation, nothing to work with. They didn't just give up their credentials and vanish into space. They worked extremely hard to transmit their discovery of mindfulness to others. It's a fantastic story, a fantastic case history, so to speak, that people could transmit the truth over all that time, without promoting their personal glory. That should actually give us a lot of hope that we can do this, too. It's possible for us as well. Taking pride in our discipline, in the positive sense, is both powerful and necessary, in both the sitting practice itself as well as in our daily living situation.

Having this sense of a heritage or ancestry of mindfulness can burst both the big and small bubbles of our egotism. Over all this time, nobody has remained an egomaniac. Not only that, but a lot of those people were able to

powerfully manifest their basic sanity. This discipline of mindfulness and awareness becomes more powerful with each generation. As one of my ancestors said, the children will be much better than the parents, and the grandchildren will be much better than that. In the lineage of practitioners, mindfulness and the celebration of basic human sanity will never wane.

On the other hand, the whole thing is up to you. It's your personal experience. Through meditation we provide the room to be with ourselves. We also develop fellowship and mutual interest in our sisters and brothers in practice. Finally, we develop a feeling of surrendering and opening, to ourselves and to the world. We should take pride in this practice. Without arrogance, we should take pride in belonging to the vast family of all those who practice and live mindfully.

---

4. Chögyam Trungpa was born in Tibet. He arrived in North America in 1970. For more information about his life, and especially about the journey that brought him to America, please see "A Biography of Chögyam Trungpa" on p. 707.

## *Editor's Afterword*

THE IDEA FOR THIS BOOK first arose in 2009, when I began to connect with more and more people who were interested in mindfulness, meditation, and the insights they offer but were not seeking an affiliation with a particular path, teacher, or organization. Some of these were people facing serious life challenges who realized that meditation was helpful in working through these issues in their lives. For example, I met a lawyer who was working with prisoners in Guantanamo and was crumbling under the stress. I talked with people who were dealing with serious physical and mental illness, personally or in their families, as well as people affected by poverty, homelessness, and loss. I also met a number of people who didn't have such extreme challenges but simply wanted to meditate as a way to help themselves deal better with stress in their lives or as a means to develop greater appreciation and creativity.

I have been archiving and editing the work of Chögyam Trungpa for thirty-some years, having been his student since 1971. Over the years I've also presented his work in seminars and workshops, and it was in this context that I started to encounter so many people committed to meditation but not affiliated with any particular spiritual or religious tradition. It occurred to me that there was a great deal of unpublished material on meditation, mindfulness, and awareness in early seminars taught by Chögyam Trungpa and that this material might make a helpful book on the topic of mindfulness. I spoke about the project with Chögyam Trungpa's widow, Diana Mukpo, who is responsible for his literary estate. She agreed that it would be a valuable undertaking. We approached Shambhala Publications, who eagerly came on board, and I began work on the book in 2011.

In late September 2011, as background research for the book I attended a conference in New York City, *Creating a Mindful Society*, which was cosponsored by the Center for Mindfulness, the Omega Institute for Holistic Studies, and *Mindful* magazine. There I met a number of leaders of the mindfulness movement and several hundred very impressive teachers and practitioners of mindfulness in myriad walks of life. There was unbelievable energy and dedication in this group, and it felt that a community was coming together, forming around a shared commitment to bring mindfulness and awareness to bear on the challenges that we all face in our work and in our lives in general. I felt privileged to have stumbled into the midst of this vibrant “happening,” and it encouraged me to move ahead with this project.

Chögyam Trungpa was himself deeply committed to mindfulness and awareness as the tools and the discipline that would be helpful to the thousands of people to whom he lectured and presented meditation in the 1970s and ‘80s. In virtually every seminar or public talk he gave in North America he encouraged people to meditate. I have helped to archive more than 2,500 of his talks, and I would estimate that meditation figured in about 2,450 of them.

From his earliest days in the West, he saw meditation as a nonsectarian discipline that could benefit anyone and that anyone could practice. The instinct to emphasize meditation was there from the beginning of his time in the West. When he started his first center in the West in 1967 in Scotland, he wanted to call it the Samye Ling Buddhist Meditation Center.

He went on to create a large network of Buddhist meditation centers in North America. Beginning in the 1970s, Chögyam Trungpa also started many nonsectarian institutions, including Naropa University, and he started a program of secular meditation called Shambhala Training, which is still being presented today.

I think he would have welcomed and been delighted by the growth of mindfulness in the United States and its application in so many fields, as represented preeminently by the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn, Sharon Salzberg, and Jack Kornfield, and by so many others.

In order to find the best material for this book, I searched through hundreds of transcripts of early talks given by Chögyam Trungpa in the 1970s. Most of these were available only as typewritten or handwritten

transcripts. I made PDFs of the original, often faded transcripts and began to pore over them and listen to the audio recordings associated with them. At first I was challenged by much of the material. I realized that in order to do justice to these teachings on meditation and mindfulness, I was going to have to slow down and actually contemplate the material on an experiential level. I was going to have to take my own journey of mindfulness. Who would have guessed? This was painfully underlined for me when I “rushed” into one work retreat in an isolated house in the country, only to discover that I hadn’t brought the right cord for my computer and that the printer cartridge I had brought with me didn’t fit the printer in my retreat house. Embarrassed by my mindlessness, I had to drive several hours back to town and start over.

In the end, I was glad that the material didn’t offer itself up to me easily. The more I practiced, relaxed, and let go, the more I started to discover the jewels that were hidden in my files of old transcripts, and the more I started to appreciate the practice of meditation itself. I felt that I was reconnecting with an old friend, but that we were making a new relationship. Indeed, it seemed that it was all about making friends with oneself.

Even though he died more than twenty-seven years ago, Chögyam Trungpa’s descriptions of the challenges and dilemmas of modern life are, to my ear and mind, still incredibly apt and telling for the twenty-first century. Perhaps because he came from such a different, a medieval, culture—Tibet in the 1950s—he was able to see certain aspects of Western life in very vivid relief or in contrast to his upbringing. This was also because he was such an inquisitive person. He was open to and interested in the people and the situations that he encountered in the Western world. Of course, he saw and spoke about great problems in our society, including materialism, speed, aggression, and fear, but he also was very attracted to and appreciative of Western culture. His use of the American idiom and his perceptive examples from our daily lives are part of what lends such a quality of aliveness to his presentations. His insights were often eerily prophetic, in that he looked deeply into his experience and what he saw happening in the world around him and projected the major themes and conflicts that would arise decades in the future. Most of the time, he was spot on.

A unique aspect of the meditation technique that Chögyam Trungpa presented was the emphasis he placed on paying more attention to the out-

breath. He didn't invent this approach; it is described in the Tibetan tradition as mixing mind and breath, or as mixing mind and space. However, I think he was the first person to emphasize this as the basic technique for the whole sitting practice of meditation.

When I was putting together this manuscript, it struck me that the material I had chosen goes into far greater depth on the topic of the breath, and the out-breath in particular, than earlier books by Chögyam Trungpa. Indeed, the book shares much of the depth and the breadth of the practice instructions that he gave directly to his students, which had not been a prominent part of his previous books for a general audience. *Mindfulness in Action: Making Friends with Yourself through Meditation and Everyday Awareness* might be described as a contemplative discussion, in the sense of mixing meditative insight with a contemplation of everyday occurrences. This approach is true of much of Chögyam Trungpa's work, and it is particularly prominent here. He was always thinking about how people would actually apply the instructions he was giving, and how they could understand them in terms of their basic, ordinary lives. At the same time, he could evoke the atmosphere of deep practice in just a few words. Combining both, he opens our eyes to dimensions of life that we rarely examine in such depth.

In his instructions for meditation practice, Chögyam Trungpa always emphasized putting our attention on the out-breath as a means of connecting with our environment and dissolving, or stepping away from, an egocentric focus. Although he was passionate about this approach, he had tremendous respect for other techniques, among them vipassana meditation and Zen, particularly as taught by Shunryu Suzuki Roshi. He was appreciative as well of other contemplative traditions, such as the Christian contemplative approach of Father Thomas Merton and others. While his meditation instructions are distinct, they are compatible and quite complementary to many other techniques. At the same time, through the emphasis on the out-breath, he offers the practitioner a uniquely potent way to link formal meditation practice with meditation in action, also known as mindfulness in action, or our meditative and contemplative experience of everyday life.

Another theme in *Mindfulness in Action* is the discussion of a gap that allows us to make an unconditional connection with awareness. In his meditation instructions, Chögyam Trungpa emphasizes the fundamental



experience of letting our attention dissolve at the end of the out-breath. This is the *go* in his “touch and go” meditation instruction.<sup>5</sup> It is more “let go” than going somewhere. He talks about how, in our daily lives, an unconditional recollection of awareness can bring us fully into the present. The emphasis on dissolving or disowning one’s attention or focus also distinguishes Chögyam Trungpa’s teachings on mindfulness from many other approaches.

Another unique aspect of his meditation instructions was his emphasis on boredom as a necessary and a positive part of one’s experience in meditation. The emphasis on boredom seems timely. I was interested recently to read Evgeny Morozov’s piece in *The New Yorker*, “Only Disconnect: Two Cheers for Boredom,” in which he talks about an essay in praise of boredom written by Siegfried Kracauer in 1924.<sup>6</sup> Kracauer’s was partly a response to the hustle and bustle in the modern city of that era, along with other new phenomena such as the distracting power of the cinema and the radio. Morozov tells us that Kracauer’s remedy was “extraordinary, radical boredom,” a prescription that seems very close to the state of “cool boredom” that Chögyam Trungpa describes in *Mindfulness in Action*. Morozov goes on to talk about the current challenges to our awareness posed by our modern devices and the myriad ways we stay connected to information but disconnected from ourselves. In response to the attraction of the distraction of ever-available information and entertainment, Morozov tells how he put a safe in his apartment with a built-in timer where he can lock away his smartphone and his Internet cable for long periods of time. Reading this, I thought that taking up meditation might be a dignified alternative, a way to step away from the addiction to and distraction of our devices.

Another recent reference to the positive power of boredom was in Inara Verzemnieks’s “Life along the 100th Meridian” in a recent issue of *The New York Times Magazine*. Talking about the affirming aspects of living in the empty landscape of Nebraska, Sharon Moreland is quoted as saying, “I think there are a lot of creative people out here. Our kids would play with spark plugs, sticks in the ground. I think you have to have a certain amount of boredom to create....People here create things from what is around them. The openness and the distance between people inspires possibility.”<sup>7</sup> I cannot but think that Chögyam Trungpa would have seconded this insight.

Although in many respects the material in this book is very simple, it is not at all simplistic. The book presents instructions for the beginning meditator, but it also goes deeply into the complexities and nuances of our practice. Using the analogy of gardening, some of the early chapters in *Mindfulness in Action* are like an instruction booklet for someone whose interest in horticulture is limited to wanting to plant basil in a window box or tulip bulbs in the backyard. But inevitably, if you take the next step and gardening becomes a real avocation, if you stay with it for any length of time, you are going to find yourself interested in compost and soil, in seed catalogs and new varieties of flowers or vegetables, in the different tools you may use in gardening, and all the ways to deal with garden pests and diseases. In short, you become a gardener.

Similarly, if you start meditating, you may initially be looking for a simple technique to reduce stress or help you find peace in the midst of the chaos of your life. If you keep practicing and go deeper into your practice, you will have lots of new questions and interests. This book presents fairly simple ideas about how to start meditating and what happens when you do. It also considers what may happen if you actually become a meditator and begin to see mindfulness as an ongoing journey.

When people practice diligently over a period of time, they usually find that their practice changes or evolves. They might see this as a problem, especially if they begin to loosen up or relax. They may think that they are straying from the technique. Chögyam Trungpa encourages us to have greater faith in our experience and to regard whatever arises as workable, as part of the meditator's path.

This is somewhat akin to the experience that many parents have when they are worried about a problem their child is manifesting. Then they discover that their child is not the first child ever to have done or said this particular thing and that they are not the first parents who have ever reacted by doing or saying something particular in response. It turns out that everyone says and does these things. What a relief!

When you experience wild mood swings, spacing out, or other unexpected challenges in your meditation, it is highly likely that you are not the first person to do so, and it's not particularly a problem. Chögyam Trungpa often spoke of problems being promises. There are many examples of this in the

sitting practice of meditation. For example, what we may often see as a problem in our practice—finding that the most difficult emotional and mental stuff eventually rises to the surface in our meditation—is actually the way to fully process it. In other words, it's good news. We may think that to be good meditators we should empty our minds of thoughts, but this is actually not the point, especially when it involves suppression or avoidance. We are just putting off the hard work that we will eventually need to do.

Chögyam Trungpa's approach to meditation reflects a deep respect for Western psychology. A book of his talks on psychology was published posthumously as *The Sanity We Are Born With: A Buddhist Approach to Psychology*. However, he had concerns about some therapies being used to reinforce egotism or to enshrine emotionalism, as opposed to emotion.

Chögyam Trungpa emphasizes the discovery of egolessness as a positive outcome from the practice of mindfulness and meditation. He distinguishes two approaches to or definitions of ego: “The term *ego* can be used to describe egomania, which is self-indulgence and a style of self that is looking for security and survival, trying to establish the certainty of one's existence. That is the confused and aggressive part of ego, which is completely blind. However, there is also another view of ego as intelligence and being assertive in a positive sense....[W]e're not only talking about the negative side of ego.”<sup>8</sup> By *egolessness*, a term that occurs occasionally in *Mindfulness in Action*, he means an open and engaged approach to our lives, one that is compassionate and concerned with others more than with protecting our own self-centeredness. Elsewhere he described the realization of egolessness as “authentic presence.” The epitome of authentic presence would be someone like Nelson Mandela. Egolessness, or overcoming the hard core of our egocentric selves, is not a milquetoast or dysfunctional aspect of ourselves but an empowered and expansive presence.

Working with our emotions is discussed in *Mindfulness in Action* primarily in relationship to meditation practice. In the meditation instructions that are given in [chapter 16, “Touch and Go,”](#) Chögyam Trungpa stresses the importance of acknowledging our emotional and intense mental states of mind, actually looking at these as they arise rather than trying to avoid the difficulties and embarrassments that are uncovered in our practice. At the same time, after we have looked at and experienced our emotional and mental

upheavals, the instruction is to label even these powerful feelings thinking. We label them and return to the breath.

This approach is designed not only to keep us from bottling things up but also to encourage us to process our feelings and let the dramas dissolve—not get stuck in them over and over again, seemingly forever. Sometimes we treat our deepest emotional issues like precious objects that we pack away in our mind’s attic. We might bring them out occasionally to admire them or show them to someone else, but then we carefully wrap them up again and put them back in storage. What Chögyam Trungpa suggests here is that once we take something out we should keep it on the mantelpiece, admire it, and delve deeply into it. Then, rather than packing it back up, we may be able to let it go. In meditation, this begins by labeling it thinking. We may be living for a long time with what we’ve uncovered. It’s not a one-shot deal. But when we uncover our emotional conflicts or deeply disturbing memories and then disown them to return to the breath, we make a commitment not to hold on to our difficult emotional baggage forever, as a precious family heirloom. Whether they are brilliant, dull, stinky, or beautifully perfumed, our most conflicted and intense thoughts and feelings are now on display. It is an act of bravery to acknowledge what’s there. Then, letting go, with no guarantee, requires a real leap of faith.

Chögyam Trungpa saw the emotions as having great promise in their raw or awakened state. He saw them as powerful energies in our lives, in both very destructive and very creative ways. He talks about both aspects in *Mindfulness in Action*.

While reviewing material for the book, I was excited to discover two talks he gave in 1971 that appear in this volume as “The Fringe of Our Emotions” and “The Heart of Emotion.” At that time Chögyam Trungpa was in the very early stages of working on the development of a therapeutic community for people with mental illness. He developed a series of postures and specially constructed rooms, as part of a system of working with energies, called Maitri Space Awareness. *Maitri* is the Sanskrit word for “loving-kindness.” The goal of the space awareness practice is to develop loving-kindness through discovering, experiencing, and accepting our inherent state of being, in both its neurotic and awakened manifestations. Today, at Naropa University, the maitri postures and the rooms are primarily used in the

contemplative psychology program as a way for students to work on understanding styles of neurosis and wisdom. A number of other individuals and organizations also work with this approach to maitri. My interest in bringing up this topic here is to point out that, very early on, Chögyam Trungpa was seeking methodologies to work with and acknowledge the wisdom of our emotions as well as the problems they create for us.

In fact, Chögyam Trungpa was interested in a wide range of mind/body techniques and disciplines. In addition to Maitri Space Awareness he created a series of theater exercises called Mudra Space Awareness; he invented a system of elocution, to improve people's relationship to their speech; and he created a number of exercises as part of developing an appreciation for what he termed dharma art, which is based on artistic sensibility and creativity without aggression. These are just a few of the unique disciplines that he introduced. These were mindfulness-inaction practices, not designed to be practiced during formal meditation. He also introduced a practice for raising energy to be done at the beginning or the end of one's meditation practice, and he encouraged many students to include a formal practice to develop empathy and compassion as part of their meditation sessions.

My point in bringing this topic up is, again, to point to the open and complementary nature of his view and his work. On the one hand, he was very orthodox and somewhat conservative in how he taught meditation. On the other hand, he himself was a great innovator and an inventor of sorts in the field of mind/body disciplines. He talks about this combination of spontaneity and discipline in [chapter 13, aptly titled "Spontaneous Discipline."](#)

Chögyam Trungpa talks in this book about a natural progression from mindfulness to awareness, or insight, and also about how compassion naturally arises as an outgrowth of our experiences of opening and letting go in meditation. He shows us how these things can unfold and evolve without struggle, both in our meditation practice and in the application of meditative insight in our lives. He illustrates very empirically how a *path* of meditation evolves in our practice. It is also the natural, self-existing quality of all this that I find particularly heartening and illuminating. He encourages us to gently uncover the intelligence and good heart that are an intrinsic part of our being.

Sometimes when these aspects of ourselves are trying to break through, or at least twinkle in our mind's eye, we may feel that something is going wrong. We may panic and try to cover it all up again, as is discussed in the third and final section of the book. I love the image in [chapter 18, “The Sword in Your Heart,”](#) of a sword that is trying to emerge while we wrap mental bandages and newspapers around the heart, out of fear or misunderstanding. We so often reach points in our practice where we feel too exposed, so we try to manufacture some safe harbor or attractive alter ego for ourselves. In *Mindfulness in Action* Chögyam Trungpa encourages us not to buy in to our self-deception but still to love ourselves with all of our foibles—our “tricks and triggers,” as he sometimes called them.

Another key message in this book is that no one else can do this work for you. You have to do it for yourself. Others can be an example and a guide, but they cannot magically zap us into wakefulness. So there is a quality of hard truth in this book—no punches pulled, but also no false promises made. I think that in the long run when each of us has to face the tough stuff in life—and we all have to face it, one way or another—we will feel grateful that someone told us the truth, with a big grin rather than a long face. The ability to celebrate the best and the worst of life is one of this book's greatest gifts.

The world is always changing. This we know, but it seems that the pace of change is accelerating exponentially in this era. Institutions, ideas, and ideologies that may have sustained us in the past are being altered so quickly and in such fundamental ways that they may be almost unrecognizable to us, if they're not swept away altogether. At this uncharted and uncertain time in our history, mindfulness makes a significant contribution by offering us a way to remain fully and deeply engaged with our world without any necessary or particular religious or ideological affiliation. Chögyam Trungpa has talked about appreciating the “spirit” of life, in the sense of life being spirited or energetic. He suggested that, unlike our normal preconceptions, the spiritual dimension of life can be an approach “where there is energy happening, there is something to work on, and things are dynamic and provocative. There are flashes of negative energy, flashes of positive energy, flashes of destruction, flashes of hatred and love. All of this is happening within a big perspective.”<sup>9</sup>

In this sense, being fully connected with life through the practice of mindful awareness provides fuel and sustenance for our life's journey. It is a

way to appreciate both simplicity and complexity and a means to be not overwhelmed by chaos but cheerfully appreciative in its midst.

Mindfulness is on the cutting edge these days. Some worry that by entering the mainstream of American society it will become a diluted version of the real thing or, worse, that a treasured heritage of wisdom will be damaged. This is possible, indeed, but it is equally possible that by entering the mainstream of American society, meditation and mindfulness will tilt the balance of sanity just slightly, so that this sanity can manifest as wisdom that can be a force for good in a much bigger world. In doing so, mindfulness may promote a fuller appreciation of wisdom and compassion of all dimensions and traditions.

All over the world, the enormous advances in brain science are helping many to see meditation as a discipline that can be scientifically verified as useful and therapeutic. These developments were still in a very embryonic state when Chögyam Trungpa was teaching in America in the 1970s and '80s. The marriage of science and meditation may help to dispel the view of meditative discipline as what Chögyam Trungpa called "love-and-lighty." I think he would be delighted to see these gooey clouds swept from the sky. He approached meditation as pretty hardcore, that is, as a grounded, realistic approach based on an intellectually rigorous contemplation of things as they are, not as a sappy version of how we would like them to be. At the same time, he used the word *magic* to point to the indescribably forceful power and beauty of reality. He spoke often of the marriage of intellect and intuition as the recommended course. Let us hope that this union will remain an indivisible part of the practice of mindfulness in times to come.

Chögyam Trungpa didn't view meditation as just a valuable tool or a necessary discipline. I think that he truly loved the practice of meditation. At the months-long programs where he taught meditation and where many of his students practiced for days and weeks, you could feel a kind of cool warmth that pervaded the atmosphere after people practiced meditation intensively. The coolness was the cooling off of the heat of neurosis and speed; the warmth was the openness, intelligence, and full heart generated by the practice. And it seemed that he exemplified and amplified these qualities and made it possible for all of us to aspire to further diligence in the practice. I am immensely grateful to him for the example that he set, for the wisdom



that he shared, and for the instructions that he gave, which are gentle and loving but also piercing and luminous.

During one of these extended practice periods, a three-month program of study and practice in 1978, he wrote several poems about meditation practice. He ended one poem with these two lines:

Let us practice!

Sitting is a jewel that ornaments our precious life.

To that, I can only add “Amen!”

CAROLYN ROSE GIMIAN

*November 28, 2013*

---

5. See chapter 16, “Touch and Go.”

6. *The New Yorker*, October 28, p. 33.

7. December 8, 2013 ([www.nytimes.com/2013/12/08/magazine/life-along-the-100th-meridian.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/08/magazine/life-along-the-100th-meridian.html)).

8. See p. 255.

9. See p. 12.



## *Acknowledgments and Gratitudes*

I THOUGHT TO CALL THESE acknowledgments gratitudes because I am writing them on the American Thanksgiving Day in November 2013. I am in a retreat house near Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia, Canada, where I have worked on more than a dozen books over the last eighteen years. I am grateful to have this place to work, and I am grateful to Chögyam Trungpa for having introduced me to the practice of solitary retreat, which has been so essential to my being able to do this work at all. I do most of the compilation and editing of books here, in what I call semiretreat or a work retreat. The older I get, the more I seem to need the solitude and relative isolation. Practice informs the work, and the space of retreat helps me to see the shape of a project as it evolves, also enabling me to find the pieces of the puzzle that will be the book.

The Shambhala Archives provided access to audio and videotapes, as well as to transcripts, of much of the material in this book. I would like to thank everyone at the Archives for their cheerful accommodation and their dedication to preserving these important records, especially Gordon Kidd, Jeanne Riordan, Chris Levy, and Sandra Kipis.

I have benefited from a number of lectures, discussions, and books about mindfulness. I would like to thank a number of the people who have influenced my understanding of and appreciation for mindfulness. Some are acquaintances, some are friends, some are close to me, and some I have met only through their books or lectures. My thanks go out to my husband, James Gimian, the publisher of *Mindful* magazine; Barry Boyce, the editor-in-chief of *Mindful: Taking Time for What Matters*; Jon Kabat-Zinn and Saki F. Santorelli of the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society (Kabat-Zinn's book *Full Catastrophe Living* was an especially

important resource); Sharon Salzberg and her book *Real Happiness: The Power of Meditation—A 28-Day Program*, which was an eye-opener in the best sense of the word; Mirabai Bush, for many insights, references, great stories, much wisdom, and for her friendship; Jack Kornfield, for books, lectures, and exchanges over the years; Pema Chödrön, who gave me several wonderful opportunities to present meditation at her Smile at Fear programs, where I met people who fundamentally changed my worldview; a raft of presenters at the Creating a Mindful Society conference in New York, including Jon Kabat-Zinn, Saki Santorelli, Richard Davison, Janice Maturano, Congressman Tim Ryan, Ali and Atman Smith, Rhonda McGee, and Liz Stanley; Judith Lief, for her masterful editing of *The Path of Individual Liberation*, by Chögyam Trungpa—an important reference for this project—and for friendship and general merriment; Trudy Goodman, for insights gained over coffee in Paris, and for other conversations; and Melvin McLeod, who gave me opportunities to edit earlier versions of several chapters in this book for publication in the *Shambhala Sun* magazine.

Thanks are also offered to Robert Walker, who opened my eyes to much of the material on the foundations of mindfulness by Chögyam Trungpa, and to Andrew Safer, who has shared many resources and invited me to teach from the material in this book at the Family Life Center in Saint John's, Newfoundland. Thanks also to Sister Loretta Walsh at the Family Life Center for accommodating and welcoming us; and thanks to all the workshop participants; and to Trudee Klautky, for generous sharing on many levels. Thanks also to Sherab Chödzin, the editor of *The Path Is the Goal: A Basic Handbook of Buddhist Meditation*, by Chögyam Trungpa, another important reference, and to Jenny Gimian, one of the most wakeful people I know.

I would like to thank Shambhala Publications and its founders, Sam and Hazel Bercholz, for supporting this project, and offer thanks to others at Shambhala, especially Sara Bercholz, my editor, and Nikko Odiseos, publisher, as well as Ben Gleason.

In most cases I do not know who transcribed the talks that have made their way into this book, but I am immeasurably grateful for these transcribers' efforts in the 1970s and '80s. Thanks to Barbara Blouin for correcting the transcripts of several talks I reviewed. Also, much gratitude to the students

who made up the original audiences for these talks and asked such penetrating questions.

I am grateful for the support from Chögyam Trungpa's family, especially Diana J. Mukpo and Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche.

I am especially grateful to Chögyam Trungpa, whose teachings make my life worthwhile.

Finally, I am grateful to all practitioners of mindfulness, who help to bring gentle sanity into this troubled world.

CAROLYN ROSE GIMIAN

*November 28, 2013*

## *Sources*

THE MATERIAL IN *Mindfulness in Action* has been compiled from multiple sources and has been edited, condensed, and shaped for this book. About 90 percent of the material has not been published in any form before now. In some cases, where multiple sources are listed, only a few paragraphs of a source have been included in a particular chapter. In other chapters with more than one source, two or more sources have been extensively interwoven. The primary source is always listed first. Throughout the book, virtually all Sanskrit and Tibetan terms have been replaced by English equivalents. In several places, Chögyam Trungpa refers to specific phrases or teachings from some of the great Tibetan teachers in his tradition. I have noted these references below.

### *Chapter 1. Meditation: An Intimate Relationship with Ourselves*

Chögyam Trungpa, “Meditation,” in *Glimpses of Abhidharma: From a Seminar on Buddhist Psychology* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2011).

“Meditation: The Way of the Buddha” (Naropa University, Boulder, Colorado, June 1974), transcript, talks 1 and 2.

### *Chapter 2. Discovering Our Capacity to Love*

“The Heart of Meditation” (Vancouver, British Columbia, September 28, 1979), transcript, talk 1.

### *Chapter 3. How to Meditate*

Some details of the meditation practice given here are based on oral instructions provided by Chögyam Trungpa to his students in talks and informal discussions over a number of years.

“The Heart of Meditation” (Vancouver, British Columbia, September 29, 1979), transcript, talk 2.

“Dathün Letter” (Rocky Mountain Dharma Center [now Shambhala Meditation Center], Red Feather Lakes, Colorado, dates unknown). This is a manuscript based

on instructions given at the Vajradhatu Seminars and at the monthlong dathün meditation practice. (*Dathün* is Tibetan for “month session.”)

“Meditation Instructors’ Training Seminars” (Karmê Chöling Retreat Center, Barnet, Vermont, December 1974), edited sourcebook, talk 2, p. 5.

#### *Chapter 4. The Teddy Bear of Breath*

“Meditation Instructors’ Training Seminars” (Karmê Chöling Retreat Center, Barnet, Vermont, December 1974), edited sourcebook, talk 2. Note: the 25 percent emphasis on the breathing instruction comes from the Tibetan teacher Gampopa.

#### *Chapter 5. Cool Boredom*

“The Discovery of Egolessness” (New York City, March 1976), transcript, talk 3.

#### *Chapter 6. Gentleness*

“The Heart of Meditation” (Vancouver, British Columbia, September 30, 1979), transcript, talk 3.

#### *Chapter 7. Rhinoceros and Parrot*

“Dhyana and Samadhi” (Berkeley, California, March 2, 1974), transcript, talk 2.

“Meditation: The Way of the Buddha” (Naropa University, Boulder, Colorado, June 1974), transcript, talks 1 and 2.

#### *Chapter 8. The Present Moment*

“The Heart of Meditation” (Vancouver, British Columbia, October 1, 1979), transcript, talk 4.

#### *Chapter 9. The Bridge of Compassion*

“Meditation Seminar” (Estes Park, Colorado, December 6, 1971), transcript, talk 3.

#### *Chapters 10–15*

These chapters are based on transcripts of the seminar Training the Mind (Rocky Mountain Dharma Center, Red Feather Lakes, Colorado, August 18–24, 1974), transcripts, talks 1 to 6. Note: in [chapter 11](#), Marpa the Translator is the teacher who spoke about meditation as “trying to look at your own eyes without using a mirror.”

#### *Chapter 16. Touch and Go*

“Dathün Letter.” See source note at [chapter 3](#).

#### *Chapter 17. Meditation and the Fourth Moment*

“The Tibetan Buddhist Path” (Naropa University, Boulder, Colorado, July 5, 1974), transcript, talk 11. A version of this talk appeared as “Beyond Present, Past, and Future Is the Fourth Moment,” *Shambhala Sun*, March 2006.

*Chapter 18. The Sword in Your Heart*

“The Discovery of Egolessness” (New York City, March 1976), transcript, talk 1.

*Chapter 19. Galaxies of Stars, Grains of Sand*

“The Discovery of Egolessness” (New York City, March 1976), transcript, talk 2.

“Meditation: The Way of the Buddha” (Naropa University, Boulder, Colorado, June 1974), transcript, talk 3.

“The Tibetan Buddhist Path” (Naropa University, Boulder, Colorado, June 19, 1974), transcript, talk 4.

*Chapter 20. The Fringe of Our Emotions*

“Understanding the Neurotic Aspects of Mind” (New York City, October 23, 1971), transcript, talk 3.

*Chapter 21. The Heart of Emotion*

“Understanding the Neurotic Aspects of Mind” (New York City, October 24, 1971), transcript, talk 4. Gampopa is referenced in the original talk as the teacher who stated that the essence of the emotions is primordially awake. Naropa is referenced as the source of the analogy of the emotions freeing themselves to a snake unwinding itself in midair.

*Chapter 22. A Mindful Society*

“The Discovery of Egolessness” (New York City, March 1976), transcripts, talks 4 and 5.

# **DEVOTION AND CRAZY WISDOM**

*Teachings on* The Sadhana of Mahamudra

*Not just anybody—not just any old hat—can write a sadhana for his girlfriend or for his boyfriend or for his teacher or for his Mercedes or for his Rolls-Royce. You have to have some feeling of connection with the lineage—simply that. That’s the basic criterion. You have to be trained in the vajrayana discipline already; you have to have some understanding of jnanasattva and samayasattva working together. You have to understand devotion.*

—CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA RINPOCHE



## *Foreword*

IN THE MODERN WORLD, religion often has a bad reputation because of all the damage that has been done in the name of religious faith. When people have a fanatical allegiance to religion, it can lead to very destructive action. If our religious motivations are based on fear, looking for an external savior, or eliminating our personal problems, then religion can become an agent of spiritual materialism. If we don't take responsibility for our own lives and instead give in to fear and blame, that can cause tremendous damage in the world.

The Vidyadhara, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, presented the pure teachings of the buddhadharma. That approach and the basic approach of Buddhism altogether are based on discovering realization within oneself, rather than looking for it outside. That understanding allows us to care for ourselves and to experience sanity in a simple, straightforward way. With the tools that the buddhadharma provides, we also have the capacity to affect change in the world.

In 1968, when I first visited Samye Ling, which was Rinpoche's practice center in Scotland, he had only recently returned from his trip to Bhutan, where he had discovered *The Sadhana of Mahamudra*. He brought the text back with him, newly translated into English. I remember that the translated text was crudely mimeographed on colored sheets of paper.

The next time I saw him, again at Samye Ling, he was recovering from a car accident that had left him crippled on one side. I realized that he was a completely different person than he had been before his accident. It wasn't just his physical demeanor that had changed. Before the accident, he had been so youthful, pure, and light. Now he was more heavy and solid, he seemed much older, and he had an unfathomable quality that I hadn't

experienced before. He was transformed. In the past I had noticed how he radiated loving-kindness. Now, although his kindness was still apparent, there was a wrathful quality.

Undoubtedly, receiving *The Sadhana of Mahamudra* as a terma was connected with this powerful time in Rinpoche's life when his manifestation and his teaching style changed and blossomed.

This was also a time filled with difficulties and obstacles. Part of the power of Trungpa Rinpoche was that he himself fully manifested the principles that he taught. He never took a shortcut for himself. He experienced a great deal of personal pain and suffering. He always took responsibility for himself and never allowed himself—or his students—a break. That adherence to genuineness was a powerful weapon for cutting self-deception, one that he gave to all of his students. *The Sadhana of Mahamudra* is one of the most powerful practices we have, because of how it directly addresses human issues and problems of human life.

I'm delighted that the teachings that Rinpoche gave on this practice are now being published in this new format. I hope that the practice of the sadhana will continue for decades and generations to come, and that it will help liberate us and enable us to help solve the terrible problems we have created for ourselves in this world.

DIANA J. MUKPO, DSW

*October 15, 2013*

## *Introduction*

PRACTICING *THE SADHANA OF MAHAMUDRA* is like flipping a switch that connects us to live current, a power supplied by practitioners stretching back more than twenty generations. The power we feel as we practice this ritual emerges from the intimate experience of a student—Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche—who devoutly followed the instructions of his teachers and became a teacher himself, yet never lost the spirit of a humble student. As we intone the words of the sadhana, he and the teachers before him seem to be whispering in our ears. They pass on more than technical instructions and doctrines. They pass on the very means for us to experience realization—not by following a one-size-fits-all formula, but by experiencing it for ourselves firsthand in the slime and muck of our own neurosis.

*The Sadhana of Mahamudra* was born in extraordinary circumstances. When Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche traveled to Bhutan in 1968, accompanied by one of his Western students, he was at an impasse. In 1959, he had engineered a daring escape from his Tibetan homeland and made a new home in a vastly different world in India. In just a few short years, when he moved to Great Britain, he found himself in a completely new milieu yet again. By 1968 he had been in the West long enough to have an appreciation for its ways. He found himself deeply inspired to bring the profound practice and insight he had inherited into an entirely new culture that would benefit from what he had to offer. And yet he was stuck.

He had been trained since the age of five in a rigorous system of study and meditative practice, one intended as a direct path to the Buddha's realization. Those methods of training had existed nearly unchanged since the twelfth century.<sup>1</sup> He longed to share that training and understanding, but couldn't quite see how to communicate it in his new environment. The buddhadharma

was a foreign plaything in his new home, often intellectualized or romanticized. When he fled Tibet, he left behind the teachers who had trained him since he was a child, the monasteries he was responsible for, and a society in which his role was clear. In Britain he studied comparative religion, philosophy, and fine arts at Oxford and eventually started a small meditation center in the Scottish countryside. Wearing monk's robes in this adopted home, he often felt he was treated like a piece of Asian statuary, uprooted from its sacred context and set on display in the British Museum. Few other Tibetan teachers offered support, at the time feeling that Westerners were sweet but uncivilized and not capable of training in genuine dharma—at least at present. Deep in his heart, he felt it must be otherwise. What to do?

In later years, Trungpa Rinpoche counseled students faced with daunting circumstances not to drive themselves into “the high wall of insanity,”<sup>2</sup> desperately trying to will and think themselves out of a corner. Instead, he advised, allow the uncertainty of those pivotal moments to unfold completely and rely on one's meditative discipline to keep oneself on the ground, just as the Buddha famously touched the earth directly prior to his enlightenment. As he describes in the first and last talk in this book, in the cave at Taktsang, Trungpa Rinpoche let the uncertainty build and build. And a breakthrough occurred.

With great clarity, he saw that the obstacle to a flowering of the Buddha's teaching and practice in the modern world was not simply the lack of good cross-cultural communication. It was materialism. Not the focus on material wealth alone, but a subtler, deeper form of apparent comfort: spiritual materialism. He coined this term to describe the desire for a spiritual path that led you to *become* something, to attain a state of which you could be proud, instead of a path that unmasked your self-deception. The conviction dawned that if people could only see and cut through spiritual materialism, they would find the genuine spiritual path; it would be fulfilling in a way that made attainments uninteresting and unnecessary. He left the retreat intent on finding students willing to make this journey with him.

One of the provisions he offered students for that journey was *The Sadhana of Mahamudra*, the very text he had discovered in the retreat.

Before too long, he established the tradition of having the sadhana practiced on the new and full moon evenings every month in the centers he founded. In those early days and to this day, it was offered to people at all levels of experience with meditation, from the very newest to the most experienced. As the Nālandā Translation Committee has written:

In offering a sadhana in English to anyone coming through our doors, the Vidyadhara gave beginning students a taste of the tantric way of engaging the world: the fearless view that all aspects of mind are workable and that whatever we experience is sacred world—a single circle beyond confusion. This practice also served as the primary statement for the Vajradhatu/Shambhala<sup>3</sup> way of engaging the dharma. It proclaims that genuine dharma becomes possible only when physical, psychological, and spiritual materialism are cut through.<sup>4</sup>

While a sadhana can be read as a document (“like a newspaper,” Trungpa Rinpoche once said) to glean its meaning and its messages, it is not a document per se. It is a ritual meant to be enacted. In practicing *The Sadhana of Mahamudra*, we reenact the realization that gave birth to it. We inhabit Trungpa Rinpoche’s worldview. The vivid imagistic language of the sadhana (e.g., “the thick, black fog of materialism”) has raw power that requires little commentary. We get a feeling for it when we first recite it, and ever after. We take a leap, a leap to a place we already are, as Trungpa Rinpoche indicated. Practicing the sadhana with little preparation, therefore, can work quite well. The sights, sounds, and feelings wash through and over us and convey a feeling of connectedness and self-liberation.

At a certain point, though, the sadhana cries out for deeper investigation. So much of its language is deeply encoded. It comes out of a rich context that we are being invited into. For example, what does it mean for us to say out loud, “My whole being is Dorje Trolö” or “the experience of joy becomes devotion”?

Precisely because the practice of the sadhana can take on deeper meanings, as we become more familiar with its context, Trungpa Rinpoche presented two seminars in 1975 to explain the literal meaning of unfamiliar terms and unpack the deeper meanings that lay within. Taken together, these two

seminars (bolstered by an excellent glossary in this volume) form the basis for a commentary on the practice. Following long tradition, we read and study the commentary to derive more richness from the practice itself. It lives and breathes, changing each time we enact it, yet staying fundamentally, adamantly, the same.

In these ten talks, Trungpa Rinpoche lays the groundwork we need to gain a deeper appreciation of the *sadhana*. At the same time, he uses the *sadhana* commentary as a vehicle for delivering key messages about how to be a good student, and in particular how to be a good student within the tantric tradition—at whatever level you choose to engage it. Therefore, many of the talks center on the theme of devotion and how we relate to the teacher, the spiritual friend, and the guru. In essence, the *sadhana* is an act of devotion. As a result, it's critical for us to refine our understanding of what devotion is and is not.

To begin with, Trungpa Rinpoche establishes in no uncertain terms that the guru is not a hero to be worshipped or a parental figure to be impressed. Devotion is not an act of theater we produce, hiding our nasty bits behind the backstage curtain. In the talk on surrendering from the second seminar, Trungpa Rinpoche ties devotion into the act of offering. Following a strongly devotional section in the *sadhana* when we call out to the teachers of the lineage (“I still aspire to see your face”) and then identify with their realization (“It is wonderful to arrive in your domain”), we offer everything we have of every kind (“Food, wealth, companionship, fame, and sensual attachments”). He makes clear that offering is essential and total. We have to “give the giver.” The essence of spiritual materialism is to make an offering of our impressive spiritual prowess, hoping to be confirmed by the teacher. In the surrendering chapter, we learn that the point of offering is to be emptied out, to reveal every corner of our world in all its neurotic glory. Only then are we ready to receive real teachings, because ego is being undercut.

“No one is home” and therefore the teachings have room to take up residence in our hearts and minds. Devotion is not a business deal where we negotiate payment for the goods. It's a literal surrender, whereby we allow the guru to ransack our treasury, taking what we hold most dear. We let it happen because we've never experienced a way of being as profound as we find embodied in the gurus of the lineage. As the subtitle of the *sadhana* indicates,

they are an “ocean of siddhas,” beings who exhibit the kind of power that is hard to ignore.

In one of the most vivid and potent talks, Trungpa Rinpoche says the world we offer up to the siddhas is a charnel ground, a place where birth and death occur all the time simultaneously: “the chaos that takes place in our neurosis is the only home ground that we can build our mandala on.” And by *our* mandala, he means the mandala of the siddhas, because we *are* them, and like them we “fearlessly enjoy the mahamudra and attain the experience of *maha ati*.”

In this charnel-ground talk, he provides commentary on the section of the sadhana that describes the ground on which the siddhas will have their palace: “that great graveyard in which lie buried the complexities of samsara and nirvana...the universal ground of everything...the basis of freedom and also the basis of confusion.” If we are to fully embody the realization of the siddhas, we first have to be honest with ourselves and stop looking for something else, somewhere else, an alternative reality that is a “better, higher, more loving, less aggressive place.” The search for a holy place set apart is once again the quest of spiritual materialism, a fool’s errand. Realization will only arise within the mess we find ourselves in.

Upon this foundation of ruthless honesty sits a huge rock mountain. In the commentary, Trungpa Rinpoche lets us know that this rock represents faith—not faith in something outer, but rather faith that what we see is what we get. It is, he says, “seeing things as they are—whatever they might be—precisely, directly, and without any hesitation.” This is the foundation on which genuine practice is built. In the iconography of the sadhana, this faith that obliterates wishful thinking is solid rock. On top of this rock sits a triangle, which “radiates the blazing red light of inner warmth and compassion.” The triangle is a standard tantric symbol that represents a cervix that constantly gives birth.

What it gives birth to is openness: “giving, opening, extending yourself completely to the situation, to what is available around you, being fantastically exposed.” In spiritual materialism, we escape reality by creating our own territory. We give birth to further territory that has our label on it, and therefore we become more closed off. By contrast, in the sacred mandala invoked in the sadhana, our ground is our commitment not to attempt escape.

From that emerges a rock of faith in seeing things as they are. On top of that is a birth canal that continually breeds openness and exposure to whatever presents itself. This is a path, a process of development over time, but in the sadhana it's represented as a physical reality that exists all at once.

On the foundation of honesty, faith, and openness, the main figures of the sadhana will take their seat. We offer them everything ("filling the whole universe") and we ask of them the ultimate ("that confusion may dawn as wisdom"). The central figure is a combination of two great lineage figures, one from the *ati* lineage of the Nyingma (Padmasambhava in his wrathful manifestation as Dorje Trolö) and one from the mahamudra lineage of the Kagyü (Karma Pakshi, the second Karmapa). In the head, throat, and heart centers within Padmasambhava/Karma Pakshi are three more of the Karmapas, the leaders of the Kagyü lineage. Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche was trained by people from each of these lineages and by people who intermingled these lineages.

In describing the essence of the sadhana, he tells us that these two traditions together make a very powerful and desirable combination, and it would be wiser to feel them embodied harmoniously within oneself rather than to see them as opposing schools of thought. They make beautiful music together. Ati, he says, represents *space*, and mahamudra, *energy*. He describes the combining of these two in a variety of other intriguing ways. When these two traditions are joined and seen as one, it brings together

insight and emotion (since insight needs to become more emotional,  
and emotion needs to become more insightful)

brains and heart

power and discipline

wretchedness (fully appreciating our neurosis) and glory (fully  
appreciating that we are enlightened as we are)

the gradual path toward enlightenment and the sudden path of  
realization on the spot

control and relaxation playboys and pilots devotion and crazy wisdom



And there's the rub. Devotion—giving even the giver, losing our home—combines with crazy wisdom. That's the cocktail at the heart of *The Sadhana of Mahamudra*.

But what is this crazy wisdom? At one point, he says it is “wisdom gone wild”; at another point, he says it's “craziness gone wise.” It's pointless to try to pin Trungpa Rinpoche down to a final definitive description; his is the finger pointing at the moon. It is for us to experience it directly. But he gives good hints.

When wisdom goes to its farthest extent, he says, it manifests as an uncompromising form of compassion that does not concern itself in any way with how the compassioner will be perceived. It's a light that shines on whatever it encounters without discrimination, without hesitation, cowardice, paranoia, or fear. “Whatever is needed will be done,” he says. Whatever and whomever needs to be worked with will be helped. The crazy-wisdom person gives up on no person and no situation. Everything is seen in terms of its “primordial wakeful quality.” Because the crazy-wisdom person sees people as awake, they are treated as awake—whether they like it or not. From the perspective of confused mind, this is far from genteel behavior: it's crazy and it threatens ego. From the perspective of enlightened mind, though, it is the wisdom with which we were born let loose, the purity beyond clean and unclean, and the ultimate expression of buddhahood.

I have been studying these talks off and on going back to 1978, when I first listened to the series on audiotape. Every time I return I am not disappointed. The topics in here are subtle and profound, but the fact that they are tied to a practice that you can do repeatedly makes them practical. Crazy wisdom, which could be obscure and highfalutin and weird, has a very earthy quality instead. If you're returning to this territory, welcome back. You will not be disappointed. If you're entering here for the first time, I envy you. It's a place you can happily return to for the rest of your life. May your emotion become more insightful and your insight more emotional. May your wretchedness come together with your glory. May compassionate energy arise without pretense and a roaring flame of blessings shoot into the sky.

BARRY CAMPBELL BOYCE  
*Halifax, Nova Scotia*  
*December 2012*

## *Part One*

# THE EMBODIMENT OF ALL THE SIDDHAS

*Karmê Chöling, Vermont, September 1975*

The lineage of the sadhana is the lineage of the two schools put together: the two traditions of immense crazy wisdom and immense dedication and devotion. It puts the student's role and the teacher's role together into one powerful style. The Kagyü, or mahamudra, tradition, the tradition of Karma Pakshi, specialized in immense dedication and devotion. The Nyingma, or ati, tradition, the tradition of Padmasambhava, is the lineage of crazy wisdom. It is possible to put these two traditions together and work with both of them. The sadhana is a prototype of how emotion and wisdom can work together. It's possible; it has been done.

—CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA RINPOCHE

**ONE**

## *Historical Commentary: Part One*

*It was most interesting in that my stay at Taktsang reflected that my being there had something to do with the Western world, since I had come there from England. I remembered England and thought about my work there and what I would have to do when I went back, so Taktsang was just a resting place for me. I knew I would have to go back to the West and present the vajrayana teachings to the rest of the world, so to speak. That concern was always intensely in my mind.*

I WOULD LIKE to discuss the background to *The Sadhana of Mahamudra*, in terms of the inspiration that developed in me from being exposed to both Western spiritual materialism and to the wisdom of the traditional Buddhist approach to reality.

### **THE VISION OF THE SADHANA: OVERCOMING SPIRITUAL MATERIALISM**

*The Sadhana of Mahamudra* was composed in Tibetan by myself, personally, and has been translated into the English language. The basic vision of the sadhana is based on two main principles: the principle of space and the principle of energy. Space here is related to the teachings of *dzogchen*, or ati, the ninth and highest yana of Buddhist tantra. The energy principle is related to mahamudra, from the *anuttarayoga* tantra; it is also a high level of experience. In the practice of *The Sadhana of Mahamudra* we are trying to bring space and energy together; we are trying to bring about some understanding and realization in the world.

This is a very confused world, a very corrupted world at all levels. I'm not particularly talking about the Orient or Occident; I'm talking about the world in general. Materialism and the technological outlook no longer come from the West alone. They seem to be universal. The Japanese make the best cameras. Indians make atomic bombs. So we are talking in terms of materialism and spirituality in the world at large. It's a universal situation. Therefore, as well, we can work together, East and West, in a very resourceful way.

The question that we need to look into is how we can overcome spiritual materialism fully and properly, without simply brushing it off as an undesirable consequence. The question is how we can actually work with the tendencies toward spiritual and psychological materialism that exist in the world today. How can we work with those things properly? How can we transmute them into livable, workable, enlightened basic sanity?

## **THE HISTORY OF COMPOSING THE SADHANA**

I wrote this sadhana during a retreat in Bhutan in 1968.<sup>5</sup> My situation at that time was very unusual; you could almost say unique.

It was unique because I was in a position to see both cultures together. I had been in the United Kingdom for a long time, since 1963. I had seen that particular world and been in that particular atmosphere. When I returned to Asia and went to Bhutan, I also rediscovered its characteristics, which were extraordinarily familiar to me; but at the same time, the reference point, or contrast to Western culture, was very powerful and important.

I asked the queen of Bhutan,<sup>6</sup> who was my hostess, whether I could do a short retreat at the Taktsang Retreat Center, at the site of the cave where Padmasambhava meditated. He actually became or manifested here as Dorje Trolö, his crazy-wisdom form. Taktsang is close to the second largest town of Bhutan, which is called Paro. The queen was delighted by and appreciative of my request. She was hoping that I could encourage the temple keepers and bless the people, as well as the place itself. My student, Künga Dawa, and I went up there part of the way in a Land Rover, which had on it the flag of Bhutan and a license plate that said, "Bhutan One." Then, we traveled the rest of the way on horses and pack mules. When we got close to the cave, we had

to dismount and climb down a very scary hill, which was a sheer drop of about eleven hundred feet if you went straight down. There were niches carved in the rock for our hands and feet. At the bottom, there was a little patch of grass that we walked across. We crossed a stream and came to the retreat center.

We were warmly received by the *kunyer*, or temple keeper. Several royal Bhutanese guards were also there, as well as various officials who had been sent to take care of us. In fact, there were quite a number of them—more than we needed. There were something like fifteen officials, and the place is very small. The site of the cave had been built up more than was necessary. The cave was below, and the temple where we stayed was built on top of it, on the rock. Something like nine temples and all kinds of shrines had been built around the cave. My bedroom was part of the ninth shrine of Amitabha, I believe. My friend Künga had a little cottage close to my room, which happened to be the hall of Karma Pakshi.



*Map of Bhutan showing location of Taktsang.*

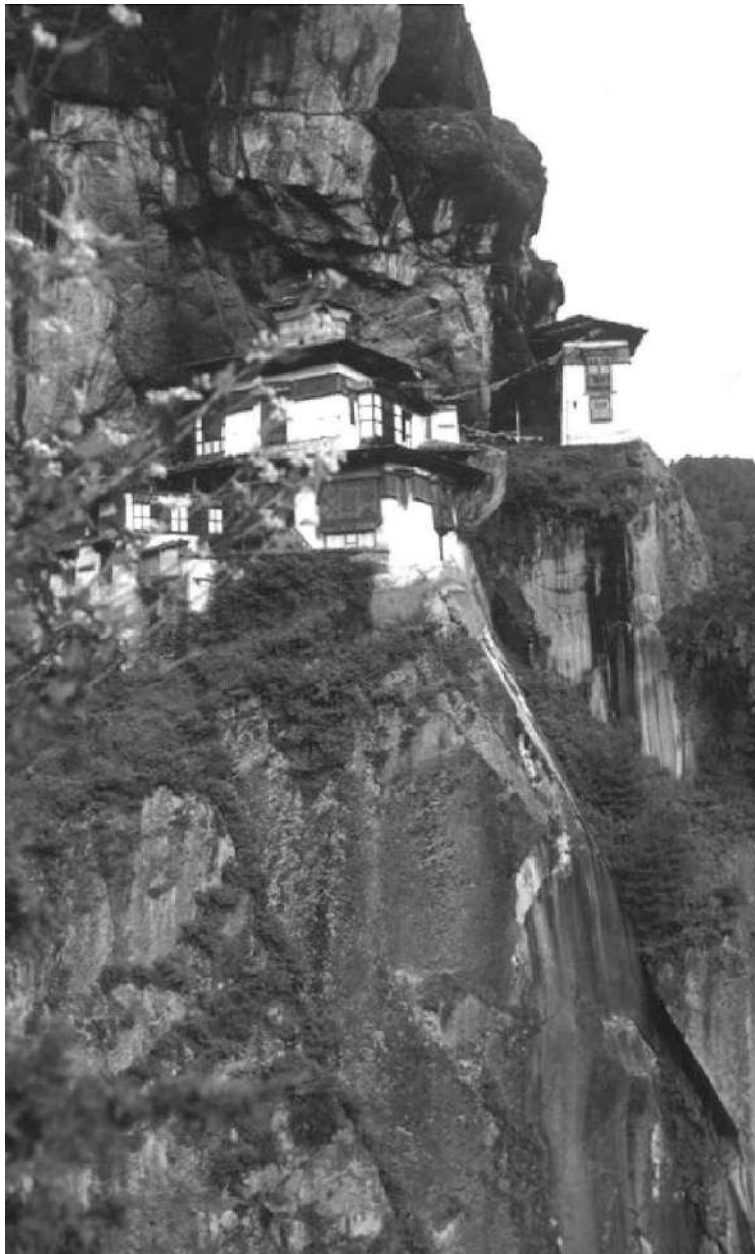
DRAWING BY CHRIS GIBSON.



*Chögyam Trungpa on a mule, on the way to Taktsang, 1968.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY DAN RUSSELL AND KÜNGA DAWA. FROM THE  
COLLECTION OF THE SHAMBHALA ARCHIVES.





*Photograph of Taktsang cave, 1968.*

PHOTO BY DAN RUSSELL AND KÜNGA DAWA. FROM THE COLLECTION OF  
THE SHAMBHALA ARCHIVES.

We settled in. We talked about the place and the air and the environment around there. At that point, I began my retreat. My experience there was

extraordinarily casual. There was nothing at all extraordinary about it. Nothing really happened. There I was in a very special place that in my childhood I used to read about and talk about. Finally, I was in the very place where Padmasambhava actually became Dorje Trolö, where he manifested as a crazy-wisdom person. When I was a child of nine, I used to learn prayers to Padmasambhava by heart. I used to study many scriptures related to Padmasambhava; I used to read the story of Padmasambhava's life and study his teachings. But this place seemed to be an anticlimax. Nothing was happening. It was a nice hermitage, the service was excellent, and the landscape was beautiful. It was a nice temple and a nice view.

We couldn't walk around much because everything was built on a cliff. We could only sit and admire the view from the windows. We could walk up and down the staircase and through the various temples, and we could talk to the kunyer, the temple keeper, who we discovered was interested in collecting books of pornography. He also seemed to be interested in little business deals, but he didn't have much to sell. He was always trying to talk to Künga and trying to sell us this and that little thing, little trinkets, little goodies of all kinds.

Occasionally, we had visits from members of the royal family or from various dignitaries and visitors, ranging from Swedish doctors to German archaeologists to English historians. They used to come up there touring and exploring the place, which takes a few hours. Then they would have their picnic lunch and go away.

To our surprise, we learned that the reason we were so well fed was because the local people would bring us their firewood, eggs, meat, and their milk as part of their tax payment. By feeding the royal guest, they would get a reduction of their tax payments. It was very easy for them, because they wanted to relate with the holy man, the Tibetan *tülku*, the rinpoche. They felt good, and they also felt businesslike at the same time, that it was a very good deal for them. We had lots of eggs and lots of meat and lots of firewood and lots of milk—and nothing else. It was an interesting time, being there.

My so-called attendant, who had been appointed by the government, lived next door to me. Beyond that were the cook's quarters. My attendant and the cook used to sit around and throw dice and laugh and drink a liquor called *chang*, the local drink. Chang is similar to beer, somewhat. It's made from

barley and yeast. But it's actually referred to as wine, barley wine. The word for wine made from grapes is *gunchang*; wine made from barley is called *nechang*. The cook and the attendant had a good time, because for a while they didn't have to serve as palace guards or be hassled by their palace duties. They were having their break, their chance to be away from the palace and to serve me for three weeks. So they had an extremely good time.

As far as I was concerned, there was no great revelation that I attained from that place apart from what was there, whatever it may be. It was most interesting in that my stay reflected that my being there had something to do with the Western world, since I had come there from England. I remembered England and thought about my work there and what I would have to do when I went back, so Taktsang was just a resting place for me. I knew I would have to go back to the West and present the vajrayana teachings to the rest of the world, so to speak. That concern was always intensely in my mind.

I conducted regular sadhana practices close to the big cave where Padmasambhava meditated.<sup>7</sup> Every day I practiced my sadhana with a few students of Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, who would prepare the shrine. We practiced together. It was a very pleasant living situation, but at the same time I had a sense of hauntedness: how to actually share this with others. I kept thinking about how I could actually communicate what I knew to others. That was a big stumbling block for me. I had a good time eating and drinking and everything, but at the same time, my mind was completely occupied. All the time, there was a concern about how this could be transmitted to others. I felt slightly depressed that I didn't have any bright ideas. No big gadgets popped up in my head. I racked my brains, and even though I was having a good time, I knew I was wasting my time.

"You're only here for three weeks," I kept telling myself. "What are you going to do after this, if you don't get something out of this fantastic, historic, blessed, highly sacred, powerful place? What if you don't get anything out of this?" That questioning took place continuously, each time I conducted the sadhana of Padmasambhava or visited the cave itself, which is a dark little dungeon. It smells of moss and rotten wood and decaying offerings; there is only a faint burning light. There is nothing particularly fantastic about it. It's just like getting inside a garbage pail—something like that. In spite of my respect for the place, it was still just going down to a dingy hole. I would just

go back and forth between my room and that cave. Nothing was happening! I would try to think holy thoughts, but so what? It was very simple and very ordinary.

At that time, I started drinking more and more because I felt depressed. Bhutanese gin was being sent to us by the queen. She also sent us what is called Bhutanese golden drink, a liquor they produce in Bhutan. The queen was also constantly sending us all kinds of little chocolates and goodies and biscuits. Every day we got little goodies. I think she even sent me some Johnnie Walker Red, all of which was an interesting reference point for me.

One night—this is not a particularly extraordinary story—I got extremely drunk and frustrated. I looked out the window, and there was nothing but fireflies flying around. My cooks were snoring very loudly, and the statues in their little niches in my room were staring in their own way. The little butter lamps were burning; my bed was there, and my books were there. I felt such immense frustration that I actually yelled. I was extraordinarily drunk; it was a very intense, very personal experience. I was not yelling for help or for mommy or daddy; it was an internal yell, or shout. It created some kind of breakthrough, and also some understanding of alcohol at the same time. There is some kind of little click, a step that you can take between alcohol being possessed in your body or alcohol possessing your mind. Once your mind is clear, your body becomes uncomplicated. That was a particular point of realization, very quick, although I had no visions of any kind. Nothing extraordinary happened to me at all; the headlines of this sadhana just came up in my head, flashed in my mind. The whole headline flashed in my mind.

What was happening interested me a great deal. I felt that the experience might be some kind of leverage, some kind of handle or staircase through which I might be able to relate or communicate, by means of that particular discipline and message, which is said by nobody, but which was in my head. That message was very powerful and very important for me.

An understanding of alcohol took place at the same time. I was drinking Bhutanese gin, I think, as well as Bhutanese beer, which is atrocious. It usually makes you sick. It's a dishwater kind of substance; it doesn't taste so good. I was drunk on the combination of the two, or maybe it was three—whatever the third one was. Some understanding took place, and I wrote down the title of the sadhana that night. The next day I woke up quite clear,

without any hangover. I was very happy and rejoiced; my whole mood had completely changed. My preoccupation with Taktsang, the feeling that I should make a big deal of the place, that I had to get something out of it, was completely gone.

We had lots of chilies in Bhutan, and Künga was feeling extremely painful. On that very day, he complained that he didn't want to eat this kind of food anymore. He just wanted some plain biscuits or meat. He asked me to translate his request to the cook. The cook said he had a problem with the pots: he couldn't cook two meals at once. He said he was cooking specially for me. He shouldn't have to cook especially for Künga; Künga was supposed to be my disciple, so he should eat what I ate. He shouldn't be treated as a VIP. I translated all that back to poor Künga, who was very depressed. So he had to stick with *ema*, which is the Bhutanese word for chili. Bhutanese cooking uses a lot of hot green chilies—it's like Szechuan food. Hot chilies were cooked with the meat. There was no curry powder or any other spice. It's very painful to eat, and it's good, too. The worst pain is when you go to the bathroom.

Getting back to the subject, I began to write the sadhana on that day, and I completed almost the whole thing. I wrote just a few words the following day. So altogether it took me about six hours to write the whole thing. I didn't have to think about what I was doing; the whole thing came out very fresh. After a while, the words began to churn in my mind and my hands began to ache. I tried to relax a little bit and rest my fingers. After that, I picked up my pen and just wrote spontaneously. That is how the sadhana was written.

## **THE PURPOSE OF THE SADHANA: JOINING ATI AND MAHAMUDRA**

In writing the sadhana, I tried to bring together the devotion from the Nyingma tradition and the Kagyü tradition. That is the basic idea of the sadhana: to bring together the ati and mahamudra traditions. There's no conflict at all between the two. The contemplative approach of the Kagyüs is somewhat dramatic and perhaps too power oriented. In order to tone it down, I added something from the Nyingma tradition, in order to create a better soup stock, by adding another flavoring. Bringing those two traditions together actually makes a lot of sense. Karma Pakshi, who is the main figure

in the sadhana, is regarded in the sadhana as the same as Padmasambhava, who is the founder of the Nyingma lineage. It was Padmasambhava who introduced the Buddhist teachings to Tibet. He was also a tantric master. Karma Pakshi was a less powerful or famous person historically. He was just a crazy-wisdom person in the Kagyü tradition.

My purpose in writing the sadhana was to build a bridge between the two contemplative traditions. Even the wording of this sadhana, how each sentence and the whole thing is structured, is based on that idea of trying to bring together in a harmonious way the mahamudra language of the newer school of tantra and the ati language of the older school of tantra.

Underlying both mahamudra and maha ati is a basic foundation: the practice of surrendering, renunciation, and devotion. That brings the whole thing together, very much in a nutshell. You have to surrender, and you actually have to develop devotion. Without that, you can't see or hear or experience the real teachings properly and fully. We could go into the details of that later on.

## DISCUSSION

### **The reference to “warring sects” in the sadhana.**

*Question:* At the beginning of the sadhana, in the introductory remarks before we begin chanting, the sadhana speaks of warring sects, schools of the sangha fighting among themselves. Were you referring to the conflict between the Nyingmas and the Kagyüs?

*Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche:* Not necessarily. Warring or fighting refers to all the schools—to everything, to everybody. The Theravadins were at odds with the Sarvastivadins; the Burmese were quarrelling with the Sinhalese.

### **Relationship of mahamudra and ati.**

*Q:* Are mahamudra and ati two different sects, related to the Kagyü and Nyingma lineages?

*CTR:* They are not regarded as being different in terms of being in conflict, but the mahamudra tradition of the Kagyüs was often regarded as less

advanced than the highest level of the Nyingma tradition, which is ati. The Kagyü tradition actually does accept the ati teachings.

### **Reconciling the Kagyü and the Nyingma lineages in the sadhana.**

*Q:* I was deeply impressed by the process, more than I was by the climax or the content of what we're striving to understand. As you told the story, with my Western ears, I heard you saying that you went in and out of the garbage pail, and you came to this place and made a primal scream, and out came the thing that you were looking for. So I'm curious as to what motivation you felt, as sort of the filter or the transmitter of Buddhism, to create this reconciliation of two schools.

*CTR:* Well, that reconciliation evolved on its own. For example, the third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje, was the embodiment of both traditions. At the same time, the Kagyü and the Nyingma lineages both continued separately. So I don't particularly have to invent a new lineage. Jamgön Kongtrül the Great also realized that the two traditions are very close, that they work hand in hand. The Kagyü tradition is more energetic and the Nyingma tradition is more spacious; nevertheless, they work together.

### **Carrying the profundity of the sadhana into everyday life.**

*Q:* The sadhana is a highly inspiring piece of literature. It speaks of how the phenomenal world in all its simplicity and mundane quality represents the very highest, the most profound, truths. There's an exciting quality to performing the sadhana; at the same time we could have some intuitive sense that our mind in its naked state could actually be Dorje Trolö—that it could be of the nature of self-existing equanimity. That simplicity is very exciting, but at the same time, that exciting simplicity is over when the gong rings three times and we go back to our simple, mundane world. We don't think anymore in terms of Dorje Trolö or self-existing equanimity. Yet that is what the sadhana is about: seeing the profundity in everyday experience.

*CTR:* We have an artificial problem there. I don't see any real problem. It's a question of what we're going to do afterward. We just do what we do, and when the security of our inspiration gets exposed to city life or just ordinary life, it is very painful for us. But we have to submit to that situation; otherwise

we would have no way to understand ourselves. I don't see any big problems, particularly. We just have to do it, just do it very simply. And when we do it, we are able to feel it properly. If we have any complaints, that is a sign that we didn't do it properly. So it's very simple to deal with our artificial problem. We have to do it. We have to do it.

### **Reference in the sadhana to the waning of the Buddha's teaching.**

*Q:* You wrote at the beginning of the sadhana that the teachings of Buddha were waning, and that spiritual materialism was getting stronger. Was that in reference to your experience at the temple at Taktsang?

*CTR:* It was in reference to many things. We definitely had a lot of spiritual problems in my country. People just conducted their little spiritual business affairs: they conducted marriage ceremonies; they conducted funeral ceremonies; they conducted ceremonies for the sick; they conducted ceremonies for the unfortunate. However, there was no real practice going on; it was a big racket. It was no wonder the communists decided to take over; they were right from that point of view. They had a perfect right to destroy that superficial and highly theocratized society, which had no real theocracy, no real religion, no real insight. All those things were true. In fact, I think the dissolution of the Tibetan kingdom was very fortunate for Buddhism. We are finally here; we are face-to-face with somebody else, with another real world. I'm beginning to feel that Tibetan teachers who escaped from communist oppression could hopefully conduct their business very honestly. They don't have to continue the old ways—over and over, again and again.

So as far as I'm concerned, I have pulled my own trip together from that point of view. I just tell people the truth: that to begin with, life is painful—that it's not blissful to begin with. I tell people they have to do things properly, that they have to sit a lot. That's the basic point. If people want to get into tantra, I tell them that it's a very long way for them, that they're not ready for it, and so forth. What we have been discussing under the heading of the sadhana is that people corrupt the teachings in the name of holiness. It has happened in the past, in the Catholic tradition as well as in other high church traditions. It seems to be always the same problem. What we are getting into here is hopefully reformed Buddhism. What happened in Tibet did not happen in the name of deception; there were very honest and fantastic



teachers, great teachers like Jamgön Kongtrül. But there were a lot of other people who were trying to make fifty cents into a dollar. It was a complex situation.

*Q:* I'm very glad you're here.

*CTR:* Thank you. You got your money's worth.

## TWO

### *Devotion and Crazy Wisdom*

*The crazy-wisdom tradition puts a lot of emphasis on the sense of sudden intoxication, that ordinary mind can be suddenly transformed into no-mind. The mahamudra devotional school puts its emphasis on gradual intoxication, telling students that they have to take their time, take it sip by sip, so to speak, and find their own level. Both approaches have truth in them...There is a need for both approaches together. That makes the whole thing completely workable for students.*

NEXT WE COULD DISCUSS the relationship between crazy wisdom and devotion. That relationship underlies *The Sadhana of Mahamudra*.

## DEVOTION

### *Hero Worship versus Genuine Devotion*

The ordinary notion of devotion is based on some kind of parental relationship, a relationship between a father or mother and a child. On the part of the child, it involves security, admiration, and hero worship. That is why a lot of people think that devotion means putting a picture of their own favorite football player or rock star on their wall, along with photos of their favorite admired gurus. Jumbling them together that way seems to be their idea of hero worship, the worship of the ultimate achievement of a spiritual and physical superman. That kind of devotion is very questionable. There is no real substance or intelligence there, in terms of relating with the reality of

personal growth; it's purely hero worship, a dream world. That kind of adoration actually weakens the notion of heroism.

In the Kagyü tradition, the notion of devotion is an absolutely fundamental and, at the same time, full commitment. Devotees do not regard the object of their devotion as purely an object of admiration. They don't simply admire somebody because that person has great talent, and therefore should be a good person to be put on their list of heroes. There is enormous simple-mindedness in that approach, which is why we are not really able to appreciate art or fine craftsmanship or true sanity with that approach. We usually put everything together in one big garbage pail; we feel that anybody who is not quite in keeping with our own clumsiness has got to be good. So let us worship all these great football players or great presidents along with our great spiritual teachers. That approach seems to be starting out on the wrong footing; we could quite safely say that we are beginning at the wrong end of the stick.

Any real sense of devotion or dedication comes not from comparing, but from personal experience. We have actually committed ourselves. Maybe the closest example of devotion that we could come up with would be the way we feel about our lover, who may not be a great musician or a great football player or a great singer. That person may not even be all that great at keeping their domestic life together. There is just something about that particular person, who doesn't fit any of the usual categories of heroes. He or she is just a good person, a lovable person who has some very powerful qualities in themselves. That seems to be the closest analogy that we could come up with. But at the same time, devotion in the spiritual context involves something more than that. Our lover may have some kind of physical beauty or may be able to offer us some sort of security. He or she may be able to create an accommodating nest for us personally, which would be a fantastic idea. But somehow, in real devotion, we are even transcending that situation.

Real devotion is connected with some sense of ground, in which we relate with our own mind. Often you may not be able to do so with your lover, since your lover is the object of too much admiration. The object of devotion, the guru, is not so much an object of admiration, not a superman. We are not expecting everything to be absolutely right. At that point, we take another step in our relationship with our guru, our teacher, who is not a football

player, not a great musician, a great singer, or even a great lover. We have gone to another level. We simply begin

to realize that some kind of love affair is taking place between us and the teacher, not at the football player level or even at the wife or husband level; something else is taking place. That something else is difficult to explain and very hard to describe; that something else has immense clarity and power. We don't usually like our lovers to have too much power over us; we don't usually like our heroes to have too much power over us. We would simply like to idolize them. That way it's our choice rather than something coming from that angle. The complete devotion of the relationship between teacher and student is a unique situation.

### *The Two Aspects of Devotion*

**Longing.** There are two aspects to devotion: longing and humbleness. The first one is longing, in the sense that you would actually like to get into the mind of your teacher. You would like to experience your teacher's mind fully and completely; you wish you could get inside the teacher's brain and look out. Then you could say, "Wow! This is how the teacher sees it. It's fantastic!" You would like to get inside his or her brain first and then look at yourself. You're a little disciple sitting there in your teacher's mind and looking at the world from his point of view. You climb over his brain and you poke a little hole in his skull so that you can look outside. But although you are unable to do that, you still feel a kind of fascination and a fantastic longing: you would like to mix your mind with his or her mind. That longing is the first kind of devotion.

**Humbleness.** The second aspect of devotion is humbleness. Humbleness in this case means absence of ego, absence of arrogance. When you worship a football player or your great daddy or your great mother, that worship is somewhat arrogant: you think that you will inherit their great genius. You would like to associate with great poets, great artists, great geniuses. But when you relate with your teacher spiritually in terms of devotion, there is very little room for arrogance. You have a sense of humbleness and an absence of uptightness.

Uptightness is also arrogance. Arrogance is thinking that you know what you are going to do; you are completely involved in your male chauvinistic trip or your female chauvinistic trip. You think that as females or as males, you have the right to a complete description of what spiritual disciplines you might be receiving. That kind of chauvinism is what's known as arrogance. People who might mock other people's chauvinistic trips would never criticize themselves. They would say about others, "*You* are a bitch; you are a pig." The others are in the wrong, obviously. That is always the problem. When there is arrogance, there is no communication. So the obstacle to humbleness is too much chauvinism, and not paying enough attention to who you are and what you are. The only way to overcome that obstacle is to develop a sense of humbleness. Genuine humility doesn't mean that you have to faithfully follow an Oriental trip of bowing every other minute or every other second. You don't have to kneel down and lick your teacher's feet as an expression of devotion. Sometimes when people can't experience devotion properly, they just try to act it out physically. They are always trying to please, trying to maintain some kind of format or protocol, which is highly questionable. Often such people are extraordinarily arrogant.

Real humbleness is not allowing any kind of backbone in oneself. You are completely flexible from head to toe. You are without a backbone, without any bones at all in your body. You would just like to kneel down. You are flexible like a good fish that has been cooked; you are completely flexible, like a worm. You don't have the arrogance of sticking your little corners out and saying, "No, no! You can't touch my ribs. No, no! You can't touch my neck. You can't touch my back, my shoulders, my leg. It hurts! Don't touch me." You are totally reduced to a piece of raw meat, a completely flexible piece of raw meat. You are willing to do anything. You are willing to get into anything; you are willing to actually open yourself up and be at the mercy of your teacher.

So those two aspects of devotion—longing and humbleness, the absence of pride or arrogance—are the basis or foundation of the sadhana. They are also a description of how you could actually follow your path.

## CRAZY WISDOM

Going further, another aspect of the tradition of the sadhana is crazy wisdom, which is a very unusual topic. How can we say that craziness and wisdom would exist together? We could say quite safely that the expression *crazy wisdom* is not structured correctly; it is purely a linguistic convenience. We could say instead that wisdom comes first and craziness comes afterward, so “wisdom crazy” is more accurate. In relation to the idea of journey, wisdom is an all-pervasive, all-encompassing vision or perspective. It is highly powerful, clear, and precise. You are able to see things as they are, in their own right; you have no biases at all; you see things as they are, without any question. Out of that, you begin to develop craziness, which is not paying attention to all the little wars, the little resistances that might be put up by the world of reference points, the world of duality. That is craziness.

So “wisdom crazy” is the better term. It involves a sense of immense control, immense vision, and immense relaxation occurring simultaneously in your mind, all the time. You might ask how that is possible. Ordinarily, if you exercise too much control, you can’t relax. You think that in order to be in control, you have to be tight. So how can you have immense control and immense relaxation at the same time? How can you see clearly at the same time? But that dichotomy is too conceptual; you can achieve immense control and immense relaxation and immense clarity all at the same time.

## JOINING CRAZY WISDOM AND DEVOTION

The lineage of the sadhana is the lineage of the two schools put together: the two traditions of immense crazy wisdom and immense dedication and devotion. It puts the student’s role and the teacher’s role together into one powerful style. The Kagyü, or mahamudra, tradition, the tradition of Karma Pakshi, specialized in immense dedication and devotion. The Nyingma, or ati, tradition, the tradition of Padmasambhava, is the lineage of crazy wisdom. It is possible to put these two traditions together and work with both of them. The sadhana is a prototype of how emotion and wisdom can work together. It’s possible; it has been done.

This particular tradition or lineage has developed quite recently, starting about 160 years ago. It was founded particularly by the Tibetan master Jamgön Kongtrül the Great. He had developed a deep understanding of the ati and mahamudra principles, and he had become the lineage holder in the contemplative traditions of Tibetan Buddhism. His tradition or system is called the Ri-me school, which literally means “unbiased.” There is no favoritism toward a particular school of thought, but it combines the contemplative traditions. The meditative traditions were brought together at that point. The initial inspiration for the Ri-me school came from Karma Pakshi, the second Karmapa, who lived in the thirteenth century. Karma Pakshi was a teacher of the Kagyü lineage. He received teachings from the Nyingma tradition as well as from his own tradition.

Rangjung Dorje, the third Karmapa, the reincarnation of Karma Pakshi, brought the two traditions together still more. He had the very clear and precise understanding that the mahamudra teaching of devotion and the maha ati teaching of crazy wisdom could be brought together. The tradition became very eminent. It was a very important revelation for the two contemplative traditions of Tibetan Buddhism.

Openness and craziness became one approach at that point. In the Kagyü tradition, there were people like Milarepa, who was a very hard worker. He was extraordinarily diligent and devoted to his own particular discipline. On the other hand, the holders of the Nyingma lineage, like Padmasambhava, were wild and crazy and fantastically expansive. They were visionary on a larger scale; they had their own particular style of relating with the world. Bringing those two styles together is like making a good cup of tea. You boil some water and you put a pinch of tea in it, which makes a good cup of tea. You put a dash of milk in it and you drink it up.

So what we are talking about is a very beautiful blend of the two situations put together. It's an ideal situation. Quite possibly, I could say that it's the best thing that has happened to Tibetan Buddhism. It's a fantastic, magnificent display of total sanity, of basic enlightenment. Both traditions also have developed a sense of ruggedness and openness, expansiveness, and craziness put together. My personal teacher, Jamgön Kongtrül of Sechen, who was the embodiment of both traditions, handed down the teachings to me, so I feel extremely worthy and very personal about discussing this subject.

I feel that being able to discuss these things is a rare opportunity for us. The crazy-wisdom tradition puts a lot of emphasis on the sense of sudden intoxication, that ordinary mind can be suddenly transformed into no-mind. The mahamudra devotional school puts its emphasis on gradual intoxication, telling students that they have to take their time, take it sip by sip, so to speak, and find their own level. Both approaches have truth in them.

However, it is best to start with the gradual process; otherwise you get an upset stomach—or even sudden death. In any case, you would experience sudden chaos. So whichever of these two traditions a person is involved with does not really make any difference at this point. Younger students are not able to handle the abruptness or suddenness. Therefore, they should be trained in hinayana first, then in mahayana, and only later in vajrayana. They should be prepared slowly and gently, and when they are ready to actually take the leap, then you push them off the cliff and make them fly. That is precisely how the mother eagle trains her young. The first few weeks she feeds them with all kinds of meat and worms and what have you. And only later, when they are still playing games with their mother, when they still want food and are getting fat without any exercise, when they are ready to use their wings, the mother pushes them out of the nest. In that way the young eagles begin to fly. They begin to take pride in their abilities. That approach to training actually makes sense.

Our lineage is quite fittingly referred to as the “children of the garuda,” which is a mythical bird in Indian mythology. When the garuda egg hatches, the young garuda is all ready to fly. In the Ri-me tradition, the ideas of sudden birth and gradual birth work together.

That question of gradual or sudden enlightenment exists in the Zen tradition as well. In Zen, people talk about experiencing satori and suddenly being able to do anything you want. But at the same time, you are expected to do a lot of sitting practice; a lot of training is needed. So that seems to be the general pattern of spiritual development: that there is a need for both approaches together. That makes the whole thing completely workable for students. If it were not for the mahamudra, or devotional, tradition, the mahayana, or crazy-wisdom, tradition might produce a lot of fanatics, a lot of neurotics, quite possibly even a lot of suicides. It is common knowledge that there is a high suicide rate among Zen practitioners. It is also quite possible



that the gradual school would end up just running on its own regular nonsense if there were no crazy-wisdom school to save people from their wormlike trip, chewing their way through their own little tree, going round and round and round and finally dropping dead, completely dried up.

So bringing the two traditions together saves both, and their combination seems to be one of the most workable situations that has ever developed. It's no wonder the great teachers of the past came to that conclusion; I would say that they were very smart, as they deserve to be. They were, and they still are. That approach is still working in our own time.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Gelukpa tradition and the use of old tantras.**

*Question:* Do they use the old tantras in the Gelukpa tradition?

*Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche:* They miss a lot of big chunks, so they have no crazy wisdom; they're afraid of it. That's why in Western literature they are called the reformed tradition. Charles Bell and other scholars all call them "reformed."

*Q:* Last night you used the word "reformed" when you were speaking about the Kagyü tradition coming to America.

*CTR:* Well, this is real reform. We're not threatened by anybody, so we are doing it properly.

### **Devotion to discipline versus devotion to the teacher.**

*Q:* You mentioned devotion—devotion to the teacher and devotion to discipline. I wonder if the teacher is the embodiment of discipline.

*CTR:* The teacher is the embodiment of discipline.

*Q:* Can one be devoted to discipline?

*CTR:* Sure, to a discipline that is given by a teacher. You can't get away with that!

### **Heroism of crazy wisdom.**

*Q:* It seems to me that the concept of crazy wisdom has something very heroic about it. The crazy-wisdom person can do anything he wants; he's very powerful. He's a hero just like a football player is.

*CTR:* Well, I think that he *is* a hero rather than someone who is hero-worshipped. That's the difference. Obviously, he is powerful. When you possess power, you don't have to say, "I am powerful," because you are powerful already. So the difference between being hero-worshipped and being a hero on the spot is that you don't have to be qualified as a fantastic and powerful person. You are already.

*Q:* I have to think about that.

*CTR:* You'd better think about that before you get out of here.

### **Mahamudra and ati in the nine yantras.**

*Q:* Why is maha ati the ninth yantra and mahamudra the sixth yantra?

*CTR:* Let's make it very simple. There are six tantric yantras that come after the first three yantras: *shravakayana*, *pratyekabuddhayana*, and *bodhisattvayana*. Those first three yantras make up the hinayana and the mahayana together. Then, there are six further yantras, or stages, of the vajrayana. Mahamudra includes the next three yantras,<sup>8</sup> which are the first three tantric yantras. Anuttarayoga tantra, which is basically the fruition of the sixth yantra, is particularly predominant. Beyond that, you are approaching the area of ati, or crazy wisdom, the three higher tantric yantras: *mahayoga*, *anuyoga*, and *atiyoga*. The ninth yantra is maha ati, or ati mentality.<sup>9</sup>

### **Advisability of starting the path with ati.**

*Q:* I would like to ask your opinion of following a path that starts with ati. Or do you see the merging of the two traditions as being the best way for us?

*CTR:* It's very difficult to attain ati experience immediately; it takes a long time. So you find yourself following mahamudra, basically. That's what Rangjung Dorje, the third Karmapa, discovered himself. Many of the great teachers of the ati tradition, Jigme Lingpa and Longchen Rabjampa for example, constantly refer back to the nine-yantra structure. You might think that you are doing ati-type discipline, that you belong to that particular style.

Nevertheless, you always find that you have to start from scratch, which is unavoidably the mahamudra principle. So we don't have to give them labels, particularly, but what the whole thing amounts to is that you're starting from mahamudra experience in any case.

### **Seeing every experience as a manifestation of the guru principle.**

*Q:* Rinpoche, could you talk about mahamudra and its connection with devotion and humbleness, and mahamudra and its connection with the visual aspect of the world, as a way of seeing reality as something vivid and colorful?

*CTR:* That's a very good question. Thank you. I wondered if somebody would catch on to that. You did. Devotion is not only devotion to your guru alone; it is also devotion to the manifestations of the guru that exist throughout your life, all the time. If you are drinking your tea, if you slipped a disc in your back, if you're crossing the river in a ferry, if you're flying in an airplane, if you step in dog shit—whatever you might do in your life—everything is a manifestation of the guru principle. Because there is such a powerful love affair between you and your vajra master, everything becomes extraordinarily vivid and extraordinarily personal.

You might sometimes feel like complaining about the whole thing; you might try to avoid the whole situation altogether. But somehow that doesn't work. There is a constant haunting quality to your experience, and when you try to forget your guru, he only becomes more prominent. When you try to pursue your guru, he only fades away into the background. That kind of process continually happens, and that actually creates the colorful perceptions of mahamudra experience. So the whole thing begins with devotion. That seems to be the basic point.

There is need for the vajra master in any case, whether you are part of the ati tradition or the mahamudra tradition. Particularly in the ati tradition, you need to have a lot of guidance and a sense of commitment to the vajra master. So the more commitment you have to the vajra master in the mahamudra tradition, the more ati-type experience will begin to take place. So it's saying the same thing in some sense.

### **Mahamudra automatically carrying over into action.**

*Q:* That was the next thing I wanted to ask. It would seem that if you lived according to a mahamudra style, it would automatically carry over into action, without the normal reference points. So the traditions are very close together.

*CTR:* Well said, son of noble family.

### **Difference between the two schools in terms of luminosity and emptiness.**

*Q:* Is the difference between the two schools a statement—not so much that “form is emptiness” and “emptiness is form,” but that “form is luminous” and “luminosity is empty”?

*CTR:* How do you know about that?

*Q:* Does that make any sense, or is—

*CTR:* It does make sense, it does make sense. But did you read about that, or did you think about it?

*Q:* I thought about it.

*CTR:* Oh, that’s great! That’s been done already. That seems to be the tantric notion of the whole thing. Instead of saying “empty,” you say “luminous.”

*Q:* Well, I read that part in *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*.

*CTR:* You did? That’s too bad.

### **Personalities in relation to mahamudra and ati.**

*Q:* Why did the two schools arise? It wasn’t just the personalities, was it?

*CTR:* It was the personalities, sure. People have different ideas: some people would like to be pilots and fly airplanes. Some people would like to be playboys. The playboy people are mahamudra people; the pilots are ati people. But maybe the playboys would like to fly airplanes, and the pilots might like to be playboys. Those are the two basic kinds of vision: one is so expansive, and the other is so intense and colorful—a love affair.

### **Spaciousness and demand in mahamudra practice.**

*Q:* But in order to experience mahamudra, wouldn't your practice have to be very spacious as well?

*CTR:* In some sense. But if you find yourself in the middle of anuttarayoga disciplines, they are very demanding. They reduce you to nuts and bolts; with your mudras, your mantras, and your visualizations, you don't know where you are. It's a very demanding practice. You can't eat this; you can't eat that. You must eat this; you must drink that. You are constantly bounded within a very small area. But that is necessary because each time you practice, it is a process of shedding something.

Getting into the tantric world is a very full experience—overwhelmingly demanding. Some people's idea of tantra is just drinking ordinary liquor and having a good time, having a freestyle love affair. But that's not quite so. Demands are made on you in a particular way; the whole process is extraordinarily demanding. The whole point is to scrape away your basis, so that you don't have any ground to walk on. It is like scraping meat off bones: your emotions begin to float to the surface like fat boiled in water.

*Q:* But as you practice and the demands become greater and greater, shouldn't some kind of spaciousness always be required?

*CTR:* Not necessarily. As you become greater and greater, you could discover more and more possibilities of things that you could put into that greatness. If you become a millionaire, you buy lots of property and lots of furniture. You buy a big house and you fill it with pictures and photographs and furniture. That's how the whole thing goes. When you have a bigger style of thinking, you would like to decorate your world that way, because you feel that passion is your style. Maybe you should visit the homes of rich people and see how they handle themselves, particularly in America, which is a notoriously crude country. All kinds of things are going on in rich peoples' homes. Spaciousness doesn't mean that when you clear a space, when you open up a space, that nothing will occupy it. It usually happens that when you have more space, you put more stuff in it.

*Q:* So the big danger is of this intoxication becoming intoxicated.

*CTR:* Yes, that's right. You got it.

In order to connect with this material, it would be good if you can put more emphasis on disciplining yourself and on the sitting practice of

meditation. That will make what we are discussing much more workable and immediate and realistic for you.

### THREE

## *The Mandala of the Siddhas*

*That whole process of visualization is based on the unique world which is created by bringing together the contemplative traditions of the two schools. There is no need to borrow from any other tradition; we have a self-existing world that is created from the unique bringing together of the Kagyü and Nyingma traditions, very closely and properly....One school has the brains and one school has the heart, so to speak. The brain represents the ati tradition; the heart is the mahamudra tradition. Joining the two together makes a perfect human being—something even more than that, a higher human being, a fantastic superman, a vajra superman of our age.*

WHAT WE DISCUSSED in the last chapter covered the background of the two disciplines of the practicing lineage. The language used in the sadhana is based on those two experiences: the highest level of devotion and the highest level of wisdom combined. Today, we could go beyond that to a more detailed understanding the sadhana itself.

### THE OPENING OF THE SADHANA

The sadhana is composed of various sections, according to a traditional pattern. At the beginning is taking refuge and the bodhisattva vow. The first section also creates an atmosphere of self-realization or basic potentiality, which is an ongoing theme in the sadhana. In tantric language, that is called vajra pride. Your basic existence, your basic makeup, is part of enlightened being, a part of the enlightened principle. You are already basically

enlightened, so you need only recognize or realize and understand that. That is done in the first lines of the sadhana.

## CREATING THE MANDALA OF THE SIDDHAS

### *The Charnel Ground*

The next part of the sadhana is the creation of the mandala of the siddhas, Karma Pakshi and Padmasambhava, who are embodied together. Beneath Karma Pakshi Padmasambhava, is a triangle, which rests on a rock, which is built on the property of the charnel ground, which is a symbol of no-man's-land. It is the ground where birth and death take place; it is prelife and postlife experience. The idea of the charnel ground is that all kinds of experiences coexist simultaneously; you are working with that kind of no-man's-land. You no longer belong to any particular situation; you no longer belong to any particular lifestyle. You are completely open and basic. That fundamental principle is the nature of buddha mind, in fact. Buddha mind, or buddha nature, is like the space where birth and death take place. Discontinuity, or dissolving, and continuity take place constantly in that space. From that basic mandala of the charnel ground, the siddhas arise.

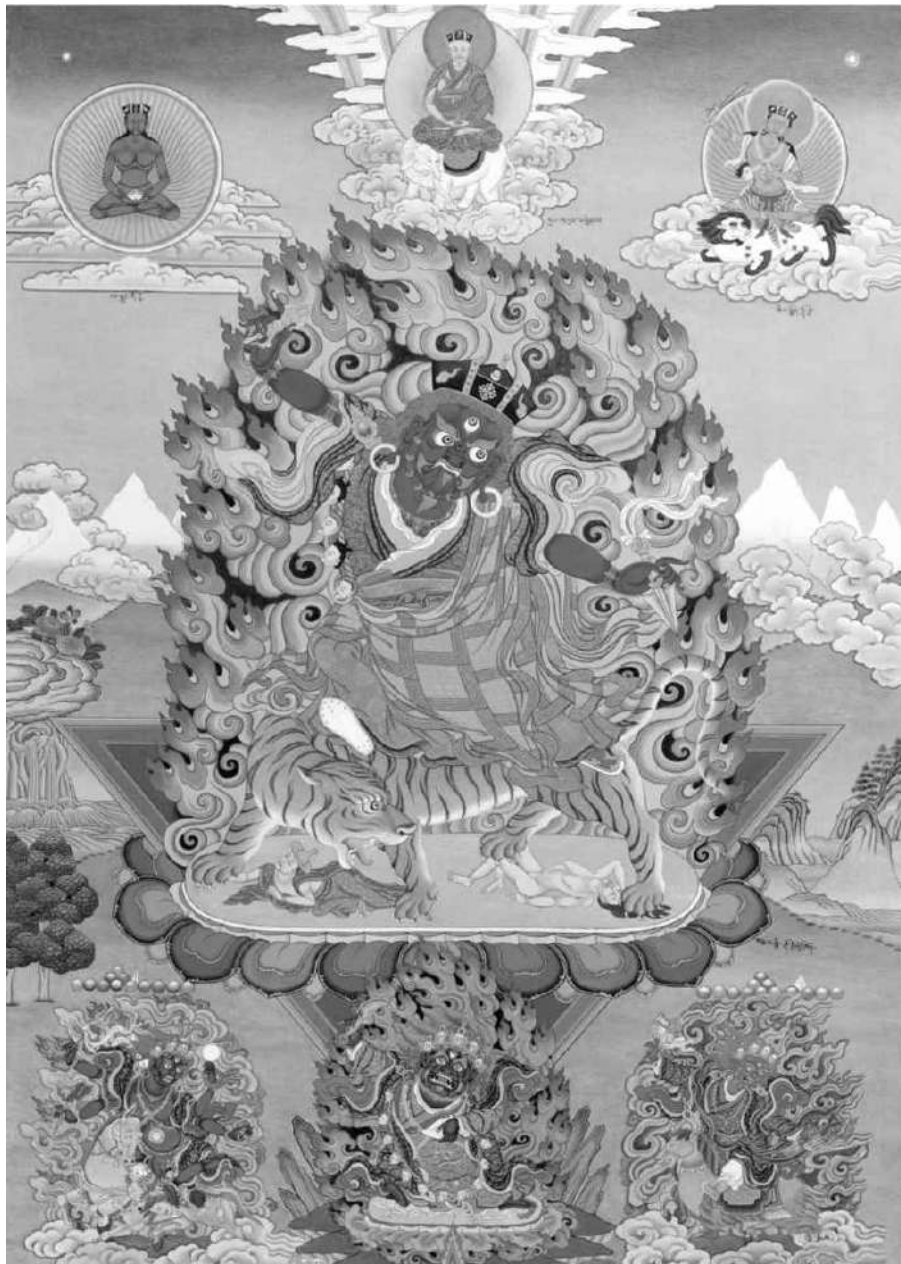
### *The Inner Mandala*

There are two types of mandala: there is the elaborate setup of the geographical mandala of the charnel ground, and there is the mandala that is created out of one's own body. The various parts of the body mandala are the forehead center, the throat center, and the heart center. The body mandala is connected with what is known as inner yoga: you don't actually have to arrange anything; the mandala is already developed in your own existence. Your body could be regarded as sacred ground or property already. At that point the figure of Karma Pakshi and Padmasambhava arises as one person, the great wrathful one, the embodiment of crazy wisdom.

That basic principle is not particularly visualized in the way that orthodox sadhanas prescribe. In this case, the qualities and the visualization are taking



place simultaneously. The qualities, or symbolism, and attributes of all kinds are described one by one.



*Dorje Trolö Karma Pakshi thangka.*

PAINTED BY SHERAB PALDEN BERU; USED BY PERMISSION.

Traditionally, in tantric visualization practice, the visualization is created, and after that the higher principles descend to bless the visualization. The

jnanasattvas bless the existing visualization, called the samayasattva, and merge with it. But in this sadhana, samayasattva and jnanasattva are embodied together. The symbolism is described first, and then the attributes of the symbolism are described, throughout the whole visualization. The basic point is that Karma Pakshi and Padmasambhava are one, and their attributes are continuous. In addition, there are various centers in the body: the forehead center, the throat center, and the heart center, which are important places.

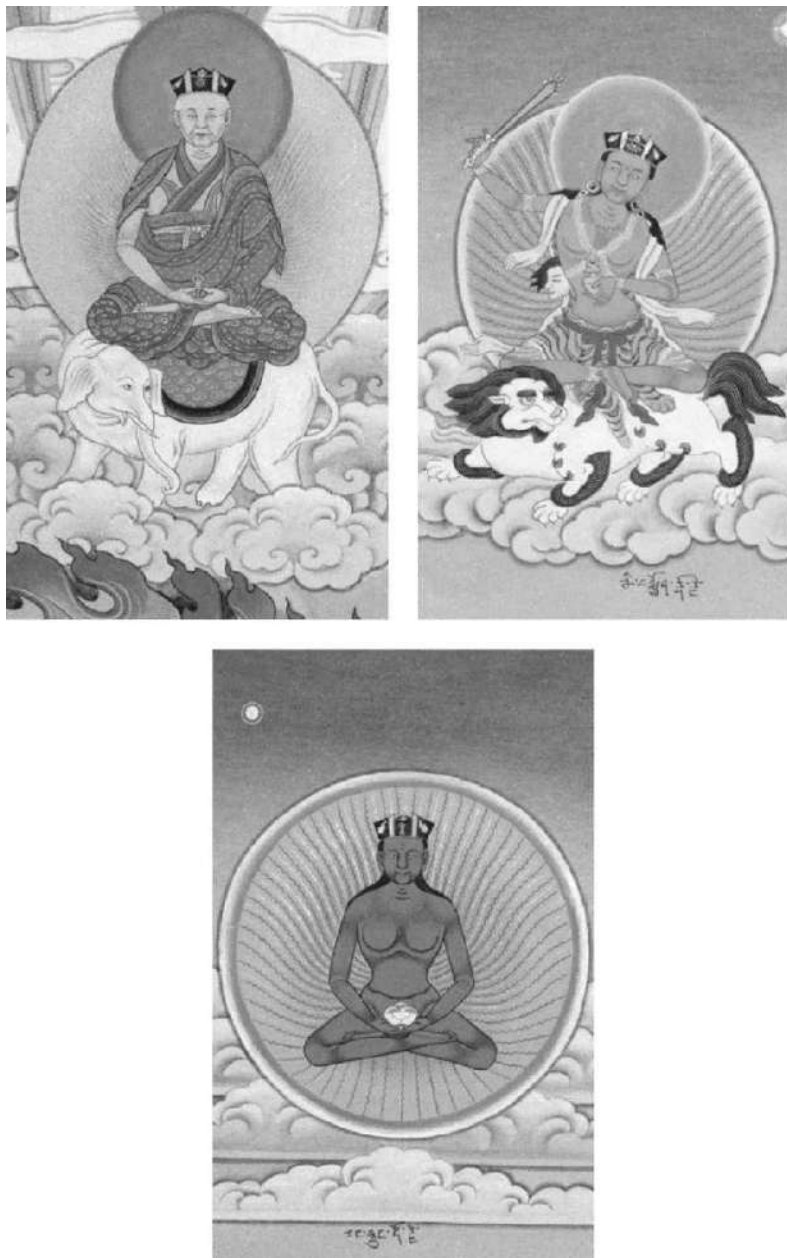
The head center represents the physical plane, the world of form, the tangible, solid world—as opposed to the confused world. The confused world, to use an ordinary metaphor, is like a chicken without a head. That chicken is very freaked out and runs all over the place. But a chicken with a head might be a better chicken. So the head chakra—or actually, somebody with a whole body including the head—is the idea of solidity, definiteness. The throat center is connected with the idea of speech, communication, reference point. You have to speak in order to connect the body and the mind. The heart center is related with the mind.

In the forehead center we have Tüsum Khyenpa, who represents the vajra principle. He was the first of the Karmapa line. He was a great ascetic, a great meditator, and a great penetrator, which is the vajra principle. In the throat center we have Mikyö Dorje, the eighth Karmapa. He was a great scholar, a great theologian (so to speak), and a great grammarian. He represents speech, the voice or the proclamation of the teachings. In the heart center we have Rangjung Dorje, who was the third Karmapa. He was the one who actually brought the ati tradition and the mahamudra tradition together. He was a lineage holder in both the Nyingma tradition of Longchen Rabjampa and others, and in the Kagyü tradition, obviously, since he was a Karmapa himself.

### ***Bringing Together the Contemplative Traditions of Mahamudra and Ati***

That whole process of visualization is based on the unique world that is created by bringing together the contemplative traditions of the two schools. There is no need to borrow from any other tradition; we have a self-existing world that is created from the unique bringing together of the Kagyü and Nyingma traditions, very closely and properly. We could call the central

figure of Karma Pakshi Padmasambhava “Karma Padmasambhava.” He is the same person, one person. The first name is Karma and the surname is Padmasambhava, which is saying that it is the same person, with the same basic character. He represents the fact that the two traditions are extremely close. There is no sectarianism or bitterness at all between them. There is a saying in Tibet that the separation between the Kagyü and Nyingma traditions doesn’t exist in the same way that your left eyeball and your right eyeball do not compete with each other. You see with both eyes. The two traditions are always together and always synchronized in their disciplines.



*Tüsum Khyenpa, Mikyö Dorje, and Rangjung Dorje.*

DETAIL FROM THE THANGKA ON P. 398; USED BY PERMISSION.

Getting back to the sadhana, around Karma Pakshi are a great host of buddhas and the sangha, the utterance of the dharma, the protectors, and so

on. They legitimize the visualization as being the embodiment of the three jewels: Buddha, dharma, and sangha. The dakinis, the *dharmapalas*, and the protectors are all included. That's the important point.

The text continues: "Whatever you see is the form of Karma Pakshi run wild; whatever you hear is the voice of Karma Pakshi let loose; whatever you think is the thought of Karma Pakshi unleashed."<sup>1</sup> That is a very important point here. The whole approach is that there is a sense of not holding back. Not holding back doesn't mean vomiting out sickness or churning out buckets of diarrhea. This is a very sane approach: we are talking about how to let go within the whole thing, how to open. You suddenly discover a sense of immense freedom when you connect with the wisdom of those two beautiful schools put together.

One school has the brains and one school has the heart, so to speak. The brain represents the ati tradition; the heart is the mahamudra tradition. Joining the two together makes a perfect human being—something even more than that, a higher human being, a fantastic superman, a vajra superman of our age.

The best of the two worlds had been put together in combining the two great contemplative traditions: that was the message that came to me from my teacher, Jamgön Kongtrül. He transmitted a lot of information and teachings to me. I also received teachings from many other teachers; I probably had something like fifteen gurus altogether. And all of the teachings agreed. I understood that there was no problem, no chaos, no confusion in putting those two schools and their wisdom together. They don't even have to be put together, actually; they simply dissolve into each other—simultaneously. That dissolving is a product of "let loose," "let go," and "unleashed." There is a sense of immense power and immense discipline at the same time.

## **SUPPLICATION: LINKING WRETCHEDNESS AND GLORY**

The next section is the supplication. In the supplication, we are basically trying to relate with each of the basic centers, or focal energies—body, speech, and mind—as well as with the sadhana as a whole, or with Karma Pakshi Padmasambhava. In these verses we are asking to be admitted or

accepted into that condition of gloriousness. Our own condition is highly wretched. So we are trying to link together wretchedness and gloriousness.

It is usually very difficult for us to do that. If we don't have a greater vision, we can't bring those two worlds together at all. The world seems very divided to us; we are so depressed and so wretched that when we even think about that gloriousness, we feel more depressed. Oy vey! And when we are into the gloriousness, we don't want to have anything to do with the wretchedness. It seems to us that wretchedness has not yet come, or else that we have already gone through it; we have already abandoned it behind our back.

Making a separation between gloriousness and wretchedness is our biggest problem. The purpose of this sadhana is to bring those two poles together, which is not particularly impossible. Wretchedness brings us down to earth, and gloriousness brings us up, makes us expansive, gives us more vision. So the idea of the supplication is to bring about a combination of those two situations.

### ***Supplication in the Nontheistic Tradition***

Supplication is not asking something of some divine principle that exists somewhere else—upstairs in the loft. It doesn't mean trying to get that person to descend on us. Here, supplication is the fundamental principle of the simultaneous existence of depression and excitement; we try to relate to both of them. Whenever there is too much excitement, depression may become very useful. Whenever there is too much depression, some excitement may be workable and uplifting. One of the problems with the theistic tradition is a constant attempt to cheer up, to try to compete with heaven or with granddad. We try to become completely like him; we try to forget how wretched we really are. Then, when we finally realize how wretched we are, we punish ourselves or we are afraid of being punished, flagellated. The theistic tradition seems to be very schizophrenic; it is unable to accept that the human condition and the divine condition are really one.

In the Buddhist nontheistic tradition, we don't have that problem. The divine principle, however glorious it may be, is still very depressing. And depression, however depressing it may be, is still glorious. We don't actually have to jump back and forth like a flea. We could stay on our own meditation

cushion; we could simply sit and be. We could wash our dishes in the kitchen sink; we could drive our car; we could go to nine-to-five jobs—we could do all the things that we are supposed to be doing. We could earn our bread that way. But at the same time, we don't have to jump back and forth anymore. We can simply stay where we are.

Where we are is what we have and what we might be, what we will be and what we have done. Everything is included. This very moment is everything. We don't have to jump back and forth comparing our own little wretchedness—how tiny we are, how little we are, how dirty we are—with how great *they* are, how fantastic they are, how expansive they are, how overwhelming they are, how glorious and mighty they are. If that is what we are thinking, then we are having a problem with our thinking system. If we try to put those two poles together, we get spiritual indigestion forever.

Very few theologians have actually come to that point of joining the two, with the exception of Martin Buber, who actually has something to say about this. He says that the two poles of the conflict exist because human beings are no longer able to accept simplicity. That seems to be the basic point, which comes through quite truly, quite rightly in Mr. Buber's writings.

### ***The Thick Black Fog of Materialism and the Slime and Muck of the Dark Age***

The supplication section of the sadhana describes our own condition, which is “wretched” and “miserable.” We are surrounded by a “thick black fog of materialism”; we are bogged down in the “slime and muck of the dark age.” It's like a description of an urban ghetto. There is so much pollution, so much dirtiness, and so much greasiness in this existence, not only in cities, but also in the country—maybe much more so. We experience the whole world that way.

There is a somewhat metaphysical meaning behind the two descriptions: “slime and muck of the dark age” and “thick black fog of materialism.” “The slime and muck of the dark age” has the connotation of an overwhelming environment, one that we often feel we are unable to relate with. We have a sense of the world's hostility and aggression, as well as passion; everything is beginning to eat us up. And “the thick black fog of materialism” refers to the



basic wrongness or problems of the environment. So a general sense of the environment and the reference point of our relationship to it are put together.

These two types of corruption correspond to the description of two types of experience in the Buddhist tradition. The first type is called “neurotic crimes.” We are constantly trying to patch things up. We don’t want to see the embarrassing holes in our existence, we would like to cover them with patchwork. We are constantly rushing and running so fast that we begin to stumble over our own feet.

The second type of experience is called “blockages” or “obscurations.” We have a sense of uncertainty that results from our own speed. There is a fundamental kind of wrongness in our actions because we are so involved in running, speeding. Those two principles are what is referred to as the slime and muck of the dark age and the thick black fog of materialism in this section of the sadhana.

### *Disillusionment with Spiritual Materialism*

The next passage in the supplication is about our disillusionment with the world of spiritual materialism. It reads:

The search for an external protector ॐ  
Has met with no success. ॐ  
The idea of a deity as an external being ॐ  
Has deceived us, led us astray. ॐ

The verse goes on from there.

There are all kinds of spiritual materialism, but theism seems to be the heart of spiritual materialism. The problems created by theism have been somewhat solved by the humanists, by the development of the Darwinian theory of evolution, the basic scientific discovery that the creation of the world was independent of God. Charles Darwin quite suspiciously presented his case, which has somehow served the purpose of human individuality. So the humanistic psychology approach makes the basic nontheistic or

humanistic point. But having understood that, it gives us no guidelines for conducting our lives. That seems to be the problem.

People feel a lot of disappointment in their own culture. They are constantly rejecting their own culture—needlessly. But in some sense they do it from a sense of genuine need. The traditional culture and the traditional hierarchy that they inherit come from their parents. Their parents believe in a hierarchical setup of authority, which comes from their priests, their religious background. It comes from the first and foremost great-great-great-granddad, who said that law and order was God, who handed down traditions: how you should eat, what your table manners should be, how you should sit on your toilet seat. You are supposed to behave well; you are supposed to be good boys and girls. All that comes from great-great-granddad. People resent that, obviously. If you can't even relate with your own parents, and then you find that there are even greater parents—100 percent more so, 200 percent more so, 500 percent more so, 1,000 percent more so—if your parents have been magnified to such a gigantic scale, that obviously becomes a source of pain; it becomes a problem. That kind of heavy-handed authority is what has led American psychology, or Western psychology in general, to a journey toward nontheism. That is the newest spiritual development, as far as the Western world is concerned.

The various things discussed here, the institutional corruptions and the traditional idea of trust, are based on nothing but confusion. All of these things are related with the theistic problems that exist in our world. But we can't be too fatalistic about this situation: it also has a lot of potential, immense potential. The complaints and the reaction against our parents and our granddad and our great-great-granddad are well founded. That new kind of wisdom of asserting our own intelligence is quite right; it seems to be the vanguard of the nontheistic tradition, which is just about to give birth. One of the most important and interesting points that we have discussed here is that everything which seems to go wrong with our life, the mismanagement of the dharma and all the other things—the list goes on and on—all seem to be related with that problem of theism.

### ***Theism and Buddhism***

That theistic problem is not a problem for theists in the literal sense alone; it is a problem for many Buddhists as well. When Buddhists begin to deify their beliefs, when they start to believe in divine providence, when they revert to a primitive level of belief, they are corrupting Buddhism immensely; they are simply worshipping an external deity.

Very conveniently we have lots of *yidams*, lots of dakinis, dharmapalas, buddhas, and bodhisattvas. In fact, the Buddhists of this age think that if they don't like one deity, they can choose another one. They have an immense feast of choices. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, there's only one divine person, which makes it very difficult. But Buddhists, or Hindus for that matter, find it delightful to jump back and forth. If they don't like one deity, they can associate with somebody else. In that way, Buddhism has become a theistic religion, which is a sign of corruption, a sign of the dark age.

Part of our work here is to try to solve that problem. We are trying to reform that primitive and corrupted way of looking at things. We are trying to reintroduce the style of the early Buddhists, the purity of the Buddhism that first came to Tibet and that was first introduced in India at the time of Tilopa, Naropa, Marpa, and Milarepa. We are trying to turn back history, to purify ourselves, to reform Buddhism. That is our basic approach. It's a question of dealing with the spiritual materialism that exists both within Buddhism and outside of it.

Theistic beliefs have been seeping into the Buddhist mentality, which should be nontheistic; that has brought with it a lot of corruption and problems. There has been too much worship and too much admiration of deities, so much so that people can't experience the awakened state of mind properly; they can't experience their own sanity properly. In fact, one reason I wrote the *sadhana* at all is because such problems exist both within and outside of the Buddhist tradition, and because the spiritual scene all over the world is going through that kind of corruption. The whole world is into fabricating its spiritual mommies and daddies.

If you don't like father figures, you decide to have a female yidam like Tara. "I like her because I'm a woman," you say. "I'm a mother, and maybe I should relate with her. She seems to be kind and motherly, and I don't like these wrathful people." Or if you feel that Tara is somewhat too corny and you would like to have someone juicy and gutsy, then you relate with those

wrathful people. There are so many trips about the whole thing. It's like a society woman telling her neighbor about her new hat. "What kind of yidam do you have?" "Who gave you that yidam? Oh, that's nice. I was just about to have so-and-so yidam, but my teacher said, 'You should have this one. It's good for you!' " The marketing of yidams, the auctioning of yidams, is mind-boggling. So the purpose of the supplication is to reawaken people from their trips. At that point, inner experience can begin to come up.

## IDENTIFICATION WITH THE GURU

The next section, which is connected with that awakening, begins:

When the wild and wrathful father approaches ॐ

The external world is seen to be transparent and unreal. ॐ

The reasoning mind no longer clings and grasps. ॐ

You are arriving in new territory. In spite of the depressions of theistic overhang, or hangover, in spite of the theistic diseases that even Buddhists or other traditions can catch, you finally begin to realize that you don't have to dwell constantly on your pain. You begin to realize that you can go beyond that level. Finally you can celebrate that you are an individual human being. You have your own intelligence, and you can pull the rug from under your own feet. You don't need to ask somebody else to do that. You don't need to ask someone to pull up your socks—or your pants, for that matter.

The next theme in this section is the idea of the merging of one's mind with the guru's mind. It says in the sadhana at this point:

The experience of joy becomes devotion ॐ

And I am drunk with all-pervading blessings. ॐ

This is a sign of the merging of mind and guru. ॐ

The whole of existence is freed and becomes the guru. ॐ

It's not that the guru is a deity that you bring into your heart, whom you become one with. It's not like artificial insemination, particularly. It is very personal and spontaneous; you are what you are, and you realize that your own inspiration exists in that particular intelligence and immense clarity. With that encouragement, you begin to wake up. You begin to associate yourself completely with the dharma; you identify completely with the dharma; you become one with the dharma. You no longer depend on any external agents to save you from your misery; you can do it yourself. That is just basic Buddhism. It could be called the tantric approach, but it's just basic Buddhism, which starts from the hinayana level of the first noble truth, and so forth—especially the third noble truth, I suppose.

### *The Four Dharmas of Gampopa*

The next section is the four dharmas of Gampopa. You could study the teachings that I've given on those, in connection with this.<sup>10</sup> The first dharma is "Grant your blessings so that my mind may be one with the dharma."<sup>11</sup> You become completely one with the dharma. It's not so much that you follow the dharma, but that your mind *is* dharma. The second dharma is "Grant your blessings so dharma may progress along the path." When your mind has become one with the dharma, then practice becomes the natural behavior pattern that exists in you. The third one is "Grant your blessings so that the path may clarify confusion." The confusion that you brought to the dharma, to the path, and to your life does not exist anymore. That confusion has been clarified. The last dharma of Gampopa is "Grant your blessings so that confusion may dawn as wisdom." You are beginning to have a very clear perception that the world is created out of no-mind—properly and fully. The world does not have to be based on strategy anymore; the world can be based on your own experience and on clear vision, clear insight.

## OFFERING

Then we have the offering section. It is quite simple. You have tried to make connections; you have tried so hard; you have tried to open up immensely. At that point, you no longer have to try so hard to be ingratiating. You finally

realize that you have something to give, something to offer, rather than offering nothing and asking for nothing. What you have to give is your own ego—ignorance, aggression, passion. We have all that juicy stuff, very rich, very fertile, very potent, and very smelly. The idea is to give these things, to offer them and not to be embarrassed. You can actually appreciate your own particular experience.

It is like entertaining a guest with your ethnic cooking. You don't have to feel bad about being Italian or Jewish or Chinese or Tibetan or Japanese or whatever. You just cook your meal for your guests. You do it in your own one hundred percent ethnic style, and your guests might like it fantastically. Those ethnic qualities in you, those provincial or local qualities in you, are the ground for fantastic color and fantastically good ideas. They could be offered as a great feast, a fantastic feast. That is what the idea of offering boils down to.

## *Padmasambhava/Guru Rinpoche*

The next section is the *abhisheka*.<sup>12</sup> It begins:

HUM HUM HUM ཨུམ

In the cave of Taktsang Sengge Samdrup ཨུམ

He who has subdued the evil forces ཨུམ

And buried treasure in rocks and snow mountains in holy places in

Tibet ཨུམ

Shows kindness to the people of the future dark age. ཨུམ

I supplicate you, Dorje Trolö; ཨུམ

I supplicate you, Ugyen Padmakara. ཨུམ

That verse was composed by Guru Rinpoche, Padmasambhava himself. Dorje Trolö was the eighth aspect of Padmasambhava.<sup>13</sup> We have no idea of the real meaning of the word *Trolö*. It is a very enigmatic word. Some scholars say that it is the Tibetanized version of Krodhaloka, the wrathful lord of the world. *Trolö* doesn't have any particular meaning in Tibetan. *Tro*

sometimes means “wheat” and sometimes means “beige”; *lō* sometimes means “loose.” Basically, Dorje Trolö is the embodiment of a real, true crazy-wisdom person.



*Dorje Trolö.*

LINE DRAWING BY GLEN EDDY; USED BY PERMISSION.

Padmasambhava manifested as Dorje Trolö near the end of his life at Taktsang in Bhutan, which at that time was in Tibet. Sengge Samdrup is the



name of the guardian deity there, so the cave was called Taktsang Samdrup, meaning the cave of Sengge Samdrup. *Sengge* means “lion,” and *samdrup* means “wish-fulfilling.” We might wonder how he did the whole thing, how he actually became a crazy-wisdom person. Nobody knows, since there is nobody here to tell us the firsthand account. As far as we know from history and from lineage gossip that has been handed down from generation to generation, he actually changed his outlook and his behavior pattern at that point.

He became very wild and crazy, seemingly. He was able to manifest himself in that way in order to override the immense speed that exists in neurosis. He was much faster than our ordinary neurosis; therefore he could bypass our ordinary speed. However fast our speed might be, whether it be as fast as a rocket or as fast as a jet plane, he would go much faster—quite possibly a hundred times the speed of sound. In that way he was able to communicate with people and catch them, catch their neurosis. That is the idea of crazy-wisdom manifestation here, of wisdom so powerfully up-to-date that even the newest inventions of our own conceptual mind and speed can’t match that. The crazy-wisdom person is super-superhuman.

The idea of Padmasambhava cutting through craziness and manifesting crazy wisdom here is partially that he had conquered the Tibetan national craziness or nationalism of the Tibetan people. At the time, Tibet was completely dominated by theism; people worshipped various local deities. There was a lot of arrogance in spite of the inadequacy in the country. Padmasambhava was able to overcome those problems.

### **Burying scriptures as a time capsule.<sup>14</sup>**

Padmasambhava was a very visionary person; when he came to Tibet, he buried scriptures. Those buried scriptures were the ancient equivalent of the time capsule. He constructed containers in which sacred scriptures and various ritual objects and household articles could be stored, and he buried them in certain places, so that future generations could appreciate and emulate those things, so that people of the culture of the golden age could appreciate those examples of quality and wisdom. That was one of the most important and powerful things that Padmasambhava did. He had so much

concern for people who would be born several centuries after him; therefore he buried a lot of scriptures and texts, like the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, which many of you have. Having that now is a product of Padmasambhava's work of burying manuscripts.

The people who discovered such texts later on are actually connected with a spiritual discipline of the Nyingma tradition. They would have a vision and some sense of feeling, and so they would begin to excavate in certain areas and dig up these treasures.

We were thinking of doing a similar thing to what Padmasambhava did. I asked one of my students, Steve Roth, to look into buying a time capsule; that would be the modern style of burying scriptures, or terma. We could collect instructions on how to meditate; we could write them quite simply. Maybe we could include a *zafu* and *zabuton*, and we could bury them somewhere. As we go further, as students go through further development, we could do similar things at a more advanced level. Further instructions could be buried that actually might be helpful to somebody in the future. That's a possibility.

It turns out that the company that builds time capsules went bankrupt, so we have to find another company. We have that project lined up to do at some point. If you have any suggestions as to how we can do that, if you have any suggestions as to what we could put in the capsule apart from a *zafu* and *zabuton*, your ideas are very welcome. In that way, we could take part in making history—in the future.<sup>15</sup>

The next stanza is

HUM HUM HUM ཨུམ

You are the lord of yidams and conqueror of the whole of existence  
and all apparent phenomena; ཨུམ

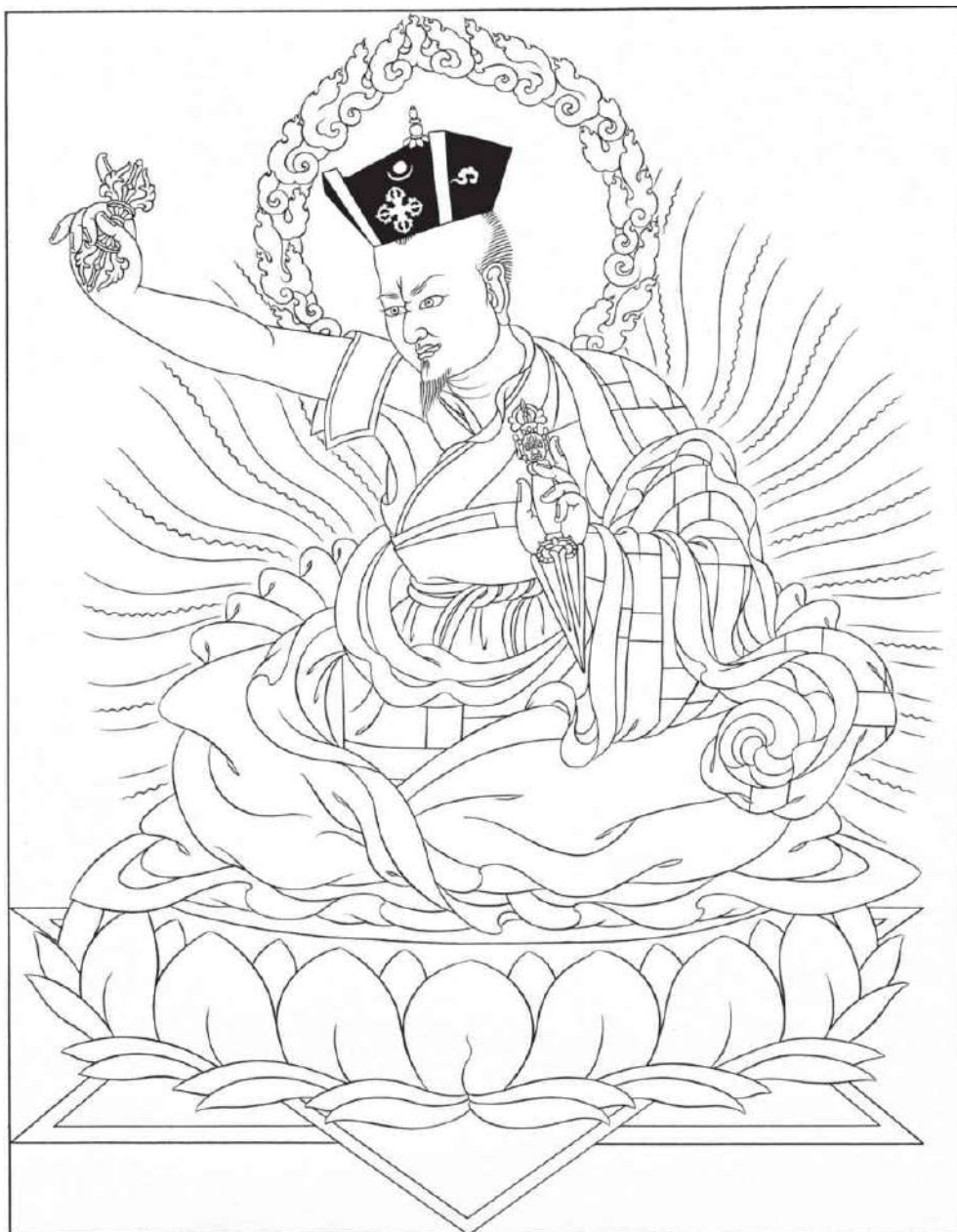
You have subdued the viciousness of the Mongol emperor ཨུམ

And overcome the energy of fire, water, poison, weapons and evil  
forces: ཨུམ

I supplicate you, O Karma Pakshi. ཨུམ

Karma Pakshi was a very strange person. He was very sturdy and sometimes fierce, but he was also humorous. He went to China to visit the emperor,

accompanying a Sakya lama who was at the time the ruler of Tibet, the equivalent of the Dalai Lama. They went to China together. Apparently, Karma Pakshi had a goatee; he was quite mysterious. The Chinese emperor is supposed to have remarked, “The Sakya guru is quite good, but how about the other one, the one with the goatee?” Karma Pakshi was supposed to have been an extraordinarily powerful person, and the emperor was very impressed by him.



*Karma Pakshi.*

LINE DRAWING BY GLEN EDDY; USED BY PERMISSION.

Subjugating the Mongol emperor is an important point about Karma Pakshi. Later on, he became the emperor's guru. The Mongolian emperor

was supposed to have put him through all kinds of trials: he was thrown into a pitch pit teeming with fleas or mosquitoes or some other insect; he was abandoned in a cold cellar, one of those little cellars or holes where they used to throw prisoners. At one point, Karma Pakshi was hung up from the ceiling by his goatee. But he survived all those trials and tribulations. Each time, he became more and more powerful, more and more impressive and dignified. Finally the emperor gave up. He surrendered to Karma Pakshi, and he became a great emperor. He actually became Karma Pakshi's student. He even became a lineage holder in one tradition of the Kagyü tradition. He became a great practitioner of the six yogas of Naropa. It's quite amazing that such a softened emperor could be made into such a hardened practitioner.

There are a lot of stories about how Karma Pakshi overcame the energy of fire, water, poison, weapons, and evil forces. The main idea is that Karma Pakshi possessed power over phenomena. His basic qualities were fearlessness and abruptness; his actions were unpredictable. But his approach was very direct and precise.

### *Tüsum Khyenpa*

Next the text reads:

HUM HUM HUM ཨུཾ

You who fulfill all wishes ཨུཾ

And are lord of centerless space, ཨུཾ

You who shine with kind and luminous light, ཨུཾ

I supplicate you, Tsurphupa. ཨུཾ

This stanza supplicating Tüsum Khyenpa was written by Shamarpa, a disciple of Tüsum Khyenpa. *Shamarpa* means “red hat person.” *Tsurphupa* means the “person from Tsurphu,” referring to the Karmapa's seat in Tibet. Tüsum Khyenpa was a very interesting person: he was supposed to look like a monkey. His jaws protruded; his whole face jutted forward like a monkey, an ape or gorilla. He was quite old at this time. In fact, other sects made fun of both Gampopa and Tüsum Khyenpa. They said that Gampopa looked like a

goat and Tüsum Khyenpa looked like a monkey. He was a very earnest student of the practice. He came from East Tibet, where there were many traders; it was a very rich province. He went all the way from there to Central Tibet in order to study with Gampopa.

He built his square hut the length of his own body, five feet in all its dimensions, and he spent something like six years meditating there. That hut was on the ground of Tsurphu, Karmapa's monastery. Tüsum Khyenpa was known as "the good sitter," and quite rightly so. He was a very good sitter, a great practitioner of meditation.

He had a lot of influence on the various political problems of his time. He was able to arrange a number of peaceful settlements between local warlords. At that time, Tibet was a divided country; there was no one king. Everything was in the control of the warlords. So Tüsum Khyenpa was a great meditator and, I would say, a great statesman. He actually reshaped the history of Tibet; he was able to make peace between warring factions. At the same time, he was very much into practice.

Toward the end of Tüsum Khyenpa's life, he and two other disciples of Gampopa got drunk and danced outside the cave of the Gampo hills. They were singing a song of mahamudra, and the *gekö* of the monastery decided to kick them out, because nobody was allowed to drink liquor inside the monastery compound. Gampopa was very upset about that. He said, "If you kick my main students out of the monastery, I'm going with them." One of Gampopa's songs says, roughly, "Come back. Come back. We're going to create a vajra establishment in this place; you should not leave. Come back. We should not trust in these organizations; we have our own kingdom of mahamudra." It's a very moving song, which is part of the *Kagyü Gurtso*; it has been translated as one of the songs in *The Rain of Wisdom*.<sup>16</sup>

*Mikyö Dorje*

Next the sadhana reads:

HUM HUM HUM ཨུམ་

AH! Mikyö Dorje fills the whole of space. ཨུམ་

HOH! He is the vajra joy which sends out luminous light. ॐ  
HUM! He is the energy of music and lord of messengers. ॐ  
OM! He is the wrathful action which cleanses all impurities. ॐ

Mikyö Dorje, who is being supplicated here, was an interesting person. He was a great scholar, a great grammarian, as I mentioned before, and a great practitioner. He worked a great deal to bring together the mahayana and the vajrayana philosophies of the Buddhist tradition. That was one of the landmarks of his achievement. The understanding of shunyata and many other mahayana traditions were brought together by him in a vajrayana-like tradition. He was a great figure in the *svatantrika* tradition. He introduced the idea that emptiness is the same as luminosity. For a long time that concept had been lost in Buddhist philosophy. People had forgotten about the idea of luminosity; they just talked about emptiness, and emptiness being the same as form. Mikyö Dorje played an important role in reintroducing the awareness of luminosity.

Mikyö Dorje also visited China, where he became the imperial teacher. He was also a great artist and craftsman. At one temple in Tibet, he carved a seventy-five-foot Buddha and the Buddha's throne, as well as a bas-relief of the life of the Buddha. The whole thing was made of sandalwood. He was also a great caster. Many statues were cast under his direction. There is a tradition of fine craftsmanship among the Karmapas, to which the sixteenth Karmapa is an exception.<sup>17</sup>

### *Rangjung Dorje*

The next stanza of the abhisheka portion of the sadhana is

HUM HUM HUM ॐ  
Seeing the bodhisattva Rangjung Dorje ॐ  
Is like discovering the wish-fulfilling gem. ॐ  
He removes the poverty of oneself and others; ॐ  
He is the source of all that is needed. ॐ



I supplicate his wisdom body. ☉

We have no idea who wrote this verse supplicating Rangjung Dorje. Rangjung Dorje was the third Karmapa. It was he who brought together the ati and mahamudra traditions; we owe him a great debt. In fact, the whole inspiration for the Ri-me tradition of joining together the Nyingma and Kagyü traditions is due to Rangjung Dorje. His idea was to expand from the mahamudra experience of the Kagyü tradition, the orthodox mahamudra experience of purely dwelling on deities and working with conceptual ideas, into the ati experience of the next further level, the complete spaciousness of discipline. Rangjung Dorje was a truly fantastic person. He was also a great craftsman: he was a great painter, woodcarver, and embroiderer. A lot of tapestries were produced under his direction. We used to be able to see his tapestries in Tibet, but I suppose those things are gone now.<sup>18</sup>

We'll conclude our discussion of the abhisheka section of the sadhana in the next chapter.

## DISCUSSION

### **Colorfulness of the sadhana and the phenomenal world; its relationship to luminosity and ati.**

*Question:* Rinpoche, last night you said that the vivid and colorful qualities of the sadhana were a result of taking what was happening with your guru very personally. In that way, the whole phenomenal world becomes very vivid and colorful. When you say that form is luminosity, does that sense of luminosity come from the ati tradition of expanded vision?

*Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche:* I think it basically comes from the ati tradition, but it also comes from the mahamudra tradition. There's some sense of brilliance and of precision. That sense of luminosity certainly doesn't come from the pure mahayana tradition, which is somewhat nihilistic.

According to the mahayana tradition, everything is empty. It's like the black zafus and black robes of the Zen tradition, which is pure mahayana: there is no room for white. The idea of luminosity is that there is room for



white, some kind of white. The brightest color that the Zen people can come up with for their *roshi*'s zafu is brown—dark brown. That is as far as their tradition is willing to go toward light, so to speak. I think that the idea of luminosity is highly influenced by some kind of faint understanding of the *ati* tradition.

*Q*: Perceiving vividness and colorfulness sounds like a very personal experience, and the experience of luminosity sounds more like the kind of perception that comes from awareness practice.

*CTR*: That experience of luminosity is also supposed to be an *ati* expression at some point. It may be underdeveloped in individual experience, but it's still the same thing. It could be crude, just the flicker of one's own neurosis, but that neurosis has some root of sanity behind it.

### **Humanistic psychology and the nontheistic approach.**

*Q*: Rinpoche, you mentioned humanistic psychology. If I understood you correctly, you were saying that it was clearing the ground for the nontheistic approach—that it was an expression of revolt against the dominant culture, and in that sense it was a healthy revolt. Or were you being critical?

*CTR*: It is healthy in the sense that it is nontheistic, which means Buddhist. But the problem with humanistic psychology is that it doesn't have any direction. It's like women's liberation or men's liberation, without anything else going on around it. You have to have a tradition, a discipline to follow up the basic insight. But I don't think we can blame the humanistic people; I think they are very brave and very good. They have at least provided a foundation for nontheistic spirituality—and that's fantastic!

### **The relationship of equanimity and wrath.**

*Q*: I would like to ask you about the opening lines of the *sadhana*:

Earth, water, fire and all the elements, ཨོཾ

The animate and the inanimate, the trees and the greenery and so  
on, ཨོཾ

All partake of the nature of self-existing equanimity, ཨོཾ

Which is quite simply what the Great Wrathful One is. ☸

What is the relation between equanimity and wrath, or this Great Wrathful One?

*CTR:* What's the problem?

*Q:* Well, I get the feeling that all through the sadhana great wrath is important. But I can't connect it with equanimity and self-existing such-ness. I just can't make the connection.

*CTR:* I think you have a preconceived idea of wrath. Wrath doesn't mean anger; it's just wrath. Can you imagine being angry without aggression? It's just a sense of power. You can't say that fire is angry, but it still burns you.

*Q:* Are all the elements like that?

*CTR:* No. The idea is that each of the elements has its own quality. Water is unyielding; if you drown, you can't say that the water was too aggressive. You can't blame the water; you can't sue the water, the river, or the lake. It is the same with earth and earthquakes. If you fall down the mountain, you can't say it was the earth's fault. Each of the elements has its own self-existing quality. They can't be blamed as being like somebody's deliberate aggression or neurosis. It is the same with the basic wrath of the wrathful one. The brilliance and powerful vibrating quality that exist in that energy are not directed toward any particular aim or object. It simply exists.

Lofty concepts, like mahamudra and ati, in contrast to one's limited personal experience.

*Q:* Rinpoche, in my own experience, space or luminosity, mahamudra or maha ati, seem very far away, very foreign. I don't think I've ever experienced those things, and I feel that I'm not good enough to know what they are. It seems like wishful thinking and that it might be better just to sit and not have such a glorious idea of what's out there.

*CTR:* Well said, sir. You should sit, and those things might come sometime. They might never come. Take that attitude. The more you give up the possibility of fruition, that much closer it will be. It's quite naughty of me to say that. But it's far away and it's very close. Because it's far away, it's very close.

## **Practicing the sadhana in connection with phases of the moon.**

*Q:* Rinpoche, why is the sadhana always read in connection with the phases of the moon?

*CTR:* Well, you might go crazy on that day. That's true, actually. When the moon changes phase, when it begins to wax and wane, certain psychological shifts take place. That is traditional.

## **Choice in Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's own path.**

*Q:* What element of choice did you have in your path? We are here because we choose to be here. We are here through some karmic coincidence or because of some mistake—who knows why? But your path was already chosen for you soon after you were born. Did you at any point have any choice to get out or take another direction?

*CTR:* I could always have escaped, sneaked out. Apart from that, there wasn't much choice. I thought of escaping occasionally; I even planned it, but somehow it didn't work. I was always thrown back to the same thing. I had a tutor, who was constantly pressuring me to learn more and study more. I finally asked him to resign, which was quite a brave step to take. And when he wasn't there to put pressure on me, I came back by myself. I didn't want to leave the monastery anymore. I realized that the only thing I wanted to get rid of was my tutor. I was quite happy with what I was doing, and I could say the same thing now. I am quite happy with what I am doing.

---

1. *The Sadhana of Mahamudra*, limited edition sourcebook.

## FOUR

# *Joining Insight and Devotion in the Ri-me Tradition*

*Once you begin to realize the essence of the lineage, the backbone of the lineage, you will find that the greatest accomplishment of the Ri-me tradition has been to bring together emotion and insight. Insight becomes more emotional, and emotion becomes more insightful. I would say that that is the best possible contribution to our world.*

I WOULD LIKE TO complete the description of the sections of the sadhana, which began in the last chapter. The sadhana involves the creation of a mandala, with deities and offerings. In traditional sadhanas, the practitioner, the deities visualized, and the principle of energy that descends upon the visualization, called jnanasattva, are usually separate realities. But this sadhana takes a somewhat ati approach, which is what is known as the umbrella approach. Instead of the practitioner yearning upward, energy comes down as the understanding of the self-existence of wisdom, which never needs to be sought. The sadhana ends that way as well.

There is also an element of mahamudra in the sadhana, of further intense admiration of the guru and the gloriousness of it. That admiration reflects the mahamudra approach; it is based on *intense* devotion, rather than on purely traditional devotion.

## CONCLUSION OF THE ABHISHEKA

*Chanting the Triple HUM*

At a particular point in the abhisheka, the chanting of the triple HUM, that intense devotion becomes fuzzy and vague. The boundary between you and your guru becomes vague, and you are uncertain whether or not a boundary exists at all. At that point, there is the possibility of being one with your guru. And that possibility increases as you get closer to the end of the sadhana.

### *Concluding Abhisheka Verse*

The next verse begins:

HUM HUM HUM ॐ

When the precious guru approaches ॐ

The whole of space is filled with rainbow light. ॐ

It continues from there. This verse is a direct quotation from the sadhana of Mikyö Dorje, written by himself. It is as if there is an immense traffic jam: the practitioner begins to experience all kinds of energies. You feel intense devotion, intense longing, which tends to make sense of all the thought patterns that go through the mind. You experience all your mental activities as sacred, blessed by the guru. You experience great openness. You also realize that the worshipper and those being worshipped are one, which is ati. It's a question of totality.

This last part of the sadhana is part of what is known as receiving abhisheka. In traditional sadhanas, the visualization is dissolved at this point; it enters into the practitioner's body. But in this sadhana, the visualization remains; there is no dissolving. This last section is the final crescendo of the whole sadhana, the final feast.

### *Verse of Confirmation*

Next comes a short verse that is a commentary on what has been happening throughout the sadhana:

HUM HUM HUM ॐ

In the mandala of mahamudra ॐ

Shines moonlight, pure and all-pervading. ॐ

All apparent phenomena are the play of the mind. ॐ  
All qualities are complete within the mind. ॐ  
I, the yogi, am fearless and free from occupations; ॐ  
Hopes and fears of achieving and abstaining are all used up. ॐ  
I awaken into the wisdom with which I was born ॐ  
And compassionate energy arises, without pretense. ॐ  
Hey-ho, the self-existing rishi!<sup>19</sup> ॐ  
I, the siddha, enjoy myself with great simplicity. ॐ  
A A A ॐ

This verse is a confirmation of the whole thing, the final ati stamp of approval, that real things have taken place in the proper way. The point is that the chanting and meditation that we have done in the sadhana are unnecessary—in essence, everything's done already. These verses cut through any possibility of potential spiritual materialism. Beyond that, they are meant to inspire further appreciation of the lineage and the wisdom of the lineage.

### *Verse of Auspiciousness*

Then we have the last verse, which is a traditional ending:

The wisdom flame sends out a brilliant light— ॐ  
May the goodness of Dorje Trolö be present! ॐ  
Karma Pakshi, lord of mantra, king of insight— ॐ  
May his goodness, too, be present! ॐ  
Tüsum Khyenpa, the primeval buddha— ॐ  
Beyond all partiality—may his goodness be present! ॐ  
Mikyö Dorje, lord of boundless speech— ॐ  
May his goodness be present here! ॐ  
Rangjung Dorje, faultless single eye of wisdom— ॐ  
May his goodness be present! ॐ  
The Kagyü gurus, the light of whose wisdom is a torch ॐ  
For all beings—may their goodness be present! ॐ

The ocean of wish-fulfilling yidams who accomplish all actions—  
ॐ

May their goodness be present! ॐ

The protectors who plant firm the victorious banner ॐ

Of dharma—may their goodness be present! ॐ

May the goodness of the great mind mandala of mahamudra be  
present! ॐ

This ending is an acknowledgment of the process that you have gone through in reading the sadhana. It is also preparation for the postsadhana level of practice, for beginning to relate again to your daily life situation. The experience of Dorje Trolö, Karma Pakshi, Mikyö Dorje, and all the others are part of the great feast, part of the great insight. So at last we have gone through the whole sadhana.

## **JOINING MAHAMUDRA AND ATI: DEVOTION AND CRAZY WISDOM**

I would like to remind you again and again of the necessity of understanding and bringing together the highest aspects of devotion and crazy wisdom. You might find that devotion and crazy wisdom were somewhat arbitrary concepts if you didn't have any experience of the practices of our lineage.

### ***Joining Emotion and Insight***

But once you begin to realize the essence of the lineage, the backbone of the lineage, you will find that the greatest accomplishment of the Ri-me tradition has been to bring together emotion and insight. Insight becomes more emotional, and emotion becomes more insightful. I would say that that is the best possible contribution to our world. When we have insight alone, it tends to become dry and high-floating<sup>20</sup> and full of the sophistries of conceptual mind. And when we become purely emotional, we have no way of relating properly with our world, in terms of the visionary aspect of the world. We care only about ourselves and those who are very close to us. We want somebody in particular to be with us rather than the whole world to be with us. That problem of possessiveness is always prominent.

Bringing insight and devotion together at the tantric level has been a very powerful contribution to buddhadharma. The Ri-me tradition has succeeded in bringing together the illusory world of mahamudra—with its understanding of the color and emotional implications and vividness of experience—with the all-pervasiveness, spaciousness, and larger-scale thinking of the ati tradition. There is an almost patronizing quality to the ati tradition, which is valuable, too. At the ati level, the journey and the maker of the journey are not even important, because the journey itself is not important; it has already been made. Therefore, the only journey we could make would be to acknowledge that we have already made our journey, that we have already arrived at whatever place we wish. At the same time, we have no reference point as to how we have made our journey; we are caught in a very powerful and interesting dichotomy.

### *Chögyam Trungpa's Unique Joining of Mahamudra and Ati*

My presentation of Buddhism in America particularly has been an expression of bringing together mahamudra and maha ati indivisibly. There is the general perspective of ati, the flavor of ati, even starting from the hinayana practices of shamatha and vipashyana. Those basic practices have an ati flavor of spaciousness, which seems to be their saving grace, in some sense. Then we have the mahamudra experience of paying attention to details and to our lifestyle and personal situation. We learn to appreciate those things. We develop a sense of humor and begin to relate with the world—not just as something to get rid of, but as something to appreciate. From there we develop a sense of dedication and devotion to the lineage and a feeling of pride: we belong to this particular lineage and we are following its traditions wholeheartedly. So in that way, everything is brought together.

The teachings are capable of reaching people's minds properly, without any cultural sophistries and problems of that nature, because of the saving grace of both of those wisdoms. Those teachings transcend the conceptual level: they are able to communicate with us as human beings. The teachings are a direct link from one human being to another; they are not borrowed culture. That cultureless quality is very much connected with an aspect of both schools.



## DISCUSSION

### **Understanding how Buddhism is a “spiritual” path.**

*Question:* I used to think that spirituality was something beyond mind, that it was metamind. I thought it was the reception and transmission of some kind of invisible energy. However, my understanding of the teachings, as you have presented them, is of a quest or training for a more profound perceptual process, for a perceptual change in the way we govern ourselves. Why then is it called a spiritual path? What is “spiritual” about our training and about our endeavor?

*Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche:* That’s a good question, actually. We are not talking about “spirituality” in the name of “spirit,” which has a theistic origin. We are talking about spirituality in terms of picking up some kind of vibe or energy of spirit—high spirit—rather than spirit as a ghostly being. That seems to be the difference. We are speaking of “spirit” not “spirits.” We are talking about heroism and self-respect and a high sense of understanding. Spiritual discipline, from that point of view, is not dependent on anybody’s feedback; you depend on yourself. You have to develop yourself in any case. That’s the idea of heroism and trust in your own resources.

*Q:* So it’s heightened path?

*CTR:* Yes, something like that. High strung.

### **Karma Pakshi as the heruka who exists independent of people’s belief.**

*Q:* There is something in the sadhana about Karma Pakshi being the heruka who exists independent of people’s belief.<sup>21</sup>

*CTR:* That’s a nontheistic remark. People’s beliefs are usually somewhat theistic. They think that Jehovah exists because somebody once saw him and brought all kinds of messages down from heaven. The more people acknowledge his existence, the more they worship him, the more powerful he becomes. That is the theistic concept. But in the case of nontheism, something can exist independent of belief; it is self-existing. That doesn’t mean to say that Karma Pakshi is an external deity, as such, but he exists free

from conceptual mind. And being free from conceptual mind is in itself experience.

*Q:* So it is connected with the vajrayana tradition of visualizing aspects of awakened mind?

*CTR:* Yes, definitely.

### **Nyingma-Kagyü lineage holders of Ri-me; Nyingma attitude toward Kagyü and Mahamudra.**

*Q:* Rinpoche, the Trungpa lineage seems to be primarily Kagyü. And the Kagyüs integrated Nyingma teachings. But have there been any Nyingma lamas who have integrated mahamudra with ati? Are there any Nyingma-Kagyü holders of the Ri-me lineage?

*CTR:* There is a Nyingma master, Yungtön Dorje Pel, who was of both the Kagyü and the Nyingma lineages. He actually brought the two traditions together. Also, the first Trungpa, Künga Gyaltsen, was a disciple of Trung Mase, who was originally trained in the Nyingthik tradition of the Nyingma lineage. Trung Mase went to visit the fifth Karmapa, Teshin Shekpa, and became his disciple. So his monastery was formally established as within the Kagyü tradition. Nevertheless, that Nyingma background is part of the history of the Surmang tradition. So there were many teachers in the Nyingma tradition who were open to the possibilities of working with the mahamudra tradition. But on the whole, the Nyingma tradition or the teachers took a somewhat patronizing attitude toward the lower tantras.

That superior attitude used to come up quite frequently. In fact, when I studied with Jamgön Kongtrül, many of his Nyingma students would say, “You mahamudra people”—as if we were some little ethnic group. They had a definite tendency toward snobbishness. That’s a fact. But the interesting thing is that the Kagyü people, the mahamudra people, never showed any resentment of that.

They took it for granted that if you have a primitive understanding of the mahamudra tradition, that it was not as great as the ati tradition. That was completely understood.

*Q:* Similarly, it seems that sometimes there is an indirect kind of chauvinism among vipashyana students in their attitude toward shamatha. It’s

a kind of elitism.

*CTR:* If you like, sure. It's harmless. Why not? Why not have chauvinism? It doesn't hurt a flea.

### **Groundlessness and skillful means in the sadhana.**

*Q:* When I hear the sadhana, I have a feeling of groundlessness.

*CTR:* Obviously, you feel groundless because the sadhana doesn't offer you any possibilities of entertainment or any security. It is itself groundless. At the same time, it is very practical and pragmatic. It's not wishy-washy, particularly. It deals very directly with situations; it embodies skillful means. If you have truly perceived things as they are, then you automatically develop skillful means. So skillful means is a byproduct, rather than something you aim for. That is one of the differences between the sutra or mahayana teachings and the tantric teachings. In the tantric teachings, the virtues that are described in the sutra teachings are seen as by-products rather than as the direct result of practice. So the sadhana is groundless, but at the same time it's pragmatic.

### **Verses of the sadhana written by other teachers.**

*Q:* When you were writing the sadhana, did you spontaneously remember the verses that were written by Mikyö Dorje and Guru Rinpoche and so on?

*CTR:* Well, they came up at appropriate times. I also thought that I should include some of the verses composed by great teachers, so that the whole thing wouldn't become my own production. What I was doing was honoring their existence, not only at the conceptual level, but at the historical level as well.

It is my wish that what you have learned here—if anything—does not become purely conceptual. Hopefully, you will be able to translate it into practice, especially the sitting practice of meditation. Thank you, everybody.

## *Part Two*

# THE SADHANA OF MAHAMUDRA

*Karma Dzong, Boulder, Colorado, December 1975*

There is basic ground that we all believe in and live on, and out of that, we create an extraordinary landscape. Out of that comes further extraordinary imagery, which is not just basic sanity alone, but basic wakefulness within sanity. Sanity can be reasonable, but there has to be something very wakeful about the whole thing. That wakefulness is embodied in the crazy-wisdom principle, embodied in the yidam, which is not necessarily a native of that particular landscape or, for that matter, he is not a nonnative, either. He is just there. You might feel threatened because the environment is very spooky. You have to give up your arrogance, which we talked about already in connection with devotion. Giving arrogance up is connected with devotion. Having related with longing and with the absence of arrogance, you have to surrender completely. In other words, everything takes place in the charnel ground. It is a place of birth and a place of death.

—CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA RINPOCHE

## FIVE

### *The Guru Principle*

*On the Buddhist path, the development of the teacher-student relationship is analogous to bringing up infants, relating with teenagers, and finally relating with grown-ups. Those are the three examples....I would like to present the notion of devotion, or faith, properly. Faith here is not worship; the guru is not particularly regarded as Christ on earth, our only link to God. The guru is regarded as a spiritual elder, spiritual friend, and vajra master. He has ways and means to create situations in accordance with our own receptivity, our own particular style.*

THE DISCUSSION OF *The Sadhana of Mahamudra* is basically a vajrayana-oriented topic. At the same time, it has a lot of implications for, and connections with, the basic practice and understanding of hinayana and mahayana Buddhism. In this discussion, I would like to explain the basic nature of the Buddhist journey that we're taking, as it relates to the Buddhist style of meditation practice and spiritual discipline as a whole.

The first topic is devotion, which is the basis of the sadhana. Any practice of this nature cannot be properly understood without appreciating the sense of hierarchy, if you like, in the relationship of the teacher and the student, or the guru and the *chela*, or disciple. Devotion is the basis of that relationship; it is its most important aspect. But you can't have a proper relationship to devotion unless you have some understanding of the guru principle altogether.

## PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP AS A MODEL

To begin with, as human beings, we believe it is necessary to have some kind of babysitter, or to have our parents acting as our babysitter. We need someone to change our diapers, give us a bath or a shower, change our clothes, put us in pajamas. We need to have someone who can tell us how to eat—whether to use a spoon or a fork and how to relate with cups and plates—and how to sit up, and who will provide us with some kind of seat, called a baby seat. That’s the beginning point, the first reference point in our lives for a hierarchical relationship with another human being. I’m not particularly coming at this topic from a higher level, an arrogant level. But if we want to function properly in our life, we have to have such a starting point as we begin to grow up. As children, we must have experienced that ourselves. It has happened to us already. That basic human experience is an analogy for the teacher-student principle as it develops through the three *yanas*. On the Buddhist path, the development of the teacher-student relationship is analogous to bringing up infants, relating with teenagers, and finally relating with grown-ups. Those are the three examples that we could use as reference points for our discussion, quite simply, without further complicating the issue.

## **THE HINAYANA TEACHER AS ELDER**

In discussing the student-teacher relationship, the first point is the hinayana relationship to hierarchy or to a parental figure. On a very elementary level, that is the beginning point of the journey that this *sadhana* is presenting.

Our ordinary sense of the growing-up process, whatever we think it entails, is based purely on our dreams. We have to face that fact. We have to acknowledge that we think we’re going to become PhD candidates without even knowing how to speak or write or read, without even being toilet trained. That’s the kind of ambition we usually have: we don’t want to be hassled by little embarrassments here and there. We say to ourselves, “Of course I can push them aside; I can just grow up, and soon I will be accepted in the mainstream of the respectable, high-powered world. I’ll just do my best. I’m sure I can do it.” That’s our usual approach. Many people believe that professionalism means having a self-confident but amateurish approach to reality, which is not quite true. We’re not talking about being “professional” Buddhists in this sense. We’re talking about how to actually

become adults in the Buddhist world. We have to grow up as adults rather than being kids who appear to be grown up. We actually have to grow up, and we have to face the problems that exist in our lives. We have to learn to grow up—we have to learn to develop a sense of the subtleties, a sense of understanding our reactions to the phenomenal world, which are our reactions to ourselves at the same time.

In order to do those things, we need some kind of parental figure to begin with. In the hinayana tradition, that parental figure is called a *sthavira* in Sanskrit, or *thera* in Pali, which means “elder.” The elder is somebody who has already gone through being babysat and has graduated from that level of experience to become a babysitter. In ordinary life, that person is very important for our development, because we have to be told what will happen if we put our fingers on the hot burner. We have to be warned. Or if we decide to step on a pile of shit or if we decide to eat it up, we need to know the consequences, what’s going to happen to us.

All those seemingly unimportant little details are quite trivial, but they provide a very important background for us. We have to learn the facts and figures and the little details that exist in our lives: what is good, what is bad, what should be done, what shouldn’t be done. Some kind of discrimination is important, but not in order to bring everything down to promises and punishment as such. We are not talking about the Christian concept of original sin. But we do need to have a basic understanding of how things are done in connection with natural forces. If you walk out into the snow without any clothes, you will catch cold—obviously. That’s a natural fact. If you eat poison, you will die. Those simple little facts and figures are important.

There are spiritual facts and figures as well. As a practitioner, you might regard yourself as grown-up. You might say, “Well, *I* don’t need a babysitter. I can take care of my business. I’m fine—no thanks.” But in terms of spiritual discipline, even that reaction is very infantile. You are completely closing off large avenues of learning possibilities. If you reject those possibilities, then you have nothing to work with. You have no idea even how to begin with the ABC level of basic spirituality.

So in the hinayana tradition, the notion of *acharya*—meaning “master,” “teacher,” “elder,” parent figure, and occasionally babysitter—is always necessary. That person’s purpose is not to teach us what’s good and what’s

bad—how to hate the bad and how to work toward the good—but the point is how to develop a general sense of composure. That is very important as a first step; it is the beginning of devotion, in some sense. At that point, at the hinayana level, devotion is not necessarily faith at an ethereal or a visionary level, particularly. Devotion and vision come purely from a sense of practicality: what it is necessary to do and what it is necessary to avoid. It's just a simple, basic thing.

### ***The First Noble Truth***

So at the hinayana level, to begin with, the teachings tell you that your view of the world is an infantile view. You think you're going to get ice cream every day, every minute. As a baby and a young child, you are always crying and throwing temper tantrums, so that your daddy or your mommy or your babysitter will come along with a colorful ice-cream cone and begin to feed you. But things can't be that way forever. What we are saying here is that life is based on pain, suffering, misery. A more accurate word for that experience of *duhkha*—usually translated as “suffering”—is *anxiety*. There's always a kind of anxiousness in life, but you have to be told by somebody that life is full of anxiety, to begin with. The elder helps us to relate with that first thing, which is actually called a truth. It is truth because it points out that your belief that you can actually win the war against pain, that you might be able to get so-called happiness, is not possible at all. It just doesn't happen. So the elder, parent, therā, or sthāvira tells us these facts and figures. He or she tells us that the world is not made out of honeycombs and big oceans of maple syrup. That person tells us that the world has its own unpleasant and touchy points. And when you have been told that truth, you begin to appreciate it more. You begin to respect that truth, which actually goes a very long way—all the rest of your life. And you begin to have some feeling for your teacher as a parental figure.

For the elder, such truth is just old hat: he or she knows it already, having gone through it. Nevertheless, the elder doesn't give out righteous messages about those things. She or he simply says, “Look, it's not as good as you think, and it is going to be somewhat painful for you—getting into this world. You can't help it; you're already in it, so you'd better work with it and accept the truth.” That is precisely how Lord Buddha first proclaimed the dharma.



His first teaching was the truth of suffering. So when you are at the level of being babysat, having the teacher as a parental figure, you are simply told how things are. Being told about the truth of suffering is like having your diapers changed—your nappies. This is an example of the trust and faith in the teacher that develop in the early stage of the teacher-student relationship, when the teacher acts as a babysitter.

## **THE MAHAYANA TEACHER AS SPIRITUAL FRIEND**

At the second level of your relationship with your teacher, having already understood the first noble truth, you no longer see the teacher as a hassle or as overwhelming, unpleasant, or claustrophobic. At that point, your relationship with your teacher begins to evolve into a different level.

He or she becomes the *kalyanamitra*, a Sanskrit word meaning “spiritual friend” or “friend in virtue.” The *kalyanamitra* is less heavy-handed than the elder or parent, but on the other hand, he is much more heavy-handed. He is like a rich uncle who provides money for the rest of his family, including his parents. He becomes a big deal to his relatives because he doesn’t want them to just lounge around and live off his money. The rich uncle would like to be more constructive than that; he would like to have very industrious relatives, so that he can promote his capital.

Unlike a rich uncle in ordinary life, the bodhisattva’s approach, the mahayana approach, is not based on self-aggrandizement. It isn’t self-centered. It is a much closer relationship. The teacher has become a friend, a spiritual friend. When relatives give us advice, we have a certain attitude toward their advice: we know that we are just being told the *relative* truth. That truth has some value, it has some application, but it is still relative truth. But when friends give us advice, it is much more immediate and personal than relative-like truth. If we are criticized by our parents, we think that it’s their trip, or we think something is wrong with their approach, so we take it very lightly. Sometimes we are very resentful, which helps us to push those criticisms aside. But if we are criticized by our friends, we feel startled. We begin to think that maybe there’s some element of truth in what they are saying.

### ***Working with Others: The Six Paramitas***

So in the mahayana, the approach to the student-teacher relationship is that the teacher is a spiritual friend. He or she is much more demanding than the purely relative level. The spiritual friend makes us much more watchful and conscientious. At that point, relative truth has already become somewhat old hat. We already know about the four noble truths: pain, the origin of pain, cessation, and path. So what's next? At this point, the spiritual friend tells us, "Don't just work on yourself. Do something about others. Relate with your projections rather than with the projector alone. Do something about the world outside and try to develop some sense of sympathy and warmth in yourself."

That is usually very hard for us to do. We are already pissed off that life is painful; we're resentful about our world. We are a bundle of tight muscles; we're very uptight. It's very hard to relax, to let go of that. But it can be done; it's being done in the present, and it will be done in the future. So how about giving an inch? Just letting go a little bit? Opening a little bit? We could be generous and disciplined at the same time. Therefore we should be patient and exert ourselves, be aware of everything that is happening, and be clear, all at the same time.

That is what is called the six paramitas, the six transcendent actions practiced by the mahayana practitioner, or bodhisattva. Practicing the paramitas is a tall order in some sense. How can we practice all six of them simultaneously? It seems like you have to be a fantastic actor who doesn't believe what he is doing, or else you have to become an idiot who purely follows the rules, someone who gives things away, who is disciplined and patient and hardworking. But there are other more genuine ways of practicing the paramitas. That practice puts us in the spotlight, so to speak. We have a general sense of wanting to open for the very reason that we have nothing to lose. Our life is already a bundle of misery and chaos. And since we already have nothing to lose, we might in fact gain something by just giving, opening. That seems to be the trick, the point at which the transition between elder and spiritual friend takes place.

The spiritual friend acts like a rich uncle who throws us into the street, not giving us any pocket money. He might give us a few pencils and tell us to go out and sell them. We might say, "I'm sorry, I need a warm coat. I can't go

out like this.” And he will say, “First you have to sell your pencils. Then you get a coat. You have to buy a coat for yourself; I’m not going to provide you with one. You have to earn the money yourself.” That’s a very rough example; please don’t misunderstand me. But that seems to be the general pattern of the relationship.

## **THE VAJRAYANA TEACHER AS VAJRA MASTER**

At the next level, the vajrayana level, your relationship with the teacher becomes very complicated, very tricky. Your teacher becomes what is known as the vajra master, and your relationship with him or her has a different slant entirely. In some sense, he becomes a combination of the elder and the spiritual friend. The process is the same; the line of thinking is the same, but it has its own particular twist. The vajra master is not an elder, a parental figure, a spiritual friend, or a rich uncle. He is a born warrior who accepts only a few students. He will not accept students who are sloppy and unreceptive.

### ***The Meaning of Vajra***

*Vajra* is a Sanskrit word meaning “indestructible,” adamant, or diamondlike. According to Indian mythology the vajra was the scepter of Indra, the king of the gods. It was such a powerful weapon that it could destroy anything. Having once destroyed, it would return to his hand. It had the power to destroy not only once, but in many situations. This weapon was indestructible because it could not in any way be cracked, bent, or destroyed. So the idea of vajra mind is that it is completely well put together. It does not have any cracks anywhere; it cannot be criticized. You cannot bring any confusion into it because it is so well guarded—not out of paranoia, but out of its own existence. It is self-guarded, so to speak.

### ***The Vajra Master as Samurai***

The closest analogy for the vajra master is the samurai. Such a teacher is ferocious, but at the same time he or she has the qualities of a parent, an elder, and a friend. He could be very passionate, very warm and sympathetic,

but he doesn't buy any bullshit, if we could speak American at this point. Studying with such a person is very dangerous, and it is a very advanced thing to do. You might actually progress much faster on the path. But if you start with the expectation of going faster, then you might actually go slower. The vajra master's approach to teaching is to create successive teaching situations in your life. Having already gone through the hinayana and mahayana, you are well trained and disciplined.



*The vajra, or scepter. This vajra belonged to Chögyam Trungpa.*

FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE SHAMBHALA ARCHIVES. PHOTOGRAPH BY  
MARVIN MOORE; USED BY PERMISSION.

At this point, the vajra master demands complete, unconditional trust and openness from you, without any logic behind it. Maybe some kind of little logic applies, but the rest of it is simple and straightforward: “Would you like to come along with me and take part in this historic battle? Come along, here’s your sword.” Of course, you have room to chicken out. But once you have chickened out you could go through a lot of problems, unspeakable problems. The more you are a coward, that much more the vajra master will try to terrify you. I don’t want to paint a black picture of the vajra master, but that is the simple truth. The more you try to escape, the more you will be chased, cornered.

However, the more you work with the vajra master, the more you will be invited to join that fantastic feast and celebration and mutual dance. The notion of celebration here is that of feast. It is not the idea of indulging, having parties and eating a lot. Feasting means sharing together rich experiences of all kinds. Sharing together in that way is the only way that the vajrayana teachings come alive and become very appropriate. But if you were not ready for that, then the vajra master might send you back to your spiritual friend or, if necessary, to your elder, your rabbi.

### ***The Vajra Master as Inner Guru***

The level of your commitment to the vajra master, the samurai, is not purely to the external person alone; it has possibilities of commitment to the internal guru as well. I heard that Dr. Herbert Guenther said that, toward the end of your relationship with the kalyanamitra, the spiritual friend, you discover your inner guru. I must contradict that statement. That is not the case, even though Dr. Guenther is a great professor. At that level, you have not yet discovered the inner guru.

Something beyond that outer level takes place only when you meet the vajra master. At that point, you begin to experience a greater level of heroism, fearlessness, and power. You begin to develop a sense of your own resources. But that journey takes much, much longer than you would expect. The vajra master doesn't want to give you any chance to play out your trip. Otherwise, you might decide to reject your irritating and overwhelming vajra master. You could purely internalize by saying, "I don't have to deal with that person anymore. I can just do it on my own."

### ***Nontheistic Devotion***

The point here is that, at this level, there is a sense of magic, power, and immense devotion. That devotion is quite different from devotion in the theistic tradition, devotion to Christ or Krishna or whoever you might have. In this case, faith and devotion are very much based on the sense of not giving up completely, but taking on more things, taking all sorts of examples and insight and power into yourself. At this point, you can actually be initiated—

that is precisely the word—you can receive abhisheka. You can be abhisheka-ed, to coin a verb.

Faith and devotion in the theistic tradition have a very remote quality. Somebody is out there all the time—not a person, not a teacher, not an elder, not a parent, but something greater, someone who will feed you, who will make you feel secure. Everything is somewhat on an ethereal level, as they quite precisely call it, on the level of otherness. That particular thing is going to save you. You might not necessarily believe in an old man with a beard, but you still believe in something out there somewhere, playing tricks on you. The reason why lizards exist, the reason why snakes coil themselves, why rivers run to the ocean, and why trees grow tall—the reason for all this mysteriousness must be because of “him” or “it.”

That theistic belief actually keeps you from understanding real magic. It keeps you from trying to understand how things come about or from finding out how you can do something in your own way. When you think that the world must be someone else’s work, or creation, you begin to feel as though the whole world is run by a gigantic corporation, including the weather. But we run our own corporation, according to the nontheistic tradition of Buddhism. In order to have access to our world, so that we can run our own corporation, we need to have the vajra master give us manuals, systems, techniques, and instructions. And if we are dumb, if we are not exuberant, he might actually put us into a very difficult situation.<sup>2</sup>

So that is the general preparation of the ground for our discussion of the sadhana. I don’t want to give you too much material at this point. I would like to present the notion of devotion, or faith, properly. Faith here is not worship; the guru is not particularly regarded as Christ on earth, our only link to God. The guru is regarded as a spiritual elder, spiritual friend, and vajra master. He has ways and means to create situations in accordance with our own receptivity, our own particular style. And you could create a whole situation and relate with that.

## **DISCUSSION**

**Working with disillusionment toward the teacher.**

*Question:* Rinpoche, what does the student do when heavy disillusionment with the kalyanamitra or the acharya or the vajra master sets in? How does he relate to that?

*Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche:* I suppose it's up to you.

*Q:* Is there any sense of direction?

*CTR:* Well, maybe the whole relationship was conducted wrongly at an early stage. There is some need for undoing and going back. You should go back to the elder.

*Q:* How do you find the elder again?

*CTR:* Sit a lot. Practice diligently, without visualizing anything.

### **When to trust completely in the guru.**

*Q:* How would a person know when it's appropriate to assume that complete trust without logic? How would a person know when it's time to start relating to a guru in that way?

*CTR:* I think at that point, your teacher might begin to direct you. He might begin to throw you into a different phase.

*Q:* But isn't it possible that you might feel appropriately that you weren't really ready for that?

*CTR:* Well, I think there has to be some kind of faith and trust in the physician.

*Q:* Isn't it dangerous to jump into that kind of faith and obedience too soon?

*CTR:* It depends on you, too. In the early stages, you look for an appropriate parent. If you make a mistake at that level, then you keep on making mistakes all down the line. You have big disasters and you end up in a loony bin, or something like that.

### **The interplay between critical intelligence and faith.**

*Q:* At other times you have stressed being very critical, keeping one's critical intelligence at all times. Is there a point along the path where you give up that critical quality toward the teacher or the teachings? Is there a point



where this faith is different from that critical quality, or do you keep that critical quality? Do they go together?

*CTR:* Well, I think that critical quality still goes along with your faith, but your criticism becomes more of an introverted than extroverted critical attitude. It begins to turn inward and it begins to dissolve.

### **The role of opening up in practicing the paramitas.**

*Q:* I have a question about the paramitas. When you open up, you just step into open space. Does that create the space for the paramitas to sort of go through you, to happen, or is there some element of endeavor in doing them?

*CTR:* I think that it comes naturally, but at the same time there is obviously a need for some kind of push. You can work with yourself as well as with your spiritual friend. The two go together.

### **How cynicism and trust work together in relating to the teacher.**

*Q:* If you maintain this cynicism up to the last moment, it seems that you would realize that your trust in this person could actually be another self-deception. At that point, you might only surrender because you knew that even if it were self-deception, it wouldn't matter anyway.

*CTR:* I think it works both ways. Your critical input and your surrendering are working together at the same time. They're not working against each other. The more you get input and the more you develop, the more you question even those things. So there is some kind of dance taking place between the teacher and yourself. You are not particularly trying to switch off one area and switch on another area. The two are synchronized together. It shouldn't be purely a kill-or-cure situation. You think that you have to be very naive or terribly cynical to the point of being ready to drop the whole thing. But that somehow doesn't have any bearing. Those two attitudes have to work together.

*Q:* Do you sort of flicker from one state to the other?

*CTR:* You have a general sense of cynicism to begin with, and a general sense of openness at the same time. They work together, simultaneously. So

at the same time that you appreciate what you have received as a great gift, you continue to question it.

### **Theistic and nontheistic approaches to the world as a giant corporation.**

*Q:* You said that, according to the theistic view, the world is run by a gigantic corporation, but that we could run our own corporation if we had a manual from the guru. I'm confused about the laws of the corporation, and the taxes, and how everything works together.

*CTR:* I don't see any problems with that particular way of looking at things. We are already involved in some idea of totality. As Suzuki Roshi says, big mind is the biggest one of all. Small mind needs to be trained to become big mind. Jews and Christians would say that you have to submit, you have to surrender to this big creation. You are simply the creatures of it. The problem lies in distinguishing "big" versus "small" rather than in who runs the household. You use very subtle logic: if you are the mother superior of a particular nunnery, then you have your little kingdom. But then the people under you simply become reflections of yourself, your own extension of security rather than the cosmic level.

What we are discussing here is the difference between theistic and nontheistic attitudes at a cosmic level. The nontheistic approach would be, obviously, that somebody has to take control of the whole situation. It could be anybody: the head of a meditation center, the head of the whole organization, or somebody who runs the building. All those people are necessary, but they are not particularly regarded as gods. They are just ordinary people who are confused or on the way up or on the way down. They are just little beings working with their little brains. However, the theistic idea of the world as a huge scheme is very tricky. Once you click into that idea, you discover that it doesn't give you any room for anything at all. You are just part of that huge scheme, so you might decide to murder somebody, according to the will of the scheme. That is going a bit too far. This isn't just a farfetched example. That logic could go very far; it has been done in the past. Or you could just create little areas in the name of the huge scheme. That becomes problematic.

## **Importance of personal contact with the teacher; role of the sangha.**

*Q:* In terms of relating to the guru as a parent, kalyanamitra, or vajra master, it seems that relationship implies a lot of personal contact. Sometimes I wonder whether you have to use your own fantasy about where you are in this relationship, when you don't have personal contact. Perhaps that's a silly question.

*CTR:* It's not that silly; it's very potent. It is in the air in many ways, which makes it a good question. I quite agree with you: personal contact is important. But what do we mean by personal contact? That's the question. You have some kind of understanding and experience of how far such an elder, kalyanamitra, or vajra master has the composure to communicate on a level that could be understood. The communication could be nationwide; it could even be at a cosmic level. The communication is not at the level of individual worship or experience alone, but many students are working on that particular level. They are beginning to pick up that particular type of sanity, that particular kind of openness. They are beginning to create an environment of sanity. So the concept of sangha is a very important part of that particular notion of communication between teacher and student. The sangha is a group of people who don't lean on each other; they stand on their own feet and they propagate the teachings. They are capable of expanding themselves.

So the message that individuals receive from the teachings can be expanded, and the whole thing can be done very honestly. If any problems come up, they can be handled by direct authorization, direct contact with your elder or your spiritual friend. Overall, creating an atmosphere of sanity is a very important part of that. Otherwise the teacher-student relationship becomes just like a buying and selling trip. Everybody comes to the cash register<sup>3</sup> and pays his money, and the cashier makes the change. The whole thing becomes very petty and it takes too much time and space and sanity.

## **Knowing which level of teacher-student relationship is appropriate.**

*Q:* I got confused about the rich uncle and the father. How does one know what level you are on, when there's so much interpenetration of all the levels?

We're told that there's not necessarily a definite distinction between hinayana, mahayana, and vajrayana. Or is that incorrect?

*CTR*: Those levels are largely a matter of a student's discipline, his or her sense of practice, which is largely based on the sitting practice of meditation to begin with. Beyond that, it's a matter of commitment to giving up individual freedom and dedicating oneself to a much wider level of practice. It's a matter of personal choice.

*Q*: I was wondering whether all three of those levels happen at once.

*CTR*: Not necessarily. The first two might happen at once, but the last one, the vajrayana, happens in a very single-handed way, which is the only way. It's a very special one.

---

2. Ed.: in order to wake us up.

3. Ed.: the teacher.

## SIX

# *Crazy Wisdom*

*The crazy-wisdom body, or form, is related with the basic notion of enlightenment. We say in the opening line of the offering in the sadhana: “To the crazy-wisdom form of the buddhas of the three times.” So crazy wisdom is part of the general scheme of enlightenment....But in this case we are talking about a larger form of crazy wisdom, which is cosmic crazy wisdom. It is part of the enlightened attitude of the whole situation, which is already crazy, continuously crazy—and wise at the same time. Primordial wisdom is continuously taking place. That is a very crazy thing, in some sense.*

WE HAVE DISCUSSED the three levels of the teacher-student relationship in terms of the student’s development. Now, I would like to discuss those to whom we’re relating in the sadhana. We have a sense of relating with somewhat ideal, ethereal beings, who are known as Dorje Trolö or Karma Pakshi. These are people who have already existed, who have lived and died in the past. How can we relate those people to the present situation? And how is that different from worshipping Jesus Christ, for that matter?

That is an interesting question. Dorje Trolö and Karma Pakshi represent the notion of the embodiment of the siddhas. *Siddha* is a Sanskrit word that refers to those who are able to overpower the phenomenal world in their own enlightened way. A siddha is a crazy-wisdom person.

## DEFINITION OF CRAZY WISDOM

Crazy wisdom in Tibetan is *yeshe chölwa*. *Yeshe* means “wisdom,” and *chölwa* is literally “gone wild.” The closest translation for *chölwa* that we could come up with is “crazy,” which creates some further understanding. In this case “crazy” goes along with “wisdom”; the two words work together well. So it is craziness gone wise rather than wisdom gone crazy. So here, the craziness is related with wisdom.

### ***Wisdom***

The notion of wisdom here is very touchy, and we will have to get into the technical aspect of the whole thing. Wisdom is *jnana* in Sanskrit and *yeshe* in Tibetan. *Yeshe* refers to perception or to enlightenment, which exists eternally. *Ye* means “primordial,” and *she* means “knowing,” so *yeshe* means “knowing primordially,” knowing already. The idea is that you haven’t suddenly acquired knowledge. It isn’t that somebody has just told you something. Knowledge already exists; it is already here, and we are beginning to tune into that situation. Such a thing actually does exist already. Wisdom isn’t purely manufactured by scholars and scientists and books.

So the notion of enlightenment is the same as that of wisdom. Being a buddha is not so much being a great scholar who knows all about everything and therefore is enlightened. Being a buddha, being enlightened, is actually being able to tune our mind into that state of being which already exists, which is already liberated, a long time ago. Our only problem is that we have covered it over with all kinds of hiding places and shadows and venetian blinds—whatever we have covering us. We are always trying to cover it up. As a result, we are known as confused people, which is an insult.

We are not all that confused, stupid, and bewildered. We have possibilities—more than possibilities. We actually inherit fundamental wakefulness—all the time. So that is the notion of enlightenment, as well as the notion of *yeshe*. We are eternally awake, primordially awake, cognitively open and insightful. That is the notion of wisdom.

### ***Crazy***

The notion of “crazy” is connected with relating with and dealing with individual situations. When wisdom has been completely and thoroughly

achieved at the fullest level, then it has to relate with something. It has to relate with its own radiation, its own light. Ordinarily, when light begins to shine, it reflects on things. That is how we can tell whether the light is bright or dim. The light is reflected in our eyes; we see it, and so we can tell there is light. Therefore, when light is very brilliant, it projects and reflects on things properly and fully. Then we know that there is some kind of communication taking place. In terms of the expression of wisdom, that communication is expressed by the intensity of the wisdom light shining through. That communication is traditionally known as buddha activity or compassion.

Compassion is not so much feeling sorry for somebody, feeling that you are in a better place and somebody else is in a worse place. Rather, compassion is not having any hesitation to reflect your light on things. That reflection is an automatic and natural process, an organic process. Since light has no hesitation, no inhibition about reflecting on things, it does not discriminate whether to reflect on a pile of shit or on a pile of rock or on a pile of diamonds. It reflects on everything it faces. That nondiscriminating reflection is precisely the nature of the relationship between student and teacher. When the student is facing in the right direction, then the guru's light is reflected on him. And when the student is unreceptive, when he is full of dark corners, the teacher's light is not fully reflected on him. That light does not particularly try to fight its way into dark corners.

So that nonhesitating light reflects choicelessly all the time; it shines brilliantly and constantly on things. Crazy means not discriminating and being without cowardice and paranoia. "Should I shine on this object, even though this other object is facing toward me?" Not at all. As it says in the sadhana:

He is inseparable from peacefulness and yet he acts whenever action is required. ॐ He subdues what needs to be subdued, he destroys what needs to be destroyed and he cares for whatever needs his care. ॐ

So the definition of crazy wisdom is that whatever is needed will be done and what is not needed is not done. That idea is quite different from the Christian notion that everybody should be converted to Christianity—even stones and grass and meat eaters. It isn't our duty to go around the corner and

convert someone. This is a different approach. Whatever needs to be reflected on is reflected on, and whatever needs to be done is done—on the spot.

Maybe that idea doesn't seem to be particularly crazy from your point of view. You might think that if somebody is crazy, he won't leave you any space at all. He will just roll all over you, vomit all over you, and make diarrhea all over you. He will make you terribly crazy, too; he will extend his own craziness. But here this craziness is not so neurotic. It is basic craziness, which is fearlessness and not giving up on anything. Not giving up on anything is the basic point. At the same time, you are willing to work with what is there on the basis of its primordial wakeful quality. So that is the definition of crazy wisdom, which is sometimes known as "wisdom gone wild."

## THE SPACE OF COMPLETE SANITY

Crazy wisdom is not only connected with reflecting on things, but it is also connected with the space around things. The crazy-wisdom person provides immense space or environment around things. That environment is completely thronged with the energy<sup>22</sup> of its own fearless wisdom. When a crazy-wisdom person decides to work with you, when he decides to liberate you, you become his victim, choicelessly. You have no way to run away from him. If you try to run backward, that space has been already covered. If you try to run forward, that space has also been covered. When you have a feeling of choicelessness in regard to the particular teacher that you relate with, if you give into that, your relationship becomes very natural and open. So the crazy-wisdom teacher is somewhat dictatorial. The space he creates is thronged, filled with a strong charge of heavy enlightenment, heavy primordial sanity.

That is usually our problem: we can't handle too much sanity. We would like to have a little corner somewhere for neurosis, a little pocket, just a little puff here and there. If we run into too much sanity, we say, "Boy, it was heavy!"

That heavy sanity is basically what the sadhana is all about. Its purpose is to create just such an atmosphere of claustrophobic sanity, claustrophobic enlightenment in this world, particularly in North America. Western Europe,



too, is somewhat hopeful. The idea is that the practitioner of this sadhana should have that kind of understanding or appreciation of sanity. He should be willing to commit himself to an intense experience, which is usually called “freaky.”

Let’s discuss and dissect the notion of freakiness. What do we mean by “freaky”? The word has two aspects. When sane people get into insane situations, they say that it is freaky. But when insane people get into sane situations, that is also known as freaky. It’s just the other way around. So the word *freaky* by itself doesn’t mean anything very much; it’s just common jargon for when we don’t like such situations. We find them threatening to us, whether they are right or wrong, sane or insane. We would like to actually demonstrate or indulge in our own thingy, which is not allowed in those situations. We could say that crazy wisdom actually charges toward us and develops its own direction. There is a sense of openness and a sense of confusion at the same time.

We have a great fear of complete sanity. Let’s face it! We don’t like being completely sane, completely awake. We really don’t like it! We would like to have a little home touch at this level, at that level, at all kinds of levels. We would like to have a home touch so that we can indulge in ourselves, as well as inviting somebody else to indulge in us. We would like to take a break here and there. That is always the case: we don’t want to be completely sane.

We have no idea how to be fully sane, fully balanced, fully awake. We have no idea at all. We have never done so. Occasionally, when we are feeling good and religious and prayerful, we would like to go up to our loft. But at the same time, the basement is more attractive. We actually feel as though we have a better reference point and learning situation if we are allowed some indulgence in our neurosis, as long as we’re also doing a good job on the other side, on the level of wakefulness.

Sometimes, when we have been quite heroic, quite sane for a long time—if such a thing is possible at all—and then we return to our previous situation, it is more refreshing for us to see things at the so-called gut level, dirty-spoon level, greasy-spoon level. We have some kind of neurotic love for our ethnic claustrophobia. That ethnic claustrophobia applies not only to the Jews and the Chinese and Italians; it applies to everybody’s little ethnic world—our grandmother’s cookies and our mother’s temper tantrums and our father’s

businesslike style. All those little things that make us glad to return home, to be comfortable at home, are very nostalgic. We would like to return home and feel those good old things. Maybe that's why antiques are very expensive in America.

The vajrayana approach to reality demands complete sanity. It demands not being afraid of sanity. It demands highways and highways and highways of sanity, skies and skies and skies of sanity, fold after fold of it. The vajrayana demands not being afraid of that.

At the first Naropa Institute course on tantra, in the final lecture, I talked about the blue pancake.<sup>23</sup> That is a similar approach. The idea is not so much a round pancake on your plate; rather the whole sky is a self-existing pancake, dough after dough, roll after roll of pancake. That is the space that is always there.

## **THE CRAZY-WISDOM BODY**

The crazy-wisdom vision is very crazy, too. It gives us a sense of direction, a sense of heroism, a sense of reality, a sense of compassion, and so forth down the line. It also includes our doubts as part of that crescendo. So the crazy-wisdom body, or form, is related with the basic notion of enlightenment. We say in the opening line of the offering in the sadhana: "To the crazy-wisdom form of the buddhas of the three times." So crazy wisdom is part of the general scheme of enlightenment. The crazy-wisdom guru is not some Rasputin of Buddhism gone wild who does crazy things, who churns out a crazy-wisdom cult. You might think, "Padmasambhava went to Tibet and got drunk and went crazy. He hyperventilated in the mountain air after being in India." Or, "Karma Pakshi went to China and got turned on by being an imperial teacher. Because of that, he went crazy."

But in this case, we are talking about a larger form of crazy wisdom, which is cosmic crazy wisdom. It is part of the enlightened attitude of the whole situation, which is already crazy, continuously crazy—and wise at the same time. Primordial wisdom is continuously taking place. That is a very crazy thing, in some sense.

## ***Dorje Trolö***

We have two personality types in the sadhana: Dorje Trolö and Karma Pakshi. Dorje Trolö is Padmasambhava. Padmasambhava attained enlightenment at birth. He was an Indian Buddhist saint, a siddha, a *vidyadhara*, or “wisdom holder,” and a great teacher who brought Buddhism to Tibet. There was already some element of Buddhism there, but Padmasambhava actually brought the full swing, the full force of Buddhism to Tibet.

He manifested as a crazy-wisdom person particularly when he was meditating in Tibet, in a cave called Taktsang Sengge Samdrup, which is now in Bhutan. (In those days, Bhutan was part of Tibet, in the province of Mön.) In order to relate with the savageness of the Tibetans and their own little ethnic samurai mentality, he had to appear in that manifestation. So he manifested himself as an enlightened samurai, a savage person, a crazy-wisdom person known as Dorje Trolö.

According to the iconography, Dorje Trolö rides on a pregnant tigress. He wears the robes of a bhikshu, or Buddhist monk, and he wears a kimono-like garment underneath. He holds a vajra in his right hand and a three-bladed dagger in his left hand. He represents the aspect of crazy wisdom that doesn't relate with gentleness in order to tame somebody. In order to tame someone, you can approach the person abruptly and directly. You can connect with his or her neurosis, his or her insanity; you can project sanity on the spot. That's the notion of crazy wisdom.

## ***Karma Pakshi***

Karma Pakshi was the second Karmapa. The Karmapas are the heads of the Karma Kagyü lineage, the practicing lineage, to which we belong. Since Karma Pakshi was recognized as a great master, he was invited to the Chinese court as part of the entourage of the Dalai Lama, who in those days was the head of the Sakya sect and was not known as the Dalai Lama. This abbot, the Sakya teacher, was going to become the imperial teacher to the Chinese emperor. Karma Pakshi was just going along as part of the group.

Karma Pakshi was always very strange; his style was not in keeping with the protocol expected of emissaries to the Chinese imperial court. During the

journey to China, he played a lot of little tricks; everybody was concerned about his power and his naughtiness, so to speak. There was a lot of intrigue. The Sakya abbot who was supposed to become the Chinese imperial teacher didn't like Karma Pakshi's tricks, and so had him thrown in jail. By means of his miraculous powers, Karma Pakshi turned his prison into a palace. He was able to manifest himself as a real crazy-wisdom person. He proved that politeness and diplomacy were not necessary in order to convert the Chinese emperor, who was Mongolian in that era. He showed us that straight talk is more effective than gentle talk. He didn't say, "Buddhism would be good for your imperial health." He just wasn't into being diplomatic. The rest of the party got very upset; they were afraid that he might blow the whole trip, so to speak. And apparently he did!



*The phurba, or ritual dagger. This phurba, carried by hand out of Tibet by Chögyam Trungpa, is an important relic belonging to his lineage, thought to have belonged to Padmasambhava himself.*

FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE SHAMBHALA ARCHIVES. PHOTOGRAPH BY MARVIN MOORE; USED BY PERMISSION.

Toward the end of his visit, he became the real imperial teacher. The Chinese emperor supposedly said, “The Sakya guru is fine, but how about the other one with the beard? How about him? He seems to be a very threatening person.”

The energy of crazy wisdom is continuously ongoing. Karma Pakshi was always an unreasonable person—all the time. When he went back to Tibet, his monastery was still unfinished, so he ordered it to be built on an emergency basis. In that way Tsurphu monastery was founded. It was the seat of the Karmapas in Tibet. It is interesting that such energy goes on throughout the whole lineage.

If I may, I would like to inject a bit of our own vision, here and now, in connection with this aspect of crazy wisdom. For us, it is like wanting to buy a huge building, which may be out of the question, in some sense, but on the other hand, it is a possibility.<sup>24</sup> And we are going to do it! That seems to be Karma Pakshi’s vision, actually. He would have done a similar thing.

Suppose a fantastically rich person came along. All of us might try to be nice to this particular guy or this particular lady—or we might blow his or her trip completely—to the extent that this person would be completely switched! Although the person’s notion of sanity was at the wrong level, he or she might become a great student if we were willing to take such a chance. So far, we haven’t found such a person, who would be rich enough and crazy enough and bold enough to do such a thing. But that was the kind of role Karma Pakshi played with the emperor of China. Karma Pakshi was known for his abruptness and his dedication. He possessed the intelligence of primordial wakefulness.

### ***Tüsum Khyenpa***

Then we have another interesting person in the sadhana: Tüsum Khyenpa, who was the first Karmapa, before Karma Pakshi. He was an extraordinarily solid person, extraordinarily solid, sane, and contemplative. He spent his whole life teaching and negotiating between various warring factions. There was a lot of chaos at that time; all kinds of squabbles erupted among the Tibetan principalities. By his efforts, their fighting was finally subdued. He was basically a peacemaker and a very powerfully contemplative person.

### ***Mikyö Dorje***

Then we have Mikyö Dorje, who was the eighth Karmapa. He was a great scholar and a great teacher, and he was very wild in his approach to reality. Once he said, “If I can light fire to the rest of the cosmos, I will do so.” That kind of burning prajna was in him all the time.

### ***Rangjung Dorje***

Rangjung Dorje, the third Karmapa, was a key person: he brought together the higher and lower tantras. He was an extraordinarily spacious person, and one of the most powerful exponents of mahamudra, which is at a very high level of vajrayana enlightenment experience. He was a great exponent of the ati teachings as well.

### ***Connecting with the Crazy-Wisdom Lineage through the Sadhana***

I’m trying to introduce these people to you tonight. And I’m sure they’re very pleased to meet you as well. They are such powerful people! It’s such a powerful idea! And that powerful idea is not of the past or of the present or of the future; it is simply living experience at every level. All those ideas which presently exist have existed in the past—obviously. Otherwise, we wouldn’t be able to discuss them. And since such experience did exist, does exist, we have some way of relating with that. We can capture the vision of those people and their fearlessness.

How are we going to do that? The only way to do so seems to be to have some kind of connection, a means, a way to link ourselves to that. That way is the sadhana itself. I’m not talking about tripping out, taking LSD and reading the sadhana in the afternoon, trying to visualize Dorje Trolö and Karma Pakshi, trying to bring them into your world. I’m not talking about getting them on your side when you are particularly depressed or in need of help. The approach in vajrayana is not the popular Christian principle of inviting God to be on your side because your side is right. That is precisely the kind of problem with the Arabs and the Israelis. We’re not putting up a fight, so no one has to be on our side or on the other person’s side. There is no other person to fight with. We’re on our own side, and “they” are we.

So those people in the sadhana are not regarded as ghosts, as holy ghosts. And they are not particularly regarded as the Christ principle. They are not regarded as larger spirits that we have around us. They are simply regarded as states of being that express ourselves in our awakened state.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Fate of the Chinese emperor.**

*Question:* Rinpoche, with all due respect to Karma Pakshi, can you tell me what happened to the Chinese emperor?<sup>25</sup>

*Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche:* I think he was saved. There's a story that the Chinese emperor became one of the lineage holders himself. That's not bad for a Chinese, eh? [Laughter]

### **Relationship of figures in the sadhana to the vajra master.**

*Q:* Are all these people the same as a vajra master? If you get into it with the vajra master, are you getting into it with them?

*CTR:* Yes, absolutely! It's like studying with somebody who is fully soaked in his or her own tradition, like a poet. It's as though you could meet a living poet who has all the feelings and inspiration of his tradition. It feels as if you could actually meet Shakespeare, as if you could meet Yeats or another great poet on the spot. Unfortunately, the world of poets is slightly different from the world of Buddhist practice, which is constantly being transmitted from generation to generation.

### **Rangjung Dorje's integration of ati and mahamudra.**

*Q:* Rinpoche, you mentioned that Rangjung Dorje integrated the ati and the mahamudra traditions. Was he a holder of the ati lineage as well as the mahamudra? And along those lines, is the sadhana an integration of the Nyingma and the Kagyü traditions? And do the Nyingma lamas incorporate the practice of mahamudra?

*CTR*: Yes. He was in the ati lineage. The sadhana is supposedly in the Kagyü tradition, which has a lot of ideas borrowed from the Nyingma tradition. That's the case with almost any sadhana in the Kagyü tradition. The Nyingma tradition also incorporates the practice of mahamudra.

### **The difference between jnana and prajna.**

*Q*: What is the difference between jnana and prajna?

*CTR*: Jnana is basic, primordial wakefulness. And prajna is a tool that you use throughout the whole journey, starting from the *pratyekabuddha* level of the hinayana up to the vajrayana level. It is a constant examination: you are constantly trying to find out the way things are. So prajna is more intellectual, and jnana is more experiential.

The word *intellectual* has a very limited meaning in the English language. I don't know about its meaning in the other European languages. In English it means just relating with books and facts and figures. But in this case, "intellectual" means seeing things very precisely, as much as you can. It means perceiving further and transcending your own perceptions at the same time. That is not quite a meditative state. It's not a state: it's working with your mind.

*Q*: Is jnana like something that has been given to you already, and prajna like something that you develop?

*CTR*: Jnana is your inheritance. Prajna is a sympathetic inheritance which you work toward.

*Q*: I don't quite understand what you mean by sympathetic.

*CTR*: It's something that you already have with you. You could say prajna began when you were born, when you learned how to suck your mother's nipple. It begins from that level, which is already an inheritance, in some sense.

*Q*: But it's also something you develop.

*CTR*: Yes.

*Q*: Do you develop more and more prajna?

*CTR*: You don't suck your mother's nipple forever; you just grow up.



## **How crazy wisdom relates to being human.**

*Q:* Could you talk about how crazy wisdom relates to being a human being? Are we manifestations of crazy wisdom refusing to see itself, or something like that?

*CTR:* Yes.

*Q:* There must be more to it.

*CTR:* That's it!

## **Interrelationship of the incarnations of the Karmapas.**

*Q:* Rinpoche, if Tüsum Khyenpa was the first Karmapa, Karma Pakshi was the second Karmapa, Mikyö Dorje was the eighth Karmapa, and the sixteenth Karmapa is the one we know,<sup>26</sup> are all these people the same person?

*CTR:* Well, it's like trying to say which sky is the real sky: the one above New York City or the one above Boston. It's difficult to say.

## **Difference between an ordinary crazy person and a crazy-wisdom person.**

*Q:* I usually think of a crazy person as being kind of out of control and kind of dangerous because I can't reason with him, I can't control him. Is there that feeling about the crazy-wisdom person?

*CTR:* With the crazy-wisdom person, wisdom is already wise. In other words, if you become wise, you become a wisdom person. Trying to control someone who is crazy is obviously not wise. Such a person doesn't know anything about wisdom; he is just being crazy. That seems to be the problem. If you don't have a touch of wisdom, a dash of wisdom in your craziness, you are just flat crazy. It's very dangerous, sure.

But a crazy-wisdom person is not particularly dangerous. On the other hand, he could be dangerous. It depends on how crazy *you* are. If you are more crazy, then the crazy-wisdom person is more dangerous. It also works the other way around. When an ordinary person is crazy, if he is less crazy, he is safer. He is not as much of a threat, right? I hope so. Is that logical? But at the crazy-wisdom level, if you are more crazy, then the crazy-wisdom

teacher is going to be more dangerous for you. He is going to try to cut through the aorta of your neurosis.

*Q:* Does that relate to what you were saying earlier in the talk about a feeling of freakiness? Kind of feeling half insane and half sane?

*CTR:* Yes, something like that.

*Q:* When you feel that freakiness, is that the time to let go more? Is that the time for a leap?

*CTR:* The letting go has to be based on some kind of wisdom. You see, the point is that first you get wisdom; then you get crazy. That's what the crazy-wisdom direction is all about. In ordinary cases, first you get crazy, and then you get wisdom. That is the mad philosopher style.

### **Integration of ati and mahamudra in the sadhana.**

*Q:* Rinpoche, in the sadhana, is there some point where the ati and the mahamudra traditions are integrated, or is that happening all through the sadhana?

*CTR:* All through the whole thing.

### **What you are battling against in the vajrayana?**

*Q:* I wonder if you could reconcile something from the last talk with something you said this time. Tonight you spoke about there being no sides. But last night, in describing the relationship with the vajra master, you said something about the vajra master inviting the student: "Here is your sword. Come join the battle." Who is the battle against?

*CTR:* The two things are saying the same thing. The battle is simply not being afraid to fight, to use your sword. Sometimes people become petrified when they are given a weapon. They are afraid they might cut themselves by tripping on it, if they're wearing a long coat or something. People are afraid of all kinds of things; they are so cowardly. If they have a sword, they are constantly in fear of having an accident. But if you are given a sword, you should be able to handle it. That is what we have been discussing tonight.

*Q:* I still don't understand. What are you going to do with the sword?

*CTR:* You fight with it.

*Q:* But what is it that you fight? Or is this the sword of Manjushri?

*CTR:* That is also a sword. You battle with your neurosis, which battles back. It's not just chopping down neurosis, which is quietly lying there. It's not all that simple, you know. This whole world is coming toward you.

### **Relationship of openness and not giving up.**

*Q:* You talked about openness, and you talked about jnana as not giving up anything. I don't see how the two go together.

*CTR:* I don't see any problems with that. Openness is not giving up. When you're open, that means that you don't reject anything. It's not refusing to give up in the sense of working very hard to get something. We're not talking about laboring. Not giving up doesn't have to become a crusade.

### **Fear of sanity and how to overcome it.**

*Q:* You said that we don't want to be completely sane. Is that because of our fear? And if so, why are we afraid, and what can we do about it—other than sitting?

*CTR:* You are afraid because you like the smell of your own armpit. You find it very attractive, very homey. Doing something about that would be taking a shower, trying out the perspective of freshness instead of your smelly armpit. That is opening up. That is not indulging your own little thingy. You just get out! That seems to be the point.

*Q:* That has to do with familiarity, which is a very safe feeling. But I don't understand how that relates to overcoming fear.

*CTR:* Well, nothing is going to be familiar in an area where we have never gone. Nothing is going to remain very familiar. But at this point, familiarity is not the criterion. The criterion is just general wakefulness. That is going to be very alien to a lot of us, but we've got to do it.

*Q:* So is that the leap?

*CTR:* Yes. You've got to do it.

## SEVEN

### *The Charnel Ground*

*Having discovered that the charnel ground is not unworkable, it actually becomes our working basis. It is the expression of our neurosis, which we have to work with. We begin to find that there is enormous strength and power behind it. We are not trying to get away from the charnel ground. We also don't build a Hilton Hotel in the middle of it. We don't shut the doors in order to seal off completely the smell of rot and the chaos outside, so that we could enjoy ourselves on the wall-to-wall carpeting. Building the mandala is actually part of the charnel-ground principle.*

WE HAVE DISCUSSED the principle of crazy wisdom, and hopefully we now have some understanding of what that is. I would like to go further in discussing what kind of world, what kind of universe, is connected with the crazy-wisdom mandala.

### **MANDALA AS THE EXPRESSION OF OUR BASIC BEING**

The interesting point is that such a mandala, or such a world, is not built on any form of uncertainty at all. It has very specific and definite patterns and directions. It is simply the expression of our own particular state of being, which constitutes the basic world of pain and pleasure, chaos and order, neurosis and sanity, and so forth. This kind of mandala setup is used in *The Sadhana of Mahamudra* as it is in many traditions of tantra, particularly the anuttarayoga and mahayoga levels of the tantric teachings.

We have a basic background, which is actually speakable, workable, and communicable. And on that basic ground, which we share with each other, the teachings can be founded. If the teachings were founded on virgin territory, there would be no communication whatsoever with our ordinary, everyday-life situation. In that case, teaching would be out of the question. Nobody would be able to understand properly; nobody would be able to practice properly. Because the practice of buddhadharma exists within our own state of being, our own world, it is very powerful. The teachings speak our own language, rather than some divine language, some language of transcendence.

People get excited when spiritual language is used as a foreign language that has nothing to do with them personally or with their everyday life. Everything is expressed in extraordinary language, and people try to relate to that as if they were eating a new dish or wearing a new costume. They think of it as something exotic or special, something they are not used to. Such indulgence is completely fake because it has nothing to do with their lifestyle or their state of mind. They simply would like to have something different for a change.

Some people find that ordinary life is too dull, that the environment is too predictable. They decide to go to India or Japan for a change. When they get to those countries and discover such familiar landmarks as Coca-Cola bottles or ice-cream cones, they feel completely insulted. They feel insulted, not because they're culturally impeccable, but because they were looking for something other than their own experience. They're shocked that their territory has been invaded, and they blame it on those countries. They didn't expect such places to be Americanized, Westernized. And when they begin to realize that the Japanese don't always sit on low cushions, that they use tables and chairs and eat with knives and forks, it's terrible. They are so insulted. When they begin to realize that Japanese wear suits and ties and ordinary clothes rather than kimonos, they are so insulted.

This is not so much a puritanical approach to the world or to culture, although you present it that way because that's the only way that you can present it. But it is a personal invasion. You are looking for an ideal new world, a brand-new world completely different from your world. But when you begin to relate with the larger world, the world on a global level, you

discover that the technical or mechanized aspect of Westernization is always prominent. You begin to realize that your ideal world is not intact, which is very difficult for people to relate with. We hear all kinds of stories when people come back from other countries. Sometimes they're very disappointed. Sometimes they're not all that disappointed because they have gotten something out of it, but still they make jokes about Coca-Cola bottles with flowers in them sitting on the shrine. In 1974, hundreds of people in Boulder made fun of His Holiness the sixteenth Karmapa drinking Sprite while he was giving blessings. They thought it was very cute, kind of a collage of artistic improvisation. Some people thought it was not so good; they thought that even the Karmapa was beginning to be corrupted by such things.

So we have that notion of wanting to change our world completely. When we get into a different tradition of spiritual discipline, we think we're getting into another cultural setup altogether. We would be highly confirmed in our expectations if the rest of the world, other than this world, walked on the ceiling instead of on the floor. That would be regarded as a fantastic thing to do. We would like to learn that particular martial art of sitting and walking, even sleeping, on the ceiling. Those things should be regarded as just dreams. There is a touch of cheap magic about them. Those expectations and attitudes are what is known as spiritual materialism. We think that somebody has a higher level of psychic ability and can tell us where our missing coin is. That approach is just a simple version of a comic book brought to life; nothing is happening there.

## THE CHARNEL GROUND

I am discussing this particular point because in the sadhana we talk about the whole mandala being created on the charnel ground, where birth, life, and death take place. It is a place to die and a place to be born, equally, at the same time—a wasteland of some kind. The closest thing to a charnel ground in this country is a hospital, a place where you give birth and where death occurs. But the charnel ground is much more than a hospital situation. It is simply our basic raw and rugged nature, the ground where we constantly puke and fall down, constantly make a mess. We are constantly dying, we are constantly giving birth. We are eating on the charnel ground, sitting on it,

sleeping on it, having nightmares on it. That basic ground which we use all the time is what is known as the charnel ground.

A traditional description for the charnel ground is an abandoned place where nobody would want to hang out. But it's so truthful. It does not try to hide its truth about reality. There are corpses lying all over the place: loose arms, loose hands, loose internal organs, and flowing hairs all over the place. Jackals and vultures are roaming around, each one devising its own scheme for getting the best pieces of the corpses, the next finger or toe. That is precisely what we are doing in this country and in this world.

When I say this country, I do not mean the USA alone, but the ordinary, usual world that we live in. Whether it is an Occidental or an Oriental situation, it's exactly the same thing. There is always a charnel ground of some kind where we try to catch each other's toes and bite each other's tails. This is called business mentality or competitiveness, friendship, or any of the many words that we use. This is the charnel ground, and that is why we don't like it. We want to get into a higher level of something or other, where we might be able to attach ourselves slightly differently. But unfortunately, according to the vajrayana teachings, we can't do that. According to basic Buddhism, in fact, we can't do it. Everything starts from the first level of the truth of suffering and the origin of suffering. And studying our particular state of mind—the five skandhas and the twelve nidanas and all the topics that we discuss as part of the basic teachings of hinayana and mahayana—is simply an attempt to understand the notion of charnel ground properly and fully.

Those who are known as bodhisattvas—the brave people who can actually tread on the path of enlightenment, who can dance with it—are also treading on the charnel ground. They realize that the world they are treading on and working in is filled with intense neurosis, intense chaos, intense ugliness and unpleasantness—all the time. Bodhisattvas are actually inspired to work with such chaos, to tidy up a little bit, without disrupting the generally inspiring qualities of those untidy areas. They just work with what is there.

This sadhana follows the traditional pattern of first laying the ground of the mandala. If you are going to build a castle or a house, you build it on a battlefield, which is a somewhat medieval concept. In some sense, you could say that people fight for their land, slaughter some of their enemies, and drive the rest away—which creates a charnel ground. Once you capture that

particular land, you say, “This is my property. I’m going to build my castle on it, my house on it.”

Creating the mandala of the sadhana is the same kind of experience. First there is need for a rugged, raw, and straightforward relationship with the world. You have to overcome a certain hesitation toward that particular relationship. The interesting point is that, having dealt with the rugged and raw situations, and having accepted them as part of your home ground to begin with, then some spark of sympathy or compassion could begin to take place. You are not in a hurry to leave such a place immediately. You would like to face the facts and realities of that particular world; you would like to go back and try to build on your home ground. So the chaos that takes place in our neurosis is the only home ground that we can build our mandala on.

If we are looking for something else, then we want to reject that ground and find a better, higher, more loving, less aggressive place. If we are looking for an ideal spot, we never find it. It is like shopping for an apartment; we never come up with an ideal place to live. We have to make modifications: sometimes we modify the situation, sometimes we begin to accept it. Our constant desire is to look for luxury, but such luxury doesn’t happen without our dealing properly with the rugged aspects of our life.

That seems to be the first message, which may be very grim. But it is also very exciting. Large areas of our life have been devoted to trying to avoid discovering our own experience. Now we have a chance to explore that large area which exists in our being, which we have been trying to avoid. We have further possibilities of discovering a good site on which to build our castle of enlightenment. When people are unable to accept this message, some people go too far: they commit suicide. They say, “This particular life is too hopeless. There is too much charnel ground. Hopefully the next life will be better.” But the same thing goes on in the next life, too, from that point of view. We inherit our previous charnel ground; it is doubled, tripled, a hundred times exaggerated.

Once I gave a talk at the Asia House in New York City, and the old ladies and old gentlemen there were very upset because I discussed the charnel ground. I also discussed the way people relate to art purely in terms of buying and selling it. I said that regarding Buddhist art purely from that point of view



is nothing but spiritual materialism. They were very upset; they didn't like the subject at all. It hit them very deeply.

Having discovered that the charnel ground is not unworkable, it actually becomes our working basis. It is the expression of our neurosis, which we have to work with. We begin to find that there is enormous strength and power behind it. We are not trying to get away from the charnel ground. We also don't build a Hilton Hotel in the middle of it. We don't shut the doors in order to seal off completely the smell of rot and the chaos outside, so that we could enjoy ourselves on the wall-to-wall carpeting. Building the mandala is actually part of the charnel ground principle.

## **THE ROCK OF SANITY AND FAITH**

The notion of the immense sanity that exists within the charnel ground is symbolized in the sadhana by rock. That monumental rock is a symbol of solid and sane ground. It is obsidian or flint, very sharp and accurate. It is a monument that we can build within the charnel ground, as part of this particular environment of neurosis. So there could be a monumental rock in the middle of the charnel ground. Why not? In this case, it is not an ego-centered monument, but a powerfully personal and fully awake aspect of that ground. And that monument is called faith, devotion, trust. We decide to work with our charnel ground rather than running away from it, because there is so much devotion and faith and trust in our own sanity already. Our sanity automatically becomes a rock.

This is similar to the concept of Saint Peter's Basilica. The idea was that the foundation of the church should be built on some kind of solid foundation of real faith, unshakable faith.<sup>27</sup> Unfortunately, that only happened in Rome and doesn't exist anymore. However, in this case, this rock is not in Rome; it is everywhere, in every one of our hearts.

A mahayanist analogy for this rock of sanity is that everyone possesses Buddha in themselves. There is a perfect, beautiful, well-preserved Buddha image in everyone's heart. That doesn't necessarily mean that, if you dissect yourself, you will find a little statue inside. Buddha in your heart is a symbol of faith: you could be immaculate and perfect, as perfect as Shakyamuni Buddha himself. That possibility already exists in you.

What is faith? Is it blind or real? In ordinary terms, the concept of prayer in the Christian tradition is an expression of faith. Once you have said a prayer, you have faith that something will happen to you or that something will actually be transmitted to somebody else, one way or another. It actually makes sense to you that what you want to happen will happen. And if you are in the wrong, you will be punished. You should take that also as a message. But in this case, faith has nothing to do with praying to somebody. Faith is a sense of dignity. Meister Eckhart talks about faith and prayer in the sense of awake—being present and mindful and aware of the situation. Faith is seeing things as they are—whatever they might be—precisely, directly, and without any hesitation. We have already experienced our neurosis faithfully and properly. We have no way of avoiding our neurosis. Acknowledging that is one step toward faith. We know how much pain is involved, how many problems there are already.

We are already well versed in our own problem of reality, the facts and figures and the truth of reality. That is a step toward faith.

Working with our own reality brings us the realization that it is workable: it is not as bad as we thought. In fact, it is highly possible to work with our reality, our neurosis. That brings a further level of faith, that we can actually be with ourselves and our neurosis, and we can experience openness. Faith is not so much connected with promises: “Everything’s going to be okay. Just have faith. You’re going to get a million dollars tomorrow. There’s nothing to worry about. Just have faith.”

You might be disappointed when you go to your mailbox tomorrow. That kind of faith is future oriented. It is not that you should have faith and therefore you’ll be given your reward. But faith is the conviction that something is actually happening this very moment, that something is taking place right now, therefore it is so. It is tonight, it is nighttime, the sun isn’t shining. It is winter; there is snow on the ground. We are indoors, we have electricity, and we have lights shining on us—very simple. That’s the kind of faith we’re talking about. It’s actual faith as opposed to promised faith, which is a different approach. Nothing is related with any reward.

That notion of reward reminds me of one of those scientific experiments that trains rats to eat at a certain time. If you program them in a certain way, they do what you want. The same thing is being done with monkeys and

dolphins. But spiritual discipline is not particularly a zoological practice. Buddha or God doesn't regard human beings as zoological specimens or as an interesting study program. People are real. We'll have to ask Jehovah about that, whether or not he agrees with us.

## **THE TRIANGLE OF COMPASSION**

Faith is very solid when it is based on the experience of now rather than on future proof. So the rock we are talking about is very solid and very basic—absolutely basic. On top of that rock sits a red triangle, which is a symbol of the feminine principle. The triangle represents the cervix, the gate of birth. It is a very popular tantric image. Once you have faith, then you can give birth—properly, freely, fantastically. You can actually give birth to everything. But if you were in the charnel ground without faith, you would be constantly confused; you would be completely sterile. You couldn't be a proper mother or father; you would be completely castrated. You would be just a freaky wind, blown by the incense of rotting bodies and the stench of jackals. You would be completely confused by the whole thing.

This triangle is just a triangle, a red triangle. It could be made of plastic or ruby. Compassion radiates constantly from this triangle, which is the notion of relaxation or openness. When you're willing to give birth to reality, you can't begin by fighting for your territory. You can't say, "This is my baby; that is your baby," and put stamps on their foreheads. You can't categorize which babies belong to whom. That doesn't necessarily mean that you have to abandon your baby at the hospital and take someone else's baby. That would be too literal. I am mentioning this just in case. I respect your sanity; nevertheless, there could be occasional people who are too literal.

In this case, the triangle represents a much more general and basic approach—a more sane approach. Such compassion is giving, opening. What has been happening so far in the charnel ground is a self-exploratory process, constant personal exploration. But beyond that, there is just giving, opening, extending yourself completely to the situation, to what is available around you, being fantastically exposed. That sense of openness can take place when you have faith and when you have developed dignity and a sense that you can

actually give birth to another world. Then you are ready to open up and perform your duty.

To end, I'd like to share the passage from the sadhana that we've been discussing this evening:

In the state of nonmeditation all phenomena subside in that great graveyard in which lie buried the complexities of samsara and nirvana. ☉ This is the universal ground of everything; it is the basis of freedom and also the basis of confusion. ☉ Within it, the vajra anger, the flame of death, burns fiercely and consumes the fabric of dualistic thoughts. ☉ The black river of death, the vajra passion, turbulent with massive waves, destroys the raft of conceptualization to the roaring sound of the immeasurable void. ☉ The great poisonous wind of the vajra ignorance blows with all-pervading energy like an autumn storm, and sweeps away all thoughts of possessiveness and self like a pile of dust. ☉

Whatever you see partakes of the nature of that wisdom which transcends past, present and future. ☉ From here came the buddhas of the past; here live the buddhas of the present; this is the primeval ground from which the buddhas of the future will come. ☉ This is the heavenly realm of the dakinis, the secret charnel ground of the blazing mountain. ☉ But you won't find ordinary earth and rocks here, even if you look for them. All the mountains are Buddha Lochana, who is the all-pervading wisdom of equanimity and unchanging stillness. ☉ This is the realm in which the distinctions between meditation and the postmeditation experience no longer occur. ☉ In this fearless state, even if the buddhas of the three times rise against you, you will remain in the indestructible vajra nature. The water which flows here is the Buddha Mamaki, who is the lake of the mirrorlike wisdom, clear and pure, as though the sky had melted. ☉ Here is the joyous river, which is the transcendent form of the eight kinds of consciousness. ☉ It flows into the great purity which goes beyond clean and unclean.

In various parts of the charnel ground can be seen the terrifying trees, which are the protecting mahakalis: Rangjung Gyalmo, Dorje Sogdrubma, Tüsölma and Ekajati. ☉ In those trees vultures, ravens, hawks and eagles perch, hungry for meat and thirsting for blood. They

represent the concept of good and evil. ☸ Until you stop clinging to this concept the mahakalis will continue to manifest as friendly goddesses and harmful demons. ☸ Various animals roam about: tigers, leopards, bears, jackals and dogs, all howling and jumping up and down excitedly. ☸ These represent the different kinds of perception. ☸ Here too are the chötens of the awakened state of mind, where the great yogis live. ☸ They represent the supernormal powers which need not be sought. ☸

In the middle of this heavenly realm is a huge rock mountain, which arose from the corpse of the rudra of ego. ☸ It is triangular in shape and it pierces the skies. ☸ It is dignified and awe-inspiring and radiates the blue light of Vajrasattva. ☸ On top of this mountain is the red triangle which can accommodate all apparent phenomena and the whole of existence. This is the primeval ground where the question of samsara and nirvana does not arise. ☸ It is the beginning and the end of everything. ☸ The triangle radiates the blazing red light of inner warmth and compassion. Above the triangle is a beautiful flower, a hundred-petaled lotus in full bloom, exuding a delicate scent. ☸ It is the lotus of discriminating-wisdom.

## DISCUSSION

### **Allowing the energy of crazy wisdom to enter you.**

*Question:* In terms of opening up to perform our duty, as you said, did you mean to open and allow the enlightened energy to come through us as the action of a bodhisattva?

*Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche:* I'm talking about something more than purely being a bodhisattva. You allow the energy of crazy wisdom to come inside you.

*Q:* So it's not obligatory as much as it is a natural sort of evolutionary—

*CTR:* Well, it is obligatory, in some sense, because you have to push yourself. You might have some hesitations about it. Nothing will arise easily; there has to be some kind of effort. That's where faith comes in: your faith has to be a rock. It couldn't just be cotton wool or papiermâché in the shape

of a rock. It has to be a real rock, and some real effort has to be put in. Good luck.

### **Hesitation and faith.**

*Q:* In terms of faith and hesitation, do you have to be able to get past hesitation before faith happens? I sort of got that impression.

*CTR:* Well, that would be very difficult to do.

*Q:* So there's some sense of working with the hesitation as part of the faith, or something?

*CTR:* Yes. Otherwise, you'll never get anywhere. Hesitation *is* faith.

You have faith in hesitation. If you have faith in something, you can work with it. You could even have faith in drinking a cup of tea, or you could drink vodka in the same way.

### **Relationship of faith and discipline.**

*Q:* Rinpoche, what about the question of discipline and faith? How are they integrated?

*CTR:* Faith is discipline. You can't have faith if you don't have discipline. Discipline is trying to work with the situation that you have faithfully worked out. Then you have faith. They go hand in hand, needless to say.

*Q:* Does that give birth to anything? In that process of discipline, is there any sense of the birth of the situation taking place as a result of those two things coming together?

*CTR:* I hope so, sir. You'd better—we'd better—do it, whatever the case.

### **Relationship of the charnel ground to crazy wisdom.**

*Q:* Is the charnel ground crazy wisdom?

*CTR:* It's just charnel ground. We can't dress up our charnel ground; it's simply charnel ground. The charnel ground has wisdom and craziness at the same time, but I wouldn't say that the charnel ground *is* crazy wisdom, particularly. There's a lot of wisdom and a lot of craziness going on there.

## **Crazy wisdom in relation to logic and mathematics.**

*Q:* Earlier, when you were talking about crazy wisdom, I was thinking about science and mathematics and logic, and they seemed poles apart. But when you talked about the Coke bottle on the shrine, I thought maybe they could come together. I wonder if there is room, if a coming together of crazy wisdom and logic is possible.

*CTR:* Absolutely. Crazy wisdom is very logical, very accommodating, in a very crazy way—absolutely. That’s good thinking, actually.

## **Confusion and sanity in the charnel ground as grandmother’s soup.**

*Q:* Would it be dualistic to regard some things in the charnel ground as confused and others as not confused? You don’t particularly say, “This is confused and that is not confused.”

*CTR:* Everything is both. Grandmother’s soup. The whole thing is a big soup. It’s like the soup that we usually brew on New Year’s Eve.<sup>4</sup> Grandmother’s soup is supposed to have nine ingredients, which represent everything you could throw in: sweet and sour, bones and fats and vegetables—everything put together.

## **Relationship of faith and doubt.**

*Q:* Rinpoche, with the exception of a few vivid experiences, like falling into the toilet, I find that doubt has a more rocklike quality than experience does. I’m wondering if you would talk about doubt in relationship to faith.

*CTR:* Doubt is nonyielding, nongiving. What we are talking about is much more than purely intellectual doubt. Doubt has emotional attachment as well, which is not wanting to give, not wanting to open or expand. You feel that you are surrounded by the enemy. Faith is completely the opposite: everybody is your friend, including your enemy. On the other hand, you might become somewhat too love-and-lighty, which could also be problematic. Faith is not love-and-lighty. It can only be achieved through critical judgment of the situation. That is the essence of faith: you are critical, you are not conned, particularly. On the other hand, you are not particularly put off by your criticalness. There is workability and openness within it. It’s like driving on a

highway: you have to drive on the highway the way it is. You can't hold a grudge against the people who built each curve. You have to go along with it, but you still have doubt about the problems of that particular road.

### **The recipe for the charnel ground.**

*Q:* I'm curious and a little confused about the recipe of the charnel ground—the soup that you mentioned. Is it a metaphor for samsara? Are the ingredients prefabricated? Do we just stumble on them, or do we create—

*CTR:* In some sense we create it, and in some sense it is basic shit; it's a mixture of both. There are little highlights coming up, which are sane and pure; there are also little pollutions coming up. That is actually the perfect picture of the world we're living in. There is a lot of sanity and there is a lot of chaos, at the same time. It's a huge soup, an ecological mess, I would say.

### **The Buddhist approach to faith and prayer.**

*Q:* In the Christian sense of faith, you have faith that maybe your prayer will be answered. But it seems that in the Buddhist tradition, if you pray, you just have faith that you're praying. Is there a change in that as you get into vajrayana? Does faith become something different, more powerful?

*CTR:* I think that the Buddhist approach to faith, in terms of the help that you get out of having faith, is that you could help yourself, rather than being helped. You don't have to be crucified for the sake of whatever it may be—plum juice or any kind of colorful image. You don't sacrifice yourself for the sake of orange juice, but you develop your own discipline, your own reality. You learn that you can help yourself—completely. That's the idea, because Buddhism is not particularly a centralized philosophy, a pyramid approach. One of the symbols for Buddhism is a wheel. So it's an eternally circular approach, rather than a pyramid approach. So the idea is that faith is meant to help you. It recirculates things. What you put out goes around; it goes around and then it comes back to you.

### **Faith and making friends with yourself.**



*Q:* Rinpoche, is faith more than just making friends with yourself? Is it more comprehensive than that? Is it making friends with the whole situation as well?

*CTR:* It is much more than making friends with yourself. It's having the solid ground of real appreciation of things as they are: that fire burns, that water flows. It's that kind of real experience of how things work.

### **Fear of sanity.**

*Q:* You talked earlier about people being frightened of experiencing their emotions, because they are afraid of being overwhelmed. And I was wondering if the fear of complete sanity is the fear of the intensity of that sanity, a fear of being overwhelmed by it.

*CTR:* I think that's a problem we have with faith, because of too much hanging onto the sense of feedback and reward.

*Q:* I was wondering if people hesitate to allow themselves to be completely sane because that situation would be extremely intense. As with emotions, they might feel that their sanity would overwhelm them completely. Why is there that feeling of being overwhelmed?

*CTR:* In some sense, it is because you would like to stay in your nest. You don't want to be put on the spot, particularly. You would like to indulge in your own particular nest. You don't want to step outside without an overcoat, in just your shirtsleeves on a winter morning, which would be much more challenging. Then your personality would come through, your relationship to the coldness of it.

*Q:* So there's a cowardliness?

*CTR:* Yes, there has to be that.

*Q:* How do you become brave?

*CTR and Q [in unison]:* You just do it.

## EIGHT

# *The Crazy-Wisdom Body of All the Buddhas*

## DEVOTION AND BLESSINGS

*Adhishthana...means the radiation that takes place between the opening of the student's mind to the teacher and the teachings, and the opening of the teacher's mind to the student. Between those two openings, experience becomes not only naked but radiant. The two burn each other completely. The teacher begins to understand the student's desire, his devotion. The student begins to feel the teacher's desire and openness.*

BEFORE WE DISCUSS the visual structure of the mandala in detail, I would like to talk further about the implications behind that setup. On the lotus seat in the center of the mandala sits the crazy-wisdom body of all the buddhas of the past, present, and future. He is the embodiment of basic sanity who actually controls and directs the universe, who controls all apparent phenomena and the whole of existence. That figure is connected with the sense of devotion. It's somebody's rough guess, so to speak, about enlightenment, basic sanity, surrendering, and openness—all that is embodied in this central figure.

However, this figure, this symbol, is not regarded as unreasonably divine or sacred. There is no solidity here in the notion of divinity and sacredness. On a superficial level, the notion of divinity is that it shouldn't be tampered with or touched by dirty hands. That isn't the point here. Sanity and devotion both exist within us. Along with our experience of faith and trust, our sanity and serenity are still very intact.

Something that exists within us and something that exists outside of us are combined together in this figure.

## **MÖGÜ: THE EXPRESSION OF DEVOTION**

### ***Möpa: Admiration and Longing***

There are several levels of devotion. The Tibetan term for devotion is *mögü*, which is divided into two parts. The first one is *möpa*, which means “admiration” or “longing”; we will talk about *güpa* a little later.

### **Admiration as spiritual materialism.**

Such admiration could be purely looking for an object of worship, a fanclub approach. We would like to worship a hero who possesses a great deal of grace, a great deal of talent. But often we find that looking at an art object or listening to a composition produced by a master artist only makes us jealous and depressed. We say to ourselves, “How come I can’t do those things? I would like to be one of those people who can produce fantastic works of art.” We have a sense of pain and longing because we are trying to compete with somebody who has actually accomplished tremendous discipline. We feel lonesome because we are unable to execute such a beautiful, brilliant work of art. We feel inadequate and completely stupid, which only makes us depressed.

At the other extreme, all these fantastic things seem like an insult to us. We become tremendously resentful about anything presented to us that is beautiful. We would like to steal works of art from museums; we would even like to burn down the museums themselves. We might feel like going to those extremes, or we might just feel like insulting those people who have actually achieved something—who are in a position to achieve something or who have some appreciation of art. We get completely pissed off at those people.

Another approach is that we feel an immense distance between works of art and our own ability; we feel that those works of art are fine, but they have nothing to do with us. If we want to relax, we would like to put on a record. If we’re rich enough, we would like to buy such-and-such painting, or if we’re

not all that rich, we might be able to buy a postcard from a museum. But that painting or that music has nothing to do with us. We're completely cut off. Our psychological blockage makes us feel humble and resentful and inadequate. It's too painful to look into, so we decide just to cut it off completely.

Sometimes, admiring something means that you want to suck it in. And sometimes admiration is a sense of awe and fear; we don't even want to touch the stuff. Our mind is completely closed off to the possibility of appreciation.

So there are a number of neurotic styles of relating to objects of our admiration based on passion, aggression, and ignorance or indifference. In general, we relate to our guru in the same three neurotic styles. If we meet a crazy-wisdom person—if we could even dare to discuss such a topic at this point—if we even touch on the verge of the possibility of that meeting, we react with passion, aggression, or indifference. We may be completely terrified and threatened, which is an expression of aggression. We don't want to have anything to do with that person—not at all. Or else we would like to suck and chew and gnaw and swallow and digest the guru completely, so that he or she becomes a part of us. Then there would be nobody to threaten us from the outside.

A third possibility of relating with a crazy-wisdom person is to regard that person as purely an icon. We hang his or her picture on the wall; we worship them. We think that if we are on the good side of such a great person and such great concepts, it will be safe for us. We make them into an altarpiece.

Many people in this country have plastered their walls with all kinds of guys and girls: Indonesians, Japanese, Inuit, Native Americans,<sup>28</sup> or whatever you have. Their walls are completely covered with heroes, pinups, personalities. Admiration is very dangerous from that point of view. Here, you want to suck in the object of your admiration. You want to pour your passionate maple syrup, your passionate honey, all over the place until you make the whole thing completely gooey. Then you can eat it up completely. That trip seems to be slightly outdated these days, but it is still going on. It is purely a trip and it is based on spiritual materialism, which this sadhana is meant to cut through. But at the same time you would like to worship. Before you cut through, you want to make sure that you will be on the right side of such people. When you confront Dorje Trolö or Karma Pakshi in person, you

would like them to be on your side, to fit your particular perspective. If they happen to show up, you could tell them, “Look! There’s a painting of you, an altar I created for you. I’m on your side, see? Don’t destroy my ego. I’m on your side.”

This approach to devotion is largely based on spiritual materialism: we would like to win those people over. This approach is somewhat theistic, even somewhat Christian. The idea is like having God on our side. As long as we have a Bible and a cross, and quite possibly a sword, we could place the cross on our chest and carry the Bible in one hand and the sword in the other. We are entitled to destroy any nonbelievers completely. We could kill our enemies, who are regarded as nonbelievers: they are anti-God, nonbelievers in the Bible.

Admiration could also become somewhat secularized. You could worship only the highest principles, which are embodied in a certain person of immense accomplishment, immense understanding of reality, and immense richness. You regard the object of your worship as king. As long as you are on the right side of Don Corleone, everything’s okay. Otherwise you might be shot down or screwed or ripped off in your business ventures, or whatever the consequences might be. So much for admiration!

When we say, “I admire you so much,” your hero might answer, “Yeah? Why? What is it all about? Where does your admiration come from? What do you do with it? Do you just want to tell me that? Or maybe you would like to do something embarrassing about the whole thing.”

Admiration as celebration and devotion. The examples of admiration are somewhat negative from that point of view, but at the same time it can be very positive. Admiring something is not necessarily wanting to be sucked in or wanting to be eaten up or wanting to be part of that particular gang, part of that particular army. Admiration can also inspire a sense of heroism and tremendous dignity. Admiring someone doesn’t have to mean competing with that person; you could simply share their immense vision. That could be a glorious, fantastic celebration—with fireworks. Such an attitude can only exist when you have no personal investment in the “cause.” Your role is simply to develop complete devotion so that you have no personal investment. You are no longer expecting a certain cut of the deal. Absolutely not! Instead, you

really have a complete deal, as a matter of fact. You become part of a fantastic crescendo.

That kind of admiration is heroism in the true sense because you don't regard the whole situation purely as a business deal. You simply regard the whole thing as a journey, and you are not expecting any kind of profit from that journey. So your admiration is complete and clear.

The only analogy I can come up with for this positive sense of admiration is that of a person who can breathe the mountain air without any sinus problems. You can breathe the cool, fresh mountain air completely. You can say, "Ahhh! Look at the mountains." You feel like you are part of the mountains, part of the highlands. That is admiration: it is some kind of sharing. You don't just go back to your bedroom for your duffel jacket, in case you catch cold. "This mountain air is fantastic, but suspicious." You don't do that; you simply breathe your mountain air, which is a source of strength and life. It's fantastic!

### ***Güpa: Absence of Arrogance***

The second kind of devotion is güpa, which literally means "absence of arrogance." It goes along with what we've already discussed. If you have a real sense of longing and admiration, that automatically means that absence of arrogance as well.

### **Levels of arrogance.**

There are several levels of arrogance. Sometimes there's a lot of passion, too much wantingness. You so want to be the object of someone's passion that you cease to see the rest of your world properly. You're so passionately involved with your own arrogance, your own passion. Even in relating with a guru, you are primarily involved with your own passion. Such sensual, passionate problems are created around you, which is the definition of what we call a trip. Tripping out on something is a mixture of passion and arrogance.

I had a monumental experience of that when I visited Esalen a few months ago. It was a fantastic demonstration of passion and arrogance. Everybody was appreciating the ocean, the sunset, and the sunrise. Everybody was

holding onto each other, shoulder to shoulder, arm in arm. Everybody was drunk with the beauty of whatever it might be. It's an unbelievable place! It's such a decadent place that it even ceases to be decadent; it becomes a horrifying world. Can you imagine such a thing? Even corpses would get up and put on their makeup and begin to dance and make love to you. It's very deadly, but fantastically sensuous. It's a great place—more than you can imagine. I didn't realize that the sunset means all that much to people. It's some kind of demonstration of visual orgasm: everybody loves to watch. And the sunrise is giving birth to your own personal child on the spot. Fantastic place, but let's forget about that place!

There are such moments of neurosis all over the place. Compared to Esalen, even Disneyland is a world of enlightenment. It's just fine. You go and see those things, and it's fine. It's supposed to be some kind of statement of American existence, and Mr. Disney is the perfect analogy of the American businessman. There are all kinds of trips at Disneyland, but it's a very kind and very enlightened place compared with Esalen. There is a lot of sanity there compared with the other place.

So in connection with the notion of the absence of arrogance, it is a question of how much we could indulge ourselves in our collections of information, in all those techniques and stories and quotations and little words of wisdom—how much we could indulge in those things for our own benefit. We could even beat our old teacher to death and get our revenge by saying, “When you used to be my teacher, you treated me badly. You gave me a hard time. But now it's my turn to give you a hard time.” That seems to be the wrong end of the stick, that immense arrogance.

Absence of arrogance: offering your neurosis as a gift. Absence of arrogance is a sense of being less resentful about the world in general, as well as our relationship to our own particular world—our bank, our business deals, our money situation, our landlord, our landlady. We have to make a relationship with all those situations, and that provides us with a way of reducing our arrogance.

Particularly with the notion of guru at the crazy-wisdom level, absence of arrogance is very much required—absolutely so. You have to give in on the spot: unless you are without arrogance, you are not accepted as a good student. You might have your pride in your poetry, your woodcarving, your

photography. You might have all kinds of talents, but you can't regard them as a passport to sanity. In fact, when you present them, they are regarded as neurotic garbage. Your visa might be rejected several times if you present your little thingies which hang out and which you would like to use as convenient credentials for your application. You might dress them up and write nice little reports about what you have done with them, but that is only arrogance dressed up as something presentable. It is amateurism presented as something professional. You could write a whole book about the fantastic material that has promoted your spiritual growth: you had fights with your mother for twenty years and how much you have learned from that. You could write a whole essay, a whole book about it. You could give it to your crazy-wisdom guru as an application for entering into vajrayana discipline.

We can imagine what you would experience if you approached the crazy-wisdom person with such little things dressed up as professional credentials. Quite possibly you would be beheaded on the spot—if he's even willing to do that. That would be a sign of acceptance, but he might not even do that; he might just give you a big pain on your neck. Your abilities as a great mathematician (you understand the truth, the real truth of mathematics), your genius as a poet (you understand the truth of that), your skill as a carpenter or a cook or a crook—all of those credentials are regarded as phony. A crazy-wisdom person would not accept such things at all. It is out of the question altogether. It is not that the crazy-wisdom person is involved with morality or with how respectable you are in society; it's that you are bending the truth in some sense.

On the other hand, if you simply offer your neurosis as a gift or as an opening gesture, that's fine. There is nothing wrong with that. But if you begin to dress up your neurosis and make it into a course description, as if you have been invited to teach in a university, that stinks. That is what usually happens in universities: you make up your own particular thing, your particular course, out of what you've learned or out of your own neurosis. You put it in technical terms; you try to dress it up and make it respectable, make it seemingly workable. But the whole thing says, "I would like to present this particular pile of shit to my students." You could call it a turd. Aren't we strange people? We have so many good ideas, such brilliant ideas, but we are basically so dumb, so naive at the same time.



### ***Joining Möpa and Güpa***

So möpa and güpa—longing and absence of ego—put together create a very constructive foundation for practice. Experiencing möpa, or a sense of longing and heroism, and güpa, or absence of ego-clinging to our own case history, puts us in a completely naked situation, a completely real situation, properly, fully, and thoroughly. Out of that we get some glimpse of crazy-wisdom possibilities. That twofold devotion process is regarded as an eye-opening operation. First, the tissue of our eyes is sliced open, and then whatever was the obstacle in our retina is removed. Finally, we can see the vivid brilliance of things, which is real seeing.

## **BLESSINGS**

### ***Adhishthana***

I'm sorry to bore you with more categories, but there are two types of blessings that come with that experience. The Sanskrit term for blessing is *adhishthana*, which in Tibetan is *chinlap*. It is not quite the same as the Christian idea of grace. *Adhishthana* literally means that you're overwhelmed by radiation. You begin to realize that your experience has become so radiant that you can't help not relating with it completely. You are utterly opened up. Otherwise, you would just be scorched, baked. It sounds like a microwave oven, doesn't it?

### **Seeking blessings as spiritual materialism.**

Usually when we use the term *blessing*, we actually have no idea what we are saying. A lot of hippies who have been to India come back saying, "I've got blessings from Mr. A, Mr. B, Mr. C, Mr. D, and Mr. E." It becomes a credential. Well, that's good. You got a blessing from all those people. That's fantastic! But rather than actually receiving blessings, those people seem to be hung up on their experience. That is very disappointing. It's as if you woke up in the morning and said to your friend, "I went to a party and had so much to drink." But when you check back with the people who gave the party, you discover that you just drank water. Somehow or other you have managed to

get a hangover. That's your problem: that you get hung over from drinking water. That means that nothing actually happened when you were there, but something happened when you woke up the next day.

Nothing really happens to all those people who go to India looking for blessings—nothing, not a little spot. When they come back, they're just as resilient, just as crazy, just as neurotic, and just as spiritually materialistic as they were before they left. But something happens when they leave. They fly over the Indian continent, and as soon as they land in this country, they're very "high." What happened to them? Is that adhishtana, blessing? If that's what it is, they don't even have to go to India. They could get their blessings from being with their parents or from going to school. Lots of people get high from having a difficult relationship with their parents or with their school. People get spaced out very easily. They don't need any blessings to get spaced out—that's what I'm trying to say. You might find this a slightly obnoxious remark, yes indeed. Nevertheless, it's true. It's not me making an obnoxious remark. Things are obnoxious from that point of view, which is very maddening, absolutely maddening. Who's kidding whom? That is the big problem.

That is the heart of spiritual materialism: we would like to cover the whole area completely. When somebody goes to India or drops out of school—which is saying the same thing at this point—when they leave the country, it makes no difference that they meet great people, because they are not at all equipped to understand them. It's colorful; getting out of school is also colorful. And when you awaken from that you are completely blissed out, so-called. That is very strange. The immense vajrayana teachings are completely descending on us all the time, instigating all these freakouts and rejections of sanity—I doubt it. Where is the blessing? Where is grace, even? Nowhere, absolutely nowhere. It's very sad, actually. It's worth laughing about.

### **Genuine adhishtana: openness between teacher and student.**

That is precisely what we call spiritual materialism. The purpose of this sadhana is to overcome such deceptions. Adhishtana, or chinlap, means the radiation that takes place between the opening of the student's mind to the teacher and the teachings, and the opening of the teacher's mind to the student. Between those two openings, experience becomes not only naked but

radiant. The two burn each other completely. The teacher begins to understand the student's desire, his devotion. The student begins to feel the teacher's desire and openness.

What we are talking about here is that you can't expect to become pregnant unless you actually make love. You can't actually receive blessings unless you are open to the guru, and the guru is open to you. That is the basic point. We don't believe in the virgin birth, whether it is called an accident or whether there is a scientific whatever-it-may-be. It's still questionable. We don't believe that anybody can become pregnant in that way. But real radiation and real openness can take place. When that begins to happen, there's a sense of something happening properly to us. That is the first level of *adhishtana*.

### ***Yeshe Phowa***

The second level of *adhishtana* is what is known as the transference of *jnana*, or *yeshe phowa* in Tibetan. *Yeshe* means "wisdom," and *phowa* means "transference." So *yeshe phowa* is the "transference of wisdom" into our system. Once some kind of openness has actually taken place, then something begins to be transmitted to us, properly and fully.

In the *sadhana* this is the level of supplication. We are appreciating a particular aspect of Dorje Trolö Karma Pakshi,<sup>29</sup> and we are appreciating that particular aspect coming to us. We are beginning to acknowledge those things properly. Although our situation is not so good, we are not particularly trying to reject it. We are actually pleased, actually glad to see what's happening. So there is a possibility of workability. Otherwise, if nothing were workable, true devotion and compassion could not come together.

I'd like to end by quoting several stanzas from the supplication in the *sadhana* that relate to our discussion of devotion here:

O Karmapa, lord and knower of the three times, ཨོཾ

O Padmakara, father and protector of all beings, ཨོཾ

You transcend all coming and going. ཨོཾ

Understanding this, I call upon you— ཨོཾ

Give thought to your only child. ཨོཾ

I am a credulous and helpless animal ॐ  
Who has been fooled by the mirage of duality. ॐ  
I have been fool enough to think that I possess my own projections,  
ॐ  
So now you, my father, are my only refuge; ॐ  
You alone can grasp the buddha state. ॐ  
The glorious copper-colored mountain is within my heart. ॐ  
Is not this pure and all-pervading naked mind your dwelling place?  
ॐ  
Although I live in the slime and muck of the dark age, ॐ  
I still aspire to see it. ॐ  
Although I stumble in the thick, black fog of materialism, ॐ  
I still aspire to see it. ॐ  
The joy of spontaneous awareness, which is with me all the time,  
ॐ  
Is not this your smiling face, O Karma Padmakara? ॐ  
Although I live in the slime and muck of the dark age, ॐ  
I still aspire to see it. ॐ  
Although I stumble in the thick, black fog of materialism, ॐ  
I still aspire to see it. ॐ  
At glorious Taktsang, in the cave ॐ  
Which can accommodate everything, ॐ  
Samsara and nirvana both ॐ  
The heretics and bandits of hope and fear ॐ  
Are subdued and all experiences ॐ  
Are transformed into crazy wisdom. ॐ  
Is not this your doing, O Dorje Trolö? ॐ  
Although I live in the slime and muck of the dark age, ॐ  
I still aspire to see your face. ॐ  
Although I stumble in the thick, black fog of materialism, ॐ  
I still aspire to see your face. ॐ

The corpse, bloated with the eight worldly concerns, ཨུ  
Is cut into pieces by the knife of detachment ཨུ  
And served up as the feast of the great bliss. ཨུ  
Is not this your doing, O Karma Pakshi? ཨུ  
Although I live in the slime and muck of the dark age, ཨུ  
I still aspire to see your face ཨུ  
Although I stumble in the thick, black fog of materialism, ཨུ  
I still aspire to see your face. ཨུ

## DISCUSSION

### **Practices like *asanas* and vegetarianism as spiritual materialism.**

*Question:* Rinpoche, do you think doing asanas and purifications and being a vegetarian and eating organic food is all part of spiritual materialism?

*Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche:* Yes.

### **Spiritual arrogance and labeling spiritual practices as spiritual materialism.**

*Q:* I wonder if you could explain exactly what arrogance is?

*CTR:* Maybe you should tell me. What is your rough guess?

*Q:* Territorial pride.

*CTR:* Yes, sure, as well as chauvinistic tendencies and some notion of not accepting your own lameness. You don't want to acknowledge that you are lame and helpless. Because you are arrogant, you think you don't need help from anybody else. You never ask for any kind of sympathy or any kind of genuine communication. That's when devotion comes in. When somebody is willing to help you, you won't buy their sympathy. You regard it as an insult rather than as an act of compassion. You say, "I don't need your help, I'm okay." If you are falling down on the icy road and somebody tries to catch you, you say, "Please don't catch me. Get out of my way. I don't want

anything.” You say that even though falling down is not a reflection on yourself but some unavoidable, disastrous thing happening to you.

*Q:* Getting back to the question of arrogance, you said to the lady who asked about asanas and purifications, “That’s spiritual materialism.” But it seems to me that spiritual materialism is how you do a practice rather than the practice itself. It seems to me that there’s a tendency for everything that’s not strictly part of this particular scene to get a big *SM* stamped on it.

*CTR:* *SM*—you mean spiritual materialism? Well, I think what we’re trying to do here is to point out that potential spiritual materialism exists in us. We’re constantly trying to expose it. Another possibility is to do asanas to improve your body, or to eat healthy food, whatever that might be, to build a great body, in which case there is not even any hint of any spiritual possibilities. That whole approach seems to be based not on any conscious spiritual materialism but on ignorance. Within such ignorance there is no such thing as a problem of spiritual materialism at all.

I have seen a lot of people in Jackson, Wyoming, and in Snowmass and Aspen who are older but still skiing and trying to look good on the ski hill. There are older and younger people who are trying to be extraordinarily hip. They are all extraordinarily arrogant and unapproachable. They don’t want to be approached with any kind of challenge to their approach. But still, you know, they’re trying their best. The only thing they talk about at dinner parties is how much inheritance they’re going to get.

*Q:* Might it not be useful to illustrate spiritual materialism with examples of how the practices that we’re into can be twisted?

*CTR:* I think it’s very hard not to see that; I think it would be spotted. There is so much prajna around that everybody keeps a keen eye on everyone else, so you can’t actually get away with twisting anything.

*Q:* I hope so.

## **Heroism.**

*Q:* I’m a little confused about your use of the term *heroism*. Sometimes it seems like it has a very negative connotation, that it is associated with arrogance or pride. Other times it seems to be a very positive thing, something like courage or fearlessness.

*CTR*: It's both. Basically, heroism is a positive word as I use it. It's connected with a sense of dignity and straightforwardness and not being apologetic. But obviously it has its own negative tendencies as well. If you could disconnect the word from any kind of philosophical or sociological jargon, heroism is the same as devotion. It's very positive. It is what the bodhisattva path is made out of. A bodhisattva is simply someone who is proud and diligent enough to follow the path of enlightenment. The paramita practices of generosity, discipline, and so forth are based on that sense of heroism. I'm not saying that bodhisattvas would like to make themselves into heroes, into movie stars. But they are inspired by something. It's like taking pride in your nation, in your world. In this country, everybody seems to have lost that notion of heroism. Maybe too much has been said; maybe there's too much happening; maybe the country is too big. Everybody has lost their American heroism, their American pride. Only a few awkward, uptight people hold onto that particular truth. It is embarrassing and it's terrible, in some sense, but I suppose that's how the wind blows, how the egg boils.

### **Theistic and nontheistic supplication.**

*Q*: I'm trying to understand the difference between the nontheistic approach and the theistic approach. In the part of the sadhana we are studying tonight, there seems to be a sense of calling to something outside of oneself, and I didn't think that is what we're doing.

*CTR*: Well, it seems to be saying the same thing. We're not particularly trying to call on something outside of ourselves. There's a very interesting line in the movie *The Ruling Class*. Someone asks the hero, "Why do you think you are God?" And he answers, "Because when I pray, I hear myself talking to myself." That is very cheap logic, but it is precisely what you are doing. When you talk to yourself, you hear yourself. Even though you are supposedly talking to somebody else, you still hear yourself talking to yourself.

Another thing about the sadhana is that all kinds of demands are being made on you, on your own particular understanding. You are not particularly asking forgiveness for committing a gigantic sin. That's the whole approach of Christianity, as opposed to other theistic religions like Hinduism or Islam or Zoroastrianism or whatever. In the Judeo-Christian tradition there's a lot of

emphasis on guilt. In the case of the sadhana, however, the commitment between your inspiration, or your higher being, and you is made purely arbitrarily, even bypassing Christ.

You are talking to something bigger than an intermediary. That is the interesting point: there's no particular lead to follow. You are not actually asking to be forgiven, that you have been a bad boy or a bad girl. You don't need to beg, "Please forgive me. From now on I'm going to be good." Instead, everything is pure demand: you are just talking to yourself, but that has a lot of magic to it at the same time. You are not just naively talking to yourself, thinking that one of these days you are going to wake up as a buddha, but you are talking to your fundamental intelligence and to the fundamental electricity that exists within you, which is called magic.

Magic comes from nowhere. It just exists within us and outside of us as well. It has nothing to do with any gift of God. We just wake up. It's like the magic of electricity, which just comes along. When we get a shock from a thunderbolt, we just get it on the spot. That's the kind of magic we're talking about. We're not talking about invoking anybody or being afraid of anybody. We just do it on the spot. This is starting to get very complicated, but it's actually very simple.

### **Theistic and nontheistic faith.**

*Q:* You've spoken a lot about faith. You seem to have described the theistic approach to faith as some sort of future orientation, the idea of some future reward. Would it be correct to say that we're just trying to have faith in the present moment?

*CTR:* Yes—precisely, absolutely. We're not asking for a good harvest or inviting the next messiah. We don't even care about that; we just sit and meditate.

*Q:* Would it be possible just to have faith in the present moment and also have a theistic approach?

*CTR:* It doesn't sound like it. Somehow that doesn't work. You see, then you would have an investment in both camps. It would be like somebody who could actually let go by himself, but instead asks somebody else to help him let go. It is like having two homes. It's evident that situations reflect your



attitude and automatically bounce back on you. So the situation demands you to make up your mind, in some sense. Think about that. Take it home.

**How faith and devotion together avoid arrogance.**

*Q:* Am I right to think that devotion to an external person has to go along with faith in order to avoid arrogance?

*CTR:* In this case, an external person is somebody you can actually relate with personally. It's not an imaginary person. In that case, yes.

## NINE

# *Surrendering*

*The giving process is preparing enough room, enough space so that what is known as enlightenment, the awakened state of mind, can be felt. And that can't take place if the receiver is still clinging to conditions and to reference points and to a business mentality. We have to have an absence of business mentality; otherwise, the awakened state cannot take place. In other words, when we begin to receive the teachings, nobody is receiving them. The teachings become part of us, part of our basic being.*

IN THIS CHAPTER we are going to talk about the offering section in the sadhana, which reads:

To the crazy-wisdom form of the buddhas of the three times, ཨུམ་  
The unified mandala of all the siddhas, Dorje Trolö Karma Pakshi,  
ཨུམ་  
I make this supplication. ཨུམ་  
Desire, hatred and other hindrances are self-liberated. ཨུམ་  
To the boundless rainbow body of wisdom Padmakara Karma  
Pakshi, ཨུམ་  
The heruka who, untouched by concepts, pervades all existence, I  
make this supplication. ཨུམ་  
Whatever is seen with the eyes is vividly unreal in emptiness, yet  
there is still form: ཨུམ་  
This is the true image of Tüsum Khyenpa, whom now I supplicate.  
ཨུམ་

Whatever is heard with the ears is the echo of emptiness, yet real:  
ॐ

It is the clear and distinct utterance of Mikyö Dorje, whom now I  
supplicate. ॐ

Good and bad, happy and sad, all thoughts vanish into emptiness  
like the imprint of a bird in the sky: ॐ

This is the vivid mind of Rangjung Dorje, whom now I supplicate.  
ॐ

The animate and the inanimate are the mandala of the glorious  
mahasiddha, which no one can change; ॐ

It always remains impressive and colorful. This mandala now I  
supplicate. ॐ

The hope of attaining buddhahood and the fear of continuing to  
wander in samsara, ॐ

Doubt that wisdom exists within one and other dualistic thoughts—  
all these are my feast offering. ॐ

Food, wealth, companionship, fame and sensual attachments— ॐ

All these I offer for the elaborate arrangement of the mandala. ॐ

Wantingness, desire and passion I offer as the great ocean of blood  
which comes from the killing of samsara. ॐ

Thoughts of anger and hatred I offer as the amrita which  
intoxicates extreme beliefs and renders them inoperative. ॐ

All that arises within—wandering thoughts, carelessness and all  
that is subject to ignorance— ॐ

I offer as the great mountain of tormas ornamented with the eight  
kinds of consciousness. ॐ

Whatever arises is merely the play of the mind. ॐ

All this I offer, filling the whole universe. ॐ

I offer knowing that giver and receiver are one; ॐ

I offer without expecting anything in return and without hope of  
gaining merit; ॐ

I make these offerings with transcendental generosity in the  
mahamudra. ॐ

Now that I have made these offerings, please grant your blessings  
so that my mind may be one with the dharma. ཨོཾ

Grant your blessings so that dharma may progress along the path.  
ཨོཾ

Grant your blessings so that the path may clarify confusion. ཨོཾ

Grant your blessings so that confusion may dawn as wisdom.<sup>30</sup> ཨོཾ

The understanding of devotion brings a further sense of what is appropriate action in connection with devotion. Longingness, *möpa*, and the absence of arrogance, *güpa*, begin to provide a general background of devotion in which we could operate quite freely. The particular activity connected with the expression of devotion is known as offering or surrendering. Having developed devotion, having the inspiration to open, you are no longer simply paying lip service; at this point you begin to put your devotion into action.

## THE MOTIVATION FOR GIVING

### *The Motivation of Ordinary Persons*

Surrendering raises a question: do we know how to give? Sometimes we think we know, and sometimes we wonder. The notion of giving is interesting: usually we don't just give for the sake of giving, unless we want to get rid of something. We can't particularly regard what we discard as a gift; it's just throwing something into the garbage pail. Unfortunately, we have special times for giving things: birthdays, Christmas, baby showers, housewarmings, or whatever occasion it might be. We don't just give things freely. We always like to make our gift-giving coincide with a special occasion. When we travel, if we are generous enough, when we return home, we bring gifts to our spouse or our children. But there is an entirely different tradition, in which giving gifts doesn't have to coincide with social norms; gifts can be given at any time. That seems to be the basic idea.

The question we need to look into is what motivation we have when we give. Ordinarily, we tend to express some kind of appreciation: that the other person has given us enough love, education, support, or whatever. We think

we should make this person a gift to pay such a person back. Another kind of gift-giving is done in order to win somebody over, which is a kind of subtle blackmail. If we give someone a gift, hopefully that person will be favorable to us. On the whole, we don't give gifts without a purpose of some kind, without some scheme or other. We carefully arrange the time and place, so that the gift can be made properly.

### ***The Motivation of the Bodhisattva***

But at the bodhisattva level, generosity is regarded as an act of letting go. The purpose of giving gifts and the practice of the paramita of generosity is to learn from our life and to experience—or to develop the vision, rather—of giving without expecting anything in return. That is very hard for us to do, because we are brought up in a social norm that expects tit for tat. We may be embarrassed if we are put in a situation of having to make a gift to somebody, having to make some kind of statement of generosity. We don't want to do that.

## **OBSTACLES TO GIVING**

The idea of giving something purely without expecting anything in return is the expression of the absence of arrogance; it is longing. It doesn't seem to be particularly smart from an ordinary business point of view. From the point of view of the social norm, we are just throwing our money down the drain. Since we already feel the absence of arrogance, since we already feel humble, why don't we just maintain those virtues, hold them close to our heart? Why don't we make the best of those virtues rather than making any further gifts? Making further gifts would be regarded as completely impractical. In fact, we could go as far as to say that, in the ordinary conventional world, it is insane to do such a thing.

However, here the idea of giving is not to prove how wealthy you are, how artistic you are, how visionary you are. You just give everything there is. You give your body, your speech, your mind. You give the giver completely, in other words. So it ceases to become even a gift, it is just letting go.

Unfortunately, you usually would like to watch the receiver of the gift appreciating what he has received. You would like to hear him say, “Thank you very much. It was very sweet of you to give me yourself.”

You are simply asking for confirmation. Suppose you give your whole being to somebody. The minute that person thanks you, you haven’t actually given yourself away, because you get your gift back.

When you give up your anger, it is not like giving up cigarettes. You have a tremendous sense of giving up the *security* of anger—or the security of passion. It’s not that you regard anger as a nuisance, and therefore you decide to give it up, like cigarettes, in order to get rid of it. You usually experience some sense of security even in your hang-ups, your so-called problems. You might feel that you are somewhat inadequate: you keep losing your temper at the most inappropriate times, and you feel bad about yourself. But if you analyze the reason why you lose your temper, it is not so much because you are angry at the cause and effect of a certain situation, but because you would like to reaffirm yourself, your existence. You would like to express yourself. You would like to make a statement: “I do exist.” It might be painful to lose your temper; it might be discomforting. But at the same time it is part of the game that you play with yourself. You would like to confirm your existence. You are dying to make confirmations here and there, right and left, all the time.

When we hear something that we don’t like, we get angry, pissed off. It’s not only that we are pissed off at those things that we are told aren’t good for us or that we disagree with; it is also that we have to keep affirming ourselves—all the time. Some people go to the extreme of ceremoniously attempting to commit suicide. They hope that somebody will prevent them from doing so, and that in turn they will get more attention, more confirmation. Somebody will feel sorry for them. We often say, “I don’t like this. I want to get rid of it. I want to see a therapist. I want to take a downer”—or an upper, depending on the case. “I want to see a guru. If only I could get rid of these problems, I would be happy. I’d be very happy.” But we don’t actually mean that. We cherish our neurosis so much. We don’t want to give; we want to be improved.

We are usually full of schemes. We scheme so much that we finally lose track of who’s doing what. We find that we have completely lost track of our

successive schemes. We begin to catch the tail end of one scheme before we even begin another one. We are completely caught up in that kind of confusion. But we would like to maintain ourselves; we don't want to give those things up. We might say, "It would be nice if I could give up my anger, give it to you. Here's my anger, you take it. This is my gift." But we don't really mean it. We are probably proud of our anger. We think we have given a fantastic gift, but it was purely a chauvinistic gesture. It wasn't real giving, real surrendering, free from expectations. The realization that giver and receiver are one never takes place.

## **GIVING THE GIVER**

If we have an immense sense of devotion, if we can actually give the background, the giver, then we are ready to receive blessings, adhishtana. Our usual problem is that we don't want to give. We might be willing to pay for something if it comes along with something else that we can get. But we don't really want to just give, not even knowing whether we're going to get a reward out of it, not even knowing whether we will still have ourselves. That's a terrible thought: If we have to give the whole thing and nothing comes back, we can't even watch the process of giving. We can't even take part in that particular ritual. We might say, "This is asking too much." It is definitely asking too much. That is why it is a very special kind of giving process which asks a lot, which demands absolutely everything, including the giving of the giver, which is very hard for us to do.

The giving process is preparing enough room, enough space so that what is known as enlightenment, the awakened state of mind, can be felt. And that can't take place if the receiver is still clinging to conditions and to reference points and to a business mentality. We have to have an absence of business mentality; otherwise, the awakened state cannot take place. In other words, when we begin to receive the teachings, nobody is receiving them. The teachings become part of us, part of our basic being.

We don't receive the teachings as a gift, as a package deal which makes us the possessor of the dharma, the teachings. We can't insure the dharma. We can't put it in the safe or deposit it in the bank. So receiving the teachings is

not regarded as an adornment which can become part of our spiritual materialism.

You might say, “I went to such-and-such teacher, to such-and-such guru, to such-and-such lama. I received millions of initiations, and I was ordained in trillions of sanghas. I am fully ordained and fully initiated.

I’m completely soaked in blessings.” That is the most decadent way of relating to the teachings. You are merely collecting teachings, which could be regarded as committing a sin, actually. In order to develop your ego’s lavish indulgences, you are using teachings and teachers as part of your conspiracy. That will only bring you down and down, rather than opening you up to anything having to do with being awake. Instead of waking up, you are falling deeper and deeper into sleep.

From that point of view, spiritual discipline is obviously quite different from collecting credentials—PhDs, professorial credentials, academic degrees, and all kinds of things that you can receive in the field of education—because you’re still trying to become the greatest scholar in the world. But you can’t do that with spiritual discipline. The more you collect credentials, that much more you lose your credentials. You become a mystical egomaniac beggar, who keeps on begging, keeps on getting things. You become more and more mystical at the wrong end of the stick, the ego end of the stick. Every minute the whole thing is sinking to a grosser and grosser level, rather than becoming more refined. There is absolutely nothing wakeful about it. There is no prajna whatsoever. The whole thing becomes heavier, dirtier, sloppier. You make more and more collections of credentials, which are based on not giving, not giving the giver.

When you give the giver, you are completely committed. If you feel slightly discomforted with your master, your teacher, you do not run away to find his replacement. You don’t use the relationship with your first master as a credential, a passport, before you completely blow up the whole thing; when it’s convenient, you take your leave and go on to the next master. Using the previous experience as a passport sounds very unreasonable and very sad, but there are people who do that. In fact, I know quite a lot of them. They are very sweet and nice and rugged and homey, but there are definitely problems with them in spite of their exterior.



The whole point of giving or surrendering seems to be the idea of giving the giver. This is not particularly supposed to be a fund-raising pitch, but the notion of giving the giver is the key point. That seems to be the only way the teacher can relate with you, the only way that you can open up and that the meeting of two minds can take place.

We could quite safely say that, to a certain extent, the real teachings can only be received when nobody is at home. As long as somebody's at home, it is very difficult to receive the teachings. You would like to possess the teachings, own them. You would like to be a homeowner; you would like to turn them into merchandise. So the only way to receive the teachings is if you are not actually there. A lot of demands are made on the practitioners of this sadhana. They are high-level demands because they are based on the highest vajrayana teachings. I suppose the sadhana could also be practiced at a lower level, but the philosophy behind the sadhana is based on teachings that are very subtle, that are unreachable by ordinary minds.

## DISCUSSION

### **Dorje Trolö and the landscape of the charnel ground.**

*Question:* Could you review the principle of the charnel ground? I didn't understand how Dorje Trolö Karma Pakshi fits into that landscape.

*Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche:* The idea is that there is basic ground that we all believe in and live on, and out of that we create an extraordinary landscape. Out of that comes further extraordinary imagery, which is not just basic sanity alone, but basic wakefulness within sanity. Sanity can be reasonable, but there has to be something very wakeful about the whole thing.

That wakefulness is embodied in the crazy-wisdom principle, embodied in the yidam, which is not necessarily a native of that particular landscape—for that matter, he is not a nonnative either. He is just there. You might feel threatened because the environment is very spooky. You have to give up your arrogance, which we talked about already in connection with devotion. Giving arrogance up is connected with devotion. Having related with longing and with the absence of arrogance, you have to surrender completely. In other

words, everything takes place in the charnel ground. It is a place of birth and a place of death. Is there any problem?

*Q:* No, it will just take me a while to put it together.

*CTR:* Well, imagine that you are in a charnel ground, a really vivid one. Then you would figure out everything, including the giving.

### **Giving without confirmation as an ongoing practice.**

*Q:* Rinpoche, would you comment on giving up without any kind of confirmation as an ongoing process, an ongoing practice?

*CTR:* I wouldn't say it would necessarily be a twenty-four-hour-a-day job, around the clock. I think it comes in a rhythm: whenever there is a stumbling block, it could be surrendered, given up. Even the background of that could be given up. Whenever you have a sense of wanting to hold back, that surrendering can take place.

*Q:* Sometimes I get a very stubborn feeling, a sort of blind heroism. Because I feel some resistance, I feel heroic. I say, "Let's just jump in." Is that too dualistic?

*CTR:* Obviously it doesn't work that way. The whole idea is that before you give in, you have to be devoted. Last night we talked about two types of devotion. Both of them are very intelligent. If you feel like you have to be doing something, then sitting practice will bring you down, make you solid. The whole thing is based on the sitting practice of meditation, which plays a very important part, obviously.

### **Why the sadhana is read on the full and new moon.**

*Q:* Rinpoche, why is the sadhana read on the full moon and the new moon?

*CTR:* We could say it is because that is the craziest time.

### **The connection between the charnel ground and devotion.**

*Q:* Could you speak about the connection between the charnel ground and devotion?

*CTR:* Connect them? Well, the charnel ground seems to be the general environment. It's where you are, on the spot. Devotion is part of that: you are put on the spot and you accept everything that exists in yourself. Because of that, you are willing to give, without trying to sort things out or trying to find a little clean garden. Just being in the charnel ground.

**The connection between outrageousness and giving what is not expected to be given.**

*Q:* Rinpoche, I'm wondering about outrageousness and about giving that which is not expected to be given.

*CTR:* Are you asking if that is outrageous?

*Q:* Yes.

*CTR:* I suppose you could say that, but it's not all that outrageous if you know the whole scheme.

*Q:* In other words, it's not shoving your giving down somebody's throat?

*CTR:* It's a regular thing. It might hurt you a little bit, but it's not all that painful—if you mean that.

*Q:* Oh no, I don't mean outrageousness is painful—on the contrary.

*CTR:* This is an interesting discussion.

*Q:* Yes. I don't exactly feel satisfied, but maybe I'm looking for confirmation.

*CTR:* Well, if I say too much, it's going to be painful.

*Q:* Maybe you should risk it.

*CTR:* I think I should leave that to your imagination.

**Potential for spiritual materialism when you ask for blessings.**

*Q:* The part of the sadhana you just read says, "Now that I have made these offerings, please grant your blessings." That sounds to me a little bit like a bargain, or like spiritual materialism. It has always bothered me. Could you tell me how you intend that?

*CTR:* It's not so much, "Now that I have made these offerings, therefore please gimme!" But, "Having done one thing already, now I am prepared

enough to receive the next thing.” There has to be some timespace accuracy somewhere; otherwise, there wouldn’t be any language.

*Q:* Okay, but right after it says, “I offer without expecting anything in return,” it immediately says, “Please grant your blessings.”

*CTR:* That’s just the inadequacy of language.

### **The object of giving when you give the giver.**

*Q:* Does this kind of giving necessarily imply a receiver, an object of the gift?

*CTR:* I think so. There is some kind of vision taking place. The receiver is more a vision, an ideal, rather than a particular person.

*Q:* It’s not just giving up, just plain giving?

*CTR:* You’re not just abandoning yourself. It’s like the difference between worshipping the mountains and having some sense of respect for the teachings. If you want to worship the mountains, you jump off a cliff. If you want to show your respect for the teachings, you prostrate to them.

### **The meaning of symbolic offerings.**

*Q:* What are symbolic offerings about: mandala offerings, rice...?

*CTR:* It’s the same idea as what we’re talking about here. You are offering your world. You’re giving the globe, the earth, the sun, and the moon.

*Q:* Don’t we have enough to work with in our lives, just giving up our neuroses? Why do we have to mess around with rice?

*CTR:* It’s saying the same thing. We have enough, but not all that much. We are not usually very precise, so we have to find some kind of alphabet.

### **The problem of expecting something in return when we give up everything.**

*Q:* I don’t know if this is a linguistic problem, but it seems that we’re talking about giving up everything in order to receive the teachings. I feel that there is a sense of expectation. As I intellectually ponder the idea of giving myself up, it’s still in order to receive the teachings.

*CTR:* That could be a problem. But I think a necessary prerequisite for receiving the teachings is to understand that you can't receive them unless you first give up.

*Q:* Is the process of giving up achieved just through sitting practice?

*CTR:* Yes, as well as through all kinds of little pushes that come up—life situations.

*Q:* Until that point, could we say you haven't received the teachings?

*CTR:* Yes, that's why the teachings are called self-secret.

### **Putting oneself in threatening situations in order to work with surrendering.**

*Q:* In terms of surrendering, would you say that it would be helpful to put yourself in threatening situations—though not necessarily foolish situations—in order to surrender yourself?

*CTR:* We can't just have a staged situation. If you like, we could organize that. But you might freak out.

*Q:* I feel a bit like I already am.

*CTR:* That's it!

*Q:* Thank you very much.

**TEN**

## *Historical Commentary: Part Two*<sup>31</sup>

*The Kagyü tradition and the Nyingma tradition are brought together very powerfully at Taktsang; the influence of the practicing lineage is very strong there. There is a feeling at Taktsang of austerity and pride, and some sense of wildness, which goes beyond the practicing lineage alone. When I started to feel that, the sadhana just came through without any problems. I definitely felt the immense presence of Dorje Trolö Karma Pakshi, and I told myself, “You must be joking. Nothing is happening here.” But still, something was coming from behind the whole thing; there was immense energy and power.*

THIS IS THE FINAL CHAPTER in our discussion of *The Sadhana of Mahamudra*. The subjects that we have gone through are connected with our general attitude toward the major principles in the sadhana. We have stayed somewhat on the safe side: the sadhana can be discussed at a much deeper level, but I feel hesitation to get into unnecessary problems. If people don't have enough understanding of these principles, they could become more confused than anything else. Interestingly enough, nevertheless, I have managed to say everything. The subjects that we covered contain many things which have connections at a deeper level, so I suppose you will have to wait and think and read over the material.

Sadhanas are traditionally written in a certain environment by someone who has a feeling about the subject. This sadhana was written in a traditional style.

### **SPIRITUAL MATERIALISM AND CORRUPTION IN TIBET**

To make a long story short, there was tremendous corruption, confusion, lack of faith, and lack of practice in Tibet. Many teachers and spiritual leaders worked very hard to try to rectify that problem. But most of their efforts led only to failure, except for a few dedicated students who could relate with some real sense of practice. The degeneration of Buddhism in Tibet was connected with that lack of practice. Performing rituals became people's main occupation. Even if they were doing practice, they thought constantly about protocol. It was like one of us thinking, "Which clothes should I wear today? What shirt should I wear today? What kind of makeup should I wear today? Which tie should I wear today?" Tibetans would think, "What kind of ceremony can I perform today? What would be appropriate?" They never thought about what was actually needed in a given situation.

Jamgön Kongtrül, my root guru, my personal teacher, was constantly talking about that problem. He wasn't happy about the way things were going. He wasn't very inspired to work on a larger scale because he felt that, unless he could create a nucleus of students who practiced intensely and who could work together, unless he could create such a dynamic situation, he couldn't get his message to the rest of the people. You might think that Tibet was the only place in the world where spirituality was practiced quite freely, but that's not the case. We had our own difficulties in keeping up properly with tradition. Before the 1950s, a lot of gorgeous temples were built; a lot of fantastic decorations were made. There was lots of brocade, lots of ceremony, statues, lots of *chötons*, lots of horses, lots of mules. The cooking was fantastic, but there was not much learning, not much sitting. That became a problem.

Sometimes Jamgön Kongtrül got very pissed off. He would lose his temper without any reason, and we thought that he was mad over our misbehaving. But he was angry over something much greater than that. It was terrible what was going on in our country. Many other teachers besides Jamgön Kongtrül began to talk about that: the whole environment was beginning to flip into a lower level of spirituality. The only thing we needed was for American tourists to come along. Fortunately, thanks to Chairman Mao Tse-tung, that didn't happen, which actually saved us.

There are a few sections connected with that situation in the first part of the sadhana, which is about why the sadhana was written. The first reads:



This is the darkest hour of the dark ages. ☉ Disease, famine and warfare are raging like the fierce north wind. The Buddha's teaching has waned in strength. & The various schools of the sangha are fighting amongst themselves with sectarian bitterness; and although the Buddha's teaching was perfectly expounded and there have been many reliable teachings since then from other great gurus, yet they pursue intellectual speculations. ☉ The sacred mantra has strayed into Bön and the yogis of tantra are losing the insight of meditation. ☉ They spend their whole time going through villages and performing little ceremonies for material gain.

On the whole, no one acts according to the highest code of discipline, meditation and wisdom. ☉ The jewellike teaching of insight is fading day by day. The Buddha's teaching is used merely for political purposes and to draw people together socially. ☉ As a result, the blessings of spiritual energy are being lost. ☉ Even those with great devotion are beginning to lose heart. ☉ If the buddhas of the three times and the great teachers were to comment, they would surely express their disappointment. ☉ So to enable individuals to ask for their help and to renew spiritual strength, I have written this sadhana of the embodiment of all the siddhas.

There were a lot of problems, obviously. Tibetan Buddhism was turning out to be a dying culture, a dying discipline, a dying wisdom—except for a few of us, I can quite proudly say, who managed to feed the burning lamp with the few remaining drops of oil.

Suddenly there was an invasion from the insect-eater barbarians called the Chinese. They presented their doctrine called communism, and they tried to use a word similar to *sangha* in order to hold together some kind of communal living situation, in order to raise the morale of the masses. But what they had in mind turned out to be not quite the same as the concept of sangha. There was no practice, no discipline, and no spirituality. When the communists finally realized that they couldn't actually indoctrinate anybody, they decided to use greater pressure. They invaded the monasteries and arrested the spiritual and political leaders. They put those leaders in prison. Asking the communists to do something about the treatment of the Tibetan

leaders further intensified their antagonism. Rather than letting these political and spiritual leaders come out, the Chinese just told the stories of what happened to these prisoners. That created further problems.

I don't want to make this a political pep talk as such, but you would be very interested to know that in the history of communism, Tibet was the first place where workers have rebelled against the regime. The Tibetan peasants were not all that aggravated or pissed off by their situation before the communists; they were well off in their own way. They had lots of space for farming. Maybe they were hard up in terms of comfort and things like that, but our people are very tough. They can handle the hard winters; they appreciate the snow and the rain. They appreciate simple ways of traveling; they don't need helicopters or motorcars to journey back and forth with. They are very strong and sturdy; they have huge lungs in order to breathe at a high altitude. We're tough people! The peasants took pride in those things, obviously. Their faith and their security and their pride was based on some kind of trust in the teachings and in the church, which was slightly crumbling but which still remained. So for about nine months new energy was kindled, and the peasants rose up against the communists. That was the first time in the history of communism that such a thing took place.

After I was forced to leave my country, people from my monastery sent me a message: "Come back. We would like to establish an underground monastery." I wrote to them, saying, "Give up. It would be suicidal. I'm going to leave for India in order to do my work elsewhere." So that was that. Hopefully they received my message; hopefully they left my country.

My journey out of Tibet, my walk across the country, is described in *Born in Tibet*. I appreciated enormously the beauty of that country, although we saw only mountain range after mountain range after mountain range. We could not go down to the villages because there might be communist spies there to capture anybody who was trying to escape. So we saw fantastic mountain ranges in the middle of winter, fantastic lakes on top of plateaus. There was a good deal of snow, and it was biting cold, which was very refreshing—fantastic!

## TIME IN INDIA AND ENGLAND

I finally crossed the border into India and took my first plane trip, in a cargo plane provided for us by the Indian army. I was excited to fly for the first time, and it was a good trip. A lot of my colleagues got sick; a few were very nauseated. But I was very interested in getting to a new world. We arrived in the refugee camp, where I spent about three months. I could talk on and on about that life, which was very interesting to me because I was having a chance to explore what it was like outside of our world.

India was very exciting to me: in Tibet we had read all about India in our books. We studied all about it, particularly about the brahmins and the cotton cloth that they wrap around themselves. We talked about brahministic ceremonies, and all kinds of things. It was very interesting that finally history was coming to life for me. It was good to be in India, fantastic to be in India.

Then one day I was invited to go to Europe, and I managed to do so. I traveled by ship, on what is called the Oriental Lines, or something like that.<sup>32</sup> It was interesting to be with people who were mostly Occidentals. They had a fancy dancing party, and they had a race on board. In fact, they had lots of parties; every night there was entertainment of some kind, which was interesting. That was the first time I actually tasted English beer, which is bitter. I thought it was a terrible taste; I couldn't imagine why people liked the stuff.

### *At Oxford University*

When we got to England, there was a certain amount of hassle with customs, but everything turned out to be okay. My stay at Oxford University was also interesting, because there was a lot of chance to communicate and work with people from Christendom. They were soaked in Christianity and in Englishness to the marrow of their bones, and yet they were still wise, which is a very mind-blowing experience. Such dignified people! Very good people there. But at the same time, you can't ruffle their sharp edges. If you make the wrong move, you're afraid that you are going to freeze to death or else that they're going to strike you dead.

At Oxford, I heard lectures on comparative religion, Christian contemplation, philosophy, and psychology. I had to struggle to understand those lectures. I had to study the English language: I was constantly going to

evening classes organized by the city for foreign students. I was trying to study their language at the same time that I was trying to understand those talks on philosophy, which was very difficult, very challenging. The lectures were highly specialized; they didn't build from the basic ground of anything, particularly. They presumed that you already knew the basic ground, so they just talked about certain highlights. It was very interesting and very confusing. If I was lucky, I might be able to pick up one or two points at each lecture.

### *Teaching in Scotland*

I was continuing with that situation, nevertheless, but I was looking for some way to work with potential students of Buddhism. I made contact with the London Buddhist Society, which is an elderly organization more concerned with its form than with its function as Buddhists. Quite a lovable setup! Then I was invited to visit a group of people who had a community in Scotland. They asked me to teach and to give meditation instruction. It was very nice there, a fantastic place! Rolling hills, somewhat damp and cold, but beautiful. It was acceptable. I spent a long time with them, commuting back and forth between Oxford and Scotland. Finally they asked me to take over the trusteeship of their place, and offered their place to me to work with. The whole environment there was completely alien, completely untapped as far as I was concerned. But at the same time, there was some kind of potential for enlightenment in that world. It was very strange, a mixture of sweet and sour.

I stayed there and worked there for several years; I said good-bye to my friends and tutors in Oxford. Great people there! But I was glad to leave Oxford for a while. When I visited Oxford again, it looked much better than it had, for the very reason that I didn't have to live there. The situation in Scotland turned out to be somewhat stagnant and stuffy. There was no room for expansion except for my once-a-month visits to the Buddhist Society, which was filled with old ladies and old gentlemen. They weren't interested in discussion, and the longest they could sit was twenty minutes. They thought that they were very heroic if they could sit for twenty minutes. We wouldn't be able to mention anything about *nyinthiins* to them; they'd completely freak out. From their point of view, being good Buddhists was like being good

Anglicans in the Church of England. That problem still continues, up to the present.

## **RETREAT AT TAKTSANG AND COMPOSING THE SADHANA**

At some point, I planned to make a visit to India. I thought it would be appropriate to check it out again, so to speak. I also wanted to visit His Holiness the sixteenth Karmapa at Rumtek. I was also invited by the queen of Bhutan, Ashi Kesang, to visit her country. She was very gracious, and also somewhat frustrated that she couldn't speak proper Tibetan. She was hoping that her English was much better than her Tibetan, so that I could teach her in English about Buddhist practice. I tried to do so, but she was a rather lazy student and didn't want to sit too long. But she had good intentions. She is now the royal grandmother of the king of Bhutan.<sup>33</sup>

I took my retreat at Taktsang, which is outside of Paro, the second capital of Bhutan. Taktsang is the place where Padmasambhava meditated and manifested as Dorje Trolö. Being at Taktsang was very ordinary at first. Nothing happened; it looked just like any other mountain range. It was not particularly impressive at all, at the beginning. I didn't get any sudden feedback, any sudden jerk at all. It was very basic and very ordinary. It was simply another part of Bhutan. Since we were guests of the queen, our needs were provided for by the local people. They brought us eggs and firewood and meat as part of their tax payment; they were very happy to give their tax payment to a holy lama. They liked to fulfill their function that way rather than give it to the administration. They were very kind and very nice, and we were provided with servants and with everything we needed.

The first few days were rather disappointing. "What is this place?" I wondered. "It's supposed to be great; what's happening here? Maybe this is the wrong place; maybe there is another Taktsang somewhere else, the real Taktsang." But as I spent more time in that area—something like a week or ten days—things began to come up. The place had a very powerful nature; you had a feeling of empty-heartedness once you began to click into the atmosphere. It wasn't a particularly full or confirming experience; you just felt very empty-hearted, as if there was nothing inside your body, as if you didn't exist. You felt completely vacant, without feeling. As that feeling continued,

you began to pick up little sharp points: the blade of the phurba, the rough edges of the vajra. You began to pick all that up. You felt that behind the whole thing there was a huge conspiracy: something was very alive.

The gekö and the kunyer, or temple keeper, asked me every morning, “Did you have a nice dream? Did you have any revelatory dreams? What do you think of this place? Did we do anything terrible to this place?” “Well,” I said, “it seems like everything is okay, thank you.”

The Kagyü tradition and the Nyingma tradition are brought together very powerfully at Taktsang; the influence of the practicing lineage is very strong there. There is a feeling at Taktsang of austerity and pride, and some sense of wildness, which goes beyond the practicing lineage alone. When I started to feel that, the sadhana just came through without any problems. I definitely felt the immense presence of Dorje Trolö Karma Pakshi, and I told myself, “You must be joking. Nothing is happening here.” But still, something was coming from behind the whole thing; there was immense energy and power.

The first line of the sadhana came into my head about five days before I wrote the sadhana itself. The taking of refuge at the beginning kept coming back to my mind with a ringing sound: “Earth, water, fire and all the elements...” That passage began to come through. I decided to write it down; it took me altogether about five hours to write the whole text. During the writing of the sadhana, I didn’t particularly have to think of the next line or what to say about the whole thing; everything just came through very simply and very naturally. I felt as if I had already memorized the whole thing. If you are in such a situation, you can’t manufacture something, but if the inspiration comes to you, you can record it.

That difference between spontaneous creation and something manufactured is demonstrated by a little poem that I composed after the sadhana was already written. The spontaneousness was gone, but I thought that I had to say thank you. Somehow I had to write a poem for the end, so I wrote it deliberately. You can feel the difference between the rhythm and feeling of the sadhana and that of the poem, which was very deliberate. The poem is something of a platitude, but the rest of the sadhana was a spontaneous inspiration that came through me. Here is what I wrote:

In the copper-mountain cave of Taktsang,

The mandala created by the guru,  
Padma's blessing entered in my heart.  
I am the happy young man from Tibet!  
I see the dawn of mahamudra  
And awaken into true devotion:  
The guru's smiling face is ever present.  
On the pregnant dakini-tigress  
Takes place the crazy-wisdom dance  
Of Karma Pakshi Padmakara,  
Uttering the sacred sound of HUM.  
His flow of thunder-energy is impressive.  
The dorje and phurba are the weapons of self-liberation:  
With penetrating accuracy they pierce  
Through the heart of spiritual pride.  
One's faults are so skillfully exposed  
That no mask can hide the ego  
And one can no longer conceal  
The antidharma which pretends to be dharma.  
Through all my lives may I continue  
To be the messenger of dharma  
And listen to the song of the king of yanas.  
May I lead the life of a bodhisattva.

I feel that this poem has a lot of platitudes because it was just some personal acknowledgment of my own stuff.

I think that in the future people will relate with this sadhana as a source of inspiration as well as a potential way of continuing their journey. Inspiration from that point of view means awakening yourself from the deepest of deepest confusion and chaos and self-punishment; it means being able to get into a higher level and being able to celebrate within that.

## DISCUSSION

### **Relationship of pain and insight.**

*Question:* It seems that insight could come from some kind of pain, but I was under the impression that it's born of some sort of discipline.

*Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche:* What do you mean?

*Q:* It could be dangerous unless there's some kind of opening up. Could insight also be born of pain?

*CTR:* Sure. Don't we know that?

### **Chanting the sadhana on the full and new moon days.**

*Q:* Rinpoche, why is the sadhana chanted at the full moon and the new moon?

*CTR:* The full moon is regarded as the fruition of a particular cycle in one's state of mind. It's like a cosmic docking, like a spaceship landing. It is very conveniently worked out: that day is regarded as sacred. Most of the full moon and new moon days are also related with things the Buddha did. So the sadhana is read on that particular day because of our potential openness: we can open ourselves; we can take advantage of the gap that is taking place. It could be a freaky gap or a very sane gap.

### **Significance of observing monthly ceremonies.**

*Q:* Do you think that the traditional observances of ceremonies on various days of the month—I don't mean just the full moon and the new moon, but a whole month full and a whole year full and a whole calendar full of liturgies—is an expression of decadence? Or do you think there is something to it?

*CTR:* Well, originally it was not an expression of decadence. Of course, it could *become* decadent, just like the Christian notion of Sunday, which has become just a day off. But at this point, I don't think it's possible. The sadhana is simply an expression of tradition, and it should be conducted properly; it depends on how you take part in it. You have two choices. For



instance, you could regard the day that you get married as a sacred day or as just a social formality. It's up to you.

### **Relationship between tradition and impermanence.**

*Q:* I guess I'm bothered by the relationship between tradition and impermanence. It seems to me that institutions and rigid traditions are the public analogies of ego-clinging at an individual level. It seems like they provide the illusion of security, but that they lead in the long run to the same disastrous consequences for the public that we find at the level of the individual, at the level of ego.

*CTR:* Well, that's an interesting question. You seem to be speaking from the point of view of revolutionaries, socialists—

*Q:* Anarchists?

*CTR:* Anarchists, yes. I think one of the problems with that approach is that if there isn't any format, there's no freedom. Freedom has to come from structure, not necessarily in order to avoid freedom. Freedom itself exists within structure. And the practices that we do in our own discipline are very light-handed practices. They have nothing to do with a particular dogma. We're not particularly making a monument of our practice; we're simply doing it. If we have too much freedom, that is neurotic: we could freak out much more easily. We could get confused much more easily because we have every freedom to do what we want. After that, there's nothing left.

*Q:* Might that freakout be crazy wisdom?

*CTR:* Absolutely not! That's just crazy.

### **Mahakali principle as an expression of the charnel ground.**

*Q:* Would you talk about the *mahakali* principle in the sadhana?

*CTR:* The mahakali principle is simply an expression of the charnel ground. If you don't relate with reality properly, there are going to be messages coming back to you, very simply.

*Q:* So the mahakali principle is just that innate energy we have all the time, which gives us messages?

*CTR:* Yes.

## **Who can write a sadhana?**

*Q:* You said that there are certain people who can write sadhanas, and I was wondering what you meant by that.

*CTR:* Well, not just anybody—not just any old hat—can write a sadhana for his girlfriend or for his boyfriend or for his teacher or for his Mercedes or for his Rolls-Royce. You have to have some feeling of connection with the lineage—simply that. That's the basic criterion. You have to be trained in the vajrayana discipline already; you have to have some understanding of jnanasattva and samayasattva working together. You have to understand devotion.

## **Meaning of Padmasambhava manifesting as Dorje Trolö.**

*Q:* What does it mean that Padmasambhava manifested as Dorje Trolö at Taktsang?

*CTR:* Well, you could say that you manifest as a mother when you become pregnant or when you bear a child. You have a different kind of role to play.

## **Discussion of business mentality.**

*Q:* I've been wanting to ask you about the topic of business mentality that keeps popping up. First of all, do you see a problem with it in the business world per se?

*CTR:* I don't see a problem. The whole point is to have a vision of the totality. Then there's no problem. If you don't have a vision of the totality, obviously you will have problems.

*Q:* Usually when you talk about business mentality, it seems to be in opposition to a spirit of giving or openness. Does that create a problem if you're involved with businesses in the outside world?

*CTR:* I don't think so. That's simply part of the adornment. You have to relate with your parents and your background and your culture in any case, which is all outside of the Buddhist tradition. Doing that is very new to most of you. So you have to relate with those situations in any case. I don't see any particular problems; those things are regarded as reference points, as the stuff we have to work with.

*Q:* I wonder if you think that in terms of this community and the businesses happening within it, if there might be a need for a more straightforward approach to business?

*CTR:* Sure, on the basis of the same logic that we are involved in already.

This discussion of the sadhana has been an unusual one: it is the first time that I have talked about the sadhana in depth. I'm glad that, in reading and studying this material, you have had a chance to learn more about the sadhana, and I hope you will be able to work on this material in the future. We have seen that there are different levels of development within the sadhana, such as the charnel-ground principle, devotion, surrendering, and generosity. All those subjects are very compact and very definite, so hopefully you will be able to work on those things. In relationship to this material, please try to sit and practice. That's the only way to understand the sadhana better.

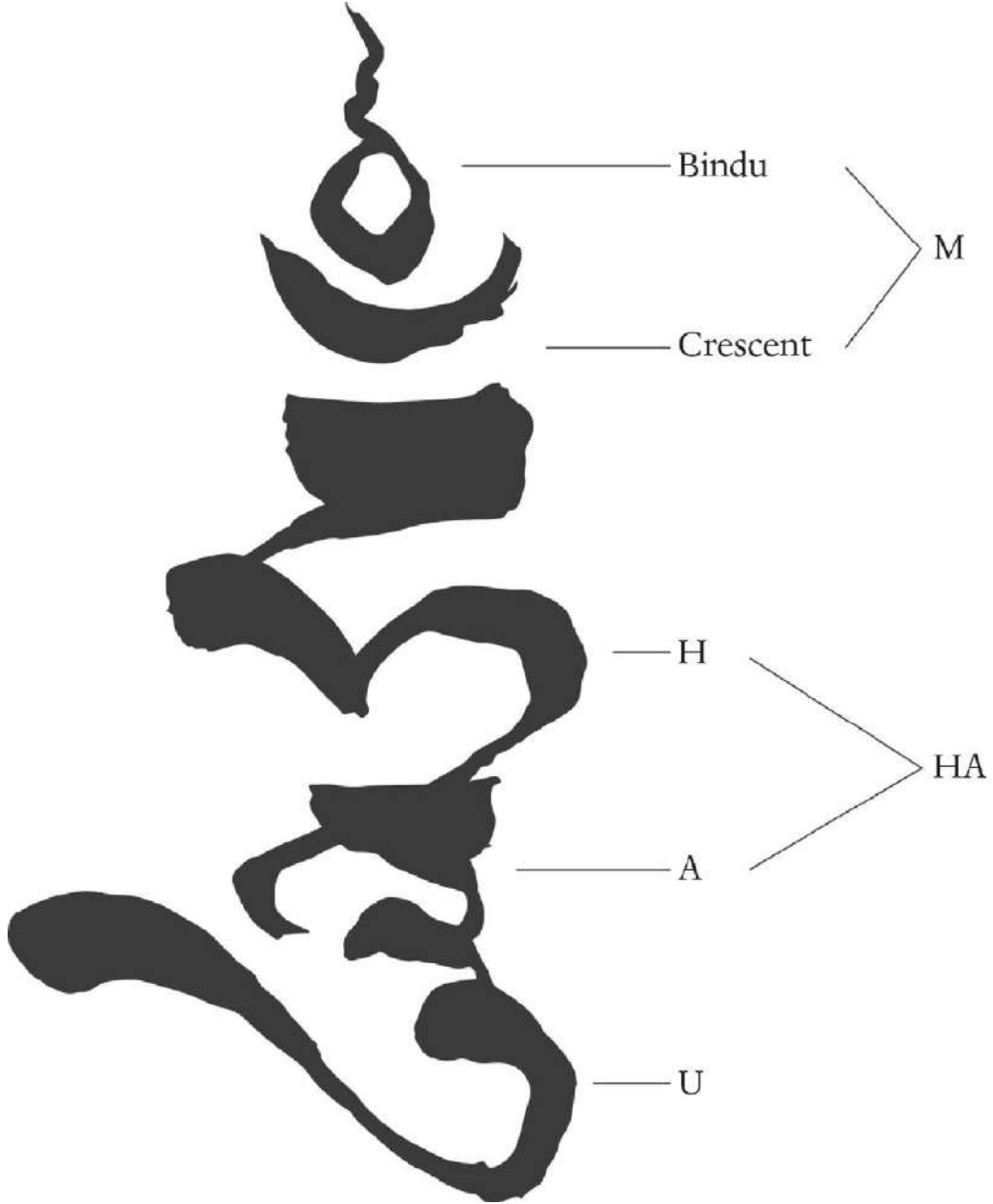
I would like to close by sharing this section from the end of the sadhana, which is dedicated to all of you.

The wisdom flame sends out a brilliant light— ཨུཾ  
May the goodness of Dorje Trolö be present! ཨུཾ  
Karma Pakshi, lord of mantra, king of insight— ཨུཾ  
May his goodness, too, be present! ཨུཾ  
Tüsum Khyenpa, the primeval buddha ཨུཾ  
Beyond all partiality—may his goodness be present! ཨུཾ  
Mikyö Dorje, lord of boundless speech— ཨུཾ  
May his goodness be present here! ཨུཾ  
Rangjung Dorje, faultless single eye of wisdom— ཨུཾ  
May his goodness be present! ཨུཾ  
The Kagyü gurus, the light of whose wisdom is a torch ཨུཾ  
For all beings—may their goodness be present! ཨུཾ  
The ocean of wish-fulfilling yidams who accomplish all actions—  
ཨུཾ  
May their goodness be present! ཨུཾ  
The protectors who plant firm the victorious banner ཨུཾ

Of dharma—may their goodness be present! ॐ

May the goodness of the great mind mandala of mahamudra be  
present! ॐ

## *Appendices*



*Sanskrit letter HUM, with individual parts labeled.*

CALLIGRAPHY BY CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA; USED BY PERMISSION.

# HUM

## *An Approach to Mantra*

Homage to the guru, yidams, and dakinis! When I hear the profound  
music of HUM

It inspires the dance of direct vision of insight.

At the same time my guru presents the weapon which cuts the life of  
ego,

Just like the performance of a miracle.

I pay homage to the Incomparable One!

ONE MUST UNDERSTAND the basic usage of mantra in the teachings of Buddha. Whether it is in the form of mantra, *dharani*, or a single syllable, it is not at all a magical spell used in order to gain psychic powers for selfish purposes, such as accumulation of wealth, power over others, and destruction of enemies. According to the Buddhist tantra, all mantras and other practices, such as visualization, hatha yoga, or any other yogic practices, must be based on the fundamental teaching of Buddha, which is the understanding of the four marks of existence: impermanence (*anitya*), suffering (*duhkha*), void (*shunyata*), and egolessness (*anatman*).

In this connection, it should be pointed out that in contrast to Hindu tantra, Buddhist tantra is based on *shunyata* and *anatman*. The concept of *shunyata* is quite easy to relate to the whole content of tantra, as in *mahamudra* experience, and that of *anatman* is most essential. Some Western scholars mistakenly identify the preparation of mandalas and the countless divinities with the Hindu tradition, as if it were an umbrella under which all other Indian religions might be found. Although some Vedantic mystics might

claim their experiences to be the same as mahamudra, there is an essential difference, for the herukas and all the other divinities in Buddhism are not external. In other words, they are aspects of the awakened state of mind, such as Avalokiteshvara representing the compassionate aspect of buddha nature.

There are various mantras connected with these bodhisattvas and herukas which help to achieve, for example, the essence of compassion, wisdom, or energy. In this essay we are discussing the single syllable HUM. HUM is the sound connected with energy, and is most profound and penetrating. This mantra was used by Guru Padmasambhava in his wrathful aspect in order to subdue the force of the negative environment created by minds poisoned with passion, aggression, and ignorance. HUM is often the ending of certain mantras used to arouse the life energy.

Before chanting the sacred music of HUM, it is necessary to consider the relationship of teacher and pupil. There must be oral transmission. The pupil should not choose a teacher at random, for unless the teacher belongs to a spiritual lineage, he may be able to give a mantra but he will not be able to transmit its power. With a strong karmic bond between teacher and pupil, the pupil should be inspired with an unwavering conviction of trust in the teacher's spiritual quality. Whatever difficulties the pupil might continually have to undergo and whatever sacrifices he might have to make, his devotion must remain constant until he is able to surrender his ego. If he fails to do this, he will not be able to experience the sacred music of HUM, he will not be able to develop understanding of its profound meaning, and he will not be able to develop the transcendental siddhi.

When a beginner chants the sacred music of HUM, he might find some temporary benefits; for example, his mind might become quiet and irritating thoughts might be eased. This is because HUM is composed of HA, U, and M. HA expels the impure air from the lungs, U releases the most irritating thoughts through the mouth, and M clears the remaining thoughts through the nose.

As mentioned in yogic texts, *prana* (breath) is like a horse, the *nadis* (channels) are like roads, and the mind is the rider. In this way, using prana, tension is released and any psychological disturbance may be relieved, but only as a temporary measure.

For advanced meditators, the syllable HUM is a means of developing the five wisdoms. H is the mirrorlike wisdom, clear and continuous. A is the wisdom of equanimity, panoramic awareness. U is the wisdom of discriminating awareness, awareness of details. The bindu is all-accomplishing wisdom, effortless accomplishment of all actions. The crescent is the wisdom of all-encompassing space (*dharmadhatu*), the ground from which all things originate and to which they return.

The meditator will not find these wisdoms in an external source but, rather like the spark which bursts into flame when fanned by the wind, he discovers them within himself.

HUM is the seed syllable of all herukas in the four orders of tantra (kriya, upa, yoga, and anuttara, which includes ati). The herukas originated with the subjugation and transformation of the Rudra, the personification of ego. The absence of ego is shunyata; in the vajrayana, shunyata, or voidness, is expressed in terms of fullness, as in the line of the *Heart Sutra* that says “form is emptiness, and the very emptiness is form.” Therefore this form has tremendous energy which is simply what the five wisdoms are.

HUM is referred to in many texts as the sonorous sound of silence. HUM represents that state of meditation when awareness breaks out of the limits of ego. It was by that force of HUM that the fortress of Rudra was reduced to dust. HUM may be regarded as the fearless utterance of a warrior shooting his arrow in the battlefield. HUM is sometimes referred to as the mantra of the Vajrakilaya mandala of the high tantra school. First, it is the dagger<sup>5</sup> of beyond-thought, which stabs with deadly accuracy into the heart of dualistic thoughts. Second, it is the dagger of luminous transcendental insight, which pierces the heart of confused darkness. Third, it is the dagger of the state of nonmeditation, which pierces the heart of thought-formed meditation, so that the meditator is delivered from subject matter. Fourth, it is the dagger of complete devotion to the all-pervading guru, which stabs to the heart of hopes and fears so that the teacher and pupil become inseparable. These four penetrations of HUM are described in the text of the *anuyogatantra*.

Guru Padmasambhava said that when you sing the crescendo music of HUM and let go of all thoughts, the ultimate meditation experiences are the echo of this music. Also, HUM is referred to as the concentration of all blessings and energy. Etymologically speaking, the Sanskrit word *hum* means “gathering



together.” HUM is not a magic spell to increase the power of ego, but it is concentrated power devoid of ego. HUM combined with complete devotion is like an arrow piercing the heart—it takes the form of the memory of the guru. Also the abrupt experience of cutting through all thoughts is the action of HUM. Therefore HUM is the energy of universal force which transcends the limitations of ego, or rather, pierces through the wall of ego.

I hope that the people who practice *The Sadhana of the Embodiment of All the Siddhas* [*The Sadhana of Mahamudra*] will study this essay very closely. May we all unite in the crescendo of HUM and liberate all sentient beings into the oneness of HUM.

From *Garuda II: Working with Negativity*. Barnett, Vt.: Tail of the Tiger, 1972, 9–11. © 1972 by Diana J. Mukpo. pp. 9–10. Also published in *The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa*, volume five, pp. 317–20.

## *Joining Energy and Space: Comments on The Sadhana of Mahamudra*

THIS IS A VERY CONFUSED WORLD, a corrupt world at many levels. I'm not particularly talking about the Orient versus the Occident but about the world in general. Materialism and the technological outlook no longer come from the West alone; they are universal. The Japanese make the best cameras. Indians make atomic bombs. So we can talk in terms of materialism and spirituality in the world at large.

We need to look into how we can overcome spiritual materialism, not just brushing it off as an undesirable but inevitable consequence of modern life. How can we actually work with the tendencies toward spiritual and psychological materialism in the world today, so that we can transmute them into living, workable, enlightened basic sanity?

I wrote *The Sadhana of Mahamudra*, a tantric liturgy, in Bhutan in 1968 in Tibetan, and then it was translated into English. My situation at that time was unusual in that I was in a position to see both the English and the Bhutanese cultures together, which was seeing the West and the East together as well. I had been in the United Kingdom for about five years, and I had experienced that world fully. When I returned to Asia, Bhutan in this case, I rediscovered characteristics that were quite familiar to me from my earlier life in Tibet. At the same time, the contrast between East and West was very powerful.

I asked the queen of Bhutan, who was my hostess, whether I could do a short retreat at the Taktsang Retreat Center, at the site of the cave where the great Indian teacher Padmasambhava—who brought Buddhism to Tibet—meditated and manifested in his crazy-wisdom form, which is called Dorje

Trolö. Being at Taktsang was not particularly impressive at the beginning. In fact, the first few days were rather disappointing. “What is this place?” I wondered. “Maybe this is the wrong place. Maybe there is another Taktsang somewhere else, the real Taktsang.”

As I spent more time there, however, I realized that the place had a very powerful nature. Once you began to click into the atmosphere there, it had a feeling of profound empty heart. The influence of the Kagyü tradition, the practice lineage, was very strong there. At the same time, there was a feeling at Taktsang of austerity and pride and the wildness from the Nyingma tradition. When I started to feel that, the sadhana came through without any problems. I felt the presence of Dorje Trolö from the Nyingma tradition combined with Karma Pakshi from the Kagyü lineage. At first, I told myself, “You must be joking. Nothing is happening.” But still, there was immense energy and power.

The first line of the sadhana came into my head about five days before I wrote the sadhana itself. It kept coming back into my mind with a ringing sound: “Earth, water, fire, and all the elements...”

Finally I decided to write that passage down, and once I started writing, it took me about five hours to compose the whole thing.

The basic vision of the sadhana is based on two main principles: space and energy. Space here refers to maha ati, or dzogchen, the highest level of Buddhist tantra in the Nyingma tradition. The energy principle, or mahamudra, is also a high level of experience in the Kagyü tradition. *The Sadhana of Mahamudra* strives to bring space and energy together, and through that, to bring about understanding and realization in the world. Even the wording of this sadhana, how each sentence is structured, is based on trying to bring together the mahamudra language with the ati language in a harmonious way.

Underlying both mahamudra and maha ati is the practice of surrendering, renunciation, and devotion. You have to surrender; you actually have to develop devotion. Without that, you can’t experience the real teachings. However, in the Buddhist tradition, devotion is not admiring somebody because he or she has great talent and therefore would be a good person to put on your list of heroes. Ordinarily, we may admire people purely because they seem to be better at something than we are. We think we should worship

all the great football players or great presidents or great spiritual teachers. That approach, in this case, is starting out on the wrong footing.

Real devotion or dedication comes from personal experience and connection. The closest analogy to devotion that I can think of would be the way you feel about your lover, who may not be a great musician or a great football player or a great singer. He may not even be all that great at keeping his domestic life together. But there is something about the person, even though he doesn't fit any of the usual categories of heroes. He is just a good person, a lovable person who has some powerful qualities in himself.

Love seems to be the closest analogy. At the same time, with real devotion, there is something more to it than that. As we said, the object of devotion, the guru, is not so much an object of admiration, not a superman. You don't expect everything to be perfect. You simply realize that a love affair is taking place, not at the level of hero worship or even at the wife or husband level. Something else is taking place, at ground level, a very fundamental level that involves relating with your mind and your whole being. That something else is difficult to describe, yet that something else has immense clarity and power.

Another aspect of the sadhana is crazy wisdom, which is an unusual term. How can craziness and wisdom exist together? The expression *crazy wisdom* is not correct, in fact. It is purely a linguistic convention. Wisdom comes first, and craziness comes afterward, so "wisdom crazy" would be more accurate. Wisdom is an all-pervasive, all-encompassing vision or perspective. It is powerful, clear, and precise. You have no bias at all, so you are able to see things as they are, without any question. Out of that, the craziness develops, which is not paying attention to all the little wars, the little resistances, that might be created by the world of reference points, the world of duality. That is craziness. "Wisdom crazy" involves a sense of tremendous control, vision, and relaxation occurring simultaneously in your mind.

The lineage of *The Sadhana of Mahamudra* is the two traditions of immense crazy wisdom and immense dedication and devotion put together. The Kagyü, or mahamudra tradition, is the devotion lineage. The Nyingma, or ati tradition, is the lineage of crazy wisdom. The sadhana brings these two traditions together as a prototype of how emotion and wisdom, energy and space, can work together.

The Tibetan master Jamgön Kongtrül the Great first brought these two traditions together about two hundred years ago. He developed a deep understanding of both the ati and the mahamudra principles, and he became a lineage holder in both traditions. He developed what is called the Ri-me school, which literally means “unbiased.”

Joining mahamudra and maha ati is like making tea. You boil water, and you add a pinch of tea leaves. The two together make a good cup of tea. It makes a beautiful blend, an ideal situation. Quite possibly it’s the best thing that has happened to Tibetan Buddhism. It’s a magnificent display of total sanity, of basic enlightenment. It displays the ruggedness and openness, the expansiveness and craziness of both traditions together. My personal teacher, Jamgön Kongtrül of Sechen, was the embodiment of both traditions, and he handed down the teachings to me.

The language used in the sadhana reflects both the highest level of devotion and the highest level of wisdom combined. Karma Pakshi, who is the main figure in the sadhana, was one of the Karmapas, the head of the Kagyu lineage. He was also a crazy-wisdom teacher within his lineage. In *The Sadhana of Mahamudra* he is regarded as the same as Padmasambhava, who was the founder of the Nyingma lineage, the oldest Buddhist lineage in Tibet. It was Padmasambhava, also called Padmakara, who introduced the Buddhist teachings to Tibet, and he was also a tantric master. My purpose in writing the sadhana was to build a bridge between their two contemplative traditions.

The sadhana is composed of various sections. At the beginning is taking refuge, committing yourself to the Buddhist teachings, and taking the bodhisattva vow to help others. The first section also creates an atmosphere of self-realization or basic potentiality, which is an ongoing theme in the sadhana. In tantric language, it is called vajra pride. Your basic existence, your basic makeup, is part of enlightened being. You are already enlightened, so you need only recognize and understand that. The next part of the sadhana is the creation of the mandala, or the world, of Karma Pakshi and Padmasambhava, who are embodied together. Several of the other great teachers in the Kagyü lineage are also included in this visualization. Next is the supplication section, which describes our own condition, which is “wretched” and “miserable.” We are surrounded by a “thick, black fog of materialism,” and we are bogged down in the “slime and muck of the dark

age.” It’s like the description of an urban slum. There is so much pollution, dirtiness, and greasiness, not only in cities but throughout the country. “The slime and muck of the dark age” also has a metaphysical meaning. It has the connotation of an overwhelming environment that we are unable to control. We sense the world’s hostility and aggression, as well as its passion. Everything is beginning to eat us up. “The thick, black fog of materialism” refers to the basic or fundamental problems with that environment.

The next passage is about our disillusionment with that world of spiritual materialism. It reads, “The search for an external protector has met with no success. The idea of a deity as an external being has deceived us, led us astray.” There are all kinds of spiritual materialism, but theism seems to be the heart of spiritual materialism. In the sadhana, we are trying to reintroduce the style of the early Buddhists, the purity of the Buddhism which first came to Tibet. We are trying to turn back history, to purify ourselves, to reform Buddhism.

Theistic beliefs have been seeping into the Buddhist mentality, which should be nontheistic, and that has been a source of corruption and other problems. There has been so much worship and admiration of deities that people can’t experience the awakened state of mind; they can’t experience their own sanity properly. In fact, I wrote *The Sadhana of Mahamudra* because such problems exist both within and outside of the Buddhist tradition. Indeed, the spiritual scene all over the world is going through that kind of corruption. The whole world is into fabricating its spiritual mommies and daddies. So the purpose of the supplication is to awaken people from such trips. At that point, inner experience can arise.

The last theme is the idea of merging one’s mind with the guru’s mind. It’s not that the guru is a deity that you bring into your heart, with whom you become one. It’s not like artificial insemination. It is very personal and spontaneous. You are what you are, and you realize that your own inspiration exists in the teacher’s intelligence and clarity. With that encouragement, you begin to wake up. You begin to associate yourself completely with the dharma; you identify completely with the dharma; you become one with the dharma. As it says in the sadhana, “Grant your blessings so that my mind may be one with the dharma.” You no longer depend on any external agent to save

you from your misery; you can do it yourself. That is just basic Buddhism. It could be called the tantric approach, but it's just basic Buddhism.

From *The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa*, volume five, pp. 310–14.

---

5. Skt. *kila*; Tib. purba; phur ba

## *Editor's Afterword*

*Devotion and crazy wisdom: Teachings on The Sadhana of Mahamudra* presents ten talks given in two seminars in 1975 by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche on *The Sadhana of Mahamudra*. For many years, the material in this book was available as “*The Sadhana of Mahamudra*” *Sourcebook*. The publisher’s inspiration to rework and reformat the original sourcebook arose in preparation for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the parinirvana of the Vidyadhara. This seemed fitting for the twenty-fifth anniversary, and indeed it felt long overdue to present these teachings in a more dignified format, one more in keeping with the importance of the text and the profundity of the Vidyadhara’s commentary.

The editing and publication took quite a bit longer than anticipated, so that *Devotion and Crazy Wisdom* is now much belated, marking an anniversary almost three years past. However, the delays do not detract from the importance of reissuing this material. Initially, there was some thought to incorporate material from the discussion period into the body of the talks, as well as reorganizing the material thematically rather than keeping it in chronological order within the two seminars. However, my review of the material highlighted for me the integrity and force of the original presentation. As well, many students, in connection with their use of this book, will be viewing newly issued DVDs of the second seminar. So I decided to keep the original format, while adding several levels of headings to facilitate study and link the material in the seminars to the various sections of the sadhana itself. Gender references were updated, a further light edit was undertaken, and I also listened to the original recordings and made editorial corrections, where warranted.



As in so many of his presentations, the Vidyadhara did not often repeat himself in these two seminars. His approach was always fresh, evocative, and of the moment, yet it was also intricately structured and comprehensive. He commented on almost every section of the sadhana in one or the other seminar, and the two explications are linked yet distinct. The more I read these talks, the more I found them a brilliant exposition of key principles of vajrayana Buddhism as well as a helpful and in-depth commentary on the sadhana itself. It is hoped that the addition of the headings in each of the talks will help readers to find the linkages between the two seminars and with the sadhana itself, thus making the material more available and useful in one's practice. As a study aid, I have also added a subject heading at the beginning of each question-and-answer exchange.

A number of other elements have been added to the book, distinguishing it from the original sourcebook. Lady Diana Mukpo generously contributed a foreword to this edition, and we also thank Barry Boyce for his excellent introduction. An article written by the Vidyadhara many years ago, entitled "HUM: An Approach to Mantra," has been added as an appendix. The Vidyadhara recommended that students study this article in connection with practicing the sadhana, and finally, with its inclusion here, it will be easy to do so! "Joining Energy and Space," an article based on material in this book and intended as a synopsis, first appeared in the *Shambhala Sun* magazine; it is also included as an appendix.

*The Sadhana of Mahamudra* teachings on overcoming spiritual materialism and invoking crazy wisdom in many respects were laying the ground for the Vidyadhara's later emphasis on creating an enlightened society. One of the books that inspired Trungpa Rinpoche in 1968 while he was on retreat at Taktsang was Erich Fromm's *The Sane Society*. Underlying the creation of a sane society is the necessity of overcoming the crippling neurosis and confusion generated by the materialistic outlook. We can be grateful that the Vidyadhara made this powerful journey from contemplating a sane society to proclaiming the Shambhala teachings on enlightened society a decade later.<sup>34</sup>

The sadhana itself is a terma teaching. Termas are "treasure" teachings given originally by Guru Rinpoche, then hidden away, and meant to be revealed or rediscovered later, when they would be most useful. In *Devotion*

*and Crazy Wisdom*, Trungpa Rinpoche compares terma teachings to an ancient version of a time capsule. Surprisingly, the Vidyadhara does not mention anywhere in these talks that this very text he is discussing, *The Sadhana of Mahamudra*, is a terma text or that he himself was a *tertön*, a teacher able to find such hidden treasures.

We might wonder why he didn't go into his own history as a *tertön*—he found an important cycle of terma teachings while still a teenager in Tibet—and why he refers to himself as the author of the sadhana, rather than its revealer or discoverer. We can only speculate, but it's likely that he didn't think his audience was ready for this kind of revelation. He was quite concerned about the tendency of Westerners to misappropriate spiritual teachings, especially those from the Buddhist tantric tradition, and to impose naive ideas of magic and mystery onto genuine spiritual experience and discovery. One of the things that I most appreciate about Trungpa Rinpoche's commentary here on the sadhana is that it is so accessible, Western, and modern in approach. He was not interested in impressing his audience with all the links that could be made to traditional, esoteric Tibetan vajrayana teachings, and this is part of what makes these talks so profound and so applicable for Western students. Devotion is a very tough sell for Westerners. Here are some of the most revealing, direct, up-front teachings on the teacher-student relationship. If we are to have a hope of developing authentic devotion, we need this understanding. What would we do without Chögyam Trungpa to demystify devotion, while at the same time not giving an inch as to its necessity for the “long game” in treading on the Buddhist path? I for one would not have a clue without this man's crazy wisdom, his generous and unwavering dedication to saying it straight and making it real.

At the time that he gave these seminars, in 1975, the sadhana was only available in a large mimeographed format—or maybe by then it was a photocopy. (This version of the sadhana can be seen in several of the DVDs from the second seminar.) It was still a crude typescript, with the pages attached by a staple in the upper left-hand corner, without even a cover. Soon after these seminars took place, Samuel Bercholz, the founder of Shambhala Publications, sponsored the first real publication of the sadhana, as an offering to the Vidyadhara and the sangha. This was a paperbound edition with dimensions resembling those of a traditional Tibetan text. For this first

edition, the traditional terma marks were added at the end of each line of text, and it became more general knowledge that *The Sadhana of Mahamudra* was a genuine terma. Since that time, several other editions of the sadhana have been published by the Nālandā Translation Committee, with a new deluxe edition with illustrations currently being contemplated.

For more than forty years now, *The Sadhana of Mahamudra* has been practiced on the new and full moon days in most of the centers established by Chögyam Trungpa in the West. Anyone can attend these practice sessions, and the sadhana has inspired, shocked, and fascinated many a new student. People from many Buddhist and other religious and spiritual communities, as well as many humanists and atheists, as well as people of no declared spiritual persuasion, have connected with this practice. For some, it has launched their interest in meditation and Buddhism altogether.

For those who have been practicing the sadhana for several decades, the text remains as potent as the first time it was read. And like so much of Rinpoche's teaching, it was meant not just for then and for those, but was a teaching for now and for the future.

The material in *Devotion and Crazy Wisdom: Teachings on The Sadhana of Mahamudra* stands on its own as a thorough explication of devotion, crazy wisdom, and other themes in the sadhana. It also brings further context and depth to the sadhana itself, which is remarkable given how profound the original text itself is.

One hopes that with this new edition will come many new readers and practitioners of the sadhana, whose minds will be turned to the dharma and whose determination to overcome spiritual materialism will fuel genuine practice and realization. We may also hope that the genuine ecumenicism of the sadhana and its fearless proclamation of wisdom free from concepts will help to increase peace and sanity in this troubled world.

With a deep bow to the incomparable Chökyi Gyatso, the eleventh Trungpa, the Dorje Dradül, and the Padmasambhava of our age, let us raise a toast: HUM HUM HUM!

CAROLYN ROSE GIMIAN  
*Trident Mountain House,*  
*Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia*  
*July 2013*

## Notes

1. The material in this and the next two paragraphs first appeared in very similar form in “Ocean of Dharma,” an article by Barry Boyce for the commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the parinirvana of Trungpa Rinpoche in the January 2012 issue of the *Shambhala Sun*.
2. See, for example, *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior*, by Chögyam Trungpa, p. 153 (Shambhala Publications, 1984).
3. Vajradhatu refers to the name Trungpa Rinpoche gave to his organization of meditation centers. Shambhala became one of the primary terms describing his work after he introduced Shambhala Training in the late 1970s.
4. From the Nālandā Translation Committee annual newsletter, 2012.
5. Although Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche was a tertön, at the time that he gave the two seminars in this book, he described himself as the author of the sadhana. The sadhana was later acknowledged to be a terma text. For more on this, see the editor’s afterword. See also the glossary entries for *terma* and *tertön*.
6. Ashi Kesang Choden Wangchuck, who is now the queen grandmother.
7. These were practice sessions of other sadhanas, not of *The Sadhana of Mahamudra*.
8. The next three yanas, sometimes called the lower tantras, are *kriyayoga*, *upayoga*, and *yogayana*.

9. For a further explanation of these yantras, see the glossary entry for *yantra*.

10. An edited transcript of this 1975 seminar is available from Shambhala Media.

11. The sadhana now contains the current translation of the four dharmaś of Gampopa, rather than Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's original translation, which he made shortly after discovering the terma in 1968. At his own insistence, the Nālandā Translation Committee revised the translation in 1979, publishing it for the first time in 1980. The original translation is as follows:

Grant your blessings so that my mind may follow the dharma;

Grant your blessings so that my practice may win success on the path;

Grant your blessings so that, following the path, confusion may be clarified;

Grant your blessings so that confusion may be transformed into wisdom.

12. The discussion in this chapter is about the abhisheka section of the original sadhana. Following Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's death, a separate abhisheka for the sadhana was composed by His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche at the request of Sakya Mipham Rinpoche. For more information about this abhisheka, see *The Sadhana of Mahamudra: Resources for Study* (Vajravairochana Translation Committee, 2012).

13. Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche discusses all eight aspects of Padmasambhava in *Crazy Wisdom* (Shambhala Publications, 1991).

14. Teachings that are discovered according to the way Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche describes in this section are called terma teachings. See the glossary entries for *terma* and *tertön*.

15. Steve Roth completed the time-capsule project in 2013.

16. See “Lord Gampopa’s Song of Response to the Three Men of Kham” in *The Rain of Wisdom*, pp. 275–82. This is the English translation of the *Kagyü Gurtso*.

17. Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche refers to the sixteenth Karmapa, who passed away in 1981, because he was the head of the Kagyü lineage at the time of the talk.

18. This refers, of course, to the destruction of many Buddhist texts, religious items, and entire monasteries during the Chinese takeover of Tibet.

19. Originally, this line was “the spontaneously-existing rishi.”

20. Earlier edits of this material had “falutin” instead of “floating.” To this editor’s ears, it sounds more like “floating,” although that is slightly more eccentric.

21. In the current edition of the sadhana, this line reads: “To the boundless rainbow body of wisdom, Padmakara Karma Pakshi, / The heruka who, untouched by concepts, pervades all existence.”

22. Literally, “with the charge.”

23. See “Maha Ati” in *Journey without Goal: The Tantric Wisdom of the Buddha* (Shambhala Publications, 1981), especially pp. 136–38.

24. At the time of this talk, the Boulder Buddhist community was fundraising to buy the building in which the talks were being held. In the end, this project was unsuccessful.

25. The questioner is Chinese.

26. At the time of the talk, the sixteenth Karmapa had recently visited the West for the first time. His successor, Karmapa Ogyen Trinley Dorje, is currently the head of the Karma Kagyü lineage.

27. Presumably this is related to Christ's saying, in reference to his disciple Peter: "On this rock I will build my church." It is believed that Saint Peter's Basilica is actually built above the tomb of Peter.

28. At the time of the talk, Chögyam Trungpa referred to "Eskimos" and "American Indians," in the common parlance of the era.

29. In an earlier chapter it was explained that Karma Pakshi and Padmasambhava in his aspect of Dorje Trolö are both embodied in the central figure of the sadhana.

30. For further information on the translation of the four dharmas of Gampopa, see note 11.

31. A discussion of the history of the sadhana was also the starting point of this book. Although the two talks were given only a few months apart, Trungpa Rinpoche's characterization of his retreat at Taktsang has a different emphasis in the second talk; even some of the details are different and seem contradictory. Taken together, the talks provide a rich background for our understanding of the sadhana.

32. In *Born in Tibet*, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche says that he traveled from Bombay to Tilbury aboard the P & O line. P & O is an abbreviation for the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company, which was established in England in the nineteenth century.

33. Ashi Kesang was the queen of Bhutan when she invited Chögyam Trungpa to Bhutan. She is now the queen grandmother.

34. For more on this theme, see the introduction to *The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa*, volume five.

## *Acknowledgments*

MANY PEOPLE HAVE CONTRIBUTED to the production of this book. Thanks are due to those who recorded, transcribed, and edited these teachings originally, as well as to students in the audience, who inspired Rinpoche to give these talks.

Particular thanks go to the following: Künga Dawa, who attended the original retreat in 1968 and worked with the Vidyadhara on the original translation; the original editors of the source book, who are not known to me; Ellen Kearney, who in the early days of the twenty-first century reviewed the original editing for a new edition of the source book, which informed my own review; Tingdzin Ötro, who copyedited this edition and revised the glossary; the publisher, Shambhala Media, especially the executive editor, Emily Sell, and the designer, Chris Gibson; and the photographers who have allowed us to include their work here.

Special thanks are extended to the Nālandā Translation Committee and its able translators, who have watched over *The Sadhana of Mahamudra* for many years: translating it, publishing it, updating the translation to avoid gender-biased language, providing detailed instructions for its practice, sponsoring commentaries by other teachers, and making many other contributions to its preservation and propagation.

Gratitude is offered as well to the Shambhala Archives, for their ongoing work to preserve, digitize, and present the audio and video teachings of the Vidyadhara.



# **SELECTED WRITINGS**

*Articles from the Vajradhatu Sun*

## *Make Friends with Your Business*

WELCOME, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN of the Ratna Society.<sup>1</sup> I am glad you are all smiling. That is the first thing we need in the Ratna Society. The reason we have formed this society is to develop mutual appreciation and mutual celebration by means of wealth and business in our community, and to expand what we are doing to the rest of the world. This is possible because we have confidence in what we are doing, based on our dedication and devotion to the practicing lineage and our personal involvement in practice. And through this, we are also trying to create structure in our lives. That is to say, our own welfare can be taken care of, and beyond that, we also have tremendous resources to elegantize<sup>2</sup> the rest of the world by means of our sense of appreciation and by how we handle business and money.

There are several situations that I would like to discuss. With regard to ethics, a natural sense of business ethics exists in North America, which seems to be based on the Jewish and Christian traditions, so it is largely a theistic ethic. However, we should not look down upon it as being an ego-centered approach.<sup>3</sup> Obviously there are a lot of aspects of how business is conducted that we can refine and conduct in other ways. But there is already a general sense of ethics and trust, brotherhood and sisterhood in business dealings, and we should acknowledge that.

Something additional comes up in our business situation, which is our personal discipline. This discipline is based on an appreciation of our individuality, that whatever business we might do is a reflection of our own existence. Sometimes people regard doing business as a necessary hassle that they should put up with, but in our case that is not so. The question is one of individual and personal trust in ourselves and the reflection of that trust in our

business—which leads to an appreciation of the whole enterprise. We can regard our businesses as our own children; if parents have a bad relationship with their children, then the level of sanity and education of the children goes downhill. And in fact, when they are old enough, they will rebel against us and run away from home. In the case of business, the whole operation will collapse, of course. So it is absolutely necessary to have a natural sense of delight in our own personal lives as well as in our businesses.

There seem to be some obstacles to that natural sense of delight. One obstacle is categorizing jobs and business as something that takes away our privacy and removes our sense of relaxing at home. We may be looking forward to a situation: “One of these days I will be rich enough to give up my business and retire. Then I’ll build a little cottage or a mansion in the countryside and live happily ever after.” But thinking in those terms is very destructive to our businesses as well as to our own lives, because we are deliberately separating our livelihood, our expression, from what we are. That kind of schizophrenia tends to bring more chaos into our dealings with employees and with ourselves, and it also brings a general loss of vision. We should regard ourselves and our expressions as indivisible. Conducting business and brushing our teeth should be regarded as the same situation. Often we get very tired of the whole thing and we either pile up our details and try to put them off until next week, or we push our secretaries to sort out the messiness of it. This approach comes from a sense of no delight and heedlessness. That is to say, there is a need for lots of hard work. We should take delight in cleaning up our offices.

Pay your bills if you can. If you can’t, there is another way of being honest, which is to be straight with your creditors. If there is less manipulation, your creditors will begin to appreciate you more. If you think that you can get away with something, that you can steal another week or ten days by deceiving your creditors or being devious, it might work the first time you do it, it might barely work the second time, but obviously the third time and definitely the fourth time, something is going to leak out. It leaves a bad taste, and your creditors begin to pick up on your sloppiness and lack of discipline. Everything goes downhill from then onward. Perhaps you might think you will find some divine angel who will save you from all this, but that is a wild

dream—usually such magic does not happen, so you should not even bother to think about such a possibility.

In dealing with the community—that is, with Ratna Society members as well as the sangha in general—there should actually be a sense of comradeship, which is a sense of communication and being on good terms with your comrades. It is not necessary that you mind each other's business, so to speak, but on the other hand, there must be some sharing of how the whole thing is going or coming. When you begin to have self-secrecy, the notion of comradeship goes downhill, and the general sense of trust in each other also begins to go downhill. Members of the Ratna Society who are doing that begin to be singled out as “no friends,” or being unfriendly. In turn, they feel resentful about the whole situation.

The sangha is the best friend you could ever find in your life—better than your own brothers and sisters and parents. So if you have the self-secret attitude of feeling smart, having lots of things up your sleeve, you may be quite disappointed. You won't find anything up your sleeve except your own Kleenex, which is not worth much.

There is something else connected with business deals, which is the issue of ethics. One of my students who has been instrumental in the Ratna Society, Mr. Michael Chender, asked me to talk about this topic, and in particular, if there's any way at all of combining or synchronizing slow and fast. This is a long-lasting topic with businesses, and particularly with Triple Gem, with which I am personally involved.<sup>4</sup> We experienced fast growth, which we thought was the greatest thing of all, and then we found that, when we went very fast, we actually became very slow. We have learned our lesson, so to speak. This is not necessarily a confession, but it is a fact, and it is real.

I think that our attitude must be that we are willing to stay in the business community for a long time, and that we are willing to work with worldwide or nationwide or sangha-wide businesses. It is very important to make a commitment, to be willing to stay where we are and to work with the whole thing. Sometimes there will be other possibilities. Opportunities will come up, and it is necessary to take advantage of those. But at the same time, if we think that we can get away with anything, then our business is questionable.

If we begin to take the attitude that we are willing to go slow and cease thinking in terms of “we are going to make a quick buck, on the spot,” then

more opportunities will come along, opportunities that we can actually seize on the spot. But while the attitude should be slow, action could be fast. If anybody in the Ratna Society made a million dollars tomorrow, I would be very suspicious. I think that would be bad news. I wouldn't believe that. On the other hand, if you can make a million dollars within a year, that's good.

We should maintain some kind of integrity, at least. Raising prices is not necessarily illegal or unethical. But cheating is something else. Cheating is based on some kind of smugness, impatience, and aggression, where we think we can actually get away with something, that our intentions could be concealed. Any attempt to cover up our business picture is actually covering up our ego picture in some sense. It is very closely tied in with practice.

So, ladies and gentlemen, we have a lot of chances to develop ourselves through business. We don't regard ourselves as mercenaries. That has very bad connotations. When we have a mercenary approach, we come up with laziness and aggressiveness both at the same time. And between the two, we produce lots of neurosis not only for ourselves, but for our contacts all over the place. We actually begin to pollute the whole universe that way. The Ratna Society's philosophy should not be based on capitalism or, for that matter, socialism. But some kind of individualism is appropriate. Such individualism is based on practice, an understanding of the dharma, and gentleness. We can always raise our prices and still be genuine. But we can't cheat. If we want to cheat somebody else, that means we are cheating ourselves.

If our attitude is to be settled, even though our business might be only six months old, first of all we should know who we are. From that, we should know how to manifest ourselves. We might talk to this or that person, who begins to say, "Great, go ahead. That's great. Let me jump in with you." But those little enthusiasms sound very suspicious. In fact, our community has suffered a lot in the past by trying to snowball each other's enthusiasm to the level of frivolity. We should be aware that once we begin to do that, we are trying to catch an echo in a net. We begin to run here and there looking for the origin of the echo, but our net will always be empty. Nothing is caught because there is nothing to it.

What I'm saying is that on the whole, there is no particular trick. Even if the Buddha himself or Padmasambhava sets up a business, there is no trick.

We have to go along with the natural sense of economy that exists in the country and with our own sanity, which is worthy of being successful in business. It seems that our particular role is not so much having one hundred percent successful businesses necessarily, but first of all settling down with ourselves and then leading our lives accordingly. Having laid a structure nicely, then we can actually elegantize: instead of only a roof, we might put up walls around us and then a water system, insulation, and a sewage system. And when everything's settled, we can also elegantize the rest of the world. It is not at all tedious if we actually know what we are doing. However, often we don't, and then we might ask, "What's the key to it?" There's no particular key—but if there were, the point would seem to be some notion of decency.

I believe very strongly that you cannot cheat the natural growth of the economy and the business world. That is trying to cheat the karmic flow. You cannot jump the gun that way without suffering the karmic consequences. You have to keep up with what is going on, but beyond that, you have lots of space. You can use your prajna, intellect, and you can become more and more decent and more and more genuine. Then your business is completely sharpened up, and you could actually become a multimillionaire on the spot. But not tomorrow. Maybe in six weeks. Take your time and appreciate your work. That is very important.

Often people talk about taking time off as a luxury and going to work or their office or factory or the restaurant they own as a drag. That kind of separation actually makes things very hard. So if there is any way at all that you can make friends with your business, that is the number one starting point of maitri, which means having a loving, kind attitude to oneself.

*Question:* Rinpoche, you talked about keeping a secret up your sleeve. I can think of two situations in business where this might apply. For instance, if you know of a market, you could keep that secret for a while so that you could personally take advantage of that market.

*Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche:* Well, it seems that our businesses have a great sense of individualism, their own particular flavors and colors. The issue is not so much who gets to a new market first. But it's a question of wanting to conceal things altogether, wanting to forget any kind of friendship. And sometimes situations work in very strange ways. If you let your fellow Ratna

Society members have a flavor of what you are getting into, it can work out much better. It may not work right on the spot, but it will work eventually. That is the purpose of the Ratna Society altogether: some kind of comradeship in which nobody tries to tread on each other's toes, and some sense of natural process. Even bees and ants have managed to do that, so I'm sure we can do it—particularly as members of an enlightened society, which we're supposed to be.

*Q:* My experience of the market has been that you can misperceive it if you try to keep it up your sleeve and that the market actually is much bigger if you share it.

*CTR:* Yes. We should be able to share. And if anybody tries to do otherwise, he could be singled out and, if necessary, asked to leave our society.

*Q:* Well, I agree with what you have just said. But now another question comes up, which is a very direct one. That is, you have a certain thing that costs you so much, and then you turn around and sell it for so much. You might even sell it to members of the Ratna Society or the community at a discount, a very fair price. Would you say that you are keeping something up your sleeve by not divulging what you're paying for what you purchase?

*CTR:* That's an interesting question. Well, I think the point is that you understand the basic philosophy, the idea of integrity, that you have a general sense of the whole thing. I wouldn't want to answer that question. I would like to leave it up to you. And obviously, we do not want to jeopardize your business because of our integrity. It is up to you. Once you have some kind of understanding of that nature, then it is trustworthy. But this doesn't mean that if you want to cheat somebody, you can go outside the Ratna Society and cheat the rest of the world.

*Q:* Could you speak a little bit about the sense of gentleness in business, because it's a general theme in business that nice guys finish last, that business has a lot of aggression tied to it.

*CTR:* Well, I think that gentleness is ammunition as far as Buddhist business is concerned. When we approach other people, the first thing they expect is a sort of building up. So they regroup their troops and are willing to fight us. However, when our approach becomes natural, gentle, and straightforward, then they are completely bewildered. It affects them and

confuses them somewhat, which is good. Our business approach could become a landmark in their lives. This is how we handle the rest of our life as well. So on the whole, our trademark should be gentleness. In some sense that has happened already. But in certain businesses we still are borrowing from past neuroses, which is not necessary.

I would like very much to tell every one of you who is doing business here that many of the reports I get back indicate that, when our businesses begin to lose their inspiration, we tend to borrow from our neurotic heritage and become like the rest of Americana. And at that point, nobody could care less. There's no respect for you. Even though you might be quite rich and opulent in your particular business, the sense of enlightened society is not happening. This is a dangerous situation. When you run out of reference points of the enlightened point of view, you should not just go back to your neurosis, but you should become inspired beyond your neurosis. You can do it. I think all of our members are older students, people who have heard the dharma quite a lot. So you are the best. Probably sometimes you don't want to do it, but you have to do it. It might consume tremendous energy to begin with, but eventually it will be much easier for you to do.

*Q:* Rinpoche, how do you apply this attitude of gentleness toward collecting late and very bad accounts?

*CTR:* Be straightforward. That's it. You see, we're not talking about how to schemize<sup>5</sup> all this. Becoming a member of the Ratna Society produces no new schemes, just good old truth. Be direct, forceful, and tell the truth. It always works.

I think we have the duty and responsibility not to separate spiritual and economic disciplines. In the past, yogins who had a bad feeling for their heritage or their family situation rejected it by what is known as "renunciation," which could be regarded as creating further samsaric problems. And people in the business world often questioned me in the early days about whether they should actually get into business at all. But in our case, we are talking about joining together the yogic approach of sitting meditation and vajrayana practice with the approach of business discipline. That is, we should have some kind of discipline in organizing our lives: enough practice, enough business, and enough sense of business and practice put together. In this way, meditation in action can be accomplished properly.



I feel we are just about to make this particular combination of business and practice a reality.

Often I suggest that people become the bosses of their own particular business. That seems to be the basic approach of building the vajra world, enlightened society. That approach depends on appreciating a sense of dignity in oneself as well as in the rest of the world. I appreciate your existence and the effort you have put into your businesses. I don't want you to give any of them up. Thank you.

- 
1. Chögyam Trungpa established the Ratna Society, a group of businesspeople, somewhat similar to a chamber of commerce, for his Buddhist community. For more on the meaning of *ratna* and the history of the Ratna Society, see the glossary.
  2. One of a number of words in the English language that were created by Chögyam Trungpa.
  3. By theism here, Trungpa Rinpoche is referring to looking for help or ultimate salvation outside of oneself. He often connected theism with egotism, in that the belief in a deity may then give credence to one's belief in the solidity of one's own self. Here, he is saying that the fact that business ethics in North America come out of a Judeo-Christian background does not mean that this approach reinforces egotism.
  4. Triple Gem was a business established by some of Chögyam Trungpa's students, which was involved in buying and selling gem stones. Triple Gem was also connected with a retail jewelry store in Boulder, Colorado, in the late 1970s, called Kensingtons. Both businesses eventually closed.
  5. A verb created by Chögyam Trungpa to describe the activity of scheming.

## *Attitude toward Death: Loyalty to the Dying Person Is Key*

*Understanding death and cultivating the proper attitude toward persons who are dying are natural developments from our Buddhist discipline. Here, Chögyam Trungpa discusses this and related issues with the staff of Dana Home Care, a sangha business that provided live-in and day-care services for elderly people who wished to continue to live in their own homes.<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, the staff was about equally composed of Buddhists and non-Buddhists. Chögyam Trungpa initiated the discussion by inviting questions.*

*Question:* We had our first client die last week. I called up one of our advisors somewhat panicking about how to handle it, in relating to the family and to the client herself. He reminded me that panic was the problem. So we kind of settled in and just were around. She was in the hospital and we didn't do much but be with her. It seemed very simple and somewhat sweet, yet we were uneasy that maybe we weren't doing as much as we could for her. We wondered what you might think about being with someone who's actually dying.

*Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche:* Well, there seems to be a question about being helpful in the process of death. I think a lot of people feel that death is an injustice. They feel as if dying is like going to an execution place, so they try to help by giving someone a good word before he goes to his execution. That's basically the theistic approach to death, that God has protected people from everything and granted them richness and happiness in their life. Everything except protection from death has been granted. Eternal life has not been granted, so they feel that death is kind of a punishment. That's the usual approach that everybody takes. In our case, we are not so much speaking on behalf of G-O-D, but we are trying to be helpful to people in the

general process of their existence. We are trying to make them feel at ease so that some kind of humor and natural relaxation can take place. That seems to be the only thing we can do unless we are working for nontheistic people, in which case there is obviously a lot of scope. Otherwise, I think laying our trips on dying people in the last minute is not very good. They just feel resentful that they are being bombarded with ideas and concepts, which they don't have time to practice since they are just about to pass into the next thing in a few days. So instead, some natural sense of goodness can be permeated to them.

*Q:* Just a few days before she died, the patient we were speaking of said, "My time is up." Somebody said, "Well, do you want to talk about it?" And she said, "No, I'm ready," which was true. I mean, I think she was ready to die in a sense. Her body was totally painful and distorted. But is it okay just to drop it if the person says, "I don't want to talk about it"?

*CTR:* I think so. Then you can embellish that by saying, "Since you don't want to talk, that's okay. We feel good for you. Hopefully it will be a good journey." It's that kind of approach.

*Q:* Rinpoche, I recently worked with a woman who was dying of cancer who was not being taken care of by Dana Home Care. She and her family were Christian more or less by birth and by whatever. In the final hours of this woman's life, her daughter and I were there. The daughter felt that the woman was holding on because she was so worried about her husband, who was still physically very healthy but had gone senile and kind of wandered around. So the daughter and I sat there with her and continually said, "It's all right; you can let go. We will take care of Father. We're here to help you." I took my cue from the daughter because I thought her orientation to it was all right. I mean, she was looking at it that way, so I took my cue from her. Was that all right?

*CTR:* I think so. I think there has to be some kind of instant communication. You can't use too many words when somebody's about to die. For one thing, dying people have physical problems in listening to you. Another thing is that they cannot handle futuristic notions like discipline and practice or anything like that, which goes beyond their whole situation. Instead, they should witness that there are good people who care for them. If they can die with less resentment of any kind, that's the only thing we can

contribute. We can stretch the Buddhist logic and say we are transplanting *bodhichitta*, the awakened state of mind in their heart, somewhat. That is as much as we can do at this point. There is no point in pushing too hard. I think the main thing has to be having a sense of loyalty to the person who is dying, and some kind of dutifulness. You know, it is like sending someone to say, "Farewell, have a good trip." That is as much as we can do. Our actions are somewhat limited at that point, but it's okay.

*Q:* I'm interested in resentment. All of our clients are old. Maybe they're not in the process of dying immediately, but it will happen soon. And I myself, speaking as administrator of this organization and also as a person who lives in with an old person, feel a tremendous amount of resentment that I don't want to feel.

*CTR:* From them?

*Q:* No, from myself.

*CTR:* Oh, from yourself. I see. That's something else. [*Laughter.*]

*Q:* I walk in the door and the old woman I live with says, "Oh, you didn't fill the hummingbird feeder," or, "You didn't close the refrigerator door," or, "What's that dog bone doing in the refrigerator?" It's very little, minute things. And all of a sudden, I feel tremendous resentment. I mean, how can I soften her up to die when I'm feeling like this?

*CTR:* Well, that's an old story. [*Laughter.*] I think you're dealing with two types of situations. One situation is your clients, people who have no discipline. They have gone through their lives of pain and confusion and tried to cheer themselves up and hold together, which is quite wonderful on their part. But in our case, the second situation, we have a discipline. We have a practice, we have our training, and we have all sorts of techniques for how to handle ourselves. So as long as we are committed to this particular project, resentment is just a sort of testing ground in which we can try to find out where the irritation comes from.

Everybody feels resentment, not only in this particular job that we are doing, but even just in leading an ordinary life, relaxing at home, having breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Quite simply, we always find some kind of resentment all the time. That quality of resentment arises because we don't want to let go, and we feel personally insulted by even a fly landing on our

nose. There is always resentment; there is always some kind of resentment thing happening. So resentment comes from restlessness and speed, and also from ambition to achieve an ideal situation.

There is some kind of arrogance on our part—negative arrogance. We don't want to give in to anything. We always want to defend ourselves all the time. We feel that we are right and we don't want anybody to say, "That was a bad job." On the whole, we're looking for feedback, for compliments from the world—which are very hard to come by. [*Laughter.*] So from that point of view we have to be independent. We have to execute our actions and then, whether we are criticized or not, just go ahead and do our duty. When we have that kind of warmth to ourselves to begin with, then warmth to others begins to happen and therefore the situation works.

There's no point in trying to prove yourself, in saying, "I didn't leave the refrigerator door open," or whatever. Sometimes justifying yourself creates more resentment. The basic technique, according in particular to mahayana Buddhism, is to take the blame on yourself. In those small issues, it is not really necessary to gain victory; they are not really court cases of any kind. It is a very simple matter. If fault is found, if somebody blames something on you that you haven't done at all, often you should take the blame on yourself. I do that myself all the time. My students come up with all sorts of up-in-arms statements all the time: "You don't like me. This has happened, that has happened. It's all your fault." And I say, "All right, let it be my fault. [*Laughter.*] Okay? But let's do a better job next time." That's what I do with my students, so you can do the same thing.

*Q:* I have a lot of trouble working with these old people. I have a certain sense that I'm a do-gooder. You know, I feel I'm helping these people; I'm providing a great service to them—what a good boy am I. I feel that somehow I'm doing these old people a favor by helping take care of them. Yet I feel that somehow that's wrong, that I shouldn't be laying that kind of trip on them. Could you say something about that?

*CTR:* That's the wrong attitude. We're not taking care of anybody at all. We're just practicing our thing. If we take the attitude that we are doing a favor for somebody, then the whole notion of serving goes down the drain. Somebody here poured me my sake. She was not doing me a favor. She just

poured my sake for the very reason that we like each other; therefore she did it.

If there's any favoritism or a reward notion of any kind, that is a bad job. It doesn't work; it just builds up mounds and mounds of conflicting emotions. Particularly in a charitable job such as what we're doing, it causes the whole thing to go down the drain. Somebody may not say, "Thank you," or "Please," and in fact he or she may resent it that we are helping, but still we should go on and work with it. If we expect any kind of p's and q's from them, it doesn't work.<sup>7</sup> We have to be selfless. There's no bodhichitta if we expect anything. If we as servers work with somebody who has been trained to say, "Thank you," and "Please," then as the situation goes on, instead of an inch, we begin to take a mile out of that person's life. We begin to become arrogant, proud, and puffed up. We feel that because we did so much for that person, he or she should give so much back to us. So instead of taking a slice, we want to eat the whole cake. We become greedy.

I think that particularly in this project, we have to learn to be humble and, at the same time, proud. We have to take pride in our humbleness, which is very hard for a lot of people to do. The notion of democracy in particular says that if we give an inch, somebody will pay us back two inches. So the democracy begins to grow lopsided, and one day we give a little inch and someone takes a mile out of our life. The whole conspiracy begins to snowball so much that there is no reference point left anymore. Therefore, people begin to fight each other, destroy each other, and there's no reasonability at all. The whole thing becomes very ugly. It's a polite battleground—and sometimes it is not even polite.

*Q:* If you give an inch and get an inch back, can you be proud of that? I mean if you feel that you've really given your very best and if the person you're working with is happy with you and tells you so, can you take some pride in that?

*CTR:* You see, the complaints that you get from your clients do not mean that you have done a bad job. They are not so much indications of disrespect for you, but an expression of their neurosis. You might actually receive more complaints if you become more trustworthy to them. Then they begin to feel more relaxed, and therefore, they complain to you more and more.

*Q:* But if they tell you that they think you are doing fine, that they like you and that everything is going hunky-dory, can you take pride in that without being selfish?

*CTR:* Sure, sure. But at the same time, don't step beyond that. You see? Be very careful. It's a very interesting rapport that takes place. It's like a tug-of-war, a tug-of-war kind of approach. You can't be too religious about the whole thing. You have to be willing to expect that at any time, any minute, you'll be put down. But at the same time, take pride in your own courage. (This is like talking to a group of soldiers, actually. [*Laughter.*] I'm afraid that's Shambhala vision in some way.)

*Q:* I'm sort of interested in what approach you would use to display some sense of entertainment. One woman I'm taking care of mostly sits and watches television in the evening. Often I find myself sitting in front of the television and my inclination is to say, "Well, wouldn't you like to talk about something? You know, we could talk." But by that time, we have become so engrossed in the television in front of us that I don't know how to get beyond that. There's a sense that here we are, watching the television, and there doesn't seem to be too much else to do. Is there some other style of entertainment that could be...

*CTR:* Well, you see, the situation is interesting. If you want to cultivate a relationship with her in that situation, it would be difficult because talking to each other is more painful than watching television, which is an impersonal thing. (By the way, I don't watch television at all. However that doesn't matter anyway. I like people. If you were babysitting for me, I would prefer to talk to you rather than watch television.) [*Laughter.*]

*Q:* Should I just talk about whatever? At that point, I don't ever know exactly what to say.

*CTR:* I think that with these particular far-gone people that we are working with, the idea is that you can't tear them away from habitual patterns, and you can't lay trips on them. You know, that wouldn't be a particularly good idea.

*Q:* So we should watch television.

*CTR:* I think probably that's simpler, yes, rather than saying, "What did you think of the latest news? What do you think of the Middle East?" On the other hand, with a person who has more of an inclination to relate with

people than to watch television, obviously that would be preferable. But we have to be somewhat generous. Our work here is not particularly virtuous work or religious work. It's human work of some kind—although it is not particularly based on humanistic psychology. Just simply, we should do whatever's the best for our clients so that they feel their deaths are well received and harmonious. That's what we're trying to do. So laying further trips wouldn't help very much.

*Q:* What do you mean by feeling their death is well received?

*CTR:* Well, they feel that somebody's being kind to them and taking care of them—somebody's actually appreciating watching television with them. You know, there's some kind of comradeship joining the whole thing together.

*Q:* My own father is seventy-one years old and retired three years ago. He's depressed most of the time. He walks seven or eight miles a day and basically watches television and reads *Time* magazine every night. I feel sort of helpless in the situation. There seems to be no way to spark him to find something. Maybe that's just how it is and I need to accept that, but I feel a lot of pain about it.

*CTR:* You should know your father well enough to know how to spark him up. Make him angry! [*Laughter.*]

*Q:* That's scary.

*CTR:* But still, you can do it; then you find out that you can create communication. Do anything. You can do it.

*Q:* What you have said has caused me to have second thoughts about the way I've been approaching the people that I work with. One woman that I work with seems to be very frightened of the outside world or of approaching anything new, like having new people come into her life or new experiences. Another woman has got a very rigid program set up for herself, which she doesn't like being tampered with at all. She likes the same food every day, the same schedule every day. My approach with both of them has been, through establishing friendship, to sort of bring new things into their lives. For instance, I try to have the one woman go outside of her house and do something new, or I try to bring new foods into the other woman's diet. I wonder if I'm bringing something new into a scene that is supposed to be



kind of winding itself up, or if I'm trying to bring some life in there for my sake.

*CTR:* Well, I should leave it up to you. But whatever you do, don't lay trips on them. It has to be organic. If you bring in a new food, the situation has to be organic, rather than, "Look what I have found for you. It's good for you to eat this." Maybe that person has a lot of rhythm in her lifestyle and on the other hand it may be stagnating. So you have to be careful.

*Q:* Well, both of them are approaching death without any real discussion of the fact that that's what's going on in their lives.

*CTR:* Maybe raise the issue of death in conversation. That's what we should always be doing if we are working with those who are not in the last few days before death. Just simply talk about it. Try and slip in the possibility of death, that death is not bad, and that they could actually stop resisting or resenting their death. I mean, there has to be some kind of humor with the whole thing. You could make some kind of joke connected with life or death, whatever... some little sprinkle of perfume in their rotted world, which would be good. But you shouldn't lay heavy trips on the whole thing, that we are being "organic" people and blah, blah, blah. Another thing is that there's not really a manual as such at all. Everything's up to you people—as long as you have basic intelligence, which you have.

*Q:* I'm working with younger people in a mental health institution, who are often suicidal. It seems that the attitude commonly accepted by everybody, including the therapists, is that suicide is wrong: that it's okay to die when you're old, but it's wrong to die when you're young. I'm curious about how you see suicide and how we could deal with our own reactions to it when it happens.

*CTR:* Well, in some sense suicide is okay, but on the other hand, it's not okay. It's a very interesting point. A lot of people talk about suicide as a fashion. Those people don't usually do it; it's just a bluff. Those who are very serious don't talk about it. I think the whole thing could be taken as a play with words, with vocabulary, a play with the cosmic systems: as opposed to birth, you talk about death. A lot of people have no humor when they talk about suicide. When they tell you, "I'm going to commit suicide," they expect you to be panic-stricken and to say, "That's terrible! Don't do it!" That's what they're inviting. So there's a need for a lot of humor. If somebody tells you,

“I’m going to commit suicide,” you might say, “Good luck!” That has lots of humor. I think there’s a lot of bluff involved in suicide. It’s a person’s last resort, the only one he has.

Baker Roshi sent me a person who was supposed to have suicidal tendencies.<sup>8</sup> Since she’s been here, she’s been fine; no problem, she’s enjoying her life. He thought she was going to do it within twenty days; that’s why he sent her to me. But she is still practicing and doing fine. She’s actually an excellent writer. She writes me letters every week, which are very beautiful writings. She’s still going on and there’s no problem.

*Q:* What I’m hearing is that a person’s suicide is his own choice in some way.

*CTR:* But he’s not going to do it, not really.

*Q:* But when it happens, it’s already happened. It’s not like an old person dying where you can...

*CTR:* Sure, absolutely.

*Q:* And it seems to stir up a lot, so much...

*CTR:* Well, if you panic with someone who’s threatening suicide, that might encourage him to be more serious. But you don’t have to take them all that seriously. I don’t think that anybody’s bad enough to really do it that way. Usually a person’s suicidal tendency comes from his having no one to talk to, no one to share vision with at all. Therefore he or she doesn’t even talk about suicide; he just does it. Whereas people who talk about it want to share their vision—so there’s no problem. [*Laughs.*]

*Q:* I find that there are times when one of the ladies that I work with actually recognizes her own boredom and loneliness, which tends to make me recognize my own. It seems to be a very uncomfortable space that I’m in at that point. I don’t know quite how to deal with that situation, when there’s that much vulnerability with myself and with my lady.

*CTR:* So what are you asking?

*Q:* How to relate to that.

*CTR:* No, it’s a question of how to do it. Use your Buddhist logic. You have received vajrayana transmission.<sup>9</sup> [*Laughter.*] Yes, that’s quite true for all of you. It’s very simple and straightforward. It’s as though you have received a horse and saddle, armor and sword, bows and arrows, as well as training in

how to fight, and you're still asking me, "What am I doing with all these?"  
[*Laughter.*]

*Q:* It doesn't seem so extraordinary.

*CTR:* It's quite extraordinary.

*Q:* Are there ways to encourage other people in letting go?

*CTR:* I think with lots of humor, and maybe by joining them in their little indulgences that they have a little bit, with some kind of humor.

*Q:* There's a lot of controversy about being present with a person when he dies.

*CTR:* That's good. If you can do so, that would be good. You can actually hold your composure and sanity while the process of death is taking place. It's like a lullaby process.

*Q:* How do you do that?

*CTR:* Just do it.

*Q:* Do you feel that it is as important with people who are in a coma when they die as with people who seem to be more with it when they die?

*CTR:* During a coma is the best time to do that, yes, as opposed to after an accident, when the person dies suddenly. A person in a coma has a vague connection with the world, but still it's not actually happening.

*Q:* The Evans-Wentz version of the *Book of the Dead* makes a big deal about not touching the body because of the whole bit about the consciousness factor or whatever's exiting through that particular orifice that you're closest to. Is that really a big issue for us, or can we hold someone's hand or stroke his head while he dies?

*CTR:* That's fine.

*Q:* So if a person's in a coma we should make an extra effort really to be there with him all the time?

*CTR:* Yes. That would be good, yes.

*Q:* I was with our client the day before she died and also with my father a few days before he died, and there seemed to be some detachment from the world. Both of them seemed to be in a world of their own, and I felt a kind of hopelessness.

*CTR:* That's okay. They're involved with the world of their body. A newly born child has the same kind of connection. When a newly born child is still in the incubator, it doesn't have reference to anything at all but its own body. If a nipple comes to its mouth, it sucks. This is the same thing, so it doesn't matter. But still, the warmth projecting from you is important. That could somewhat be regarded as a magical thing from the vajrayana point of view.

*Q:* What about the situation of sudden death, of suicide? What about coming in on someone who has just hung himself or drunk toilet-bowl cleanser? You know, someone who's dead but still breathing, someone who's been serious and hasn't said a word, and whose body is still quite warm?

*CTR:* Actually, that's great practice. It's very effective to do something with them too. Just project some kind of warmth. T.G.S.

Well, friends, you seem to be in good spirits tonight, and I am very pleased. This particular project is very essential to the Vajradhatu project altogether.<sup>10</sup> It's a very worthwhile project and we seem to be getting into it very thoroughly. I think we could do a lot of service to the rest of mankind, womankind. The main point is to have some readiness to do it. So please don't think that you have to have some particular serial number or accident or problem that you have to wade through before you can do it. You have to do the whole thing by your instinct and your own involvement with the practice—and that obviously means that you have to practice a lot yourselves. You have to develop a lack of resistance and resentment and be willing to work with anybody whether or not you get any feedback or gratitude from them at all. It is important for you to do that. I work with a lot of people who never give me gratitude or feedback or thanks, and I still appreciate and work with them. So let us do it all together. That would be good, excellent. Our work has never been weakened, because there is a sense of strength that we all have together. So the whole thing is very good and excellent. Keep going. We should meet again. I would like to know what's going on with your work. It is very important, so please, take care of yourselves.

*Q:* I just wanted to say that this has been my first week working with Dana Home Care. I went in Monday morning and I was terrified. I didn't know what was going to happen. This meeting tonight has made me feel very confident and very hopeful for myself and for my clients.

CTR: Well, the basic point is to trust yourself, trust yourselves. I'm sure you'll do a good job if you trust yourselves; otherwise you'll be too shaky. Well, thank you very much.

---

6. Dana Home Care was established in the 1970s in Boulder, Colorado, under the direction of Ann Cason and Victoria Howard, two of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's senior students. It provided in home care for the elderly for more than twenty years. Ann Cason wrote about the approach pioneered by Dana Home Care in her book *Circles of Care*. She continues as a geriatric consultant.

7. This seems to be playing on the saying "mind your p's and q's," which refers to minding your manners. The origin of the phrase is unknown. Some people associate the phrase with minding your pleases and your thank yous.

8. Richard Baker became the head of San Francisco Zen Center after the death of Suzuki Roshi.

9. A transmission in how to work with and recognize one's own mind very directly. The transmission, as given by Chögyam Trungpa to students in his community, also empowered the student to begin formal vajrayana practices, starting with the preparatory practices, or the ngöndro. Here, Chögyam Trungpa seems to be suggesting that the questioner already has the resources to work with this situation in their work and doesn't really have to ask for advice.

10. The Vajradhatu project here seems to be referring to Chögyam Trungpa's efforts altogether to create a Buddhist mandala, or world, including many elements and institutions within society. Vajradhatu was the name he gave to his international organization of Buddhist centers.

# *Vajra-like Marriage*

*Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's remarks at the wedding of the  
Loppon, Lodro Dorje Eric Holm and Miss Donna Bostrom*

I WOULD LIKE TO WELCOME the members of the sangha, the relatives, and especially these two friends. This occasion is very special. It is an opportunity for me to refresh my memory of how to conduct a wedding [*laughter*] and it is an opportunity to demonstrate that long friendship can turn into vajra love and become real.<sup>11</sup>

We often say, “Could it be real? Blah, blah, blah.” [*Laughs.*] In this case what we’re doing here is very real, although in Buddhism we talk about the unreality and illusoriness of the circumstances and experience of our lives. But there are some situations where things are not unreal; they are very special and definite. Particularly in the vajrayana tradition, we talk about vajra nature, which is free from deludedness and the insubstantiality of the samsaric lifestyle.

These two friends are taking a big step toward establishing a vajra-like marriage, which is very real, very definite. It is definite because the inspiration has come about from the practice of meditation and the understanding of the three-yana principle of which this gentleman is the head.<sup>12</sup> [*Laughter.*] There is also some sense of heroism and the natural taste for reality from the vajrayana point of view or, for that matter, even from the hinayana point of view.

At the level of hinayana, we talk about truth, the four noble truths.<sup>13</sup> We regard the experience of enlightenment as real wakefulness. At the level of mahayana we talk about bodhichitta being transplanted in our hearts. Something real is transplanted in our hearts. In the vajrayana we talk about vajra nature and the ordinariness of ordinary mind, which is real. So with

these three principles, whatever life we lead, whatever situations we experience, whatever circumstances we might encounter, there is always a tremendous sense of heroism and intrinsic goodness.

Even people who haven't heard the dharma can appreciate that. They may not understand the logic or the contents of what we are doing, but they can still experience its shadow. They might say, "I have no idea what it is, but there is something to it. There is something very real and precious and glowing." This ceremony is an expression of that quality. Two individuals born in different situations have met; they have both experienced that realness. Therefore they are joining together to organize their domestic situation and their spiritual situation and all the rest.

We are very fortunate to be able to experience that whatever we do is real. We do not fake; we do not pretend. When we experience pain, we express it; we relate with it. When we experience pleasure, we also express it; we relate with it. In the Kagyü lineage to which we belong, we have a very special way to express our emotions very sanely. We have inherited that from Tilopa and Naropa and Milarepa and Gampopa. If you read the writings and songs of these forefathers of the Kagyü tradition, you may at first glance find them somewhat corny and emotional. But when you look into them further, you may find that what they say is true. They have a very special language to express wakeful emotions thoroughly, fully, and beautifully. What we are doing today is an expression of that wakefulness.

The ceremony consists of taking a vow of friendship in the presence of the shrine and the sangha and the vajra master. These two friends are about to acknowledge that they will practice the discipline of the six paramitas.<sup>14</sup>

*Generosity*, the first paramita, is not expecting anything in return, not expecting any reward. It is open-ended and without struggle.

*Discipline* is in-built awareness that extends throughout your life from morning to evening and even during sleep.

*Patience* means not jumping to conclusions but taking situations step-by-step. You don't have to be picky; you simply expand your sense of delight in your existence.

*Exertion* is a further sense of delight. The ups and downs in your life are cut through; your experience and your discipline become very even, like the

cloudless sky which covers everything.

*Meditation* is being on the dot and not giving in to the fickleness of your mind. Whatever situations you are in, your mind is very constant, very smooth and very joyful, very wonderful.

*Prajna*, knowledge, is seeing both sides of the coin, seeing the oneness of the razor's edge. Any obstacles of doubt, confusion, or uncertainty are cut through, pierced through. Discriminating-awareness wisdom develops naturally. So the paramitas are the basic disciplines that we always follow. And this vow acknowledges those disciplines.

Without further delay we could continue with our ceremony.

---

11. In the early 1970s, Chögyam Trunpga personally conducted the weddings of many his students. But when this wedding took place toward the end of the '70s, there were several thousand people in the North American Vajradhatu community, and a lot of them were twenty-somethings and thirty-somethings—so there were a lot of weddings. He did not officiate at many of them. The Vajra Regent Ösel Tendzin was performing many weddings by this time.

12. Lodro Dorje, the groom, was at this time the head of the Department of Three-Yana Studies within Vajradhatu.

13. The first teaching given by the Buddha: that life is suffering, that desire is the cause of suffering, that cessation of suffering exists, and that there is a path to follow to attain the cessation of suffering.

14. The six transcendent actions of a bodhisattva, or one who is traveling the mahayana path of helping others. Here Chögyam Trunpga applies them to working with everyday life and activities.



## *An American Version of Sanity*

*Remarks by Chögyam Trungpa at his birthday celebration, 1979*

THANK YOU SO MUCH. Everybody is very kind, sweet, and reasonable—bright at least. I appreciate your gathering together here, and I appreciate that you had to drive down here in spite of the traffic and so forth, and that you managed to get here safely.<sup>15</sup> And by the way, please drive back home safely too. That is my main concern—for the time being anyway. Thank you so much for your generous speeches and gift and this gathering and organizing all this for me. You shouldn't have done it. [*Laughter.*]

I am a simple man [*laughter*], quite an ordinary person. I came here from Tibet, managed to settle down, and have been able to relate with lots of Americans from the point of view of Buddhism. I don't particularly feel that is any great achievement. I can say that the only, or the greatest, achievement of any I have ever made is marrying Diana Pybus, who is the greatest lady.<sup>16</sup> [*Applause.*]

Come to think of it, your admiration for me could be regarded as bullshit, just simply hero worship, or quite possibly, for that matter, it could be seen as some kind of longing to have a father figure or a lover. However we haven't figured it out from the point of view of Freudian psychology yet. [*Laughter.*] This person here, called Mr. Mukpo, is a very ordinary person. This person here has simply escaped out of Tibet because of the Chinese communist oppression. And he was looking for possible ways to relate with the world outside of Tibet. And he was trying to tell people how that person felt about his own practice, his own feelings about what he had studied and what he had learned. That's simply what we are doing right here. I personally do not have any tendency or inclination to exaggerate anything at all.

However, the story gets bigger at this point. The students at the early stages managed to understand and practice the basic simplicity of hinayana training, the sitting practice of meditation. And, in fact, my wife and I are part of that discipline as well, which I'm proud of. So seemingly things began on an extraordinarily simple level. On my arrival in the United States of America, I was met by lots of psychologists and students of psychology, ex-Hindus, ex-Christians, ex-Americans of all kinds. And my way to help them out was purely trying to say: "Please sit; sit a lot."

Then, the situation went beyond that level, because students practiced and their sitting vision turned out to be somewhat extraordinary. And lots of American students questioned themselves and proved to themselves that they could actually get into further practice. That further practice means giving up something, as opposed to having a psychological answer to how your mind works. Students actually worked harder, much, much harder. And students, to my surprise, in spite of bad table manners, began to become very decent people. And I thought that with this rate of inspiration, and with possibilities of expanding that vision further, maybe I might be alive longer—that I might stay longer and continue to teach. And this has gone on constantly, which I am very proud of.<sup>17</sup>

At the beginning, when I first arrived in the USA, I was trying to find students' so-called trips and trying to push a little bit of salt and pepper into their lives and see how they handled that. They handled that little dash of salt and pepper okay. They understood it, but they would still maintain their particular trips. So then I put more of a dash of salt and pepper into their lives and further spices into their lives, experimenting with how to bring up so-called American students. It's quite interesting, almost scientific. You bring up your rat in your cage; you feed it with corn or rice or oats; you give it a little bit of drugs; and maybe occasionally you inject it with a drug and see how it reacts, how it works with it. I'm sorry, maybe this was not the best way of describing this—but my approach was some kind of experimentation as to how those particular animals called Americans and this particular animal called a Tibetan Buddhist can actually work together. And it worked fine; it worked beautifully. The process of working together with students and their practice has no problems, particularly. In that whole process, we have followed the logic and inspiration of Buddhism, how the Lord Buddha taught

the dharma in this world, and it has worked quite successfully. And the process has to go on all the time, obviously—constantly. That process of teaching and working together in introducing the buddhadharma is obviously a big task and lots of work.

Ladies and gentlemen, I hope I am not boring you. We must go on and describe further one of the processes involved in producing an American version of sanity. The conviction that Americans can actually work along with a notion of sanity at all is, I suppose, the vision of this particular birthday celebration as well. We are sharing some world together, and we are experiencing some sense of unity altogether.

My empowerment of the vajra regent, and that particular point of his empowerment, was the starting point of planting the seed in his mind that he was and would become a good product of vajrayana, or of the sanity of Buddhist practice altogether.<sup>18</sup> Continuously, my way of bringing up the vajra regent has progressed enormously; and at this point, if I may say so, the vajra regent has actually learned to experience or to separate a hair from dust very clearly. He has experienced lots of hair, and he has also experienced a lot of dust. But he has also actually experienced a lot of clear surface, or a highly polished mirror in his life, in his world. And he has transferred that to a lot of you as well.

All of you, as my students, have experienced how to work—supposing somebody put a hair on your china cup as a trial. You could freak out, saying that your china cup was broken because there was a crack in it. But on the other hand you could say, “No. No, it’s not broken. There is simply a hair on my china cup.” The subtleties are very extraordinary. We could understand how far we are going to go on with our own brokenness of our china cup and how much we’re actually going to remove that hairline which exists on our cup. Do you understand?

Ladies and gentlemen, your existence here is extraordinarily understanding and powerful. The future of our work and practice is purely based on our personal conviction. Ladies and gentlemen, you might feel a potential threat if we expose our practice to the rest of the world. And you might think about how we should legitimize what we are doing in our practice altogether—that is to say, Shambhala vision and vajrayana vision altogether. But whenever you

begin to think about legitimacy, I think you are panicking unnecessarily. Legitimacy only comes from basic sanity altogether.

I appreciate the fact that all of you have a good sense of head and shoulders tonight.<sup>19</sup> You have your posture, and you are dressed well, and you have composed yourselves so well tonight. That could be the possible image of how we should present our vajra world. Let us not be afraid of legitimacy at all. Your parents may offer you ten thousand dollars to give up your practice. [*Laughter.*] Or you may begin to feel that you are in some kind of crazy society and that what we are doing is confused, wretched, or whatever. But this particular process of understanding makes a lot of sense. We are not afraid at all of anything, including if the ice statues created for the party melt, the lights go off, or your chairs go down to the floor suddenly. We are not afraid at all. Moreover, if your life and your inspiration have questionable situations in them, we don't have to give in to them at all.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm so encouraged by all of you and by your dignity and your warriorship altogether. Let us join together. And I thank you very much on my birthday—which actually denotes the possibility that this gentleman who is talking to you is going to give you further trouble. He is so pleased to give you further trouble—and I am so pleased to give you further trouble. [*Laughter.*] I am so proud of your intensity and your dignity and your power. We will never sit less or practice less or drink less! We will go on. I thank you so much. Let us raise our goodness. Please don't give up at all. We are here and we will be here. We are talking about what we are experiencing in our personal lives; we are not fooling anybody at all. The truth is real truth in this case—honest truth and very dignified truth. And it is absolutely jolly good truth. [*Laughter.*] Please join us in this jolly good truth and join along in the vision of the Great Eastern Sun. Thank you.

---

15. The birthday party was held in a downtown Denver hotel, forty-five minutes from Boulder.

16. Diana Judith Pybus was the wife of Chögyam Trungpa. She took his name when they married and became Diana Mukpo.

17. How his students had extended his life through their practice was a frequent theme mentioned by Chögyam Trungpa at his birthday parties.

18. In 1976, Chögyam Trungpa empowered one of his senior students, Thomas Rich, as the Vajra Regent Ösel Tendzin, making the regent his dharma heir, the inheritor of his Buddhist lineage. The regent passed away in 1990 and subsequently, Trungpa Rinpoche's eldest son, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, became the Buddhist lineage holder. He had already been named as the lineage holder of the Shambhala teachings.

19. "Good head and shoulders" was a phrase that Chögyam Trungpa developed in connection with the presentation of the Shambhala teachings. It referred to an upliftedness and dignity in one's posture and demeanor.

## *View, Meditation, and Action*

I'D LIKE TO DISCUSS the present situation in the Buddhist community at large. This discussion could be related not only to the situation in Boulder, but also to all the Dharmadhatus and other centers.<sup>20</sup> In some sense, we are still going through the growing pains of developing our community structure and discipline, and we will be going through these growing pains all along.

But this particular type of growing pain is not necessarily problematic. In fact, it is sometimes quite delightful: we know we are growing because we have pain. On the other hand, some of us might resort to aspirin, which is not so good. We are supposed to live with our growing pains, rather than resorting to all sorts of other things, other possibilities.

The Vajradhatu sangha has grown enormously. People have developed as individuals, and they have learned to relate to the rest of the world properly—both within themselves and outside of themselves. That is praiseworthy. That sense of head and shoulders, good posture, that quality of being a well-groomed Vajradhatu person is always there. Sometimes other people from outside of our community are jealous of that, and sometimes they are frightened by it.

But we still need to put further emphasis on our discipline. The kind of discipline we are talking about is connected with the idea of gentleness to ourselves. We should make sure that we do not neglect ourselves. We may feel a longing for inspiration, and that longing usually comes with a tinge of sadness. Occasionally, we feel almost a sense of separation. Sometimes we doubt ourselves; maybe we are not connecting enough; we feel sad and disconnected and sometimes we even feel left out. That kind of hearty sadness and distance is very useful, very helpful.

We are experiencing the essence of sangha. When we talk about sanghaship, we are talking about people who can stand on their own feet and who can project friendship to others at the same time. When you stand on your own feet, you might feel lonely and sad. That is fine; that is good. If you don't feel sad enough, lonely enough, you begin to lay your trips on others—right and left—and you begin to promote spiritual materialism.

Many people who have studied spiritual disciplines throughout the world, who may even have heard five sentences of truth, try to make that the basis of their career. They make a guru out of themselves, and they begin to convert hundreds of people. Then they begin to throw in all sorts of garbage: psychoanalysis, Outward Bound, a pinch of Gurdjieff, a pinch of Catholicism, and some mystical blah, blah, blah.<sup>21</sup> They begin to brew a gigantic cauldron of soup of nothingness—from only five sentences. They would like to set themselves up as gurus, as teachers; they would like to save the rest of the world. The ultimate charlatanism comes out of that.

Sometimes people jump back and forth from one discipline to another. They cannot stick with one discipline because it is too strenuous, so they jump to another camp, where the discipline is not as strenuous, and where there is a lot of room for charlatanism. They play back and forth between the two situations and try to get credentials from both camps. They hope to become winners, warriors, but in the wrong sense. That kind of winning is based on cowardice.

There are a lot of people in this country who want to be charlatans. They are geared for it; they are hot for it. It doesn't matter whether it is the truth or a lie. They have information from here and information from there—from the sublime to the ridiculous. They have picked up a bit of Buddhism, a bit of Gregory Bateson, a bit of Jung, a bit of Freud, a bit of T'ai Chi Ch'uan, and a bit of this and that. They would like to make a big soup out of all those bits; they think that nobody else has ever thought of it before. So they begin to cook a big, smelly cauldron of soup, but somehow the ingredients do not coincide properly. They put salt and sugar into the soup at the same time. Such a soup would have a yucky taste—we know that.

That kind of situation happens everywhere, throughout the world. Everybody wants to become a teacher right away. When that happens, we have a problem. How can we be teachers? We are so full of hypocrisy, or, we



could quite safely say, so full of shit, and we want to make our diarrhea, our shit, into a great soup, a fantastic vichyssoise. [*Laughter.*] It's absurd, truly absurd! There are a lot of people who want to do that—you would be surprised. You would be so surprised how many people still go on thinking that way, how many people set themselves up as gurus. It is painful; it is ridiculous; it destroys human intelligence. It produces setting sun spirituality—if there *is* such a spirituality at all.

When we think we want to work with people, when we want to relate with others, we should be very, very careful to examine our mind completely, and our intentions, and our attempts to find a career. Please be very careful. Make sure your intentions are clear. Make sure that you are not going to reproduce what you are trying to clean up. Please be very careful.

We do not want to create further pain for anybody; our intention is to save individuals from intense pain. But once we begin to produce spirituality in our own way, we are bound to produce tremendous chaos and pain for everybody. We want to make sure that what we are doing is genuine, that our reason for being here is genuine—absolutely genuine. We want to make sure that we are not presenting further problems for anybody or creating further pain. Whatever we do has to be genuine and true and straightforward—very much so.

## VIEW

We have three subjects tonight: view, meditation, and action. The first one is perspective, or view, which is connected with the idea of reacting to things. According to the Buddhist tradition and the Kagyü lineage, both good and bad are regarded as the same thing. Good does not particularly promote your upliftedness, and bad does not bring down your morale. Good and bad are one; they are the same thing. Having perspective means viewing things as they are, as pure. If you see a black board in front of you, the black board does not mean “bad,” and the white board does not mean “good.” Whatever you see in front of you—your whole situation, your lifestyle, whether domestic or economic or whatever—those things are not regarded as either good or bad.



The basic point is that we should not be startled. When we see white, we do not have to come up with a big grin [*grins in an exaggerated manner*], or when you come across something bad, you don't get angry [*leans forward and screws up his face in an angry expression; laughter*]. Good and bad are one. The good will not uplift you if you indulge in it; the bad will not bring you down if you indulge in it. They are two sides of the same coin, and you have the coin in your pocket, in any case.

What we are trying to say here is that, as a Vajradhatu community, we have to be very good and very steady—on the spot. We should not be so easily destroyed when we see a black board or so easily uplifted when we see a white board. Good and bad are one. Once we begin to remember that, we will become less hungry, and less poverty-stricken. We are no longer looking for any kind of confirmation. So that is perspective, or view. Good is not as good as you think it should be, and bad is not as bad as you think it might be. It is quite basic and straightforward.

## MEDITATION

The second subject is meditation. Aha! [*Laughter.*] It is very important for you to relate with sitting practice: sitting on your meditation cushion, your zafu and zabuton, practicing properly. It is possible that if you don't practice—if you don't sit on your cushion and follow your breath and your thoughts—you may not be able to see that good is not all that good, and bad is not all that bad. Not practicing is your greatest problem. You might say, "How would you explain that good is not all that good and that bad is not all that bad?" The crux of the matter is that if you don't sit, you will not understand at all. You might be quite eloquent with logical explanations, but you will never have any feelings about the whole thing. The sitting practice of meditation is the key point of your practice, of your life altogether. It is very important, absolutely important.

How many people sat this morning? [*Small show of hands.*] How many people sat yesterday? [*Small show of hands.*] That is not good enough! [*Laughter.*] If I may ask, how many people will sit tomorrow? [*Laughter.*] And the day after? Next month? It is interesting to note that if you don't sit, there is no point in my teaching you. It is simple as that. If you don't relate

with the truth, you will never overcome the vicious circle of samsara. When you don't sit, you seem to want to go along with that vicious circle. If you don't relate with that kind of real truth, there is no point at all in our working together. It is as simple as that. It is quite flat and quite real as far as I am concerned; we might as well stop working together.

Sitting practice provides you with a connection with your mind and with yourself altogether, and that is very painful for you. You have not wanted to relate with your mind for a long time. You have been hoping that by doing something else you might be relieved from even looking at yourself. You are so embarrassed to look at yourself in the mirror, and even beyond that, the mental mirror. It is so embarrassing. You don't want to look at yourself, and you don't want to have any demands made on your schedule. That would very painful and unkind. You might think such demands are inhuman; you might even try to sue us; you might say that the practice of meditation is inhuman. Go ahead! Sue us. You are not going to get a penny out of us. [*Laughter.*] We could sue you back for not taking responsibility for yourself. You have the proper faculties: body, mind, name, and age. You are who you are, which is quite certain. As long as you have your body, mind, name, and age, as long as you have who you are, you can't sue us, in the name of the Buddha. What you have is what is known as ego; you have your identity. And as long as you have your identity, you cannot sue us. You have to make your way out of that. That was the problem, that *is* the problem, and that will be the problem. On the other hand, if you do not have a body, a mind, and a name, then you can sue us.

Practice is essential, ladies and gentlemen of the sangha. Without the practice of sitting meditation, all of you would have gone completely crazy by now. One of you might say, "Of course not! I would have gone about my business." But what is your business? You might have a questionable business. What we have here is a bunch of nutcases. Every one of you is purely and completely a nutcase and the rest of the world are nutcases as well. [*Laughter.*] If I may say so, we have managed to save a few of you nutcases so that you could become sane and decent, so that you could develop good head and shoulders, and a good sense of humor. You could even laugh and smile—it's fantastic! What we have accomplished is very good. At least we

have cleaned the street at this point. The practice of meditation is very important; otherwise we would have no connection at all.

## ACTION

Number three is action, which means taking responsibility, personal responsibility and other kinds of responsibility, whether it is connected with your household, your marriage, your business, your economic situation—whatever might come to you. It is very important for you to take responsibility and to relate to everything in your life properly and fully. To put it in a nutshell, please don't expect that your roommate is going to wash your dishes. Please don't. Do it yourself.

Sometimes it is difficult to clean your frying pan. Particularly if you cook something greasy, like sunny-side-up eggs for your breakfast, it is difficult to scrape the pan. But please wash up after yourself; clean up after yourself after you cook a decent meal for yourself. It is important to cook yourself a decent meal, of course, but it is as important to wash up after yourself. And when you cook a decent meal for yourself, don't use too many pots. Try to economize so that if you have to cook, you can have a good meal and minimize the pots and pans and plates and utensils you use, and you can still enjoy it properly. You can have an elegant meal, but please clean up after yourself. That is a very important point; it is connected with action and also with practice. You have to sit, and your sense of view, which is nondiscrimination, comes up here as well.

And if you have a maid or a live-in cleaning person, please make sure that he or she has an easy job, that the person doesn't have to do one hundred percent or two hundred percent of the dirty work. Don't leave your things lying around your house. When your hairbrush gets dirty, use your shampoo and clean it so that your hairbrush gets shampooed along with your hair. Then it will be clean when you brush your hair.

You could regard these simple, basic, and ordinary things as absurd. The Lord Buddha never had to talk about those things to his disciples, but we have to talk about them because we have accumulated a lot of things in twenty-five hundred years' time. If the Buddha came back and sat here with us, he would appreciate and understand what we are talking about.

Naturally, such things as paying your bills on time and establishing a good relationship with your creditors are also very good ideas. It's a good idea to wash your hairbrush when it is full of dandruff. Washing your dishes is very important, extremely important in order to lead your life properly. If you would like to be well groomed, beautiful, and dignified, a good Shambhalian person, you have to do the basic necessities; otherwise you will never make it. You will be pretending something that you do not have, which is full of shit, a lie.

The kingdom of Shambhala was not founded on falsity, but on real people doing their things properly, one hundred percent. Ladies and gentlemen, you have many responsibilities, and I'm sure you will be quite busy. It is good if you are busy at the right times, and you can have a good time, as long as you know how to schedule your life, your destiny, and your practice properly. You can do so. You are capable of doing that at this point. It is possible to do so. Please be gentle to yourself and to your mate, but at the same time, don't expect anybody to save your life or clean up after you. You have to do it yourself. Nobody is going to give you a shower; you have to walk into the shower and wash yourself. It is very important to understand the freedom and the friendship that are involved with leading your life altogether. It is very tricky, but at the same time, it is workable. You can do it; there is no problem. It is a question of cleaning up after yourself all along. That seems to be the basic message. Clean up after yourself, and beyond that, elegantize your world. Your world is all right; it is an okay world.

Usually, we find that if we are dirty, our world looks dirty, unclean. When we begin to clean ourselves, then we find that our world is in harmony with us. We find that the world is workable all the time. The sunshine is very bright, and occasional rain is very refreshing. It is workable.

You may think that you have to attack the problems that come up in your experience, but those problems are made up, completely made up. You just made it all up. Because you are so resentful, you want to find the sore points, the thorns, everywhere, all around your house. Everything is terrible and unworkable because you made it so.

We have a good slogan for that: "Drive all blames into oneself." We don't have to complain to the world. If we have to complain to anybody, we should complain to ourselves. So to begin with, we have to get our trip together

properly. After that, we can begin to find that there is always room everywhere. There is always room; there is always fresh air coming from somewhere.

You might say that there are many problems in the world. But those problems can be sorted out quite easily if you have developed some sense of individual freedom, if you are not bound by your own destiny and blackness and lack of humor. You can go beyond that; you can create little pockets of air. You can sizzle the problems out: ssssssss! You can deflate the arrogant world that exists around you. It can be deflated, which is very good news. It is absolutely possible, and it is also a personal experience. I am not talking about hypothetical possibilities; I have done it myself. It is possible.

If there is any discussion, you are welcome please. [*Pause.*] Is everybody a coward?

*Question:* Sir, you said something about being very careful about the way we go out into the world. What about livelihood? What kinds of jobs do you think would be most appropriate?

*Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche:* Well, it doesn't really matter very much. I think we are saying that, in our approach, we have to be very careful that we are ready to get into our world—or their world, whatever we are talking about. We have to be ready for it altogether, rather than just having some idea that we want to get into a particular business situation. That is not the question at this point. What we are talking about here is being ready to deal with human beings at all. We should train ourselves to relate with anything at this point, particularly as Buddhists. So we have to have tremendous access to things and be willing to relate with everything. But, before we do that, we have to prepare ourselves. Do you see what I mean? We have to be really on the dot.

*Q:* Sir, how does driving all blames into oneself relate to being generous to yourself?

*CTR:* That is a very good point. I am glad you asked that. When you begin to drive all blames into yourself, then you begin to feel very generous toward yourself. [*Laughter.*] If you are generous to yourself first, then you have a very difficult time driving all blames into yourself. So, first you drive all blames into yourself. That's it, [*hits microphone with fan*] on the dot. Then

you can be generous to yourself, because you have driven your blames into yourself. That is the whole point. Understand?

*Q:* Yes, I think so.

*CTR:* Go ahead and do it—tonight! You can do it tonight, and find out what it is all about. I think it is quite simple.

*Q:* Sir, you said that good and bad were the same. How do we apply that when we are conducting our business? When we are in a business, we want to have our business be a success. If we are doing our practice, we want to succeed in that. We seem to take things on as projects, and we do not want to fail.

*CTR:* Well, it is saying the same thing. In fact, you could use a very simple metaphor: you have proof that your electricity is working, because you switch it off and on. It is the same thing. If you can switch it off, it means that the electricity is working. If you can switch it on, it also means that the electricity is working. It is very simple. This does not mean that, when you switch it off and have darkness, that that is a bad message, or when you switch it on, that it is good. You just do it, and you have the results. And similar situations happen throughout your life. If you are connecting with the energy of a situation altogether, it is like switching the electricity off and on. It is quite straightforward, very basic. Any more discussions tonight? Last question.

*Q:* Sometimes you come across a situation in which you feel that it is not right for you to do something, whether someone else would say it was good or bad or whatever. Would you call that ego or self-preference?

*CTR:* Well, I think you can still say good and bad in that way, definitely. But beyond that, good and bad are not helpful reference points for you when they begin to affect your emotions.

*Q:* Should you respect your emotions first?

*CTR:* I think so. Thank you.

---

20. Chögyam Trungpa gave this talk to the Boulder Buddhist community, but he was addressing the larger worldwide community. This is one reason the article was probably published in the *Vajradhatu Sun* later that year—to reach that larger audience.

21. Chögyam Trungpa is not saying that in themselves these disciplines are garbage, but that when they are all mixed together with a superficial understanding of spirituality, they become garbage.

## *Another Year, Another Zafu*

*Closing address at the 1979 Dharmadhatu Conference*

IT SEEMS THAT A LOT OF WORK has been done already in this conference. Since you have been studying, discussing, and exchanging reference points with each other, there's not much left for me to say particularly. But there are some points I probably should raise in terms of how we are going to proceed after this. What we have done here at this point is still on the level of theory, since you are not yet back to your own homeland, so to speak, your home ground, hometown. So when you get home, it is time to put our conference in action for the coming year.

As you know already, the Dharmadhatus and Dharma Study Groups, are regarded as being like the wall of a building, the part of the building that is connected with the outside atmosphere. Whether it is summer or winter, the wall transmits the outside temperature to the inside of the building. (In this case we are talking about an uninsulated building, an un-central-heated building. We are talking about just a tent, almost.) So, in that way, the Dharmadhatus can transmit messages of what their relationship is with the outside world to Vajradhatu central, to myself and my regent and so on.<sup>22</sup>

As we have discussed already, right at the beginning, your role is to work with others as much as you can. There have been problems in the past, which I think have been somewhat resolved, but there still may be a need for me to emphasize one thing: as Dharmadhatu members, tremendous humility is required. Humility goes hand in hand with egolessness, as you know already. And humility is necessary in dealing with people coming to the Dharmadhatus from the non-Buddhist world. Those people have some kind of intuition, or some kind of buddha nature, that made them interested in what we are doing. They come and want to see what the Dharmadhatu is doing and what this Buddhism is all about. When such people come and



approach us, meet with us, we have to extend ourselves. Maybe they sit for only five minutes of a function and then walk out, but still, when such people come and be with us, we have to extend ourselves a great deal and create a welcoming atmosphere.

This is still the notion of humility and openness. We should not sort of wave our flag and say, “We know what we are doing. Who are you anyway?” That particular attitude has not been very helpful in our experiences of the past. So there is a need for us to have tremendous humility toward outsiders, non-Buddhists, who might come to us looking for some message, some teaching. Sometimes people come along purely because they are bored—not in our sense of boredom; they are just bored bored.<sup>23</sup> They are looking for some excitement, some new color in their life, so they fill up one hour or spend an afternoon visiting these interesting people at the Dharmadhatu. Whatever the case may be, still we can afford to extend ourselves—almost, we could say, more than necessary. So we have to be very humble; we have to have lots of humility. It doesn’t hurt.

Humility is the vessel that accommodates the neuroses of others. Then, having been accommodated, their neuroses are transformed. In other words, because what we present to visitors is friendliness or genuineness, they don’t feel that they are walking into some monolithic organization, completely fortified with stern Buddhists. [*Laughter.*] So it is very important to realize that humility, gentleness, and genuineness are absolutely necessary if we are interested in working with others. And if we are not, then we are not actually practicing dharma at all. So the logic follows that there is no other way but to accommodate the neuroses of the rest of the world—to invite them, process them, and transmute them so that the world could be enlightened in that way. And I wouldn’t say that by doing this we are taking more than we can digest; but we are taking something that we *can* actually digest. This is what is called path. It’s our individual practice as well as our group practice. So you should be trying to do as much as you can at the Dharmadhatus, and our efforts here at the headquarters are to try to encourage you to do that. We will send occasional speakers to your local centers, people to conduct seminars and those kinds of situations. And not only that, but we ourselves are practicing here at Vajradhatu.<sup>24</sup> This is a training program in how to be humble and

genuine, which everybody is going through—including my regent. This practice applies to everybody.

This is quite a big task in some sense; but on the other hand, it is a very simple one that we can do. The only thing that it requires is constant mindfulness practice. Sometimes we might have to do this by putting it on, acting it out, in the beginning. But once we begin to break the ice, so to speak, once we act it out, then we *become* it. That's how we actually do it in our Buddhist practice together. We pretend to be Buddha sitting cross-legged, and then one day we ourselves become buddha. So that's how we do it. That's how the concepts of shila, samadhi, and prajna—discipline, meditation, and intellect—follow throughout the whole thing. So we should not hold territory as a Dharmadhatu ego, but Dharmadhatu should be an open situation. That is the atmosphere in which all the dharmas can be accommodated; that is why it is called Dharmadhatu. There could be all sorts of dharmas, but we can accommodate all of them and work with them.

A lot of the Dharmadhatus and Dharma Study Groups are wondering about the introduction of Shambhala Training in their area. Many of you have seen presentations already on what it's all about, but there is still the question of how and when we can ignite Shambhala Training in your particular area. We are planning to present the general idea of Shambhala Training in your areas this year. Slowly, step-by-step, we are taking further measures to present the levels of training and Shambhala concepts altogether.<sup>25</sup>

I think the importance of Shambhala Training is unique. It has been conceived of as an extension of Buddhist vision in which the ordinary and secular lifestyles of individuals can be upgraded according to the concept of enlightened society. And people can join in because of that vision. The main point is that the practice of meditation is important, and that by cultivating some kind of sanity in their domestic and business situations, people can relate with greater vision and with a tremendous sense of dignity. It has also been very helpful to a lot of sangha members because they could invite their parents, their brothers and sisters and friends, who were afraid to join the Buddhist situation. Those people can step into Shambhala Training because it does not demand anything particularly drastic. But at the same time, a subtle change takes place in them, and they can learn how to see and feel intrinsic goodness. So we have had quite a lot of success with that in the past. There

were a lot of people who usually wouldn't join in or sit with us but when we presented Shambhala Training, they did come and sit with us, because there was a different emphasis on the whole thing. So that is very helpful and important.

The idea is that, eventually, as the Shambhala Training process becomes popular and helpful to everybody, it will act as a host to introduce people to Buddhism. But so far, what we have now is that Buddhism is hosting Shambhala Training. So we are starting that way; otherwise there would be no starting point at all. The reason Buddhism is hosting Shambhala Training is because the nature of Shambhala Training itself is derived from the notions of enlightenment and egolessness. The sense of dignity and regalness comes from the image of Buddha sitting on a throne and teaching the dharma. So at this early level, Shambhala Training has to prove itself as not being a borrowed idea, but an original idea. It is derived from dharma, buddhadharma; but when it takes its own shape fully as the training process goes on, then it will stand on its own feet; and then, in turn, it will host the dharmic situations. So we are trying to bring that about. And we will put a lot of effort into holding Shambhala Training in various places as the manpower, the financial situation, and the publicity allow us to do so. So please keep your eyes and ears open—there are interesting developments taking place in our sangha.

Apart from that I can't think of anything further to say. Having had contact with the delegations here, and having witnessed and met with some of you, I feel we are doing very well—and obviously, we could do better. Our standard of development is limitless. We don't ever reach rock bottom and say, "That's it." Such a thing never will happen. Our standard of development is infinite, limitless. In fact, the greater the sanity we achieve, the more we find there are problems. As we become sharper and more perceptive about ourselves because of our development, we begin to perceive specks of dust much more vividly. So in such cases, please don't panic; it's the result of the sharpening of our prajna, and that is what happens always. The more we tie up the loose ends, the more we find there are always loose ends everywhere. So that is something very natural. We have to live with it, and we have to continue.

We here at headquarters try to do our best, and you, as the walls of the tent, please remember that boredom is very exciting. [*Laughter.*] So keep on

with that. Thank you. And thank you, everybody, for your appreciation. I think it is obviously a mutual appreciation we have for each other. People write to me occasionally and express their feelings of neglect. Such-and-such a person, Mr. Joe Schmuck [*laughter*], feels he has not been acknowledged as a good student. People write occasional complaints like that to me. And I write back to them and say, “In any case, I will not give up on you. You have a long way to go before you can convince me to change my mind. And I’m not going to give you up in any case.” So that goes for everybody here—and not only for everybody here, but for your friends, your dharma brothers and sisters everywhere in our Vajradhatu community at large.

My dedication to being with you, my willingness to stick with you is complete, total. And my sense of loyalty goes on always. Whether you are several thousand miles away or only a few inches away, the distance doesn’t really make a difference. Our closeness always remains, permanently. In the same way I feel that my teacher has been instilled within me, I feel that your existence as good students is also always with me. Please think of that, and tell others.

Once more, thank you for coming to this conference. Obviously, we will be resuming our conference next year. The dharma goes on and on continuously: another year, another zafu. [*Laughter.*] Thank you very much.

---

22. Chögyam Trungpa is referring here to the Vajra Regent Ösel Tendzin, his dharma heir. See “An American Version of Sanity,” for comments by Rinpoche on the regent.

23. Elsewhere Chögyam Trungpa described a meditative or contemplative experience of boredom, which comes from intensive practice of meditation. It is called “cool boredom.” Here he is speaking of ordinary boredom. For more on cool boredom, see “Cool Boredom” in *Mindfulness in Action*.

24. Vajradhatu was the national and international headquarters at this time, while the Dharmadhatu and Dharma Study Groups were the local chapters of the organization.

25. Chögyam Trungpa began developing the Shambhala Training program in 1976. In the beginning it was offered in only a few places, Boulder being a principal location. The idea was that it would be a program of meditation accompanied by teachings on basic goodness, using the Shambhala warrior as the main image for developing bravery and gentleness so that one can help others. The program was intended to be an alternative to a Buddhist approach to meditation, as Rinpoche explains here. It was in a phase of expansion in 1979, beginning to be offered in many more city centers around the United States and Canada.

## *Cleaning Up Your Existence*

IN OUR COMMUNITY we have no other intention or purpose than to practice meditation and study the buddhadharma. That is our entire interest and goal. Obviously, along with that comes paraphernalia of all kinds: administration, organization, politics, and economics. Those things occur naturally in proclaiming and maintaining ourselves, and we shouldn't feel burdened by them.

When a poor, innocent baby is born in a hospital, that baby needs a name and a birth certificate. The hospital needs a report on the parents and how much the baby weighs. So the birth of a baby becomes part of the bureaucracy of the hospital and the nation. The nation has to know how many babies are born in a particular year. You might feel that this is a burden; you might wish you could just give birth freely to your baby in the rolling hills or in the mountains or in the meadow. But if you decide to do that, there might be problems; you might have to call in helpers. You might need a doctor—or at least your husband, the father of the baby. Things could begin to get very complicated.

The main point is a question of interest and how much you are willing to relate to your world at all as total world or as partial world. Total world means that you are willing to trust your world, and you are willing to relate with your world altogether. Partial world means that you would like to reserve some secret, private areas for yourself. Those two styles can be seen in society: some people would like to share one hundred percent of their lives with the world; they have no desire for privacy. Some people prefer to share only 40 percent; they would like to maintain the rest for themselves as a private entity.

If you are a one hundred percent person, from a negative standpoint, you might feel that is the opportunity to proclaim your neurosis, rather than your sanity. You don't try to hide the fact that you beat your husband or your wife, that you also impose your neurosis on your children. You have the complete luxury—or complete ugliness—of declaring your neurosis in every aspect of your life. That is not so good.

On the other hand, some people like to keep part of their world private. When somebody presses the doorbell, you can keep your visitor outside while you clean up, so that you only have to share 40 percent of your life. You can provide an ideal trip to someone who visits your home. That is also not so good.

We have international situations like that, as well. The Chinese communists who invaded Tibet are now inviting foreign reporters and dignitaries into the country. They have been telling the Tibetans to dress up and smile. In fact there is a course on how to smile and pose for photographs. Uniforms are being issued: *chubas* for both men and women.<sup>26</sup> People are being told to take baths, put on their chubas, brush their hair, and wear jewelry of some kind.

It's like inviting someone in when he rings the doorbell—but only after doing a quick cleanup. That somebody can actually organize a whole country like that is quite remarkable. On the other hand, it is very deceptive. The situation in Tibet exemplifies the notion that we can deceive people with a happy medium. We think we can hide altogether and avoid our connection to honesty and genuineness.

One of the problems our community faces here in Boulder, or perhaps nationwide, is that when we come home after a morning of practicing and hearing the teachings, like this one, we tend to switch into complete neurosis. We immediately get into our regular neurotic routines. We turn into aggressive, crazy, hassled people. But when we come to meetings like this one, nobody has wrinkles on his shirt, everyone's hair is combed, and everyone looks clean. So some kind of flip between those two situations seems to be taking place. Then there is the other side: some people do not care at all about any of that. They come here as ragged and blunt as they have been since the day they were born. They extend their family neurosis into public situations.

So we have a problem in our community of people flipping between sanity and insanity—back and forth—all the time. We should be doing something about this situation. The solution is not to try to reach such a high level of attainment and equanimity that they can transcend the whole hassle. We are not talking about goal orientation: that once we become Buddha, the whole thing will be clean. We are talking about what to do before we become Buddha, and how to conduct ourselves on the journey. The reason for the existence of sangha at all is based on path orientation. We should take pride in our path. The dharma, as it has been taught, is the path, and we should take pride in that situation. We have dirty underpants, dirty shirts, wrinkled suits, unwashed bodies, smelly armpits, and what have you. All that is path, and we should try to clean up those situations step-by-step.

However, quite possibly everything can't be cleaned up. We might have clean underpants but smelly armpits. We might have clean armpits but dirty underpants. Nonetheless, we should make an effort to iron out the whole thing, so to speak. [*Laughter.*] It is very important to take that kind of pride at a local level, slightly better than animal level. Animals don't wear shirts. [*Laughter.*]

At a basic human level, cleaning up your existence is essential. It is connected with the hinayana principles of mindfulness, awareness, simplicity, and tranquility—in short with shamatha discipline. You begin to feel that situations are very straightforward and simple; you take them step-by-step. That kind of discipline is completely typified by oryoki practice.<sup>27</sup> The basic idea is to organize a situation formally and properly, take advantage of what you have organized, and then clean up afterward. There is a sense that you are sharing the whole world and that you don't leave your dirt for somebody else to clean up.

This is a basic Buddhist principle. You have your samsaric neurosis—your bad karma is inherited, of course—and you work with it; you don't impart your neurosis to anybody else. You clean up after yourself, and having cleaned up completely, then you can propagate what you have done. At both the hinayana and the mahayana level, purity and goodness and compassion and loving-kindness can be propagated and transmitted to others.

We have found that with parents. Many of you have invited your parents to visit you in Boulder. They are usually suspicious at the beginning because



they know your case history of messiness. They may have already begun to see that you have become somewhat tidy and good, but they still don't know why you have done such a thing. When you invite them here, they see the sangha; they see our establishment altogether. Then they begin to be convinced that your messiness is utterly purified, not simply that you are trying to impress them.

So purity and goodness and cleaning up after ourselves have become very important in our community. Furthermore, we should expand our vision of sangha altogether. We need to pay more attention to how we present ourselves to the rest of the world, how we manifest the true buddhadharma, which is purity and goodness. The world should not have to share the burden of the presentation of buddhadharma. In other words, when we present the buddhadharma to a wider circle—throughout the universe—the world should not have to pay a higher garbage bill. If we clean up after ourselves completely, we do not have to create any garbage as we expand. Moreover, we could present the possibility that purity and tidiness could happen throughout the whole world. We can clean up our own garbage and, in fact, teach our friends how to clean up their garbage.

We have been working together for ten years, by means of trial and error. We have been through ups and downs of all kinds, and so far we have achieved tremendous sanity, purity, and goodness. It is quite remarkable—and we would like to continue in the same way. The logic of that is connected with the basic notion of trying to avoid the extremes of being either rhinoceroses or parrots. A rhinoceros is an individual who would like to be by himself all the time; the parrot flock refers to people who want to be involved in groupie situations. We have to transcend both those extremes. The point is to learn to moderate both these situations and to extract the wisdom that exists in each of them.

The sangha principle means that people can handle themselves as individuals. They can be strong; they can practice in their own homes on their own zafus; they can have good sitting sessions all by themselves. They can also join in group practice situations, like dathüns and nyinthüns. They can accomplish those two types of practice situations at the same time. On the whole, they are able to hold their own seat—properly and fully.



That seems to be the basic point: being able to hold your own seat. You are congenial in public and you are strong in private. You can maintain yourself properly and fully. You are able to deal with a nine-to-five job, and you can appreciate the facilities that have been created for and by the sangha, which are called administration, or government, if you like. You are able to relate with that, as well. So the sangha principle is an integral part of your whole life.

The sangha principle means working with what is known as dharma. Sangha members believe in the truth of dharma, which is unconditional truth. Dharma is nonaggression, genuineness, and wakefulness, and the practice of meditation is a natural process that awakens those qualities. Without dharma, we are stepping back, looking backward. Therefore, if there is sangha, there is dharma. The very reason for having a sangha of people working together, the reason why we are here together at all, is dharma. Dharma is truth that we believe in completely—and we are proud of it. We appreciate it so much, and we take tremendous pleasure in actually working on the real truth.

That truth even transcends ordinary truth; it is what is called nondualistic truth. That truth doesn't need to be told; it is *it*, on the spot. Real truth doesn't have to be processed or proved; it is *it*. Therefore it is *it*, and therefore it is true, on the spot. We don't even believe in what we believe; we don't even have to believe; we are *in it*. Therefore we *feel it*. Therefore, we don't even have to feel *it*; it's there already. We are in complete harmony with that truth, which doesn't require any reinforcement, any scientific, mathematical, or logical feedback. We know what it is: it is dharma, which has been told to us.

Therefore, the next step is that, in order to relate with that truth, we also have to understand and realize the authors of that truth. We are not talking about "author" in the sense of somebody who has written a book, but somebody who has experienced the same thing that we have experienced. That is the meaning of lineage, beginning with the Buddha. It is very important for us to realize that our heritage, the Buddha and all of the realized ones, which includes our own lineage, the Karma Kagyü lineage, and your own teacher, have discovered *that*. And *that* has been propagated and told to us as the dharma. Therefore, we have a sangha that understands *that*. We are bound together by those who are realized and by those who are working on the path. What we are working with, as well as what we have

realized, is always the same message: *it* or *that*. So we are bound together by that very principle.

It is very hard to describe the truth. Obviously, it has a lot of facets. Sometimes truth has the possibilities of warmth and sympathy toward those who have tremendous aggression. On the other hand, truth has the potential for tremendous relentlessness and harshness, because it does not conform to our neurotic tendencies. Truth cannot be fit into the usual categories of conventional logic, even the sociological-philosophical-metaphysical logic of the Western tradition. It is beyond ideas.

Nonetheless, we are able to work together because that truth is so precise and good. It is so much on the spot—without any second thought. We could just work with first thought; we could click with that—on the spot. And we could cheer up. We could develop a tremendous sense of appreciation for our life and for our lineage altogether. We are so fortunate to be able to hear or even glimpse that particular truth, which is so difficult to hear. It is always contradictory, I suppose. Nevertheless, it is very obvious. It is somewhat stunning, shall we say.

*Question:* You were talking about clean underwear and clean armpits, and there seems to be some danger there—at least in my experience. [*Laughter.*] The danger is that if my armpits are clean, if my underwear is clean, if there's no lint on my jacket, all that seems to create the illusion that everything is fine. It creates a kind of arrogance—at least I've noticed that in myself. I wonder if you would say something about how to work with that. I mean, maybe there's some value in working with the smell, rather than just cleaning it up and thinking that I've taken care of it, that everything is all right.

*Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche:* Well, you see, it's very interesting logic: once you have cleaned up, you are inviting more dirt. According to a traditional Buddhist analogy, a highly polished mirror, an ideal mirror, collects dust very quickly. Even the tiniest speck of dirt becomes very visible. So when you have clean underpants and clean everything, it doesn't mean that you are going to be clean all the time. In fact, you will probably stay clean for about thirty seconds. You quickly begin to acquire more lint and more dirt and more smell—always.

So that's the idea of mindfulness and awareness: once you have pure ground, then you begin to realize how many problems that creates. That pure ground keeps you busy—all the time. So the idea is not so much that when you see the first speck of dirt on your mirror, you pretend it doesn't exist, but you just acknowledge it. So it keeps you very busy, and you don't even have room to be arrogant. As long as you are honest and genuine, you will have hundreds and thousands of specks of dust landing on your mirror all the time [*laughter*], and you try to clean them—that's the whole idea. Doing that does not provide you with any possibilities of corruption. If you believe in true, genuine purity, you will realize that impurity happens all the time. So you have to work with that; it is the source of mindfulness-awareness taking place all the time. The more you clean, the more dirt becomes visible. But that doesn't mean to say that you are getting worse; in fact, you are getting better. The more you become better, the more dirt you have to relate with. That's how we work on the path—always.

---

26. A chuba is a Tibetan traditional form of dress, somewhat similar to a Chinese robe or Japanese kimono.

27. For an explanation of oryoki practice, see “Oryoki Tradition Enhances Sangha Lifestyle” in this volume.

## *Oryoki Tradition Enhances Sangha Lifestyle*

ORYOKI IS A ZEN MONASTIC-STYLE EATING PRACTICE that we are introducing into our community. We will be practicing oryoki at the Vajradhatu Seminaries, at dathüns, and during other intensive practice retreats. The practice of oryoki, historically speaking, comes from the meals that were taken by the disciples of the Buddha. The disciples were often invited by various devotees to have a meal. The basic monastic technique, or practice, of taking meals was to have a light breakfast, a very heavy, full lunch at noon, and after that, not to eat anything at all, apart from maybe a very light soup. The monastic rules say that after lunch you shouldn't be served anything you can chew, so dinner was a sort of bland broth.

There are reasons why this was so. Breakfast was obviously just to wake up. A heavy lunch was traditional because the donor liked to invite the disciples for a midday meal. That was popular in India in the time of the Buddha, twenty-five hundred years ago. The disciples were offered meals that were cooked very specially, not by the cooks of the family, but by the queen and king who were hosting the Buddha. The chief host would always cook a special meal for the Buddha and his entourage, the sangha members. The hosts offered a meal to the sangha to express their generosity and in order to receive teaching.

After the meal was served, the donors would gather together in front of the Buddha and ask him to teach the dharma; they would receive teaching at that point. The Buddha would give a sermon, so to speak, which was usually later recorded as a sutra. In fact, a lot of the sutras came about in that fashion. The Buddha would present a sutra, a discourse, to the people, and then the people would thank the Buddha and his disciples, the sangha. Then the Buddha and

the sangha would go back to their meditation setups, their caves and huts and so forth.

According to the Buddha's logic, if you eat anything after twelve o'clock, midday, it will be too heavy for the body. You will sleep so heavily that you can't wake up the next morning; you will have a food hangover. The midday meal is healthy because you eat a full meal and you appreciate the hospitality of the donors. Then you can give something in return. You have energy to teach them the dharma, and in that way you thank them. That is the basic logic and why the midday meal is more elaborate in the monastic tradition.

Oryoki comes out of that tradition. Traditionally, oryoki is done only in monastic communities; however, in the Japanese tradition it is somewhat extended to the lay community as well—to noncelibate people, married couples, and so forth. We are using that approach rather than making oryoki purely a monastic practice.

The various eating habits that we will practice are very close to the rules the Buddha prescribed to the sangha members. Traditionally, something like eighty-one styles of eating are described in the *vinaya*.<sup>28</sup> In the beginning, there were no rules. The Buddha would bring his disciples to have a meal with a donor, but each one of them made mistakes; they ate very sloppily. For instance, one would spill his bowl of water; another would spill his soup and make a mess on the floor. In turn, the donor felt bad: "If such a person, a noble sangha member whom we have invited into this household, can make such unmindful mistakes, where is the dharma? How can we follow the Buddha's example?" Because of that, rules were developed. The Buddha said, "Well, we won't use a drinking vessel for water. We will just eat our meal. We will handle our bowls and cups properly, in this way." The oryoki practice that we are doing in our community, at intensive practice programs, is quite authentic, closely following the rules given by the Buddha. At our Vajradhatu Seminary we practice oryoki, almost as a monastic discipline. In fact, in some sense, it is as strict or almost stricter than the discipline and the rules observed by the hinayana or Theravadin monastic community.

## FOOD NEUROSIS

To begin with, I would like to make a basic statement about the food neurosis that exists in Western culture—or rather, un-Buddhist culture. Food neurosis is quite horrendous. People have such cultural hang-ups and cultural fascinations about food. If they don't have pancakes for breakfast, or fried eggs and bacon, they feel bad until they go to bed. Situations like that are horrendous. We have never thought that our lifestyle should be flexible, that it should bend to reality at all. Food neurosis has become one of the biggest problems in our sangha group-living situations. It may also be one of the biggest economic problems we will have in the future: how we can work with such neurosis. Suppose we have a monastery, or any place practitioners are doing their practice. How can we relate with the food situation? Do we always have to come up with cappuccino? Do we always have to come up with toast and marmalade or pancakes for breakfast? How do we handle somebody who has a passion for sandwiches or hamburgers? How do we handle that kind of situation?

The truth of the matter is that we don't have to handle the situation, particularly. I don't think we're trying to run a Buddhist food project that would be a success in the rest of the world. We are not particularly in business to do that—as you know. The idea is to have a simple and straightforward breakfast, a very elaborate lunch, as much as possible, and a simple evening meal. People are expected, or requested, to learn to give up eggs and bacon and that kind of thing. That is very important.

It is not so much an issue of what food you eat at a certain time of the day. The problem is using food to make yourself feel good. When you see eggs and bacon in the morning, you feel good. It reminds you of Queens or Brooklyn or your Los Angeles apartment or your home in Texas. It's good food, an ideal breakfast. You make a lot of connections like that. I must confess that I myself have that problem, too. If I had a Tibetan breakfast, that would be fine. But I haven't had one for twenty years, at this point, and I'm quite happy with anything.

Since we are all refugees in any case, we are trying to depart from our habitual cultural neurosis. Maybe that is asking too much, and maybe I'm being too presumptuous, but I think I'm being genuine and honest in saying that we *can* depart from our habitual cultural neurosis and our habitual cultural expectations of all kinds. To do so would be extremely helpful.

When we have group retreats where we practice oryoki, we have been working extremely hard on the cooking. I'm very concerned about the food. I have met with the cooks several times, and I will continue to meet with them. If you have suggestions of what you would like to eat, or if you have problems with the food, you are welcome to report to me. Please go ahead. I'm not saying that you have to eat what we present and that you're not allowed to complain. That's not quite the case. Please let us know what you thought of the congee the other day, or what you think of the whatever. Please let us know. Give us feedback. That way we can develop a monastic food situation, free from Americana of any kind, so that we can develop our health and cheerfulness, and meditate properly in a state of oryoki-ation.

It is very important for you to realize that we are not imposing on you, but we are asking for your help. At the same time, we are pushing you a little bit. You are supposed to accept that. If you can't accept it at all, then we would like to know the reasons why you find it detrimental, problematic, or whatever.

The basic idea is that as practitioners, you are supposed to be hungry to begin with. That is a very important point: you are not supposed to have already eaten a snack. Millionaires and spoiled rock stars, or any other setting-sun lizards, might already have eaten occasional flies. But when you sit, you work hard, and we appreciate that you are hungry.

The concept of hunger is very important. You are hungry for your meal because you have done a lot of sitting practice. You appreciate the person who is preparing the food in the kitchen, who cares for you because you are hungry. There is a sense of appreciation of where the food is coming from. It's not just somebody's good luck that the food happens to drop by, but the food was made, cultivated by somebody, somewhere. It is real food, which was grown, collected, processed, and bought. It is presented here for your sake, with honor and appreciation, with the idea that such noble practitioners deserve good food, and they also deserve their hunger, in some sense. It is good to feel that connection with your food, so that you don't just rush out to the nearest hamburger stand and grab something, eat it up, and then sit. You don't do that. Instead, your food has been cooked in the kitchen by devoted students. They spend hours and hours over it, and we spend a lot of time discussing the menus together. You deserve that, and you should also

appreciate that. The delightfulness of your hunger for food is good, from that point of view.

## CHANTS

We have come up with a Tibetan liturgy that you will be reading during oryoki, which you should memorize. The chants should be memorized completely; otherwise, the whole ritual won't make any sense. You have to synchronize your mind and body precisely; you have to open your oryoki set and recite at the same time. So please try to memorize the chants.

There is a technique for memorizing: you should not just try to memorize the verses, but you should try to find some logic in the liturgy. You may find catchphrases that are appealing to you, that fascinate you. You may not understand what they mean, exactly, but just use those phrases as landmarks. There might be a few sentences, or there might be one landmark verse that sounds funny to your way of thinking; just think of that. Then you might find several landmarks. In that way, if you can get from this pole to that pole, you can memorize the whole thing. It's like sailing on the ocean; if there's a landmark, a lighthouse, then you can sail from here to there.

Look for those phrases. I used to do that myself; I was taught to memorize in that way. If you have any problem memorizing, try to find the basic concepts.

This particular oryoki chant, the *Sutra of the Recollection of the Three Jewels*, is based on the idea of praising the Buddha, the dharma, and the sangha.<sup>29</sup> Each one of them—Buddha, dharma, and sangha—has its highlights. Try to find the basic concepts. It is highly important that you memorize the chants quickly. Otherwise you may not enjoy your food.

## ORYOKI SETS

In terms of the technicalities of the oryoki sets themselves, ideally it would be extremely good if everybody could own the wooden, lacquered sets that are made in Japan. Those sets will become your possession for the rest of your lives. If you like, you can hand them down to future generations of



practitioners: your children, your grandchildren, and so on. It would be very good to have the complete wooden set.

You should appreciate your bowls and spoons and setsus.<sup>30</sup> You have a sense that the people who prepared those utensils paid a lot of attention to what they were doing and had respect for what they did. They were not businessmen trying to churn out hundreds of thousands of oryoki sets to sell in King Soopers.<sup>31</sup> The Japanese people who made these particular sets are devoted Buddhists, who paid tremendous attention to their work, knowing that Buddhist practitioners were going to eat out of the sets. They had a lot of feeling for us.

The plastic set that many of you have is somewhat like a field-training kit, but it would be good to own that, as well. Suppose you take a retreat in the mountains; the wooden set might not serve you all that well in that rugged situation, because of its sophistication; the plastic set could be used instead. And the wooden set could be used for dharma gatherings. If you possess both sets, that would be good. However, we are not particularly asking you to strain or strangle your financial capabilities.

At the same time, in the long run, it is absolutely necessary to invest in a good set. A long-lasting oryoki investment is very good. I have seen people hand down begging bowls from one generation to another. I inherited my begging bowl from the previous Trungpa, and I still have it. In that way, your oryoki set becomes a family heirloom. It is very good to have that kind of idea. We are not particularly talking about the economy or affordability of such a thing; we are talking about the principle. It would be very good for you to have the wooden oryoki set.

## **FOURFOLD LOGIC OF ORYOKI**

Oryoki can be divided into four stages: ground, path, fruition, and cleaning up.

### ***Ground***

Our style of eating is a system of monastic discipline. You have a wrapping cloth, a wiping cloth, and a lap cloth; you have a setsu, or cleaning utensil, a

spoon, and chopsticks; you have a case for these instruments; and you have your set of nested bowls.

The first step is how you actually prepare for the meal. As you do your chants and are about to receive your food—but not quite yet—you are undoing your oryoki set, opening your bowls, and setting each in its particular place, which is very important. There is a sense of respect for the person who cooked the food that is about to be served to you. And you appreciate that you are going to eat properly and mindfully. You also have some sense of the details. All of this is the logic of the ground.

### *Path*

Then we have the logic of path. The transition from ground to path comes when you raise your bowl to receive food. The path is receiving the food at the proper place in the chant.

### *Fruition*

The fruition is actually eating the food. Here again, the idea is not one of resentment and sloppiness. You should pay attention to your utensils and your bowl and your posture—all at the same time. That way the food is eaten properly.

We could quite safely say that at least 30 percent of the indigestion problems that take place in the Western world occur because people don't eat properly. I'm sure macrobiotics always say that, but we have something more to offer than that approach, I hope. The idea is that you get indigestion when you don't relate with your food properly, when you don't eat properly, when you don't eat mindfully.

You should pay attention, scoop by scoop, chopstick by chopstick, to how you eat and why you eat. You don't have to chew like the macrobiotics, but please pay attention to how you eat. Eating is not particularly sharing your whims or your casualness with other people. We eat in the shrine hall, and we eat the way the Buddha ate. Somebody produces the food; therefore we appreciate it; and therefore we eat properly, in a good way.

## *Cleaning Up*

After that, we finish our oryoki properly. What usually happens in the setting-sun world is that when we achieve the result, we just take off; when we get the gold medal, we just go away. But in the buddhadharma world, or even the Great Eastern Sun world, we don't do that. We follow up after the fruition. Having eaten, we also learn how to clean our world. That gesture is applicable to any situation: we can clean our entire world properly and fully. We wipe our bowls clean, and we also fold the cloths and tie them up properly. We make sure that our world does not create any further nuisance for others, but that we can in fact provide tremendous vision and inspiration for people to clean things up. We don't just leave our trash everywhere. The logic here is: at the beginning there is no praise; at the end there is no blame. We are creating a decent human society—we can even go so far as to look at oryoki sociologically. By practicing oryoki, we are creating our world, and we are appreciating our world.

---

28. There are something like two hundred fifty monastic rules that are part of the vinaya, the code of discipline that comes from the Buddha. Almost forty of these are about eating.

29. This sutra appears in the appendix.

30. A utensil for cleaning the oryoki bowls.

31. A supermarket in Boulder, Colorado.

# *Why Buddhism in America*

*A talk at Naropa Institute*<sup>32</sup>

AT NAROPA INSTITUTE, we always begin by saying that the question is the answer. So “Why Buddhism in America” is not a question; it is a statement. “Why” is the notion of an open mind. “Buddhism in America” relates Buddhism to the general mentality that exists in the United States of America.

When we established Naropa Institute, we began with a summer program that drew a tremendous, overwhelming response in the first year. We had a similar response the second year, and by our third year, we found that a lot of students wanted to study here year-round.

The festivity of the summer, which still continues, is not particularly a highlight, but it has become something of a social event. Students can invite their parents to attend classes, and those who have a faint interest could drop by and see what is going on at Naropa Institute.

The summer festivity continues at the institute, which is actually helpful and good. But on the other hand, we might change our approach quite rapidly in the future because we would like to encourage year-round programs at Naropa Institute.<sup>33</sup>

Having year-round students is much more helpful than inviting dilettantes, although there’s nothing wrong with dilettante-ship as such. Obviously, somebody has to test and taste what is happening in current educational systems, such as Naropa Institute. People have to dip their fingers into the soup and taste it, to see if the soup tastes too hot or whether the soup has enough spices to appreciate and drink it at all.

We have an influx of both young and old people who are happening to examine the virtues, merits, and disadvantages of Naropa Institute. They

scrutinize the merit of the institute quite thoroughly, and they also appreciate it quite thoroughly.

At Naropa Institute we approach the whole educational system according to the principles of buddhadharma. We would like to present a traditional approach, similar to the Victorian style of education or other European approaches.

Recently, education in America has been based on entertainment. That is to say, the professors and teachers have become more and more cowardly. They don't want to push their students to follow their instructions within the traditional educational format.

In the schooling of young children in preparatory schools or elementary schools, we begin to find more and more that children are told to use their toys to learn with. "We are not going to push you to do anything drastic. You don't have to memorize; you don't have to think, even. Just play nicely with the toys we provide, and you will learn something about our history, our mathematics, our alphabet, and our grammar."

That is the idea of education that seems to have been created by the present generation, which had a terrible time with their schooling. Now they are in power, so they have invented a system of entertainment as education, so that children won't have to go through terrible educational situations. That approach is actually based on good intentions, excellent, maybe. But, on the other hand, it could mean the destruction of the educational system altogether.

We have to push our children and ourselves to relate properly with the principles of education, which means discipline, respecting our elders—that is to say, our teachers—and putting ourselves through a certain amount of painful situations.

Knowledge is often regarded as a gigantic, monumental tablet. We might wonder how we can climb on that, or comprehend that gigantic thing, those stacks and stacks of information, knowledge, and wisdom—accomplishments of all kinds. How can we actually achieve something? How can we climb up and conquer and be on top of that Mount Everest of knowledge at all? However, we could recognize that learning is not necessarily all that difficult, although it does require effort.

An educational system based on very hearty discipline is absolutely necessary for us. We have to push ourselves, lock ourselves in our studies, and simply relate with the information that is given to us. We have to appreciate what is being taught to us; we have to memorize and experience the information, as well as relating to the challenge of discussion groups and all kinds of examinations. If we don't do that, we find ourselves nowhere.

We don't have to borrow toys to help us to study properly. Obviously, the concept of comfort, as well as entertainment, is out of the question. Comfort is not in the best interest of student or teacher. Where we begin to present education as a toy or a lollipop, we begin to devalue our wisdom, and we reduce school to a candy bar approach, as opposed to a university or a center of learning.

When we pervert our imagination and vision, we would like to preserve the possibility of degrading our stack of knowledge into a candy bar. Many people would like to see things evolve that way, so that they don't even have to study. They could have tape recorders hidden under their pillow. Then they could snore loudly and sleep peacefully while somebody feeds them knowledge subconsciously in their sleep.

People have tried that many times, but it never brings success such as is achieved by someone who has learned orally, personally. No real experience takes place when we try to avoid discipline.

Why Buddhism? It's not Buddha-*ism*. The religion of the Buddha isn't necessary, particularly, but the disciplines that we have developed and learned from over twenty-five hundred years are necessary. At Nalanda University, Vikramashila, and other Buddhist centers of learning, the student was the practitioner, and the scholar was concentrated one-pointedly, on the point. Education was a complete lifestyle. Students practiced and they concentrated one-pointedly. They memorized texts and thought about what was said in the texts, whether the contents were valid or invalid.

When you follow these principles of education, you begin to use your logical, or critical, intelligence to examine what is presented to you. That critical intelligence is also critical intelligence about yourself. That critical intelligence is applied in two ways: toward what is presented to you, the educational material, as well as toward who is going to be educated. So you work with yourself as well. The two blades of the sword work simultaneously.

Then you begin to find yourself examining things constantly. The process of education becomes very precise and clear and absolutely accurate. There is no room for mistakes, at all.

We are applying the Buddhist mentality or Buddhist approach to education at Naropa Institute, rather than purely taking a religious approach to education. We are not particularly talking in terms of converting people to Buddhism, but we are talking in terms of bringing the inheritance of Buddhist methodology into our system of education.

“Why Buddhism in America,” why the Buddhist way, is a statement. Why open mind. Why Buddhist way. We have to do it. When we present education from the point of view of Buddhist vision or of European vision, the main point is that we have to think twice. We have to refrain from using entertainment as education. That does not mean to say that in order to learn we have to be put into a prison, or be tortured—although we might be tortured by our own concepts and ideas and wanting to make everything liberal.<sup>34</sup>

In order to study and learn properly and study properly, we have to work at it; we have to work on it. There is no other way. There is no savior or god of knowledge who descends on our heads, so that one minute we’re dumb and the next minute we are brilliant. Oh no! We have never heard of that. Nothing like that happens.

In the Buddhist tradition, we talk about individual salvation, *sosor tharpa*. Everybody has to prove himself. We are capable of individual salvation because we do possess our own inherent human dignity already, in any case. We are capable of learning properly, but we have to tune into our dignity rather than trying to use lollipops and toys and gimmicks. So, no toy shop anymore. Thank you.

---

32. Now Naropa University.

33. Over a period of some years, Naropa went from being a summer institute to a year-round accredited institution of higher learning. It was fully accredited in 1986. It recently celebrated its fortieth anniversary.

34. Ed.: I originally thought that the word here might have been misheard and should be “literal” rather than “liberal,” as it appeared in the *Vajradhatu Sun*. However, since the main

argument is about education not being entertainment, I returned to “liberal.”



## *The Ten Paramitas in the Development of the Vajradhatu Buddhist Community*<sup>35</sup>

*This talk was given on January 1, 1981, at the conclusion of an all-day reading of the Kagyü Gurtso, or The Rain of Wisdom—songs of the great forefathers of the practice lineage—in the Boulder shrine hall. The day's activities commemorated the tenth anniversary of Chögyam Trungpa teaching in North America.*

WELCOME, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN of the noble sangha. It would probably take another ten years to tell the full story of the past ten years, but if we are looking forward, the story could be shorter. It could be very simple and straightforward.

As we all remember, each one of you had a chance to come to the dharma in your own various ways. In many cases, before we began working together, your situations were rather desperate. Some of you were struggling more than others, or suffering more than others, but each of you had your own style of manifesting your struggle and your pain. You each manifested your own kind of contortions, hunched-overness and jumpiness.

Nonetheless, we met together quite happily, and we managed to work together. I think the success of our meeting was largely because of my particular vision of the Shambhala possibilities that could be established in North America, as well as the possibilities of buddhadharma that could be established here.

In one of the conversations I had with Jamgön Kongtrül,<sup>36</sup> we discussed what the final place would be where we could go to establish dharma, and he thought it would be America. That was in 1953. At that time we knew that there would be a problem or disaster. We knew we would be unable to

maintain our tradition, our heritage, our wisdom, and our discipline properly in the place where we were, and that we would have to change our location.

Following that conversation, the intensive takeover of Tibet and the Buddhism of Tibet by the Chinese communists led to my leaving the country and coming to India and Britain and so forth.

Coming to this country was an interesting encounter. Here I met people with extreme expectations. A lot of people had already become professional spiritual supermarket shoppers, and some were still trying to become so. Therefore we needed a sense of *generosity*.<sup>37</sup> That was the starting point.

Following generosity, we certainly needed some sense of *discipline*. After being generous with each other, we could not just indulge in freedom. Therefore we introduced the notion of discipline.

At that point the administrative setup of our organization began to develop. With that necessary step, we began to realize the need for tremendous *patience*. Orderliness was not necessarily what we expected; neither was it unexpected. But to develop a sense of organization, group effort was necessary, so patience was required.

Following patience, naturally, next came *exertion*. You cannot just leave things hanging loose, but you have to follow up. At that point things begin to happen, to take place on their own, as if they had their own strength, their own life. In our community, the organization of Vajradhatu emerged. Karma Dzong came into being and Karmê Chöling began to develop as its own entity.<sup>38</sup>

The next step was obviously dhyana, *meditation*. We discovered a piece of land near Fort Collins, Colorado, and established a center there. We tried to decide what we should call it. Some people said that we should call it the Fort Collins Meditation Center. Because the Pygmies made up the largest population on the land at the time, we couldn't exactly call it a meditation center.<sup>39</sup> [*Laughter.*] So we thought it might be better to call it a dharma center rather than a meditation center; we felt that might have more creative possibilities. At this point, of course, Rocky Mountain Dharma Center is becoming a meditation center. The possibilities for meditation have begun to develop, and we are able to work with that situation beautifully.

As we went further, we had the development of Naropa Institute. That was the next step, prajna, or *transcendent knowledge*, on the sixth bhumi level. As we used to say, Naropa Institute is where intuition and intellect meet together.<sup>40</sup> We started with quite a big bang: we invited Ram Dass and many others. There was a Buddhist camp and a Hindu camp.<sup>41</sup>

The prajna phase was quite successful, but at the same time we began to realize that there might be more than we could handle; we realized that there was already so much energy and so many possibilities in North America. The expectations of our students, our sangha membership, were that we might not be able to make it. There was a strong feeling that we might not be able to handle so much energy, as more and more possibilities were coming up.

After the prajna breakthrough of founding Naropa Institute and Nalanda Foundation, we were faced with a problem of how to coordinate situations together.<sup>42</sup> That was the upaya, or *skillful means*, phase. At that level, we had a landmark experience: financial panic. The question was how to join the right hand and the left hand together, so that we could keep things together.

Some people suggested that we should sell Karmê Chöling—get rid of it, so that we could get more money to maintain the rest of our programs. I personally vetoed that suggestion. I said, “Should we cut off one of our limbs in order to survive?”

The policy we developed then was to try to decentralize a little bit more, so that the different centers would have their own fund-raising projects and their own particular programs, and they would relate with their own constituents, their own friends, and sanghas. Local friends would support each center so that everything would not always be dumped on the central organization. With that approach we didn’t have to have a financial panic happening all the time.

The upaya phase was an interesting one. It was as if we were learning all over again how to live and how to run our households. We had to decide who was going to pay the bills, who was going to make the money, who was going to take out the garbage, who was going to talk to the postman, and who was going to relate with the landlord. We had to learn to deal with simple situations like that.

But at the same time, our situation was obviously on a larger scale, a greater scale. It was a question of greater value, greater volume altogether. Initially we managed to survive financial panic, but there were still difficulties at that point—or even at this point.

The next phase was *power*. Power in this case means having strength and dignity without begging for confirmation from others. Community members should have a sense of individuality. They should feel proud of what they do, what they have, and what they practice. In fact, we are very proud of those things.

But at the same time we also feel resentful and defensive when we talk to our parents, our in-laws, or whatever we have. There are two types of power, which run parallel to those two situations. Those two types of power are connected with a number of situations that have come up as we have gone through our ten years' journey.

We have had several visits from His Holiness the sixteenth Gyalwang Karmapa, and we have been given his confirmation and his appreciation and trust.<sup>43</sup> That confirmation is one kind of power.

The other kind of power is connected with the public image that we have projected to those outside the sangha. Often, when a sangha member falls in love with a non-sangha member, a lot of sangha members feel threatened. They become inhospitable to the person who has fallen in love. That inhospitality causes a problem and territoriality.

It is almost as if we were developing a different kind of racist society. We respond as our Jewish mother would respond if we brought home a Gentile boyfriend or girlfriend. “Look, Mommy, what I found!” [*Laughter.*] And your mother's first question is, “Is he or she Jewish?” “No, Mommy, no, Daddy.” We have that kind of attitude actually. Our community members have been somewhat small-minded; they have felt threatened themselves, so they have not been able to expand or extend in that way. That small-mindedness is part of the power problem.

Beyond that, we have been attacked by the press, the media. That is another kind of power situation. What the press has to say is basically somewhat complimentary. They think that we are so powerful, so strong, and so *mean* [*laughter*] that we could change the rest of the world. Therefore, they

have been saying that we are wicked: we have done such-and-such things wrong, and they have made certain discoveries about us, and blah, blah, blah, blah.

At the same time, there is a certain amount of fearful respect in what they say, which is an interesting kind of double twist. Even the *Boulder Monthly* respects us.<sup>44</sup>

Mr. Tom Clark of that magazine respects us because we have come so far, and therefore we are worthy of his criticism; he takes pride in his criticism. It is interesting to be criticized by somebody of that nature; you begin to realize that a little worm who is trying to cross the street doesn't get criticized. People criticize only if there is an outrageous tiger trying to cross the street, or a big elephant or a big zebra.

That is the logic of why we get bad press. It is part of the power problem, and it is connected with our own community problems as well, in some sense. When community members are questioned by the press, they don't seem to have anything to say, particularly. They become either angry or tongue-tied; they don't have much to say.

For further reference, maybe we should have more to say. We should regard being questioned as part of the journey we go through. We will always have to go through this journey, and we should learn how to handle such situations. We have by no means passed through the stage of being attacked. Quite possibly there is some other attack percolating in another corner of the universe.

The next level, number nine, is inspiration, or *vision*. That inspiration was definitely manifested in His Holiness's last visit. Our community members finally managed to overcome their nervousness and sense of strangeness and foreignness, and they learned to look at him when he performs the vajra crown ceremony and manifests as the vajra king on the spot. That has had a tremendously positive effect on our community altogether. That is the first aspect of vision, which is very powerful and very helpful to all of us.

We have also been trying to work with many other situations of inspiration in our community. Community members are trying to organize Shambhala households, and they are learning to develop a sense of culture and society within the community, through proper households, table manners, and

decorum of all kinds: how to dress, how to eat, how to talk, how to be—all those basic principles.<sup>45</sup> We are beginning to learn the principles and the disciplines of warriorship. In particular, we are studying with the *kyudo* master Shibata Sensei, and we are learning how to do *kyudo* properly.<sup>46</sup> That kind of discipline is part of category number nine: vision.

In addition, Lady Diana is trying to develop further vision through the practice of the discipline of dressage, which she has studied very diligently.<sup>47</sup>  
<sup>48</sup> She herself has gone through tremendous pain and tremendous exertion, and now she is finally manifesting herself—with a certain amount of chaos and the usual economic problems and all the rest of it. Nonetheless, we as a community are manifesting the vision of dressage; it is becoming one of our landmarks, which we certainly cannot forget. Dressage has become part of the ninth category of developing vision and inspiration.

Then we finally have number ten, which is traditionally known as *wisdom*, *jnana*. There doesn't seem to be much to say about it at this point. [*Laughter.*] This is the tenth year since I came to North America, the tenth anniversary; nonetheless I don't seem to have much to say about number ten. We can only talk about how we developed from number one to number nine. Therefore we have number ten, simply. Further wisdom depends, I suppose, on the years to come.

There is something else, apart from what we have been talking about: there is the overall development and the growth of the community. There is a general sense of people taking more responsibility, holding their seat properly, and having a sense of discipline and cheerfulness. All of these are prerequisites to continuing further and to the creation of Shambhala vision and enlightened society altogether.

In this particular talk I am addressing our international community, which is now all over North America and in Europe as well. We have more to do and more to learn, particularly in the area of providing further help and further service to the rest of the world—in terms of education, in terms of developing physical and mental health, and in terms of sports. That is to say, we are trying to develop the various ways of training warriors: riding, *kyudo*, and all the rest.



We could uplift ourselves and our society further. Obviously the possibility of uplifting our society depends on your personal practice of sitting meditation, and on your learning and your further connection with the mahayana notion of training the mind.

We should take a look at what we have done so far; that is very helpful. But we cannot just glorify what we have done and forget to go further; we must continue with what we have been doing, with what we have achieved. We have done a very good job so far; therefore let us continue. I would like to thank everyone very much, everybody here in this room as well as those who are not here: those who are in Europe, those who are in Canada, and those isolated students of ours who are sometimes too shy to come to meetings, but who still have a secret admiration for us. I would like to welcome all of you and invite you to join us. I would like to invite you to put some effort into uplifting yourselves and building an enlightened society and energizing the vision of the Great Eastern Sun so that we can understand how to defeat the setting-sun vision.

Since we have been able to stick together for ten years, I think we should stick together for longer than that. That would be the best proof, like good whiskey. [*Laughter.*] Let us go on. Please don't fall back; let us continue. If you don't fall back, I certainly won't. I'll be with you all along. Whether it is a rough journey or a smooth journey, I will always be there with you. Please come along with us. Thank you very much. In the name of the lineage and the Shambhala tradition, please let us continue.

---

35. The paramitas are the transcendent virtues or actions of a bodhisattva, someone whose life is committed to helping others. Most commonly, one hears of the six paramitas, or skillful actions, of a bodhisattva: generosity, discipline, patience, exertion, meditation, and transcendent knowledge. There are, however, ten paramitas connected with the ten bhumis, or stages, of the bodhisattva path. In addition to the first six, the remaining four are upaya, or skilful means; inspiration, or vision; power; and wisdom, or jnana. In relating the paramitas to the growth of the Buddhist community, Chögyam Trungpa here reverses numbers eight and nine, vision and power.

36. Chögyam Trungpa's root teacher, or main teacher, in Tibet.

37. In this talk, Chögyam Trungpa relates the development of the Buddhist community to the paramitas. The first time a paramita is mentioned, it is given here in italics.

38. During his first few years in North America, there was no central organization or administrative structure. In 1973, Vajradhatu was established as the national organization, with its headquarters located in Boulder, Colorado. Karma Dzong was the name given to the headquarters in Boulder. It referred both to the local center as well as to the seat of the national organization. Karmê Chöling is the name of the rural retreat center in Barnet, Vermont. It is the first center established in the United States by Chögyam Trungpa.

39. The Pygmies were members of a commune in Boulder, Colorado. Many of them became close students of Chögyam Trungpa's and they helped to establish the Rocky Mountain Dharma Center. Here, Chögyam Trungpa is humorously suggesting that they didn't meditate much, so that RMDC should be called a dharma center rather than a meditation center. For more, see *Taming Untameable Beings*, by James Lowrey.

40. For more on this idea, see "Intellect and Intuition," in *The Heart of the Buddha: Entering the Tibetan Buddhist Path*, pp. 12–17.

41. For more on the founding of Naropa Institute and its transition from a summer program to a year-round university, see "Why Buddhism in America" in this volume and the introduction to *The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa*, Volume Two, pp. xxvii–xxxiii.

42. The Nalanda Foundation was the second charitable organization founded by Chögyam Trungpa. It was set up to be the educational nonprofit overseeing Naropa University and other secular parts of the mandala, or world, that Chögyam Trungpa was establishing. He seems to be referring to issues of coordinating so many different programs, centers, and organizations.

43. His Holiness the sixteenth Karmapa was the head of the Kagyü lineage of Tibetan Buddhism, to which Chögyam Trungpa belonged. At Trungpa Rinpoche's invitation, he traveled to the United States in 1974, 1976, and again in 1980–81. He performed an important empowerment, the ceremony of the vajra crown, many times in North America and also formally empowered Chögyam Trungpa as a vajra master (*vajracharya*) and holder of vajrayana wisdom (*vidyadhara*).

44. The *Boulder Monthly* was a local magazine in Boulder, Colorado. Tom Clark was a senior writer for the publication in 1978–79. He wrote there about a controversial incident involving Chögyam Trungpa and W. S. Merwin, at the 1975 Vajradhatu Seminary, and later was the author of *The Great Naropa Poetry Wars*.

45. Chögyam Trungpa encouraged the establishment of Shambhala households, in which several families or individuals would live together trying to embody the principles of Shambhala vision in their everyday life. These were group-living situations, but they were far from being hippie communes or something of that nature.

46. Kyudo is the Japanese art of archery. Chögyam Trungpa was a close friend and colleague of Kanjuro Shibata Sensei, the twentieth in a line of master bow makers and a lineage holder of the kyudo tradition.

47. Lady Diana here refers to Diana J. Mukpo, the wife of Chögyam Trungpa. He gave her the title "Lady Diana," so that, as the wife of the teacher, she would be treated with respect.

48. Diana Mukpo studied dressage in North America and Europe, including several years spent studying with top riders from the Spanish Riding School in Vienna. She was also able to attend the Spanish Riding School for several terms as a student there, which was extremely



rare for a woman. For more on her training and knowledge of dressage, see *Dragon Thunder: My Life with Chögyam Trungpa*.

# *How to Be a Warrior: Joining Mindfulness and Awareness Together*

*A talk at the 1981 Magyal Pomra Encampment. This program was created by Chögyam Trungpa in 1978 to provide intensive training for members of the Dorje Kasung, a service organization that provided security at many events, as well as personal service to Chögyam Trungpa and his family.*

TODAY IS A VERY IMPORTANT TIME. Our training is proceeding further. Some of you have accomplished a lot and some of you are about to accomplish a lot. Your being here has been excellent.

Today, I would like to lay out the basic evolutionary process of how to be a warrior. The main point is quite simple, and at the same time, it is complicated by the nature of its simplicity. You might regard that as kind of nonsensical, but it's a true statement. Why are we doing this crazy thing at all? Why do we have the Dorje Kasung? Why don't we just have an intensive training session without the kasung and everybody could be happy?<sup>49</sup> We could just recruit volunteers as doorkeepers and a person who is a sort of moderator. Why do we have to develop such a thing as the *kasung* at all?

The original idea of kasungship didn't come about purely because we were bombarded with too many demands, and therefore we needed someone to close the doors or moderate the crowd or anything like that. The original idea of kasung is more than you think. It came about a long time ago. It was at the time of the attainment of enlightenment of the Buddha. When he meditated, at the time he was about to attain enlightenment there was an attack of *maras*. *Mara* is a Sanskrit word that literally means "destroyer." *Mar* means "to kill." Mara is a killer or destroyer, an interrupter of the situation.

A group of mara spirits appeared as the Buddha was meditating. They had neglected the Buddha, because they never thought a person could attain enlightenment. When they saw that Buddha was about to attain enlightenment, they panicked and came up with all sorts of passion, aggression, and ignorance. Mara's daughters undressed before the Buddha, doing a sort of striptease, which was passion. And aggression came in the form of the armies of mara, who shot arrows and spearheads at the Buddha. But all the weapons became flowers and they didn't hit the Buddha. Instead they became part of the celebration.

The attainment of enlightenment, or even a glimpse of it, always comes along with a certain passion and a certain aggression that try to take your mind away from the true way. This has happened to practitioners throughout history, always.

So we, as the protectors of dharmic inspiration, should be able to give practitioners, including ourselves, the chance to go right through with their practice, without being swayed by passion or aggression of any kind. Those obstacles may come along in all sorts of ways, depending on your weakness: what your favorite music is, what your favorite drink is, who your favorite person is, and all the rest of it. So that is why we have kasungship.

All of you are protectors to yourselves to begin with, of course. And then you are protectors for the rest of your fellow sangha members who are not kasung. Your role is to see that they are not swayed by different kinds of seduction, other than the seduction of coming into the mandala. That is your role.

Here, at the encampment, is the training ground, but there, when you go home, is actually where you are on duty, always. Whether you are so-called on duty or not, you are expected to be on duty for the benefit of yourself and others so that they can hear and see and experience the teachings properly, fully.

The word *kasung* is a Tibetan word. *Ka* means “command” or “sacred word.” In this case it means both. When we call ourselves the Kagyü, that means we are followers of the sacred tradition of the lineage (*gyü*) as well as the command (the *ka*) of the lineage. So, after this, this is not my talk. It is inspired by the Rigdens.<sup>50</sup>

## JOINING MINDFULNESS AND AWARENESS: NOT BEING SWAYED BY OTHERS

The first step in your discipline is awareness, awareness in the sense that you do not act haphazardly or casually in connection with your state of mind. So since you are kasung already, you have to be developing awareness around you. That is not just when you are a kasung on duty. You may have taken the pin off of your lapel, but still the basic awareness takes place.

If you are off duty, you are still on duty on the spot. You are on duty in order to preserve the dharma, in order to be part of the mandala, in order to be an inhabitant, or inmate, of the mandala—or whatever you'd like to call it. You are still there. You are still in bed with the Mukpos.<sup>51</sup> I highly demand a sense of total awareness. I actually demand that very highly of all of you.

I could be completely pissed off at all of you. I could say, “Why on earth are you coming into my world, my compound? You have no right to do that. You are what you are, and we have our own systems and wisdoms, so why are you coming in? We don't need any of you. We don't want to have anything to do with any of you.” Theoretically, I could have said that and cast all of you out completely.

But instead, I've been commanded and I've been told to accept anybody who has a sense of loneliness, a sense of chaos, and at the same time a sense of wakefulness and bleeding heart—bleeding heart, not in the Christian sense, but like a ripe fruit about to burst. I've been told to accept such people.

Before I left my country, I received a message that I was going, that I *should* go, out of my country. The message said, “When you go, you might meet strange people, but at the same time, they are part of your blood, part of your system, part of the vision of the Buddha himself, altogether.” So here we are. The vision came true; the dream came true.<sup>52</sup>

What we are doing is nothing gimmicky; it has nothing to do with a gimmick. EST might come up with car racing and say that all the EST students should do that as part of EST training.<sup>53</sup> But it is not like that with us. We are trying to go back as much as we can to the basic tradition. In fact, we are going back so far that you might be surprised. You might be frightened that we are going back so far, very far.

The king of Tibet, Trisong Detsen, or even earlier, Songtsen Gampo in the seventh century, had an interest in Buddhism. Songtsen Gampo belonged to the Bön tradition, which is a tradition of local deity worship; Buddhism was added on top of that. The king decided to send his prime minister to India to receive Buddhist teachings from Indian teachers. So what we are doing is similar to that, in some sense. We are not adopting things by chance, but we are going back and back and back to the ancient traditions.

In both living situations as well as psychological situations, we try to maintain dignity. From that comes a sense that we are no longer subject to the sudden impulses of modern wisdom that might come up, such as EST, Outward Bound, Esalen, or anything like that. But what we are doing is going back, rather than coming up with a new idea.

Every one of you applied to attend the encampment, and you were accepted with tremendous delight. My only regret is that I am somewhat sad that some of our old comrades, the veterans of earlier encampments, have been unable to join us because of economic and domestic situations. It is very sad. If you have a chance to, when you go back home, whether you are living in Boulder or elsewhere, you should try to meet with some of our old kasung comrades who were unable to come here. They have learned a lot. They have a lot of wisdom, and it is too bad that they can't join us here. In any case we are going on.

Mindfulness, at this point, is accepted as a natural situation. Mindfulness you have already. Awareness is a second stage that is particularly important in kasungship. So there are two practices: shamatha, or mindfulness, and vipashyana, or awareness. In order to be a dharmic soldier, shamatha is good; but in order to form a group, in order to march, in order to have drills, in order to have manpower, vipashyana is very important—unusually important. So I would suggest that all of you, when you return to your home base, should try to study more about vipashyana. Vipashyana is founded on the base of shamatha, and it is very important.

In fact, there is a tradition of joining shamatha and vipashyana together. In the Tibetan tradition, it is called *shilhak-zungjuk*. Shilhak-zungjuk, the combination of tranquility and awareness together, is actually recommended a lot in the Buddhist tradition.

In the Japanese tradition there is a similar term, which is *shikantaza*. Shikantaza is seen as one of the high points of practice in the basic meditative tradition of the Soto school of Zen. And in the Tibetan tradition we have shilhak-zungjuk, mindfulness and awareness put together. Ordinarily, we teach our students just plain shamatha first of all. Vipashyana comes much later. When they have actually practiced the best of shamatha, then vipashyana comes very naturally to them automatically. But in your case, as Dorje Kasung, you don't have the time or the space or the accommodation for that. We want you to do both together—shikantaza.

So in becoming a Dorje Kasung you are required to do a combination of shamatha-vipashyana, shilhak-zungjuk, shikantaza, mindfulness and awareness at once. That is what is required and expected.

The combination of awareness with mindfulness at the same time cuts frivolity and cuts chaos. When you crawl into your pup tent, what should you pick to wear, to put on first thing next morning?<sup>54</sup> Is there going to be morning dew or frost in the morning, or is there going to be rain in the morning? You have to know each of those situations.

You would read about a lot of things and you could go on field trips, and you could have expert outdoorsy teachers. But fundamentally you don't get anything out of those things. They just tell you mechanically what will happen, almost at the level of saying, "When it rains, you'll get wet." It's almost on that level.

The business-world comrades, the businessmen of the world, will sell you raincoats, sleeping bags, and anything else that will make sure that you'll forget that you are in nature when you camp like this. You'll forget that you are in a natural situation, with nature. The business world is trying to tell you how to forget your nature.

My son, the Sawang, showed me some little pellets last night that you can buy so that you don't have to learn how to light your kindling, your bonfire.<sup>55</sup> You just light one tablet, set a match to it, and you put lots of wood on top of it so that it makes your fire for you. In the Shambhala situation that we have here, we are not particularly interested in relying on such things.

Of course we rely on certain things up to a point, so that, for example, I don't have to shout at the top of my voice in order to talk to you. We use

electricity for a microphone, and little things like that. But on the whole, in our living situation here, we try to learn to conduct ourselves at our best, based on the vision of the shamatha principle of concentration and the vipashyana principle of having general awareness around us.

It is not a metaphysical approach, but it is very practical. What particular logs should you choose for your bonfire? What particular twigs should you choose for your kindling? All those little things come out of shamatha and vipashyana discipline.

So we are trying to cut down on frivolity and artificial inspiration. Know-how is good because it provides a certain amount of inspiration, but at the same time it is lethal. If you begin to rely on that kind of mechanical situation *alone*, then you would become subject to the scientific world. You don't have a chance to develop yourself.

You never make a real fire, never in your life, if you follow those examples, if you always have your kerosene and your newspapers and those pills or whatever. You never make a real fire at all. I think people have a lot of problems with that, even in being parents, knowing how to raise their children or how to be a wife or husband.

The main point seems to be that we have to attain a state of existence where we cannot be overpowered by others. We are self-contained individuals as we are, with intelligence and wisdom, obviously. This is not ego-tripping, but simply being willing to step out of the remedies and shelters that have been provided to us by ourselves as well as by our parents and our friends, always.

Whenever there is a problem, nobody says that we should go out and try to heal ourselves. But they always give us a pill or an environment to get into. This point is what we are actually trying to teach in Shambhala medicine as well, that you have to cure yourself by being perky. Nobody actually cures you. If you don't have the spirit of uprightness, nobody can help you. There is no such pill. A pill may lift you upward, but then, it makes you silly.

The main point is that, when you develop basic mindfulness-awareness, you are no longer swayed by others. That seems to be the main point. This applies to being a kasung on duty or remaining at home or dealing with your banker or whatever you do. So as Dorje Kasung, you should practice awareness together with mindfulness on the spot.

All right, we could have questions if you like. Do you have any questions?

*Question:* Sir, how does one practice shikantaza?

*Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche:* You find that out when you drill.<sup>56</sup> When you're there, you're there, which is *shikan*. You are not confused or frightened. You are at home. You have your head and shoulders together and you stand up. Then you have *taza*, when you begin to walk. So you have shikantaza together. It's delightful actually.

*Q:* Sir, how could this be transferred to the gomden, the meditation cushion?<sup>57</sup>

*CTR:* There, the basic point is holding and working with your thoughts. The basic practice of awareness at all is shikan. Taza is just working with your discursive thoughts. You shouldn't try to forget the phenomenal world, hearing sounds, seeing things, smelling them. You shouldn't try to exclude them. That creates taza, so that everything is included. The shikan part is trying to hold one-pointedness, on the spot.

*Q:* Thank you, sir.

*Q:* In being a kasung and working with the notion of obstacles, there is something that's not clear in my mind. When is an obstacle a creation of our own mind, such as a klesha, or a conflicting emotion, versus what the Buddha experienced, where the obstacle manifested as an external presentation or force?

*CTR:* Well, obstacles don't exist externally, particularly. They are quite easy to sway. When somebody comes up with a new idea, the obstacles begin to change their reference point altogether. So as long as one keeps one's own steady discipline, it's not a problem, particularly since a lot of us are working together. If you were sent into the setting-sun world purely by yourself, in the desert of Australia, it might be difficult. But at this point, we don't have that problem. So we should be all right. And we can tell the people in the setting-sun world: "Look, isn't that depressing?"

*Q:* So then, sir, you're saying that if you have realized your existence as a warrior, you don't need to be concerned about the complexities of what's going to happen when you step into the setting-sun world.



*CTR*: The main point is to be simple-minded: as if, as if. Be simple-minded. Then you are not swayed by anything. You have just one thing going on. As if. Be simple-minded. And when you are simple-minded, as if, enough, then people begin to think that you might have something up your sleeve. Then you tell them you don't, but you are just what you are, which is what you have learned from our training. That's it.

Also, don't try to talk your parents or relatives or friends out of their doubts by rebelling. You have to convince them by your example: how you are, the way you handle yourself. This is what we are doing here. It's a conquering plan. It's a different kind of conquering plan, without machine guns or bombs, but just being. Once you plant yourself as a good kasung, a good practitioner, in the middle of Timbuktu, you are bound to magnetize thousands of people. That's the bomb we are trying to work with. Each one of you is a bomb. [*Laughter.*]

*Q*: It sounds, sir, a little bit like what you did about ten years ago.<sup>58</sup>

*CTR*: Well, I hope you understand that. I'm glad you do.

*Q*: The Kasung Kyi Khyap in his talk last night said that the kasung were dharmapalas because they could use weapons.<sup>59</sup> I wonder if you would say what our best weapon is.

*CTR*: Well, we don't have any, except our words. When somebody comes to the gate and says, "Can I do this?" you say, "No," or you say, "Yes." Words. First we use our mind as a weapon. So we start with mind, then speech, then body. Usually, the order in Buddhist literature is body, speech, and then mind. But we use our mind first as an intelligent way of protecting things. Then we declare that, and if somebody doesn't obey that, we have to use our body.

The notion of a weapon shouldn't startle you. It's not so much a killing principle but it's more of a mark of holding office, basically. This fan I am holding is the best weapon we have, actually. You might think it is purely to wave around, but it actually embodies the warrior principle.

Maybe *weapon* is not a good word. *Scepter* is probably a better word. This kind of weapon is like an engagement ring. The ring shows that you are committed, and you have it for the rest of your marriage.

It's a question of humans being different than dogs and cats. They are provided with fingers, so they can hold their weapon, hold their scepter. The main point is to exaggerate, the same as in kyudo. We can do this with our body [*snaps fan*]. We can do this with our hands [*snaps fan*]. It is an extension of our message that we can control the phenomenal world; the inanimate world can be controlled by an animate person. We can conquer the world that way.

It actually goes beyond that. The magic of making hailstorms or rain or snow, all that magic that you read about in Milarepa's life, is part of your scepter. Human beings are capable of doing that.

Friends, with that note, maybe we could finish at this point.

---

49. Study and practice retreats were often called intensive training sessions.

50. The Rigden kings are the mythical rulers of Shambhala. In essence, Chögyam Trungpa is saying that his talk is inspired by the highest levels of Shambhala vision.

51. Mukpo was Chögyam Trungpa's family name. It was also a clan in Tibet. He often spoke of the members of the Dorje Kasung as being part of the Mukpo family.

52. Chögyam Trungpa was a true visionary, in the sense that he was inspired and guided by a sense of vision that went beyond personal inspiration. When he talks about receiving a message here, it's not a message that was delivered on a piece of paper but rather something much more primordial that he tapped into. He speaks in other places about how, in the early 1950s, his root guru, Jamgön Kongtrül, talked with him about going to America. (See, as one example, "The Ten Paramitas in the Development of the Vajradhatu Buddhist Community," in this volume.) He was also well known as a tertön, or someone who was able to uncover the teachings of Guru Rinpoche that had been hidden in Tibet, both physically and in the psyche of great teachers. The messages he is speaking of here are probably more in that realm.

53. EST is a reference here to Erhard Seminars Training, a kind of personal transformation program developed by Werner Erhard, which was quite popular in the 1970s and early '80s. Chögyam Trungpa had several meetings with Werner Erhard and also accompanied His Holiness the sixteenth Karmapa when His Holiness performed the vajra crown ceremony for a large number of EST students. Chögyam Trungpa was quite critical of Erhard and of EST. At some point, Werner Erhard became interested in racing and recommended it to his students. In July, 1979, *People* magazine wrote: "There are 29 other qualifiers in this Gold Cup event, but only driver Werner Erhard claims he is here for the sake of mankind. Erhard, the founder of EST (Erhard Seminars Training), says that when he slides into his 164-horsepower Argo JM4, he is raising consciousness, not merely dust." <http://www.people.com/people/archive/article/0,,20074172,00.html>

54. Many participants at the encampment slept in pup tents, especially their first year.

55. Chögyam Trungpa is referring here to his eldest son, Ösel Mukpo, now Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, the head of Shambhala. The Sawang, which means “Earth Lord,” attended many of the Magyal Pomra Encampments, first as a participant and later in leadership positions, mentored by his father and other senior students. Since 1987, when his father passed away, he has presided over the encampments.

56. At the Magyal Pomra Encampments, one of the main disciplines is marching, or drill practice, which stresses both a great deal of individual precision as well as the overall awareness of being part of and moving together as a group.

57. The gomden is a square meditation cushion that was designed by Chögyam Trungpa.

58. The questioner is referring to Chögyam Trungpa coming to North America and how he magnetized people.

59. The Kasung Kyi Khyap, David I. Rome, was the highest ranking leader of the Dorje Kasung below Chögyam Trungpa.

## *Mindfulness-Awareness: A Good Garden Where Buds and Flowers Can Grow*

OUR TOPIC IS THE UPBRINGING OF OURSELVES and our children, as well as the whole notion of developing a good household situation. The overall title of this seminar, *How to Cultivate Buds and Flowers*, refers to our children as the buds and ourselves as the flowers.<sup>60</sup> Cultivating our domestic situation is like preparing the garden soil in which the buds and flowers can grow.

Superficially speaking, as Buddhists, our living situation is not much different from that of the rest of the world. But on the other hand, we have our specialties or peculiarities, because we are Buddhists and we have our practice of meditation. Practice may sometimes be regarded as a difficulty, when we try to schedule time to practice as well as to conduct our family affairs properly. We have many different activities to carry out beyond practice itself. So we wonder how to fit all of this together.

From one point of view, it's a big mess; from another point of view, it's a big question that we all have. I think one of the main points is that practice should come first, whatever we do.

But that doesn't necessarily mean to say that sitting on your gomden or your zafu is the only form of practice. The general sense of practice is having constant mindfulness and awareness. That is the foundation of our life, which helps to free us from speed, chaos, neurosis, resentment, and all the rest of our negativity. Therefore, awareness practice is the key point: awareness while you're cooking, awareness while you're driving, awareness while you're changing nappies, and even awareness while you're arguing!

Once we have a sense of awareness, life becomes a new revelation. Sometimes we find ourselves totally depressed, and we don't want to get out of bed in the morning. We turn off our alarm clocks and try to steal another ten minutes. All of our depression can be overcome by the notion of basic mindfulness-awareness.

Sitting practice itself could be regarded as training ourselves to be aware, so that we could be aware always. Sometimes we find that while we are on the meditation cushion we are fine, but when we get up and go to the office and get talking on the telephone, we change our personality entirely. So the genuine sense of awareness is extremely important. Without it, we cannot do anything at all. We are completely crippled. Awareness allows our vision to expand, so that our vision becomes powerful. And this allows us to *be*, and to be responsible.

The responsibilities of being in a family unit may include taking care of our children, cleaning our home, cooking our meals, and relating with each other. The hassles of this life come from not regarding everything as sacred. We are particularly talking here about relating to our children and to our husbands and wives. Once we have a sense of awareness and constant practice, then life becomes workable.

We begin to learn how to handle our various jobs and duties, those connected with the sangha, as well as those connected with earning a living and taking care of our family. So, on the whole, we should regard our home as sacred. We should spend as much time as we can working with our domestic situations—with awareness and with delight, rather than feeling that we're subjugating ourselves to chaos. If we can't build a good home situation, we cannot build enlightened society. Enlightened society must have a good foundation, a good garden, and good soil where buds and flowers can develop and blossom.

It is also very important to work with the *delek* system.<sup>61</sup> Along with developing awareness and mindfulness, we should have a sense of not isolating ourselves. We should relate with other members of our sangha family altogether, so that the *delek* system begins to become a basic social unit.

Helping ourselves and our household to develop is also important. So it is a fifty-fifty situation. For example, in bringing up our children, we can't

abandon them on the pretense that we have other things to do. But at the same time, we cannot just close the door and refuse to work with the world outside, either. So there is an important balance between the two.

On the whole, we should not be afraid to have a household. Once we have begun a family unit, we have to face the fact that we cannot ignore it, at all. There might be seeming problems, but they are not real problems. If we look at the situation clearly, we will actually find ourselves very inspired.

Having children should not be regarded as a nuisance. You should not park your child with others purely in order to get rid of the chaos. That's what it actually boils down to. It's not so much what you do, but the attitude you have. You should not develop any sense of resentment. Even faint resentment could become problematic. Therefore, mindfulness practice is very important. That is the key point.

In business situations or domestic situations, in whatever we do, we mustn't lose the sense of sacredness, the attitude of sacredness. There is always room for mindfulness. There is material for mindfulness, all the time. Then, with mindfulness as the foundation, we could create enlightened society, and we could help others at the same time. Thank you.

---

60. This is the opening talk of a seminar conducted in Boulder, Colorado, December 10–12, 1982. The seminar, *How to Cultivate Buds and Flowers*, comprised this talk by Chögyam Trungpa, plus panel discussions, meditation practice, and a talk given by Lady Diana Mukpo, Trungpa Rinpoche's wife.

61. See the introduction to volume eight of *The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa* for a discussion of the delek system, pp. xl–xlii. Basically, the delek system refers to working with your neighborhood or local community.

## *What Is Ngedön?*

*The opening address to the Ngedön School of Higher Learning at  
Naropa Institute in Boulder, Colorado, September 12, 1982*

WE ARE INAUGURATING a new program at Naropa Institute, which will be called the Ngedön School. The establishment of this program is extremely important and powerful. It is modeled on the schools of the Kagyü tradition that have studied and achieved the intrinsic understanding of the buddhadharma. In the Kagyü tradition, the Ngedön school attained and understood the best of the Buddha's teaching. Therefore, we take great pride in it. Introducing the Ngedön tradition in this part of the world, to you as students, will help tremendously.

*Ngedön* is a shortened form of *ngepi-ton*. *Ngepa* means "certain" and "real"; *ton* means "further essence." So *ngepi-ton* means "understanding and comprehending fully what Buddha actually meant when he taught the dharma."

Ngedön can be contrasted with the notion of *trangdön*. *Trang* means "straightforward"; *dön* means "meaning," or "essence," as before. We could say that the Buddha first taught us the pointing finger, so to speak, which is *trangdön*, and after that he taught the reality that the finger is pointing to, which is *ngedön*. For example, a parent might point to the moon and say to the child, "That is the moon," and the child might think the finger itself is the moon [*laughter*]. Later on, the child will see that the finger is pointing to something else, which is actually the white disk of the moon itself.

Similarly, *trangdön* is the early stage in one's understanding. First one has to realize and understand the metaphors and the connections at the *trangdön* level, and then at the *ngedön* level one asks, "Metaphors for what? With what? What is metaphoring?" There is an analogy for this in the Vajrayogini practice; if you are completely fascinated by the visualization alone, then you

are fascinated by the finger. If you look for what Vajrayogini stands for, what the finger is pointing to, then you begin to understand.

Similarly, with banners, for instance, they are not just purely ink printed on satin; but they *mean* something. What the printing means is more important than the satin or ink itself. Of course, you understand that. What I am saying is that you should understand the purpose and the object of the purpose. You will understand more and more.

In the vajrayana tradition, we have what is known as the wisdom of example, and we have the wisdom itself. Similarly, we could say that the trangdön, the straightforward interpretation, or the teaching itself, is simply the wisdom of example. And the ngedön is the wisdom itself, what is exemplified by the trangdön. It is the same as in the analogy of the finger and the moon.

Some traditions talk about one hundred bowls of water each reflecting the one moon in the sky. Either you could say there are a hundred moons, one in each bowl (trangdön), or else you could say there is one more moon (ngedön), which is reflecting into the hundred bowls.

So trangdön is the reflection of the example, and ngedön is the reality that is reflected in the minds of ourselves. Do you understand? Trangdön is like a photograph, which is a facsimile of a person, and ngedön is the real person beyond the facsimile. So, without wasting too much time, we would like to study the reality; we would like to study the person, rather than the photograph of the person. That is what we are aiming at: enlightenment. We could aim for the facsimile of enlightenment, or for enlightenment *itself*. This is what we are trying to understand, what we are trying to talk about. Shall we have a discussion on this? You are more than welcome.

*Question:* Sir, when we talk about ngedön, are we talking about different teachings? Are some teachings trangdön teachings and other teachings ngedön? Is it correct to understand it that way?

*Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche:* We are talking about the style of teaching, rather than the teachings themselves. When you take a photograph of a person, you don't change the look of the person. It is just a photograph; the real person is three-dimensional and moves and speaks. We are talking about methodology in this case.



*Q:* So the style of ngedön actually puts us in touch with the real person?

*CTR:* It is a question of reality, yes, reality, much more so. That is why many people are shy of this approach. They don't want to get too close. They pull back; they appreciate the facsimile rather than the reality.

*Q:* You have in the past mentioned that the *Uttara Tantra* (Tib. *Gyü Lama*) is an important text from our tradition.<sup>62</sup> Would that be ngedön?

*CTR:* I think so, yes.

*Q:* Is it ngedön because it speaks in such a way, or in such a style, that actually opens up the real reality?

*CTR:* Yes. That approach is connected with Marpa's third journey to India: he had to see the reality, rather than the reflection.<sup>63</sup> He learned a lot from that—and we shouldn't put down trangdön as being bad, particularly. It's a great introduction, but when you have an introduction, you haven't met the real person yet; you have just had an introduction. After the introduction, then, having met the real person, you get to know them.

*Q:* Sir, you said ngedön is what is reflected in the minds of ourselves. Could you say more about that?

*CTR:* Ngedön is what is actually in our mind, such as tathagatagarbha, *sugatagarbha*, buddha nature—and enlightenment itself.

*Q:* So it's reflected in the sense of a clear, clean mirror, when there is no karma—

*CTR:* It is not even a mirror; it is looking at the person himself, three dimensionally.

*Q:* Sir, with due respect, may I ask you what teachings have you been giving us? If this is ngedön, beginning now, in this school, with your presence and your words, what have we received in the past? Has it been ngedön?

*CTR:* It is ngedön depending on how you receive it, rather than depending on what has been told. Now that you are worthy enough, we are telling you very boldly. Hopefully, you can take it. It is a very bold approach we are taking now. So far, we have been kind to you, so you wouldn't get shocked. So far, we have been gentle to you. Now we are telling you the truth itself, which is very shocking, absolutely shocking. I was shocked when I was thirteen years old. Reality is very unpleasant sometimes, but if you get into

reality properly, thoroughly, then it is blissful. And it is pleasant. This is so because reality speaks genuineness.

If somebody told you that you are ugly, you would be shocked, but that might be true. I'm not personally referring to you [*laughter*]. If somebody said that your ears are like a donkey's, you would go... [*Takes a deep breath*] first. Then you might look at yourself in a mirror and feel your ears [*laughter*]. You might actually find your ears *are* like a donkey's. It's the truth, going further and further, which shocks us, and delights us at the same time.

*Q:* Sir, in the Ngedön School we'll be starting with the vinayas and sutra literature, and then the *abhidharma*, and particular texts. Is the ngedön aspect how we relate to all of them, rather than the particular topics themselves? So it isn't the teachings themselves, but how we approach them, that makes it ngedön?

*CTR:* It is how we approach them that makes it ngedön.

*Q:* So, in that sense, could we say that the teaching of the three marks of existence is ngedön?

*CTR:* It is ngedön, yes. And we will study the vinaya teachings, the rules and the discipline, and how we relate with that, from the ngedön point of view.

*Q:* So even though we might have studied some of these topics before, we could approach them differently in how we apply them?

*CTR:* Yes, it is how we apply the truth and the ultimate truth.

*Q:* And this cuts across any division of the teachings into hinayana, mahayana, and vajrayana?

*CTR:* There is no division. There is no division. It is how we look at it. A child might look at a diamond, a teenager might look at a diamond, and a grown-up person might look at a diamond: same diamond, same reality. But the discovery is different. It is a question of the perceiver rather than the perception itself. You find ngedön in the hinayana, and ngedön in the mahayana, and ngedön in the vajrayana.

*Q:* Sir, what is the role of study, in the examination of the diamond? Could we discover ngedön entirely in our practice, without studying texts, or is it important to study in order to go deeper?

*CTR:* I think it is very much connected with study, yes. Study has two parts: the study of the conventional truths and the study of real truth. In the Ngedön School we study the real truth, rather than the conventional truth.

*Q:* So study in the Ngedön School is somewhat different from our previous study?

*CTR:* It is not just intellectual study, but it is taking the teachings to heart. It is as if you were putting your finger on the sun, and burning your finger, and realizing the sun is hot. Then you will know more about the sun. This whole thing is the study of *reality*. For example in the vinaya, we study why we would kill somebody, why we would steal, why we have sexual intercourse with somebody, why we drink alcohol. That seems to be the point: why we do certain things. That will be the first study of hinayana from the ngedön point of view.

Then we will study why we hate somebody, why we dislike somebody, why we are unable to extend our compassion, our loving-kindness, to somebody. That would be the ngedön point of view of mahayana, which we have to study. We shouldn't be shy. We should be forthright. Ngedön also means forthright, not being shy. Ngedön means that we are not hiding anything behind our frown or our smile. Genuine is the word: ngedön. *Nge* means "real," *ton* means "subject," so ngedön means "real subject." Reality comes through—if you are open to it.

*Q:* Sir, you mentioned the quality of shyness or hesitancy. Now it is more a feeling of dealing with reality by putting your finger on the sun, and being burned, to find out exactly what the sun is like. Would you give some guidance as to how to work with our own hesitation as we approach the deeper level?

*CTR:* Yes. Well, you see, there is no "how." It is up to you to discover the path. As we know, children walk in puddles. Their shoes get wet and cold, and they come back to their mothers, or parents, and they cry. Some parents will spank them, and some parents will change their shoes, their socks. It's a question of discovery. The path is yours. That's why dharma is put in between sangha and Buddha. You have Buddha, dharma, and sangha. Why is dharma in the middle? It is up to you. And this particular school, ngedön, is obviously geared to that. We present the Buddha and the early schools of Buddhism, and we also present to you the teachers of ngedön thought, the ngedön

lineage, altogether. And we leave a little gap for you to discover the path, the dharma, itself. It's up to you, sweetheart.

*Q:* Thank you, sir.

*Q:* Sir, could you tell us what happened to you at thirteen years old that was shocking to you?

*CTR:* I was just shocked. I thought they had laid out the whole journey for me, and when I realized they hadn't, there was a big gap, a Black Hole of Calcutta [*laughter*]. I was shocked and realized that I had to do it myself. And at the same time, I was quite pleased that they didn't hassle me. Things were left up to me to do. So it is pain and pleasure at the same time.

*Q:* Thank you, sir.

*CTR:* So, please study. The basic meaning of study here is that you are not fooling yourself. You are not pretending to understand. At the same time, there is joy in study; you don't have to pull long faces. It is wonderful to study. It's different than going to a Protestant school or a Hebrew school. You are not condemned. You are cheered; you are brought up. The more you study, the more you find delight in the whole thing. So please, cheer up.

If I were a schoolmaster, I wouldn't just smile at my students; I would push them. So please smile and enjoy. This is the most enjoyable thing that you could discover: learning about yourself and learning about the world—learning how you can actually walk on the path. So please have a cheerful time, and please don't drop out. I want you all to raise your hands to say that you are not going to drop out. Good. Thank you very much.

---

62. The *Uttara Tantra* (Tib. *Gyü Lama*) is one of the five treatises of Maitreya, a commentary on the teachings of the third turning of the wheel of dharma explaining buddha nature. It is included among the texts that form the core of the curriculum in most shedras, or monastic colleges.

63. Marpa the Translator, the first Tibetan holder of the Kagyü lineage, traveled to India three times to receive teachings from Naropa, his root guru, and other great Buddhist teachers. On the third visit, after spending months trying to find Naropa, Marpa was finally reunited with him. While they were together, Naropa manifested a tantric mandala in the sky and asked Marpa if he would prostrate to the mandala or to his teacher. Marpa prostrated to this miraculous manifestation, the mandala, and Naropa then told him that the mandala only arose because of Naropa and that the guru was the source of all mandalas and teachings.

Then the mandala dissolved into Naropa's heart center. This is probably the incident, quite well known, that Trungpa Rinpoche is referring to here. See also "An Element of Unreasonability," in this volume.

# SELECTED WRITINGS

*Other Articles*

# *A Sense of Humor*

## INTRODUCTION

CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA SAW HUMOR as an essential quality of the practitioner's experience on the Buddhist path. He used laughter as leavening: to lighten up our heavy-handed ideas about spirituality and ourselves. At the same time, his sense of humor was earthy and grounding. It usually produced a belly laugh rather than a titter. It was often a way of creating openness and communication with his students. The first time I had an interview with Chögyam Trungpa, in Berkeley, California, in the early seventies, he asked about my family background. I told him that my father was English and my mother, Portuguese. The next time I saw him, he said something about a goose, which at first mystified me, until I realized he was referring to my Portu-geese ancestry. I was charmed that he remembered, and after that I felt more relaxed around him.

Rinpoche loved puns, especially “Buddhist” puns. During one period in the 1970s he made many puns on the names of famous Tibetan teachers: Who was the teacher who owned a gas station? Petrul Rinpoche, of course. He also liked this joke: What did the villagers say when the naked lady rode into town on a yak? “Some yak, some body.” [One of the epithets for the Buddha is *samyaksambuddha*, “the completely pure, perfect buddha.”]

Rinpoche also loved practical jokes, many of which had a point to them. During one of the American tours of His Holiness the sixteenth Karmapa, a visit coordinator (whose job included teaching proper protocol to students in many centers) missed dinner while working in the Karmapa's house and ordered a pizza to be delivered there. Rinpoche thought it was undignified to have a pizza truck delivering fast food to the Karmapa's residence. For about

two years after this, Rinpoche arranged to have a pizza delivered to this student at the most unexpected and awkward times, often when he was working with a group of people. Rinpoche never identified himself as the sender, and the student had to pay for the pizzas. Rinpoche thought this was hilarious. Although this joke became very well developed and drawn out over time, it arose as a spontaneous insight and response to the original situation. His jokes were hardly ever constructed or contrived ahead of time, arising instead out of the immediate stuff of the situation. Humor for him was often another way of transmitting insight.

Trungpa Rinpoche started the tradition of celebrating April first, April Fools' Day, with practical jokes in our sangha. One year, he asked a student who worked closely with him to call a member of the board of directors to announce an outrageous demand: that Rinpoche wanted to buy an expensive new car, right away. Thousands of dollars would be needed immediately. (I don't know what the actual first joke was, but it was something along these lines.) Board members started to freak out, some resenting this request, others panicking about finding the needed funds. Then, finally, the message came, "April Fools'!" After that, many people got into the spirit of the day. It was dangerous to lose track of the date at that time of year, as you were likely to receive a call on the first of April, maybe just past midnight before you had time to think about what day it was, telling you to come to a nonexistent meeting in an odd place. Or you might be informed of a financial disaster that would cause you to pull your hair—until you figured out that it was April 1.

Rinpoche staged an elaborate April Fools' joke in 1985. He had been on a year's retreat in Nova Scotia and was due to travel back to Boulder at the beginning of April. Everyone was expectantly awaiting his return. He and his retreat staff departed from retreat on April 1, one day before their scheduled departure, leaving one staff person behind to man the phones, creating an illusion that he was still there. When it was discovered that he had left before expected, no one could locate him. He and several traveling companions had just disappeared. No one knew where he was. People searched high and low in Nova Scotia, sent drivers to the airports in Boston, New York, Denver, and elsewhere—in case he should arrive there—and phoned other centers to see if he had turned up. An elaborate welcome home ceremony was planned in the Boulder shrine-room on April 2, with close to a thousand people expected to



attend. Should the ceremony be canceled? Should we go ahead? In the end, everyone assembled anyway, to see what would happen. We waited and waited. Finally, just late enough to keep people's anxiety high, Rinpoche and his band of pranksters pulled up to the curb. As it turned out, they had flown into Denver a day earlier and had been staying in a hotel under an assumed name.

People were amused, frightened, angry, and behind that there was a vast sense of empty heart. With this joke, he created a situation in which people realized they couldn't take anything for granted. Given that Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche died two years later, almost to the day, it was good preparation for what was to come. Some of his students, myself included, feel that it was not pure coincidence that he died so close to April Fools' Day: April 4, 1987. In some sense, it was the biggest joke he ever pulled.

The humor of this vajra master was thus sometimes whimsical and childlike, but hardly inconsequential. It strikes at the heart of his teachings: how to embrace life with a light touch, how to "make light" of life and death without making fun of them.

Here in his own words, are some of Chögyam Trungpa's remarks on a sense of humor.

CAROLYN ROSE GIMIAN

## **OUTRAGEOUSNESS AND HUMOR**

Either we do meditation practice at the simple, matter-of-fact level or we do it with a very meaningful religious or philosophical undertone. That undertone automatically becomes dogma and belief, a very definite belief. Because that belief is so definite, therefore you feel that you should defend that belief; and defending that belief becomes aggression. The quality of outrageousness is the opposite of that—or the extension of that act without aggression. The definition of outrageousness is basically a sense of humor. In this case, humor is not particularly making fun and mocking somebody or something. Instead, it is an appreciative gesture. That is, things don't seem to

be as heavy as we think they are, but they seem to be floating above the ground, and seemingly hilarious, funny, swift, and lucid.

At the same time, humor is not particularly casual or haphazard. The casual approach to life is often the result of being shy and feeling self-conscious and tense, so you would like to pass the buck or divert the attention to some other situation. But that also diverts the concentration of attitude and energy, so it is basically stupid rather than insightful. Humor is not like buying toys for your kids, which is somewhat lighthearted—unless the toy turns out to be extraordinarily expensive. And it is not at the level of the cheap world of plastics or teddy bears. It comes from delight and a sense of celebration. A sense of humor from that point of view is very transparent; at the same time, it is very definite. It has its own background and sanity.

Outrageousness is a question of being fearless in your celebrations and your sense of humor. Sometimes it could be somewhat absurd and stubborn, but that seems to be the necessary eccentricity of this particular approach. Again, as long as it doesn't contain aggression and an exhibitionistic outlook, it seems to be quite simple. A sense of conviction brings fearlessness, outrageousness, and a sense of humor.

Adapted from "Outrageousness," in *Dharma Art*, pages 71 to 72.

## **HUMOR AND THE ANIMAL REALM**

The animal mentality is very serious. It even makes humor into a serious occupation. Self-consciously trying to create a friendly environment, a person will crack jokes or try to be funny, intimate, or clever. However, animals do not really smile or laugh; they just behave. They may play, but it is unusual for animals to actually laugh. They might make friendly noises or gestures, but the subtleties of a sense of humor are absent. The animal mentality looks directly ahead, as if wearing blinders.

From *The Myth of Freedom and the Way of Meditation*, page 33.

## **A COW-ARDLY PUN**

Trust starts from realizing that there are trillions of worthwhile people who want to connect with Shambhala vision and with basic goodness.

Therefore, you develop a sense of warriorship, which is free from cowardice, or nervousness as it is commonly known in America. But the actual, technical term is *cowardice*. This has nothing to do with milk, or course. *Cow-ard*, *cow-ard*, and *cow-ard*. In fact, the cow-ard is the opposite of the cow-cow. This cow does not even give milk. It is too cowardly to give milk; it is completely dry and shaking.

From “Blamelessness: How to Love Yourself,” in *Great Eastern Sun: The Wisdom of Shambhala*, pages 120 to 121.

## **A SENSE OF HUMOR IN MEDITATION PRACTICE**

Meditation practice is based on dropping dualistic fixation, dropping the struggle of good against bad....There are many references in the tantric literature to *mahasukha*, the great joy, but the reason it is referred to as the great joy is because it transcends both hope and fear, pain and pleasure. Joy here is not pleasurable in the ordinary sense, but it is an ultimate and fundamental sense of freedom, a sense of humor, the ability to see the ironical aspect of the game of ego, the playing of polarities. If one is able to see ego from an aerial point of view, then one is able to see its humorous quality.

From *The Myth of Freedom*, pages 44 to 45.

## **THE MOUSE AND THE TURQUOISE**

There is the Tibetan story of a certain monk who renounced his samsaric, confused life and decided to go live in a cave in order to meditate all the time. Prior to this he had been thinking continually of pain and suffering. His name was Ngonagpa of Langru, “the black-faced one of Langru,” because he never smiled at all but saw everything in life in terms of pain. He remained in retreat for many years, very solemn and deadly honest, until one day he looked at the shrine and saw that someone had presented a big lump of

turquoise as a gift to him. As he viewed the gift, he saw a mouse creep in and try to drag away the piece of turquoise. The mouse could not do it, so it went back to its hole and called another mouse. They both tried to drag away this big lump of turquoise but could not do it. So they squeaked together and called eight more mice that came and finally managed to drag the whole lump back into their hole. Then for the first time Ngonagpa of Langru began to laugh and smile. And that was his first introduction to openness, a sudden flash of enlightenment.

So a sense of humor is not merely a matter of trying to tell jokes or make puns, trying to be funny in a deliberate fashion. It involves seeing the basic irony of the juxtaposition of extremes, so that one is not caught taking them seriously, so that one does not seriously play their game of hope and fear.

From “A Sense of Humor” in *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, pages 114 to 115.

## *The Basis of Nonviolence*

BEFORE WE PUT NONVIOLENCE INTO ACTION, we have to see the natural quality, the basic structure or the essence, of peace. There are so many ways of interpreting and categorizing peace. Therefore, we should try to look for the actual reality of peace and pass beyond the philosophical or theoretical aspects. It's ridiculous to try to understand peace and nonviolence purely from theory, books, or logic. That would be like trying to learn the art of cookery from a person who had never tasted food.

Peace is not indulging ourselves in joy or happiness. It also isn't a state where there's no emotion, a state where there is no feeling, a state where there is no energy, either. Rather, peace is the source of everything; it is what we are, what is. One might say peace is a childlike state, the state we are born from, the primeval state, before we have been indoctrinated by anything. We might see it as some kind of ultimate mystical experience, but it is not mystical experience. Peace is that which remains both still and active and that which radiates, full of life. Because of it, people feel peaceful and open. It is a state where there is no idea of defending or trying to preserve oneself. In the Buddhist scriptures, one finds the term *tathagathagarbha*, which is buddha nature or the essence of mind. It is also described as the undisturbed color, the undisturbed texture, character, and quality of mind. Therefore it contains the true meaning of love, the true meaning of energy. That is the true function of peace.

One is able to bring this into consciousness through the practice of meditation, if the practice of meditation is not based on dogma. First of all, then, it is a discovery within oneself. It is very much a lone effort, an individual effort within ourselves. Because of this discovery, one does not

have any fear of opening and expanding into an external world. Therefore, there is a possibility of putting nonviolence into action.

## *Appreciating the Practicality of Life*

**M**ONET IS A SOURCE OF CREATIVITY and in many cases a source of trouble. Money in this sense, broadly speaking, is material goods of any kind. The question of money is a stumbling block that cannot be resolved in the present or the future without some knowledge of the practicality of life. Earning a living, shall we say, or having some sort of income is necessary. At the same time, we may talk in terms of trying to be spiritual, being a spiritually inclined sort of person who does not care about money at all. We want to be free of all this worldly concern. So we become very nonmaterialistic. If we develop the attitude that money or material goods personify evil, then they become evil.

If we try to lead a life completely free from money or materialism, there is a lack of clarity, a lack of real feeling. Particularly in this highly organized society, we live at the expense of others, unless we ourselves contribute something. Whether we are living in a remote place, such as the north of Scotland, or wherever we are, we still need food, and this food is produced by somebody. This food is the product of someone's work. Someone has been working, going to a great deal of trouble to produce our food. Some people may spend their lives purely churning milk in order to produce butter. Some people spend their whole lives just screwing bolts into things. Most of their lives are just spent doing that. People are trained in the beginning to do regular, ordinary work, and they do it. When the time comes to retire, they feel something is missing, something has been lost. Those people suffer, but they don't think in terms of suffering or pain, because they have so bravely accepted their lives and ignored all the other aspects of life. They close one eye and just do it, just one thing. The world is made out of this, the present world anyway. Perhaps it has always been this way. This is not just a question

of money alone, but it is appreciating the practicality of life. This is really where we need compassion. And there is a limit to how much freedom we take.



# *Truth*

*D*<sub>HARMA</sub> LITERALLY MEANS “truth” or “norm.” It is a particular way of thinking, a way of viewing the world, which is not a concept but experience. This particular truth is very painful truth—usually truths are. It rings with the sound of reality, which comes too close to home. We become completely embarrassed when we begin to hear the truth. It is wrong to think that the truth is going to sound fantastic and beautiful, like a flute solo. The truth is actually like a thunderbolt. It wakes you up and makes you think twice whether you should stay in the rain or move into the house. Provocative.

The sound of thunder could be nice and friendly or it could be a great hassle. The whole thing depends on your living situation. If you’re camping outside without a tent and it begins to thunder, you feel threatened. You feel terrible because you are exposed and you have to move under a tree or into a cave—some kind of roof is needed. Whereas in the opposite situation, in which you already have a roof or a shelter, when you hear thunder, it sounds great, fantastic. And you can listen to the raindrops as well.

The basic questions are: Who is actually listening to the truth? What is his or her situation? And, in fact, what is truth? At this point, we could say quite clearly that truth is about *you*. It is not about celestial beings descending on you, or the golden age of Martians. The truth is about you, your existence, your experience. It’s about you. Hearing the truth of dharma and becoming part of the dharma is willing to face yourself, to begin with. It may be disturbing or encouraging—however, that’s it!

Following the dharma doesn’t mean going along with a particular prescription and taking your medication every day. Instead, it’s a basic commitment to the teaching, which means to yourself. You could get out of

an organization; you could get out of the club. But you can't step out of the dharma. The dharma is always you. You are always going to have the dharma of you, your dharma. Your truth, your facts and figures, your reality, are always there.

People try to escape reality by recreating the different seasons—in the winter they can go to Florida; in the summer they can go up to the mountains. But it's not as simple as that. Reality is inescapable.

The truth about you has different facets, obviously. You might think you are made out of some good things and some bad things. Sometimes you feel bad and sometimes good. Life may be monotonous, but there are ups and downs as well. Regularity in life is not the point; experience is the point.

Fundamentally, every one of us feels extremely insecure. You could have lots of money, lots of background, education, friends, resources, skills, but none of that is going to make any difference to your security. The more we seek security, the more insecurity that creates. It constantly happens that way.

There's something fundamentally threatening and insecure taking place all the time in our lives. Something's not quite as solid as we would like it to be, so we need lots of reassurance—some philosophy, some idea, some kind of backing from the world of comfort, the world of companionship. There is always hollowness, an emptiness taking place in us always. Basically, we feel we are broke and we have a poverty mentality. Very few people like to face that, but it's the first truth, one of the very valuable truths to face. It is not really pleasant, and it may not even seem helpful, for that matter. But maybe its unhelpfulness is helpful. There's always that possibility.

Out of that insecurity, we come up with a lot of strategies, plans of all kinds. We try to combat this insecurity by means of drugs, politics, philosophy, religion, friends. Everybody has tried something. This approach is extremely depressing, but it's all experience. It's dharma. In its own way, it is truth.

What is so sacred about that? Where does sacredness come in? It doesn't come in the form of religion, as a savior notion. The sacredness is the truthfulness. Experience is true; therefore, it's sacred. Truth could be secular but still it's sacred.

If we don't face what we are experiencing, then there's no path. It may be a drag, but you must be willing to face and actually give in to what is happening. Nobody's going to come up with a fat check for you tomorrow. At this point, believing in miracles is an obstacle. There is great room, on the other hand, for our minds to open, give, and face facts—literally to face the facts: the facts of reality, the facts of pain, the facts of boredom.

Our world, this particular world, our dharma, our truth, need to be acknowledged and need immense surrendering—not just a one-shot deal. Without this first dharma, understanding the truth and our relationship to the truth, we could not go further. Finally, you and your world meet and are introduced to one another: “My name is Ms. World.” “Hello, Ms. World. Pleased to meet you.” You shake hands and actually begin to give in. You're willing to accept your world. You have never done that before.

## *Working with Fear and Anger*

THE CRAZY-WISDOM APPROACH TO FEAR is to not regard it purely as a hang-up, but to realize that fear is intelligent. It has a message of its own. Fear is worth respecting. If we dismiss fear as an obstacle and try to ignore it, then we might end up having accidents. In other words, fear is a very wise message.

You can't conquer fear or frighten fear. You have to respect fear. You might try to tell yourself that it's not real, that it's false, but such an approach is questionable. It is better to develop some kind of respect, realizing that neurosis is also a message, rather than garbage that you should just throw away. The whole starting point for working with fear and other emotions is the idea of samsara and nirvana, confusion and enlightenment, being one. Samsara is not regarded as a nuisance alone, but it has its own potent message that is worthy of respect.

Fear contains insight as well as the panicky blind quality we often associate with it. The element of panic has a deaf and dumb quality—doing the best you can, in spite of your fear, hoping everything will be okay. But fear without hope seems to be something very insightful. If you give up your hope of attaining something, then tuning into fear is tuning into its insightful quality. Then, skillful means or action arises spontaneously out of the fear itself. Fear can be extremely resourceful rather than representing hopelessness. It is the opposite of hopelessness, in fact.

*Question:* Is fear insightful in that it points out to you why you were afraid in the first place?

*Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche:* It's not only that. It has its own intuitive aspect going beyond just logical conclusions. It has spontaneously existing

resourcefulness. When you connect with your fear, you realize you have already leaped; you are already in midair. You realize that, and then you become resourceful.

*Q:* You said that fear without hope would be intelligent. Could the same be said about working with other emotions?

*CTR:* Hope and fear largely constitute all the emotions. Hope and fear represent the kind of pushing and pulling quality of duality, and all the emotions consist of that. Emotions are different aspects of that duality: they all seem to be made out of hope and fear of something—either pulling and magnetizing, or fending off.

*Q:* Is having fear also based on a desire for the same thing you are afraid of?

*CTR:* Yes, that's the way it is. But when you realize that there is nothing to be desirous *of* (you know, the desire is the hope aspect of the fear), when you realize that, then you and your fear are left nakedly standing alone.

*Q:* So you just connect with the fear without hope. But how do you do that?

*CTR:* It's relating without feedback. Then the situation automatically intensifies or becomes clear.

*Q:* Can you apply the same approach to anger? If I'm angry, instead of either expressing or suppressing it, can I just relate to it? Can I stop the anger and just relate to the thought process?

*CTR:* You don't stop the anger; you just *are* the anger. Anger just hangs out as it is. That is relating with the anger. Then the anger becomes vivid and directionless, and it diffuses into energy. The idea of relating with it has nothing to do with expressing yourself to the other person. The Tibetan expression for that is *rang sar shak*, which means "leave it in its own place." Let anger be in its own place.

Being without fear, you create fear.

The renown of fear cannot be feared.

When through fear you examine yourself,

You trample on the egg of fear.

## *Let Ego Have an Energy Crisis*

MEDITATION HELPS TO SIMPLIFY YOUR LIFE. It is the act of surrendering, while sitting on your meditation cushion. Then, by relating directly with your breath, body, and mind, you have no problems communicating with yourself. When you simplify meditation down to that level, you don't have any goal or project in mind. Lord Buddha recommended this twenty-five hundred years ago, and since then, millions of people have practiced in this way. Their meditative experiences and knowledge have been handed down and each generation has added new richness to this training process. Meditation is where the energy and enlightenment of the Buddhist lineage could meet together with our willingness to surrender the ego. It is highly possible.

When we begin to practice and to learn more, we may think we should be adding tricks or embellishments of all kinds to our practice. This is the approach of spiritual materialism. It seems fascinating and efficient to use more gadgets to run our domestic scene, office scene, spiritual scene, or whatever scenes we may have. American society already has enough gadgets, but we want more. In the long run, that approach is wasteful and creates further chaos. Spiritual discipline is not about advancement, but it is a question of undoing what we have created already. We are not talking about extending ourselves to become greater or more professional meditators, but we are talking about meditation as unlearning, undoing.

We should be aware that spiritual materialism creates garbage. Some of the mental tricks associated with meditation are so fantastic and outlandish that one wonders who dreamed up such things. Or one might feel dwarfed by such seemingly impressive wisdom. We are piling up one cardboard box of spiritual stuff after another. We purchase this stuff, we bring it home and take it out of the cardboard box it came in, and then we find that our garage is

completely filled with those boxes, boxes after boxes, with labels on them. However, a lot of these complicated techniques are just stuff or garbage that is being imposed on us. This has nothing to do with unlearning, undoing, or simplifying at all.

We have all made these kinds of collections. In fact, without them, we couldn't come to the spiritual path. Some people like to collect junk, some people like to collect antiques, some people like to collect stamps. You have your own style of collecting. Some of these collections may be worthwhile. In the practice of meditation, you are surrendering the collections you have made, and that process could be very genuine and beautiful. On the other hand, sometimes we are very aggressive about holding onto our collections, because we want to get something out of them.

In the practice of meditation, it is necessary to think quite sanely and practically about ecology. It is more ecological, needless to say, to stop collecting more stuff, more garbage. It would be terrible to collect too many things, more than we can handle. That would be like cutting too many order forms out of magazines. When you fill in a little form from an ad in a magazine, it may seem simple and harmless, but after you mail it in, what comes back to you are huge boxes destined for the garbage.

The basic practice of meditation at this point is a question of simplicity, unlearning, undoing. The technique for the practice of meditation that was prescribed by the Buddha is working with the awareness of breath. That tends to cut through the unnecessary chatter of thought. The approach is so simple-minded that subconscious gossip and mind's duplicity begin to decrease. Just be with your breath; just be with your body. Sit down and don't try to think of anything else. Just sit and be with your breath. Let the breath be your thought.

When you take this simple-minded almost simpleton approach, if you'd like to call it that, all kinds of metaphysical, philosophical, and seemingly mystical experiences may descend on you, in the form of your thoughts during meditation. So what? Just let them be. Just regard them as garbage—but not in the sense of looking down on them as bad, threatening, and impure. Just see these collections of thought as something unnecessary, as further garbage. That is the starting point for the practice of meditation, which is the beginning of undoing ego's territory.

Ego continually tries to create and maintain its security through the constant chatter of thought, our constant thought process. That process keeps itself busy, and it allows you to regenerate yourself constantly. Your mind's motor keeps running because you have been pouring the fuel of conceptual mind into it for a long time. If you don't pour more fuel in, or if you don't go along with any of the thought process, ego is somewhat starved. It is no longer sustainable. That seems to be the starting point or the basic attitude to begin the practice of meditation. Boycott ego, not as a villain or an enemy. But don't give it any fuel. Let ego have an energy crisis. That is the basic approach that Buddha developed and it is still up-to-date.



## *A Meditation Instruction*<sup>64</sup>

DOUBTLESSLY, MEDITATION PRACTICE is one of the most important and at the same time most confused subjects that we experience. It's confusing because of our own expectations that the practice of meditation should bring about a certain sense of tranquility, equilibrium, and spiritual "high."

I would like to emphasize that the practice of meditation as it was presented by the Buddha is no more and no less than working with yourself—sitting with yourself, alone, without entertainment, without further feedback and encouragement.

The sitting practice of meditation is one of simplifying one's basic psychology and one's basic problems. Simplifying in this case means having no expectations about the technique, not expecting that the technique is going to liberate you or provide flashes of excitement or mystical experiences. In keeping with how the Buddha taught, I would like to present the situation of meditation extremely simply, without metaphysical or philosophical overlay.

To benefit from meditation, you need more than just a glimpse. You need to make a commitment to training yourself in meditation. Otherwise, there will be a lot of gaps and missing the point, and you will experience unnecessary confusion. So it's important to stick with the practice and follow the instructions that you receive. It might be best to look at meditation as a way of life.

If you stick with the practice and go along, with exertion and patience, you will have a chance to realize yourself, to understand yourself. Such understanding may be extremely boring. Such understanding may be seeing something you don't want to see. Nevertheless, we can't reject ourselves before we know what we are. So I encourage you to be brave, from that point

of view. Please don't chicken out and either reject yourself or congratulate yourself. Rather, try to work with the techniques and the tradition that is presented to you.

The practice of meditation in Buddhism is a very simple technique that was recommended by Lord Buddha himself. I myself have been trained in this technique. Meditation in the Buddhist tradition is connected with the idea of *bhavana*, a Sanskrit word that refers to spiritual exertion or discipline altogether. That is the basic point of meditation: unless you are inspired to discipline yourself, it is hopeless. If you only discipline yourself halfway and then give up, that will create congestion and indigestion for yourself.

From that point of view, meditation can be very demanding. If you stick with it, however, if you sit regularly and follow this discipline, you will develop understanding and become skilled in the clarity of the practice. Your experiences won't be dramatic, by any means. The practice will purely lead to discovering yourself, I'm afraid. You won't see cherubs and gods, heavenly realms, colorful mantras, or *yantras*—none of those.

Meditation is very simple and extremely down-to-earth, to the extent that it's *irritatingly* down-to-earth. Through the down-to-earth practice of meditation, you can see the colors of your own existence. The earth begins to come back to you rather than that you are getting messages from heaven, so to speak.

Altogether, meditation in Buddhism is extremely severe. I don't want to convert you to this particular style or approach necessarily. But I think it is worthwhile to apply your exertion to the practice of meditation; that is necessary if you want to learn something from the practice. I have personally learned from this practice. I don't mean this as a testimonial, particularly, but I feel I should share with you that I have gained wisdom and clarity myself from this practice. I'm giving it to you as I have learned it, as I received this myself. The only difference is that you don't speak Tibetan.

According to the Buddha, meditation is a threefold process. The first stage is what is called *shamatha*. The second process is *vipashyana*, and the third is the combination of the two: *shamatha-vipashyana*. Shamatha, which I am presenting here, means the development of mindfulness. It can be practiced in group situations or individually. The meaning of mindfulness is up to you to discover.

This particular approach to meditation practice is paying attention to what is happening. It focuses mainly on your breath, your ordinary breathing. If you've been running and then you stop and sit down, the first thing you do is to try to regain your breath. At that point, you pay attention to your breathing. Or if you are doing things and then you want to relax, then you sit down and say, "Phew." So breathing plays an important part in ordinary experiences. Breathing is quite natural. It's a natural situation, part of what we naturally associate with relaxation.

*Shamatha* literally means the "development of peace." Peace in this case doesn't mean a state without war. It has nothing to do with politics. We also are not talking about a psychedelic sense of getting off on peace. Here, we are simply talking about peace as nonaction. If you are having an intense time with your friends, your parents, or with your business, you might sit down and say, "Phew!" Peace is that kind of flopping down. But please don't misunderstand what I'm saying. You can't get this kind of peace instantly. You have to apply exertion and patience.

In the practice of meditation, we speak of peace in a very particular, extraordinary, and eccentric sense, as it was taught according to the Buddha. The Buddha was a very eccentric person, in that he attained enlightenment, which is extraordinary. Initially, we can't actually understand what it means that he attained enlightenment—but he did. We are also on that path. We have no choice. In one of the sutras, the Buddha says that those who practice dwelling in peace, or shamatha, are building a staircase toward enlightenment.

That is what we are doing in the practice of meditation: constructing a staircase toward enlightenment. It requires very precise measurement of the boards to build the steps properly. All the angles have to be properly considered, and you have to use the right nails and hammer them in carefully, because this staircase has to bear the weight of people walking up it. Shamatha practice is building a staircase very deliberately, according to the Buddha. A staircase to what? To enlightenment? What is that? It doesn't really matter. Just building the staircase may be good.

No promise, no blame. Let us simplify the situation. Let us build this staircase very simply and directly.

When you practice meditation, don't make a big deal about it. Just sit down, relax, and straighten your back, not to the extreme but in a deliberate

fashion. Your posture is a bit like how you would hold yourself if you were going to ask your lover to marry you. Your approach would be semirelaxed—friendly and somewhat seductive, but straightforward. That’s how your posture should be here. Then you place your hands on your knees, which is known as the mind-relaxing posture, or in whatever position you have been instructed in.

Then you should just feel your breath, your natural breath. It might be rough or deep if you have to run to get to the meditation room. Or your breathing might be quite shallow. It doesn’t really matter. Just feel your existing natural breathing. Sit quietly and listen to your breathing. To begin with, just listen to it for a few minutes. In that way, you can settle into the practice.

Then you can begin to discipline your state of awareness, your state of inquisitiveness. When you have nothing to do but sit and breathe, you begin to wonder, “What can I do with myself?” Those thoughts are fine, but then try to focus everything on your breathing. Listen to your breathing, feel your breathing, completely, properly, as much as you can. But don’t force yourself. Don’t hold yourself too tight, like an Englishman with a stiff upper lip. Here, you are dealing with your breathing very naturally. It’s just natural breath. You sit there as though you’re about to address your lover. You just sit there and go along with your breathing.

You follow the breathing, very simply. Particularly pay attention to the out-breath. Go along with it. Don’t particularly try to feel the temperature of the breath in your nostrils or anything like that. Just breathe out, and as your breath goes out, you go out with your natural breath, very simply, extremely simply.

In terms of the staircase you are building, it requires enormous precision and enormous subtlety to build these steps. That is related to working with the out-breath. There’s a general sense that you’re there. You are not trying to become frigid or rigid and solemn about the whole practice. You are simply being there. When you sit, you actually sit. There’s no room for speculation. You sit. You actually sit. You actually do breathe. The sense of simplicity is almost to the level of naiveté. You do things completely, wholeheartedly. You do things as they are. You actually get into things as they are, completely, correctly.

Your breath goes out and dissolves into the atmosphere, the space around you. Don't try to follow it out too far. Let it be. Then, there's a gap, some uncertainty maybe, and your breath comes in automatically, as a natural physiological function. At that point, don't try to bring your attention back into your lungs and your body particularly. Just let it be, let it drop. So your attention is dropped, your breath is coming into your lungs, and then another breath goes out and you go out with it again. It's very simple. There should be a sense of simplicity to the whole thing.

While you're meditating, all kinds of thoughts arise: thoughts about your life, your future plans, conversations with your friends and your relatives. All kinds of things come through the mind. Let them come through. Let them just come through. Don't try to say whether they are bad or for that matter whether they are particularly good. Just let them come through, as simply as you can. By letting them come through, you find that there's a sense of openness. You don't find your thoughts threatening or particularly helpful. They just become the general gossip, the traffic of your thoughts. If you live in a city, you hear the traffic coming through your windows: there goes a motorcycle, there goes a truck. There goes a car, and then there's somebody shouting. At the beginning, you might get involved in or distracted by the noise, but then you begin to think, so what? Similarly, the traffic of your thoughts and the verbosity of your mind are just part of the basic chatter that goes on in the universe. Just let it go through.

Whether you sit and practice alone or in a group situation doesn't make any difference. If you find it difficult to meditate and want to stand up and walk out of meditation, the group situation does help you not to chicken out. It also provides a sense of fellowship.

At the same time, whether you are sitting in a group or physically alone, you are always sitting alone. You might have been told that even if you don't have a solid commitment to meditation, the good vibrations in the room will pick you up. The energy will uplift you in any case. But that's not possible. The sanity that one person experiences in the sitting practice of meditation is not transferable. That kind of cosmic hitchhiking doesn't exist. Everybody's in their own little vehicle, which is called a body. There's no room for anybody else in that particular body. Everybody has their own car, their own body, so that in fact you can't hitchhike. You need to acknowledge that, and

the sooner, the better, because then you won't have unrealistic expectations. You will realize that you have to pull yourself together, rather than waiting for somebody to rescue you.

Sitting practice is independent and individual and a very lonely journey. Aloneness is the basic point. Whether you sit in a group or individual situation, there is a sense of loneliness. Sometimes you might feel completely isolated and cut off in your experience. But sometimes you might experience this aloneness as the basis of heroism. In the positive sense, you are making a journey, and nobody's telling you to make this journey. You are making the journey alone. The only help that somebody can give you is to tell you that others have made this lonely journey and that you could do so as well, in the same way.

This might seem like a very severe process, very strict. But it is very cheerful, because there's a sense of conviction that you aren't going to hitchhike; you are going to do this yourself. There is a powerful sense of celebration in this, which is the heart of the practice of meditation. The sitting practice of meditation is the expression of celebration, rather than falling into a trap or imprisonment. You no longer have to go through exaggerated sociological, psychological, or bureaucratic trips that we create for ourselves. You could get into the practice simply and directly, starting with the breath. Get into it, simply go along with it, and work with it. That's the basic point of shamatha.

Having done that deliberate practice of relating with one's awareness, simply and directly, without question, then you begin to relate to sound, smell, sight, and every experience that you have in the sensorial world with exactly the same awareness. You see things simply and directly. You're with them and with your breathing. You're simply there, very simply and very directly there. There are no interpretations: Is this going to be good enough? Am I making mistakes? No such questions arise if you are being simple enough. The questions come from looking, questioning, lying back, analyzing, trying to make sure. Questions only arise on the basis of how to secure your basic ground as ego. If there is no ego-oriented question, there are no other questions. Instead, your practice is a statement, somewhat. It is extremely direct and deliberate. The basic point of shamatha is this sense of deliberateness. You are actually doing something. You are getting into this

particular process, without making sure that what you're doing is okay. Things are actually taking place almost of their own accord, very simply and directly. That is meditation.

---

64. Chögyam Trungpa taught a course on meditation during the first session of the Naropa Institute in 1974. With a number of senior students as his assistants, he was the main meditation instructor for a group of five hundred plus students who attended the weekly lectures and made the commitment to daily practice. This article is based on the first two talks of the series.

## *An Element of Unreasonability*

THE GREAT TEACHER MARPA, who lived in the eleventh century, was the first Tibetan holder of the Kagyü lineage of vajrayana Buddhism. In his teaching style and his experience, Marpa represents a person accomplished in mahamudra, a vajrayana approach to meditation and meditative experience. All together, the earthiness of Marpa's approach is very much connected with the ground or the earth, basic earth.

*Mahamudra* means "the great symbol," or "the great sign." *Mudra*, which means "symbol," has two aspects. It represents the wisdom of shunyata, or emptiness, and it also refers to freeing oneself from the samsaric network. *Maha* means "great" or "grand" in Sanskrit. "Great" here has the implication of going as far as you can go, rather than comparing yourself to something smaller.

There are three stages of mahamudra tantra: the ground, the path, and the fruition tantras. Our discussion here is associated with ground tantra, which is connected with developing awareness in which existing symbolism is important. Symbolism becomes a guideline in our day-to-day situation. Symbolism in this case is not representational, where a symbol stands for something else. Symbolism here is seeing the deep core of the phenomenal world as it is. It is seeing the heart of the phenomenal world as it is. This is not just connected with relating with people; it is also about relating to events and inanimate objects as well.

Mahamudra has both a destructive and a creative aspect. The destructive aspect of mahamudra is cutting through the samsaric network. The creative aspect is developing shunyata wisdom. From the point of view of



mahamudra, perception and seeing symbolism in the phenomenal world involve both these processes.

To begin with, you cut the dualistic fabrications that develop. Then you see the emptiness of perception. We could say that the approach of cutting through is the masculine principle, and the approach of seeing emptiness is the feminine principle. Shunyata is open space, and the samsaric net is the obstruction, which creates a problem in seeing the spaciousness of shunyata.

There is a further approach to mahamudra, particularly to the wisdom of emptiness. This is experiencing primordial wisdom, wisdom which is born together with ignorance. Whenever there is a dualistic split, wisdom is there already. Wisdom occurs together with confusion at the same time. So mahamudra can only be perceived by what is called “one taste.” This one taste, or one flavor, is beyond two. Pain and pleasure are experienced and perceived as one flavor.

Flashes of mahamudra are twofold: first there is a sharp blow, and then there is clarity. It’s very dramatic, in some sense. Each time you perceive something, the process of perception is to cut and then experience the clarity. This kind of awareness is not just smooth and tranquil awareness. The first perception of mahamudra awareness is a sharp blow, and then there is an explosion into the nonexistence. Having cut through any fixation, you discover desolation of some kind, which is actually a discomfiting situation. That is the first glimpse of shunyata in the mahamudra experience.

Nonexistence in this case is quite different from the shunyata principle in the mahayana path of the bodhisattva or the Zen style of experiencing shunyata. In the Zen tradition, or more generally the mahayanist approach to shunyata, obstacles are removed rather than cut through. The obstacles are dissolved. It is more like a cleaning-up process than a tearing-out process.

This cleaning-up process is referred to in the Zen tradition as the experience of no-mind. This comes from the Yogachara school of thought within mahayana. Yogacharins look at the experience of shunyata as an experience arising out of luminous consciousness, which is brilliant and highly intelligent. But still it is mind and mind’s view of the nonconception of duality. It is a gentle blow. The *Heart Sutra* talks about no form, no feeling, no concept, no nothing. The approach is a gentle one, simply negating, rather than emphasizing the cutting through. The mahayana tradition of shunyata is

a very contemplative one, because you contemplate the nonexistence with no-mind.

When you reach the final experience of shikantaza in the Zen tradition, of transcending any techniques of working with the breath, you are tasting the core of both duality and nonduality, of no-mind. However, there is still allegiance toward emptiness. Up to a certain point, there is a euphoric experience of being absorbed into the nothingness. It's very cool and precise. It's simple but artistic. It is a work of art.

On the other hand, the mahamudra experience has no room for a work of art. It is not an artistic measure of anything, and the work of art is not a reference point. A gentle work of art is too civilized from mahamudra's point of view. Rather, there is an element of craziness, an element of unreasonability. You are not conned even by the artistic simplicity of nothingness.

Marpa's understanding of tantra was a very living experience, not an artistic or gentle one but a very abrupt and direct experience of mahamudra. When he confronted situations in his life, Marpa simply plunged in. At one point, after having made two trips to India to study with his root teacher, Naropa, and other great teachers, Marpa returned home and was absorbed in the pleasure of teaching his students. He had set up an elaborate tantric mandala and shrine, and he was preparing to give empowerments to his students.

But the night before the empowerment was to begin, Marpa had a dream in which his own guru, Naropa, was calling to him. The next day he abruptly canceled the ceremony and announced that he was going to India for a third time. He quickly gathered together enough gold for the journey and prepared his baggage. His family was concerned because of his age and how difficult the journey would be for him, so they hid the gold and the luggage, hoping that he might stay behind if he couldn't find his belongings.

When Marpa discovered what they had done, he was very angry and said that he was going to India whether he had his gold or not. And he left with nothing. So his family and students had to chase after him. They invited him back, saying that they would like to give him a farewell party and present him with more gold for his trip.

These little incidents played an extremely important part in Marpa's life. The messages that he received had nothing to do with scholarship or the refined understanding that can come through linguistic studies or the study of epistemology. The messages were simple and direct truth, and his moves were very abrupt and definite.

After his third visit was completed, Marpa gave instructions to his seven children, and they all became great students, scholars, and yogis. His oldest son, Tarma Dode, was particularly brilliant, and it was Marpa's wish that Tarma Dode become his successor. He was a very proud young man, a learned and accomplished person who was constantly competing with his father. If his father forgot the details of something during a talk, his son would whisper to him how to finish a quotation or would supply the philosophical details.

Once, while Marpa was in retreat with many of his chief disciples and his children, a neighboring scholar came with an invitation to attend a garden party of scholars, teachers, and dignitaries from all over the region. Marpa didn't want to attend but Tarma Dode wanted to go and show off. He wanted to exercise his authority and create a good image for the Marpa family and the Kagyü lineage.

Marpa said, "Go if you must. But don't engage in philosophical debate. Don't stay too long. Come home early." So Marpa let him go, with Milarepa (a great student of Marpa's who would later become his dharma heir) as an escort. They went to the party, and Tarma Dode was unable to avoid the philosophical debate. He couldn't play dumb. The discussions were wild and exciting, and Tarma Dode was extremely pleased by his abilities to expound fine points of philosophy and his knowledge of yogic teachings.

Finally, Milarepa reminded him that they should return early and convinced him to leave. As they were riding home, Tarma Dode's horse startled a bird nesting in rushes along the pathway. The bird suddenly flew up, defending its chicks. The horse was startled and ran wild. As it ran, Tarma Dode fell off, with his foot caught in the stirrup. His head was crushed by boulders. The horse ran back to the stable at Marpa's house with its half-dead passenger, and Tarma Dode died soon after. This was of course tragic and disheartening for Marpa, in spite of all his understanding of impermanence.

One of Marpa's students mentioned that Marpa had told them that everything is illusion, that there is no substance in anything. "You used to tell us that there is no point in worrying about things. But now that this trouble has come, you seem really upset. How is this possible?" Marpa replied, "My son's death is illusion, but it is wild illusion, super illusion. It is quite different from ordinary stupid illusions. It's a great illusion."

All of this is related to our discussion of the direct messages associated with mahamudra. During Marpa's third visit to India, Naropa had magically manifested in the sky a visual mandala of Hevajra, who was Marpa's yidam, or personal deity. It was very beautiful and elaborate. Naropa asked Marpa, "To whom will you prostrate, to the magical mandala or to me?" Marpa thought the mandala was so unusual. It was miraculous to see it in living form. So he prostrated to the mandala, the guru's creation, rather than to the guru himself.

Afterward, Naropa told him it was a mistake to prostrate to the mandala. Because Marpa didn't have trust in human beings continuing the lineage, and because he was deceived by magic and the superhuman forms he saw, this would mean an interruption in his family lineage, although the lineage of teacher and disciple would continue. Marpa was very depressed when he realized what he had done and thought that it was the product of accumulated karma. He had known better, but nevertheless he had prostrated to the illusion. He was more excited by magical creations than by Naropa himself.

Tarma Dode's death was the delayed action that came out of this. In Marpa's life, the direction and the messages came from a real understanding of mahamudra symbolism. When you have this understanding, the situation creates the decisions for you, rather than you sitting down to think or plan anything.

Marpa's activities and development are all examples of real surrendering. If there's no real dedication or real surrendering to the lineage, then one cannot expect a true understanding of mahamudra. You can't expect to get the best of both worlds. If you don't commit yourself to the process, you can't expect to have a mahamudra experience. In order to purchase a home, you have to give a down payment.

Mahamudra is fundamentally based on real commitment, genuine commitment. It is commitment that is not based on day-to-day temperament

or ego-oriented projects or promises. It is based on the understanding that the journey and the discovery are all part of giving up hope and fear.

In mahamudra, experiences come to you and they are workable. That is the attitude one must take, rather than expecting those experiences to constantly be confirming or pleasurable. Commitment has nothing to do with seeking pleasure or security. It is real commitment.

If we don't have mutual commitment between guru and disciple throughout the lineage, then what we are going to get is half-baked bread, which can only produce a stomach upset and further sickness. The purity and energy of the teachings cannot survive if one of the holders of the lineage has a halfhearted commitment to the teaching. If the lineage is not transmitted properly or completely, there is a lot of destruction and chaos for the students.

Marpa's example and approach to mahamudra experience were based on complete commitment and basic sanity, in which he accepted his everyday life situations. At the same time, he was able to see those situations as the path. You might think this sounds like too big an undertaking, but it is extremely simple, if your patience permits. If you have real commitment, this means that you trust yourself and you trust that there is something true in the teachings. Commitment reflects how much you identify yourself with the teachings and with your own life.

Once you are committed, then you have no choice. This is true for both master and student. As far as the master is concerned, once the students commit themselves to the path, it is like they are passengers getting into an airplane. In the middle of the flight, the captain can't kick out the passengers; he has to hang on to them. At the same time, the passengers might find it very claustrophobic. There is no chance to chicken out at all. At that point, it's too late. Either you get on the airplane or you don't. Once you've gotten on the plane, there's no way out. You can't even hijack the airplane.

Once a person is committed to the Kagyü lineage, that person becomes part of the lineage forever. It doesn't matter whether you are a star, a chief, an ordinary dishwasher, or a clerk. It's all the same thing.

As Marpa aged, his experience of continual mahamudra messages became his natural home ground. He didn't have to struggle to tune into anything. Things would just happen naturally, spontaneously. That comes when one reaches the level of an old dog—such occurrences are no longer new to you.

You know how to tune into situations quite simply and easily. Marpa's life example is applicable to us. Any one of us could work our way through situations very simply and directly, as he did.

## *Jolly Good*

WE ARE GOING TO DISCUSS the ground for building an enlightened society. No matter where we are in the world, there is a need for enlightened society, wherever natural disasters hit. In this case, “natural disaster” refers to aggression, passion, and ignorance. These kinds of natural disasters occur in the minds of people. They may be easy or difficult to deal with, but nonetheless they are workable.

If a building collapses, you spend thousands of dollars to fix it. If a hydroelectric dam breaks, it may cost millions of dollars to repair. In some sense, the disasters in the mind are cheaper to fix, but on the other hand the solution could be more demanding, because it requires personal attention and individual awareness. It is up to us to realize how and why and in which way we could bring about an enlightened society. Passion, aggression, and ignorance are regarded as problems or obstacles to this, but they are also part of the working basis.

While building an enlightened society requires us to overcome passion, aggression, and ignorance, the means to do this also requires a realization of joy, that you are not in a dungeon or the Black Hole of Calcutta. You get so resentful when you feel that someone or something in your life has imprisoned you in that way. You can’t even hear or talk properly. When you talk, you stutter with anger. When you hear, you only hear the destructive side of the argument.

So there is need for a sense of humor. It is impossible to overcome passion, aggression, and ignorance with a long face. We have to cheer up. When you begin to see yourself fully and thoroughly, then you discover your sense of

humor. It is not the same as telling bad jokes. Humor here is natural joy, the joy of reality.

The Shambhala tradition is very closely connected with the principles and vision of Buddhism. At the same time, this approach provides us with a secular view of how we can actually commit ourselves to a world that is true and genuine and good for us. There is something about human nature that is good, excellent, and cheerful. We are not particularly talking on a religious level. We are just talking about being human beings and cheering ourselves up. If we smile genuinely each day, that is jolly good. Having smiled already, then we can help the rest of the society, the rest of the world. Enlightened society has genuineness, gentleness, and honesty, and on the whole, it comes with tremendous joy. When you help the rest of the world, you don't have to be solemn.

There is always something in the situation that can cheer you up, but you have to discover and understand it yourself. There is no point in me telling you how to cheer up. It is up to you to find the intrinsic cheerfulness that exists in you. You have to actually experience it. If somebody simply puts an idea in your head, it is not good enough. You can cheer yourself up much better than somebody talking you into something.

As you learn to cheer up, you will also see the problems in our society, but you can't immediately criticize them or do anything about them right away. You have to develop yourself first. Then you can begin to work with others. In the Shambhala tradition, we don't jump the gun, so to speak. If you are going into battle, you don't put on your suit of armor hastily before you sit on the toilet. First you sit on the toilet and make sure your system is clear; then you put on the suit of armor. It could be a big problem if you do it the other way around.

So in order to help society, you need to work on yourself first. In the Shambhala tradition we talk about becoming a warrior. "Warrior" here is the English translation of the Tibetan word *pawo*. *Pa* means "brave." When you add *wo*, it means "he or she who is brave." It has nothing to do with warfare. If an infant is afraid to suck its mother's nipple, you have to train the infant, so that the infant would not be afraid to nurse. That is the idea of the warrior's bravery.



The basic definition of the Shambhala warrior is one who appreciates human goodness. Goodness here means simply being yourself. Out of being yourself a sense of upliftedness arises, rather than you becoming solemn. That upliftedness is a sense of basic human virtue. On that basis, you can train yourself to have a good sense of head and shoulders, or good posture, and good speech. Then a good way of working with others will come naturally.

The principle of virtue also includes a sense of decency. Decency does not just mean that Joe Schmidt is a decent chap because he pays his bills and never had a bad relationship with the neighbors. That might be part of it, but there is more to it than that. Even animals can do a decent job. When you give them a dish of food, they eat; give them a dish of water and they drink. They are very loyal to their masters.

Here, decency goes beyond that level. It is embracing the joy of living, the joy of being alive. So when we talk about the bravery or fearlessness of the warrior, we are not simply talking about overcoming fear. Fearlessness here is delight, cheerfulness, and a sense of sparkling eyes and good head and shoulders.

Usually when we talk about joy, it is connected with how wonderful things are, how pleasurable things are. But in the Shambhala teachings, there is a sense of joy even in difficult circumstances. You might have no hot water available and your house might not be insulated. Your children might be screaming and scheming, and you only have one outhouse. But at the same time, if you can raise your head and shoulders, there is some sense of joy. It's not any kind of cheap joy. It's individual dignity.

Joy and unconditional healthiness arise from the basic virtue of being what we are, just like we are, right now, at this point. There is natural healthiness, a natural sense of goodness that we can experience personally. Then, from that beginning point, when we go out and relate with the greater realities, we will discover what kind of joy is needed to help the world. We find that the joy of warriorship is always needed.

For the warrior, it is joyful to be in such good health, joyful to keep such good posture, joyful to experience that you are alive, that you are here. You can appreciate the colors of the world and you can appreciate the temperature

of the air. You can appreciate smells and you can appreciate sounds. There is a tremendous feeling of pleasure and appreciation.

But at the same time there is sadness. It is like the sound of a flute, which is so melodic and so beautiful that it ravishes your mind. It is almost like a mixed blessing, sweet and sour together. So joy brings a sense of sadness at the same time. Joy doesn't stay by itself. If it does, there must be something wrong with it, something perverted about it.

Instead, when there is fundamental joy, fundamental pleasure, an appreciation of yourself and your world, then a notion of empty heart begins to develop. You think you might be falling in love, but you never know who you are falling in love with. You just fall in love. It is so pleasurable and so painful at once. You are almost falling in love with the universe, with the general situation. At that point, there is no reference point to anyone or anything. You can simply be a lover without loving anybody particular. It is just being in love, just appreciating your world. You don't have to crank anything up. The main point is developing some kind of appetite for the universe, that everything is workable and lovable.

At the same time, one has to view the world with critical intelligence. You begin to use your eyes, your ears, your nose, and your tongue—your sense perceptions—to relate with reality. For the first time you see such penetrating and extraordinary red, such cool and beautiful blue, such warm and delicate yellow, such refreshing, earthy, and wet green. We could include sound and smell and taste: they are all part of our sense of appreciation. How wonderful the world is! How beautiful the world is! How exotic and how fabulous the world is! You might take it for granted, but if you look again, you begin to discover the tremendous beauty and subtlety that exist in your sense perceptions.

When there is this sense of joy and well-being, then there is also sadness. You wish that you could share your sense of well-being with other people. Our sadness and delight bring us to work with others. They begin to be included in our vision, in our experience. Other people have difficulties relating to the world, which may take the form of aggression, passion, or ignorance—the three natural disasters we discussed earlier. But just as we work with these things in ourselves, we begin to work with them in others. As long as people possess sense perceptions, sense organs, and sense

consciousness, then there is a working basis. Being able to work with others, one is able to work with oneself at the same time.

One's appreciation of the world never diminishes. Whenever there is doubt about that, that provides another step on your staircase. That means that you have to take another step to go beyond. So each time there is an obstacle, you go step-by-step. You walk or jump step-by-step until you see the Great Eastern Sun, the great sun of wakefulness and joy. This is the warrior's path.

## *Why We Meditate*

THE ACTUAL EXPERIENCE, TECHNIQUES, AND DISCIPLINES OF meditation are still unfamiliar to many people. So I would like to give you a basic idea of how meditation practice works, how it operates in our everyday life situation, and how it functions scientifically, so to speak. The practice of meditation is not so much based on becoming a better person, or for that matter becoming an enlightened person. It is seeing how we can relate to our already existing enlightened state. To do that is a matter of trust, as well as a matter of openness.

Trust plays an extremely important part in the practice of meditation. The trust we are discussing is trust in yourself. This trust has to be recovered rather than developed. We have all kinds of conceptualizations and attitudes that prevent us from uncovering that basic trust. These are known as the veil of conceptualization.

Sometimes we think of trust as trusting someone else to provide us with security, or trusting someone else as an example or an inspiration. These kinds of trust are generally based on forgetting yourself and trying to secure something trustworthy from the outside. But when our approach is highly externalized, the real meaning of trust is lost.

Real trust is not outward facing, as if you were completely poverty stricken. When you have that mentality, you feel that you have nothing valuable within you, so you try to copy somebody else's success or style or use somebody else's resources. However, Buddhism is known as a nontheistic tradition, which means that help doesn't come from outside.

The Sanskrit term for meditation, *dhyana*, is common to many Buddhist traditions. In Chinese, it is *chan*, and in Japanese it is *zen*. We may use the

word “meditation” in the English language, but how can we actually express its meaning, or what this approach actually is?

We have to know what we mean by meditation at all. Sometimes we use the word “meditation” to mean emptying out or letting go. Sometimes we mean relaxation. However, the point of meditation practice is actually to rediscover our hidden neurosis and our hidden sanity at the same time.

Although meditation involves training and discipline, the point is not to become a good, highly trained person who will behave in a certain enlightened style, so that you will be accepted among the buddhas and bodhisattvas. Rather, the meaning of meditation is intense lightness. Meditation is intense, because the practice is demanding, and your commitment to the sitting practice of meditation day after day is very demanding. At the same time, the practice of meditation is very light, because you have nothing to do, and nothing to accomplish, when you practice. So intense lightness or intense freedom is the meaning of meditation.

There is another tradition of practice, the contemplative tradition, which involves contemplating certain themes, subjects, or ideas. You may visualize a full moon, a flickering candle, or raindrops, or you may imagine yourself glowing with light. There are visualizations using symbols and signs of all kinds. These all fall in the category of the contemplative tradition, rather than the meditative tradition. According to the Buddha, such practice is often merely mental gymnastics, or a source of entertainment that is furthering your neurosis instead of leading to enlightenment. So according to the buddhadharma, simplicity is important. Therefore dhyana, meditation, means reliance on simplicity. That is the starting point.

Another important aspect of meditation is discipline. Discipline leads to openness, but that does not mean one’s frivolity is included as part of the path. Discipline is very severe and extremely demanding, highly demanding. You are expected to take part in this severe discipline, which is the discipline to be, to sit, to practice, and to completely involve your attitude, your conceptualizations, your subconscious mind, your emotions, your domestic affairs, and every aspect of yourself in your practice. Everything in your life situation becomes part of meditation, which is an enormous demand.

Giving in to such demand eventually begins to open a huge gate or door that has been shut tight. From this point of view, developing openness is not so easy—at all. It is opening a heavy wooden door, which is stuck. Opening this huge door is enormously demanding. It is not an artificial door, but a real, heavy door. To open it, first you touch the door handle, and then you have to pull and pull and pull. Not succeeding, you have to pull further.

Then, finally, you begin to hear the sound of the wood creaking, which is the first sign that you are finally going to be able to open this door. The creaks are encouragement that something is actually happening. Slowly, slowly, it opens a little, and then more, until finally you can open the whole door. Whew! This is how discipline equals openness—it is very deliberate, extremely deliberate. Nothing comes free, and nothing comes easy, either.

Meditation is also about exerting yourself and using your inquisitive mind as part of the practice. In order to be a good student, you have to be highly inquisitive. Then information is no longer a foreign element; it becomes part of furthering your inquisitiveness.

That inquisitiveness is referred to in traditional terms as faith or devotion. Why so? You are inquisitive because you want to find out something. There is something that interests or itches you. It sucks you in and you want to find out more and more. That attraction is the basis for faith or devotion. You feel that there's got to be something behind the whole thing, so you explore more and more and more. You never tire of your experience, but you are highly inquisitive about it. Each time you discover something, you feel even more inquisitive. That faith or devotion to things is very contagious.

Another aspect of meditation is that it reveals further neurosis. Here, we are speaking of the neurosis that you've been trying to hide underneath your carpet, your pillows, your seat, underneath your desk. You don't want to look into it, so you try to slip it underneath something somewhere. You try not to think about it at all.

We have to come face-to-face with these neuroses that we've been concealing from ourselves. We usually say, "Oops, that's not very nice, but never mind. Something else will come up that feels much better. I'll take advantage of that, rather than looking at this other thing, which is so unpleasant. Let's just forget about it." We've been doing that for a long time.

In fact, we've become so professional at this approach that we really don't question ourselves.

So meditation is uncovering those tricks that we've developed. In the beginning, a person who is practicing meditation usually feels extremely clumsy and embarrassed. You may even question whether you're doing something worthwhile. Meditation may seem unnecessary. You may feel that you're wasting your time, money, and effort.

Meditation is about relating with two factors. It relates you with yourself, and it also relates you with your world. Through the practice of meditation, you are able to synchronize your world and yourself together. Working with the two eventually produces a spark. It is like rubbing two sticks together or striking a flint against a stone to produce a spark. The spark of light you produce is called *karuna*, or compassion.

When you first come to meditation, you may not like yourself very much. You may feel that you even hate yourself, or hate your world. But you continue to practice and relate with your world and yourself simultaneously, both in meditation and in everyday life situations. Doing so properly, thoroughly, and completely, some kind of warmth begins to develop. You find that the phenomenal world is workable after all. It may not be lovable yet, but at least it's workable, manageable. And you realize that maybe you too are workable and manageable.

So the practice of meditation is comprised of these three elements: working with yourself, working with the phenomenal world, and working with the warmth that develops. You begin to take a liking to your frustration, pain, and boredom. Everything is part of your world.

The practice of meditation is the only way to develop this basic trust in yourself and your world. Beyond that, meditation is the key to developing openness and the potential of enlightenment. Without this practice as the basis, you may be sidetracked by all kinds of entertaining processes. Those sidetracks may feel quite good for a few months. You can do all kinds of exotic, seemingly fantastic things. Still, when you are going through these experiences, your vessel has a hole in it, somewhere or other. Somewhere, you are still leaking. You are not able to hold things within yourself properly. Your fascination, your sense of impatience, and trying to make the best of

things in the world by entertaining yourself is the heart of what I call spiritual materialism.

That approach is always a problem, not only in the modern world but throughout history. It existed in the past, going back twenty-five hundred years to the time of the Buddha. Spiritual materialism, the desire to turn spirituality into something you can possess and the tendency to see spirituality as a thing outside of yourself, is always there to be dealt with.

With the mentality of spiritual materialism, when you feel that everything in your life is a mess, you try to find someone to blame. We might blame the president of the country, the head of the police force, or our own boss. But you are missing the point. You ignore the leak in your own vessel, the leak within yourself. Nobody regards his or her own vessel as inefficient. We miss the point: that actually *our* vessel is leaking; our pot is leaking.

Meditation, especially at the beginning, exaggerates the leaks that are taking place. You keep pouring all kinds of goodies, all kinds of interesting experiences, into your vessel, but it never fills up. Finally, through the practice of meditation, you realize that there is a leak. It's not all that magical. The leakage is distrust. You realize that you are rejecting your basic sanity, and that you think that this basic sanity is something you have to purchase from somebody else and then transplant it into yourself.

The real weakness is thinking that you are not good enough, and that there is some outside security that you have to find. If you feel that somebody else has the sanity and you are messed up, then you think that you have to become like someone else, rather than becoming yourself. When you realize that this is what you have been doing, then your life becomes real and workable—because it has been workable all along.

In summary, meditation is a means of working with oneself and the phenomenal world. Working with those two together produces sparks of warmth and trust. A sense of workability begins to develop throughout your life.



## *Find Your Heart in Loneliness*

THE FIRST MEETING WITH ONESELF, with aloneness, is meeting one's real ego without clothing—naked ego, assertive, distinct, clear, definite ego. The experience of loneliness is from ego's perspective: ego has no one to comfort itself, no one to act as moral support. This kind of aloneness is simply the feeling of being nowhere, lost. There is tremendous sadness that there's nothing around you that you can hang on to. But it is your own ego acting as the voice of sadness, loneliness, so you cannot blame anybody or even get angry. That starting point is very useful and valuable. It was the inspiration to go into retreat in Milarepa's case, and in our case as well.

Taking part in a retreat is a way to express aloneness, loneliness, desolation. We might experience fear in retreat, but that fear is purely an expression of that loneliness. We are trying to entertain ourselves, so we manufacture fear. We might go back to our mental notes of the past, or our scrapbooks, but that becomes boring. We are back to square one constantly. Cooking, sleeping, or walking might become a source of entertainment. There is so little to do; we are thankful there is something to do. But even that comes back to square one. We tend to get disillusioned with that, too.

Such experiences of being in retreat are not exactly wretched. There is a very faint, subtle sense that you are falling in love with something. You begin to appreciate the desolation. A subtle romanticism is happening completely. Because there is nothing to entertain you, everything comes back to you. The songs of Milarepa, at the early stage of his being in retreat, are love songs.<sup>65</sup> They praise the terrain, the mountains, his cave, his desolateness, his solitude, and the memory of his guru. Those are his love songs.

In retreat you begin to find that the sadness and desolateness has a sense of the romantic. There is something to hang on to—somewhat. There is something to latch on to, but if you go too far it disappears. So it is a very subtle love affair. But obviously, it is definitely a romantic one.

At that point you see the value of guru. The guru becomes precious to you. You not only fall in love with the environment and with your aloneness, as such, but you also feel that your guru has a lot to do with it. You begin to appreciate his fatherhood and his genius as a matchmaker, that he married you and this desolate place. So we could say that sadness also provokes spiritual romanticism. Although it is materialistic in style, fundamentally it is spiritual, or even—if we could be brave enough to say such a thing—mystical. There is a tone of mystical experience.

Sadness brings up tremendous artistic talent in oneself, as it did in Milarepa. Milarepa composed songs and began to see the colors and sights and happenings around him become very real, extremely real. The way the sun shines, the way the moon sets, the way the clouds move. The wind breaking, the sounds of owls hooting at night. Mosquitoes landing on you. Everything you see becomes completely, totally, a gigantic world of romanticism—colorful and fantastic. At the beginning you are irritated by the insects around you, but at some point you begin to find that you wish you could invite them for a party or for dinner.

We could say that this whole thing is unreal, an expression of your being spaced out or even tripping out. But it has a valid reason; you can't regard it as unpleasant or a sidetrack on the path. It is very valuable, because we have not seen our ego alone for a long time—never. For the first time we begin to see that our ego is naked. We are not exactly without ego—there is ego—but that ego is a naked one. And it begins to explore the world around it.

So going into retreat, we could say, is an introduction to ego's nakedness and the subtle appreciation of aloneness, loneliness. Being in retreat, free from any kind of security, even from your guru, you have to pull up your own resources constantly.

Retreat does not only mean going into retreat in the physical sense, in a cabin—retreat means that you are left with nobody. Your guru has told you just to work on yourself, that it is not necessary to extend further information to you. You have to find your way.

In our case, you would like to find out something, you are hoping for new experience, so you decide to go on retreat. You consult your guru, and both he and you agree that this is a project you should get into. Then the process of retreat begins, and the experience becomes identical with Milarepa's. Obviously, you could step out of it. You could run into the city and eat ice cream and go to the movies. You could do all kinds of things.

Nevertheless, even if you do those things, they become part of the whole experience—you cannot actually escape. You are never out of retreat, once you decide to do it. You could be in Grand Central Station, but nevertheless, there is a sense of desolateness.

So, in fact, you are not going into retreat, but retreat is coming to you. That loneliness is always there. I wouldn't say that loneliness is only Milarepa's experience—we all have that sense of loneliness, particularly on the spiritual journey and in relating with a guru, but also in relating with a family and our case history of the past. The sense of loneliness is always there, even if you are entertaining yourself and you have lots of company and lots of friends to keep you occupied. Still, behind that, the sense of loneliness becomes prominent. Always you are back to square one. It is inevitable.

---

65. Milarepa was a great practitioner and lineage holder in the Kagyü tradition, known for his songs of realization. He spent many years in solitary retreat, and his retreat experiences were the basis for many of his spontaneous songs of realization.

## APPENDIX

### *The Sutra of the Recollection of the Noble Three Jewels*

*This short sutra is traditionally chanted as a way of increasing a student's devotion to the Buddha, trust in the dharma, and respect for the sangha. Trungpa Rinpoche included this chant in the meal liturgy he created for extended group meditation retreats, such as Vajradhatu Seminars.*

#### THE BUDDHA

I PROSTRATE TO THE OMNISCIENT ONE.

Thus, the Buddha, *bhagavat*, *tathagata*, arhat, samyaksambuddha, the learned and virtuous one, the *sugata*, the knower of the world, the charioteer and tamer of beings, the unsurpassable one, the teacher of devas and humans, is the Buddha bhagavat. The tathagata is in accord with all merit. He does not waste the roots of virtue. He is completely ornamented with all patience. He is the basis of the treasures of merit. He is adorned with the excellent minor marks. He blossoms with the flowers of the major marks. His activity is timely and appropriate. Seeing him, he is without disharmony. He brings true joy to those who long with faith. His knowledge cannot be overpowered. His strengths cannot be challenged. He is the teacher of all sentient beings. He is the father of bodhisattvas. He is the king of noble ones. He is the guide of those who journey to the city of nirvana. He possesses immeasurable wisdom. He possesses inconceivable confidence. His speech is completely pure. His melody is pleasing. One never has enough of seeing him. His form

is incomparable. He is not stained by the realm of desire. He is not stained by the realm of form. He is not affected by the formless realm. He is completely liberated from suffering. He is completely and utterly liberated from the skandhas. The *dhatus* have no hold on him. His *ayatanas* are controlled. He has completely cut the knots. He is completely liberated from extreme torment. He is liberated from craving. He has crossed over the river. He is perfected in all the wisdoms. He abides in the wisdom of the buddha bhagavats who arise in the past, present, and future. He does not abide in nirvana. He abides in the ultimate perfection. He dwells on the bhumi where he sees all sentient beings. All these are the perfect virtues of the greatness of the Buddha bhagavat.

## THE DHARMA

The holy dharma is good at the beginning, good in the middle, and good at the end. Its meaning is excellent. Its words are excellent. It is uncorrupted. It is completely perfect and completely pure. It completely purifies. The bhagavat teaches the dharma well. It brings complete vision. It is free from sickness. It is always timely. It directs one further. Seeing it fulfills one's purpose. It brings discriminating insight for the wise. The dharma spoken by the bhagavat thoroughly teaches training. It is renunciation. It causes one to arrive at perfect enlightenment. It is without contradiction. It is pithy. It is trustworthy and puts an end to the journey.

## THE SANGHA

As for the sangha of the great yana, they enter completely. They enter insightfully. They enter straightforwardly. They enter harmoniously. They are worthy of veneration with joined palms. They are worthy of receiving prostration. They are a field of glorious merit. They are completely capable of receiving all gifts. They are an object of generosity. They are always a great object of generosity.

This concludes the noble *Sutra of the Recollection of the Noble Three Jewels*.

Translated by the Nālandā Translation Committee

## FULFILLING THE ASPIRATIONS OF THE VIDYADHARA, THE VENERABLE CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA RINPOCHE

*When notably great teachers pass away, especially those with an international impact or one that goes beyond their lifetime, like the Vidyadhara Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, it is traditional to compose a chant enumerating the teacher's buddha activity and expressing the desire of the teacher's disciples to realize his or her aspirations. These are composed by a living teacher with a connection to the teacher who has died, to be chanted by the disciples and other practitioners touched by the teacher's dharma activity. Fulfilling the Aspirations of the Vidyadhara, the Venerable Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche was composed by the great elder teacher of the Karma Kagyü lineage, Venerable Thrangu Rinpoche, who has visited and taught in Trungpa Rinpoche's community many times, serves as the abbot of Gampo Abbey, and continues to be a great advisor and spiritual mentor to Trungpa Rinpoche's students.*

*The chant exhorts students to continue to practice and to study the oral instructions of the teacher. Particular emphasis is given to the importance of the Shambhala teachings, as well as the sitting practice of meditation through the practice of dathiin, and the vajrayana path as presented by Trungpa Rinpoche.*

*For a more detailed explanation of this chant, please see Thrangu Rinpoche's article "Fulfilling the Aspirations of the Vidyadhara" in Recalling Chögyam Trungpa, compiled and edited by Fabrice Midal (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2005), 451–460.*

**NAMO GURU-KARMAKAYE**

Through the power of practicing the holy dharma in general and the *utpatti* and *sampannakrama* of the anuttarayoga tantra of the secret mantra vajrayana in particular, may we, his disciples, in this life and through the entire succession of our lives, be endowed with the good fortune of practicing, by means of hearing, contemplating, and meditating, all the exceptional oral instructions of the great Vidyadhara Chökyi Gyatso.

As we practice and come to understand his profound oral instructions, may exceptional experience and realization arise in our beings. All the blessings without exception of the mind of the supreme vidyadhara having entered our beings, may we easily attain the supreme and ordinary siddhis. Having attained them, may we instruct and teach fortunate students, and may this spread throughout the entire expanse of Jambudvipa, completely fulfilling the wishes of this lord.

Accordingly, to provide a refuge from suffering, may the bravery, confidence, intelligence, exertion, gentleness, and so forth of the excellent tradition of Shambhala, which arose as his mind terma, spread and flourish. Based on the power of that, may the growing suffering of poverty and destitution due to the decline in prosperity, the affliction of various diseases previously unknown, the horrors of a war that could destroy the world and its inhabitants through poisons and other weapons, and other problems facing the world be completely quelled. May all beings without exception on this earth enjoy peace, happiness, and complete prosperity.

In particular, in this place on which this lord walked, which he blessed, and which he prophesied—the land of Kalapa and so forth—may *drala* and *werma* gather like clouds. Through completely increasing and expanding the teaching of Vajradhatu, the Dharmadhatu, and Shambhala, may we be able to fulfill effortlessly and spontaneously all the buddha activity and wishes of the great vajra vidyadhara, the supreme Chökyi Gyatso. Please grant your blessings.

In order to remain in nonwandering, the ground of dharma,  
Relying on the meditation practice of dathün,  
Completely free from the movement of discursive thought,  
May we give rise to the samadhi of one-pointed shamatha.



Having trained the mind on the paths of the greater and lesser  
vehicles,  
Through hearing the oral instructions of the view and meditation  
of the secret vajrayana  
And through direct transmission,  
May we give rise to completely pure conviction in our beings.

Through the practice of the general and special preliminaries—  
By purifying our beings, completing great accumulations of  
merit,  
And by the power of the guru's blessing entering us—  
May devotion, the root of dharma, be firmly planted.

Prajna in the form of the mother Varahi,  
Supreme upaya in the form of the father Chakrasamvara—  
Through the practice of unified utpatti and sampannakrama  
May we attain supreme siddhi in this life.

Through Ashe, the essence of Shambhala—  
The place of the seven dharmarajas and twenty-five Rigdens—  
May confidence enter our hearts,  
And through the power of that may drala and werma gather like  
clouds.

Through relying on the blessings and the power of the truth  
Of the genuine three jewels and three roots,  
May all the excellent fruition of our aspirations  
Be spontaneously accomplished, quickly and effortlessly.

*At the request of the Sawang Ösel Rangdröl Mukpo, the great holder of the family and dharma lineages of this holy one, this was written by the one who holds the name Thrangu Tülku. Through its power, may it be a cause for the teachings to spread everywhere.*

Translated by the Nālandā Translation Committee

## GLOSSARY

THE DEFINITIONS given here are based on how the terms are used in the text and do not attempt to be comprehensive. Terms already clarified in footnotes are not, in general, included in the glossary, unless additional information may be especially helpful to the reader.

**abhidharma** (Skt.). The systematic and detailed analysis of mind, including both mental processes and contents. Also, the third part of the Tripitaka, the “three baskets” of early Buddhist scripture.

**abhisheka** (Skt.). A tantric empowerment. In vajrayana Buddhism, an abhisheka is an elaborate ceremony initiating students into particular spiritual practices. More specifically, abhisheka refers to the meeting of minds between teacher and student, which is essential for the transmission of the teachings.

**acharya** (Skt.). Master, teacher, or elder.

**adhishtana** (Skt., “blessing”). Refers to the blessing that arises from a student’s devotion to his or her teacher and to the teachings in the vajrayana tradition. “The radiation that takes place between the opening of the student’s mind to the teacher and the teachings, and the opening of the teacher’s mind to the student. Between those two openings experience becomes not only naked but radiant” (*The Collected Works of Chogyam Trungpa: Volume Ten*, Shambhala Publications).

**Amitabha** (Skt.). An important mahayana and tantric deity connected with the Pure Land schools of Buddhism. Amitabha is the buddha of compassion and the ruler of the western paradise, Sukhavati. Many Buddhist funeral rites, especially those of the tantric Buddhist schools, include a chant asking Amitabha Buddha to guide the consciousness of

the deceased to the pure land of Sukhavati, thus releasing him or her from the round of suffering.

**anuttarayoga** (Skt.). “None higher” yoga. The highest of the four tantric yanas (“vehicles”), according to the New Translation School of Marpa and his contemporaries. The first three yanas are kriya, charya (upa), and yoga.

**anuyoga** (Skt.). One of the tantric yanas of the six tantric yanas of the Nyingma School (Old Translation School). The six are kriya, upa, yoga, mahayoga, anu, and ati.

**ati** (Skt., also maha ati). The highest of the six tantric yanas of the Nyingma School (Old Translation School). The six are kriya, upa, yoga, mahayoga, anu, and ati. Ati teachings are the final statement of the fruition path of vajrayana, according to the Nyingma tradition. *See also* dzogchen.

**Avalokiteshvara** (Skt.). The great bodhisattva of compassion; he is an emanation of the buddha Amitabha. His limitless compassion is said to help all beings who turn to him in difficult times. His Holiness the Dalai Lama and His Holiness the Karmapa are both considered to be an emanation of Avalokiteshvara. The mantra of Avalokiteshvara, OM MANI PADME HUM, is among the best known of all Buddhist mantras.

**Bateson, Gregory** (1904–1980). An eminent anthropologist, linguist, and social scientist whose work was multidisciplinary and intersected with many fields. He taught at the Naropa Institute in its first few years, while he was also a professor at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

**bhavana** (Skt., “cultivating” or “producing”). Chögyam Trungpa associates bhavana with spiritual exertion and discipline, especially in the development of shamatha and vipashyana meditation.

**bhikshu** (Skt.). Fully ordained monk.

**bindu** (Skt., “drop,” “dot,” or “point”). In yogic practice, which focuses on an inner or esoteric path of unifying mind and body, bindu may often refer to semen in men and to the sexual essence or essence of life in human beings generally. In the practice of sexual yoga, the idea of not wasting bindu has to do with refraining from ejaculation during sexual intercourse. Bindu is more broadly associated with mind or

consciousness. In *Journey without Goal*, Chögyam Trungpa says. “So consciousness or bindu is journeying through the energies of the world. Consciousness is the awake quality that doesn’t have to refer to immediate reference points alone, but has greater scope, like a radar system...The radar system is called bindu” (128).

**bhumi** (Skt., “land”). One of the ten stages, or spiritual levels, that a bodhisattva must go through to attain buddhahood. The ten bhumis are progressive stages in the development of the bodhisattva’s wisdom and compassion. They are called (1) very joyful, (2) stainless, (3) luminous, (4) radiant, (5) difficult to conquer, (6) face-to-face, (7) far-going, (8) immovable, (9) having good intellect, and (10) cloud of dharma.

**bodhichitta** (Skt.). Awakened mind or heart. Ultimate, or absolute, bodhichitta is the union of emptiness and compassion, the essential nature of awakened mind. Relative bodhichitta is the tenderness arising from a glimpse of ultimate bodhichitta that inspires one to work for the benefit of others.

**bodhisattva** (Skt., “awake being”). A bodhisattva is an individual who, by taking the bodhisattva vow, is committed to helping others and who gives up personal satisfaction for the goal of relieving the suffering of others. In the Buddhist teachings, a bodhisattva is more specifically one who has committed to practicing the six paramitas (transcendent virtues) of generosity, discipline, patience, exertion, meditation, and knowledge. The bodhisattva’s development of wisdom and compassion is an ongoing journey, and it is an example of how to work in daily life with awareness and compassion, or concern for others’ welfare.

**Bön** (Tib.). Generally, the religion of pre-Buddhist Tibet. *See also* Pön.

**Buber, Martin** (1878–1965). Austrian-born Judaic scholar and philosopher.

**buddha** (Skt., “awakened one”). When capitalized, Buddha generally refers to the historical buddha, Shakyamuni. When lowercase, it refers more generally to the quality of awakened mind.

**buddhadharma** (Skt.). The teachings of the Buddha or the truth taught by the Buddha. *See also* dharma.

**Buddha Lochana**. Often referred to as one of the five “female buddhas.” In various tantras she is said to be the consort of either the tathagata

Akshobhya or the tathagata Ratnasambhava. Her name literally means “Buddha eye,” and she is associated with the element of earth.

**Buddha Mamaki.** Often referred to as one of the five “female buddhas.” In various tantras she is said to be the consort of either the tathagata Akshobhya or the tathagata Ratnasambhava. Her name literally means “my,” and she is associated with the element of water.

**buddha nature.** The enlightened basic nature of all beings. Buddha literally means “awake” or “the awakened one,” so buddha nature is related to complete wakefulness. Basic goodness, which Chögyam Trungpa discusses extensively in the Shambhala teachings, is similar to the concept of buddha nature. *See also* tathagatagarbha.

**chakra** (Skt., “wheel”). The chakras are generally described as the places in the body where the nadis, or channels, come together and from whence energy emanates. In *The Sadhana of Mahamudra*, the Karmapas (Tüsum Khyenpa, Mikyö Dorje, and Rangjung Dorje) are visualized in the forehead, throat, and heart centers respectively.

**chandali** (Skt.). *See* tummo.

**chang** (Tib.). *See* nechang.

**chela** (Hindi). Student or disciple.

**chinlap** (Tib.; Skt.: adhishtana). Blessing. *See* adhishtana.

**choten** (Tib.; Skt.: stupa). A reliquary. It may be a small reliquary that would sit on a shrine, or it can be a large building, containing relics of the Buddha or of a great teacher, such as the Great Stupa of Dharmakaya at Shambhala Mountain Center.

**chuba** (Tib.). Traditional Tibetan dress, worn by both men and women. Chubas may be elaborate garments made of brocade fabric, or they may be everyday garments made of wool.

**crazy wisdom** (Tib., yeshe chölwa). Chögyam Trungpa coined this term to refer to the ultimate attainment of wisdom that manifests in compassion free from bias or restraint. It is also connected with manifesting the wisdom of the four karmas of pacifying, enriching, magnetizing, and destroying. The wisdom has to come first. The “crazy” only comes after the attainment of wisdom. It is action that may appear crazy to those

who do not understand the skillful action of the teacher whose compassion is extended to all, without bias. It is not just wild or conventionally “crazy” behavior.

**dakini** (Skt.; Tib.: khandroma). A wrathful or semiwrathful female deity signifying compassion, emptiness, and transcendental knowledge. The dakini is the embodiment of the feminine principle. The dakinis are tricky and playful, representing the basic space of fertility out of which the interplay of samsara and nirvana arises. More generally, a dakini can be a type of messenger or protector. In vajrayana practices, sometimes a dakini may be visualized alone, as the central figure of the visualization. Sometimes the dakini is visualized in union with a male deity, or heruka. One of the descriptions of the charnel ground in *The Sadhana of Mahamudra* is “the heavenly realm of the dakinis.” *See also* heruka.

**Dalai Lama**, His Holiness the. The much beloved secular and spiritual leader of the Tibetan people. The fourteenth Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, is the current Dalai Lama. Born in Tibet, he now resides in Dharmasala, India. A prolific writer and teacher, he is the recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize.

**dathün** (Tib.). A monthlong training period and retreat, focused on the sitting practice of meditation. Developed by Chögyam Trungpa as part of the path of meditation for his students.

**delek** (Tib., “auspicious happiness”). Neighborhood associations in Chögyam Trungpa’s community in the 1980s. For more on the deleks and the delek system Trungpa Rinpoche developed, see the “Introduction to Volume Eight” in *The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa, Volume Eight*, pp. xl–xlii.

**dharma** (Skt.). Truth, norm, phenomenon, or law. Often used to refer to the teachings of the Buddha, which are also called the buddhadharma. Dharma may also refer to the basic manifestation of reality or to the elements of phenomenal existence.

**dharmadhatu** (Skt., “space [or] realm of dharma”). The realm of ultimate truth. When capitalized, the name that the Vidyadhara gave to his dharma centers, now known as Shambhala Centers.

**dharmapala** (Skt.). Protector of the Buddhist teachings. May be used as a general term to refer to any Buddhist protector or more specifically as a term for a transcendent, or enlightened, protector as opposed to a lokapala, or worldly protector.

**dhyana** (Skt., “meditation”). In general, a reference to meditation. Dhyana is one of the six paramitas. *See also* dhyana, four states of.

**dhyana, four states of.** *Dhyana* is a Sanskrit term that means “meditation.” In Palithe term is *jhana*; in Chinese it is *ch’an*; and in Japanese, it is *zen*. Dhyana Buddhism is a term that may be applied to any Buddhist school that stresses the importance of the practice of meditation. The four dhyana states refer to four stages of absorption within the realm of form, or the rupakaya. The attainment of these dhyana states is connected with attainment of special powers and with the lessening or elimination of confusion and obstacles. However, the dhyana states are still relative experiences that take place within samsara, or the confused realm of existence, although on a refined level.

**Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche** (1910–1991). A great teacher in the Nyingma lineage of Tibetan Buddhism, who was one of Chögyam Trungpa’s main teachers in Tibet.

**dorje** (Tib.). *See* vajra.

**Dorje Dzong** (Tib., “Indestructible Fortress”). The name given by Chögyam Trungpa to his headquarters in Boulder, Colorado. Later, other international headquarters in Canada and in Europe were also called Dorje Dzong.

**Dorje Kasung** (Tib., “Indestructible Protector of the Command”). A service organization established by Chögyam Trungpa that provides security services and personal service to the teachers and the students within the Shambhala mandala. The training brings together the Shambhala training in warriorship with the practice of meditation.

**Dorje Sogdrupma.** *See* mahakali.

**Dorje Trolö.** The wild and wrathful form of Padmasambhava. He is the embodiment of true crazy wisdom and symbolizes self-existing equanimity. Dorje Trolö Karma Pakshi is described in *The Sadhana of*



*Mahamudra* as “the crazy wisdom form of the buddhas of the three times, the unified mandala of all the siddhas.”

**duhkha** (Skt.). Suffering, anxiety. *See also* four noble truths.

**dzogchen** (Tib.; Skt.: maha ati). The highest teachings of the Nyingma school. *See also* ati.

**Ekajati**. A mahakali important to the Nyingma lineage who is said to be a protector of the ati teachings. She is the protector for the first rural meditation center established by Chögyam Trungpa in North America. *See also* mahakali.

**ema**. Bhutanese chili.

**feminine and masculine principles**. In Buddhism, the feminine and masculine principles have nothing to do with gender differences. They are a way of looking at how reality is experienced in terms of space and what is contained in the space. The feminine principle is the container, the atmosphere, or the environment; the masculine is what arises or manifests in that vast space. The feminine is described as unborn, unceasing, with a nature like sky, and is equated with wisdom; while the masculine is connected with skillful action, including the bodhisattva activity of compassion. In the higher tantras, it may also be associated with mahasukkha, or great bliss. Chögyam Trungpa gave many teachings on the feminine and masculine principles. *See also* dakini and heruka.

**four noble truths, the**. The first teaching given by the Buddha after he attained enlightenment. The four noble truths are (1) the truth of suffering, (2) the truth of the origin of suffering, (3) the truth of the cessation of suffering, and (4) the truth of the path that leads to the cessation of suffering.

**Freud, Sigmund** (1856–1939). The founder of psychoanalysis.

**Freudian psychology**. An approach to psychology based on the work of Sigmund Freud.

**Gampopa** (1079–1153). “Man from Gampo.” A great scholar and philosopher, and an important Kagyü forefather. Founder of the

monastic order of the Kagyü lineage, Gampopa was the chief disciple of Milarepa and the author of *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*.

**garuda.** A mythical bird that hatches fully grown and soars into space beyond limits. The garuda symbolizes vast mind that can't be measured; symbol of the awakened state of mind, or buddhanature.

**gekö** (Tib.). The chief disciplinarian in the meditation hall.

**Geluk.** One of the four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism, which emphasizes observation of monastic rules and thorough study of authoritative texts; founded by Tsongkhapa. His Holiness the Dalai Lama is the head of the Geluk school.

**Gesar of Ling.** A Tibetan warrior king particularly associated with eastern Tibet. Stories about King Gesar form the greatest Tibetan epic. He was a great inspiration to Chögyam Trungpa.

**Great Eastern Sun.** In connection with the Shambhala teachings, a term coined by Chögyam Trungpa to describe the eternal brilliant wakefulness of human beings. The Great Eastern Sun is not the rising sun, but it is the sun at around ten o'clock in the morning.

**Guenther, Herbert** (1917–2006). One of the foremost early translators of the vajrayana and dzogchen teachings. He did the original translation of *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*. He and Chögyam Trungpa taught a seminar together in the early 1970s, which was the basis for *The Dawn of Tantra*, published by Shambhala Publications.

**gunchang** (Tib.). Wine made from grapes.

**güpa** (Tib.). Without arrogance. One of the essential qualities of devotion. *See also* mögü.

**guru** (Skt., “heavy”; Tib.: lama; bla ma; “none higher”). A master or teacher, especially in the tantric or vajrayana tradition of Buddhism.

**Guru Rinpoche.** “Precious Teacher,” the name by which Padmasambhava, a great teacher who helped to bring Buddhism to Tibet, is often referred to by the Tibetan people. *See also* Padmasambhava.

**Heart Sutra.** An important mahayana sutra on the nature of form and emptiness.

**heruka** (Tib.; Skt.: daka). A wrathful male deity in vajrayana Buddhism. The heruka is considered to be the embodiment of the masculine principle and in vajrayana visualization practices may be visualized alone or in union with a dakini, or female deity, representing the feminine principle. *See also* dakini.

**Hevajra**. One of the principal yidams practiced in the anuttarayoga school of vajrayana Buddhism. Hevajra was one of Marpa's yidams.

**hinayana** (Skt., "small way). The narrow way or path. The first of the three yanas of Tibetan Buddhism, the hinayana focuses on meditation practice and discipline, individual liberation, and not causing harm to others. The hinayana is made up of the shravakayana (the path of those who hear the dharma) and the pratyekabuddhayana (the path of those who are individual or solitary sages). Chögyam Trungpa talks about the hinayana as a necessary starting point on the path to realization.

**Jamgön Kongtrül of Sechen** (1901?–1960). Chögyam Trungpa's root teacher, one of the five incarnations of Jamgön Kongtrül the Great. He was also one of the chief disciples of the Tenth Trungpa, Chögyam Trungpa's predecessor.

**Jamgön Kongtrül the Great** (1813–1899). One of the most important scholars of the Nyingma and Kagyü schools of the nineteenth century. He collected teachings of all the schools of Tibetan Buddhism and instructed students in accordance with their own background. Despite criticism of his ecumenical approach, called Ri-me, he remains the embodiment of the esoteric and intellectual tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. His collected works, which together consist of 101 volumes, contain many teachings from all traditions that would otherwise have been lost.

**Jigme Lingpa** (1730–1798). One of the most important teachers of the dzogchen lineage; he received visionary transmissions, known as the Longchen Nyingthik, which were to become famous throughout Tibet.

**jnana** (Skt., "primordial knowing"). All-pervasive wisdom or intelligence, which transcends all dualistic conceptualization.

**jnanasattva** (Skt. "wisdom being"). In contrast to the samayasattva, this term refers to the actual deity beyond conceptualization. *See* samayasattva and

jnanasattva.

**Jung, Karl** (1875–1961). The influential founder of analytical psychology.

**Kagyü** (Tib., “command lineage”). Also known as the practice lineage. One of the four main schools of Tibetan Buddhism, stemming from Marpa Lotsawa, a translator who brought many tantric teachings from India to Tibet in the eleventh century. *Ka* refers to the oral instructions of the guru, which have a quality of command. In this lineage, emphasis is placed on direct transmission from teacher to student. The central practices of this school include mahamudra and the six dharmas of Naropa. As the eleventh Trungpa tülku, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche was a Kagyü lineage holder, although he also studied within the Nyingma tradition.

**Kagyü Gurtso**. The songs of the lineage fathers of the Kagyü lineage. Chögyam Trungpa worked with the Nālandā Translation Committee on the translation of these songs into English. Published as *The Rain of Wisdom* by Shambhala Publications.

**kalyanamitra** (Skt., “spiritual friend”). Used in context of the mahayana relationship of teacher/student.

**karma** (Skt., “deed” or “action”). The universal law of cause and effect. The entrapment of karma refers to the fact that our actions, since they are based on ego-clinging, entrap us in a never-ending chain of cause and effect from which it is more and more difficult to escape.

**Karma Dzong** (Tib., “Fortress of Action”). The name given to the meditation center in Boulder, Colorado, founded by Chögyam Trungpa in 1970 (now known as the Boulder Shambhala Center).

**Karma Pakshi** (1204/6–1283). The second Karmapa, who lived in the thirteenth century. In *The Sadhana of Mahamudra* he is inseparable from Dorje Trolö, and in that aspect he is the central figure of the sadhana.

**Karmapa**. Head of the Kagyü school and holder of the vajra crown. The Karmapa is an emanation of the tenth-level bodhisattva Maitreya and manifests as Avalokiteshvara.

**Karmapa, His Holiness the sixteenth Gyalwa** (1924–1982). Rigpe Dorje, the Karmapa was the head of the Kagyü order until his death in 1982. The title Gyalwa means “victorious one.” His name, Rigpe Dorje, means “indestructible awareness.”

**Karmê Chöling** (Tib., “Dharma Land of the Karma Kagyü”). The meditation center in Barnet, Vermont, founded by Chögyam Trungpa in 1970; originally known as Tail of the Tiger.

**kasungship**. The path and the practice of the Dorje Kasung teachings.

**Khenpo Gangshar Wangpo** (1925–?). A renowned twentieth-century Nyingma master associated with Sechen monastery. Chögyam Trungpa was a close personal student of Khenpo Gangshar. Famed for his instruction in crazy wisdom, Khenpo Gangshar was invited to teach at a shedra, or monastic college, that the Vidyadhara founded at Surmang Monastery.

**klesha** (Skt.; “trouble,” “defilement,” or “passion”). Klesha refers to the confused expression of emotion. There are three primary kleshas, which are often referred to as the three poisons: passion, aggression, and delusion or ignorance.

**kriyayoga** (Skt.). The first of the six tantric yanas of the Nyingma school (Old Translation School). The six are kriya, upa, yoga, mahayoga, anu, and ati.

**Künga Dawa**. An early student of Trungpa Rinpoche who helped translate *The Sadhana of Mahamudra*.

**Künga Gyaltzen** (fifteenth century). The first Trungpa.

**kusulu**. *See* pandita versus kusulu.

**kunyer** (Tib.). Keeper of a retreat place.

**kyudo** (Jpn.). The Japanese art of archery. Chögyam Trungpa was a close friend and colleague of Kanjuro Shibata Sensei, the twentieth in a line of master bow makers and a lineage holder of the kyudo tradition.

**Longchen Rabjam** (1308–1363). Known as a great scholar of the Nyingma lineage; like the third Karmapa, he carried the title “all-knowing.”

**Magyal Pomra Encampment.** An annual outdoor training program first held in 1978 for members of the Dorje Kasung, providing advanced training in the conduct and practice of warriorship. The original Encampment grounds are above the site of the Great Stupa of Dharmakaya at the Shambhala Mountain Center. The secondary location is on the Willow Church Road, near Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia.

**maha ati.** *See* ati.

**mahakali** (Skt., “great black female”). The female guardian protectors of the dharma. In *The Sadhana of Mahamudra* they are the “terrifying trees” in the charnal ground: Rangjung Gyalmo, Dorje Sogdrubma, Tüsölma, and Ekajati.

**mahamudra** (Skt., “great symbol or seal”). The central meditative transmission of the Kagyü lineage. The inherent clarity and wakefulness of mind, which is both vivid and empty.

**mahasiddha** (Skt.). A greatly accomplished practitioner and wise teacher in the vajrayana tradition who has accomplished siddhi, or great power. Often used in reference to teachers who are unconventional, nonmonastic masters of meditative realization.

**mahasukha** (Skt., “great bliss” or “joy”). A fruitional experience in the practice of vajrayana yogic disciplines. Chögyam Trungpa explains this as “not so much that somebody is tickling you or that you are in a state of ecstasy from the effect of some chemical...Here, joy and togetherness and wholesomeness has to do with something that is naturally there, completely there, a sense of arrogance and pride without neurosis, a natural state of being, which is so” (*Glimpses of the Profound*, Shambhala Publications).

**mahayana** (Skt., “great vehicle”). The second of the three yanas of Tibetan Buddhism, the mahayana is also called the “open path” or the “path of the bodhisattva.” Mahayana presents vision based on shunyata (emptiness), compassion, and the acknowledgment of universal buddha nature. The mahayana path begins when one discovers bodhichitta in oneself and vows to develop it in order to benefit others. The path proceeds by cultivating absolute and relative bodhichitta. The result is

full awakening. The ideal figure of the mahayana is the bodhisattva who is fully awake and who works for the benefit of all beings.

**mahayoga** (Skt., “great union”). The fourth of the six tantric yogas.

**maitri** (Skt., “loving-kindness,” “friendliness”). In connection with compassion, or karuna, maitri refers to the process of making friends with oneself as the starting point for developing compassion for others.

**mandala** (Skt., “disk” or “circle”). Derived from a root meaning “to adorn”; in Tibetan, “center/fringe.” (1) Outer: the geographical layout, frequently found in tantric visualization practice. (2) Inner: the body as sacred ground with its centers of energy. (3) The emotions as liberated energy.

**Manjushri**. Bodhisattva of knowledge and learning. Usually depicted with a book and the sword of prajna in his hands.

**mantra** (Skt.). Words or syllables, generally Sanskrit, that express the essence of various energies or yidams. The repetition of mantras is connected with protecting the mind from confusion and obscuration.

**mara** (Skt., “destroyer”). *Mar* means “to kill.” Mara is a killer or destroyer, an interrupter of the situation. The maras were the forces of confusion and self-delusion that attacked the Buddha just before he attained enlightenment. Generally, they are the obstacles to awakening.

**Marpa** (1012–1100). The chief disciple of the Indian teacher Naropa, Marpa of Lhotrak brought the Kagyü teachings from India to Tibet in the eleventh century. He is often called Marpa the Translator. A farmer with a large family, he was known not only for his meditative realization of mahamudra but for his attainment of spiritual realization within a secular lifestyle.

**materialism, psychological**. The appropriation of ideas and concepts to protect the individual’s ego or self-clinging. A phrase coined by Chögyam Trungpa.

**materialism, spiritual**. The appropriation of spiritual experiences and ideas to reinforce ego-clinging. A phrase coined by Chögyam Trungpa.

**Meister Eckhart** (1260?–1327?). Thirteenth-century German theologian regarded as a great mystic. His influential works concern the union of the individual soul with God.

**Mikyö Dorje** (1507–1554). The eighth Karmapa. A scholar, grammarian, and artist, he was one of the greatest teachers of his time, a completely accomplished and realized tantric master. In *The Sadhana of Mahamudra* he resides in the throat center of Karma Pakshi as “the lord of speech, the unceasing voice of Amitabha.” He represents the proclamation of the teachings.

**Milarepa** (1040–1123). The most famous of all Tibetan poets and the quintessential wandering yogin, Milarepa, or “the cotton-clad Mila,” was Marpa’s chief student and the fourth major lineage holder of the Kagyü tradition. His songs of realization are still recited and studied.

**mögü** (Tib.). Devotion, especially in the sense in which it is practiced in vajrayana Buddhism. Mögü is made up of *möpa*, or longing, and *güpa*, or gentleness, being without arrogance. *See also* möpa and güpa.

**möpa** (Tib., “interest” or “admiration”). The quality of longing associated with devotion, especially in vajrayana Buddhism. *See also* mögü.

**mudra** (Skt., “seal, sign”). Bodily posture, or symbolic gesture, especially a hand gesture, that accompanies the practice of Buddhist liturgies. In the larger sense, mudra refers to how phenomena demonstrate or manifest themselves, as symbols or signs of themselves.

**Nalanda University**. A large Buddhist monastery in the ancient kingdom of Magdha (modern-day Bihar) in India. It was an important center of learning from the fifth century to the thirteenth century. Naropa, the great lineage holder in the Kagyü tradition, taught at Nalanda before studying with his root teacher, Tilopa.

**Naropa** (1016–1100). A great Indian siddha, or tantric master, second of the enlightened lineage of teachers of the Kagyü lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. Naropa was a greatly accomplished scholar at Nalanda University. He left Nalanda to search for his teacher when he realized that he understood the literal meaning of the teachings but not their true sense. He underwent many trials before he attained enlightenment. Later, he was the teacher of Marpa, who traveled to India three times to study with Naropa and receive teachings from him. Chögyam Trungpa gave a number of seminars on Naropa’s life and teachings, several of which are published as *Illusion’s Game*.



**Naropa Institute.** Established in 1974 by Chögyam Trungpa and his students, Naropa Institute, now Naropa University, was envisioned as a place that would bring together East and West—the spiritual traditions and contemplative practices of the East with the great intellectual traditions of the West. The first summer of Naropa, close to two thousand students arrived to study with a diverse faculty that included Chögyam Trungpa, Gregory Bateson, Ram Dass, Jack Kornfield, and many others. Presently the university is a leader in contemplative education and offers both undergraduate and graduate degrees.

**Naropa University.** *See* Naropa Institute.

**nechang** (Tib.). Wine made from barley (also referred to as chang).

**ngedön** (Tib.). A shortened form of *ngepi-tön*. *Ngepa* means “certain” and “real”; *tön* means “further essence.” Ngedön refers to studying and realizing the essential meaning of the teachings, rather than purely exploring their intellectual basis.

**nidana** (Skt., “cause” or “source”). One of the twelve “links” that form the chain of conditioned arising or the links that make up samsara, the everyday confused world of suffering. The twelve nidanas are depicted in the wheel of life, which shows the functioning of samara. The nidanas form the outer ring of the wheel. The innermost ring is composed of the three primary kleshas: passion, aggression, and ignorance. Around that, the six realms of conditioned existence revolve: the realms of gods, jealous gods, humans, animals, hungry ghosts, and hell beings. Beyond that are the twelve nidanas, which are (1) ignorance, (2) formations or impulses, (3) consciousness, (4) name and form, (5) the six realms of the senses, (6) contact, (7) sensation, (8) craving, (9) clinging, (10) becoming, (11) birth, and (12) old age and death.

**nirvana** (Skt., “extinguished”). Freedom from the sufferings of samsara, or confused cyclic existence. *See also* samsara and nirvana.

**Nyingma** (Tib., “Old Ones”). The earliest of the four principal schools of Tibetan Buddhism, which focuses on the oldest Buddhist traditions of Tibet brought to the country from India by Padmasambhava, Vimalamitra, and Vairochana in the eighth century.

**nyingthik** (Tib., “heart essence”). Often used in connection with *terma*, or revealed, teachings, in the Nyingma tradition. The Longchen Nyingthik, for example, are famous *terma* teachings revealed by Jigme Lingpa.

**oryoki** (Jpn.). Japanese monastic practice for taking one’s meals in the meditation hall.

**Padmasambhava** (Skt., “The Lotus-Born”) One of the eight aspects of Guru Rinpoche, a great teacher who was instrumental in bringing Buddhism to Tibet from India in the eighth century. He is considered the father of Buddhism in Tibet and is revered by all Tibetan Buddhists. He hid many prophetic teachings in places in Tibet, which are called *terma*, to be discovered for the use of future practitioners. He is the main figure in *The Sadhana of Mahamudra*, manifesting in his crazy wisdom aspect as Dorje Trolö and inseparable from Karma Pakshi. *See also* Guru Rinpoche.

**pandita versus kusulu.** *Pandita* is a Sanskrit word that simply means “scholar.” It is the source of the word *pundit* in English. The *pandita* tradition in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism emphasizes the importance of scholarly work, reading and studying texts as the basis for one’s understanding. The *kusulu* tradition emphasizes meditation practice without a great deal of scholarly analysis involved. Some texts in the tradition of *mahamudra* meditation stress that the practice of direct valid cognition, or direct perception and understanding without confusion, is divided into two styles of practice. One is called the analytical meditation of a *pandita*, and the other is called the meditation of a *kusulu* or *yogi*. Here, *pandita* style is analytical direct observation in which you are observing specific characteristics or things. The other aspect, the meditation of a *kusulu* or *yogi*, is simple and direct, without directed or analytically oriented observation.

**paramita** (Skt., “transcendent,” “perfection,” or “gone to the other shore”). The *paramitas* are the transcendent actions or virtues practiced by a *bodhisattva*. The six *paramitas* are generosity, discipline, patience, exertion, meditation, and knowledge (*prajna*). The *paramitas* differ from ordinary activities or virtues in that they are all based on realization free from ego-clinging.

**pawo** (Tib. “warrior”). Used by Chögyam Trungpa in connection with the Shambhala warrior teachings. *See* Shambhala warrior.

**Pön tradition.** *See* Bön.

**phurba** (Tib.; Skt.: kila). Ritual dagger.

**prajna** (Skt., “transcendent knowledge” or “perfect knowledge”). The sixth paramita. It is called transcendent because it sees through the veils of dualistic confusion. Prajna is like the eyes, and the other five paramitas are like the limbs of bodhisattva activity. Prajna can also mean wisdom, understanding, or discrimination. At its most developed level, it means seeing things as they are from a nondualistic point of view.

**pratyekabuddha** (Skt., “solitary awakened one”). One of the two hinyana vehicles; a term for a person who has realized one-and-a-half-fold egolessness due to insight into dependent arising, without relying on a teacher.

**Ram Dass.** Born Richard Alpert in 1931, Ram Dass is a Hindu spiritual teacher and the author of *Be Here Now*, which was a bestseller in the 1970s. He taught at Naropa Institute in 1974, and a number of his followers became students of Chögyam Trungpa.

**Rangjung Dorje** (1284–1339). The third Karmapa and the reincarnation of Karma Pakshi, who brought together the two traditions of the mahamudra teaching of devotion and the maha ati teaching of crazy wisdom. In *The Sadhana of Mahamudra* he resides in the heart center of the main figure.

**Rangjung Gyalmo.** *See* mahakali.

**ratna** (Skt., “jewel”). In the mandala of the five buddha families, ratna is the buddha family associated with the south, the buddha Ratnasambhava, the klesha of pride, and the wisdom of equanimity. It is associated with wealth and richness.

**Ratna Society.** Chögyam Trungpa and a number of his students who were involved in business enterprises started the Ratna Society as an organization where businesspeople could gather to talk about best practices and how to create wealth without causing harm.

**Rigden.** A king of Shambhala.

**Ri-me** (Tib.). The “unbiased” school of Tibetan Buddhism, established by Jamgön Kōngtrul the Great and other leading teachers of the Kagyü and Nyingma lineages in the twentieth century. The Ri-me school respects the wisdom and practices of all the lineages and attempts to preserve them. It is ecumenical but does not try to eliminate differences. Rather it is appreciative of different approaches, insights, and skillful means.

**rinpoche** (Tib., “precious one”). An honorific used for great teachers, usually those who are recognized as reincarnations of earlier great teachers.

**rishi** (Skt.). A sage, one who is straightforward, not deceptive in body, speech, or mind.

**Rocky Mountain Dharma Center.** The rural meditation center established by Chögyam Trungpa and his students in the early 1970s. Now renamed Shambhala Mountain Center.

**Rolpa Dorje** (twentieth century). A Kagyü master and teacher of Trungpa Rinpoche at Surmang.

**roshi** (Jpn., “old [venerable] master”). Title of a Zen master.

**rudra** (Skt.). The personification of ego. In *The Sadhana of Mahamudra*, the quality of rudra is synonymous with ego, self-clinging, and territoriality.

**sadhana** (Skt., “means of accomplishing something”). A spiritual practice or a liturgy associated with a particular practice.

**Sakya.** A major school of Tibetan Buddhism named after the Sakya (“grey earth”) monastery in southern Tibet. Founded in 1083 and known for creating a systematic order for the tantric writings, it had great political influence in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

**samadhi** (Skt., “meditation” or “concentration”). A state of total meditation in which the mind rests without wavering and the content of the meditation and the meditator’s mind become one.

**samaya** (Skt.). Binding vow, commitment, or words of honor. In vajrayana Buddhism, students take samaya vows committing them to the teacher and the teachings.

**samayasattva.** See samayasattva and jñanasattva.

**samayasattva and jñanasattva.** The samayasattva and the jñanasattva are two basic principles or aspects of visualization practice in the vajrayana.

*Samaya* literally means “vow” or “bondage.” *Sattva* means “being” or “body.” The samayasattva is the practitioner’s visualization of a deity, and it expresses his or her connection with the teacher and the teachings. *Jnanasattva* means “wisdom being” or “wisdom body,” and it represents the wisdom and sanity of the lineage and the teachings descending or entering into your visualization and blessing it, or giving it a sense of power and wisdom. This is all within a nontheistic context. That is to say, although the practitioner visualizes the jnanasattva in front of him- or herself and then descending or joining in union with the samayasattva, nevertheless, the practitioner understands that there is no actual independent entity. In fact, the union of the samayasattva and the jnanasattva represents the fundamental unity of experience, beyond this and that.

**samsara** (Skt.). *See* samsara and nirvana.

**samsara and nirvana.** Samsara is the vicious cycle of confused existence, the world of struggle and suffering that is based on ego-clinging, conflicting emotions, and habitual patterns. Its root cause is ignorance of our true nature, which is openness beyond the duality of self and other. Samsara is contrasted with nirvana, the state of enlightenment characterized by the cessation of ignorance and of the suffering of conditioned existence. The highest tantric teachings speak of the union of samsara and nirvana or their indivisibility.

**sangha** (Skt.). The community of Buddhist practitioners. The sangha includes both the monastic sangha, the community of monks and nuns, and the lay sangha. The sangha is one of the three jewels, or the three aspects of Buddhist practice that should be respected and revered. The other two are the Buddha, or the teacher; and the dharma, or the teachings of Buddhism themselves.

**satori** (Jpn.). Zen term for the experience of awakening.

**Sechen.** One of the six main Nyingma monasteries in Tibet and seat of Jamgön Kongtrül, the Vidyadhara’s root guru. Following the Chinese invasion of Tibet, this monastery was rebuilt in both Tibet and Nepal.

**Seng-ge Samdrup.** The guardian deity of the cave of Padmasambhava. *See also* Taktsang Seng-ge Samdrup.

**setsu** (Jpn.). An implement for cleaning one's bowls in the practice of oryoki.

**shamatha** (Skt.). Mindfulness practice. A basic meditation practice common to most schools of Buddhism, the aim of which is to tame the mind.

**Shambhala**. A legendary kingdom said to have been located in Central Asia, which represents the ideal of enlightened society.

**Shambhala Training**. A program presenting meditation practice and teachings on basic goodness and the path of the Shambhala warrior, developed by Chögyam Trungpa and his senior students in 1976.

**Shambhala warrior**. The image of a brave human being who is free from aggression but is dedicated to helping to promote peace and insight in the world and dedicated to helping others.

**Sharmapa**. Holder of the red crown, the Sharmapa is known as a manifestation of Amitabha, the buddha of limitless light.

**shikantaza** (Jpn.). A term used mainly in the Soto school of Zen, which may refer to a state of meditative realization or to the practice of meditation that leads to that experience. Chögyam Trungpa described shikantaza as the union of calm and insight, two fundamental aspects of the sitting practice of meditation. He had great respect for the Zen tradition and also for shikantaza meditation.

**shila** (Skt., “discipline”). One of the six paramitas, or transcendent actions of a bodhisattva. It also is used to refer more generally to the practitioner's discipline and conduct. Chögyam Trungpa frequently talks about shila in terms of particular aspects of conduct, such as telling the truth and being generous to others. *See also* paramita.

**shravakayana** (Skt., “vehicle of the hearers”). The first of the three “vehicles,” or yanas, on the practitioner's path that can lead to realization. It is part of the hinayana path.

**shunyata** (Skt., “emptiness”). In the second turning of the wheel of dharma, the Buddha taught that external phenomena and the self, or “I,” have no inherent existence and therefore are “empty.” Shunyata is a completely open and unbounded clarity of mind characterized by groundlessness and freedom from all conceptual frameworks. It could be called “openness” since “emptiness” can convey the mistaken notion of a state

of voidness or blankness. In fact, shunyata is inseparable from compassion and all other awakened qualities.

**siddha** (Skt., “accomplished one”). *See* mahasiddha.

**skandha** (Skt., “group,” “aggregate,” or “heap”). Each of the five aggregates, which constitute what is generally known as ego or personality. They are form, feeling, perception, concept, and consciousness.

**Songsten Gampo** (569–649?/605–649?). The first great Buddhist king of Tibet.

**sosor tharpa** (Tib.). Individual liberation. The Hinayana path is particularly connected with the attainment of individual liberation.

**Soto School of Zen.** The leading school of Zen Buddhism, which stresses the practice of meditation as the means to attain realization.

**sthavira** (Skt; Pali.: thera). Elder.

**Svatantrika.** One of the subschools of madhyamaka. Shantarakshita, who helped bring the buddhadharma to Tibet, was one of this school’s best-known proponents.

**sugatagarbha** (Skt.). Indestructible basic wakefulness, buddha nature. Similar to tathagatagarbha, however sugatagarbha emphasizes the blissful aspect and the path aspect of buddha nature, while tathagatagarbha emphasizes the wisdom or “isness” aspect. *See also* tathata *and* tathagatagarbha.

**Surmang** (Tib., “many cornered”). A monastery in eastern Tibet, which traces its roots back 550 years to the mahasiddha Trung Mase. For twelve generations it has been the seat of the Trungpa lineage.

**sutra** (Skt.; Tib.: do; mdo). Thread, string, or cord. Sutras are hinayana and mahayana texts in the Buddhist canon that are attributed to the Buddha. *Sutra* means a meeting point or junction, referring to the meeting of the Buddha’s enlightenment and the student’s understanding. A sutra is usually a dialogue between the Buddha and one or more of his disciples, thus elaborating a particular topic of dharma.

**Suzuki Roshi** (1904–1971). Shunryu Suzuki Roshi was the founder of the San Francisco Zen Center and Tassajara monastery and the author of *Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind*. A Soto Zen master, his approach to teaching Westerners had a profound effect on Trungpa Rinpoche.

**T'ai Chi Ch'uan.** A form of contemplative exercise and a martial art form developed in China.

**tantra** (Skt., “continuity”). A synonym for *vajrayana*, the third of the three main yanas of Tibetan Buddhism. *Tantra* means “continuity” and refers both to the root texts of the vajrayana and to the systems of meditation they describe.

**Taktsang Seng-ge Samdrup** (Tib. “tiger’s den wish-fulfilling lion”). The cave where Padmasambhava manifested as Dorje Trolö and where *The Sadhana of Mahamudra* was discovered by Chögyam Trungpa.

**Tarthang Tulkü** (1934– ). A Nyingma meditation master and scholar who emigrated to the United States in the same era as Chögyam Trungpa.

**tathata** (Skt., “thus,” “isness,” “dharmaness”). Related to *sugata*, which is “well-gone,” and tathagata, “gone as it is.” Both achieve the “tathata,” which is “as it is.”

**tathagata** (Skt., “thus gone”). An epithet for a fully realized buddha. *See also* sugatagarbha.

**tathagatagarbha** (Skt.). *Tathagata* is an epithet for a fully realized buddha, which means “he who has gone beyond.” *Garbha* means “womb” or “essence.” Tathagatagarbha is Sanskrit for buddha nature, the enlightened basic nature of all beings, which is a central theme of many of the the mahayana schools of Buddhism. *See also* buddha nature.

**terma** (Tib.). Teachings given by Padmasambhava that are physically hidden or hidden in the realm of mind and space, to be discovered later by a tertön, or treasure revealer. In Western terms, we might view terma as prophecies that are uncovered. Chögyam Trungpa was a well-known tertön, who began discovering terma in Tibet at a very young age. *The Sadhana of Mahamudra* was the first terma text he uncovered in the West.

**Teshin Shekpa** (1384–1415). The fifth Karmapa, and teacher of Trung Mase.

**Theravadin.** A follower of the Theravada school, the school of Buddhism that draws its scriptural inspiration from the Pali canon, or Tripitaka, which scholars generally accept as the oldest record of the Buddha’s



teachings. For many centuries, Theravada has been the predominant religion of Sri Lanka, Burma, and Thailand.

**three poisons.** *See* klesha.

***Tibetan Book of the Dead*** (Tib.: *Bardo Thödol*, “Book of Liberation in the Bardo through Hearing”). A famous Tibetan tantric text on working with death and dying and the after-death state. Chögyam Trungpa worked on a translation, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, that makes these teachings much more available to Western readers, through the explanation of their psychological significance. The origin of these teachings can be traced to Padmasambhava and his consort, Yeshe Tsogyal. The text was later discovered as a terma, or treasure text, by Karma Lingpa, in the fourteenth century. It is often read aloud to dying persons to help them attain realization within the bardo, the state after death. The lineage that Chögyam Trungpa belonged to, the Trungpa lineage, as well as the lineage of the Surmang Kagyü, had a strong connection with these teachings.

**Tilopa** (988–1069). A renowned teacher of vajrayana Buddhism in India in the eleventh century. His most famous disciple was Naropa, who through his student Marpa, introduced the Kagyü teachings into Tibet.

**trangdön** (Tib.). *Trang* means “straightforward”; *dön* means “meaning,” or “essence.” This term is sometimes translated as “literal meaning.” It is the scholarly study of something that gives an understanding about something but does not constitute direct or essential understanding. *See also* ngedön.

**transmission** (Tib.: ngotro). The meeting of the mind of the guru with the mind of the student. The pointing out, usually through gesture and symbol, of the true nature of mind.

**trikaya** (Skt., “the three bodies of enlightenment”). The dharmakaya is enlightenment itself, wisdom beyond any reference point. The sambhogakaya is the environment of compassion and communication. Iconographically, it is represented by the five buddhas, yidams, and protectors. The nirmanakaya is the buddha who actually takes human form. In the vajrayana, the teacher’s body, speech, and mind are regarded as the trikaya.

**Trisong Detsen** (740–798). One of the important early kings of Tibet. He became the king in 755 and invited Padmasambhava, Shantaraksita, Vimalamitra, and other important Indian teachers to come to Tibet.

**Trung Mase** (fifteenth century). A great mahasiddha and teacher of the first Trungpa tülku, Künga Gyaltsen.

**Tsurphu**. The principal monastery of the Karma Kagyü lineage. It has traditionally been the main seat of the Karmapas.

**tülku** (Tib., “emanation body”). A term for a person who is recognized as the reincarnation of a renowned teacher. Generally refers to a nirmanakaya buddha, a buddha in human form.

**tummo** (Tib.; Skt.: chandali, “fierce, wrathful”). A term in vajrayana Buddhism for psychic heat generated and experienced through inner disciplines of meditation that focus on synchronizing body and mind. This inner heat burns up obstacles and confusion.

**Tüsum Khyenpa** (1110–1193). The first Karmapa, a great ascetic meditator who was one of the primary students of Gampopa. In *The Sadhana of Mahamudra* he resides in the forehead center of Karma Pakshi, the central figure.

**Tüsölma**. See mahakali.

**upayoga** (Skt.). One of the tantric yanas.

**upaya** (Skt.). Skill in means or method. Often associated with the ability of a bodhisattva to apply the skillful means to liberate or help others.

**uttaratantra**. See *Uttaratantra Shastra*.

**Uttaratantra Shastra** (Skt.: *Mahāyānottaratantra Śāstra*; Tib.: *Gyü Lama*). One of the five treatises of Maitreya, a commentary on the teachings of the third turning of the wheel of dharma explaining buddha nature. It is included among the so-called thirteen great texts, which form the core of the curriculum in most shedras, or monastic colleges.

**vajra** (Skt.; Tib.: dorje, “noble stone”). In the vajrayana, vajra is the basic indestructible nature of wisdom and enlightenment, penetrating wisdom that cuts through solidified ignorance. A vajra is also a tantric ritual implement or scepter representing a thunderbolt, the scepter of the king

of the gods, Indra. This thunderbolt is said to be made of adamantine or diamond, and this is connected with its basic symbolism: the indestructibility of awakened mind. When used with the ritual bell, or ghanta, the vajra symbolizes skillful means, and the bell, transcendental knowledge. Vajra is also the name of one of the five buddha families, whose enlightened quality is pristine clarity and whose confused or neurotic quality is aggression.

**vajra master.** A tantric teacher. The vajra master's approach to working with practitioners is uncompromising and demanding. His or her job is to introduce reality in successive teaching situations throughout the practitioner's life.

**vajra nature.** Indestructible being. Indestructible self-existing sacredness and sanity of phenomena and of one's basic existence, manifesting through vajra body, speech, and vajra mind. *See also* vajra.

**Vajradhatu** (Skt., "The Indestructible Realm or Space"). The name given by Chögyam Trungpa to the international organization he established in 1973 to bring together his various meditation centers and teaching activities. More generally, in the vajrayana teachings of Buddhism, vajradhatu refers to the ultimate realm of space, the primordial realm of mind from which everything arises.

**Vajrakilaya** (Skt.; Tib.: Dorjephurba, "Indestructible Dagger"). Vajrakilaya is a vajrayana deity or yidam connected with overcoming obstacles. Mainly associated with the Nyingma school. There are many kinds of kilas, or daggers, associated with this practice, mainly of a psychological kind—meaning that the kilas refer to overcoming obstacles through practices that strengthen and sharpen the mind.

**Vajrasattva** (Skt., "Indestructible Being"). Vajrasattva is a vajrayana deity or yidam embodying the principle of purity, in the sense of pure vajra being.

**vajrayana** (Skt., "the diamond way" or "the indestructible vehicle"). Vajrayana is the third of the three great yanas, or stages on the path, of Tibetan Buddhism. It is synonymous with *tantra*. The vajrayana emphasizes the attainment of vajra nature, or indestructible wakefulness, and its indivisibility with compassion. The practice of vajrayana emphasizes devotion to the guru, or vajra master. In the vajrayana,

buddhahood is presented as already existing, available to be actualized through the skillful means of visualization, mantra, and mudra.

**Vajrayogini** (Skt.). One of the principal deities or yidams of the Kagyü school of Tibetan Buddhism. Vajrayogini is the consort of Chakrasamvara. She represents the principle of nonthought or wisdom beyond conceptual mind.

**vidyadhara** (Skt., “wisdom holder”). Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche was referred to by his students as the Vidyadhara.

**vinaya** (Skt.). The canon of Buddhist scriptures consists of three parts: the Vinaya-pitaka, the Sutra-pitaka, and the Abhidharma-pitaka. Vinaya, the first “basket,” contains accounts of the origins of the Buddhist community (sangha), as well as the rules of discipline regulating the lives of monks and nuns.

**vipashyana** (Skt., “insight” or “clear seeing”). With shamatha, one of the two main modes of meditation common to all forms of Buddhism.

**warrior**. *See* Shambhala warrior.

**yana** (Skt.). A vehicle in which, symbolically, the practitioner travels on the road to enlightenment. The different vehicles, or yanas, correspond to different views of the journey, and each yana comprises a body of knowledge and practice. The three great yanas in Tibetan Buddhism are the hinayana, mahayana, and vajrayana.

**yantra**. A drawing or diagram, often geometrical, that is connected with a particular energy, yidam, or mantra in the vajrayana Buddhist tradition.

**yeshe** (Tib.; Skt.: jnana, “primordial knowing”). *See* jnana.

**yeshe chölwa** (Tib., “wisdom gone wild”). *See* crazy wisdom.

**yeshe phowa** (Tib.). Transference of wisdom.

**yidam** (Tib.). Term used for a deity in vajrayana Buddhism. It is a shortened form of the phrase *yid kyi damtsig*, which refers to binding the mind to wisdom. The visualization of the deity in vajrayana is a way to connect with the fundamental sanity or wisdom energy of a particular practice.

**yoga** (Skt., “yoke” or “union”). In the Buddhist tantric tradition, yoga is a means of synchronizing body and mind to discover reality or truth;

synonymous here with vajrayana practices and disciplines of the tantric yanas.

**Yogachara** (Skt.). An influential school of Buddhist philosophy, sometimes referred to as the “mind only” school.

**yogin** (Skt.). A practitioner of yoga or one dedicated to the yogic tradition. *Yogin* is non-gender-specific. A male practitioner of yoga is a yogi; a female practitioner is a yogini.

**Yungtön Dorje Pel** (1284–1365 or 1296–1376). Nyingma master who brought together the traditions of Kagyü and Nyingma. Dating from the thirteenth century, he was a student of Karmapa Rangjung Dorje.

**zabuton** (Jpn.). A rectangular meditation mat, usually about two by three feet, that is placed under a meditation cushion (zafu or gomden) for meditation practice. *See also* zafu.

**zafu** (Jpn.). A round meditation cushion, usually stuffed with kapok, used in the Zen Buddhist practice of meditation. The author originally suggested the use of the zafu by his Buddhist and Shambhala students but later recommended instead a rectangular foam-filled meditation cushion of his own design, the gomden.

**Zen**. A Japanese school of mahayana Buddhism that stresses the prime importance of the enlightenment experience. Soto Zen teaches the practice of zazen, sitting meditation, as the shortest way to awakening.

## SOURCES

“An American Version of Sanity.” *Vajradhatu Sun*, April–May 1979. © 1979, Diana J. Mukpo.

“Another Year, Another Zafu.” *Vajradhatu Sun*, February–March 1980. Dharmadhatu Conference closing address, 1979. © 1979, Diana J. Mukpo.

“Appreciating the Practicality of Life,” unpublished article. Edited from “Money,” the transcript of a talk given in Scotland circa March 29, 1969. Edited 2006 for *Elephant Journal* but never published. © 2016, Diana J. Mukpo.

“Attitude towards Death: Loyalty to the Dying Person Is Key.” *Vajradhatu Sun*, December 1978–January 1979. © 1979, Diana J. Mukpo.

“The Basis of Non-Violence,” unpublished article. Edited from “Peace,” the transcript of a talk given in Scotland circa March 29, 1969. Edited 2006 for *Elephant Journal* but never published. © 2016, Diana J. Mukpo.

“Cleaning Up Your Existence.” A community talk by Chögyam Trungpa, February 3, 1980. Published in “Ten Years in North America” a special issue of the *Vajradhatu Sun*, 1980. © 1980, Diana J. Mukpo.

*Devotion and Crazy Wisdom: Teachings on The Sadhana of Mahamudra*. Halifax, Nova Scotia: Vajradhatu Publications, 2015. © 2015, Diana J. Mukpo.

“An Element of Unreasonability.” *Shambhala Sun*, September 2012. Adapted from talk four of The Life and Teachings of Marpa, a seminar given at

Karmê Chöling meditation center, Barnet, Vermont, September 1973. © 2012, Diana J. Mukpo.

“Find Your Heart in Loneliness.” *Lion’s Roar*, April 2016. From talk five of The Message of Milarepa, a seminar given at Karmê Chöling meditation center, Barnet, Vermont, July 1973. © 2016, Diana J. Mukpo.

“How to Be a Warrior: Joining Mindfulness and Awareness Together.” *Vajradhatu Sun*, October–November 1982. From a talk at the 1982 Magyal Pomra Encampment. © 1982, Diana J. Mukpo.

“Jolly Good.” *Shambhala Sun*, November–December 2012. Adapted and edited from a public talk, Chicago, September 1982, and a seminar in Boulder, Colorado, April 1983. © 2012, Diana J. Mukpo.

“Let Ego Have an Energy Crisis.” *Elephant Journal*, date unsure, believed to be winter 2008. Excerpted and edited from “Meditation and Surrender,” talk five of *The Tibetan Buddhist Path*, Naropa Institute, 1974. © 2016, Diana J. Mukpo.

“Make Friends with Your Business.” *Vajradhatu Sun*, October–November 1978. Based on remarks at the Ratna Society Meeting, August 28, 1978. © 1978, Diana J. Mukpo.

“A Meditation Instruction.” *Shambhala Sun*, March 2012. Based on talks one and two from *Meditation: The Way of the Buddha*, a seminar at Naropa Institute, 1974. © 2012, Diana J. Mukpo.

*Mindfulness in Action: Making Friends with Yourself through Meditation and Everyday Awareness*, edited by Carolyn Rose Gimian. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2015. © 2015, Diana J. Mukpo.

“Mindfulness-Awareness: A Good Garden Where Buds and Flowers Can Grow.” *Vajradhatu Sun*, February–March 1983. © 1983, Diana J. Mukpo.

“Oryoki Tradition Enhances Sangha Lifestyle.” *Vajradhatu Sun*, October–November 1980. From a talk at the 1980 Vajradhatu Seminary. © 1980, Diana J. Mukpo.

“A Sense of Humor.” Published as “Chögyam Trungpa on a Sense of Humor,” in *Inquiring Minds, Gravitas Levitas* 21, no. 2 (spring 2005).

“The Ten Paramitas in the Development of the Vajradhatu Buddhist Community.” *Vajradhatu Sun*, February–March 1981. Edited from a talk at the Tenth Anniversary Dharma Celebration, January 1, 1981. © 1981, Diana J. Mukpo.

“Truth.” *Elephant Journal*, summer 2007. Based on material in talk one, “Following the Dharma,” in *The Four Dharmas of Gampopa*, a seminar at Karmê Chöling, 1975. © 2007, Diana J. Mukpo.

“Vajra-like Marriage.” *Vajradhatu Sun*, February–March 1979. © 1979, Diana J. Mukpo.

“View, Meditation and Action.” *Vajradhatu Sun*, December 1979–January 1980. Edited from an address to Karma Dzong, September 16, 1979. © 1979, Diana J. Mukpo.

“What Is Ngedön?” *Vajradhatu Sun*, April–May 1983. Opening address, Ngedön School of Higher Learning, Naropa Institute, September 12, 1982. © 1983, Diana J. Mukpo.

“Why Buddhism in America?” *Vajradhatu Sun*, December 1980–January 1981. Based on a public talk at Naropa Institute, summer 1980. © Diana J. Mukpo, 1981.

“Why We Meditate.” *Shambhala Sun*, July 2014. © Diana J. Mukpo, 2014.

*Work, Sex, Money: Real Life on the Path of Mindfulness*, edited by Carolyn Rose Gimian and Sherab Chödzin Kohn. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2011. © 2011, Diana J. Mukpo



“Working with Fear and Anger.” *Elephant Journal*, fall 2008. © 2008, Diana J. Mukpo.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

IN 1976, SOME FORTY YEARS PAST, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche wrote this short haiku-like poem:

People round me  
Within lotus petals  
Remember their death and please remember their duty  
I'll die with you.

In myriad ways, Rinpoche's students still strive to follow this imperative—often feeling that they can't get away from it! For many, he has become indivisible with their most heartfelt experience of the world. This, in part, is what he points to here when he says, "I'll die with you." He is with us in life and death: this is what many of us feel.

*The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa* reflects not only his extraordinary efforts to propagate the dharma but the efforts of so many people who have transcribed, archived, catalogued, edited, published, studied, and transmitted his teachings—and still continue and will continue to do these things! Let us offer them all a deep bow, especially those yet unborn who will become the caretakers of these teachings in the future.

I've been working on volumes nine and ten of *The Collected Works* for a number of months. When people hear about these new volumes, quite a number of them are shocked that there are going to be additional volumes. "What's in them?" people ask, a little incredulously. It's a bit difficult, I guess, to imagine that so much new material is still being edited and published thirty years after Chögyam Trungpa's death. But imagine this: the next editor of

new volumes of *The Collected Works* is likely to be someone who never met him, so to speak. They will have to have met him quite profoundly in his teachings to take on the job of editing his *Collected Works*, however.

I'd like to express my gratitude to all of those who worked on the books and the selected writings that have been compiled and included in volume ten. In particular, I would like to thank the editors, designers, publishers, and other staff of the *Vajradhatu Sun*, which became the *Shambhala Sun*, which became the *Lion's Roar*. Material from all three incarnations appears in volume ten. Particular thanks to the editors-in-chief past and present: Joshua Zim, Miriam Tarcov, Rick Fields, and Melvin McLeod—all of whom have made important contributions to the development of Buddhism in America through their role with the magazine. Thanks also to publishers James Gimian and Ben Moore, whose stewardship of the *Shambhala Sun* and *Lion's Roar* has kept the boat afloat and relevant for so many years. I'd also like to thank *Elephant Journal* and its founder Waylon Lewis, for his inspiration in publishing original articles by Chögyam Trungpa.

Vajradhatu Publications, which is now an imprint of Kalapa Media, which until very recently was Shambhala Media, has published much important work by Chögyam Trungpa over decades. *Devotion and Crazy Wisdom*, which appears in volume ten, is one such publication. Thanks to all those at Kalapa Media, and its previous incarnations, who have supported the publishing program there. In particular, thanks to Emily Sell and Terry Rudderham, who as codirectors in the last decade, have always looked ahead and have kept this small publisher afloat as well. Thanks as well to Ellen Kearney who worked on many volumes when she was the managing editor at Vajradhatu Publications. In particular, she worked on a revised edition of the *Sadhana of Mahamudra Sourcebook*, which was the basis for *Devotion and Crazy Wisdom*.

Shambhala Publications came into being just at the time, more or less, that Chögyam Trungpa was heading for America, more than forty-five years ago. Shambhala remains committed to publishing the works of Chögyam Trungpa. Their support is invaluable. Thanks to Sam, Hazel, Sara, and Ivan Bercholz for their leadership and continued investment in this dharma legacy, as well as for their friendship; to Nikko Odiseos for his vision and dedication to true dharma, and for his loyalty to publishing Trungpa Rinpoche's teachings; to

Liz Shaw, the in-house editor of volumes nine and ten, and assistant editor Audra Figgins; and to Lora Zorian for design. Jonathan Green has always provided guidance to me in my editorial work. Thank you, Jonathan. A tip of the nonexistent hat also must go to Kendra Crossen Burroughs, who was the in-house editor for volumes one through eight and who set the bar high for us.

The Shambhala Archives, especially Gordon Kidd and Jeanne Riordan, have helped us find photographs for these two volumes and have provided copies of needed documents. Thank you both! Thanks too to Diana Janowitz, able editorial assistant for volumes nine and ten.

I'd also once again like to thank Jim and Jenny, my family, who have put up with a lot of preoccupation and irritability during this project, and smiled through almost all of it.

Diana Mukpo has been unwavering in her commitment to the publication, preservation, and propagation of the work of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. We all thank you, Lady Diana. Thanks also to all the members of the Mukpo family, in particular to Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche for his commitment and leadership.

And finally, sir, we of past, present, and future stand in this moment outside of time to bow to you, the Dorje Dradül, the Vidyadhara, the Venerable Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. May we strive for many lifetimes to fulfill your aspirations.

## A BIOGRAPHY OF CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA

THE VENERABLE CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA RINPOCHE was born in the province of Kham in eastern Tibet in 1939.<sup>1</sup> When he was just thirteen months old, Chögyam Trungpa was recognized as a major tülku, or incarnate teacher. According to Tibetan tradition, an enlightened teacher is capable, based on his or her vow of compassion, of reincarnating in human form over a succession of generations. Before dying, such a teacher may leave a letter or other clues to the whereabouts of the next incarnation. Later, students and other realized teachers look through these clues and, based on those, plus a careful examination of dreams and visions, conduct searches to discover and recognize the successor. Thus, particular lines of teaching are formed, in some cases extending over many centuries. Chögyam Trungpa was the eleventh in the teaching lineage known as the Trungpa tülkus.

Once young tülkus are recognized, they enter a period of intensive training in the theory and practice of the Buddhist teachings. Trungpa Rinpoche, after being enthroned as supreme abbot of the Surmang Dütsi Tel monastery and governor of Surmang District, began a period of training that would last eighteen years, until his departure from Tibet in 1959. As a Kagyü tülku, his training was based on the systematic practice of meditation and on refined theoretical understanding of Buddhist philosophy. One of the four great lineages of Tibet, the Kagyü is known as the Practicing (or Practice) Lineage.

At the age of eight, Trungpa Rinpoche received ordination as a novice monk. Following this, he engaged in intensive study and practice of the traditional monastic disciplines, including traditional Tibetan poetry and monastic dance. His primary teachers were Jamgön Kongtrül of Sechen and Khenpo Gangshar—leading teachers in the Nyingma and Kagyü lineages. In 1958, at the age of eighteen, Trungpa Rinpoche completed his studies,

receiving the degrees of *kyorpön* (doctor of divinity) and *khenpo* (master of studies). He also received full monastic ordination.

The late fifties was a time of great upheaval in Tibet. As it became clear that the Chinese communists intended to take over the country by force, many people, both monastic and lay, fled the country. Trungpa Rinpoche spent many harrowing months trekking over the Himalayas (described later in his book *Born in Tibet*). After narrowly escaping capture by the Chinese, he at last reached India in 1959. While in India, Trungpa Rinpoche was appointed to serve as spiritual adviser to the Young Lamas Home School in Delhi, India. He served in this capacity from 1959 to 1963.

Trungpa Rinpoche's opportunity to emigrate to the West came when he received a Spalding sponsorship to attend Oxford University. At Oxford he studied comparative religion, philosophy, history, and fine arts. He also studied Japanese flower arranging, receiving a certificate from the Sogetsu school. While in England, Trungpa Rinpoche began to instruct Western students in the dharma, and in 1967 he founded the Samye Ling Meditation Center in Dumfriesshire, Scotland. During this period, he also published his first two books, both in English: *Born in Tibet* (1966) and *Meditation in Action* (1969).

In 1968 Trungpa Rinpoche traveled to Bhutan, where he entered into a solitary meditation retreat. While on retreat, Rinpoche received a pivotal terma text for all of his teaching in the West, *The Sadhana of Mahamudra*, a text that documents the spiritual degeneration of modern times and its antidote, genuine spirituality that leads to the experience of naked and luminous mind. This retreat marked a pivotal change in his approach to teaching. Soon after returning to England, he became a layperson, putting aside his monastic robes and dressing in ordinary Western attire. In 1970 he married a young Englishwoman, Diana Pybus, and together they left Scotland and moved to North America. Many of his early students and his Tibetan colleagues found these changes shocking and upsetting. However, he expressed a conviction that in order for the dharma to take root in the West, it needed to be taught free from cultural trappings and religious fascination.

During the seventies, America was in a period of political and cultural upheaval. It was a time of fascination with the East. Nevertheless, almost from the moment he arrived in America, Trungpa Rinpoche drew many

students to him who were seriously interested in the Buddhist teachings and the practice of meditation. However, he severely criticized the materialistic approach to spirituality that was also quite prevalent, describing it as a “spiritual supermarket.” In his lectures, and in his books *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism* (1973) and *The Myth of Freedom* (1976), he pointed to the simplicity and directness of the practice of sitting meditation as the way to cut through such distortions of the spiritual journey.

During his seventeen years of teaching in North America, Trungpa Rinpoche developed a reputation as a dynamic and controversial teacher. He was a pioneer, one of the first Tibetan Buddhist teachers in North America, preceding by some years and indeed facilitating the later visits by His Holiness the Karmapa, His Holiness Khyentse Rinpoche, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and many others. In the United States, he found a spiritual kinship with many Zen masters, who were already presenting Buddhist meditation. In the very early days, he particularly connected with Suzuki Roshi, the founder of the San Francisco Zen Center. In later years he was close with Kobun Chino Roshi and Bill Kwong Roshi in Northern California; with Maezumi Roshi, the founder of the Los Angeles Zen Center; and with Eido Roshi, abbot of New York Zendo Shobo-ji. *The Teacup and the Skullcup: Chögyam Trungpa on Zen and Tantra*, published by Vajradhatu Publications in 2007, is based on two seminars where Chögyam Trungpa discussed the interrelationship of these two great Buddhist traditions. (Shambhala Publications reissued this book with a new subtitle, *Where Zen and Tantra Meet*, in 2015.)

Fluent in the English language, Chögyam Trungpa was one of the first Tibetan Buddhist teachers who could speak to Western students directly, without the aid of a translator. Traveling extensively throughout North America and Europe, he gave thousands of talks and hundreds of seminars. He established major centers in Vermont, Colorado, and Nova Scotia, as well as many smaller meditation and study centers in cities throughout North America and Europe. Vajradhatu was formed in 1973 as the central administrative body of this network.

Beginning in 1973, Trungpa Rinpoche initiated a three-month advanced program of practice and study, the Vajradhatu Seminary, attended by his senior students. Over the course of thirteen years, he gave hundreds of talks

on the Buddhist teachings at these programs. In 2013, the three-volume *Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma* was published based on these talks at the seminars. Judith L. Lief was the compiler and editor of this work, having spent more than ten years on the intensive editing of the material.

In 1974 Trungpa Rinpoche founded the Naropa Institute (now Naropa University), which became the first and only accredited Buddhist-inspired university in North America. He lectured extensively at the institute, and his book *Journey without Goal* (1981) is based on a course he taught there during the first summer session. In 1976 he established the Shambhala Training program, a series of seminars that present a nonsectarian path of spiritual warriorship grounded in the practice of sitting meditation. His book *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior* (1984) gives an overview of the Shambhala teachings.

In 1976 Trungpa Rinpoche appointed Ösel Tendzin (Thomas F. Rich) as his vajra regent, or dharma heir. Ösel Tendzin worked closely with Trungpa Rinpoche in the administration of Vajradhatu and Shambhala Training. He taught extensively from 1976 until his death in 1990 and is the author of *Buddha in the Palm of Your Hand*.

Trungpa Rinpoche was also active in the field of translation. Working with Francesca Fremantle, he rendered a new translation of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, which was published in 1975. Later he formed the Nālandā Translation Committee in order to translate texts and liturgies for his own students, as well as to make important texts available publicly.

In 1979 Trungpa Rinpoche conducted a ceremony empowering his eldest son, Ösel Rangdröl Mukpo, as his successor in the Shambhala lineage. At that time he gave him the title of Sawang (“Earth Lord”).

Trungpa Rinpoche was also known for his interest in the arts and particularly for his insights into the relationship between contemplative discipline and the artistic process. Two books published since his death—*The Art of Calligraphy* (1994) and *Dharma Art* (1996, a new edition appeared in 2008 under the title *True Perception: The Path of Dharma Art*)—present this aspect of his work. His own artwork included calligraphy, painting, flower arranging, poetry, playwriting, and environmental installations. In addition, at the Naropa Institute he created an educational atmosphere that attracted



many leading artists and poets. The exploration of the creative process in light of contemplative training continues there as a provocative dialogue. Trungpa Rinpoche also published two books of poetry: *Mudra* (1972) and *First Thought Best Thought* (1983). In 1998 a retrospective compilation of his poetry, *Timely Rain*, was published.

Shortly before his death, in a meeting with Samuel Bercholz, the publisher of Shambhala Publications, Chögyam Trungpa expressed his interest in publishing 108 volumes of his teachings, to be called the Dharma Ocean Series. “Dharma Ocean” is the translation of Chögyam Trungpa’s Tibetan teaching name, Chökyi Gyatso. The Dharma Ocean Series was to consist primarily of material edited to allow readers to encounter this rich array of teachings simply and directly rather than in an overly systematized or condensed form. In 1991 the first posthumous volume in the series, *Crazy Wisdom*, was published, and another seven volumes followed in the ensuing years. Beginning around the year 2000, Shambhala Publications, in consultation with Rinpoche’s editors and his family, decided that all of Trungpa Rinpoche’s books could now be considered part of the Dharma Ocean Series, regardless of the level of editing. In essence, the series as a separate designation was no longer useful, but the publication of his work continues at quite a pace.

Trungpa Rinpoche’s published books represent only a fraction of the rich legacy of his teachings. During his seventeen years of teaching in North America, he crafted the structures necessary to provide his students with thorough, systematic training in the dharma. From introductory talks and courses to advanced group retreat practices, these programs emphasized a balance of study and practice, of intellect and intuition. *Chögyam Trungpa* by Fabrice Midal, a biography, details the many forms of training that Chögyam Trungpa developed. *Dragon Thunder: My Life with Chögyam Trungpa* is the story of Rinpoche’s life as told by Diana Mukpo. This also provides insight into the many forms that he crafted for Buddhism in North America. In the last ten years, a number of other books penned by Trungpa Rinpoche’s students have started appearing. They offer a rich and diverse view of this extraordinary human being, his life, and his impact on his students.

In addition to his extensive teachings in the Buddhist tradition, Trungpa Rinpoche also placed great emphasis on the Shambhala teachings, which

stress the importance of meditation in action, synchronizing mind and body, and training oneself to approach obstacles or challenges in everyday life with the courageous attitude of a warrior, without anger. The goal of creating an enlightened society is fundamental to the Shambhala teachings. According to the Shambhala approach, the realization of an enlightened society comes not purely through outer activity, such as community or political involvement, but from appreciation of the senses and the sacred dimension of day-to-day life. A second volume of these teachings, entitled *Great Eastern Sun*, was published in 1999. The final volume of these teachings, *Smile at Fear*, appeared in 2009.

Chögyam Trungpa emphasized the primacy of the sitting practice of meditation as the basis for the practice and study of both the Buddhist and the Shambhala teachings. In the early 1970s, he helped to popularize the practice and the understanding of both mindfulness and awareness. A book of teachings based largely on this early work, *Mindfulness in Action: Making Friends with Yourself through Meditation and Everyday Awareness*, was published in 2014 at a time when the “mindfulness movement” was gathering momentum in North America and Europe.

Chögyam Trungpa died in 1987, at the age of forty-seven. Soon after his death, the Shambhala Archives was established as the primary repository for audio, video, and written documentation of his life and teachings. The more than twenty-five books of his teachings published since 1987 are almost entirely based on the documents, especially the audiotapes, in the archives. As of 2017, thirty years after his death, his editors estimate that as many as forty additional titles still remain to be edited and published. In 2016, two of his senior editors—Judith L. Lief and Carolyn Rose Gimian—working together with Naropa University, inaugurated a training program for new editors.

By the time of his death, Chögyam Trungpa was known not only as Rinpoche (“Precious Jewel”) but also as Vajracharya (“Vajra Holder”) and as Vidyadhara (“Wisdom Holder”) for his role as a master of the vajrayana, or tantric teachings of Buddhism. As a holder of the Shambhala teachings, he had also received the titles of Dorje Dradül (“Indestructible Warrior”) and Sakyong (“Earth Protector”). He is survived by his wife, Diana Judith Mukpo, and five sons. His eldest son, the Sawang Ösel Rangdröl Mukpo, succeeds him as the spiritual head of Vajradhatu.

Acknowledging the importance of the Shambhala teachings to his father's work, the Sawang changed the name of the umbrella organization to Shambhala, with Vajradhatu remaining one of its major divisions. In 1995 the Sawang received the Shambhala title of Sakyong like his father before him and was also confirmed as an incarnation of the great ecumenical teacher Mipham Rinpoche.

Trungpa Rinpoche is widely acknowledged as a pivotal figure in introducing the buddhadharma to the Western world. He joined his great appreciation for Western culture with his deep understanding of his own tradition. This led to a revolutionary approach to teaching the dharma, in which the most ancient and profound teachings were presented in a thoroughly contemporary way. Trungpa Rinpoche was known for his fearless proclamation of the dharma: free from hesitation, true to the purity of the tradition, and utterly fresh. May these teachings take root and flourish for the benefit of all sentient beings.

---

1. Because the Tibetan calendar is distinct from the Western calendar and because Chögyam Trungpa's exact date of birth was not recorded, there are two dates used for his birthday in different publications, one in 1939 and one in 1940. We have used the earlier date here, consistent with the date given in *Born in Tibet*.

## BOOKS BY CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA

*Born in Tibet* (George Allen & Unwin, 1966; Shambhala Publications, 1977)

Chögyam Trungpa's account of his upbringing and education as an incarnate lama in Tibet and the powerful story of his escape to India. An epilogue added in 1976 details Trungpa Rinpoche's time in England in the 1960s and his early years in North America.

*Meditation in Action* (Shambhala Publications, 1969)

Using the life of the Buddha as a starting point, this classic on meditation and the practice of compassion explores the six paramitas, or enlightened actions on the Buddhist path. Its simplicity and directness make this an appealing book for beginners and seasoned meditators alike.

*Mudra* (Shambhala Publications, 1972)

This collection of poems mostly written in the 1960s in England also includes two short translations of Buddhist texts and a commentary on the Ox-Herding Pictures, well-known metaphors for the journey on the Buddhist path.

*Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism* (Shambhala Publications, 1973)

The first volume of Chögyam Trungpa's teaching in America is still fresh, outrageous, and up-to-date. It describes landmarks on the Buddhist path and focuses on the pitfalls of materialism that plague the modern age.

*The Dawn of Tantra*, by Herbert V. Guenther and Chögyam Trungpa (Shambhala Publications, 1975)

Jointly authored by Chögyam Trungpa and the Buddhist scholar Herbert V. Guenther, this volume presents an introduction to the Buddhist teachings of

tantra.

*Glimpses of Abhidharma* (Shambhala Publications, 1975)

An exploration of the five skandhas, or stages in the development of ego, based on an early seminar given by Chögyam Trungpa. The final chapter on auspicious coincidence is a penetrating explanation of karma and the true experience of spiritual freedom.

*The Tibetan Book of the Dead: The Great Liberation through Hearing in the Bardo*, translated with commentary by Francesca Fremantle and Chögyam Trungpa (Shambhala Publications, 1975)

Chögyam Trungpa and Francesca Fremantle collaborated on the translation and are coauthors of this title. Trungpa Rinpoche provides a powerful commentary on death and dying and on the text itself, which allows modern readers to find the relevance of this ancient guide to the passage from life to death and back to life again.

*The Myth of Freedom and the Way of Meditation* (Shambhala Publications, 1976)

In short, pithy chapters that exemplify Chögyam Trungpa's hard-hitting and compelling teaching style, this book explores the meaning of freedom and genuine spirituality in the context of traveling the Buddhist path.

*The Rain of Wisdom* (Shambhala Publications, 1980)

An extraordinary collection of the poetry or songs of the teachers of the Kagyü lineage of Tibetan Buddhism, to which Chögyam Trungpa belonged. The text was translated by the Nālandā Translation Committee under the direction of Chögyam Trungpa. The volume includes an extensive glossary of Buddhist terms.

*Journey without Goal: The Tantric Wisdom of the Buddha* (Shambhala Publications, 1981)

Based on an early seminar at the Naropa Institute, this guide to the tantric teachings of Buddhism is provocative and profound, emphasizing both the dangers and the wisdom of the vajrayana, the diamond path of Buddhism.

*The Life of Marpa the Translator* (Shambhala Publications, 1982)

A renowned teacher of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition who combined scholarship and meditative realization, Marpa made three arduous journeys to India to collect the teachings of the Kagyü lineage and bring them to Tibet. Chögyam Trungpa and the Nālandā Translation Committee have produced an inspiring translation of his life's story.

*First Thought Best Thought: 108 Poems* (Shambhala Publications, 1983)

This collection consists mainly of poetry written during Chögyam Trungpa's first ten years in North America, showing his command of the American idiom and his understanding of American culture, as well as his playfulness and his passion. Some poems from earlier years were also included. Many of the poems from *First Thought Best Thought* were later reprinted in *Timely Rain*.

*Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior* (Shambhala Publications, 1984)

Chögyam Trungpa's classic work on the path of warriorship still offers timely advice. This book shows how an attitude of fearlessness and an open heart provide the courage to meet the challenges of modern life.

*Crazy Wisdom* (Shambhala Publications, 1991)

Two seminars from the 1970s were edited for this volume on the life and teachings of Guru Rinpoche, or Padmasambhava, the founder of Buddhism in Tibet.

*The Heart of the Buddha* (Shambhala Publications, 1991)

A collection of essays, talks, and seminars presents the teachings of Buddhism as they relate to everyday life.

*Orderly Chaos: The Mandala Principle* (Shambhala Publications, 1991)

The mandala is often thought of as a Buddhist drawing representing tantric iconography. However, Chögyam Trungpa explores how both confusion and enlightenment are made up of patterns of orderly chaos that are the basis for the principle of mandala—a difficult but rewarding discussion of the topic of chaos and its underlying structure.

*Secret beyond Thought: The Five Chakras and the Four Karmas* (Vajradhatu Publications, 1991)

Two talks from an early seminar on the principles of the chakras and the karmas, teachings from the Buddhist tantric tradition.

*The Lion's Roar: An Introduction to Tantra* (Shambhala Publications, 1992)

An in-depth presentation of the nine yanas, or stages, of the path in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Particularly interesting are the chapters on visualization and the five buddha families.

*Transcending Madness: The Experience of the Six Bardos* (Shambhala Publications, 1992)

The editor of this volume, Judith L. Lief, calls it “a practical guide to Buddhist psychology.” The book is based on two early seminars on the intertwined ideas of bardo (or the gap in experience and the gap between death and birth) and the six realms of being.

*Glimpses of Shunyata* (Vajradhatu Publications, 1993), now included in *Glimpses of the Profound: Four Short Works* (Shambhala Publications, 2016)

These four lectures on the principle of shunyata, or emptiness, are an experiential exploration of the ground, path, and fruition of realizing this basic principle of mahayana Buddhism.

*Training the Mind and Cultivating Loving-Kindness* (Shambhala Publications, 1993)

This volume presents fifty-nine slogans, or aphorisms, related to meditation practice, which show a practical path to making friends with oneself and developing compassion for others, through the practice of sacrificing self-centeredness for the welfare of others.

*The Art of Calligraphy: Joining Heaven and Earth* (Shambhala Publications, 1994)

Chögyam Trungpa's extensive love affair with brush and ink is showcased in this book, which also includes an introduction to dharma art and a discussion of the Eastern principles of heaven, earth, and man as applied to

the creative process. The beautiful reproductions of fifty-four calligraphies are accompanied by inspirational quotations from the author's works.

*Illusion's Game: The Life and Teaching of Naropa* (Shambhala Publications, 1994)

The great Indian teacher Naropa was a renowned master of the teachings of mahamudra, an advanced stage of realization in Tibetan Buddhism. This book presents Chögyam Trungpa's teachings on Naropa's life and arduous search for enlightenment.

*The Path Is the Goal: A Basic Handbook of Buddhist Meditation* (Shambhala Publications, 1995)

An in-depth investigation of the practice of meditation, with emphasis on the vipashyana teachings on awareness, this volume evokes the author's penetrating insight and colorful language.

*Timely Rain: Selected Poetry of Chögyam Trungpa* (Shambhala Publications, 1998)

With a foreword by Allen Ginsberg, this collection of poems was organized thematically by editor David I. Rome to show the breadth of the poet's work. Core poems from *Mudra* and *First Thought Best Thought* are reprinted here, along with many poems and sacred songs published here for the first time.

*Glimpses of Space: The Feminine Principle and Evam* (Vajradhatu Publications, 1999), now included in *Glimpses of the Profound: Four Short Works* (Shambhala Publications, 2016)

Two seminars on the tantric understanding of the feminine and masculine principles, what they are and how they work together in vajrayana Buddhist practice as the nondual experience of wisdom and skillful means.

*Great Eastern Sun: The Wisdom of Shambhala* (Shambhala Publications, 1999)

This sequel and complement to *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior* offers more heartfelt wisdom on Shambhala warriorship.

*The Essential Chögyam Trungpa* (Shambhala Publications, 2000)



This concise overview of Trungpa Rinpoche's teachings consists of forty selections from fourteen different books, articulating the secular path of the Shambhala warrior, as well as the Buddhist path of meditation and awakening.

*Glimpses of Mahayana* (Vajradhatu Publications, 2001), now included in *Glimpses of the Profound: Four Short Works* (Shambhala Publications, 2016)

This little volume focuses on the attributes of buddha nature, the development of compassion, and the experience of being a practitioner on the bodhisattva path of selfless action to benefit others.

*Glimpses of Realization: The Three Bodies of Enlightenment* (Vajradhatu Publications, 2003), now included in *Glimpses of the Profound: Four Short Works* (Shambhala Publications, 2016)

Teachings on the three kayas and on the universality of buddha nature.

*True Command: The Teachings of the Dorje Kasung, Volume One: The Town Talks* (Trident Publications, 2003; Vajradhatu Publications, 2009)

Teachings on how to be a leader and how to work with conflict, negativity, and obstacles. Colorful teachings given to the Dorje Kasung, a group established to practice warrior disciplines of nonaggression while providing security and service.

*The Shambhala Warrior Slogans: 53 Principles of Living Life with Fearlessness and Gentleness* (Shambhala Publications, 2004)

Short sayings, or slogans, with commentary, intended to evoke the Shambhala teachings and deepen our connection to them. To be used as reminders of everyday wisdom and as objects of contemplation.

*The Sanity We Are Born With: A Buddhist Approach to Psychology* (Shambhala Publications, 2005)

A collection of twenty articles in which Chögyam Trungpa presents insights into meditation, mind, and psychology which he shared with Western psychologists and students of Buddhist meditation.

*The Teacup and the Skullcup: Where Zen and Tantra Meet* (Vajradhatu Publications, 2007; Shambhala Publications, 2015)

Two seminars on the similarities and the differences between the Japanese Zen Buddhist tradition and the Tibetan tantric tradition. As always, Chögyam Trungpa speaks from the point of view of the practitioner's experience and how it is shaped by both one's view and one's meditation practice.

*Ocean of Dharma: 365 Teachings on Living Life with Courage and Compassion* (Shambhala Publications, 2008)

365 short teachings excerpted from Chögyam Trungpa's books and unpublished teachings. Meant to inspire and inform everyday life.

*The Pocket Chögyam Trungpa* (Shambhala Publications, 2008)

108 classic brief teachings excerpted from Chögyam Trungpa's books and unpublished teachings, with an introduction to meditation as well.

*True Perception: The Path of Dharma Art* (Shambhala Publications, 2008), originally published as *Dharma Art* (Shambhala Publications, 1996)

Chögyam Trungpa was a calligrapher, painter, poet, designer, and photographer, as well as a master of Buddhist meditation. Drawn from his many seminars and talks on the artistic process, this work presents his insights into art and the artist.

*The Mishap Lineage: Transforming Confusion into Wisdom* (Shambhala Publications, 2009)

Chögyam Trungpa introduces us to the teachers from his lineage of Tibetan Buddhism and shows how their lives offer inspiration and insight for our own.

*Smile at Fear: Awakening the True Heart of Bravery* (Shambhala Publications, 2009)

Teachings on working with our fundamental fears and discovering our capacity for fearlessness in the face of uncertainty and obstacles. More wisdom, as well as practical advice, from the Shambhala tradition.

*The Truth of Suffering and the Path of Liberation* (Shambhala Publications, 2009)

This in-depth exploration of the four noble truths—the foundational Buddhist teaching about the origin of suffering and its cessation—reveals the subtlety and sophistication that lie beneath these deceptively simple teachings.

*Work, Sex, Money: Real Life on the Path of Mindfulness* (Shambhala Publications, 2011)

How to apply meditative insight and practice to the real issues that we face in our careers and workplace, our relationships, and in working with financial realities.

*The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma* (Shambhala Publications, 2013)

This three-volume compendium presents the advanced teachings given over thirteen years by Chögyam Trungpa at the Vajradhatu Seminaries. In lively, relevant language, this meditation master presents these comprehensive teachings from all stages of the Tibetan Buddhist path.

*Mindfulness in Action: Making Friends with Yourself through Meditation and Everyday Awareness* (Shambhala Publications, 2015)

A manual for meditation, showing how to apply mindfulness and awareness to befriending even the most difficult situations and parts of ourselves, as well as learning to celebrate our ordinary life. Teachings in plain language with heartfelt appreciation for the challenges of modern life.

*Devotion and Crazy Wisdom: Teachings on The Sadhana of Mahamudra* (Vajradhatu Publications, 2015)

In-depth teachings on an important text, which Chögyam Trungpa left specifically for the West, to aid in working with the difficulties of this modern era. Teachings on how to overcome spiritual materialism, the importance of nontheistic devotion, and the development of compassion without bounds, or crazy wisdom.

*Glimpses of the Profound: Four Short Works* (Shambhala Publications, 2016)

Here, in one volume, are four out of the five volumes in the “Glimpses” series edited by Judith L. Lief: *Glimpses of Shunyata*, *Glimpses of Space*, *Glimpses of Mahayana*, and *Glimpses of Realization*. Potent doses of deep wisdom.

*Milarepa: Lesson from the Life and Songs of Tibet’s Great Yogi* (Shambhala Publications, 2017)

In this volume, edited by Judith L. Lief, Chögyam Trungpa retells the stories and realization songs of Tibet’s best-known and most-beloved religious figure, illuminating the meaning behind them, and always coming back to the relevance of Milarepa’s life to practitioners today.

# RESOURCES

## *Practice Centers*

FOR INFORMATION regarding meditation instruction or to find a Shambhala-affiliated practice center near you, please contact one of the following:

### SHAMBHALA

Sovereign Place

5121 Sackville Street, Suite 601

Halifax, Nova Scotia

Canada B3J 1K1

phone: (902) 425-4275

website: [www.shambhala.org](http://www.shambhala.org)

### KARMÊ CHÖLING

369 Patneau Lane

Barnet, VT 05821

phone: (802) 633-2384

website: [www.karmecholing.org](http://www.karmecholing.org)

### SHAMBHALA MOUNTAIN CENTER

151 Shambhala Way

Red Feather Lakes, CO 80545

phone: (970) 881-2184

website: [www.shambhalamountain.org](http://www.shambhalamountain.org)

GAMPO ABBEY

Pleasant Bay, Nova Scotia

Canada B0E 2P0

phone: (902) 224-2752

website: [www.gampoabbey.org](http://www.gampoabbey.org)

DORJE DENMA LING

2280 Balmoral Road

Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia

Canada B0K 1V0

phone: (902) 657-9085

website: [dorjedenmaling.org](http://dorjedenmaling.org)

e-mail: [info@dorjedenmaling.com](mailto:info@dorjedenmaling.com)

DECHEN CHOLING

Mas Marvent

87700 St. Yrieix sous Aixe

France

phone: +33 5-55-03-55-52

website: [www.dechencholing.org](http://www.dechencholing.org)

### **Naropa University**

Naropa University is the only accredited, Buddhist-inspired university in North America. For more information, contact:

Naropa University

2130 Arapahoe Avenue

Boulder, CO 80302

phone: 1-800-772-6951 toll free, or (303) 541-3572

website: [www.naropa.edu](http://www.naropa.edu)

### **Ocean of Dharma Quotes of the Week**

Ocean of Dharma Quotes of the Week brings you the teachings of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. An e-mail is sent out several times each week containing a quote from Chögyam Trungpa's extensive teachings. Quotations of material may be from unpublished material, forthcoming publications, or previously published sources. Ocean of Dharma Quotes of the Week are selected by Carolyn Rose Gimian. To enroll go to [OceanofDharma.com](http://OceanofDharma.com).

### **The Chögyam Trungpa Legacy Project**

The Chögyam Trungpa Legacy Project was established to help preserve, disseminate, and expand Chögyam Trungpa's legacy. The Legacy Project supports the preservation, propagation, and publication of Trungpa Rinpoche's dharma teachings. This includes plans for the creation of a comprehensive virtual archive and learning community. For information go to [chogyamtrungpa.com](http://chogyamtrungpa.com).

### **Kalapa Media**

For publications from Vajradhatu Publications and Kalapa Recordings, including both books and audiovisual materials, go to [www.kalapamedia.org](http://www.kalapamedia.org).

### **Shambhala Archives**

For information about the archive of the author's work, please contact the Shambhala Archives: [archives@shambhala.org](mailto:archives@shambhala.org) or go to [www.shambhalaarchives.org](http://www.shambhalaarchives.org).

# INDEX

*Note: Index entries from the print edition of this book have been included for use as search terms. They can be located by using the search feature of your e-book reader.*

Abhishekas

Absorption, meditative. *See also* Dhyana states

Action, as taking responsibility

Adhishthana (blessings)

Aggression

- absence of

- alternatives to

- awareness and

- from blind rejection

- from defending belief

- of ego

- emotional style of

- mara of

- meditation and

- mind and

- as natural disaster

- outrageousness and

- passion and

- in relating with guru

- of self-justification



in sitting meditation

subtle

Alcohol, understanding

Aloneness. *See also* Loneliness

Ambition

America

Buddhism in

earthiness, developing in

education in

ethics of

karma of

money, views of in

pride and heroism in

spirituality of

“An American Version of Sanity”

Amitabha

Analogies and metaphors

awakening from sleep

babysitter

breathing mountain air

caged rat

car mechanic

catching echo in net

Cheshire cat

chicken with head

dinner party

drunken elephant

dust on mirror

electricity

entertaining with ethnic cooking

finger on sun

finger pointing to moon  
garuda hatching  
gigantic corporation running world  
going down a slide  
going over cliff  
grandmother's soup  
guinea pigs  
hair on china cup  
hearing music of the moment  
jewel in rubbish heap  
juicy steak  
knife and whetstone  
large immaculate house  
leaky vessel  
looking at diamond from different ages  
love affair  
making bread  
medicine as cure or poison  
metal and plastic  
moon in hundred bowls of water  
mountain streams  
one hundred bowls of water  
reflecting moon  
opening heavy door  
photographs  
plant in four seasons  
ploughing rocky soil  
princess and pea  
pulling rug from under one's own feet  
pure gold  
razor's edge

rich uncle  
riding on electricity  
samurai  
self-existing pancake  
separating hair from dust  
sound of thunder  
swans and vultures  
sword  
teddy bear  
training wild horse  
trampling egg of fear  
transcendental microwave oven  
waterfall  
yogurt

Anathapindika

Anatman

Anger

environment of  
fully experiencing  
giving up  
identity and  
in its own place  
and wrath, differentiated

Animal realm

Animals

“Another Year, Another Zafu”

Anuttarayoga tantra

Anxiety. *See also* Suffering

“Appreciating the Practicality of Life”

Appreciation

as basis for practice

beyond projections  
in business  
discomfort as triggering  
of everyday life  
in families  
for flow of life  
of food  
giving and  
of lineage  
in mahamudra  
of meditative experiences  
of mindfulness  
for ourselves  
of present  
of raw qualities of life  
of sense of being  
of styles of others  
of uniqueness of situations  
of the world

April Fool's Day

Arrogance

about work  
absence of  
cleaning up and  
devotion and  
due to lack of self-appreciation  
in groups  
levels of  
preventing opening  
resentment and

Ashi Kesang Choden Wangchuck

Asia House (NYC)

Ati

as brain  
luminosity in  
and mahamudra, joining of  
personalities in  
qualities of  
umbrella approach of  
view of

Attachment

“Attitude toward Death”

Automatic devices

Avalokiteshvara

Awake nature/state

Awareness

being one with  
of breath  
challenges to  
development of  
discomfort as provocation of  
in everyday life  
expansive sense of  
in family life  
as fourth moment  
function of  
fundamental  
individual  
in kasung discipline  
in mahamudra  
in meditation  
mind and

nonconceptual  
panoramic  
of present state  
recollection of  
sensorial  
in shamatha  
between sitting sessions  
use of term  
in walking meditation  
*See also* Discriminating awareness

Baker Roshi (Richard Baker)

Banners

Bardo

“The Basis of Nonviolence”

Being, sense of

Bell, Charles

Benedictine monks

Bercholz, Samuel

*The Best of the “Vajradhatu Sun”*

Bewilderment

awareness and  
comfort of  
in communication  
consciousness and  
as foundation of ego development  
karma and  
maintaining  
in new workplace  
as source of fear  
as space

Bhavana

Bhumis, ten

Bhutan

Bill Kwong Roshi

Bindu

Blame

Blamelessness

Blessings

Blinking

Bodhichitta

Bodhisattva path

Bodhisattvas

Body

centralizing energy in

of crazy wisdom

dependence on

focal energy center of

giving

karma and

mandala of

in meditation practice

mind and

mindfulness of

nowness and

relating with

at time of death

Bön tradition

*Book of the Dead. See Tibetan Book of the Dead*

Boredom. *See also* Cool boredom

*Born in Tibet*

Bostrum, Donna

Boulder. *See also* Karma Dzong; Naropa University

*Boulder Monthly*

Boulder Shambhala Center. *See* Karma Dzong

Boyce, Barry

Brahma

Brahmacharya, meanings of

Bravery

Breath

- meditation and

- mind and

- mindfulness of

- out-breath

- teddy bear of

- touch-and-go instructions

- and working with distraction

Brilliance

Buber, Martin

Buddha

- dignity of

- enlightenment of

- family of

- first teaching of

- Lekpe Karma and

- lineage of

- maras and

- meal practices of

- meditation instructions of

- Mikyö Dorje's artistic works of

- in one's heart

- projecting richness

- touching earth



Buddha activity

*Buddha in the Palm of Your Hand* (Tendzin)

Buddha nature

Buddhism

approach to desire in

atheistic standpoint of

charnel ground in

externalism and nihilism in

faith in

good and bad in

meditation style in

money, role of in

nontheism of

preconceptions about

renunciation in

sex in

and Shambhala tradition, relationship of

theism in

Tibetan transmission of

traditional practices in

transmission in

two types of experience in

view of

views of buddha nature in

in the West

wheel symbol of

*See also* America; Tibet

Buried scriptures. *See* Terma

Business

comradeship in

considering value of

developing  
ego-centered approach to  
evaluating offers  
feeling worthy to succeed in  
inspiration for  
making friends with  
reasons for creating  
richness in  
Business mentality

Carthusian monks  
Cason, Ann  
Celibacy  
Center for Mindfulness  
Ceremonies, monthly  
Chang  
Chaos

acknowledging  
of charnel ground  
checking in with  
cutting  
energy of  
as inspiration  
from not relating with earth  
as stepping-stone

Charlatans

Charnel ground  
as basic ground  
devotion and  
excerpt from *Sadhana of Mahamudra*  
faith and

as mahakali principle  
sanity and chaos of  
traditional description of

Cheerfulness

appreciation and  
developing  
intrinsic  
in meditation  
from study

Chender, Michael

*Chögyam Trungpa* (Midal)

Chögyam Trungpa Legacy Project

Choiceless choice

Choicelessness

Christianity

contemplative  
conversion in  
devotion in  
faith in  
at Oxford  
Sundays, notion of in

Clarity

awareness of mind's  
developing  
in mahamudra  
in meditation  
without reference point  
as temporary meditative experience

Clark, Tom

Claustrophobia

Cleaning up

“Cleaning Up Your Existence”

Clear light, four experiences of

Clear seeing. *See also* Vipashyana

Comas

Commitment

- in business

- in devotion

- to dharma

- as gift to spiritual teacher

- in group retreats

- to letting go

- levels of

- in mahamudra

- in marriages

- to meditation

- to mindfulness

- to openness

- as physical surrender

- to sanity

- in student-teacher relationship

- to vajra master

Communication

- between body and mind

- in business

- in caregiving

- challenge of

- compassion and

- desire in

- with dying persons

- in families

- four joys and

honesty in  
irritation as  
judgement and  
in marriages  
with oneself  
as open exchange  
passion as ground of  
prajna and upaya in  
sexual  
skill in  
spiritual quality of  
in student-teacher relationship  
that undercuts ego  
with work  
in work environments

Communism

Community

Compassion

absence of duality and  
of charnel ground  
confused notions of  
crazy wisdom and  
cultivating  
devotion and  
in differentiating spirituality and  
materialism  
emotional and direct, distinctions  
between  
fake  
limitless  
linking meditation and daily life

loneliness and  
meditation and  
natural arising of  
passion and  
propagating  
reflection of  
spark of  
symbolism of  
transcending egotism  
unconditional  
wisdom and

Competition

Concentration

Concept, skandha of

Conceptualization

absence of  
as approach to life  
being haunted by  
of good and bad  
karma as  
transcending  
veil of

Confidence

in business  
conceptual notion of  
developing  
of ego  
without frivolity  
in meditation  
vajra pride and  
willingness and

## Confirmation

ego's dependence on  
of existence  
in fourth moment  
giving without  
lack of need for  
power and  
in practice

*Sadhana of Mahamudra* verse of

## Confusion

acknowledging  
beginning with  
and bewilderment, differences between  
comfort of  
creating  
from ego  
endlessness of  
first thought and  
gaps in  
getting caught in  
loneliness as source of  
as mental creation  
reminders and  
sanity and  
as self-destructive  
solidifying  
using  
wisdom and

## Consciousness

and “being,” differentiated  
continual rebirth of

luminous

skandha of

Conservative social values

Contemplative disciplines

Contemplative life

Cool boredom

Corleone, Don

Corruption

Cosmic hitchhiking

Counterculture

Cowardice pun

Crazy wisdom

approach to fear

definitions of

and devotion, joining

embodiment of

energy of

guru at level of

heroism of

ordinary craziness and

sanity and

*Crazy Wisdom*

*Creating a Mindful Society* (conference)

Creation

Creativity

without aggression

boredom and

in dealing with others

and destruction, relationship of

fear of

money and



in work

Credentials

Culture

conditions for mindfulness in

excess, cultural condition of

food and

lack of in dharma teachings

rejecting

search for exotic

working with

*Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*

Dakinis

Dana Home Care

Darwin, Charles

Daydreams

Dead end

Death

aloneness at

appreciating life and

approaching

attitudes toward

helping with

inevitability of

loss of self and

New York City as expression of

readiness for

Debt

Decision-making

Defense mechanisms

Deities/divinity. *See also* Theism; Yidams

Delek system

Delight

basic

difficulties and

in domestic situation

exertion as

humor from

in meditation

in mystical experience

in natural situation

obstacles to

spontaneity and

in study

Desire

of bodhisattvas

in chain of causality

fear and

for luxury

in second noble truth

spiritual materialism and

in student-teacher relationship

*See also* Passion

Devotion

charnel ground and

as commitment

compassion and

constancy of

crazy wisdom and

in current era

to experience

expression of

faith and  
as foundation  
to guru principle  
hero worship and  
heroism and  
hinayana level of  
as inquisitiveness  
insight and  
intelligence of  
letting go of giver and  
möpa and güpa levels of  
nontheistic  
sadhanas as  
in sanity  
two aspects of

*Devotion and Crazy Wisdom*

*Dhammapada*

Dharma

agency of  
experiencing shadow of  
identifying with  
importance of working with others  
in  
obstacles to Western transmission  
preconceptions about  
propagating through business  
reasons for engaging with  
sangha and  
selling  
traditional approach to  
as truth

value of

*See also* Teachings

Dharma Ocean Series

Dharma Study Groups

Dharmadhatu centers

Dharmadhatu Conference (1979)

Dharmapalas. *See* Protectors

Dhyana states

Dignity

admiration and

compassion and

discovering basic

of Dorje Kasung

individual

in learning

in meditation posture

in posture and demeanor

preoccupation with

self-protection and

Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche

Discipline

in business

devotion to

education and

faith and

as in-built awareness

individual and group

integrity and

in meditation

monastic

money and

paramita of  
parental  
spontaneous  
three-part approach  
work and

Discriminating awareness

Disneyland

Distraction

Dorje Kasung

*kasung*, meaning of  
purpose of  
qualities of  
training of

Dorje Trolö

crazy wisdom of  
drawing of  
manifestation as, meaning of  
relating to  
verse composed by

Dorje Trolö Karma Pakshi,. *See also* Karma Pakshi Padmasambhava

Doubt

bewilderment and  
of bodhisattvas  
crazy wisdom and  
in egolessness  
in existence  
faith and  
in materialism  
overcoming  
in relationships  
of relatives or friends

vajra pride and  
on warrior's path

*Dragon Thunder: My Life with Chögyam Trungpa* (Diana Mukpo)

Dressage

Drill practice

Duality

actions of  
breaking down  
fixation of  
fundamental  
identifying with  
as pain  
pushing and pulling quality of  
seeing absence of

Duhkha. *See* Anxiety

Dzogchen. *See* Ati

Earth/earthiness

and air, bringing together  
conceptualization and  
in crazy wisdom  
daydreaming and  
in Marpa's approach  
meditation and  
relationship with  
work and

East-West Center (Boston)

Eckhart, Meister

Ecology

Economy, world

Education

Effort. *See also* Exertion

Ego

absence of  
ambition and  
chain reaction of  
development of  
dismantling  
double-cross of  
energy crisis of  
fickleness of  
as goal oriented  
hauntedness of  
HUM and  
humorous quality of  
maintaining  
meditation and  
meeting naked  
offering  
panic from  
psychological view of  
questions from  
and self-esteem, misunderstanding  
solidity and  
in spiritual institutions  
on spiritual path  
surrendering  
twist of  
ultimate

Egolessness

awareness of  
and fascination, differentiated

flash of  
humility and  
recognizing  
Shambhala Training and  
vastness of  
Egomania  
Eido Roshi  
Elders, spiritual  
“An Element of Unreasonability”  
Elements, self-existing qualities of  
*Elephant Journal*  
Emotions  
absorption and  
becoming one with  
development of  
discovery of  
ego and  
fringe and center of  
hope and fear as basis of  
identity and  
and insight, joining  
insight into  
karma and  
in maintaining ego  
mind and  
mindfulness of  
pickling  
repression of  
respecting  
styles of  
as thinking



touch-and-go approach  
uncovering hidden  
wakefulness of  
wisdom and  
working with

Empowerments. *See* Abhishekas

Emptiness

in Buddhist tantra  
echo of  
of emotions  
levels of recognizing  
luminosity and  
in mahamudra  
meditative experience of

Empty-heartedness

Energy

accepting good and bad  
basic centers of  
centralizing, problems with  
chaos as sign of  
compassion and  
connecting with  
direct contact with  
of emotions  
of first thought  
HUM and  
without karma  
of life  
mahamudra as  
in meditation practice  
of money

of openness  
peace and  
primeval  
of sense of being  
of society  
space and  
of thoughts  
unconditioned  
unlimited, recognition of  
working directly with

#### Enlightened society

business and  
foundation of

#### Enlightenment

crazy wisdom and  
false  
giving process and  
glimpsing  
passion and aggression in  
potential of  
principle of  
sanity and  
Shambhala Training and  
staircase toward  
sudden and gradual  
wisdom as

#### Entertainment

in American education  
in caregiving  
caring for children as  
of ego

helping others as  
self-deception of

## Environment

awareness of  
emotional  
mindfulness of  
outbreath and  
in retreats  
in *Sadhana of Mahamudra*

## Equanimity

## Erhard Seminars Training (EST)

## Esalen Institute

Ethics. *See also* Honesty; Integrity

## Everyday life

awareness in  
conditioning in  
difficulties as opportunities in  
discipline in  
experience in  
fourth moment in  
intuition in  
lack of clarity in  
mindfulness in  
openness in  
as personal dreamworld  
sanity and neurosis in  
seeing things as they are in  
simplicity of  
spirituality in  
spontaneity in  
as teaching

in transcending spiritual materialism  
walking meditation and

Evil

Evolution

Exertion

breath and  
importance of  
in meditation  
openness and  
paramita of  
spontaneity and  
*See also* Effort

Existence

beyond ego  
doubting  
as experience  
of individual entities  
mindfulness and  
reinforcing  
touch-and-go instructions for

Externalism

Factories, profundity in

Faith

critical intelligence and  
as dignity  
doubt and  
in experience  
and hope, differences between  
as inquisitiveness  
leap of

in meditation  
in meditative experience  
nontheistic  
in oneself  
in sanity  
in things as they are

## Fame

## Families

adult children, relationships with  
children in  
developing  
generational continuity in  
mindfulness-awareness in  
money in  
one-upmanship in  
traditional Tibetan  
Western

## Fear

from confusion  
of death  
in ego development  
intelligence of  
of losing identity  
from rejection  
in retreat  
societal  
from uncertainty  
working with

## Fearlessness

in crazy-wisdom lineage  
delight as

without frivolity  
of Karma Pakshi  
from letting things be  
outrageousness and  
spontaneity as  
vajra master and  
Feeling, skandha of  
Feminine principle  
“Find Your Heart in Loneliness”  
First thought  
Food  
    neurosis around  
    as offering  
Fools, being proper  
Forehead center (chakra)  
Form, skandha of  
Four dharmas of Gampopa  
Four Dharmas of Gampopa seminar  
Four karmas (enlightened actions)  
Four noble truths  
Fourth moment  
Freakiness  
Freedom  
    dignity and sadness in  
    imprisonment and  
    individual  
    limit to  
    misunderstanding  
    panicking at  
    sanity and  
    spontaneity and

structure and  
types of  
understanding

## Friendship

in business  
communication and  
in families  
in marriage  
projecting  
understanding  
in working with dying

## Frivolity

## Fromm, Erich

Fruition, giving up possibility of

## Functional talking

## Gampopa. *See also* Four

dharma of Gampopa

## Gandhi

## Gaps

of awareness  
bewilderment and  
in breathing  
as change of emphasis  
as clarity  
of cool boredom  
in ego  
in everyday life  
fear of  
filling  
as first thought

as fourth moment

in pain

in storyline

Gates, Barbara

Gautama Buddha. *See* Buddha

Gelukpa tradition

Generosity

of bodhisattvas

compassion and

discipline and

in families

in marriages

obstacles to

from openness

paramita of

in relationships

simple acts of

Gentleness

of basic being

in business

capacity for

cleaning up and

facade of

loyalty and

seed of

toward ourselves

transforming effect of

in workplace

Gimian, Carolyn

Gimian, James

Giver, letting go of



Goal orientation

God

American society and  
side of  
union with  
*See also* Theism

God realms

Gold Lake Oil

Goodness

appreciating  
basic  
fundamental  
human  
intrinsic  
propagating  
uncovering

Grasping

Gratitude

Great Britain

Great Eastern Sun

*Great Eastern Sun*

*The Great Naropa Poetry Wars* (Clark)

Greed

Green energy

Grooming, importance of

Groundedness, lack of

Groundlessness

Group practice. *See also* Parrots, flock of (group practice)

Guenther, Herbert

Guilt

about money

about sex

in families

Güpa (absence of arrogance)

Guru Rinpoche. *See* Padmasambhava

Gurus/guru principle

devotion to

identifying with

inner

preciousness of

as source of all mandalas and

teachings

styles of relating to

*See also* Student-teacher relationship

Habitual patterns

American

in caregiving

clarifying in present

disrupting

as learning process

liberation from

losing interest in

as means to close off

as obstacles in business

uncovering

Happiness, search for

Hatred

environment of

mind and

toward oneself

Hauntedness

Head and shoulders

Head chakra. *See* Forehead center (chakra)

Heart

    experiencing

    mind and

    sword in

Heart center (chakra)

Heart of the matter

*Heart Sutra*

Heaven, earth, humanity

Hemera Foundation

Hero worship

Heroism

Herukas

Hesitation

Hierarchy

Hinayana

    ati flavor in

    charnel ground and

    ngedön in

    practicing

    precepts of

    principles of

    student-teacher relationship in

    truth in

Hinduism

Hitler, Adolf

Holding one's seat

Home ownership

Honesty

    in business dealings

in enlightened society  
foundation of  
from generosity  
importance of  
of present moment  
in relationships  
in student-teacher relationship  
toward oneself  
in workplace

Hope and fear

Hopelessness

Householders

“How to Be a Warrior”

How to Cultivate Buds and Flowers

seminar

Howard, Victoria

HUM

calligraphy of  
chanting of triple  
energy and  
four penetrations of  
temporary benefits of

“HUM: An Approach to Mantra”

Human beings

authentic

basic makeup of

Humility

Humor, sense of

in building enlightened society

in daily life

entertainment and

and frivolity, differences in  
heaviness of mind and  
irony as  
in mahamudra  
in marriage  
meditation and  
money and  
in mystical experience  
outrageousness and  
puns and practical jokes  
self-consciousness in  
spontaneity as  
in work environments  
in working with dying persons

Hunger, importance of

Hypocrisy, freedom from

Iconography. *See* Symbolism

Ignorance

ego and

emotional style of

as natural disaster

as refusal to accept what is

*See also* Bewilderment

Illusion, levels of

Imagination, practical

Impermanence

Impulse, skandha of

India

Buddhism in

Marpa's visits to

meal customs in  
money in  
spirituality of  
Trungpa Rinpoche in  
Individual salvation (sosor tharpa)  
Individuality  
Indra  
*Inquiring Minds*  
Inquisitiveness  
Insight  
    of awareness  
    clear  
    developing  
    egoless  
    and emotions, joining  
    first thought and  
    as fourth moment  
    meditative  
    through humor  
    unfolding of  
Insight meditation  
Inspiration  
    of American students  
    artificial  
    in business  
    from feminine and masculine principles  
    longing for  
    from meditation  
    of present moment  
    to relate with spaciousness  
*Sadhana of Mahamudra as*

from society

in working with others

Integrity

Intellect

Intellectual, meanings of

Intelligence

of bewilderment

critical

direct relationship with

ego as

egolessness and

ignorance and

as inspiration on path

mind as

passion and

primordial

sharpness of

skill in using

of thoughts

undermined by study

in working with karma

Intentions

in business endeavors

in everyday life, observing

for group retreat

in working with others

Interior design, filling space through

Intuition

Irritation

Islam

Jamgön Kongtrül the Great

Jamgön Kongtrül of Sechen

Japan

Japan Society sword exhibit

Jesus Christ

Jigme Lingpa

Jnana (primordial knowing)

Jnanasattva (wisdom being)

Job interviews

“Joining Energy and Space”

“Jolly Good”

Joy

- in building enlightened society

- four types

- great (mahasukha)

- as heart of meditation

- peace and

- sadness in

- selfless

- spontaneous

- in study

- as temporary meditative experience

Judaism

Judeo-Christian tradition

Justice, basis of

Kabat-Zinn, Jon

*Kagyü Gurtso* (The Rain of Wisdom)

Kagyü lineage

- approach of

- commitment to



devotion in  
education and training in  
emotions in  
good and bad in  
lineage holders of  
meaning of name  
Mongolian (or Chinese) emperor in  
and Nyingma, joining  
and Nyingma, relationship of  
*See also* Karma Kagyü lineage;  
Mahamudra

Kalapa Assemblies

Kalapa Media

Karl, Phil

Karma

from aggression  
Buddhist view of  
creating good  
cultural  
ego and  
energy free from  
family  
of gifts  
inherited  
money and  
national  
panoramic awareness and  
in student-teacher relationship  
transcending  
trying to cheat

Karma Dzong (now Boulder Shambhala Center)

Karma Kagyü lineage

Karma Pakshi, Karmapa II

crazy wisdom of

drawing of

hall of

lineages of

qualities of

relating to

as self-existing

Karma Pakshi Padmasambhava

Karmapas,. *See also* Karma Pakshi, Karmapa II; Mikyö Dorje, Karmapa VIII; Ogyen Trinley Dorje, Karmapa XVII; Rangjung Dorje, Karmapa III; Rangjung Rigpe Dorje, Karmapa XIV; Tüsum Khyenpa, Karmapa I

Karmê Chöling

Kensingtons

Kesang Ghetza Tashi

Kham (Tibet)

Khenpo Gangshar

Kindness

in basic being

in group approach

as inspiration

money and

ordinary acts of

paying back

self-existing

*See also* Loving-kindness

Kings, traditional Indian training of

Kitchen sink, profundity of

Kleshas. *See also* Emotions

Knowledge

in business  
creativity of  
in education  
of egoless insight  
practical  
primordial  
spontaneity and  
Kobun Chino Roshi  
Kohn, Sherab Chödzin  
Kornfield, Jack  
Kracauer, Siegfried  
Krishna  
Krodhaloka  
Künga Dawa  
Künga Gyaltzen  
Kusulu tradition  
Kyudo

Labeling  
Lady Diana. *See* Mukpo, Diana J.  
Lalita (dancing with situations)  
Laziness  
Leap, taking  
    as acknowledging intelligence  
    based on wisdom  
    into freedom  
    without landmarks  
    to where we are  
Lekpe Karma  
    “Let Ego Have an Energy Crisis”  
Lewis, Waylon

Lief, Judith L.

Life and Teachings of Marpa seminar

Life force

*The Life of Marpa the Translator*

Lifestyle, continuity of

Light touch

Lineage

*Lion's Roar*

Livelihood.

*See also* Work

Lodro Dorje (Eric Holm)

Logic, moving beyond

London Buddhist Society

Loneliness

accepting

desire and

in meditation

as part of life

of retreat

of solitary practice

space and

Longchen Rabjampa

Longing

Lotus flower

Love

basic twist of

capacity for

ego in

mind and

for oneself

peace and

Loving-kindness

Loyalty

Luminosity

Lying

Maezumi Roshi

Magic

Magyal Pomra Encampment

Mahakali principle

Mahamudra

creative and destructive aspects of  
demands of  
direct energy of  
emphasis in  
as heart  
intense devotion of  
living in accordance with  
meaning of term  
and Nyingma, relationship of  
orthodox tradition of  
perception in  
personalities in  
qualities of  
shunyata in  
symbolism in  
workability of experiences in

*See also under* Ati

Mahasukha (great bliss/joy)

Mahayana

blame in

bodhichitta in

charnel ground and  
ngedön in  
nihilism in  
propagating  
sanity in  
shunyata in  
student-teacher relationship in  
tantra and  
vajrayana and

Mahayoga

Maitri

Maitri Space Awareness

“Make Friends with Your Business”

Making friends with yourself

deepening  
devotion and  
self-acceptance as  
through meditation  
working with others and

Mandalas

as basic ground  
of body  
financial  
as ground of commitment  
masculine and feminine principles as  
basis of  
of siddhas  
society as  
in story of Marpa and Naropa  
world as

Mandela, Nelson

Mantra. *See also* HUM

Manual labor, creativity in

Mao Tse-tung

Mara

Maras (destroyers)

Marpa

Marriage

Masculine principle

Materialism

- in affluent societies

- attitude toward work and

- of bindu

- centralization in

- doubting

- money and

- practicality of

- symbolism of

- types of (*see also* Psychological materialism; Spiritual materialism)

- universal

Meditation

- activity and

- with aim and object

- attitude in

- beginning to practice

- benefits of

- bewilderment and

- body and mind in

- in business

- checking-in process in

- for cutting ego

- daily practice, establishing

demands of  
in developing compassion  
direct personal quality of  
ego's role in  
erroneous concepts of  
examining self-existence in  
expectations and  
experiential nature of  
family affairs and  
formal practice, importance of  
gaze in  
as grounding  
humor in  
importance of  
insight in  
inspiration from  
integrity and  
intuition in  
journey of  
just do it  
for life's challenges  
meaning of  
mind in  
names for  
no ideal state of  
as nonsectarian  
objects of  
paramita of  
physical discomfort in  
primacy of  
purposes of



as relating with life  
as return to sanity  
right mindfulness in  
*Sadhana of Mahamudra* and  
science and  
self-satisfaction in  
simplicity in  
spontaneity and discipline in  
stages of  
styles of  
techniques (*see also* Breath; Thoughts)  
temporary experiences in  
that lacks compassion  
threefold process of  
as training for daily life  
Trungpa Rinpoche's approach to  
views of  
working with arising questions  
in workplace  
*See also* Mindfulness; Shamatha;  
Vipashyana

Meditation in action. *See also* Mindfulness in action

*Meditation in Action*

"A Meditation Instruction"

Meditation instructors

Memories

Memorization

"Me-ness"

Merit

Merton, Thomas

Messages

directness of  
fear as  
ignoring uncomfortable  
mahakali principle and  
mahamudra and  
rejecting

Trungpa Rinpoche's

Midal, Fabrice

Mikyö Dorje, Karmapa VIII

Milarepa

magic of  
physical service of  
retreats of  
songs of  
with Tarma Dode

Mind

awareness of  
balanced state of  
and body, relationship of  
breath and  
continual activity of  
enlightened and confused, differences between  
heaviness or fascination of  
investigating  
karma and  
mindfulness of  
money and  
moon cycles and  
ngedön and  
peace and  
physical activity and

prana and nadi, relationship of  
of student and teacher, mixing  
taming  
in work environments, role of  
Yogachara understanding of  
*See also* No-mind

Mind-body disciplines

*Mindful* magazine

Mindfulness

applications of  
awareness and  
becoming  
continuity of  
developing  
gradual process of  
heritage of  
importance of  
internal feedback in  
in kasung discipline  
meditation's role in  
of mind  
of money  
and other traditions, compared  
peace in  
purposes of  
societal contributions of  
as training  
*See also* Everyday life; Meditation

Mindfulness in action

benefits of  
compassion and

and formal practice, relationship between  
opportunities for  
seeing through self-deception in  
Trungpa Rinpoche's approach to  
walking meditation as

### *Mindfulness in Action*

major themes in  
purpose of  
sources of  
writing of

Mindfulness movement

Mindfulness-awareness

“Mindfulness-Awareness: A Good  
Garden Where Buds and Flowers  
Can Grow”

Miracles

Mishap lineage

Mön

Monasticism

begging practice in  
choice in  
daily routine in  
economics of  
meal practices in  
ordination in  
passion in  
renunciation in  
spirituality of physical acts in  
Trungpa Rinpoche in

Money

abusing

attitudes toward  
as attribute of society  
as burden and delight  
contacting reality in  
controlling power of  
criteria for working with  
cultural views of  
for dharma teachings  
ego and  
energy of  
euphemisms for as green energy  
karma and  
as mother's milk  
practicality of  
preconceptions about  
present moment and  
privacy regarding  
searching for pleasure through  
in spiritual institutions  
spirituality and  
work and

Moon, significance of cycles of

Möpa (admiration)

Morality

Morozov, Evgeny

Mother principle

Motivation

Mudra

Mudra Space Awareness

Mukpo, Diana J.

dressage and

marriage of

workshops by

See also *Dragon Thunder: My Life with Chögyam Trungpa* (Diana Mukpo)

Mukpo, Ösel Rangdröl. *See also* Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche

Mukpo name

Mussolini, Benito

Mystical experience

*The Myth of Freedom*

Nadis (channels)

Nalanda Foundation

Nālandā Translation Committee

Nalanda University

Naropa

Naropa University (formerly Naropa Institute)

Dana Home Care and

educational view of

foundation for

founding of

Ngedön School at

Trungpa Rinpoche at

Nasruddin, Mullah

Native Americans

Natural disasters, three poisons as

Neurosis

American spiritual

around food

battling with

breath and

cherishing

complaints and  
and craziness, difference between  
cutting from within  
declaring  
Dorje Trolö and  
of excess  
first thought as  
fixating on  
flipping to  
freedom and  
fully experiencing  
indulging  
mandala and  
as messages  
offering as gift  
as opportunity  
passion and  
rediscovering hidden  
sanity and  
as too much freedom  
truth and  
working with others'

Neurotic crimes

New York City

Ngedön and trangdön

Ngedön School of Higher Learning

Ngonagpa of Langru

Nihilism

Nine-yana structure

Nirvana

No-man's land

No-mind

Nonaggression

Nondiscrimination, view of

Nonduality

Nonmeditation

Nontheism

Nonviolence

Nova Scotia

Nowness

Nyingma tradition

- approach of

- and Kagyü, joining

- and Kagyü, relationship of

- Rangjung Dorje in

- terma in

Nyingthik tradition

Obstacles

- distinctions in approaching

- exertion and

- as good news

- as opportunities

- overcoming

- working on fringe

- working with greatest first

- “Offering of the Six Paramitas”

Offerings

Ogyen Trinley Dorje, Karmapa XVII

Omega Institute for Holistic Studies

One flavor (one taste)

One-upmanship



## Opening the Dharma Treasury workshop

### Openness

all-pervading  
vs. being spaced out  
as blessing  
compassion and  
dedication to  
developing  
in developing Vajradhatu  
discipline as  
in emotional upheaval  
exertion and  
faith and  
of first thought  
foundation of  
generosity and  
humor and  
in Kagyü tradition  
of mahayana  
in marriages  
to ourselves and world  
in sexual expression  
toward vajra master  
in work environments

### Oral transmission, importance of

### Ordinary mind

### Oryoki

discipline of  
fourfold logic of  
on group retreats

history of

liturgy

sets

“Oryoki Tradition Enhances Sangha Lifestyle”

Ösel Tendzin, Vajra Regent

Outrageousness

Oxford University

Padmakara. *See* Padmasambhava

Padmasambhava

crazy wisdom of

and Karma Pakshi, co-arising of (*see* Karma Pakshi Padmasambhava)

mantra of

phurba of

role in Tibet

as source of terma

work skills of

*See also* Dorje Trolö

Pain

from blind acceptance

of duality

experiencing

fixed notion of

in meditation practice

mindfulness of

in spiritual practices

transforming

Panic

Panoramic awareness

Panoramic view

Paramitas

six

ten

Paranoia

Parrots, flock of (group practice)

Passion

arrogance and

confused

ego and

emotional style of

environment of

as ground of communication

guru and

mara of

meditation and

mind and

as natural disaster

neurosis and

orthodox approach to

pure (*See* Vajra passion)

Passionlessness

Patience

Peace

developing

as expression of nowness

as non-action

in shamatha

as source of everything

ups and downs as

Peasant quality

Perceptions

Personal experience

of clarity and brilliance  
in meditation, importance of  
outside validation and

Phenomena, internal

Phenomenal world

being fully in touch with  
controlling  
mahamudra understanding of  
meditation and  
as workable

Phurbas

Physical activity and disciplines

Physical materialism

Pleasure

from blind acceptance  
experiencing  
fixed notion of  
mindfulness of  
and pain, relationship between  
paranoia and

Pluscarden Abbey

Positive thinking

Postmeditation. *See also* Mindfulness in  
action

Posture

breath and  
in a chair  
on a cushion  
gaze in

importance of  
maintaining  
mind and  
mouth and tongue  
placement of hands  
in walking meditation

Poverty mentality

Power, paramita of

Prajna. *See* Transcendent knowledge (prajna)

Prana (breath)

Precepts

Presence

Present moment

being realistic about  
decision-making in  
discipline of  
faith in  
joy of lack of concepts in  
living in  
as third moment  
*See also* Nowness

Pride. *See also* Vajra pride

*The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of  
Dharma*

Projections

bewilderment as  
ego and  
emotions and  
kindness of  
lack of solidity of  
loss of fear in

not engaging with  
seeing transparency of

Protectors

Psychological materialism

competition and  
ego and  
indulging  
lack of openness in  
of money  
overcoming  
primordial intelligence and  
society and  
transcending

Psychology

Psychosomatic body

Puns

Purity

Pybus, Diana Judith. *See* Mukpo, Diana J.

Pygmies

Rahula

*The Rain of Wisdom (Kagyü Gurtso)*

Ram Dass

*Rang sar shak* (“leave it in its own place”)

Rangjung Dorje, Karmapa III

Rangjung Rigpe Dorje, Karmapa XIV

Ratna Society

Reality

connecting with  
dancing with  
dharma as

as inescapable  
naked  
as ngedön  
in *Sadhana of Mahamudra*  
as self-secret  
in vajrayana

Recollection, practice of

Reference points

in ati view  
concepts as  
lack of  
meditation as  
mind and  
nowness and  
of past and future  
purpose of

Refuge

Reincarnation

Relationships

body as basis of  
conflicts in  
enjoying  
faithfulness in  
love-hate dynamic of  
passion in  
possessive approach to  
in spiritual institutions  
work and

*See also* Families

Relaxation

Religion

Reminders

Renunciation

Resentment

Retreats

- group

- in-house

- loneliness of

- meals in (*see also* Oryoki)

- solitary

- at Taktsang

- walking meditation in

- worldly life and

Rhinoceros (solitary practice)

Rich, Lila

Rich, Thomas. *See* Ösel Tendzin, Vajra

Regent

Richness

Rigden kings

Ri-me school

Rinpoche, meaning of

Rocky Mountain Dharma Center. *See*

- Shambhala Mountain Center

Romanticism, spiritual

Rome, David

Rome, Martha

Roth, Steve

Rudra

*The Ruling Class*

Rumtek

Sacredness



of all life  
celebrating  
of family life  
of mental activities  
respecting  
of society  
of truth

*The Sadhana of Mahamudra*

abhisheka in  
charnel ground in  
commentary on  
composition/recovery of  
crazy wisdom in  
dedication verse  
demands of  
devotion in  
ecumenism of  
editions of  
ending poem  
enlightened society and  
in everyday life  
four dharmas of Gampopa in  
as groundless and pragmatic  
guru identification in  
history of  
levels of development in  
lineage of  
mandala in  
offering in  
practice of  
purposes of

space and energy in  
structure of  
supplication in  
as terma

*The Sadhana of the Embodiment of All the  
Siddhas. See The Sadhana of  
Mahamudra*

Sadhanas, traditional  
composition of  
mandala in  
practice days  
as practice ritual  
visualization in

Sadness

Saint Peter's Basilica

Sakya lineage

Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche

Salvation

Salzberg, Sharon

Samantabhadra

Samayasattva (pledge being)

Samsara

allegiance to  
as concept  
mahamudra and  
message of  
and nirvana, union of  
overcoming  
sacredness of  
twelve nidanas and

Samye Ling Meditation Center

*The Sane Society* (Fromm)

Sangha

business and  
communist use of term  
essence of  
group living in  
importance of  
principle  
reason for  
as social unit

Sanity

American version of  
basic  
of charnel ground  
claustrophobic  
confusion and  
as connecting with reality  
creating atmosphere of  
cultivating  
devotion and  
display of  
earthbound quality in  
ego and  
in everyday life  
fear of  
fully experiencing  
of groups  
and insanity, flipping between  
investing in  
meditation and  
as non-transferable

projecting on the spot  
rediscovering  
sudden realization of  
symbolism of  
wakefulness of

*The Sanity We Are Born With*

Satori

Sawang. *See* Sakyong Mipham

Rinpoche

Scotland

Seed syllables

*Selected Community Talks*

Self, sense of. *See also* Ego Self-centeredness

Self-consciousness

Self-deception

Self-existing equanimity

Self-improvement, approaches to

Selflessness

Self-protective mechanisms. *See*

Defense mechanisms

Self-secrecy

Sengge Samdrup

“A Sense of Humor”

Senses

Service

Setting-sun

Sex

as attribute of society

contacting reality in

in Eastern spirituality

ego in

energy of  
preconceptions about  
privacy regarding  
sacredness of  
as self-conscious spiritual act  
spirituality and

Sexual yoga

Shamarpa

Shamatha

Shamatha-vipashyana

Shambhala Archives

Shambhala Mountain Center (formerly Rocky Mountain Dharma Center)

Shambhala Publications

*Shambhala Sun*

Shambhala Sun Foundation

Shambhala tradition

after Trungpa Rinpoche's passing

business model in

emphasis on

households in

medicine in

vision of

weddings in

*See also* Enlightened society

Shambhala Training

Shedra model

Shibata Sensei

Shikantaza meditation

Shilhak-zungjuk (mindfulness awareness)

Shunyata. *See* Emptiness

Sickness

Siddhas

Siddhi, transcendental

Sikh tradition

Silence, practice of

Simple-mindedness

Simplicity

- accepting

- from compassion

- discovering

- of emotions, seeing

- meditation and

- in monastic tradition

- peace as

- of spiritual path

- in work situations

Sitting Bull

Sitting practice. *See* Meditation

Six realms of existence

Six yogas of Naropa

Skandhas (heaps)

Skillful means/action (upaya)

- in business

- compassion and

- in daily life

- emotions and

- fear and

- and impulsiveness, differentiated

- as masculine principle

- paramita of

- of *Sadhana of Mahamudra*

Slander

*Smile at Fear*

Smileless smile

Society

anarchistic approach to  
gaining perspective on  
hierarchical structures in  
mindful  
relating to  
sacredness of

Shambhala vision of  
traditional

Solitary practice

Songtsen Gampo

Soto Zen

Soul. *See also* Ego

Space

ati as  
awareness of  
bewilderment and  
breath and  
crazy wisdom and  
devices and  
in emotions  
empty  
energy and  
filling  
infinite  
in mahamudra  
in meditation  
mind and  
openness of

passion and  
sense of poverty and  
as solid  
trusting  
from uncertainty

Speech

Speed

Spiritual development

Spiritual friend (kalyanamitra)

Spiritual institutions

Spiritual journey/path

aimlessness of  
conceptualizing good and bad on  
continuity of  
difficulties of  
ego on  
everyday life and  
exertion on  
experiential nature of  
and goal as inseparable  
insight on  
openness on  
preparation for  
pride in  
purposes of  
relating with dirt on  
reward, notion of in  
simplicity of  
telling one's family about  
truth on

Spiritual materialism



admiration as  
arrogance and  
in art  
in Buddhism  
of confirmation by teacher  
devotion based on  
disillusionment with  
ego and  
lack of compassion in  
in meditation  
overcoming  
permanent happiness and  
promoting  
in *Sadhana of Mahamudra*  
of seeking blessings  
spiritual achievement as  
through creating territory  
in Tibet  
transcending  
and true spirituality, differences  
between

Spiritual practice

expectations in  
proper understanding of  
purposes of

Spiritual supermarket

Spiritual teachers

charlatans  
in labor camps in Tibet  
physical service to  
purpose of

as reflection of students

sanity of

## Spirituality

as acceptance of world as it is

conceptualization of

culture and

daily life and

earthbound quality of

economic disciplines and

erroneous ideas about

humor in

as isness of life

limited approaches to

money and

need for compassion in

not sticking with one discipline of

oriented toward pleasure

primitive notions of

as relating to present

setting-sun

societal cycles in

term, clarification of

views of

work and

as worldly concern

## Spontaneity

## Square one

## Student-teacher relationship

adhishthana in

with American students

commitment in

crazy wisdom in  
cynicism and openness in  
disillusionment in  
hierarchy in  
joy in meeting of  
in mahamudra  
merging roles of  
oral transmission in  
parent-child model  
personal contact in  
in three yanas (*See also* individual yanas)  
*See also* Devotion

Study

Stupidity

Subconscious gossip

Success, concepts of

Suffering

Sufi tradition

Suicide

Suits of armor

*The Sun of Prajna*

Supplications

Surmang Dütsi Tel monastery

Surmang tradition

Surrender

as foundation

giving and

to lineage

meditation and

need for

*Sutra of the Recollection of the Three*

*Jewels*

Sutra tradition

Suzuki Roshi, Shunryu

Svatantrika tradition

Symbolism

of deities in sexual union

of feminine principle

mahamudra understanding of

of money

of *Sadhana of Mahamudra*

sex as

Tail of the Tiger. *See* Karmê Chöling

Taking your seat

Taktsang Retreat Center

Taktsang Sengge Samdrup cave

Tantra

basic Buddhism and

demands of

four orders of

hinayana and

Hindu and Buddhist, differences

between

mental level of sexual union in

other yanas and

union in

yanas of

Tara

Tarma Dode

Tathagatagarbha

Tatsumara Silk Company

Tea

ceremony  
as joining of styles  
with Oxford scholar  
relating fully to making

Teaching stories

of arhat seeing causality in bone  
disciple murdering teacher  
man stealing bell  
Sikh meditating on God's name

Teachings

as basic being  
collecting  
communication of  
as cultureless  
identifying with  
process of giving up and  
receiving when nobody is home  
respecting  
universal quality of

“The Ten Paramitas in the Development of the Vajradhatu  
Buddhist Community”

Tenzin Gyatso, Dalai Lama XIV

Terma

Teshin Shekpa, Karmapa V

Theism

in Buddhism  
death in  
devotion in  
divinity in  
faith in

and nontheism, difference between  
spiritual materialism of  
supplication in  
in Tibet

Thought patterns  
awareness of  
daydreams as  
without ego  
emotions and  
as mental creations  
mindfulness of  
noticing  
regarding everything as  
transparency of

Thoughts  
cutting through  
discursive  
equal importance of  
impersonal view of, developing  
in meditation practice  
money as  
as physical sensations  
subconscious chatter  
types of  
*See also* Labeling

Three jewels

Three kayas

Three poisons

Three yanas

Throat center (chakra)

Tibet

Buddhism in  
Chinese invasion of  
communist deception in  
custom when giving money  
family in  
giving food, attitude toward in  
money in  
Padmasambhava's role in  
social propriety in  
spiritual materialism in  
at time of Tüsum Khyenpa

*Tibetan Book of the Dead*

Tibetan sayings and stories  
better not to begin  
cutting peak off mountain  
on Kagyü and Nyingma relationship  
lama reborn as giant fish  
mouse and turquoise  
trying to kill blind father-in-law

Tilopa

Time-capsule project

Totality

Touch and go

Trangdön

Transcendence, distraction of

Transcendent knowledge (prajna)

in business

and jnana, difference between

lack of

paramita of

Transmission

Triple Gem (business)

Trisong Detsen

*True Command: The Teachings of the Dorje Kasung*

Trump, Donald

Trung Mase

Trungpa, Chögyam

in America

begging bowl of

birth and recognition of

birthday celebrations of

on buying a suit

car accident of

on coming to West

death of

distinctions in teachings of

early training of

escape from Tibet

experience of personal dreamworld

on having little money himself

on his early training

on his own meditation practice

on his own path

on his teaching in America

humor of

in India

legacy of

lifestyles of

lineages of

marriage of

meditation, approach to

names and titles of



at Naropa Institute  
on not giving up  
parinirvana, twenty-fifth anniversary  
of  
photograph of  
presenting vajrayana in West, concerns with  
in Scotland  
teachers of  
teaching style of  
as tertön  
training of  
use of language  
as vajra master  
works of

Trungpa lineage

Trust

based on confusion  
in business  
commitment and  
compassion in  
in emotions  
in guru  
intuition and  
in meditation  
in one's world  
in oneself  
in panoramic awareness  
primordial  
recovering in meditation  
in sanity  
in vajra master

in whatever arises

in workplace

“Truth”

Tsurphu monastery

Tülku tradition

Tummo

Tüsum Khyenpa, Karmapa I

Twelve links of interdependent  
causality (nidanas)

Ugyen Shenpen, Lama

Unconscious

Untouchables

Upaya. *See* Skillful means/action (upaya)

*Uttara Tantra*

Vajra hell

Vajra masters

Vajra mind

Vajra nature

Vajra passion

Vajra pride

Vajra principle

Vajra superman

Vajradhara

Vajradhatu community

after Trungpa Rinpoche’s passing

being on the spot, need for

conferences of

development of

founding of

future of  
public image  
purpose of  
ten paramitas in  
weddings in  
Vajradhatu Publications  
Vajradhatu Seminaries  
*Vajradhatu Sun*  
Vajrakilaya  
“Vajra-like Marriage”  
Vajras  
Vajrayana  
    in America  
    awakened mind in  
    business discipline and  
    demands of  
    in gradual approach  
    legitimacy of  
    lineage, role of in  
    mahayana and  
    precepts of  
    reality in  
    sanity in  
    shunyata in  
    student-teacher relationship in  
    vision of  
    wisdom in  
Vajrayogini practice  
Vedas  
Verzemnieks, Inara  
View

“View, Meditation, and Action”

Vikramashila university

Vinaya

Vipashyana (Skt., vipassana, Pali)

Vision, paramita of

Visualization practice

- awakened mind in

- with consort

- development of

- differences in

- while on the toilet

Volition

Vows

Wakefulness

- of emotions

- energy of

- posture of

- primordial

- within sanity

- in three yanas

Walking meditation

Wall Street, spirituality of

Warmth

Warring sects

Warriorship

Watcher

Wealth. *See also* Money

Weapons

Wedding ceremonies

Westernization

“What is Ngedön?”

Wheel of life

“Why Buddhism in America”

“Why We Meditate”

Wisdom

bewilderment as expression of  
in business  
compassion and  
of crazy wisdom  
ego as  
emotions and  
of example and wisdom itself, compared  
fearless  
as feminine principle  
inherent  
loneliness and  
measuring  
paramita of  
passion and  
primordial  
recollection of awareness and  
self-existing  
transference of

Wisdoms, five

Wishful thinking

*Wizard of Oz*

Work

attitude, importance of to  
as attribute of society  
being a nuisance at  
body and mind in

conceptual approaches to  
contacting reality in  
direct feedback in  
ego's approach to  
energy of  
importance of  
as means of escape  
meditation and  
menial or routine  
nowness and  
ordinary attitudes toward  
pain and pleasure in  
preconceptions about  
privacy regarding  
properly ending  
resistance to  
snobbishness about  
spirituality and  
suitability for

*Work, Sex, Money*

“Working with Fear and Anger”

Working with others

attitude in  
basis of  
compassion and  
humbleness in  
intensity in  
interest in  
just do it  
mindfulness and  
recollection of awareness and

relationships as basis of  
simplicity in  
skill in  
through business

Wrath

Yama

Yeshe phowa (transference of wisdom)

Yidams

Yoga, inner

Yogachara school

Young Lamas Home School

Yungtön Dorje Pel

Zen tradition

Sign up to receive news and special offers from Shambhala Publications.



Or visit us online to sign up at [shambhala.com/eshambhala](http://shambhala.com/eshambhala).