

Tenzin Palmo seminar

April 16-18, 2019

Deer Park Institute, Bir, Himachal Pradesh

Advice of Jamgöng Kongtrul to LhawangTashi

Tuesday, April 16, session 1- 9.30 am

Schedule 6h45-7h30 9h30-10h30 and 11h-12h

2.30 3.30 and 4 to 5

This seminar was led by Tenzin Palmo for an audience of about 100 people in the Deer Park Institute, which was at the beginning a Tibetan Monastery and has been for many years under the guidance of Dzongsar Rinpoche¹ a Center for the study of Indian traditions. Bir is only 20 km from DGL nunnery, founded by Jetsunma (“la Mère Yogini) Tenzin Palmo. Dongyu Gyatsal Ling means “The Garden of the authentic lineage”. It gathers about a hundred nuns hailing for some from Tibet, but most of them from the regions at the periphery of Tibet, be it in India or Nepal. The written form doesn’t translate the general tone of Jetsunma, which conveyed a great care for the auditors, and at the same time a sense of urgency. We have in this human life in general and in this teaching in particular a window of opportunity to progress, let’s seize it, perhaps such positive circumstances won’t come back before a long time. About the non-dual, dzogchen approach which underlies many verses of the commented text here, Jetsunma insisted on the simplicity of the practice, so simple that we are most of the time unable to recognize it. In the same way, we notice objects in space but forget to notice space itself. Jetsunma had received a few months ago, in December 2018 in Singapore for a week the transmission of the Abbot of one of the biggest nunneries in Tibet, which directly concerned dzogchen. This transmission consisted in two hours every day of private interviews, and Jetsunma meditated by herself the rest of the day. This is both touching and inspiring to see that, even after 50 years as a Tibetan nun and 11 years and a half of practice in a cave, she is still open and eager to receive deep teachings from competent lamas.

¹ Author in particular of *What makes you not a Buddhist and not for happiness*. Dzongsar is also a filmmaker.

Jamgön Kongtrul and his time

I'll start by giving you some idea of the context of the life of Jamgön Kongtrul.

Born in 1830, he passed away in 1899, so he died just at the turn of the century.

Tibet at that time was divided between Central Tibet (capital Lhasa) and Western Tibet. There was a great political game between Russia, UK, and China around Tibet. As for Eastern Tibet, it was composed of different independent kingdoms, so quite different from Central and Western Tibet. There were different kings from Sakya or Kagyu tradition, unlike Central and Western Tibet who were Gelugpa.

This was the time of the 13th Dalai Lama. He was a brilliant lama, very knowledgeable and at the same time a smart politician. He launched the conquest of Eastern Tibet by the Central Tibetan Government army linked to the Gelugpa school. This elicited a reaction from the three other schools, which made a united front against the Gelugpas. The same kind of process happened in Thailand at that time, when the king Rama IV Mongkut wanted to expand the control of the central government on the many independent monasteries which were living well and freely and give them a standardized curriculum of study with exams, so that all the independent monasteries be standardized by the central government. So, there was a resistance against the incorporation of small traditions in the main stream. This is important in order to understand the context in which Jamgön Kongtrul evolved.

At that time, at the end of the 19th century, there were great, magnificent lamas, they were like flames which blaze just before being extinguished. There was an important teacher, Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, who was a *terton*, a discoverer of *terma-s*, treasures hidden by Padmasambhava and his consort Yeshe Tsogyal. His lineage is present in the monastery where we are now, the Deer Park Institute. His lineage is basically Sakya, but because he was a *terton*, he had strong links with the Nyingma. Jamgön Kongtrul was a contemporary and friend of this great lama, and wrote his biography. By the way, Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, (the second guru of Mathieu Ricard), is believed to be the “mind reincarnation” of Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo.

In this movement of Rime, there was in particular Patrul Rinpoche, whose work *Words of my Perfect Teacher*, is a classic text which is studied in all schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Patrul was connected with the Nyingmapa. Chökoling Lingpa, one of the greatest tertons of the 19th century was also Nyingma. The great lamas of this time had a series of teachers, one was certainly the “heart teacher”, but they did not hesitate to follow instructions of other good lamas. There is indeed a delicate balance : on one side, to be true to one's tradition, on the other side, not to become sectarian or partisan, which would be a very damageable thing.

In the Kagyu lineage, they had Jamgön Kongtrul. He was in Derge in East Tibet. Jamgön Kongtrul had 60 teachers, they were good friends, and they liked indeed to exchange teachings between each other. Even HH the Dalai-lama has 25 teachers whom he puts on his tree of teachers during his meditation. It's good to be rooted in a tradition, but it's also important not to become sectarian, partisan. It's just like loving one's family but recognizing the value of other families as well. Partisanship is very bad, so these lamas made great efforts to start the *Rime*

movement, especially with the Nyingma and Sakya tradition. Jamgön Kongtrul is a really important figure of this movement without sectarian bias.

Born in 1830, Jamgön Kongtrul has written 90 texts. He was active mostly in East Tibet, studied in different monasteries and was especially connected to one named Palpong. Jamgön Kongtrul would be at home here in the region of Bir and Sherab Ling. This community is the monastery of the Kagyu master Tai Situpa which includes the Palpung Institute, at 10 km to the north of Baijnath. Tai Situpa is one of the four or five “heart sons” of the 16th Karmapa. Actually, this area is home to many Rime monasteries. Through his diplomatic efforts, he managed to save Palpung monastery in East Tibet from the depredations of the army of Central Tibet during these troubled times.

Jamgön Kongtrul did the great work of saving many traditions which were about to die. In Tibet, publishing a book was an enormous work. First, it should of course be written nicely, then carved on wood blocks. Many monks were busy with that. I did myself this work of copy when I was in Lahul valley, in Tayul Gompa for 6 years and in the cave for 11 and a half years. Fortunately, during the Cultural Revolution, Tchou-En-Lai forbid the Red Army to burn the libraries conserving the wooden blocks, because he knew it was an inestimable treasure. In a library in the town of Darge, they have the largest library of wooden carved blocks extending on miles for printing books. They prepared a special edition of Kangyur (Buddha’s sutras) and Tangyur (commentaries by Nagarjuna, Asanga, etc) recognizable by its red ink and its volumes of large dimensions.

Many texts were only handwritten, even paper needed days and days of preparation to be soften, soaked, rubbed, and you had to line all the pages, because Tibetans like straight lines for their sutra, then you had to make the ink and use a kind of bamboo pen. I did all that for years, it was a strenuous task. So, even copying these texts was already a work of great devotion. Many writings at that time, the second half of the 19th century, were in danger of disappearing. Moreover, you needed the authorization and oral (?)transmission to just read and study a given book. This aural transmission, ascending from disciple to guru, went back all the way to the author of the treatise.

In this context, Jamgön Kongtrul took it upon himself to travel to the remotest places of the country and to find what texts and traditions were available over there, persuade the local lamas to give them the initiations and aural transmissions and made a compilation which he entitled *The 5 treasures*. This was distributed to a few lamas and *khyentses* (scholars) to pass them on. When a big lama gave these kinds of initiations based on some rare text, many people gathered, not so much to practice their instructions intensely, but for the blessings inherent to this kind of event. The result of Jamgön Kongtrul’s work is that these texts are conserved and available in this big compilation. Especially after the invasion of Tibet by the Communists, they would definitely have disappeared. Jamgön Kongtrul was not only a great lama himself, but a good friend of all the great lamas of his time, with whom, as we said, he used to exchange teachings. The third reincarnation of Jamgön Kongtrul, who bore the same name, was in Rumtek with the 16th Karmapa, but he died in a car accident. It was a tragedy because he was a good arbitrator

between various factions around the Karmapa. Shamar Rinpoche died also from heart attack, Gyatsab is still running the Rumtek monastery.

When the Tibetans went into exile in 1959, the monks took the compilations of Jamgön Kongtrul. In the troubled times of the second half of the 19th century, there were already disturbances due to the interferences of Chinese warlords who wanted to invade Tibet, which eventually didn't happen until the communist takeover.

As I said, Jamgön Kongtrul wrote 90 different texts of different lengths this one is the shortest. I have no idea of who was Lhawang Tashi to which the text was destined, probably a monk. I found other translations of this text of advice, which are always interesting to compare with the present one, there was one in 2008 and a more recent version which is the one you have. Now, I have no authority to give you the aural transmission because I didn't receive it, I could have asked it from Tai Situpa, but never mind, it's a short text.

*I take refuge in Padmasambhava.
O Kagyü gurus, please grant your blessings!
Please turn the minds of faithful ones towards the dharma;
May we embrace the path of liberation beyond return!*

Does anyone not know Padmasambhava? He was the father of Tibetan Buddhism in the 8th century, probably hailing from Swat Valley at the border between present-day Pakistan and Afghanistan. He was the founder of Samye (70 km south-east from Lhasa), established the Nyingma, which means "old", school, and with his consort Yeshe Tsogyal, he hid the *terma-s*, the treasures, to be rediscovered later. He had 25 main disciples who would reincarnate and retrieve these texts. Specially in the Nyingma School, there is a half of ancient texts, and the other half composed of *terma-s*. These are of two types, physical or mind treasures. One Sakya master for instance had received a mind treasure, and then compared it to the physical treasure rediscovered just after. Both texts were almost identical, so he suppressed his mind treasure asking to follow the physical treasure, estimating that it was no good to have two texts with just few differences on the same teaching.

If anyone of you is interested, 20 km south from Mandi lies Tsopema, the lotus lake of Padmasambhava: the king's daughter Mandarawa chose to be a nun and became the consort of Padmasambhava, but the king was outraged and threw his daughter in a pit. As for Padmasambhava, he put him for a whole week on a burning pyre, but at the end of this period, from the fire emerged a lake, and a lotus in the middle with at its center Padmasambhava himself in a sitting pose... All these places, although newly built, are very ancient in the Tibetan tradition. In the caves around, around 50 nuns are meditating, so it's very active place, worth visiting. Padmasambhava is the father of all the Tibetan traditions, everybody respects him, but of course especially the Nyingmapas. He was a great siddha. He has his temple in Dharamshala, of course.

*Please turn the minds of faithful ones towards the dharma;
May we embrace the path of liberation beyond return!*

Many people go to dharma talks, but are just superficially interested. But those who do have faith, are really involved, think that dharma is actually the center of their life, have like a bowl turned up to receive the rain of blessings, which indeed is always pouring. This rain is moistening the soil and it enables the seeds to grow and blossom. If we open our heart, blessings will definitely come.

May we embrace the path of liberation without return. Sometimes, in a retreat for instance, we have the impression to have gotten it, but afterwards (Tenzin Palmo makes a big grim face, laughs in the audience)... Still, there is a point of no return, from where we can only go forward, this is very important in the Buddhist tradition. In Theravada, they will call it “entering the stream”, in Zen tradition they will speak of satori. We could translate these two verses thus : “Let Guru Padam (as the Tibetans themselves call Padmasambhava) turn my mind to the teaching with faith to an irreversible point”.

Session 2 – 11h

*Atisha, the protector of the Snowland, said:
“Among many, examine your speech;
When you stay alone, examine your mind.”
Briefly he taught these two points.*

Atisha was a Bengali scholar in the 11th century, he emphasized the bodhicitta and the mind training, i.e. the *lojong* teachings. He was very instrumental in keeping the tradition, especially the tantric one, on track. He was born in Bangladesh. He insisted on bodhicitta, motivation and compassion as the driving force of Buddhist practice. His advice is very good for all of us : while in the company of others, minding our speech, but being alone, looking at the mind itself, i.e. studying also the inner speech and chatter to understand how to silence it.

*The mind is the root of faults
And the mouth is the gateway for these faults to emerge.
Thus, always watch over both.*

The mind is the root of our intentions. The mind has very good emotions, generosity, etc. but very negative ones too, connected for instance with greed, anger, frustration and depression. Underlying all that is the unknowing, the fundamental ignorance which causes us to identify to these thoughts and emotions. From the philosophical point of view, it's the root of our problems. Meditation consists in “unpeeling” the layers of the onion of false identifications. Basically, we think we would be so nice if others were not there. This is a wrong notion, the good news however is that we can change ourselves, while it's difficult to change the others. If you don't believe me on this last point, just try it and you will see by yourselves....

Speech should not be divisive, putting ones against the others, and also not being just chatter, which disperses our energy. As long as we are the slave of our mind, we go on for dramas and a lot of problems.

*All of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are your own mind;
They don't arise from anything else in the slightest.
Everything, such as joy and suffering, good and bad,
High and low, are the conceptual constructs of mind.*

This is an important point. I don't know any other tradition, even Hinduism, which put such an emphasis on the mind. Buddhism, like vedānta, explains that moment by moment, we are projecting our reality and we take it exactly like this. Things are dreams, projections, that's why HH the Dalai-lama is so interested in sciences. For instance, neuroscientists say that what we perceive is a very rough image of reality, mostly fabricated. What we perceive is not what we believe to perceive. Only a small percentage of it comes from the "real reality". We perceive just a basic shape, and immediately interprets it as a dog, with its race, and our opinion or prejudice on this race of dogs. All that has not much to do with the given shape we just perceived. We don't see things as they really are, we see them as we continuously fabricate them with our consciousness. As humanity, we have a karma which right from the beginning created our brain and sense organs as they are. With dogs, they don't see colors as we do, moreover they rather live in a world of smells. Each animal has its own world which it creates for itself, and this is no less real than our self-created world.

We think that *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* are outside ourselves, but they are inside, when we see *saṃsāra* with pure view, it becomes *nirvāṇa*, only our consciousness shifts and changes, not the outer world. Moreover, we think that subject and object are separated, but in fact they are interconnected. Practice leads to what is called naked awareness, without these usual moment to moment projections.

*Everything, such as joy and suffering, good and bad,
High and low, are the conceptual constructs of mind.*

We can already understand this at a very simple level. Even the appreciation of art, music, food depends on the subject, it ranges from lovely to horrible. Fashion is changing, that which was beautiful 20 years ago looks ugly now. We project quality on objects and persons which are not intrinsically there, it's all our projections. We ourselves are the source of our judgements and opinions, so we shouldn't believe everything that we think, just believing something doesn't make it true. We should rather say : "Well, it's interesting, let's see". The teachings come from great enlightened beings who have certainly seen something, we shouldn't say yes or no, we should say : "let's see".

*If your mind is pure, you are buddha:
Wherever you reside is a pure realm;
Whatever you do is from the state of the dharmatā;
Whatever appears is the jewel display of (primordial) wisdom.*

The other translation says : If your mind is purified, whatever you do is done in a state of reality.

If our mind is in a state of primordial purity, of pure awareness, we are Buddha, everything appears as perfect because we have a pure perception.

Once I visited in Tibet a nunnery of 350 nuns who never lie down to sleep, they live in a very small space. Some of the very old nuns were there before the Cultural Revolution and came back to found again the monastery. The assistant of one of these old nuns swept the floor one day, saying it was dirty, but for the old nun, it wasn't so, she said she saw it just as the pure field of Tchenrezy. When you meet great practitioners, you see they perceive their Buddha nature and its beauty everywhere, it gives them a capacity for much love. They don't have preferences. They see we are all messed up, but so, what? Behind all this, they see our potential for awakening.

If we have a negative attitude, everything is difficult, if we have a pure vision, everything is perfect. One day, Ananda asked the Buddha : "All the other Buddhas have very beautiful pure lands, but I think yours is funky. The Buddha answered : "My land is pure too, it is your mind which is funky!" With a pure mind, even in animals, we see their innate awakening potential. In this state, spontaneity is the center, and everything is made beautifully, but without a sense of design from some "I". When I remember my guru, even his drinking a cup of tea had so much meaning, so, it was different from that of an ordinary person, for whom it's meaningless.

*Whatever you do is from the state of the dharmatā;
Whatever appears is the jewel display of wisdom.*

There is no sense of prior intention in it, it's just spontaneously manifested and pure. People realize that there is a deep meaning in simple actions of the great masters. Just watching these actions is fascinating, because they are directly expressing their true nature.

*If your mind is of an impure nature,
You'll see faults even in the buddhas,
You'll get angry even at your parents,
Most things will appear as if they were your enemies.*

For example, when we are irritated, with angry feelings, even against great masters, we are criticizing them. In Asia, they respect the parents most, but in this case, we also criticize them. It's like colored glasses, if it's dark, we see everything dark and negative. We think that we are logical, but we put everything down because we are too critical, we create a lot of sufferings for ourselves and others. So, everything is tainted by our mind. Then, the important thing is first our mind, we have to train it, to transform it from negative to positive and to help it transcend the opposites, not become a slave of our ego-mind, which is a good servant but a very bad master. Mastering the mind is not the end, but a very good beginning.

*Expectation, fear, attachment, and anger will continue unabated.
Such useless things will waste your life away.
Whomever you associate with, there will be discord
And wherever you stay, it will be uncomfortable.*

Our mind is mostly dominated by expectations and fear. Many people live their whole life in anxiety, are afraid of things which probably will never happen. It's all speculation, it's not real. So, transcending our hopes and fears of whatever happens, let us accept it and transform it. If we

think like that, it's a win-win situation. Beyond that is the recognition that we are in *samsāra*, and the Buddha never said that *samsāra* is not enjoyable as such, but *samsāra* and *nirvāna* are in our mind. When we have the samsaric mind, i.e. when it's connected with the ego and its obsessions, we're definitely going to suffer.

Thinking is not the problem; the problem is when we resent what happens. When I was in the cave, the first year, it didn't snow, but in April-May it snowed a lot, still the snow near the ground was not frozen, it was melting. So, everywhere in the place, it was dripping and I had to change the location of my meditation box to be less exposed to dripping. Moreover, I had a cold and flu and was feeling very sorry for myself sitting in my box, but suddenly I thought : "Did not the Buddha said something about *dukkha*?". "Ok, I don't feel well, but *samsāra* is *dukkha*". When I thought that actually it was ok not to be ok, it represented an immense relief, accepting things as they are. The problem is with our resistances, but when you accept *dukkha* without resisting it, it decreases a lot. There are two types of *dukkha*, the physical one which is inevitable, and the mental one which we can do something about. If we do not resent the physical *dukkha*, if we accept it, there is no more problem. It's hard to explain this enormous relief that I felt at that time, just by realizing that *dukkha* as such was ok. We don't have to entertain the feeling that if everything is not ok and comfortable, we are in a state of failure. This insight helps us immediately to go beyond hope and fears.

The impure nature of the mind manifests in attraction and aversion. Everything we perceive induces a momentary impulse of attraction or aversion. This is a scientific fact, and this is also described in the *Abhidharma* (the part of Buddhist canonical texts which details the psychology). If we observe this basic impulse, it fades away, if we don't, we are caught in a chain of reactions, like addiction or anger, and this, automatically. So, we should be more conscious about it, to become aware of this underlying functioning of the mind, centered on the false idea of a solid ego – as a spider in the center of its web. This is the fundamental delusion according to Buddhism. This anger, greed will continue unabated, and it will provoke a great waste of energy. It's what we do most of us now, even people who think they are renouncers. With this kind of discriminative-divisive mind, we will perpetually be in discord with people who don't agree with us. This is a very serious matter, so let's watch the mind and go beyond the pleasant and unpleasant. Usually people work so hard, but for what? To get the pleasant and move away from the unpleasant. Nonetheless, whatever we gain in such a way, we won't be able to take with us at the time of the great departure, what we will take with us is just our consciousness and our karma.

Now it's the time for lunch and so, let's be mindful of our attraction or aversion against food, and of the gratitude towards the farmers who grew this food. They have a hard life, and thanks to them and also to the cooks, and the earth and sun which all contributed to our food, we can be nourished: this is such a complicated and intricated system which makes our food possible. So, let's integrate this truth and be able to thank for what we receive. The workers here act with joy and dedication for the dharma, they are real bodhisattvas.

Session 3- 16-04 at 2.30

All these negative emotions, greed anger, depression influence everything, even things which seem to be good. The Buddha said that the greed is like salty water, the more we drink of it, the more we feel thirsty. We live in a luxury superior even to that of the emperor of China : when you visit the forbidden city, you can for instance see their wooden chairs, which were quite uncomfortable, without speaking of the sanitary... Here also, India has changed, the past simplicity is largely gone, when people were contented with two cows and a little rice, lentils, consumerism is growing with its underlying unsatisfaction and long-term frustration.

*Being distracted again and again by the appearances of this life,
Even if you think about practicing dharma
You'll waste your life caught up in present activities.*

Our daily life is like a mill, it never stops, the “water” of things to do never ceases. After helping the children, we feel obliged to care for the grand-children, etc. We should practice now, but not relying only on the formal practice : it's also very important to integrate it to the daily life. It's so easy to be distracted. The main problem is distraction. Don't be scattered, don't get lost. During our day, during our life, don't get lost, keep aware, keep present. One time, a family of neighbors came to see me and very seriously told me: “We've decided to do a *ngöndro* (preliminary practices); they went for a regular transmission of this practice to Khamtrul Rimpoche. They had understood this very important point : outer distractions are not going to finish until we say this is enough. Patrul Rimpoche tells of a mad yogi who went to the Jokhang in Lhasa. There is a famous statue of Buddha as a child which was brought from China by a Chinese princess who married the king of Tibet in the 7th century. The yogi went inside the temple, looked at the statue and said to it : “Ok, we started at the same time, but you became a Buddha and me not. Why? Because I was lazy, while you made efforts!” And on this point, let's be careful : outer busyness is considered as a form of laziness. Being distracted, this is the problem. It may even look very good, we may be distracted by dharma things too, but even in this case, we don't do what we have to do.

*Being distracted again and again by the appearances of this life,
Even if you think about practicing dharma
You'll waste your life caught up in present activities.*

*At first, when you feel a sense of renunciation
You'll feel like you could be rid of each and everything you own;
Once you become intractable, rigid, you'll cling even to needles.*

At the beginning, it's all very good, but after a long time, renunciation is gone, attachment develops – even to a needle. Moreover, psychological rigidity can contaminate renunciation itself, one can cling to the idea of not-clinging, we should not be caught up into the idea of renunciation. This comes very easily to people, because the mind likes to cling. If not careful, we can become attached to the idea of detachment. So, we have to be vigilant, otherwise we'll end up grasping everything, even small things. Things in themselves are innocent, they are nothing; the problem is this grasping which is in the mind. There is a well-known story of ancient India, which I tell you because it's quite related to our topic, showing that an emperor of everything

may inwardly be a renunciant, but a monk may be attached. This emperor had a palace in the city and the guru had only a begging bowl. They were studying in a pleasure-garden near to the city. Suddenly, a servant came running and saying : “The palace is in flames”. The emperor said : “Don’t disturb me! Don’t you see that I’m following a teaching?” But on his side, the guru exclaimed :” So bad, I have left my wooden bowl in the palace!”. So, mind is important, it’s the receptacle of either renunciation or attachment. What counts is not outer appearance, but inner attitude.

*At first, when you feel a sense of devotion
You won’t think of anyone except your guru.
After a while, you’ll have wrong views.*

If you have a teacher, a genuine one, it may be good *not* to be too much around him, because we’ll start having doubts if we are too close to him. You will criticize him for preferring coffee to tea and so make discriminations. If our mind is impure, we will doubt everything, including our teacher and the Buddha himself. On the contrary, if our mind is clear, everything will be clear. This is, again, like spectacles which color our perception. At the beginning, the teacher is idealized, but afterwards we find faults even with a genuine teacher, not realizing that the problem is with us, not with him. So, let’s purify our mind.

*At first, when you feel a sense of faith
Your spiritual practices will pile up one on top of the other;
As you get older, all of this fades away.*

This is a real problem : at the beginning, enthusiastic beginners run from course to course, take all kind of vows, they are like a vase which can never be filled. But afterwards, even if you ask them for a simple dharma service, they just disappear. I saw the difference for myself, in my cave, I was really into it, copying texts, painting Buddhas, etc. but in the nunnery, there has been some regression, the flame is less there. Beyond the question of faith, the real key for the success in the dharma practice is to really enjoy it. The enthusiasm of the beginning is good, but it’s very important to maintain it and to find practices which speak to our heart. Of course, sometimes it may become difficult or boring, but we should really connect with the heart to the practice, we should *become* the practice. If you feel inclined to music, it’s important to find the instrument which really speaks to you in order to express your talent. In the dharma, it’s the same, there are many practices, you should find the one which speaks to you. Then, like a seed growing, all your potentialities will actualize, but we need the favorable conditions, i.e. finding the practice which really speaks to our whole being, which we can really rely on, and it’s very important to become the practice. Otherwise, if we don’t, we will be quickly tired-distracted. A musician who devotes himself deeply needs between 30 and 60000 hours of practice to become really professional. Enthusiasm for the practice should really grow in time, not diminish.

*Whenever you find a new friend
You value their life more than your own.
Once your enthusiasm fades away,
You’ll be upset with them as if they were your enemy.*

This happens many times, especially in marriage. We need somebody and so, we put unrealistic expectations on the other, while the problem is not that person, but our mind and our unrealistic expectations. We should not fabricate an unrealistic idea of the person, to which we cling and grasp and for which we have greed and attachment, this would enclose that person in an ideal into which he cannot fit. See how people who lived 30 or 40 years together become mean to each other at the time of divorce : because they got disillusioned. This is not because of the other, but because of our impure perception which creates attachment and then enmity. We create so many problems for so many people, and it's because of our negative emotions. This doesn't mean we should be exploited, but we should see the situations with clarity. Difficult relationships are due to a backlog of bad karma, so we should be very careful and terminate them properly so that we do not have to come back in another life to finish it. So, our engagement works like soda, at the beginning very bubbly and then, flat... Let's see, with clarity, things as they really are, so that we can appreciate them more and more.

*The root of all of these
Is not taking your own mind to be paramount.*

Always, when things become wrong, we tend to blame others, but the right attitude is “change your mind, change the world”, at least the world we experience. So, the central thing is our mind. This is what meditation is all about. We are not looking for something out there, we should recognize our mind, ceasing to be swept away by our emotions and our endless inner chatting of thoughts. We are regularly looking at something outside, even at our sensations, but let us look at our mind itself. Who is thinking? If we say “I am thinking”, so understand who is this “I” and if it does exist at all. Become more and more aware of the deep levels of the mind. Actually, we don't know who we are. We associate to all kind of things which are quite ephemeral, not keeping for one second. On the other extreme, we believe in an unchanging I, as a spider at the center of its web, but this is an unexamined idea. So, what we need is to look in the mind itself and actually penetrate it. It's not that difficult. This quality of knowing what is happening is what is important. There is an inner silence of the mind, beyond chatter, we should begin to uncover it, and a shift in consciousness will happen.

The root of all of this is not taking your own mind to be paramount.

Chitta, the mind is the computer, but not the engineer of the computer. The center of the being is in the heart, not in the brain, as is expressed in the spontaneous gesture : “Me?” with a hand on the chest, when someone is asking you a question. Don't try to make the brain cleverer, it's already enough so, but we should liberate the potential of our true nature in the heart, which is at present covered by the ego. The Unconditioned, the Unborn, *nirvāna*, is called in Mahayana, dharmakaya, but these are just names, labels on space, they don't point to anything. This *nirvāna* is beyond concept, but it can be known, mind is the center of everything. As long as we have not come to the center, everything will be distraction as well as pollution.

Session 4 - 4.00 : Questions and answers

Q : How to choose a good practice?

TP : Practice is like marriage or food. At the beginning, it may be difficult to swallow, but with time we start not only to love it, but even to find it healthy...like Korean food, with all their *kimchi* and pickles. At the beginning, we find it rather strange, but afterwards, we learn to appreciate it. Still, there should be a sense of recognition, of familiarity with a given practice. There is no real ready-made answer to this question. However, we should feel after some time a real connection. All practices should help to link us to the real nature of the mind. If they do so, they are good. In the Sakya tradition, they have a section on *tumo*, with 16 methods, which are from simple to complicated : the advice is to choose the one which works for you, but don't keep digging a lot of holes. If you do so in the desert to find water, you will just scatter your energy, every time approaching some humid layer, but not the real water.

Q : What is pure perception of naked awareness? Is it possible to experience it?

TP : Of course, this pure perception is possible. This naked awareness is just this, naked, but it's the opposite of being numb, this is complete awareness, like space, intangible but all-pervading. All the objects here in this hall have the possibility to exist due to space. We are all interconnected, trees produce this oxygen we consume, and we give back carbon dioxide which is food for the plants. Quantum physics speak of this interconnectivity too. Naked awareness is like space, empty, but space is not knowing, while awareness is. *Rigpa* is pure awareness (sanskrit *vidya*), usually, it's dualistic, but here, this comes without dualism, naked means not clothed by our concepts, i.e. a complete open clarity. There is the same difference between dream consciousness and ordinary awakened consciousness and this one and the supreme awakening consciousness. As long as we don't recognize the real nature of our mind, we are in *samsāra*, and as soon as we recognize it, this is *nirvāna*. Usually, this recognition is very quick, like seeing even once the sky without the clouds. Our emotions, beliefs, thoughts, feelings are clouds. After seeing once the sky, even for a short moment, we know it exists.

My lama said once we have recognized the real nature of the mind, then only can we start to meditate. We do it then in order to stabilize this breakthrough, this "entry in the stream," as they say in Theravada, or this *satori* as they say in Zen. What is required of the lama is that he points out the nature of the mind. It's so subtle in a way, it's well beyond *nyam*, which are just good experiences, like rainbows, marvelous sounds, etc. Realization is difficult to see because we keep noticing things in space but not space itself. The real masters are not zombies, they are not just spaced out, they have great compassion, they see our incredible potential. Of course, we are all messed up, but then, what? When the first great lamas came from Tibet, they did not know anything outside of Tibetan culture, but the meeting with foreigners came beyond language, and people knew that with them, it was the genuine thing, it was true. At the beginning, there were no books, but Westerners still started practicing as they could.

Can I have awareness without the concept of it?

Some teachers advise not to read much on *Mahāmudra*, in order not to be obscured by concepts. I met quite a few people who had very deep experiences out of the blue, it then messed up all their belief system and finally they searched for support, and often they came to India for this purpose. Sometimes I think I should shut up. The problem of these books is that they are all about concepts, giving the idea that all this is something very far, while it's very near. It's so

simple that we could miss it. It's like space, we don't notice it, it's there all time except that we don't see it. We are not aware that we are aware, not conscious that we are conscious. But once we recognize that which is always here with us, we realize it.

Q : Path of devotion or path of knowledge, which is the best?

These are complementary. Of course, there are differences of approach, but the great masters were great scholars as well as great practitioners. Especially as a foreigner, it's important to have philosophical understanding. The problem of devotion, as they have in many Buddhist countries, is that certainly you have great devotion, but you don't know to what. It makes you vulnerable. For this reason, people start studying dharma and develop an immense gratitude towards it, because they are able to check that it does work. Thus, they avoid blind faith and fanaticism. It gives a faith based on something stable. The great scholars were not at all dry, they had tremendous devotion and a heart full of compassion and love.

Q : If everything is an illusion, why am I here?

TP : World is like an illusion, but it has truth at its level; relatively speaking, it exists. If a stone falls on someone, it will really hurt him. We see in quantum physics that a bone which seems so solid can be reduced to molecules, atoms, subatomic particles and finally vibrations which are beyond our understanding. This is why yogis can put their imprints on rocks : a lama was known for being able to leave its footprints onto a rock. He could do this because he recognized the different levels of reality, he was not trapped in conceptual frames; we are imprisoned by our conceptual thinking mind, we have to go out of this jail.

Q : I would like to understand the functions of the heart versus the mind.

TP : In fact, in the tradition, they don't separate the two. *Chitta* is not just an intellectual aspiration it's much deeper. It has to deepen beyond our mind, because it's dualistic by nature and we need to go to a level of consciousness which is not dualistic. In *tugdram*, when the heart is still warm for weeks after brain died, people go to the level of more and more subtle consciousness; although the person is brain dead, there is a subtle presence which still permeates the heart chakra, the body doesn't decompose, it becomes on the contrary more beautiful. When the 16th Karmapa died in a hospital in the West, they said that the body didn't decay and stayed flexible for three weeks. To put it briefly, the source of our mind seems to be in the heart.

Q : How to break bad habits?

TP : By being aware of them. Like in Harry Potter, the author says that we have always two choices, one which is good and one which is easy. This is a great teaching! All the habits come from our mind, so when we start to recognize it, it starts changing. We don't have to carry all our package with us, we can drop it.

Q : How to bear verbal abuse?

TP : If people are able to understand, we can explain to them, but if not, explaining will aggravate things by making them angrier. Often, it doesn't help and unfortunately creates more problems. But still, here too, the main point is our mind. It's important not to be abusive back and to yield to the ordinary human weaknesses. As a Rinpoche said, there is Buddhism, but there are also the Buddhists...In these matters, let's be very cautious.

Q : When we are seeing things as they really are...

TP : Let's stop it right from the beginning! Better not to have the concept that we see things as they really are... This is why the Buddha rarely described the *nirvāna* in the early sutras. In this sense too, an Orthodox priest told that when he started his seminary, one of the first teachings was that anything that you can say on God is not God. It's putting labels on space. Still we can feel we approach reality when there is something clear, lucid, knowing, not just empty and elusive.

Prayers of dedication : for those here who are new to Mahayana Buddhism, it's traditional to dedicate the good actions like these meditation seminars as we do now, to others. Actually, we collect a cup of merit with these practices. If we drink it, it will be finished, but if we pour it in the ocean, it will never be finished. It goes to the whole sentient being, including to animals, insects and these invisible beings who are also many.

Wednesday 17 April

Session 1-9.30

Yesterday, Jamgön Kongtrul explained that a negative mind was the root of many problems. The discouragement doesn't come from outside, but from our mind. So, the crux of the matter is to take care of our mind. A bad mind is like putting some pollution in pure milk, it will turn sour. Be aware of what's going inside.

*The root of all of these
Is not taking your own mind to be paramount.*

If we are aware that our mind is the problem, we care for transforming ourselves, this is the only viable way. In this manner, we are more in a position to transform others. Many masters just stay where they are, people come to visit them, are touched and transformed.

*If you are able to make use of your mind
Then you don't need to search for some other place of retreat;
When concepts are absent, that is your retreat.*

Alternative translation : *once you are able to make your mind serve you, you don't need to go to places of seclusion. A mind free of thoughts is a retreat in itself.* Our problem is that our mind isn't our servant, but the reverse, it's our master. The egoic mind is a good servant but a terrible master. People go in retreat hopefully to become the master of their mind. Once it's done, we don't need to go into long retreats, although we may do it, because there is an awareness

connected to a sort of inner silence. Then, we can think, plan, do anything we need with our mind, but as a tool, a servant, and it will become much clearer and more creative. This is very important, understanding why we go into solitude : not to recite zillions and zillions of mantras, or revel in bliss, but to train the mind. Afterwards, even when we are talking and chattering, the mind remains clear. We are in charge, at this level, we don't need that much of retreat, although we may still go for it. Retreat or not retreat, the mind is the same, it doesn't change, it's still clear, luminous and open.

What happens is that usually, when we start a period of solitude, the mind seems more chaotic than ever, but we develop our capacity to step back and look at the mind as if from outside. It's like being under CCTV. Then, the mind starts by itself to realize the stupidity of its own functioning, and naturally it corrects itself. When awareness increases, mind speed becomes slower. According to Buddhist psychology, thought moments are coming fast, but still, we can have only one thought at a time. So, when moments of awareness take the place of moments of distractions, naturally the mind slows down, we are more conscious of negative emotions and stop feeding them, as we do usually. If we see their initial arising, they don't get chances to take strength and they subside naturally. The mind becomes quieter and our awareness itself is silent, so naturally our inner world becomes orderly and there is enough time for deeper inspirations to arise. Mental activity is usually an endless repeat of stupid things, our mind is not usually creative, unless we give it enough space.

In America in the 19th century, there was an affluent middle-upper-class group of people, who went to Europe to collect art objects. One of them, who was also a philosopher, visited the great artists of this time, including Rodin, etc. and recorded what they said about their creativity. They all agreed on the fact that when the usual ego-mind was in charge, the work was repetitive, but when it relaxed, the genius could come out and was indeed recognized by others. This is how it is for all of us, when the small self loosens its grip, the higher faculties of our psyche can manifest. Now, Jamgön Kongtrul goes even to say:

*You don't need to search outside for the guru;
The nature of mind is the enlightened guru.*

Mind itself is the teacher, is the Buddha. In the beginning, for any skill we want to learn, it's much preferable to have a teacher, be it in the field of any art, or sports, etc. It helps us to save time, to avoid taking bad habits and to get good ones. In mahamudra-dzogchen tradition, the main use of the guru is to point out the real nature of our mind. At a certain point, when we understand the practice, we just have to go away and exercise. Milarepa did not stay that much with Marpa. I didn't stay more than six years with my Guru, after this period, he didn't tell me to come to Tashi Jong when the community shifted there, but sent me for intensive practice to Lahul.

When I was asking Rinpoche what should I do, his answer was "What do you *want* to do?" So, I proposed something, and he approved or disapproved, but I had to think by myself. If a guru keeps a disciple near him years after years, this is suspicious. Guru Yoga in vajrayana is all about accepting that the guru is the true nature of the mind. The light of Guru nature is not different from ours, it comes in our heart and dissolves there as water in water, as they say traditionally. If

we have authentic devotion in the tantric path, it helps to find the real nature of the mind, there are no more divisions between outer and inner guru. The nature of the mind is not dual, when we recognize it, we also recognize that the guru and I are intrinsically one. It's important to realize that the guru is not the body, the personality with its physical manifestation. This is not the true refuge, the true refuge is the lama who has recognized the real nature of the mind and can point it out to us, this has nothing to do with personality and charisma, although he may use them to attract us at the beginning. This is why we visualize the guru in idealized form, Vajradhara, etc. Guru manifests Buddha's qualities, we can hook on them and thus be lifted. The guru pulls us up. The real guru is unborn and deathless, and we meditate on him as identical to the nature of the mind.

At a time, I didn't see my Guru for seven years, because he was in Bhutan and I was in Lahul. When I met him again, I told him as a matter of fact : "It's a long time we didn't see each other". He answered : "Did you not realize that we weren't separate even for a moment?"

*You don't need to worry about other spiritual practices to be done,
Being without distraction is the heart of spiritual practice.
You don't need to deliberately abandon distractions,
If your mindfulness is firm, things are spontaneously liberated.*

Basically, it says exactly that. Of course, we can do many practices, sometimes very complex visualizations. For example, in our tradition, after months of practices, we visualize thousands of deities in the body, we become full to the brim with them. Still, my dharma sisters received as an advice from the Khamtrul not to care for this complexity, just to relax and to feel, but as to me, he asked me to do these visualizations very precisely. Indeed, by trying to do this, we fill the mind instead of emptying it, and it's no more distracted. This represents another type of mindfulness. But the essence of all practices, either by single-pointedness or extraordinary complex visualizations, remains non-distraction.

I visited an old yogi in Dalhousie who had written on the walls of his room : "No distraction, no meditation". When we came to Lahul, we wrote only with friends "no distraction", the non-meditation was certainly there and needed, because meditation may make us artificial, but what was for us most necessary was the non-distraction. We should aim at awareness without distraction. The ability to observe is the first step, but as it goes, it becomes also the goal. All the other practices may be there to enhance the mind, decorate it and make it beautiful, but the essence remains, "no distraction". I met a great lama who did only dzogchen, not any (tantric) visualizations. Tantra empowers the mind, but not necessarily liberates it. This is why in India Tantra is very suspect. How this empowerment plays, will it be for compassion and the revelation of Buddha nature, or for ego? This is also all the ambivalence of magics. The incredibly good fortune of Tibet was to have been guided by masters who insisted on the purity of motivation, of our bodhicitta. Do we practice to feed the ego, or to discover our Buddha nature and to help others? A powerful mind can help many people, but can destroy many things too. Quite a few great lamas did multiple tantric practices, but this was to enhance their realization of the nature of the mind and their compassion, not their ego. This ego can develop a charisma, but it's very different from realization. Don't get caught up and trapped by the charisma of some teachers, it's not the point at all. The main point is non-distraction. This is why Jamgön Kongtrul

quoted Atisha in the beginning of this text: “In a crowd, watch your speech, in solitude, watch your mind”.

You don't have to worry that much about the differences between practices, their essence is non-distraction. The corollary is that if we do all these practices with a distracted mind, they remain useless, but if they are accomplished with a non-distracted mind, you go to the aim very quickly. It's not a question of quantity, but of quality, i.e. non-distraction. Even in the *ngöndro*, the *Kagyü* preliminary practices, it's said that the numbers of one lakh (100000 repetitions of mantras, visualizations or prostrations) is not a magical number. The main point is that they should be done well, without distraction. The question among retreatants is often: “How many *ngöndro*-s did you accomplish?” Commentators say that you are supposed to keep going until you get the signs, for instance *recurring* dreams of vomiting, taking showers, drinking milk, all these signs being linked with the process of purification stirring inside, Then, we feel something is good. Offering of mandalas, on its side, makes you very light. The first *ngöndro* I did was condensed in a week, I was distracted, but still I felt at the end that I could fly, I had to guard myself not to jump here and there. Only afterward did I read that this was a sign of the effectiveness of the practice of mandala offerings. So, these practices have their own power anyhow, but much more if done one-pointedly. When we are one with the practice, then it's very quick because we are reaching deep layers and resources of the mind. When we are immersed in the practice, everything merges together, body, speech and mind, and then we progress rapidly.

Session 2 - 17-4 at 11 am

*You don't need to deliberately abandon distractions,
If your mindfulness is firm, things are spontaneously liberated.*

Again, this is pointing out the importance of unwavering mindfulness and awareness. If it's very stable, we don't need to be disturbed. Without pushing the simile too far, it's like a rock in the midst of turbulent waters, it doesn't move. We are spontaneous free if we maintain our centeredness. If we see all the thoughts or feelings which arise just as thoughts and feelings, as empty, this is all we have to do, it's not complicated. We don't have to try to overcome afflictive emotions, we are aware, and they dissolve of themselves, we don't have to apply antidote. This is a very important point, do you understand it? The solution of all our inner problems is awareness, this non-judgmental capacity of knowing. There is no more danger. Why do we try to overcome distractions? Not to be carried away. But once our awareness is stable, everything will come in order. So, this is why Jamgön Kongtrul says that once awareness is firmly established, you can go anywhere, you won't be distracted, this is the crucial point.

He also says that you don't have to worry about the *kleshas*. Why? Because you are able to recognize their primordial nature. Thus, we are not carried away or creating more of the same about them, putting oil on the fire, as we often do. If we just stare nakedly at them, this is all. Usually, we start feeding the negativities, justifying them, or complaining about them and thus perpetuating them. But if we are just staring, looking straight at them (in the dzogchen tradition, we don't need to name and label them), we see clearly that they are not solid, they are just bubbles which may appear very bright and colorful, but then just explode, because they were empty. In the tantra, our negative emotions are fundamentally the reverse, the flipside of very

profound insights and energy of wisdom. They say that the heavier afflictions we have, the greater the wisdom. It doesn't mean that we should vent our emotions in all directions, but that if we are in control, it's better to be a tiger than a rabbit. If these emotions are recognized at the moment of arising, it automatically transforms in a powerful energy of wisdom. This is why these negative emotions have their flipside, like a coin, which is wisdom. Because of the non-distracted awareness, we are able to look at them nakedly, and they will transform into a very powerful energy. If we are skillful and cultivate the mind properly, these things which were obstacles become a big help, they will lead us to the end of the game. But again, it doesn't mean that we should vent our negative emotions, but rather that we should cultivate the awareness. We start by the awareness of the breath. However, the point is not the breath, but to direct the awareness, either onto the sensations as in Goenka's system or onto the mind itself in in *Dzogchen*. Afterwards, we can drop the object and then just to be aware to be aware. This quality of right meditation is quite "non-sticky". Whatever we experience through the sense- and mind-doors doesn't stick, it comes in and out again, without grasping from our part, just observing. Behind this all is the knowing quality, very clear, very powerful. When we see clearly and are not caught up in our usual chatter, mind has more space inside, this is why bodhisattvas are smiling, seeing with their inner eye that sentient beings are suffering so much because they don't understand their mind. The great masters who developed this ability to be totally present are also full of unconditioned compassion. They don't practice just a cold type of observing. So, Jamgön Kongtrul says you don't need to fear *kleshas*, recognizing the primordial knowing in them is enough. The basic practice is so simple that we often imagine it should be something else, more complicated.

*Except for this momentary mind of yours,
Saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are not established as anything else.
Please always watch over the mind!*

We are tempted to think that if outer circumstances would change, everything would be ok. But everything is inside, when ego is in charge, this is *saṃsāra*, when ego dissolves, this is *nirvāṇa*. Awareness is innate, if it was not there, you couldn't even see and recognize me. So, we just have to recognize the presence of this knowing, which has always been there. Likewise, a fish in water doesn't recognize water because it's too much immersed in it.

*Unless the mind is tamed within,
Outer enemies will be inexhaustible.
If you tame the anger within,
All enemies on earth will be pacified.*

Jamgön Kongtrul is again pointing out that the problem is not out there, but in our mind. Even the worst enemy will become a big help, should we tame our mind. So, this is good news, inasmuch as we can do something about our mind, while it remains difficult to act on billions of people outside. There will always be something wrong out in the world, others commenting against us, etc. We don't have to be upset by the outside, change is up to us. If you have a tight drum, even a small beating will produce a big sound, and conversely, if our ego is relaxed, even big blows won't disturb us, we will just laugh about it. When there is something terrible happening to people, they may react in a terrible way, or else come out of it with a total

acceptance and fortitude. So again, here, the difference comes not from the outside, but from the mind and its qualities, patience, perseverance, clarity and, in particular, its sense of humor. A lot of problems come from the fact that we are taking things too seriously. If we have pure awareness, all that happens is well (thunder is suddenly heard far away in the sky and Tenzin Palmo adds immediately “The dragon is agreeing!” People laugh). If the mind is tamed, everything slips and glides on it, as if there were oil on its surface, it doesn’t stick. There is this famous simile of Shantideva about wearing shoes because we cannot change the world and earth is full of thorns.

All the above was about anger, now let’s us deal with greed :

*If contentment does not arise within your mind
Even if you have everything you could ever want, you’ll be like a beggar.
Those who are content and rid of clinging
Are always rich even without possessions.*

Again, it’s so true. In our society, both in the West and India, contentment is no longer a virtue, advertising exists just to push us to buy things we don’t need. We buy to help people to sell their productions. Let’s recall the word of the Buddha about this : “Desire is like salted water, the more you drink of it, the more you feel thirsty!”

The antidote of the greed and the sense of frustration it elicits, is to cultivate contentment and gratitude for what we have. We are already so rich. Some people out there in India have so little, and however they are content, but others have so much; possessions, relationships, events, pleasures, but still they have a black hole inside of wanting ever more. It will never be filled, just because it’s a black hole. People don’t understand that outer possessions and outer relationships can never give us stable inner happiness. This is why Buddha said that the source of our *dukkha*, frustration, was our sense of grasping, holding on, and thus feeding our sense of inner desperation, based on unquenchable hunger. This is why we are killing the planet, our own home, without having anywhere else to go. Greed, greed, always more! This is so sad. Cultivating qualities brings an inner sense of satisfaction. Contentment is simple: we have already enough, why should we need more?

A person born in a very affluent family said to me that the good teaching she got from this karma was that money was not giving happiness : actually, the ones who wanted always more among his relatives were all alcoholic, the only ones to be happy were the one who were giving to charities, etc, and eventually busy to get rid of their wealth. All this is not about external possessions, but about our relationship to these possessions. Poor people can be very frustrated and unhappy, or contented and happy. I remember that I was very happy in the cave, this is why I stayed so long. From outside, it was very austere. But it was ideal for practice : six month of snow, not a single visit in perspective, it was just fantastic! I visited my mother every ten years. At that period she was employed in a very rich family in a posh area of London. Externally everything was very nice, environment, food, apartments. But still, I was expecting the date of my way back to India. Normally, I should have been equal, but I wasn’t, basically I was bored, conversations were superficial, watching TV was junk... Whatever it may be, although it’s possible to plan changes in the long run, still, the best place for us is the one where we are.

*Those who are content and rid of clinging
Are always rich even without possessions.*

This comes to the same point.

*When you accomplish wholesome worldly activities
As well as dharma and virtues,
Habitual tendencies arouse mental joy;
This causes you to take birth in the higher realms.*

This concerns the mundane virtuous conduct. In our dharma activities, if we have worldly attitude about *punya*, merits, good karma, social work, helping dharma centers, being kind, generous, patient people, we should not put it down, this is all very good...but the result will be only at the best in higher realms. In the higher realms, there is very good atmosphere where everything is OK. Still, these 26 higher realms, everyone subtler than the other, like angels' realms, remain within *samsāra*. Even when it seems that time is very long, when it's finished, we have to come back again. It's very pleasant, but impermanent, of itself it's not able to solve the problem. What we need in addition to this is the essential view.

An alternative translation is : “The imprint of these actions leads to higher realms. But one should look at the empty nature of this joy”. This is the crucial point. If this bliss is not combined with wisdom, with insight into the real nature of existence, it's not liberating. In a way, it's good not only to regret our downfalls, but to rejoice in our goodness. So, the point in addition is to look in the essence of joyous blissful feelings as empty. The utility of bliss is that it creates a more subtle level of awareness, and if we observe its emptiness, the combination of the two will give liberation. We need absolutely not to be lost into it, but to sharpen our awareness to look straight in the very nature of bliss as empty, this will free ourselves. It works also with intense negative feelings like fears. When we recognize that they are not solid, that they are empty, this is liberating.

17-4 Session 3- 2.30 pm

*Suffering arises from unwholesome
Spiritual and worldly activities.*

*If you follow after thoughts and afflictions
Such as hatred, anger, and desire,
It will cause you to take birth in the three lower realms.
To be born in any of them brings about unimaginable torment.*

If we engage in unwholesome spiritual or worldly activities, we go down. Actually, where we find ourselves in the future depends of the underlying intention of our actions of body, speech and mind. The reason motivating these actions is what counts. Even apparently virtuous activities, if made with impure motivations, will take us downward. On this very practical level, we have to be very careful. People in spiritual communities have the same problems of anger and greed as in the worldly groups. When you remove the surface skin, you see what is down below.

The lower realms, demons, animals and *pretas* not only give sufferings to individuals, but the beings who inhabit them are too busy with this very suffering to have the time to produce good karma and eventually go up, so it's a kind of vicious circle.

*Whatever afflictions or sufferings occur,
By looking at their essence they vanish into emptiness.
There is no way for wisdom to revert from that state.*

This is the symmetrical process of looking into the true nature of joy and bliss. Looking at the essence of *kleshas* directly with our naked awareness, we recognize that they are not solid, they are only like big black clouds which don't go anywhere, but just vanish. Again, we don't have to do anything, just look at them directly, nakedly, without judgment or desire that they go away, they will merely vanish in to emptiness.

There is no way for wisdom to revert from that state.

That wisdom is the true wisdom, so it won't evaporate. Look at the negativity totally, then of itself it will transform into something else, in a very profound understanding of the nature of the mind.

*To not separate your mind from this
And always guard your mind is critical.
The entirety of the dharma is encapsulated in guarding your mind.
The bodhisattva Shantideva spoke of how to guard the mind:*

*"For those who wish to guard their minds,
This is brought about by mindfulness and introspection.
As is said, 'All should diligently guard their minds!'
I fold my hands in reverence to such persons."*

Guard the mind means to observe the mind, not to be carried away by the river of feelings. We have to stay on the bank. We should not jump in the middle of the flow. How to guard the mind, first of all, by cultivating awareness and mindfulness. It's very simple. Buddhism, especially the Tibetan one, may be very complicated, but the essence is very simple, so simple that we overlook it. This is awareness. Jamgön Kongtrul was very scholarly and a good practitioner, so he knew what he was saying, and so his summary and his underlining of the essential points in this text should be to be taken seriously. Keep the mind very open, spacious...and aware! Even if it's a very dramatic movie, we know that it's just a movie. Like any practice, at the beginning it requires some effort, because we are very habituated to be distracted. But like any skill, once we have accomplished the practice, it become spontaneous, natural. We are just aware. Mind is very open and spacious, but present, knowing, awake.

It's crucial to guard your mind all the time. Indeed, to guard the mind means to know the mind. The "best best best" is to recognize the empty nature of thoughts-emotions and to replace them by wisdom energy. If this is difficult, we replace negative thought by positive ones, being content not to add oil to the fire. If there is a positive thought, we should encourage it. During the

formal sitting sessions, we don't discriminate, we just see the empty nature of any thought, but during the day, we discriminate between good and bad thoughts, so that they couldn't lead us to unwholesome actions.

We start with awareness because it's easy, it's always there, always in the present, but the most important part of this practice is not the breath itself, but to be aware. The breath is a handle to rebalance us, it's not concentration on the breath that we are contemplating on, but the quality of knowing through this exercise. This is a wonderful thing because people are always saying :” We have no time to practice!” Anyway, when we are connected to our inner primordial awareness, it flows just naturally, as an open spaciousness which is not constricted. Our ordinary mind with all its chatter is very limited, constricted.

To practice in accordance with what is said here is critical.

That being so, the six collections of consciousness and all appearing objects,

Are simply the magical display of mind's nature.

Thus, it's a mistake to think there is some agent who practices adoption and rejection

The six collections of consciousness are the five sense consciousnesses plus the mind consciousness. Eye consciousness for instance just picks up the input, the form itself, and the mind consciousness does the secondary work of labelling, comparing, rejecting or accepting etc. Normally, we assume that what we perceive through our sense is really what is going up right there. But Buddhism and Vedanta mostly say no! From our side we are creating so much of that which we project outside as our reality. The real ongoing sciences, neurosciences and quantum physics, agree on that point that moment to moment, we are creating our own reality. Certainly, we should not push too hard examples, but still let's consider cinema. The movie is on, it seems very real. We are involved. In a way, we know it's just a movie, but on another side, we are totally involved. What happens is that there is the succession of slides of transparent frames with a light behind which projects them as a movie. This doesn't assume that things don't exist, they do, but not as we perceive them. Therefore, we should not think that behind the movie there is someone who is selecting things, this is on the contrary a process which is quite impersonal. If we look for it, we don't find the idea of an agent. This concept is just that which traps us in *samsāra*. Our work is to snap this idea that there is an “I” or “mine” who is involved there. What's matters most is that we cultivate our ability to loosen gradually that notion and to perceive us as mere actors in the movie. We make our mind so small due to the ego obsession! This is why the Buddha insisted much on our going beyond the ego, not into a void, but rather into fullness. Emptiness is not void. The good things can arrive just now, our potential is right there, we don't have to fabricate it, we only have to see it. All the other practices are supporting this, and if there isn't this inner awareness and presence, the other practices won't be useful.

Even though taking things onto the path

As an equal taste is supreme,

For the beginner, let your view be high

And your practice precise.

Guru Rinpoche said that our view should be as vast as the skies, and our action should be as precise as a particle of flour. We should be very careful with our actions, they should be

impeccable, at the same time the view should be very vast. Supreme is equanimity, equal taste, *samarasa*, but for a beginner we can't do this, we cannot eat excrements as excellent food. Don't think that anger, lust, jealousy are all empty. We should definitely have a virtuous behavior. Still don't be uptight and just moralizing, come back to the vast view. The idea of equal taste is wonderful, but as beginners we should evaluate the level where we really are.

*As it's said, "The human form with its freedoms and advantages is hard to find."
Thinking over and over about death and impermanence,
Gives rise to certainty about the infallibility of karma and its effects.*

After discussing very high views, Jamgön Kongtrul comes back to basics, with karma law and the rarity of human birth. Even among sentient beings, human birth is rare, and the quality of this human birth is important and not so frequently available : not only having the contact with the dharma, but having faith and interest in practicing it. Even in Buddhist countries, some people are practicing seriously, but the other not. Even in Tibet, many become monks and nuns, but how many practice seriously to understand their mind? If we don't practice the dharma now, the next opportunity may be very, very far away. We should not take these favorable conditions for granted, we shouldn't waste good karma so that we find them again soon in a next life. The likelihood of these good conditions coming back in ulterior lives is very small. So, let's seize the opportunity now.

About taking the refuge and the five precepts :

The refuge is in Buddha Dharma Sangha, not in me. I accompany usually the ceremony of taking refuge with that of vowing to follow the five precepts.

The five precepts :

They are not commandments, but enable us to living in this world harmlessly.

- Not killing, not even insects.
- Not stealing, respect others properties, give back what we borrowed in a good shape, all this is common sense.
- Against sexual misconducts, not harming other or ourselves, we have to be responsible.
- Speech should not only be honest, not abusive and not divisive, but we should also avoid mental distractions and chatting which induces a big dispersion of energy.
- After body and speech, mind : avoid alcohol and drugs, because they disturb seriously the mind and this mind is paramount. We should be careful on this topic, inasmuch as many crimes, including domestic ones, are committed under the effect of alcohol.

The bodhisattva vows :

They are based on Shantideva's book *Bodhicharyavatara*. When we escape from the prison, we'll facilitate others' escape. These vows are not to be taken lightly, saving all beings means all

beings. This won't come in one life – in this life we have already great difficulties at saving ourselves – but in a succession of lives. When we pray the buddhas and bodhisattvas, we should understand that they are inspired by pure compassion, they are absolutely not judgmental. Sometimes, prayers to arrange things for us or our close friends work, sometimes not. Actually, we know only a small part of reality, so we don't know what is really helpful for the person we want to support by our prayers. Maybe his karma says that now, his life is finished, or sometimes something may be changed, then the bodhisattvas may do something. And sometimes, suffering is a purification of past karma, for instance from previous lives. So, the right attitude is to pray asking that what should happen what is really the best for this person in the long run.

The Dalai-lama recites the following verses by Shantideva every day

As long as the space exists

As long as there will be sentient beings,

May I remain here too

In order to continue to dissipate the sufferings of all beings.

This is recognizing and giving voice to a very vast aspiration. It actually represents only an aspiration, in this sense that we will not become a great bodhisattva in a moment. Still, the small seed of aspiration will ultimately mature into a huge bodhi-tree.

Questions and answers, 4 pm, 18-4

TP : So many questions here are complicated, Not only do I not know the answer, but also not even do I understand the question...

Q : What is the difference between negative and affirmative emptiness ?

TP : The Gelugpa is based on the Madhyamika views of Nagarjuna, it corresponds to the *neti neti* of the Upanishads. The three other schools follow the second way which is affirmative. *Rigpa*, the primordial awareness, is confirmed. This teaching is based mainly on *Chittamatra* (*chitta*, mind, *matra*, only), which came much after Nagarjuna, in the third turning of the wheel in the fourth century a.d. Asanga and his brother Vasubandu exposed the *Chittamatra*, which is a basis for the three other schools of Tibetan Buddhism apart from the Gelugpas. Anyway, the nature of the mind is beyond any debate, it's to be realized. No school has the exclusivity of the realization of the mind.

Q : To which extent should we work on ourselves before helping others?

TP : First, we have to develop our wisdom and compassion, understanding how things are really in themselves, then we will be able to benefit people. This is why great masters are needed. Buddhism has no monopoly of great masters, many traditions have them, they realized profound truths. One of the great tragedies of our time is that real masters are fewer and fewer. It's so easy

to think we have got enough and stop working. Dilgo was a genuine master, because he did not stop at a point. Half way gurus may be more dangerous than nothing, they are only half-baked. In Tashi Jong are the yogis, the *togden*, the “realized ones”. They are monks with the regular training, afterward they started 20 or 30 years of sadhana, and then, their realization was stabilized. I like this image of a cake half-baked which will collapse and have an awful taste because it was taken out of the oven too early. In our nunnery we have nuns in retreat for the past ten years and gradually they want to become *togdenma*. But as for us, we can do our work in our life. I don’t teach because I feel completely enlightened, I am rather completely unenlightened, however, my teacher told me to do it. You don’t need to be totally enlightened to start to share what you have understood of dharma.

Q : How to master the chattering mind?

TP : I hope you listen to all that we have explained, on this subject! Everyone has a chattering mind! Taming the mind means no-distraction. The Buddha said that mind is both a monkey and an elephant to be trained. This mind basically has not changed now, 25 centuries after the Buddha taught.

Q : Why and how devotion helps on the way?

TP : Devotion is a quality of the heart, it’s very important that our heart be open. Heart and mind are the two sides of the same coin, they are very interdependent. The qualities of heart are compassion, love, joy and devotion. This devotion comes in many forms, it should never be divorced from intelligence, blind faith is never advisable. If the true nature of the guru resonates in ourselves, it’s good. The guru knows his own true nature, we don’t, here is the difference. The traditional example about the guru is the difference between a simple paper in the sun which just becomes a little dry and crispy and the same paper under a magnifying glass : this is the guru who can light up the flame. There is a corridor between the guru and us, the door on the side of the guru is always open and ours is sometimes open and sometimes not. In a parallel simile, the sun is always here whatever the clouds which might obscure it.

In America, I speak of compassion and devotion in the zen centers, because they are strong on the wisdom aspect, but weak on the heart aspect. They know it, so, they ask me to deal with these subjects. Women are strongly open with the heart, with love and compassion, because they care for babies which may be very demanding. In this sense, they have many advantages on the spiritual path. Of course, there are men full of love and compassion, but these qualities are not considered as mainly masculine. Devotion is very important to moisten our earth. Devotion and knowledge are the two wings of the bird of spiritual practice.

Q : How integrate difficulties, including sicknesses, into the path?

TP : This is a huge subject, to deepen it you should read *lojong* teachings, they were started in Tibet by Atisha.

- For sicknesses, the first thing is to perceive that they are the result of past karma, in this life or in preceding lives. We should accept it as a purifying process to eliminate these past karmas.
- We may also take disease and pain as a basis for *tonglen*, “taking and giving”. When you are sick, lying on your bed, you take the disease of the ones who have the same ailment, and from your reservoir of Buddha wisdom, you send them light. For many practitioners, in case of disease, the main exercises which they like to do are guru devotion and *tonglen*.
- Physical suffering, everyone has or will have, but if we are resenting it, we add to it a good dose of mental suffering and this is actually something which we don’t need.
- Another method, more fundamental, consists in looking to the painful feelings and recognize their empty nature. If you are able to do this, pain and disease themselves will become a path of liberation. Our mind doesn’t need to be sick. If the mind is healthy, we don’t identify with the body, and so it greatly helps us to overcome pain.
- Pain also can be the center of the meditation. When I was in the cave (where I spent eleven and a half year), one day, I seriously cut my thumb by the stroke of an axe. I took a *katha* (these white honorific scarves which at that time weren’t of silk, but of cotton) in the cave and did the bandage as I could. Then, I started meditating by observing exactly how the pain was. It reminded me of an orchestra, I was fascinated by the variety of these sensations which by the way and from this viewpoint, were no more painful as such. It lasted for hours. It was one of the strongest meditations I ever had. Pain is not subtle, it’s a very strong object for the practice of meditation.

Q : What is the closest equivalent in Buddhism of God as creator and source of love?

TP : We should understand that Buddhism is not theistic, a Creator who put us here and then pulls the strings is totally absent in this tradition. However, in Mahayana Buddhism, we have the idea of the intelligence of the universe, of every cell, this is represented by the notion of the presence of myriads of buddhas and bodhisattvas. For instance, Manjushri behind me is invoked for sharpening intelligence, his mantra is recited for that. This Tibetan system of devotion reminds me of the government agencies, we should go directly to the right department. Of course, all these bodhisattvas are ultimately one, they are not separate entities, they are reflections of our inner wisdom or compassion. Still, we like to see them as entities. For instance, Tara has two major aspects, among the 21 which are classically described: healing, and compassion to overcome fear. Once, somebody asked a lama : “Does Tara exist or not?” The Lama replied : “Tara knows she is not real!” while we still believe we are real.

Take this text of Jamgön Kongtrul to heart, it’s very precious, and there is something in it for everyone, so really read it.

Tomorrow at the end of the seminar, we will perform these two ceremonies, since a number of you requested them. Taking refuge is the door which opens many different levels of development. The first thing to understand is that you don’t take refuge in me, but in Buddha-Dharma-Sangha. I associate the taking of refuge to the five vows which we’ve spoken of recently.

Thursday, April 18, 2019

Session 1

We have discussed yesterday the first point, the preciousness of this human life, we have to seize the present moment because this opportunity, which is the result of so many causes and conditions, is little likely to come back. One reason is also that, if we are lazy, we won't create a useful configuration for the next life, i.e. a human rebirth in good conditions.

The second point is impermanence, we have to consider that decay and death, it's not only for others, it's for us too, and perhaps very soon too : it's not a matter of age, there can be car accidents, heart attacks, cancer, everything is changing, outer, inner circumstances, we can't feel secure because there is no security. The only real security, is to be secure that everything is insecure. We should get out of the chains of things to do, which push us to postpone our engagement every time. We should practice now. It doesn't mean that we have to leave for a long retreat, but it means that we should take seriously the training of the mind, and this, just now, because it's the only time we have. In a deep sense, past and future don't exist.

*When you see or hear of another's death
Know it to be a warning for you.*

We have got a lot of good and bad seeds in previous births; this is why negative things happen to good people and vice-versa. However, from moment to moment, we may react well or badly to what occurs. In this way there is no good or bad karma, it all depends on what we do with it in the now. So, we should be very careful with our actions, impeccable, this is why again we should observe what kind of mind states arise from moment to moment, because these states also create karma. "What is my mind state now?" If it's a negative one, we should recognize it, accept it and work to change it.

*When you notice the changes from summer to winter
Recall that everything is impermanent*

Death and impermanence are not an academic subject, it's for us too. But still, a deep part of us denies this, although that one thing is certain in life, and this is death. Not only us, but all the nears and dears will pass away. Look at Notre-Dame of Paris, it was there for centuries, so stable, so permanent, but now it has partly disappeared. Nothing, nothing is static, unchangeable. So please, heed that. The Buddha said that if we should have one contemplation, we should have the one on death. This is not to make us afraid, but to value more this life, when we have a good opportunity to practice. We may die at any age, we do not know when. So, we should take advantage of the present window of opportunity. Moreover, with this meditation, we won't be so shocked when someone to whom we are attached dies, because we will know that these are things which happen. In one hundred years, everybody here will be gone. Nature too is changing with seasons. The cycle goes on, in outer as well as inner circumstances.

*When you catch sight of bees with their honey
Know that possessions are unnecessary.*

We are possessed by our possessions, weighted down by them. Moreover, we don't need most of them. We are possessed even by our inner possessions, our experiences, our attachments, even our scholarship, and most of it is junk. So, open the doors and windows, throw out the garbage, just be open in spaciousness, no grasping, no sticking to things.

*When you see a house or town that is empty
Consider it could be your own home or dwelling (which became so).*

You have come here all the way from abroad or you stay in India which has become your home, so you refer to a given place for your home. Still, if there should be one single mantra in Buddhism, it would be, "let go!". Not only of outer things, but of inner attachment and identifications, opinions, concepts... This is why *shamathā* is going to be very useful, it gives air, dropping all the rubbish and going towards space, luminosity and clarity. All the ideas, concepts, judgements, just empty them, empty, empty, empty. We are so much caught up in our concepts that we cannot see things as they are, we close everything. This is why practicing naked awareness is so important.

The idea is that our own present house will one day be empty and abandoned. We see things as very permanent, as this table. Of course, on a relative level, it's there, but when you look at the thing in itself, it can't be established. If we sit on it, it becomes a seat, if you put it upside-down, your dog may use it as a bed. So, the first point is that names are often about functions; they don't have ultimate reality. The second point is this, asking the question: "Where is the table?" or "By which part of it the table can be defined, where is the "tableness" of the table?". In fact, we cannot find it. During my first physics lesson when I was 11, my question to the teacher was: "When we reduce everything, what is left there?" So, the teacher went to molecule, atoms, but stopped to the proton level. Then, I was no more interested, but had she gone to the level of quantum physics and interdependence and further and further reductions, to a point that you cannot say if it is or it is not, I would have been much more captivated. This is the point, there is nothing which exists on its own side independently. This is why HH the Dalai-lama is fascinated by quantum physics, because they say the same things as Buddhism. Quantum physicists are also fascinated by the fact that the Dalai-lama could know all this by his traditional meditation and logic. That's why these topics are so interesting, and some monks spent years and years debating on these subjects. It's difficult to doubt our gross mind, this is why sages insist on these points, it opens the mind in a more spacious way and relaxes the tendency to grasping. Of course, quantum physicists are only theoreticians, should they want some realization, they should engage in a meditation practice as everyone else.

*When you see others have parted ways with their friends
Recall your own close relations.
When things suddenly happen to others against their will
Remember that such things could happen to you as well.*

We can draw teachings from the experiences of others, and how they react to mourning for instance : are they skillfully applying the dharma, or reacting blindly, without experience and knowledge of these profound laws? What is the level of suffering induced by these various reactions? Everybody will be parted from the loved ones. So, contemplate these things, in order that when they happen, you could react responsibly. So many people are shocked when a parent dies, even if they are 97 or 102! This is because they did not prepare themselves.

*When you see others have parted ways with their friends
Recall your own close relations.*

It's not just them over there, it could happen to our close relationships too. This meditation is not to make us depressive, but to come back to the cycle of nature. Things and their impermanence are not the problem in themselves, it is our attachment which creates the suffering.

There is the story of Gautami, who was not well accepted in her new family after marriage but get a better recognition when she has a son, as it's often the case. However, one day, he died. She was destroyed not only because she lost her only son, but also because her good position in the family was at stake, and she would probably again have problems with them. She became a little crazy and asked everybody around for a doctor to resuscitate the baby. They eventually sent her to the Buddha who accepted the challenge, but requested her, for doing so, to bring a handful of mustard seeds. She said that this was not difficult, but the Buddha added : "It should come from a family where nobody has died"...Of course, she didn't find any. Realizing her ignorance, she organized the disposal of the body of her baby, became a nun and finally got realized. The point of the story is obvious.

Once, I was in Australia and one man was dying from cancer. The parents were wondering : "How on earth could this happen to us?" So, I acknowledged in front of them that it was very painful for parents to lose a child, but requested them to look through the window and see all these people in the street : they had all lost some dear ones. The parents did not want him to go, although he was a skeleton, so I suggested them that this attitude actually represented a disservice to him. If you love really someone, you should be able to tell him at a point : "Now, you can go!"

*Self and other —everything— is as a dream;
There isn't even the slightest thing which is truly established.*

*When you maintain the natural state as it is,
Without spoiling or fabricating your mind,
The emptiness of all inner and outer phenomena
Is realized to be the sky-like union of clarity and emptiness.*

As I said before, the nature of the mind is compared to the sky because space is all encompassing. Although we cannot see it, nothing can exist without space and everything is space. All the outer and also inner objects are space, and all are empty, they have this encompassing, vast, spacious nature of the mind. That gives an open, spacious dimension to our

mind, instead of letting it be imprisoned in a brain. But this nature of mind may be missed, because it's too simple. We prefer big manifestations like bliss and lights. Certainly, in space there can be rainbows, but they are not always there. What is basic is the luminosity, which is beyond ego obsession. This obsession should be put at rest. The tragedy is that, because this space-nature of mind is there all time, we just don't see it.

Now, it's time for tea break : take your nice tea mindfully, and even if it's not nice, be mindful-grateful...

Session 2 - 11 a.m

*Self and other—everything—is as a dream;
There isn't even the slightest thing which is truly established.*

*When you maintain the natural state as it is,
Without spoiling or fabricating your mind,
The emptiness of all inner and outer phenomena
Is realized to be the sky-like union of clarity and emptiness.*

Especially during formal practice, the aim is just to relax, the essence of the practice is merely to be aware, to know. We are not trying to accomplish anything. People ask :” What will I gain from this meditation?” There isn't anything to gain, it just knowing. Take the simile of the paraglider, when it's in the sky, he is just flying. Little birds have to fight to fly, they make a lot of efforts to ascend a little bit, while big birds like eagles just glide in the sky. Still, at the same time they have a sight which is quite accurate, they are able to see small animals even from afar.

Give up the ideas of concentrating on this or that, of structuring the mind so that it becomes this or that. Of course, many meditations are based on concentration to fight the tendency to distractions, but here, it's not about constructing something new, it's just about relaxing. Mind doesn't think, is not agitated, but completely open, spacious, aware – and aware of awareness. It's so simple that we imagine that it cannot be here, but the essential practice is actually so simple! It deals with recognizing our awareness. The first step is to discern this more subtle level of consciousness, called mindfulness or awareness (there is a tendency, in following the Theravada tradition, to distinguish between mindfulness, *sati*, which is focalized in the present moment, and awareness, *samprajñā*, which is more global. For instance, attention to the point of concentration at the basis of the nose is mindfulness, attention to the whole body and the correctness of the posture is awareness). In this sense, focusing on breath is very useful, it's not particularly subtle, you can do it right now, everybody can do it to overcome distraction and heedlessness. We can have some control of our breath, it's just semi-automatic. If I say hold your breath or breathe deeply, you can do it.

If we consider the basically chattering mind, always moving, commenting, wanting, hating, dissipating, fearing, never still, this represents the most superficial part of the mind. A most subtle level of our consciousness is to be aware of that, to step back, as I said before, to be aware of being aware. The best way is to cultivate the ability to know, to be aware, for instance of the breath, without commenting on it, just at that moment, we are present. Ego lives in the past and

future to give its opinions, but if we are nakedly in the present, there is no more ego. Still, if we start to comment, the monkey-ego-mind comes back in a rush.

When I was at the beginning of my path in India, I started to study with an old yogi, he gave me a pebble and said, “fix it!”. Stone is good, because there is not much to comment on it. It’s not bright, so the stare can rest on it without fatigue. Moreover, when we are agitated, coming back for some minutes to breath is very useful : not only it calms us down but enables us to cultivate the capacity to be aware.

In the dzogchen tradition, what is important is not the object of attention, but the awareness. The object of meditation is a clutch, some teacher says only one third of the attention should go to the object, the breath for instance, the rest for the feeling of just being there, present, knowing. When distractions happen, there is no problem in coming back again and again. When our meditation skill develops, the background noise decreases, and we should come back to the mind itself. Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche compared this to sitting in a moving train, looking to the scenery, some is beautiful, some ugly: no matter what, we are progressing with the train. Everything can happen, we are just observing. This is very much *shamatha*, we are not examining the thoughts, we are just observing from outside. This is the first stage, the second one is objectless *shamatha*, we drop all the objects and are just aware to be aware. It’s a more subtle level of consciousness, still dualistic since there is a difference between observer and observe, but it’s a big step forward. We don’t have to believe, we verify that we aren’t our thoughts and feelings. The teacher is here to make the pointing out instruction, indicating the nature of the mind. Even the knowledge predicated on the difference between subject and object finally disappears.

Recognizing the nature of the mind is not a big explosion, it’s already there, there is no creation of something new, everything comes from this empty, elusive nature of the mind, but we don’t recognize it, because it’s not colorful. Just look at space.

*Self and other — everything — is as a dream;
There isn't even the slightest thing which is truly established.*

We are trying to fabricate things as solid, static, permanent; this is our mistake. Reality is not exactly a dream, but *like* a dream. If we consider something as completely separated from ourselves, this is erroneous. There are constant interactions between observer and observed, we produce what we believe to be interdependent, outer reality. This is very much dependent on our sense organs as they are and our brain. The scientist nowadays rediscover that was known by the great yogis of Asia : from moment to moment, we are projecting our reality. This is almost like a dream. This is why in Tibetan tradition there is a dream yoga. Within the dream itself, we train to be able to modify it. So, in an analogous way, in the waking state, we can have another awakening onto the level of spiritual consciousness.

So this is the essential point given to the student : the only thing he has to do is to recognize what is beyond time, and for this, disidentifying from ego, feelings, emotions, ceasing to think that this is “me”. If we identify with this “me”, it covers the reality of our true nature which is so much beyond thoughts.

*When you maintain the natural state as it is
Without spoiling or fabricating your mind,
The emptiness of all inner and outer phenomena
Is realized to be the sky-like union of clarity and emptiness.*

You cannot put labels on space, because everything is space. Mind is like this, empty, like space, but not only that, mind is also knowing, this is the whole point, mind is conscious, the essence of the mind is that it knows. These notions are gathered in the little word *selva*. It means bright, clear and also includes the idea of cognizing, everybody translates it differently. Luminosity, clarity, indeed lucidity could be a good choice, also “the quality of knowing”. The point is that we are always in that state, but we don’t recognize it. We don’t have to fabricate it. Still, we are all day distracted by the display of the mind. All the inner events are a natural display of our mind. But behind this is that very spacious, elusive quality. This practice is very simple, the problem is to do it.

*That is ultimate bodhicitta.
Migrating beings who do not realize this
Wander in saṃsāra under the influence of dualistic apprehension.*

Ultimate bodhicitta is the nature of mind, relative one is compassion. We wander in samsāra under the influence of dualistic mind. As long as we don’t recognize the nature of this mind, we don’t have ultimate bodhicitta and we are caught endlessly in sufferings. It’s wonderful that although we have this capacity of recognition, we don’t use it and we are so lost, that we don’t know how to find ourselves again. That is really astonishing. This is why the bodhisattvas have compassion, it’s not only for the victims of material poverty or natural disaster. Even if everything seems ok, the buddhas will have compassion for us, because this happiness is due to some past good karmas but remains impermanent, and we are still in the compound of the jail of *saṃsāra*. The traditional simile is that of beggars who have underneath their hut a big treasure, but not knowing it, they go out to beg for a few rupees. Similarly, we have this treasure of Buddha nature, but still we are mean, stupid etc. So, wisdom, seeing clearly the human situation, develops along with compassion, they are proportional. The sages push us to see the sufferings as empty.

This is why this text is very important, I like it a lot. The method is very simple, it’s not about very complex visualizations, or millions of prostrations, which may be useful or not. This is so simple, but we need to make effort to become effortless. This is like so many skills. Don’t believe you are the only one to have many thoughts and that all others around in your meditation group are in samadhi. This is like working with an instrument, at the beginning we make all kinds of wrong notes, but afterwards music becomes natural. Why? Because practitioners spent hours, days, months and years practicing. I remember this Australian who played a kind of didgeridoo : he told us that it took him six months to be able to produce his first sound from this empty pipe. It was a very beautiful and haunting sound. The diligence and patience of this man just to play with this instrument was remarkable. So, how is it that we are so lazy in trying to “play our mind”? Actually, mind doesn’t want to be trained. Even if we suffer, mind prefers to continue as before rather than to be tamed. But once it does, of itself it will evolve and we will discover what is deep there and waits to be discovered. What is good in formal meditation is the

outer discipline, for instance these vipassana retreats, 10 hours a day right from the beginning. This is throwing people in the deep pool, they learn quickly to swim. It gives confidence to them that the mind can be trained. These formal and structured retreats are very effective, even for practitioners who are not beginners. Goenka retreats are very tough, too much for some people who say at the end of it that it was fantastic. However, in actuality, they will never do it again... But the lesson of these sessions is that the mind can be settled. We have just to tame the monkey mind. Everything can do, but because we are so used to being distracted, it's very difficult to convince the mind not to be distracted. Taming the mind is the beginning, not the end. This is like piano, we have to play scales, it's boring but we must do it. Afterwards, we contact the genuine and extraordinary potentials of this mind.

Please, everyone should deal carefully with the mind, especially mindfulness and awareness, and this can be cultivated in daily life. So, any skill which helps us to develop awareness is good. Physical activities which helps us to be present to body and mind, like hatha yoga and Taichi, are good.

Session 3 - 14h30

The ultimate state is called *nirvāna*, nature of the mind, the unborn, *dharmakāya*, many names, they are just labels on the space. Still, the good news is that this reality can be clearly experienced. Names will never be the thing itself, even for material, conditioned objects, so what about the unconditioned?

*Limitless and unfabricated compassion
Naturally arises for those who undergo such torment.
This is relative bodhicitta.*

We have made enormous progress in knowledge, but not corresponding progress in wisdom. We think we're very clever, but it's not so clever to destroy this only planet we have. There are two levels which should not be confused, the ultimate, the *dharmakāya*, where there is no suffering and the relative level where we do suffer : we're indeed trapped in *saṃsāra*, like in a wheel.

*Without grasping at compassion, realize its emptiness.
Compassion, the spontaneous energy of emptiness, will emerge.
Union is the essence of the teachings of sūtra and mantra.
You should engage in this profound practice.*

Many people who are engaged in social and justice projects feel the compassion, but end up in burnout. They are overtaken by the immensity of the task, they just can't take it anymore, they get broken. All the suffering comes in, as a huge heavy rock, as a huge undigested meal, heavy like a stone. Often, I give the example of the Dalai-lama, because we know who he is, and for what he stands for. With visitors, he may weep, but afterwards they crack jokes, they smile, he is jolly. This is because he has not only great compassion but also great wisdom. All the sufferings coming to him energize his compassion and then his wisdom, and vice-versa. We have to balance our feelings, our heart, with deep understanding of the nature of things. These two

support each other, this is very important. Sometimes we have very clear meditations, but we feel that we move away from others. The other extreme may come too, we became oversensitive to the sufferings of others, and it destabilizes us... The two, compassion and wisdom should be in harmony, like two horses well matched and paired. Without being sectarian, I feel that Tibetan Buddhism has understood that well.

“Sutra” here means Mahayana. When deities are in couple, women are of the nature of wisdom, or at least we hope so... and men are of the nature of compassionate activity. The two should be in balance to give birth to precious experiences.

*The method for having such things arise in your mind-stream
Is to accumulate a wealth of merit, take all of it into your own hands.
Pray to the Three Jewels.
Take devotion to the guru as the vital point.*

If we have obstacles on the path, it may come from too much bad karma or too little good one. It's like travelling, if you have enough money, you are able to gather good provisions for the trip, booking good guides, etc. If you have little money, it may be much more complicated. On the spiritual path, we should get merits if we want it to be smooth, with all the favorable conditions to practice, good teacher, good place, good books, everything falls into place. For the Buddhist view, it's not just chance, it's because we have got the merits for it, this is enormously helpful. Of course, obstacles could be a practice in itself, but too many of them could be discouraging. On the contrary, if things somehow click together, it's a validation. So, it's important during our life to earn as much merit as possible. It's like a productive soil with good fertilizer and seeds, it will grow like crazy. Westerners say that accumulation of merits is very materialistic, but it's not so, it's rather pragmatic. Even rejoicing in the merit of others is also considered very auspicious, this is a way to spread all goodness in the world. We hear about disasters, but there are a lot of merits going on. In Buddhist countries, there is rejoicing about merits like offering food to monks (not to nuns...). People invite their neighborhood when they do so. It's not the quantity of donation which counts, but the purity of our intention. Even if we have nothing to offer, we may give a simple smile, be kind, and, as I said, we may rejoice in the merits of others.

About taking refuge and the bodhisattva's vows : *(a ceremony in this sense was organized as a conclusion of the seminar, at the request of the audience)*

What is refuge? We are all refugees. We are escaping from this prison of *samsāra* to a place of safety which is represented here as the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. Universe, the ultimate Reality is not dark, it has intelligence, light. Every time we have good feelings from deep inside, it's an access to our real nature, love, compassion and light. So, we go to this for refuge. The Dharma explains how to climb the mountain, it shows us the path, which is not so easy. The Buddha gave a very clear path and we also have guides. *Dharmakāya*, the Ultimate, is the true refuge. Sangha is not only the monastic Sangha, it means the *Mahāsaṅgha*, monks, nuns, as well as male and female lay people. The Buddha always speaks of the fourfold community and explains that when they work in a stable way together, the Dharma will grow and develop. The real refuge is *Arya Sangha*, anyone, not only Buddhist, who has genuine knowledge of

Reality. The Buddha is the innate Buddhahood, the Dharma is the way to get there, and the Sangha is the Arya Sangha. The three are the refuge out of the jail of *samsāra*.

What about the guru? He is the one who has been there, who has got Buddha nature. This is because of this that we have faith in the lama : he mirrors the true nature of mind for us, we mix ourselves in an indistinguishable way to him, like water in water because we have the same nature. We should not look to the guru on outer criteria, wondering whether he is well known, with many students, with a big charisma, etc. He should just be someone who knows what he is talking about. My guru the Khamtrul was not teaching that much explicitly, except on the subject of bodhicitta: there, he got like excited, and spoke almost without taking again his breath.

The Guru is always radiating his blessings, but we have to open the shutters.

*Encourage yourself and others to avoid wrongdoing
And, however you can, engage in virtue.
Do not separate yourself from the bodhicitta of the Great Vehicle
Nor from pure dedication of your merit.*

At least, we can all try to be good, to be kind, this is the path. The Dalai-lama insists on it, avoid being mean and unkind, irascible. If we are not nicer at the end of the day, what is the point of all these spiritual practices? Being engaged in virtue is going beyond the small “me”. If the ego is just sucking everything, making a bigger, more inflated “me”, this is not the right way. We are not trying to go a nicer, more beautiful, polished “me”. It would come down to what Trungpa Rinpoche calls spiritual materialism.

It's very simple, nothing to do with getting big realizations and becoming a big teacher surrounded by a group of admirers. We train to be beneficial to others, just as a medical student trains not only for oneself and his family, but for the benefit of everyone who will come to visit him in the future. This is our aspiration, saving all beings. If we go out of a swamp on the dry land, we don't say just “ciao” to all others still in the swamp. When we do prostrations and various practices, we associate all the other sentient beings to them, we do the practice on their behalf and we dedicate the merits to them. We are their representative just as a diplomat is the representative of his country to the United Nations.

*The spiritual practitioner known as Lodrö Thayé,
An old yogin who does nothing but eat, sleep, and defecate,
Composed this to clear up some things for Devendra,
A virtuous-minded person whose magnificent qualities are like the waxing moon.*

*May you have long life and master dharma practice
And may the two-fold benefit be spontaneously accomplished!*

Jamgong (Kongtrul) means “infinite intelligence”, this was a right name for him with all his subtle knowledge, still he describes himself with the utmost humility. The two-fold benefits of the practice are for oneself and for others.

Jetsunma's explanations during the Refuge and Bodhisattva initiations.

The Buddha is mentioned as "supreme among human beings", the Dharma is described as "supreme in the absence of desires", and the Sangha as "supreme among communities". "I ask the Venerable to consider me as a lay faithful for as long as I live." The one who gives the initiation concludes by saying: "It is the procedure" and the audience answers: "This is good!".

Having made these vows, it's of course recommended to follow them carefully: "After taking refuge in the Buddha, the question is of no longer worshipping the gods of the world. After taking refuge in the Dharma, the question is of no longer harming other beings. After taking refuge in the Sangha, the question is of no longer being taken by heretical views and not seeing those who deny the Dharma". Obviously, this does not mean that we should no longer have friends who are not Buddhist, or that we should shun our family, but it does mean that we are greatly influenced by the company we maintain. We must therefore be careful to associate ourselves with people who have good values, because we are easily led astray if we are not very attentive. They do not need to be Buddhists, but they must have a good heart, they must be good friends. Be very careful with people who have very different ideas about what is important in life and only have materialistic values. This does not mean that we should have enmity towards them, we should be friendly with everyone, but be particularly careful to choose the people we hang out with.

Now that we have taken these vows, we must live in harmony with them in our senses and in our nature. To help in this, we associate taking refuge with the five basic precepts. Do not take life, do not steal, do not take what is not given, be very conscientious in your sexual life, to avoid creating problems or harming others and ourselves. As we have said above, speech control is not only about not telling lies, but also about avoiding hurtful or divisive words, pitting one against the other, and also about avoiding chatter, which is a great waste of energy. About the last precept, not to take alcohol or intoxicants, it is given because these substances are counterproductive, distort our mind, and meditation is precisely to be able to come into contact with our true and undistorted mind. There are discussions in the different Buddhist schools about what the Buddha meant when he talked about quitting alcohol and drugs. Some people say that a glass of wine is okay with dinner, others say that no alcohol means "no alcohol". Similarly, can we say that killing a little is okay, but not too much? Not killing means not killing! Not stealing means not stealing. For the other three precepts, the interpretation "a little bit is okay" remains possible. In any case, we must understand that these are not commandments, but rules to train us. They allow us to lead a pure and ethical life which in turn will help us to pacify our mind. This mind is very interconnected with body and speech, and therefore purifying the latter two helps to purify the former. These precepts imply, for example, being preferably vegetarian, not only in order not to kill animals but not to induce other people to kill animals for us. These rules of life are not fabricated by the surrounding society, they are quite universal. They are as relevant today as they were in the 6th century BC. So, now, you have chosen to take these precepts, no one has

forced you to do so, and they are a great help. If we were tempted to do something wrong, we would be more careful in our behavior and all of a sudden, we would say to ourselves, "Oh, actually, I made a vow about that! "And at the same time, even if we do nothing positive, the mere fact that we have vowed to refrain from negative behaviors induces a very, very strongly positive karma. Even if you didn't have a particular interest in killing, the fact that you vowed not to take life makes this attitude much more positive. So, these are the reasons why Buddhists take these precepts, but it is up to you. If there is a precept that you know you can't keep, then just stay silent. In any case, they are, as they say, a matter of common sense, about how to live an ethical life. If you break a precept, feel remorse for it, say you will never do it again... and move on! If we have made the vows and we do not hold them, it is not that we offend an external god, it is for ourselves that we create negative karma.

Then follows the ritual taking of the precepts. They are recited one time only, so think to what you are saying. As for me, I took refuge and the precepts in Tibetan, and the full monastic ordination in Chinese, still, I think it's important to understand well to what we are engaging us, so, doing it in English is definitely an advantage in this sense.

The reference for these vows are the *arahat-s*, the noble ones who went into *nirvāna* because they completely overcome their ego. And obviously, if you went completely beyond ego as opposed to others, you won't feel pride, anger, fear, jealousy any more. Your ignorance is destroyed because the foundation of ignorance is the belief in a real, immutable, solid "me". Once this ego is dissolved and mind enters into *nirvāna*, so naturally, spontaneously, all the movements of action, speech and mind will be pure and perfect. It is because of this that they take the example of *arahat-s* : in fact, spontaneously, they won't even consider killing or stealing, etc. We are modelling our actions on those enlightened beings and how an enlighten being acts. They represent a perfect model.

"Just as these *arahat-s* abstain with their body and speech of these actions which should be avoided, also with their mind, likewise will I do so..." Now we repeat, and because it is just one time, please be attentive to what you say :

" Preceptor, please pay heed to me! Just as the precious *arahat-s*, for the length of their life, abstained from the taking of life, turned away for the taking of life, likewise I also will abstain from the taking of life and will turn away from the taking of life. I will train myself in this first section of the precepts of the *arahat-s*. I will follow their example and act in accordance to this. Moreover, just as the noble *arahat-s*, for the length of their life, abstained from taking what was not given, did not engaged in sexual misconduct, did not speak lies and avoided intoxicating substances, which are the occasion for heedlessness, likewise I vow, for this time onwards, for as long as I may live, to abstain from taking what is not given, abstain from sexual misconduct, abstain from speaking lies and abstain from intoxicating substances which are occasion for heedlessness. For these five precepts, I will train in accordance to the practice of *arahat-s*. I will follow their example and act in accordance. This is the procedure." (The audience then answers) : "This is good!".

The bodhisattva's vows

We should understand that these vows won't make us bodhisattvas in a moment, we are aspiring to it, we are beginners bodhisattvas, still, it's a very important step on the spiritual path. Why are we interested in the spiritual path? Is it purely for our personal benefit, or for that of other too? So, these vows go in the sense of the second option. We don't want to enter *nirvāna* and opt out of *samsāra*, we vow to return to *samsāra*, again and again and again...However, it doesn't have to be with a *samsaric* mind. The idea is that we will gain through our practice genuine realization, which will help us to remain in *samsāra*, but not with a *samsaric* mind. The example is the lotus, which takes birth from the mud, needs the mud, but is not soiled by this mud. It's quite miraculous, how it starts down then, but is completely unstained by the mud although being still in it. Its roots are in the mud, nurtured by the mud, but its flower is pure. So, it's like the bodhicitta mind, we need the sufferings of *samsāra* in order to generate the great compassion. It takes lifetime after lifetime, it's not a quick fix. We don't go out of the scene by just saying goodbye. We know how we ourselves have been helped by others to go out of *samsāra*, so, we want to continue this chain by helping others. Why are we practicing, what is the logic behind it, is it based only on the desire to be freed, or on a genuine compassion and acknowledgment of our interdependence with all sentient beings? It doesn't mean that right now we could do this, or that right now we have much compassion. It means we aspire, we wish for that. But we are planting a seed, we nurture it, and slowly it will become a big tree under which everybody can take shelter. We set a direction, we set the GPS, where we're trying to go to. We aren't there yet, it will take a long, long time, but the GPS is set.

There is a very elaborate ceremony for these bodhisattva's vows which takes hours. We won't make that one. The other is a very simple version which is taken from the *Bodhisattvācharyavatāra* of Shantideva. I was here in Dear Park Institute when Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche was giving these vows and he used this text. This is a very valid way to take the bodhisattva's vows, rather than to go through a very long ceremony. Again, this doesn't mean that we will have full compassion now, but the intention of our practice will be to benefit all sentient beings...and ourselves too. As Jamgöng Khongtrul said, we shouldn't neglect ourselves, we are also sentient beings. But ultimately, we practice in order to benefit others too.

So, it's time now to plant the seed. The bodhisattvas vows particularly should be taken as much as possible, not only every day in one's daily practice, but as soon as we hear that a good lama offers this ceremony, we should try to attend. We plant seeds in our mind stream so that in the next life, we will very quickly come in contact with the mahāyana teachings. In this way, by the refuge and bodhisattva's vows, we'll save time and in a next life, we'll rapidly take up the work more or less where we left it. This is why we take the bodhisattvas vows as much as we can, in order to make good influence.

So the ones wanting to take these vows, please kneel :

“ To all the buddhas dwelling in the three times and in the ten directions, to the great bodhisattvas on the ten levels, to the great teacher, the vajra holders, please, listen to me : until I attain the essence of enlightenment, I take refuge in all the buddhas, in the holy dharma, and in the assembly of noble bodhisattvas.” (One repeats a second, and a third time) Now come the bodhisattva's vows themselves :

“Just as the buddhas of the past aroused the aspiration to enlightenment and gradually progressed through the stages of the bodhisattva’s training, likewise I shall generate the aspiration to enlightenment for the benefit of all beings and I shall undertake step by step that training of a bodhisattva.” Bodhicitta means aspiration to enlightenment. So that’s over for the bodhisattvas vows, now we repeat this text (which is still by Santideva) :

“Today, my birth is fruitful. My human life is justified. Today, I was born in the family of the Buddha. I am now a Buddhist child. So that there would be no blemish on this spotless family, I should now act as becomes to this family.

Today, I summon the world to Buddhahood and to worldly happiness; meanwhile, in the presence of all the saviors, may gods, and all beings rejoice. I have this merit of having attained to this point and of overcoming the enemies, the wrongdoings. May all beings, buffeted by the waves of birth, old age, sickness and death, be liberated of the cycle of existence. By this merit, may health increase everywhere, may ethics, meditation and wisdom increase, may loving kindness and compassion increase, may peace and harmony increase everywhere, may the precious bodies and minds not yet born increase and grow, may these who are born have no decline but increase for ever more”.

Now, those of you who took the precept, line up for the ceremony of cutting a hair strand. I will say : “Are you happy with your hair be cut” and you will say : “I am happy”. It will be the sign of your beginning renunciation.

Two questions from Jacques Vigne to Tenzin Palmo

JV – There has been this big work done by Pr Ian Stevenson on the allegations of previous birth which in fact was quite scientific, with six volumes of rigorous collection of facts. B Alan Wallace told us he discussed with a member of the team of Ian Stevenson who continues his work. He asked him if they had any review, good or bad, in scientific medical or psychological journals. He said that there has been none.

TP : Of course, this work of Stevenson is quite scientific and clear, double and triple checked, but most scientific researches cannot even look at it, because it explodes the small jars of their preconceptions. Most scientists are not objective, they are just conditioned and are afraid their academic career be disturbed and threatened if they explore frontier subjects like this. The problem is still more serious with quite a few Buddhist teachers in the West who say that you don’t need to believe in karma and rebirth to be a Buddhist. Actually, the whole Buddhism consists in freeing oneself of the cycle of birth and death. There are two different questions : “Does karma and rebirth really exist”, and “Are they an integral part of Buddhism?”. The second question is clear, if one doesn’t follow this belief, one is perhaps in a feel-good method, it’s not bad and many atheists are good humanitarians – but still we’re not at the center of Buddhism.

JV : You spoke of a huge library conserving wood carved blocks to print books in the traditional way. Where is it located?

TP : The library of wood carved blocks for printing books is in Darge in East Tibet. There, you have miles of them! They made a special edition of Tangyur (texts of the sutras) and Kangyur (commentaries by people like Nagarjuna, Chandrakirti, etc) in red ink; with big size volumes. When you see them, you immediately know that it comes from Darge. Jamgön Kangtrul did a great work of collecting all these isolated works and oral traditions sometimes known only by an old hermit in a solitary place, writing them down if necessary and publishing them.

Memories of Tenzin Palmo about Dilgo Khyentsé Rimpoche

On the first evening of the seminar, we could see the documentary on Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche's life, Brilliant Moon, where many people were interviewed, including the Dalai-lama, Mathieu Ricard and Dilgo's daughter and grandson. Dilgo was considered as a reincarnation of the Rime (ecumenical) master Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo in the 19th century, so it explains his orientation, which was also Rime. By the way, Jamgöng Khongtrul whose text we studied in the seminar, was a friend of his, and published at the end of the 19th century his biography, which is translated and available in English. After the projection, we had a discussion with Jetsunma and she shared us some of her personal memories of Dilgo Khyentse :

If you asked him for some initiation and teaching, he was often answering in a way which was not clear, but he never forgot this kind of request and had you called at midnight or one o'clock in the morning to give you the requested teaching or empowerment.

I was in his last teaching, many great lamas, especially Nyingma, had come. He spoke for hours with an articulation which was not clear, afterwards Mathieu Ricard and the other translators with their headphones gave us the translation. The fun was that even the Tibetan lamas came to listen to the English translation session.

What was remarkable with him was his *Rime* approach : if you asked him for a teaching on *mahāmudra* in the Kagyu style, he was giving it in this very style, or for another teaching in the Sakya style, he was doing it. He had a very vast and encompassing knowledge.

He was a beloved grand-father to all. I never heard anything negative about him. He was above the differences between the lineages.

Dilgo came often to see my guru the 8th Kamtrul, not only in Dalhousie and in Tashi-jong, where once, he gave three months of teaching at a stretch) but even in Kampagar, in the olden days in Tibet itself. At that time, my guru, just like his predecessor, wasn't talking much. Dilgo's daughter who was young then asked why he was not talking. Her mother told her it was because he was a great lama. She replied : "But Dad also is a great lama, and he speaks!" At that point, Dilgo asked his wife to take the girl out...Afterwards, when in India, the Khamtrul started to speak more to be understood by people around.

Dilgo was of this generation of masters who knew that stabilizing the non-dual experience was not easy, and so they took their time in retreat to do it. The sad things today is that teachers forget that, feel too early that they have done enough of practice and they shift to something else.

This documentary film is useful, because it makes Dilgo's memory alive.

Now, let's give some quotes from the documentary film Brilliant Moon itself on the life and teachings of Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche:

- This very title comes from his initiation name, including Rabjan and which means *Brilliant moon*.

- Dilgo was his family name. He was blessed from the youngest age by a great lama and scholar who was a neighbor in Eastern Tibet, Mipham.

- His vocation to monkhood was greatly stimulated by an accident of burning the inferior part of the body, producing a wound which did not want to heal for months. When he took to the monastic novitiate, it somehow healed.

- He went three times back to Tibet, between 1985 and 1990, the fourth time, he had to cancel his visit saying : "I would like to go, but this body composed of elements doesn't agree anymore". He transmitted many initiations and empowerment during these three visits, to a Tibetan people who had been deprived of this spiritual food for decades. He largely contributed to reconstruct Samye (the monastery founded by Padmasambhava in the 8th century, 70 km south-east from Lhasa) to its original glory of the 8th century.

- When a close disciple came to see him during his last silent retreat, he broke his silence to tell him : "Now, you can go!" The disciple took it as a bad omen, because he never broke his silence like this in such retreats. The visitor added he was doing prayers for his long life. Dilgo just answered : "No problem!" and soon after, he died.

- Dilgo, when he was still young spent 15 years in solitude, where he was visited only by his elder brothers who brought him food.

-Mathieu Ricard testified that the simplest advice like "be compassionate" or "don't get attached" took in his mouth a fresh and bigger importance. Moreover, Mathieu never felt that his teachings was benefitting him personally in any way. There was no manipulation.

- Dilgo's grandson testifies that he was not only a great teacher, but an excellent human being. He mentioned other Tibetan teachers who were very deep, but not easy as human beings.

- Until the age of 80, he liked to receive teachings from other great lamas. Once he spent a lot of time with a given lama, at the end of the session they asked Dilgo what was the matter and he replied : "He was teaching me!"

- The Dalai-lama was impressed by his knowledge and his qualities as a guru, moreover he very much appreciated his non-sectarian, *rime* approach. By some of his own dreams, he felt there was some karmic connections between him and Dilgo. As the final word at the end of the documentary, he said : "Dilgo was a good lama, now it is very important to apply his teachings in our daily life to become good disciples of a good lama".

