

Enlightened World: THE THREE YANAS OF BUDDHISM AND THE GREAT EASTERN SUN

by
The Sakyong, Jamgön Mipham Rinpoche

TALK OUTLINES

Talk outlines from a three talk public program held at
Shambhala Mountain Center, August 1-5, 2007



In this three-talk public program held at Shambhala mountain Center on August 1-5, 2007, the Sakyong, Jamgön Mipham Rinpoche, introduces the three-yana path of Tibetan Buddhism and the Shambhala principles of Tiger, Lion, Garuda, Dragon, and the Great Eastern Sun.

These talk outlines are intended to accompany the DVD set:
Enlightened World: The Three Yanas of Buddhism and the Great Eastern Sun.



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Enlightened World: **The Three Yanas of Buddhism and the Great Eastern Sun**

Talk Outlines

TALK ONE: Entering the Path of Meditation ✧ PAGE 1

- Introduction
- A Path of Enlightenment
- Looking at Motivation
- Two Kinds of Meditation Practice:
 - Shamatha or Stabilizing Practice
 - Vipashyana or Contemplative Practice
- Guided Meditation

TALK TWO: Discovering the Nature of Reality ✧ PAGE 5

- Guided Contemplative Meditation
- Relating with Conceptuality
- Questioning the Belief in a Self
- Penetrating This Matrix of Concept
- Bringing Truth into Experience
- Discussion

TALK THREE: Contacting the Vajra Mind ✧ PAGE 11

- Qualities of the Path
- Orienting the Ground Basis of All
- The Four Maras and Vajra Mind
- Luminosity and Wisdom
- Ground Lungta Practice Instruction
- Concluding Comments

TALK ONE : Entering the Path of Meditation

72 Minutes Total

Introduction

(2:45)

Shambhala International President Richard Reoch introduces the Sakyong, Jamgön Mipham Rinpoche.

A Path of Enlightenment

(13:35)

The subject of enlightenment or waking up is a theme that is very current. We are moving to a time when we have to address what is a spiritual journey of the mind and the heart. The question is how to bring enlightenment as an aspect of what we are doing. How we can make enlightenment an aspect of what we are doing altogether. It has to be something that we engage in and do. A lot of time in our life, we address the external conditions but not what is actually the most important in terms of mind and heart.

The Tibetan term for enlightenment is *changchup* where *chang* means to overcome or reduce or purify, and *chup* means accomplish. We accomplish what is already innate, the enlightened qualities. There is a tendency to feel that we need to get enlightened. According to Buddhism, we are already enlightened. We need to discover that, which is a process of overcoming hesitation, fear, lack of confidence.

The view is very important. In this process how we actually regard ourselves. What is the approach we are taking. From the Buddhist point of view you have to have your approach. In dharmic language we say: *tawa*, *gompa* and, *chupa*.

Tawa means view. The main thing at the beginning is view and understanding. One word for meditation in Tibetan is *gom* which means getting familiar or accustomed to. If we don't know what we are getting accustomed to, we can sit for a long time and it will not make much difference. However, if we know the purpose of our meditation, very precise and deep meditation can reveal a tremendous amount. *Chupa* means activity, conduct how you engage. So the enlightened process of when you meditate or how you engage is your view, how you regard yourself. How you engage.

Looking at Motivation

(22:10)

Motivation is the key thing. Technically in Buddhism, we talk about nine yanass or stages, which are subdivisions of hinayana or the narrow vehicle, mahayana or the

great vehicle, and vajrayana or tantra. These are stages of bringing out the Buddha's enlightenment or quality of wakefulness. In Shambhala, they are the revealing or bringing out of basic goodness, the basic essence of goodness. The difference between each of the nine yanas is that the motivation is getting bigger and bigger. In Tibetan, motivation is *kiinlong* which means 'to come out of' or 'what inspires us'. If we fall in love or find something interesting, mind becomes very engaged. That is motivation. If we sit and want to develop compassion or wakefulness, mind is engaged.

Meditation is dualistic: there is subject and object. When mind goes toward the object, it draws from it, is affected by it, like a sponge. From a negative point of view, when we are mad, it brings out qualities of anger which lead to action. Unless we take the mind where we want to, the environment will do it. The quality of enlightenment is that the individual is taking over his own personal destiny. So meditation practice is very proactive. We are surrounding our mind and attention with things we want to be looking for.

In the context of the hinayana path, the first level of Buddhahood is called *arhat* in Sanskrit, which means 'foe destroyer'. It is the destroying of kleshas or negative emotions, and of confusion about self existence. At this level, we talk about motivation in terms of small, medium and large.

Small means that the individual pursues happiness with worldly means. You just take care of yourself. This basis has to be covered. But there is no spiritual concern. *Medium* involves mixing everyday means of looking for happiness with spiritual means. But there is no spiritual journey. At the level of *large*, we look at the root of the problem and realize that it is a spiritual issue.

The individual starts thinking in terms of lifetimes and karma, seeing life not just as a single unit. In the mahayana or great vehicle, the mind has matured. The individuals are not so much fixated on their own selves. They realize that all beings have the same difficulty. The next level of motivation is compassion, hoping that others do not suffer.

Two Kinds of Meditation Practice : Shamatha or Stabilization Practice

(13:30)

First is stabilization practice, also called *shi-ne* or *shamatha*, meaning 'calm abiding'. These words indicate that through this practice, our mind becomes more open, stable, useful. It has to do with owning or possessing our mind. It is a dualistic practice. The best way to stabilize and strengthen the mind, to give it space, is to focus on something that brings out that result, which is breathing. This is the view, knowing why we follow the breath.

Then you need not be distracted, not have thoughts having power over you. It is not about not thinking. It is about the ability to think or not to think if you want to, about not having thoughts control us. It has tremendous implications. It puts the mind on the driver seat. One can see what is going on and decide where to go.

In the Shambhala teachings we refer to the path in terms of four animals: tiger, lion, garuda, dragon. The first one, *tiger*, has contentment, meekness, carefulness. Like a tiger being fully present, when your mind is present, your muscles become fuller. You actually have more power. We call it *lungta* or windhorse. The mind is essentially the root of all actions. When we are present, we can determine what is going on. As we are there, that openness begins to relax the breathing system and affect the whole body. So we have two kinds of shamatha: mind calmly abiding and body calmly abiding.

Shamatha creates a very wide space and from that, mind is less speedy. Speed and time are a product of mind. As we think more about time, it gets more real. Yesterday is a dream-like experience. When mind slows down, there is space, it pervades time and space. First thoughts are where our mind goes. We think we are the thoughts, we can't exist without thinking. Then we realize that it is not true. I am awake. I am clear. My mind is perceptive. I'm not thinking that much.

Two Kinds of Meditation Practice : Vipashyana or Contemplative Practice (8:53)

The next kind of meditation is called *vipashyana* meditation or *jegom* 'analytical meditation' or contemplative meditation. Having found space, then you take thoughts that you want to cultivate. An obvious one is compassion. Because we can focus on something, contemplating compassionate thoughts can be very powerful. Compassion is stronger than anger. Our parents, people who cared for us, put up with a lot of stuff. Anger cannot handle anything.

We have to strip these words of their meaning in the vocabulary. Compassion is *nyingje*, *nying* means 'mind' or 'heart', *je* means 'superior', 'lord', 'noble', 'powerful'. We say 'noble heart'. It is the crown jewel of the mind. Truly, what is compassion? It is the mind that fully perceives what is going on. It sees what happens with other people, not only what we want from them, but the totality of the individual. They are suffering and out of that they say something spiteful or do something. Then we understand that maybe somebody passed away recently or they had a difficult time at work, whatever the circumstances might be. There is a consciousness that understands it. Then we are in a more fluid situation and see that actually that person needs to be hugged. The problem is that, unless you are a very talented person, it is very difficult to do it on the spot. You have to spend some time developing it, just as anything in life.

I believe that quality of meditation is better than length of meditation. Our journey depends on the vehicle that we have. If our car can't make it, it is just a fantasy trip. Sometime people get disheartened. They say "it sounds so fantastic, but when I look at my mind, I get more depressed, it is worse than before". But with the proper understanding, we can deal with any situation. You can say "I am tired. I have all these worries. But in that, can I progress on the journey? Yes I can, because there is a 15% of my mind that really wants to do this." So we have to look at that and not let the other percentages sway us into drifting mind and discursiveness.

So when we do the contemplative meditation, it is that period where we gain a level of stability, then we bring in the contemplation. At the beginning, if we have done the first kind of meditation for a long time, when we bring in a thought intentionally, it can immediately destabilize the practice. As we get better, we then have the stability, then bring the thought, and our mind becomes infused with that.

There is a lot of teaching about how you can develop various qualities of compassion, generosity, understanding, exertion, patience. Then you have the basis for actually doing something. We are talking about view, meditation and conduct. And it is all very brief. We should not be discouraged by the brevity of those things.

In the meditative tradition, we call it *samadhi*, meditative absorption. You are going to deep meditation. Even in the beginning stages, it very much can occur as we deepen. As we are beginning to do that, we are literally stepping on the path. We are making progress.

Guided Meditation

(17:25)

TALK TWO: Discovering the Nature of Reality

113 Minutes Total

Guided Contemplative Meditation

(20:24)

- ✧ A sense of breathing out negativity, discursivity, a sense of breathing in focus, relaxation
- ✧ Balance between focus and gentleness
- ✧ Impermanence and death
- ✧ Causes and results
- ✧ Perpetual cycle of pain, samsara
- ✧ Awakening to the reality of others' suffering, the mind of bodhichitta
- ✧ Aspiration to engage in beneficial activities, like the *snow lion*

Relating with Conceptuality

(8:29)

Buddhism has a bad rap about thinking. Here we are trying to change that attitude a bit. It is not a matter of thinking as such, but of the kind of thinking. Ultimately, enlightenment is a mind free from concept. In Tibetan, this is referred to as *sem-le depa*, 'beyond mind'. It is beyond conceptuality, beyond dualism. Concept is the mind putting effort into understanding. It is created. Our self and our environment are fabricated. This fabrication is called *interdependentness*. The mind is always assuming certain things, making all kinds of associations. In Tibetan, this is *tönchi*, 'generality meaning'. We perceive things, we take a quick glance, and we come up with a conclusion.

In the mahayana tradition of mind training, we begin slowly to unravel and overcome this creative process. Here we say that the whole world is interdependent. That is the Buddhist notion of *emptiness*. We say something is empty because there is no single thing that is sustained in space, that is created. If the tree was really there, it would not take seeds, weather, bark, and everything else to make it a tree. It would not be interdependent.

Sometimes people think that emptiness is blankness or voidness. But we are not into nihilism any more than we are into permanence. When we say that the point of enlightenment is to go to a level where mind is transcended, we are talking about conceptual mind. Wisdom itself is nonconceptual. We can all attain enlightenment because we all have nonconceptual wisdom in our being. We also have limitless

compassion. That is why great practitioners have tremendous exertion. They are not being dissuaded by their own or other shortcomings. Their mind is sustained because they know that this is in their being. It is inherent. So the process we have to go through is for ourselves discovering and tasting this immeasurable quality and this wisdom quality. Even just a glimpse of this incredible wisdom will cut through our doubts.

What we are generally sitting with is concept, one conceptual creation after another. The practice of meditation at the beginning is to get some sort of orientation so we don't believe so heartedly in the perpetual motion of thoughts and emotions. We find out that there is something deeper. Instead of following the conceptual framework again and again, we try to get a little distance. Through contemplative meditation, we reverse this process and reorient our focus of what we want to do.

Questioning the Belief in a Self

(14:18)

The biggest assumption that we make is that the self exists. In tantric Buddhism, we talk about the period between death and the next life as the *pardo*, the 'in-between period'. They say that when we pass away, our self, our concept of who we thought we were, dissolves and only consciousness is left. We feel lost, we actually experience interdependence. Everything is dependent upon something else. You cannot point to one thing and say this is it. This is a hard nut to crack. It has been going on for a long time, it is endless and painful.

There is a mechanism for undoing that. In mahayana and vajrayana, the emphasis is on the mind. Through yoga or jogging, you can put your body in shape, but the mind is still confused. Mind is the most powerful thing. Of course the body has to be taken care of. But most of us are physically oriented. Contemplation practices can transform the mind. If we know how to balance our mind and orient ourselves, we can make progress. We are coming to the point of *ngejung* 'definite arising', renunciation. A person who has contemplated and observed 'I don't need to do this again', comes to some epiphany, 'I see the pattern', then can go forward. Buddhism is not into suffering, but into bliss! How to get happiness, permanent happiness. But it is not conventional. Happiness is *dechik* 'bliss having arrived', it is *Buddhanature*, or basic goodness in the Shambhala warriorship tradition.

The wisest people have realized that *how things appear* and *how things abide*, that is their nature, can be very different. According to the tradition, Buddha taught in three stages or 'turnings'. The first one describes how things appear in terms of suffering, impermanence, samsara. The second one is the teaching on emptiness, on how things abide. If suffering did not abide in emptiness, then it would be a real thing, that could not be overcome. Suffering is not solid. Its nature is interdependence. It appears in a certain way. But appearance does not mean real. The way we actually abide is called Buddha. In the Shambhala tradition, we use the word *Rigden*. *Rig* means 'family', *den* means 'possessing'. The image of the Rigden as the king of Shambhala is that it is the individual who possesses the family of the enlightened

ones. This is all symbolism. Meditation is symbolism, symbolically trying to transmit to us that we are enlightened.

So we have to overcome our initial concept of what enlightenment is. The way we are intrinsically, naturally, is *dechik*, arriving and being in a state of bliss, which is free from suffering. The word 'nirvana' means free from suffering. The word 'samsara' means cyclical. The word 'liberation' means to come out of a cycle that is futile. And in the Shambhala tradition, we realize that in order to be liberated, we need great courage. That is why we use the word 'warrior'. In Tibet, meditators are called 'brave'. So we say that there are two traditions that have come together: the panditas, the brilliant ones, and the meditators, the brave ones. The brilliant ones have understood, the brave ones have enacted and realized. Obviously, we need both.

Penetrating this Matrix of Concept

(15:35)

So what is this matrix of concept, and how or where do we begin to penetrate it? The 'brilliant ones' have figured that it all appears in different ways, but the basic nature is the same, the basic weakness is the same. It is all fabricated and conceptual. We are talking about the *five skandhas* here. *Skandha* is a word that means 'heap' or 'gathering'. We put certain things together and we call it a 'thing'. Traditionally, the question is 'If there is selflessness, then who is this person?'. The Buddha answered that it is like putting grains of rice together and it forms a shape. It is 'meaning generality'. We have not looked at it, we have just assumed. Deep meditators see interdependence not only of trees and seasons, but of themselves.

Body is *form* that comes from four elements, which refers to traditional physics and chemistry. Earth is that which sustains. Water moves and congeals. Fire matures, creates heat, binds things. The body is many things, flesh and skin (earth), blood (water), warmth (fire), movement within (wind).

Then consciousness has many layers. There is experience of *feeling*, good, bad, neutral. Then there is *discrimination*, the ability to know what happened, where and when. There is *formation*, fully formulated thoughts and ideas. There are 51 of them, root afflictions, virtuous activities... There are endless dissections. We say, 'I thought I had a body and a mind'. If we look carefully, that is not exactly 'what I thought'. That moment is emptiness, emptiness of concept, the beginning of wisdom. We are doing this big program in this tent. Then in a few weeks, it will just be a meadow. It is just causes and conditions, and then it is gone. It is a matter of the way we look at it, we could miss it easily. It is the mind going there and realizing, 'I am reminded of reality in that' as opposed to 'I wish it was back together'. People think nonattachment must be painful. But for a practitioner, ultimate nonattachment to a self is called 'completely joyful'. We feel free. What is the result of more attachment? More pain, or more stress, which is the new way to talk about suffering.

We have to look, observe and see. There are many levels of mind. One is always saying 'Feel good' or 'not good'. Then we try to protect what feels good, which creates more formation. Then as soon as you have attachment, you have a reaction. This is

not as we learn in school, 'reaction equal to action'. Karma is not one to one. You can have a big reaction to a small action. Karma will definitively come about. That action takes place in the fifth skandha, *consciousness*, which is divided into eight categories.

There are five consciousnesses related to sight, sound, taste, touch, smell. Then we hear something, a car or a dog. This conceptual fabrication is within the *sixth consciousness*, the *mental* one. This is hard to experience, it happens 360 times within a snap of a finger. Some meditators are so precise, they can count moments of consciousness, get down to atomic particles.

The sixth one is where we are meditating. With *shi-ne*, we are drawing the consciousnesses into the sixth one and rest there. Why are we doing that? When you have that mind stabilized, you do not have to react immediately, following karma. There is a feeling of somewhat being withdrawn, but it is for a purpose. It works stage by stage so that we can figure it out.

The *seventh consciousness* is called 'afflicted consciousness'. It is pride, *ngagyal* 'self glorious'. It says 'I am real and I am glorious'. These consciousnesses are not separated. It is like dividing space. It is a way of looking. So even the mind is divided up. It too is interdependent.

Bringing Truth into Experience

(29:27)

We don't get the whole thing all at once. King Dawa Sangpo, the first king of Shambhala, went to visit the Buddha and asked how he could practice while having the responsibilities of a kingdom and a family and so on. The Buddha told him 'You don't have to abandon these things, if you can realize the sacredness of the world'. That is tantra, vajrayana, the direct approach. The king 'got it' and received the highest tantric empowerment, the Kalachakra. Those of us who do not recognize this truth right away, we do dathüns and prostrations! We have to go through a process of discovering for ourselves the truth, which is what the Buddha did.

The Buddha was very practical, he spoke the common language. He asked 'What is the nature of this life?' It is painful, scary, being a teenager is painful, then we have to find a job, we work hard and get worried, getting sick and old, having opinions, attachment, and the great ending is to die, and then having to do it again 49 days later, and forget how bad it was and think we are going to get it this time. When we actually see that, we begin to develop trust in the Buddha. There are these exercises 'Are you your mind?' 'If you think your mind is a thing, what is its shape or color?' So we look and as each truth becomes experienced, that is the point of practice. The point is not to sit on a cushion forever. Practice is *nyamsu len*, 'bringing into experience'. First impermanence is 'out there'. Then we experience sickness or death and suddenly it is *su*, 'here'. 'Now I know what the Buddha is talking about.' That is practice.

You cannot understand nonconceptual wisdom if you cannot believe these basic truths of karma and samsara. Buddha did not invent them. They are part of ancient traditions. The point is 'What to do about it?'. We have to gain personal experience and then do the next practice. That is the path. Things are laid out so that we can step by step experience it. Sometime people do a practice and want another one. This is fine, it keeps people busy! But it does not work if we do not let our practice penetrate us. That seems to be our cultural predicament at this point. How to let practice affect us rather than wanting more and more practices. If not, this is just entertainment. So contemplative practice is 'bringing into experience'.

One of the basic ways of beginning the path is to be like a *snow lion* and go on the path of *gewa* or 'virtue', understanding what qualities we want to enhance in our life. We are talking about compassion, mindfulness, actions that lead to pleasure and liberation, as opposed to non-*gewa* activities such as anger, self-centeredness that constrict the mind. It is not about 'goody' and 'baddy'. Contemplative texts talk about taking something out there and bringing it inside, whatever the topic is. We have the idea through the right kind of concept, and then we go to nonconceptuality or wisdom. The path is created by us understanding it, then fabricating it, then transcending it.

Real compassion first is *inferential*, an idea, then it becomes *direct perception*. At the beginning, it is all based on the idea that we think it is worthwhile, which is knowledge. We sit and conjure up an image, 'Wishing beings to be free from suffering'. At the very least we say the words, like a mantra. We may not have any feeling. Then slowly from the words, meaning begins to take place. Then the words drop away. Compassion, *nyingje* or 'noble heart', is a word. It refers to an attitude of the mind, wishing for the suffering to be eliminated. We understand the logic. If we only wish for our own suffering to be released, it only perpetuates it. The attitude of opening to others opens up the mind. Then we develop a story line. It is like making a fire by adding a log on the amber. We raise the thought of our mother or somebody close, which brings up a sense of warmth, compassion. This is created, conceptual, but we are getting more of a sense of what compassion is. And we stay there. Then there is a small feeling of what compassion is. This is a gradual process, rather than going directly to the profound meaning. It is a skillful mean, a way to orient our world. It is the most profound kind of practice of *gewa*.

The benefit of this practice is that when we engage in this thought, our mind actually becomes happier, and it benefits others. The great teacher of this technique, Shantideva, says that 'Isn't compassion meditation difficult?' is an absurd question because a small amount of practice has astronomical benefits. When your mind is involved in this kind of attitude, what comes about? In order for us to get to the point where we are even thinking of someone else, we have to have awareness of ourselves, of our own pain and suffering, as well as the pain and suffering of another individual.

Then we understand more what the situation is, which is what we call *prajna* or *sherab*, 'best knowledge'. The best thing to know about another person is that they want to be happy and not to suffer. Ultimately the best way to be happy is to be in a state of wisdom, free. So when we have that, and we have a person in mind, and we are saying 'May they be happy', of course emotions will come up, because we gener-

ally divide the world into friends and enemies. As our practice goes in concentric circles from those we care about, to those we are indifferent to, to those we have animosity towards, more and more emotion comes up. Prajna helps us understand that. The stronger it is, the more compassion we have. So the point of this practice is not just simply feeling emotional towards another being, but it is important to have it inseparable with prajna or knowledge.

What kind of other qualities are we developing simultaneously as we are doing this? As we hold our mind to this image, we are developing stability of mind, mental focus, we are developing *sheshin* 'environmental awareness', we are developing that aspect of mind that can have sympathy or empathy, be aware of how another person feels. It sharpens our mind. And as we are doing that, we go through all the *six paramitas*, generosity – because we are practicing dharma, discipline – practicing *gewa*, patience – not being angry, exertion – not let the faults of others be an obstacle, meditation – stabilization, prajna – wisdom, intelligence. Going through this is a transformative experience.

In Shambhala language, this kind of practice is about having *lungta* or courage. The result is that our life force energy increases. If you ask high lamas about a certain illness, they will tell you to practice compassion for other people, because this is the best way to overcome your health issue. It brings us away from self-centeredness. It creates *lungta*. That kind of beautiful, high energy is the *snow lion* because once you are on this kind of meditation, you feel like prancing! And the meditation quality of seeing beyond friends and enemies is the path of the *garuda*, spanning its wings.

Discussion

(23:42)

TALK THREE: Contacting Vajra Mind

112 Minutes Total

Qualities of the Path

(13:19)

When we look at the path, the journey, in the beginning, we might think that the point is to get to the end, but what we are discovering along the way, is that every day becomes the path. We should try to bring the dharma into our lives, thinking about what is most important. We have an incredibly precious opportunity. In Shambhala, we talk about 'Joining Heaven and Earth'. We need vision, we need something that is grounding, and we need the human level in there.

How do you incorporate such a wealth of knowledge? It is very simple, moment by moment, thought by thought, action by action, person by person. In the visualization practices of the vajrayana tradition, they say that if you can visualize one particle, that is as good as visualizing the whole thing, if your mind is focused. In other words, if we can do compassion thoroughly, that is as good as doing prajna, that is as good as doing generosity. This is really bringing dharma into our being. The words are very important at the beginning, because we need to get oriented. But at a certain point, there is a level of conviction that takes place. We call it 'certainty' in the Mahayana. We call it 'confidence' in Shambhala. We call it 'one-pointed' in the Hinayana. It is when the mind totally focuses. When we do that, we have tremendous power.

One of the great tantric teachings is that we are not Buddha tomorrow, but we are Buddha now. That is a profound contemplation, because then we see all the faults. But the teachings say that these faults are *küntak*, 'acquired'. They are blocking that innate Buddha quality. The path is where this quality is revealed. It is called *munto jor*, 'actualizing'. It is a journey of the mind developing more and more trust in our innateness. That revealing process happens all the time. When we feel a quality of love, within that quality, there is not just regular love but there is wisdom in it. The mind itself, that we have right now, has all the buddha qualities. But we may not feel like that. There are two levels of obscuration, *küntak*, 'acquired' and *lhenchik*, 'innate'. This is very subtle. When a child is born, no one teaches it to be angry or jealous. The seed is there naturally. But one is taught prejudices, there is an acquired kind of anger.

The other aspect of the path is that we are in a sense contriving and fabricating our buddha nature. So the mind begins to think 'I should be more compassionate'. We are developing relative prajna, relative understanding. In a way, this is already happening. It is not a choice situation. If the mind is not oriented that way, it will go the other way. There is either dharmic *küntak* or samsaric *küntak*. That is why we say that we have to participate in our journey. Meditation is developing confidence and conviction in the way we want to orient our life.

Orienting the Ground Basis of All

(21:02)

In the last talk, we talked about the seven consciousnesses and touched upon the eighth one. The mind is in a neutral situation. Like a cotton sheet, it can be dyed in many ways. From the Buddhist metaphysical point of view, this pure kind of base is called the *eighth consciousness* or *künchi* 'the ground basis of all'. As we act, there is a tendency to think that it just vanishes into space, when it actually goes into the eighth consciousness. So the practice of the path is slowly orienting that white cloth and perfuming it the way you want.

When they talk about previous karma, there is this notion of a latent situation that will eventually come out. But the force by which it arises can be nullified. Part of what will happen in the future is still undetermined. Determining the future is what practice does. Many people sit and say 'I want some enlightenment now'. The smart meditator says 'What did I do to cause enlightenment to arise now?'. In the first case, it is like saying 'Give me something that does not have a cause'. Enlightenment is there innately, but in order to bring it out, it takes causes and conditions. These can only come from body, speech and mind, and the most important one is mind. We are talking about attitude, motivation, orientation, inspiration.

People talk about living a sustainable life. But internal sustainability is developing the mind towards *gewa*, towards the *Snow Lion*. Shambhala Mountain Center is a great place. But it is not really about the place, it is about what we do in that place. As we do it, we feel better. We are actually mentally transforming our environment. So much so that the deer are coming! In Shambhala language, when you develop *gewa*, this mind of positiveness and orientation, you get *lungta*, you get *wangtang* 'authentic presence, radiance'. When the mind gets stronger, every action becomes fuller. Thoughts become more potent and the weight of that potent mind has a tremendous effect on our action and the way we live our life. If our mind is fickle and weak, it is hard to conduct ourselves. Karmic tendencies or *pakchak* 'habitual tendencies' take over.

In Mahayana, there is tremendous emphasis on deepening and understanding. They talk about meditation in terms of *nyamshak*, 'meditative equipoise'. It is the point where the mind is becoming powerful. Another word for it is *samten* 'strong mind'. As we meditate, our mind becomes stronger, our conviction becomes stronger, and then afterwards we have what is called *jethop*, 'subsequent attainment'. After you meditate, you get up and go into the world, and you have more and more understanding, deepening, realization.

I always emphasize contemplative meditation because meditation is not just about reducing stress. Once the mind is calm, you need to orient it. We need to develop qualities and the question is whether they are coming from the inside or the outside. We say that intrinsically, it is there, but at the same time, it feels somehow like they are coming from the outside. Because we have this innate level of obscurity or affliction, that comes out as emotion and discursiveness, we have to constantly remind ourselves. They say the first obstacle to meditation is laziness, but the second is for-

getting the instructions. In the Buddhist tradition, memorization is very important. It is considered to be one of the best *gewa* because it impacts the mind. It makes things innate. It is like kneading dough. Through memorization, practicing, recalling, we are kneading in those qualities. Initially, it might feel external, but after a while it feels innate. Being reminded happens through understanding, contemplating and meditating. It happens also environmentally. In the vajrayana tradition, we have many *wang* or *abhisheka*, which mean 'empowerment'. Those are rituals where the intrinsic qualities are kneaded into the student.

Traditionally they say that there are two kinds of best students, really smart or really stupid. If you are smart, you understand everything right away, karma, what is mind, what needs to be done. The really stupid goes 'If you say so!', and practices right away. Most of us are not quite smart enough, and not quite dumb enough! We say 'Wait a minute. Where do I fit in?'. We need logic, understanding. Also, here we have so much education that we have all our concepts to deal with, 'I am not sure, Buddha or Newton?'. That is why it is hard to actually do something. We are so intellectually paralyzed. We are not sure what to do. We need to clarify and learn how to trust. That is why I said in the beginning that we don't have to think of everything and do everything. We could just pick something and work with it. Also that is why we have the sangha, and teachers and teachings, to remind us and create that environment.

The Four Maras and Vajra Mind

(37:34)

In the Shambhala warrior tradition, what tends to block our activity is referred to as *döns* or sometimes *drip*. *Drip* is a heaviness on the system, a quality of being paralyzed, incapable of doing something. *Dön* is when your psychology begins to exude into the environment. Articles can be blessed and they become sacred. In the negative sense, articles can get stained by negativity. At the ultimate level of *tongpanyi* and *salwa*, 'emptiness' and 'luminosity', if your mind can go to the innate nature, there is no good and bad. However, if your mind is caught in relativity, then there is good and bad, because it affects us, because we think there is good and bad.

Samsara is a sense of environment to a certain degree. Although it is essence-less, it fools us and tricks us. And the way it affects us is called *mara*, a Sanskrit word. In the traditional story of the Buddha, just before he attains enlightenment, he goes through the attacks of Mara and his daughters. Maras can manifest in many ways. Generally we talk about the four maras. The first one is the *skandha mara* or mara of becoming. *Skandha* is when things are coming together and forming into something that we think is real. As soon as the mind sees something, it pulls everything together and tries to make it solid. And as the mind does that, it becomes the object, it goes out and solidifies more. We start seeing solid things and call them 'mine'.

Then we have *klesha mara*. In Tibetan *klesha* is *nyönmong*, which is translated as 'affliction'. It is like a disease. What happens when the mind tries to hold something together, the shock waves or reverberations, are called *klesha*. It is desire, anger, jealousy. The mara quality is that all of a sudden it hijacks our whole process. It con-

sumes the mind and then we assume that. It is like being possessed. We begin to behave that way, and buy into that logic. And then, that action is kneaded into our consciousness. So next time, we have a similar reaction. Since we have more basis, the anger, for instance, will come back quicker. It is like an infection. It starts slowly, but at a certain point, it is almost too late. You are consumed.

So again, one must be vigilant. That is the quality of the *tiger*. My father translated it as 'meek'. The Tibetan word is *chokshe*, which means 'knowing you have enough'. We say 'contentment'. Non-contentment is the mind that does not know when it is enough. The tiger knows because he is mindful and pays attention. Just as mindfulness is an attitude of mind, un-mindfulness is also an attitude of mind. In that case, those environmental things come in. The most important thing to be mindful of is our conduct, our attitude, watching the mind when it goes from enough to excess. This is all relative teaching. We are talking about very practical things. You can go to the transcendent and see it as emptiness. Then that does not matter because you can see the nature. But when our mind does not abide in the nature of things, when we are going out into the world, we are in an environment where we have to be careful. This is sometimes referred to as *payu* or 'self awareness'. We need to be aware of what is *gewa* and *migewa*, virtue and non-virtue.

The third mara is called *devaputra mara*. It is the mara of pleasure. The mind is immediately attracted to what feels pleasurable. Because it is not happy here, it seeks pleasure somewhere else. But most of the pleasures that are out there turn into some kind of painful situation. We are not really noticing as it turns into pain and we keep thinking it is pleasure. The traditional analogy is 'licking honey from a razor blade'. It is seemingly pleasurable and all of a sudden it cuts you. Here the notion of mara is just to be aware of that kind of situation. If you have actual trust and experience in your innate joy, in your Buddha kind of enlightened qualities, your basic goodness qualities, the mind will have much less tendency to do that. It is not really about abstaining. It is about recognizing. There is nothing to abstain from. The situation is as it is, but we are imputing what we would like to see on it.

The last one is *yama mara* or the mara of death. What happens is that the notion of death creates a solidity to life. Having a final thing means that everything else in there is a real experience. It creates a framework where life becomes real. According to the Buddhist teachings, life is actually an illusion. You realize that just before death. Everything seems so fluid. All your life becomes a short moment. Time is constantly changing. Even the present moment is a relative truth, it is not absolute. It can be broken down on and on. When through meditation we look at consciousness and mind, we realize that we are living in a fluid, momentarily, always fluctuating situation. When death comes, it seems as though it is gone, but it was coming and going the whole time. What we have done is taking a lot of what was coming and going and called it a self, and that self dies. These teachings are related to the *garuda*. The garuda's wings are spread out, meaning equanimity going through life. It represents the quality of bhumi, attainment, going higher and higher. Understanding selflessness and momentary time is the wisdom of the garuda. The Shambhala text says that the garuda punctures space like an arrow, in the sense that it understands the fathomless quality.

The way to counteract the maras is to have *vajra-like mind*. *Vajra* is a Sanskrit word. In Tibetan, we say *dorje*, which means ‘noble stone’. In the Indian iconography, it is Indra’s scepter, a weapon that is like a thunderbolt. It has five points representing the five wisdoms of the Buddha. It is considered to be indestructible. This thunderbolt-like mind overcomes the maras of fixating because it penetrates concepts and appearances. It has three qualities: It always hits whatever it is intending to. It destroys whatever it is hitting. Once it is destroyed, it liberates it. You are free from it. It is the opposite of discursiveness. When you have a mind that is unfocused, it never hits what you want to. It is consumed by what it is going towards. And it is entrapped. In the Mahayana school, this is called the middle way analysis. This is a profound meditation. And we say that the greatest confidence comes from egolessness. That is the confidence of the *dragon*, complete egoless confidence.

This particular type of meditation, which is called *uma* in Tibetan, or ‘middle way’, uses this diamond-like or vajra-like mind. This has to do with the power of understanding. When you thought something was one way and you found out it was another, it is a profound experience. That knowledge totally destroys what was there before. Now you are free from that. We are talking about looking at this notion of solidity and non-fluidness of the universe, what we are always trying to think things are. What is interesting here is not so much what you are meditating upon, but to watch your mind going through the process. We are trying to become more and more familiar with the empty nature of things obviously. So the mind continually contrives and at the same time you apply the antidote, the vajra principle. You send that *dorje* to this idea of a self, or time or klesha, and as you get better, the *dorje* becomes bigger and stronger.

Luminosity and Wisdom

(16:56)

Nobody likes the word emptiness. When you hear it and your mind goes there, most of the time you are not getting the right point because you think something was removed, like an empty cup. But this is different, since there was not anything there in the first place. Sometimes this is called *tathata* or ‘suchness’. The Heart Sutra says ‘form is emptiness, emptiness is also form’. The second part is as much a teaching. Because it is empty, it can be form, it manifests. Obviously there are chairs and tables. These things abide, but they abide without any inherentness. That is why it is a subjective journey. Subjective also means contrived, inferential. We need to have certainty and trust in the teachings so that our mind goes ‘I know this table is appearing, but in meditation, I understood quite convincingly how it is empty of its inherentness’. We are perceiving both the relative and the ultimate aspect of it.

The third turning or stage in the Buddha’s teachings is focusing on *ösal*, ‘luminosity’ or ‘clear light’. In Tibetan, *sal* can mean ‘clear’ and *ö* means ‘light’. When you mix the second turning teachings on the notion of suchness or emptiness, with the third turning teachings on clear light, you get the ultimate nature of all things. The first turning teachings, the Four Noble Truths, deal with relative truth, the nature of things as they appear. The second turning reveal their ultimate nature, which is *tongpanyi*, ‘suchness’ or *shunyata* in Sanskrit. Mind cannot perceive the nature of

things, only wisdom can. But the only way we can get to wisdom is to train the mind like wisdom, and then eventually it becomes wisdom. In Tibetan, mind is *sem* which means 'to create'. Wisdom is *yeshe* which comes from *yene*, 'from the beginning' and *shepa*, 'knowledge, understanding'. From the beginning it knows. In other words, wisdom was never confused. The teachings on wisdom are emphasized in the third turning because when we talk about luminosity, it is the manifest quality. Emptiness is the way things abide. Clear light is how they manifest. But what is clear light? It is knowledge, it is wisdom. Again we must reiterate that what we are talking about is beyond words, you have to experience it. We do approach it by using words and concepts, but one has to have *ngönsun*, 'direct experience'. And in a little way, we can experience it in ourselves. As we meditate, there is a quality of emptiness, things dissolving, yet we are cognizant.

In the Shambhala language, we call this third turning *sarchen nyima*, the 'Great Eastern Sun'. Why is it that you go first suchness and then luminosity? If you had luminosity first, then you would think it is a thing, that wisdom is a thing. What makes it wisdom is that it knows the nature of all things, which is empty. And how does emptiness manifest? It manifests as wisdom or clear light. These third turning teachings emphasize buddha nature or basic goodness, in Shambhala terms. And in order to go into Mahayana practice properly, one must take the bodhisattva vow. You have to have that motivation or else you will not discover emptiness. You will discover the selflessness of one individual, not of all phenomena.

How to enter into understanding wisdom, clear light and luminosity is taught extensively in *tantra* or *vajrayana*. In order to enter into tantra, one must have a qualified teacher, a qualified empowerment, and qualified instruction, or, they say, the path is dangerous. It is all a matter of knowing where one is at. The nine yanas are sequential and each one is valid. We may have the aspiration of vajrayana, but attain arhatship, the first yana, which would be a beautiful thing. If we are able to expand further, we can be pratyekabuddha, and further, bodhisattva. Then we have the outer and inner tantras. So we go stage by stage.

These teachings offer a tremendous depth of understanding reality and nature, and at the same time, we have the ability to do very fine and simple actions in our life, whether sweeping or washing or talking, that are opportunities to develop *gewa*, opportunities to understand.

Ground Lungta Practice Instructions

(9:00)

Concluding Comments

(11:00)

