



THE SIX PARAMITAS

By Tulku Thubten Rinpoche



DharmaFlower.Net

The Six Paramitas
By Tulku Thubten Rinpoche

This is the third retreat of Mahayana training. The next training will be the Vajrayāna training. The previous training was the Hinayana training, from which we already graduated from with great success and accomplishment.

Mahayana training contains various developmental meditative disciplines, such as mind training and Tonglen practice, which can bring a very rich development to one's practice.

This weekend we are going to talk about the Six Paramitas. This is perhaps the very essence, or the vital point, of Mahayana training. The Six Paramitas were taught by Buddha Shakyamuni to his followers or bodhisattvas such as Avalokiteshvara, according to many Mahayana sutra teachings, at the Vulture Peak Mountain in India. I want to share my personal experience.

Ten years ago, we went on the pilgrimage to visit some of the ancient holy places in Northern India where Buddha walked very much. One of them was the Vulture Peak Mountain. We had around 30 or 40 lamas from every tradition on the same bus. Auspicious synchronicity; it was truly a nonsectarian bus.

It was very wonderful to have a dialogue and even ordinary conversation with lamas from every tradition. We sat on the Vulture Peak Mountain, and we recited the same sutra which we recited today, the Heart Sutra, and everybody felt some kind of awakening experience. A very powerful experience, almost some sense of enlightenment too; it was a very unforgettable moment. Hopefully one day each of us can go there to do recitation of Heart Sutra.

In this retreat we are going to use the Heart Sutra as the basis of the teaching and practice; therefore I selected this text as a sadhana, or as prayer or liturgy, for this weekend. I know that your daily practice is getting thicker and thicker as time goes by. But also your skill of reciting prayers is getting faster and more dynamic too, so I would like you to add the recitation of the Heart Sutra as part of your daily practice.

Mahayana training is the path where one develops training in Bodhicitta, or awakening mind, in enlightenment. Chang chub in Tibetan has two meanings: chang means purifying all habitual tendencies, and chub means completion of all perfections: love, compassion, wisdom.

The Mahayana path leads us to the attainment of these two principles of purification and completion. They're not really separate achievements; because if we are able to purify our defilements or kleshas, we are already endowed with perfections. We are already endowed with Buddha qualities; these are intrinsic qualities in of each of us, whether we are able to manifest them or not.

We are already Buddhas. This is the main message of Mahayana as well as Vajrayāna: that all sentient beings are Buddhas. We are already endowed with Buddha qualities, or Buddha perfections, the moment we are born, even at the beginning of our existence. The only problem is that somehow we are trapped in samsara, which comes about from the accumulations of our defilements. So if we are able to purify our defilements, then we discover that we are already Buddhas, already enlightened ones.

So the notion or principle of purification and completion-they are not two things, they are the same essence.

So chang chub, which is the word for enlightenment in the Tibetan language, is the ultimate goal of this Mahayana training, which is to purify all our internal obscurations, all the 84,000 defilements which prevent us from actualizing and manifesting this internal perfection, or chubpa, which means perfection. There is perfection in each of us in every moment, whether or not we are able to reveal that right now. This is the ultimate perfection. There is no other perfection in this world more sublime than this intrinsic perfection.

At the same time, as long as we are outside of the Mahayana path, we are looking for various perfections in illusions, in thinking that perfection is outside of oneself. Most beings are looking for perfection in material things, various illusions, in images, which is false reality.

In the Mahayana path, we look for perfection within oneself by recognizing that the intrinsic ultimate perfection is your own nature, which is tathagarbha. This is the single goal of the Mahayana path. The individuals who are pursuing this path are called bodhisattvas, or the heroines or heroes, or enlightened heroes. Bodhisattva means someone who has the courage and the wisdom to pursue the path of Mahayana.

This path can be very challenging. It can be more challenging than any path or any journey that we can imagine in this human lifetime. This is because we have to sometimes confront the greatest enemies and demons, ghosts, (anything you can imagine), which are already in each of us. These great demons are our fear, our hope, our obscuration, and especially the fear of enlightenment. This may be a new concept for you: fear of enlightenment. This is the greatest enemy that ever you can confront, more than anything else. And the bodhisattva's duty is to face this inner enemy and to overcome that by acquiring and putting into action the practice and training of the Mahayana, especially the Six Paramitas.

So what we are doing right now is bodhisattva training. This is even better to say than saying the "Mahayana training." If you say "bodhisattva training" then there's more sense of personal connection with one's dharma practice; and many of you were already ordained as bodhisattvas through a ceremony at the beginning of this year.

At an annual gathering, it is very important to do a vow renewal, or renewing the bodhisattva's vows. This is for instance the Mahayana or bodhisattva anniversary for each of us. So too it would be very auspicious to take that vow once again. In the Tibetan tradition, we have sojongs, every month. Every month, when you do sojong practice, you renew your vows, your Hinayana vow, as well as Mahayana vow and Vajrayāna vow, based on very particular sadhanas or ceremonies.

Today we are going to again do the renewal ceremony for the Mahayana precept, and then also I want to give a brief introduction to this weekend retreat, which is based on the Six Paramitas.

So what are the Six Paramitas? The transcendent wisdom or Prajna, or transcendent knowledge, is the view of the heart of bodhisattvas as well as the heart of all the Buddhas in the past, present and future. Heart of wisdom, or wisdom heart, which means that transcendent wisdom is like the heart, this beating heart of all the Buddhas, all omniscient ones, all enlightened ones, in every time. This is also the same as what we're referring to when we speak about Rigpa or Dharmakaya mind in the Dzogchen teachings.

There is no difference between Rigpa, Dzogchen teachings and transcendent wisdom in the Prajna paramita teachings, or the Mahayana teachings. They refer to the same state of wisdom which is the heart of all the Buddhas. There's no higher realization or wisdom that we can actualize. It is the peak, the ultimate attainment that we can have on the path of Mahayana, and Vajrayāna too. Therefore, Buddha called it Transcendent Wisdom, because it transcends duality, it transcends samsara, it transcends the duality of everything. And when you're able to transcend the duality of everything, there's no other enlightenment beside it. Whenever you have the wisdom of transcendence, Buddha enlightenment has blossomed in yourself. It's in your heart, in your hand. Buddhahood is already with you.

The other five paramitas are as generosity, discipline, patience, diligence, and meditation. They are actually foundations which support the training of transcendent wisdom. In many Mahayana teachings, it is said often that the transcendent wisdom is like the general, or the chief, or the leader in the battle or the war zone, and your ego and duality is like the enemy, the ugly enemy. The 5 paramitas are like the armies, the soldiers who would actually support or help the chief to defeat the enemy. This is a good analogy to memorize.

The essence of this training, the six paramitas, is the transcendent wisdom which we're going to talk about the next two days in a combination with meditation and reflection. This is an extraordinary environment where we can do practice, especially reflection and tomorrow maybe we can spend some time in the Redwood trees, in the meadow to do more reflection. This is a perfect environment for meditation.

So then the other 5 paramitas are like supporters, or the foundations of the transcendent wisdom. Also we can go through some kind of commentary and explanation on that, too. The main thing about the 6 paramitas is that they're not like some kind of abstract, religious ideas or concepts or conduct. But rather they are universal, timeless ways to conduct ourselves, compassionate wisdom, conduct that we can apply in every day life, no matter where we are--whether you're in a particular environment like a monastery, or you're in a very ordinary environment like a traffic jam or in your office. You can practice the Six Paramitas anytime, anywhere, because it is timeless wisdom.

It seems when we get to the heart or essence of enlightened teachings, there's less duality of culture, less duality of everything. It seems the true teachings, the heart teachings, can always be blended, mingled with your everyday life. If you look at the Six Paramitas objectively, they seem like Buddhist principles or Mahayana principles. They seem so far away from us. But when you really reflect carefully, you'll find that the Six Paramitas are actually a part of us. They're actually our intrinsic, fundamental qualities in each of us--like generosity, patience, discipline, meditation. These are very basic enlightened properties of each of us. They are actually inherent to each of us by birth.

So this plan involves developing enlightened qualities which you have already that are dormant, or potential. So the Six Paramitas are potential to most of us, including myself. And the purpose of practicing Mahayana training is to bring that potential or dormant quality into real experience. This means that we can learn to manifest, unfold those enlightened potentials into real life.

So right now the Six Paramitas are like some kind of enlightened seed, or potential seed in our consciousness. Our mind has been obscured by various defilements and karmic tendencies which have become very powerful hindrances to the unfolding of those enlightened potentials already in each of us. The training of Mahayana involves developing, cultivating, unfolding those enlightened potentials and capabilities into a state of fruition that manifests in direct experience.

So this training involves one's own internal development. It has nothing to do with any abstract spiritual religious principles. The Six Paramitas is all about developing your inner qualities, inner Buddha qualities. In some ways this is like the term self-improvement. Some part of the idea of self-improvement can be blended with ego and spiritual narcissism. There is a strong notion of "self".

So in some way, this practice is a little bit like self-improvement. Not regarding the egotistic self, but the Buddha self. We can say: Buddha-self-improvement. The Six Paramitas are a method of Buddha self-improvement although in reality our Buddha nature can never be improve upon.

Everyone, no matter who you are, in some way or another, in order to attain liberation, has to engage with the path of the Six Paramitas. There isn't another path or avenue for anyone to the state of Buddhahood beyond Six

Paramitas. Therefore, Buddha praised transcendent wisdom as the queen or mother of all Buddhas. All the Buddhas of the past, present, and future came into being out of practicing and undertaking the path of Six Paramitas, the path of transcendent wisdom.

So in Buddha's teachings, Mahayana sermons, he often refers to that transcendent wisdom as the Great Mother of all Buddhas, a mother who gives birth to and raises up Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

If we are trying to cultivate or obtain either perfection or liberation through some kind of worldly perfection, outwardly in illusions, then we never can find true liberation or true perfection. In some way, since we are human beings, we have this inborn desire to look for perfection - some kind of perfection, some kind of satisfaction, whatever that means. But the problem is that we end up looking for that perfection outwardly in illusions that are outside our selves. This is very much the fundamental motive of our social and conventional life.

This is not really some kind of difficult puzzlement. It is quite obvious when we reflect on our life. We are always looking for some kind of ultimate perfection or liberation in outer illusions like money or self-image or self-improvement or finding a relationship or trying to find some kind of association with a group of people or society. All of us have had this motive, looking for ultimate perfection somewhere, but outside of oneself, which is a great mistake.

Therefore, whatever we put forth as effort and energy goes in the wrong direction from the point of view of Mahayana. Actually Patrul Rinpoche said that if we spend the amount of time and effort which we spend for earning an ordinary living, and we put that same energy into dharma practice, he said everybody would be enlightened on earth a long time ago-which makes sense actually.

We're quite diligent in terms of earning a living. For example, we have to get up around 7:00 AM every day to shower and brush our teeth, and we have to drive our car to the office at 8:00 o'clock and then we come back. We don't really skip those daily routines, in relationship to work, career or social activities-and we do that how many times? We have only two vacations a year, but we really don't miss those social conventions or daily routines unless we have very serious illness or accidents.

But then, somehow our dharma practice is very easy to miss, the daily practice. Sometimes we might think "I'm going to get up and do my daily practice, but because I'm not really in the mood, or last night I drank too much wine, this morning I'm going to skip my morning sadhana."

That's why each of us have more enthusiasm or energy to put the focus, effort, and time toward worldly conventional activities rather than toward dharma practice. There's nothing wrong with that, but this is some kind of habitual

pattern that we have to break down sooner or later in order to succeed in the path of the Six Paramitas.

So now you see, we put so much effort of cultivation toward outer things, conventional social values and perfections, but when we think about how much time and energy we spend for inner cultivation--Six Paramitas is inner cultivation- it's sometimes not very much time.

Social cultivation or 'samsaric' cultivation is necessary too. Cultivating money, cultivating security, cultivating insurance, these are also necessary too, necessary for temporary reasons. But when we forget the inner cultivation, while we are being so busy and so dominated by the sense of external or worldly cultivations, then we end up not finding what we are looking for- which is liberation, which is enlightenment.

There is nothing wrong with the sense of cultivating worldly things. Nothing wrong with it. There's no sin in it. As a matter of fact, if you are able to combine together this external and internal cultivation together and helping each other, then that can be a very pure authentic dharma practice, too. As a matter of fact, if you listen to enlightened teachers, His Holiness Dalai Lama, or all the teachers in Tibetan Buddhist traditions or even other Buddhist traditions, they all talk actually about the importance of bringing together these two cultivations: worldly cultivation and inner cultivation - to see that the two things are not contradictory to each other.

When we have that philosophy, it can also change the quality of our dharma practice. So therefore, there's nothing wrong with outer cultivation. For instance, if we really think carefully about how we got this environment, somebody is paying money to rent this place. Somebody is really working so hard-which is Berry in this case-She's working really hard. But if she hadn't worked so hard, we wouldn't have this place. We might try to have the retreat somewhere else, and someone might accuse us of trespassing, and kick us off the property.

So we would be in big trouble if we just showed up on someone's property. So outer cultivation can be very good. For instance, if you have successful outer cultivation, it can support your inner cultivation.

The Six Paramitas is an inner cultivation, where we are going to develop, cultivate and reveal the inner perfections which are already there. But the philosophy of the Mahayana teachings is that the Six Paramitas are inherent qualities. They're not divine qualities, in the sense that divine quality and human quality are two separate things. The Six Paramitas are not divine qualities. They are human qualities. They're actually earthly qualities. And that means each of us is already endowed with the Six Paramitas . That's why in the Dzogchen teachings, they often talk about all sentient beings are already perfect from the very beginning of their existence, which means that we are endowed with Buddha qualities-omniscience, wisdom.

Love, compassion, and all these qualities that we are aspiring toward are already in each of us, but in the form of an endowment. It's like seeds buried underground. Imagine that there's a seed underground, and in order to grow that seed, you have to put lots of effort: water, and sun rays and the right kind of temperature, in order to grow that seed. The same with your enlightened qualities, your Buddha nature is like some kind of potential seed. In order to manifest it, it requires lots of work, practice, and training.

So now we can see that the Six Paramitas are in some way inherent qualities, in another way they are actually some kind of training or disciplines that we can practice. When we begin to practice *sīla* or generosity, we begin to unfold our inherent generosity. When we practice meditation, we begin to unfold our inner *samādhi* which is already there. When we practice wisdom, we begin to unfold our inner wisdom which is already there. So whatever we practice of the Six Paramitas will bring up that quality. So this is the ultimate inner cultivation of intrinsic perfections.

Six Paramitas, in that respect, are the trainings or practice of a bodhisattva. And in some way we can say that transcendent wisdom is the philosophy, or the view, of bodhisattvas, and the five paramitas, such as generosity, discipline, patience, diligence, meditation are the conduct or the practice of the bodhisattvas. We can experience the entire Six Paramitas in that statement.

Tonight the most important thing we can do is ordain each of us as bodhisattvas. Even though you had taken that vow in the past, it's always important to take this vow again and again. Bodhisattva vow is what we call a lifetime vow. There are three kinds of precepts in Buddhism. The first one is called periodic vows or precepts. The second one is called lifetime precept. Then another precept is called the vow you take from this moment until the moment you're enlightened-which might taken an instant and might take many lifetimes. It depends on your capability too. So for instance, when we take Vajrayāna vow, when we become yogis/yoginis, that vow begins from this moment until the moment we become enlightened.

When you're enlightened, then you can give up that vow. It may take just one day. It's possible that you can be enlightened in the evening and then you can give up that vow. If it is not serving you very well, you can give up that vow. Or it may take three lifetimes, or ten lifetimes, too. But bodhisattvas vow is considered a lifetime vow. So you take that vow from this one moment, always from this very moment, to the very moment that you die.

And even Mahayana teachings and literatures talk about that taking those bodhisattvas vows 6 times every day, 3 times during the day and 3 times during the night (called the 6 stations)-you take those vows 6 times every day and night, morning, noon, evening, early night, midnight and early morning (which is actually late night). So you may like to have actually a sort of bodhisattva alarm clock which rings 6 times a day. So you take this vow 6

times, every day and night, and when you do that, it can be sometimes a very formal ceremony.

The seven branch prayer is a very popular practice, especially in terms of taking Mahayana vows or Vajrayāna vows. There's one seven branch prayer which is in the Avalokiteshvara sadhana. You can use that. And sometimes there's a very short verse of 7 branch prayers, and you can recite that too. So it's good to recite 7 branch prayers.

Imagine that you are inviting Buddhas and bodhisattvas and taking the whole vow once again, and there's a tremendous sense of enhancement and reinforcement, every time we take vows through our visualization in front of Buddhas and bodhisattvas and mandalas. You begin to feel that there's a new charge, a new enthusiasm that grows in your heart in order to keep the vows and precepts and trainings of a bodhisattvas. So tonight I'm going to be giving this vow. And even though many of you are already ordained as bodhisattvas, so we are going to do that.

Also, it's very indispensable to the retreat to talk about bringing the right kind of intention. In Tibetan Buddhism, every time when we hold a retreat, often talk about having and possessing the right kind of intention. Kalong namtak which means pure intention.

One time Lama Tsongkapa said "if you have pure good intention then the path in the ground will be very pure. If you have a wrong intention, then the path in the ground will be wrong and mistaken." Therefore our retreat, especially the quality of retreat, or how much you are going to benefit from this retreat, will be determined by your motivation. Either you have right or wrong motivation. And then, of course, it has to do with lots of various other conditions, too-the teachings, the retreat place, the food, the conveniences, and so forth. But how much we're going to benefit from this retreat is based on how much you are going to hold pure intention.

We're going to begin to undertake this retreat, including this bodhisattva vow, by developing this pure intention. If we are able to have pure intention, it's like having a clean container. Once you have a clean container, you can pour ambrosia or nectar in that and it's going to be very pure. But imagine if that container is completely contaminated by poison and toxins, then no matter how much you pour into that, you can pour ambrosia into it, but everything (whatever goes into that container) will be toxic and poisonous.

Our mind, our motivation is like the container. Dharma teachings, including contemplation and meditation, are like the nectar. So if we don't have pure intention, then the teachings will go through our ears, but never go through our heart. The teachings will never have the ability to change our consciousness. So it's very necessary to try to develop the right kind of intention, which begins by developing this altruism or compassionate

motivation toward all sentient beings, which is again the motivation of bodhisattvas. This is known also as Bodhicitta.

So we have to think at least that we are engaging with this path not for some kind of personal achievement or self-improvement, not for any desire toward exotic knowledge's, without any kind of wrong intention, but rather we want to undertake the path of the Six Paramitas in order to liberate all sentient beings, including ourselves. Liberating all of us, each of us, from the reign of samsara to the state of ever excellent perfect Buddhahood. And that can be our fundamental motivation.

Then throughout the retreat, we may have various thoughts, like 5 poisons, or judgmental mind, or unhappy state of mind. Whatever comes, just make sure you are able to catch your motivations, your thought, immediately, whenever your mind is going in the wrong direction, the direction of non-virtuous karma. Try to catch it, be aware of that. Then as an offset, as an antidote, a remedy for that, you can practice the Six Paramitas, or altruism, or Bodhicitta mind or even Tonglen practice. Try to transform that-and experience a more transcendent or enlightened experience. This is the training of the bodhisattvas, which mentions many teachings, which include mind training (7 point mind training). So try to hold that motivation all the way through.

Now we are going to begin this ceremony of the bodhisattvas ordination. So in some way each of us are already bodhisattvas, because each of us are endowed with the Six Paramitas. Or one way of saying it is we are already potential bodhisattvas, or candidate bodhisattvas. Like when I was taking citizenship, I realized I never can be President of the United States because I don't have some of those intrinsic qualities (I wasn't born in the United States).

So we are bodhisattvas, because we have all these intrinsic qualities. We are 'naturalized' bodhisattvas. Is that a correct way to say it? We have all these qualities, the Six Paramitas, inherent qualities. Even somebody who's confused, completely confused and full of hatred, even that person has intrinsic qualities like love and compassion. The only problem that he or she has is that they're not able to manifest it because of the heaviness or the obscurations or karmic tendencies.

Yet the bodhisattva qualities already exist as our true potential. That is our ultimate potential. And this is at the same time a universal truth. All sentient beings possess these intrinsic qualities, no matter who they are. They may play various roles of saint, or sinner, or good person or bad person. Whatever images or roles they play, each of them have these intrinsic bodhisattva qualities, or Six Paramitas. Therefore all sentient beings are already bodhisattvas, as potential bodhisattvas, or bodhisattvas candidates.

So that means if we put all our heart and enthusiasm toward the path of Mahayana, each of us has the ability to become a bodhisattva in this very lifetime. Actually, we can be bodhisattvas in this very moment. And this is the

whole point of this ceremony. This ceremony is a truly symbolic ceremony to ordain, initiate each of us as bodhisattvas. So it's very possible that we can be bodhisattvas in this very moment. This ceremony is a symbolic initiation that empowers us as bodhisattvas in this very moment. Whenever we become awakened to our inner Buddha qualities, the Six Paramitas, then we are already bodhisattvas.

So it's possible that, until now, we have been ordinary beings, in terms of being sentient, being confused with all sorts of internal defilements, hopes, fears, 5 poisons. But simply by being awakened to our true nature, the bodhisattva qualities, in that very moment we can have such a transformation, such a metamorphosis, that we can be bodhisattvas too.

There are many stories in Mahayana teachings about this. Shantideva said in the Way of Bodhisattva, "Imagine there's a being who's suffering in the fire of hell, but the moment he or she has an instant of Bodhicitta, in that very moment, this person would be transformed as the heir of the Buddhas. This person would be the object of gods' and humans' worship and prayer.

So this is speaking about this instant transformation. Imagine that from the very beginning of our lifetimes until now, we have been wandering in the realm of samsara and perpetuating the same kind of habitual tendencies of hope, fear, insecurities, anxieties - all those neuroses that we are experiencing.

But if we are able to simply be aware of our inner Buddha nature, the Six Paramitas that are already present in us, then we may find some new treasure, a new perfection in each of us. By finding that new treasure in yourself, you have the power and the blessing to completely awaken and illuminate your life, in that instant, in that moment. So this is a very powerful path.

Some people think the Mahayana path is a very arduous path - that it is for individuals who have lower or inferior spiritual capabilities - that the Mantrayana is a higher or more esoteric teaching. But that is not true actually. Mahayana teachings can be very powerful and transformative too.

So, through this ceremony, the idea of the ceremony is that each of us is going to be empowered as a bodhisattva, and that means that each of us is going to be awakened to this inner treasure, this inner perfection, the intrinsic paramitas. So it's better to use this word of "intrinsic paramitas" instead of "paramitas." The moment we use the word of "intrinsic" it refers to the Six Paramitas are already inherent quality of each of us.

disappointment, isn't it? I may be a very good president. But one you can be president of the United States. Then you will have a bodhisattva President.

Good morning everyone. This morning, we are going to talk about the Six Paramitas, which is transcendent wisdom. And later, we will talk about the

other 5 paramitas. Yet this Sixth Paramita is perhaps the vital and most essential understanding in the context of the paramita teachings.

There are many ways that we can comprehend this meaning of transcendent wisdom. One vital meaning is that this state of wisdom transcends both samsara and nirvana. It's a state where one has gone beyond everything. Beyond duality, beyond birth, death, beyond anything that we can comprehend. And this is called Maha-nirvana, which is the ultimate revelation of Buddha Shakyamuni under the Bodhi tree, through his vajra-like samádhi.

Buddha Shakyamuni was seeking some kind of liberation or freedom from human existence or suffering. He was looking for peace. As we are human beings, we all desire some sense of peace, or temporary peace. Most of the time we don't even understand what permanent or everlasting peace is; therefore we're looking for temporary peace, which is really a form of escapism, a way of escaping from the physical pain and existential suffering that we experience every day. As individuals, we experience suffering through the 5 skandhas which we are going to talk about later. We experience physical pains too, as we are human beings.

When you think about the moment you are born up to now, or even if you think about the future, from this very moment until we die, we have to go through various physical pains. Sickness, hunger, thirst, tiresome back pain and so forth. All of them are some kind of physical pain or suffering, whatever you like to call it. And also, at the same time, we have emotional pain, grief or sadness, depression. Sometimes it can be very rational or reasonable, but most of the time it is very irrational, without any cause or source. We find out that we're in a deep psychological problem most of the time.

And so, we desire some kind of immediate peace, or jiva in Tibetan, which means peace but has the connotation of a temporary peace, or instant peace. Maybe we can call it instant coffee, something that you want to get right now for immediate relief of pain or suffering. That's what we're desiring for most of the time.

Therefore, our lives can be sometimes very neurotic because we're constantly trying to hang on to immediate and instant relief of either physical or emotional pain and suffering. We're always jumping from one sensation to another, from one environment to another. And at the same time, if we are able to reflect on our everyday life, perhaps we'll discover that we have these habitual tendencies of going from one place to another place, either based on sensation or pleasure or emotion.

It can be something very simple; a very ordinary habit. For example, right now maybe we're drinking coffee, but nevertheless the next moment we want to drink tea or something like that. Then the next moment, we're wanting to eat something. One moment we are sitting in this temple, but then you might get bored with sitting here, or a physical sensation comes to make us feel

uncomfortable or experiencing anxiety, and we find ourselves moving on to something else.

There is this constant perpetual tendency of not being able to be in the moment, but rather of being constantly haunted, pushed by dissatisfaction. And this is what we call dukha or oppressive suffering. So in that respect, there's a notion that Buddhism is passivism, because Buddha talked about the truth of suffering and the truth of dukha. And yet Buddhism is not passivism actually. It's more optimism because Buddha taught that suffering is not permanent.

No matter how great our suffering is, how intense and personal, there is a universal and inherent capability in each of us to overcome it. More than that, we have this intrinsic ability to actualize, to obtain the highest achievement and attainment which is enlightenment. We have the capability of attaining transcendent wisdom, which is the supreme knowledge, the knowledge that is supreme and divine, above all the dualistic knowledge that you can imagine.

There are various knowledge's in this world, given by society, given by philosophers and scientists, and spiritual adepts. And all those knowledge's are trying to show us the way out of suffering, how to have instant gratification, or instant relief. Actually, nowadays we're not going so much toward knowledge, but toward intoxicating substances. Maybe it was true at one time, that people were going toward more knowledge.

Buddha talked about giving up the obsession for knowledge and philosophy in his teachings. I think nowadays we have to put more emphasis on giving up obsession for substances. When I say substances, it can be anything, not only drugs or nice food, but substance, for example any material can be a substance, a source of obsession, attachment or the desire for instant relief of pain and suffering. At this time, in this era, we have to emphasize abandoning attachment and obsession to substances.

Knowledge is some kind of wisdom, either social or religious wisdom that teaches us how to get out of suffering. But from Buddha's teachings, especially from the perspective of the Mahayana view, knowledge can never actually grant us the means of finding freedom from nirvana or mokcha which is actually complete and total liberation.

For instance, Buddha was seeking knowledge too, at first. For many years in the forest, Buddha was in the company of various spiritual adepts and siddhus. After a period of time, he recognized that he wasn't discovering what he was looking for which was complete and everlasting liberation. So what he did was he sat under the Bodhi tree one night, and he went beyond all knowledge. Beyond all samsaric knowledge or nirvana knowledge. He went beyond all knowledge. And because he transcended all knowledge, he was able to gain this samádhi which is called vajra samádhi which is the entrance to the experience of enlightenment, according to Buddha's life story.

Then he discovered this Prajna paramita teaching. One of the first things he said was: "Our life is so marvelous to see all sentient beings as Buddhas." And then Buddha said, "What I have discovered is so profound and so unfathomable that no one would understand, so I am going to stay in the forest and be in silence."

Then the story goes that Buddha went to the forest for many years. After a while, Indra and Brahma came from heaven to request Buddha to give teachings on what he had realized. But still, he didn't teach the Prajna paramita. He realized that ordinary human beings could not understand what he had realized, so he taught the four thoughts as groundwork, as preliminary teachings or guidance as a foundation for transcendent wisdom teachings. Later he taught the Prajna paramita teachings at the Vulture Peak Mountain in India.

So in some way, what we're doing here is very much what Buddha did, even though of course many of you already have the higher capability to understand very advanced teachings like Dzogchen Mahamudra, and maha-yoga and so forth. Yet we did exactly what Buddha did. We taught in the first year the four noble truths, the four thoughts. We did all this groundwork, the preliminary training and education. Now, we're ready to receive the Prajna paramita teachings, and this is not Vulture Peak Mountain, but at least we can think of it as Vulture Peak Mountain. This is actually redwood trees.

So in some way we may have this preconception, this idea that some way we're going to get some kind of Buddha knowledge, or very special fancy knowledge from this teaching and training and that will fix all our problems overnight, because it's transcendent wisdom. This is something we have to let go of right now.

Actually, when you look carefully at the words of enlightenment in Tibetan, it says chang chub. It doesn't say chup-chang. That would be really good, chupchang would mean completion first, and then purification. But rather, purification comes first, then completion comes after that.

The Tibetan translators translated the word Bodhi as chang chub, which has two connotations. Chang means purification, and chup means completion, which is a very extraordinary translation. It really clarifies the whole meaning of the path, as well as the state of enlightenment. It's very good sometimes to reflect on those words, chang chub.

So that means, in order to have completion, where the completion means wisdom, enlightenment, or freedom or love or Bodhicitta - first we have to go through this process of chang, which means purification. That means purifying all our habitual tendencies, even purifying knowledge too. Purifying concepts.

Concepts can be a great hindrance to experiencing directly the way of things, (which is tadtai in Buddhism or the such-ness, in order to realize the way things are). In order to realize the nature of reality, one has to purify not only the karmic tendencies, the gross ones, which are quite easy to point out, but also the subtle ones, concepts, concepts about who we are, concepts about Buddha and nirvana. We have to transcend all of them. That's why it's called transcendent wisdom - transcending everything, every level of concept. Whether they're holy or unholy, virtuous or non-virtuous, it doesn't matter, we have to transcend every form of concept in order to experience directly the tadtai or the such-ness too.

Tadta is a very interesting way to express reality. Tadta is almost a meaningless word in Sanskrit, which means "that" or something like that. So therefore, Buddha was limited by language. It was extraordinarily difficult to put into words or to conceptualize about the true nature of reality he experienced. So tadta is almost like baby talk. It means "such-ness" or the way things are. Reality itself is beyond any comprehension or language or symbol or concept. It's only something you can experience directly. So transcendent wisdom is something we can only experience directly and is not based on any knowledge or words or concepts or language. So that's why Buddha called it tadta or such-ness.

Now we've come to the understanding that this whole training is not about acquiring or accumulating more knowledge but rather purifying and eradicating everything we've invested and accumulated in our consciousness throughout many lifetimes. Until we enter the path, or the Prajna paramita training, we've been encouraged to accumulate more knowledge, more ideas about what is nirvana, what is samsara, what is the way to liberation.

Take for instance the four thoughts or the four noble truths. These are basically various ideas or viewpoints or belief systems about who we are and what is the cause of samsara or enlightenment. But once we've entered this path of Prajna paramita, we're talking about purifying everything. This is very similar to the Atiyoga teachings, the Dzogchen teachings.

Longchenpa says that either one could be locked up in the golden chain or an iron chain, it doesn't matter, either way one is locked up in prison. So therefore, every form of concept that we associate in our mind is actually a form of chain that distances us from the complete liberation of maha-nirvana. Whether they're a positive concept, or a negative concept, or even spiritual wisdom or conventional wisdom, any concept can be a subtle hindrance to experiencing the vajra like samádhi which is transcendent wisdom.

So now what we're doing is very unusual - unprecedented in our path, to some degree. It's about purifying everything. It's like some kind of backward practice, backward training. Up to now we've been encouraged to look for wisdom. We've been looking for knowledge everywhere, because we've been so desperate to experience immediate relief of suffering and pain and so forth.

Buddha did exactly the same as us, except he didn't drive an old Volvo. Otherwise he did exactly the same as me and you. In modern day terms he was a freak and he was a spiritual seeker also. But perhaps he wouldn't fit into any category. He might not even fit into a Buddhist community either. So basically he was a spiritual freak. He would definitely drive an old Volvo. I have a good joke about that, too. Because Buddhist people have a great attachment to precious human life, they don't want to die in car accidents before attaining Buddhahood. So they usually buy Volvos.

So Buddha was exactly like we are now. A seeker of truth. So what Buddha found at first is called jiva. Zsuppa da jiva. Jiva means peace, but this has a connotation of temporary peace. Zsuppa means samsara. Samsara is the very experience of this contact, dissatisfaction, pain, boredom, loneliness, insecurity or various existential survival difficulties - which is quite obvious. Either we admit it consciously or not, or we are able to discuss it openly. We can't hide some of those existential survival difficulties, challenges. We might try to have some kind of false optimism or wear rose colored glasses, or try to live with a sense of American optimism. But it is obvious: there is extreme existential suffering. We experience it in our own lives and we see it in the lives of other people too.

So this is called samsara. Zsuppa is our internal sufferings and conflicts with reality, with life. This is called Zsuppa. Then there's jiva, which is temporary peace. Yet it is actually samsara deep down. You may not experience the intensities, or the obvious or apparent sufferings of samsara, but yet it is samsara. This is because whenever you run out of merit or run out of whatever the source of that temporary peace is, you have to go back again to samsara and re-experience everything again.

So jiva is sometimes known as temporary nirvana. So Buddha discovered that in the first place, before he actualized transcendent wisdom in the forest. There was a time when even he made a mistake, misperceiving jiva as nirvana or maha-nirvana. He thought that he'd gained enlightenment. But later he discovered that actually he hadn't gotten any further toward enlightenment. He came back to Bodghaya and sat under the Bodhi tree, and finally obtained the samádhi called the vajra-samádhi or transcendent wisdom.

So therefore it's a very important point for bodhisattvas or for practitioners of Prajna paramita not to misunderstand the jiva as the ultimate state of ultimate liberation. Shiva is some kind of false bliss or false state of enlightenment. We may have a perception that we are already enlightened or a false perception that everything's perfect or a false perception that we no longer have to do dharma practice, or a false perception that 'oh, we know now the truth', or that we now have the ultimate wisdom or the ultimate knowledge. These are the symptoms of jiva.

We can experience jiva, or this temporary happiness, through various circumstances. For instance, sometimes we can take sanctuary in the material world, in the conventional world, and we can also experience the sense of jiva or temporary bliss or happiness. If you gained such a worldly richness, wealth, a nice house, and popularity, it's quite easy to experience temporary happiness in ways that obscure our seeing the existence of the underlying problems and conflicts of our life.

For instance, if we are on some kind of path, spiritual path, or even the path to enlightenment, it's very easy to experience this jiva or notion of temporary satisfaction, where we think 'oh everything's fine, or perfect' like being in spiritual la-la land, where everything is fantastic, exquisite, enlightened and so forth. So there are many sources in our life where we can experience temporary satisfaction. This is maybe familiar territory to each of us.

When we meditate carefully in our own lives, we can come to a heart felt realization that there is this ongoing dissatisfaction. Sometimes we're aware of it, sometimes not. Most times we're not aware of that underlying sense of dissatisfaction. It's an ongoing experience for each of us this sense of pain or discontent with who we are and the world around us.

This is always with us whether we're eating, sleeping, dancing or celebrating, there's always this ongoing sense of dissatisfaction. It's either projected onto our physical image, when we think: 'I'm not beautiful', or projected onto our sense of wealth: 'I don't have enough money', or projected on our life: 'life is confusing', or projected on God: 'god is not just', or onto society: 'society is not as perfect as I wish it were'.

So there is this constant dissatisfaction, but we don't experience this all the time consciously. We manage to hide that feeling by experiencing jiva, the temporary happiness, through various indulgences.

So let's talk about indulgence. That came up this morning. Buddhism talks about indulgence. Other religions talk about indulgence. In Christianity they have the 10 sins, right? One of them is eating too much food, what is that? Gluttony. That is similar to the Buddhist concept of indulgence.

So we have to talk about the habit of indulgence in relationship to our own life. It's not a really big problem, because everyone has this problem, so that makes it not a very big problem. Otherwise it's very scary to find out that we alone have a problem of indulgence. But it's a universal problem, a global problem. It's a problem for all human beings, so you don't have to feel any shame or guilt to meditate on that in our own life. I think sometimes westerners have a sense of reluctance or hesitance to find out about their own faults or their own neuroses, because society always condemns neuroses or habitual tendencies. So people are often afraid to discover any fault in themselves. So we must say this is a universal problem, and we have to be very happy, very delighted to discover our own indulgence.

It's not your problem, it's a problem for everyone. It's like snow, because snow lands on everyone's head, it's not just landing on you.

What is indulgence? It's actually a very subtle tendency that governs or dominates every day of our life. Of course, sometimes indulgence can take a very serious level or degree. For instance there are people in society that are obsessed with drugs or sports, or obsessed with various things, very intensively, more than other people. But deep down we all have indulgences.

What is the nature of indulgence? It comes out of this ongoing desire to release dissatisfaction. We cannot tolerate the experience of dissatisfaction. It's very painful to experience. We want immediate release, or instant release. So therefore we've got all these instant substances: instant coffee, and nowadays, we have instant liberation, too.

One time Dalai Lama was giving a teaching and somebody asked him this question: "Can you teach us what is the fastest and cheapest way to enlightenment?" Basically he was asking for instant liberation. So we are looking for instant liberation, instant release. Anything that comes along with the label "instant" is very appealing to each of us. Somehow, it isn't easy to simply hang out with this experience of dissatisfaction. It's very painful.

If we allow ourselves to meditate and to discover what is really the nature of this dissatisfaction, we may find out the perfect answer, the meaning within the conflict itself, within the suffering dissatisfaction itself. What happens though, is we get sidetracked. It's like if your car has mechanical problems, it would be quite a meaningless act to go fix your computer. Maybe we don't often want to open the car, because we're afraid we'll find dead rats, mice, dirt, and stuff. So we really don't want to open the hood of the car. Instead we decide to go fix our computer, mindlessly thinking that fixing the computer is going to fix the car.

So this is very much like obsessing on external indulgences rather than digging into the nitty gritty of what's causing those indulgences in the first place.

So someone may think "Why is it so necessary to talk about all these unpleasant things about ourselves. Why don't we talk about more glamorous, transcendent or spiritual qualities, like Buddha nature?" To explain this, Buddha gave the following categories of teachings, called the three rules or three dharma chakras: The first dharma chakra were the Buddha's teachings on the four noble truths. The second dharma chakra were the Buddha's teachings on emptiness, transcendent wisdom. The third dharma chakra were the Buddha's teachings on Buddha nature, Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya, Nirmanakaya, and the Prajna paramita teachings. These teachings on Buddha nature or luminous wisdom, are known as dhrupa, which means teachings of affirmation. But in order to understand teachings of affirmation, first we have to understand the teachings of negation.

The notion of negation is to eradicate all our concepts, which are the source of samsara. If we are able to eradicate our concepts, including grasping to ego, grasping to duality, then there is space in our consciousness to experience directly all the enlightened properties, enlightened existence - Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya, Nirmanakaya. As a matter of fact, by purifying our habitual tendencies and concepts, the gnonto, and then the chup, the completion comes naturally, automatically without any effort.

For instance, if our mirror is dusty, we just wipe the dust off the mirror. We don't have to actually manufacture another mirror because the mirror is already absolutely perfect, absolutely pristine. That mirror has the quality of reflecting images, and that means all we have to do is wipe off the dust which obscures the mirror's intrinsic ability to reflect images. In the same we, we are already Buddhas from the very beginning of our existence.

Transcendent wisdom, the Six Paramitas, are already inherent in each of us, although dormant right now. In that sense we don't have to try to actualize or try to gain any enlightened qualities. They're already in each of us. So now, all we have to do is engage in process of meditation, in the various means and methods to purify the obscurations and defilements which obscure our Buddha qualities in this very lifetime. So if we are able to practice the first principle chang, then chup comes automatically as a natural, spontaneous attainment.

So now you see we came to this understanding that the ultimate suffering is dissatisfaction, and there isn't another form of suffering besides it. You may think that suffering can be caused by outer circumstances, unfavorable circumstances, such as loss of one's loved ones, being in a state of poverty, or maybe having various uncomfortable conditions, illness and so forth. In reality none of them can create suffering in us.

Suffering is a state of mind. Dissatisfaction is the only suffering that we should and that we can eradicate. When we eradicate or transform dissatisfaction, then everything can be transformed. Reality can be transformed in your own mind and that transforms the entire world which is only your perception. There is no reality outside your own perception.

So Buddhism teaches that we can find in ourselves the ultimate liberation, the completion of enlightenment, right in this very moment. It's not like building a bridge or building stupas. If we're supposed to build a bridge, then we have to have substantial financial resources and other resources. It takes time, it takes all these conditions. It can be very dependent on outer circumstances. But enlightenment is not like building a bridge. It can happen right now by your own effort, because it's all about transforming one's perception, one's understanding of what is reality, who we are. So in some ways, obtaining enlightenment is much simpler, much easier than fixing one's computer, or fixing one's teapot.

Fixing one's computer is very difficult, actually, because first you have to have the knowledge, and even if you have the knowledge, the computer has to be fixable. If the computer is not fixable, then your knowledge about computer cannot repair the computer miraculously. So in that way enlightenment is a very easy process sometimes. Almost too easy. It's a work, a transformation that you can experience by changing your perception, independently too. It's quite amazing.

But on the other hand, it can be also very difficult, too. It's a very difficult process. Even Buddha says, "In the Hinayana path, individuals may take three aeons to gain enlightenment." Aeons are a very very long time. It can actually be very shocking news to hear what is one aeon. It contains billions of years. Quite hopeless news actually. Buddha said "Hinayana path is like riding an ox, a slow ox, it takes a long time to reach any place." The Mahayana and Vajrayāna path are like riding a magical horse. You get to your destination quite miraculously. So therefore enlightenment sometimes takes a long time, sometimes short.

So when you think about your path, your dharma practice, it may seem to be taking a long time. And sometimes we have the experience of "Oh, this dharma practice is not really working for me. I've been trying to do this for a long time. I have been taking initiations, and still my problems are as concrete as before. More than that, it even seems as though I'm getting a little be worse than before."

There are many times that we actually have doubt about Buddha nature, maybe this whole Buddha nature thing is some kind of Buddhist good news, or Buddhist optimism. It has nothing to do with reality. We always encounter this doubt. We often have doubt toward our Buddha nature. Also, it is very easy to have doubt toward the dharma teachings. So either way it can be an obstruction. If we have doubt towards our Buddha nature or toward dharma teachings it can be a very powerful hindrance towards our path.

Even if we don't think that we are already Buddhas, at least we have to have a certain unshakeable faith that we have the potential of actualizing Buddhahood in this very lifetime and to overcome our suffering. We have to cultivate that conviction and faith as the foundation, the cornerstone of our dharma practice.

So in Tibetan Buddhism, there's a great emphasis in developing faith, developing faith in one's Buddha nature, in one's Buddha potentiality. This is perhaps the most important insight, more important than any other meditation, than any other practice. When we have true faith, true conviction in our Buddha nature, then it's very easy, it's very possible to gain samādhi, liberation and wisdom. Everything's possible. Then we may use the expression, as Tibetan's use, Sangye Lapchang, which means "Buddha is in the palm of your hand." Whenever you have complete faith in your Buddha nature, then

enlightenment is in the palm of your hand. Sangye Lapchang. Buddhahood in one's hand.

I often talk about the importance of cultivating faith in Buddha nature. Buddha nature is not a philosophy, not some kind of optimism, or some kind of klesha. It's not some kind of politician's klesha like: "Everything's going to be fine next year when I become president".

I think Americans have very skeptical minds sometimes because you have a long history of leaders and politicians talking about "good news" and yet it ends up having nothing to do with reality. So there is a deep skepticism in American culture which becomes a threat. And we have those doubts and skepticisms in our consciousness too.

When we carry those conventional doubts and skepticism, which come from your upbringing, your culture, on the path to enlightenment, they can be major obstacles. Skepticism or doubt is a very powerful hindrance to us. So faith is actually the remedy to that.

In Buddhism, we don't talk a lot about conceptual faith, faith in conceptual thinking. Buddha never told his followers: "You should have faith in me." Buddha never talked about having faith in any external entity or beings. Buddha even said at one point, "Do not rely on me, rely on my teachings. Do not rely on words, but rely on meanings. Do not rely on concepts, but rely on wisdom. Do not rely on words, but rely on the realization" (the four reliance's, a very famous Buddha's statement).

So he didn't encourage his followers to have faith in any outside beings outside themselves. He encouraged all his followers to have faith in their own Buddha nature. To have faith means to have faith in your own Buddha nature. That is the ultimate faith. It is also very important to have secondary faith, like faith in dharma teachings, faith in enlightened teachers. These are also very necessary. They can help enhance faith in your own Buddha nature.

When we are able to develop faith in Buddha, it's much easier to develop faith in your own Buddha nature. When we have faith in our Sangha, in our dharma teachings, and the dharma teachings of Buddha Shakyamuni, Guru Padmasambhava, then it is very easy to have faith in one's own Buddha nature too.

If we are able to have faith, not only in enlightened teachers, but even in one individual person, that helps us to open our hearts to have faith in our own Buddha nature. There's a story that an old lady who became enlightened by worshipping a dog tooth that she thought was the Buddhas'. So if we have faith in the Buddha, or in enlightened teachers, or even faith in an ordinary person, it can help you to open your heart, open your mind to explore that we have Buddha nature - that we have this basic, ultimate, intrinsic, timeless, inherent divinity.

Everyone knows the story about the dog tooth, right? This is perhaps my favorite story in Tibetan Buddhism. So sometimes it's good to repeat those stories, they can be very inspiring. As a matter of fact, we are maybe going to read Milarepa's life story at the next DAP retreat. It's very good to read inspiring stories of enlightened beings, saints throughout history, like reading a story of 84 Mahasiddhas.

Anyway, this story is about a lady in Eastern Tibet who was very devoted. And she always wanted to have a tooth of the Buddha which is quite ambitious. I think there are only two or three of Buddha's teeth, but she was very devoted and very nave too. So she has a son who goes to Lhasa, a holy city in the center of Tibet. Lhasa is considered to be a holy city where you have all the monasteries, temples, all the lamas. So she told her son to bring back Buddha's tooth as a gift when he comes back from his tour to Lhasa. So he was someone who commuted between Lhasa and Eastern Tibet often, and every time he went there, he would forget to bring back a present. So the next time he went off, his mother said: "If you don't bring back Buddha's tooth this time, I'm going to jump off a cliff and kill myself." So he said "Ok, don't worry, this time I will make sure to bring back Buddha's tooth for your altar." He went to Lhasa and he forgot again to look for Buddha's tooth. So when he returned, as he was nearing his village, he realized that he hadn't brought anything for his mother. He got very nervous, remembering what his mother had said. So he looked around, and found a dog's corpse. He took a tooth from the dog's corpse, and wrapped it in a very beautiful, fancy, silk kaza. The next day he arrived at his village. He presented the gift to his mother and said "This is Buddha's tooth. Please cherish it. Take care of it. Put it on your altar." And the mother was so happy, completely overjoyed. She put that tooth on her altar, and sat every day and did meditation and prayer. When she died, she obtained rainbow body, she became an enlightened one. This is a very good story. So it really happens that the dog's tooth was not Buddha's tooth; it was a dog's tooth, obviously, no way to mistake that. But somehow she was able to experience her own pure perception of faith in relation to her Buddha nature, by opening her heart, by having faith in that object as Buddha's tooth.

So it's very important, and a powerful means as well, to exercise faith or pure perception in all beings, in everything, in order to awaken to our own Buddha nature. Therefore, there is a sense in Tibetan Buddhism of exercising faith, which is a very unusual concept in western culture - exercising faith, exercising pure perception.

Pure perception and faith are very similar to each other. For example, when we end the session, we always recite the prayer of pure vision, which is all about exercising pure perception or faith in relationship to everything beyond existence, whatever comes in front of us.

So all of this means we are already Buddhas. Each of us have the potential to become Buddha in this very moment, because it's all a matter of changing

one's ultimate perception of who we are and toward reality too. In that respect, enlightenment is very easy.

But where are we going to find the notion of enlightenment or Buddhahood? Outside oneself? Outside oneself in a divine transcendent dimension? Or are we going to find enlightenment within oneself. Enlightenment can only occur or awaken within oneself, within one's own consciousness. And that means enlightenment can be discovered within our own problems, within our conflict, within our own kleshas, whatever they are, right now.

When we are able to reflect and meditate on our own consciousness, our own kleshas, our defilements, habitual tendencies, instead of getting stuck with them, instead of finding more and more suffering, we find true liberation actually. This is a very ironic truth. When we try to run away from our problems or internal kleshas, then our problems begin to grow, they tend to multiply. If you try to find instant relief or satisfaction from outside in the material, or worldly, existence, sensual pleasures, entertainment, ideas, activities, our problems begin to grow, becomes heavier, and multiply.

The moment we are able to redirect our mind, and are able to meditate on the nature of reality, of our suffering or our problems, as well as our Buddha nature, then the problems begin to resolve immediately. It happens the moment we are able to direct our mind toward our suffering. Liberation comes out of suffering. Therefore, Buddha said: "Suffering is a mask to all the Buddhas of the three times. *Dukha* is actually the holy word for all Buddhas in the past, present and future. And there's no one who's become an enlightened one without taking one's own suffering as the ultimate teacher.

What does this mean, taking one's own suffering as a teacher? What does it mean? Does it mean that we have to become some kind of spiritual masochist? To experience more torment? It means to reflect on the nature of suffering, it means not being afraid of suffering, but rather undergoing the process of reflection, trying to understand what is the nature of suffering in this very moment.

There are many forms of suffering. Buddha talked about 84,000 human sufferings that we can experience in one day. We can count some of them right now, actually, from the headache down to the back pain; from stress to anxiety. We can count quite a few forms of suffering, but all of them actually grow from one field and that is dissatisfaction. You might be experiencing anxiety, or a sense of delusion, hope, or fear. All of them come out of one problem: dissatisfaction or discontent. This is what Buddha called "oppressive suffering." This sense of suffering actually permeates every one of our lifetime activities, motivations, conduct and so forth. It can also manifest in various forms of anxiety, grief, dissatisfaction, delusion, projection and so forth. This is the source of all suffering: dissatisfaction.

So where does this dissatisfaction come from? We are going to meditate on that. This is what the Prajna paramita teachings are all about. And ironically, when we experience this sense of dukha or dissatisfaction, we want to have the peace right now, immediately. We want a physical and emotional peace.

There are two ways that we look for that temporary peace, or 'jiva'. One is the instinctual method. That means you want to eat something, or drink something, have something, or experience something. Maybe you want to drink wine or have a party or listen to music. Of course there's nothing wrong with listening to music but if we look carefully, most of the time the sense of looking for relief is behind our motivation. Or maybe we want to live in a nice house, or have nice clothes, or move immediately from one environment to another environment, or we want to maybe surf the channels on the TV. All of this is because of dissatisfaction, obviously.

Maybe we want to have a lot of projects going on at the same time. These are the instinctual methods through which we experience jiva or temporary relief, which most people do. As American culture, as global culture, we go toward various sensual pleasures such as entertainment, movies, music, and so forth. I'm not saying these things are bad; but perhaps our motivation for being attached to them is to experience jiva or temporary relief.

Another way we look for jiva is the non-instinctual method. I'm not sure exactly what we have to use, but maybe it's some kind of ingenious method or conception. Somehow, we've become very sophisticated and we know that all these sensual pleasures cannot give us ultimate happiness, so we become very "spiritual" in that point of view. We become very disgusted or disillusioned with worldly life. We become disillusioned with the material world. Nothing makes sense to us, and we become very, basically, grouchy. Holy grouchy. We may want to be a monk tomorrow, or we want to be a nun tomorrow morning. We cut our hair. We think everybody's quite superficial, the culture is very material. We begin to see everything very gloomy, that there's no meaning in samsara, and we become saintly - holy grouchy. Then we begin to look for knowledge or wisdom. We may end up packing everything up tomorrow and going to Nepal or Jerusalem or Tibet to find out the way to enlightenment.

Many have followed a path such as this. When you were teenagers, you weren't interested in these teachings at all actually. And there were times that each of us were predominantly involved with sensual pleasures or entertainment that goes along with the main culture, like enjoying fancy clothes, driving a nice car, and trying to have ambitions or goals in life like trying to be successful. That was the purpose of life.

Then we came to the realization that none of our goals were giving us happiness. We knew that something was wrong with life. Then, there was a time when we began to look for wisdom, look for the enlightened path, and that's when we thought of becoming monks or nuns, when we ran away from

our home town and so forth, to look for some kind of ultimate way to free ourselves from this suffering, this ongoing dissatisfaction.

This is a very necessary development or process. To reach the vehicle Prajna paramita, we have to go through all these phases, all these processes of our lifetime. And some of you are standing on Vulture Peak Mountain right now, ready to meditate, ready to explore the wealth of transcendent wisdom. But all things, whatever you did in the past, were actually a very necessary preparation to where we begin to explore the treasures, the wealth, the enlightened wisdom of transcendent teachings, Prajna paramita.

In my case, it was very different because I was a monk already when I was 10 years old. My way of renouncing samsara was running away from the monastery and coming to the United States. That was my way of practicing renunciation. For you it would be the opposite.

I think now we went beyond these two stages. Looking for perfection through sensual pleasures, or looking for perfection through acquiring more knowledge, more ideas. So when we read various books of all sorts, that's actually the same desire at work - to find an alternate satisfaction. We may think "some books may have the right answer to some of my problems, or maybe the dharma has, or that teaching has the answer." All of that comes from the one motivation, which is a very good motivation, nothing wrong with it.

But somehow the notion of Prajna paramita has the meaning of transcending everything, transcending even knowledge, transcending attachment toward anything, toward illusions, and transcending even attachment toward knowledge. So this is not about acquiring knowledge, or trying to learn more, but trying to not learn or un-learn.

So see. We always think of dharma as something to learn, but in this respect, it's something not to learn anymore. Something that transcends the act of learning.

In the Buddhist teachings, there are three stages, such as hoppisa. Hoppi means the state of learning, and that is considered the ordinary state. Then Buddhahood is considered mehoppisa which is considered the "not learning" state. So the path of Prajna paramita is the path of not learning. Not learning anything else. Not learning ideas, not learning any concept, any knowledge about enlightenment or ultimate reality. This is the way of not learning. It's very easy actually. We don't have any quizzes, no examinations, since this is the path of not learning.

So now, according to the Prajna paramita teachings, dissatisfaction arises out of grasping onto the notion of "I" or ego. Going beyond has this sense of going beyond ego. Ego is the ultimate concept. It is concept. Usually concept, or

nongtuk, has the connotation of being fallible, of being invalid. Or it's a form of misperception when we say "concept," something we can eradicate, something we can actually throw out. You can say "Oh that's just your concept."

So ego is nothing but a simple concept. But somehow every human being has a very strong attachment to his or her concepts. This is a completely invalid concept. We may understand intellectually that this is an invalid concept that we need to throw out, but our attachment toward it is very strong, and deeply rooted in each of us through many lifetimes. So intellectual understanding cannot cut through this attachment. It requires meditation and various means of upaya including discipline and so forth.

So in this respect the Six Paramitas are not simply a meditation. It has various involvement with other practices, too. For instance, shila. Shila means discipline. Shila has various aspects including practicing discipline and purification too. For instance, discipline is necessary to support practice in order to experience transcendent wisdom or freedom from ego. It can be very powerful.

Shila is very important as a supporting practice in order to experience transcendent wisdom or the freedom from ego. Shila can be very powerful. Because we may understand intellectually the notion of ego as illusion, but in order to really purify our attachment and grasping to this notion of "I", it requires a lot of practice and discipline.

Buddha talked about the Six Paramitas, and he talked about transcendent wisdom being the main practice, a vital practice; but the five Paramitas are practices or disciplines which support us in order to gain this ultimate Paramita, transcendent wisdom.

Therefore, we can apply various disciplines. Of course, upaska vow can be a discipline, it can be a Paramita, too. And in your daily life, you can practice those Six Paramitas: generosity, discipline and so forth. There are many ways you can practice those Six Paramitas. They can be either formal or informal practices.

For instance, coming here to this sanctuary, and giving up your daily activities, and sitting in uncomfortable postures for 8 hours is discipline, too. What we are doing right now is part of the Six Paramitas practice. Actually, in Tibetan Buddhism, whenever we have an intensive retreat (and this is an intensive retreat in many degrees-a retreat that involves lots of reflection, meditation, sense of sincerity), usually we take a fasting ceremony, which involves a very specific discipline.

For instance, you can have only one meal, and then you don't eat anything else during the day, only one meal. And then there's a time that you get up very

early in the morning, it's very good to get up very early in the morning, and go to your mat and spend lots of time in meditation, time by yourself.

There are a lot of practices and disciplines that can support our path toward the direct experience of transcendent wisdom, which means basically Rigpa. In Dzogchen, they talk about Rigpa. In Mahamudra, they talk about innate wisdom. In the Madhyamika teaching, they talk about transcendent wisdom, which refers to the same realization, the same experience of Buddha mind. There's no real difference or hierarchy between them.

Ego is a misperception, so we have to find way, such as wisdom, as well as meditation, a process of purification to eradicate or purify this attachment, this ultimate delusion.

What is ego? What is the notion of "I"? When you read the Heart Sutra, there are lots of teachings, lots of wisdom words to find out what is emptiness, what is self-emptiness, which is the non-existence of ego. The Heart Sutra is a very beautiful prayer that you can recite. The teaching is based on transcendent wisdom.

In the Heart Sutra, it is said that ego comes out of the 5 skandhas, which are form, feeling, perception, intention or sometimes will, and then consciousness. So we are going to do a different set of meditations in order to understand the emptiness of the five skandhas.

These five skandhas are like attachment to this table. This table is a good example. It has various components, legs, a top, nails. But what is this table? There's no table, really. This table is just an object that someone designated or labeled as "table", based on the dependence of all these different components. So there's no table. In the same way, there's no house either. And there's no cup, and there's no bell.

In the Heart Sutra, there's no eyes, no tongue, no ears, no nose. Some lamas say: why didn't Buddha just say "there's no face"? That would have fixed everything. You know, there's no head (laughter). There's also no car, no office, no traffic jam. This is good news. All these things are a huge problem, a huge concept. "Thing" is the source of samsara. "Thing" is the source of everything. Things. What we're trying to do is eradicate things.

So we think there are lots of things. There are lots of things right now. Samsara is a thing. Nirvana is a thing. Buddha is a thing. Dharma is also a thing.

Buddha said "there is no wisdom, there is no dharma." This is quite a valuable statement in the Heart Sutra - "there's no dharma." There's no attainment even, because attainment is just a concept too. So things don't exist in the state of meditation. In the state of transcendent wisdom, things do not exist. And that state is called "great shunyata".

In Dzogchen it's called Dharmakaya, which means the same thing, the all-pervasive space. All-pervasive space is the source of all enlightened qualities. So emptiness and Dharmakaya mean the same thing. Dzogchen doesn't use the word "great shunyata" as we use in the Prajna Paramita teachings. In Dzogchen, they use more the notion of Dharmakaya, which means "all-pervasive, enlightened space." And in that state, there is no "thing." A thing has no existence, it is merely a concept.

So what we're trying to do right now is get rid of things. This is a very simple practice. Prajna Paramita is a very simple practice, getting rid of things. It's a kind of mind laundry practice. A mind-washing practice - getting rid of every thing out of your mind.

So whatever we experience, perceive everything as concepts in our mind. This practice is to get rid of everything in your mind, actually.

So you see, the table does not exist. The table is just an object that we have labeled with the word 'table' based on this collection of legs, nails, wood and so forth. In the same way, we are like the table. When we say "I", this is just like the table. The five skandhas are similar to the components of the table.

Form, is for instance our physical body, or rupa in Sanskrit. This very physical body we received from our parents - from the elements. In Tibetan teachings there is an expression: "borrowed room" or "borrowed house"). It's like this body is a rented motel room. We rent it for a while, and it will decompose eventually into the 5 elements.

So it's like a borrowed motel room, and we are the so-called 'tenants'. We have to take care of this rental room. We cannot do damage to this property because it's borrowed. We have to take care of it very well. Cleansing feet and face, we care for everything, which is our task. But at the same time, we cannot be attached to this body, this form of rupa, because this is a borrowed object from the elements. Since this is a borrowed object, there's no owner.

Usually we think we are the owner of this body - that the owner is the ego, the sense of "I". But since this is a borrowed object, there's no owner actually. The owner, or the sense of "I" is also a misperception. "I" does not exist. "I" is some notion that we perceived based on the 5 skandhas, the way we labeled the collection of various components of the table. So we have very strong concepts of thinking of this as a solid table; but the table does not exist. So this is called form, the first misperceived component of ego.

The second component is called feeling. We have lots of feelings. Various feelings in every moment. Feelings are not permanent either. They're transient, impermanent. If we meditate on the process of feeling without being identified with any of them, then feeling is transient. We can't actually point to or grasp any feeling, because they're constantly changing in every moment. It's

constantly changing. Right now you have one feeling, the next moment you can have another feeling in relationship to the environment or to the people next to you, or to the weather. Feelings are constantly changing. At the same time, we think feelings are "I", "I" am happy or "I" am not happy.

If we're able to realize it, the nature of feeling is transient, impermanent. It's emptiness. Then we can understand that there's no longer the sense of "I". The reason we suffer is that we become attached to the feeling of "I". Or another way to say it is that we become "I"-identified with feeling our feelings.

So meditation is a way to see the nature of feeling, the reality of feeling which is constant change, transience, impermanence, which has no sense of permanence or solidity. There's no basis in the realm of feeling that we can identify as "I". The notion of "I" does not exist in feeling itself as intrinsic solidity, but exists when we become attached to the feeling. So this is called feeling, which is the second skandha.

Likhipong is perception. And perception is some kind of cognitive ability we have as mind function. We perceive this as a red collar, that as a blue collar. We perceive this as a table. We perceive this as a person. That is a flower. That is a statue. That's called perception. At the same time, perception isn't permanent either. Perception is constantly changing in the same way as feelings change. But we have the tendency to identify ourselves with those various perceptions. We think that we are the perception. Then we make huge assumptions out of that, when we get attached to the perception as "I".

It's the same way with intention or will. We have will in every moment, the will to move, the will to speak, the will to sit, the will to meditate, the will to use the bathroom, the will to drive a car, the will to get enlightenment. But we have again this tendency to identify with will - "I" am going to use the bathroom, "I" am going to speak, "I" am speaking, "I" am going to change the whole world, or "I" am going to meditate. We become attached to will, then we continue the process of solidifying the ego.

Another skandha is called lamshu consciousness. Lamshu is the ability to become conscious of everything. For instance, if we see a car driving down the highway, we're aware of that car, aware that someone is driving that car. Or if we're listening to the dharma teachings, we are able to be aware of hearing the dharma teachings. Basically, it's the conscious, cognitive ability to be aware of everything that's happening in this moment. For instance, right now, we become aware that we're listening to the teachings, or we're aware that we're meditating, or we're aware that we're at Berry's house. So we can be conscious of every event.

Somehow, consciousness seems to be a larger component of us. It seems to be reality. But it is momentary reality. And when we meditate on the nature of consciousness, it changes constantly, the way the clouds are moving constantly, the way we are flowing every moment. It's very transient.

Buddha said, "if you divide the sound of a snap into atomic moments, as a hypothesis, there are 364 subatomic moments in the duration of the sound of one snap. In that moment, everything changes so much: your body, your perception, your feeling, your consciousness, everything changes. It could take a few weeks or months to become aware of the changes that are constantly occurring every second in our body. But when we meditate right now, without any attachment to thought, emotion, or perception, we can really begin to see that everything is changing. We really begin to experience that there's no real ground we can hang on to. No solid "I" - "I" am feeling this, or "I" am experiencing that, or "I" am going to react to that now. "I'm" going to get really pissed off, "I'm" going to be happy. So you can see we don't have any true base or ground for 'I'.

When we meditate, we simply meditate with the awareness of whatever is arising. The Prajna Paramita teachings are basically involved in meditation of the 5 skandhas - to find the wisdom of ego-less-ness - not in the intellectual dimension, but in one's direct experience.

So this morning, we're going to meditate a little bit. Sometimes Chod is very similar to the Prajna Paramita teachings. I often make this comment: there are two Prajna Paramita teachings, the wrathful one and the peaceful one. The wrathful one is Chod practice. That is the more wrathful method of practicing the Prajna Paramita teachings that we are going to do in Colorado in a few weeks.

What we're doing right now is the peaceful Prajna Paramita practice, living in a nice temple, and sitting on comfortable cushions, and meditating on the five skandhas. This is definitely the peaceful version of Prajna Paramita practice.

So we're going to do a basic meditation or reflection on the five skandhas. Sometimes, if you're doing meditation on the five skandhas, it's good to do a recitation, like the Heart Sutra. In the Prajna Paramita teachings, the Heart Sutra is not really a liturgy or prayer, it's more like a self-guided meditation. When you recite those prayers, they give you direct guidance for your meditation. Sometimes if you don't know how to meditate, you can recite the Heart Sutra, and that can lead you to a state of meditation. I think the Heart Sutra is like some kind of meditation instructor, except you don't have to pay him. So when you recite that prayer, it can immediately lead you into a very profound, luminous state of reflection. Very precious.

The Heart Sutra seems so dry when you recite it ("there's no eye, no tongue, no nose"); but when you recite it, the feeling that you can come out of it with is very rich. You can experience a sense of luminous wisdom. So we're going to meditate on the five skandhas

I think it would be nice to go outside, it's good to first walk a little bit, reflect on nature. Nature is a very good teacher. Buddha always spoke about the

illusions of nature, for instance there is a beautiful prayer in the Sutra (recites it in Tibetan). In monasteries, the monks are supposed to recite that prayer once every two hours, as a reminder to observe nature. This prayer says "everything is like illusion, mirage, clouds, rainbows, mist, butter lamp," everything is changing constantly. So it's good to reflect on the movement of nature, which is constantly changing. After a while then you can sit by a tree or in the meadow, and reflect on the five skandhas.

First we'll reflect on the five skandhas, observing your body, and then feelings, sensations, perceptions and consciousness. This is a mediation, but it's more of an introspection. It's not at analytical meditation; we're not trying to analyzing anything. We are simply going to be looking into things, looking into the five skandhas, the way you look into clouds. There's no reason to analyze what the color of that cloud is, you simply look at it. And when you look at that cloud, you begin to be aware of the experience that the cloud is moving constantly. In the same way, we look into the five skandhas, by directing our meditation toward the shifting nature of the body, feelings, perceptions, and consciousness.

We can meditate on the five of them together, and reflect on your sensory perceptions, your audio perception, your visual perception, and all these other perceptions. Allow yourself to open all your sensory doors. If you hear car sounds, allow yourself to hear. If you don't label anything, then that sound disappears and you will hear another sound, the sound of birds, or the sound of coughing.

You simply reflect on whatever is happening in your sensory perception without labeling, without judging, without designating anything as "Oh, I'm hearing a car sound" or "I'm feeling this unpleasant (or pleasant) perception". Because the moment we identify with them, we reinforce this notion of "ego" and then we become reactive to whatever the sensory input is. And that's when we experience what we call the conflict between oneself and the so-called external reality. This is the source of true suffering.

(meditation)

So we said that samsara is a vicious cycle, and is actually a state of mind brought on by discursive thinking. A great Buddhist master, Acharya Asanga said "liberation means simply exhausting all concepts."

Nirvana is not some place that exists outside of our own mind. Nirvana is not some kind of paradise that exists somewhere else, like the notion of Shambhala, or external heaven. Nirvana is inside of us. Whenever we're able to let go of our grasping, or attachment to our concepts, then that purified state of mind, that unconditional state of mind is already nirvana. In this respect, all concepts literally refer back to the notion of 'ego'. Ego is the mother of all concepts. Ego is the foundation of all concepts.

When we are able to let go of all our attachment to ego, then we don't have any base or foundation for any emotions or concepts or defilements and so forth. Ego is this giant mother that lays lots of eggs-defilements, concepts. It's like a spooky monster creature, who lives under the train station. That is ego actually.

It's important to remember that freedom, liberation, enlightenment, is not a myth. It's not simply a fantasy. We can actualize the highest level of liberation in this lifetime. We don't have to die to be born in heaven or in a Buddha field in order to experience the highest level of liberation. Liberation does not depend on any outer circumstances, or any cause or conditions. That means we don't have to be a special person, or be in any special position, in order to experience liberation.

There's no such thing as the need to be physically fit to find liberation. You don't have to be male, or female, or wealthy, or intelligent or to have been born in a certain environment. There are no conditions for liberation. Liberation is available to every sentient being, in each moment.

The practice of Dzogchen teaches that liberation is a momentary experience. Whenever you're able to relax the natural state of your mind, then liberation arises automatically. So liberation is not something we're going to actualize in the future, but rather it's something we can directly experience: being awake to the natural state of your mind in this very moment.

So nirvana is not a myth. And yet, if we're looking for happiness outside oneself, then freedom is a myth. It's a very common experience for each of us to look for freedom and happiness in outer circumstances. This is like trying to catch a rainbow. But we will never be successful in catching a rainbow in this way. A rainbow looks very beautiful, but as you try to get close to it, it always gets further and further away from you.

In the same way, when you try to look for happiness or freedom outside yourself, it's simply like trying to catch a rainbow. There's a Tibetan folk saying that the only way to catch a rainbow is to ride a black goat and hold dog shit in your mouth! (laughter) So this is a completely irrational nonsense statement, right? In the same way, if anyone, society, or our parents teach us that we can catch happiness or freedom by being successful, or by getting what we want to get, it's completely irrational, fraudulent advice. That statement is false knowledge,

As we are human beings, we grow up in this conventional social belief system believing that happiness is outside of our self. We have this conviction we have to be a hard worker, greedy, ambitious in order to find happiness. Somehow our dualistic mind misconstrues material wealth and worldly illusions and perfections as ultimate happiness. This is the biggest mistake we make in the beginning of our life.

The moment we direct our mind's effort to looking for satisfaction or enlightenment outside ourselves, then freedom, happiness become myths, become completely unattainable. The moment we direct our mind inwardly, looking for enlightenment, freedom or nirvana, then there's the possibility in each of us that we can find the ultimate supreme liberation, everlasting happiness right here in this moment without any conditions.

There is no such thing as the right conditions, the right weather or astrological date for finding enlightenment. It can happen at any moment if you're able to direct your mind inwardly rather than outwardly.

Worldly or samsaric happiness is very much dependent on various conditions and circumstances. More than that, it's temporal, changeable, it never lasts more than a certain amount of time. For instance, if we're very happy from having some kind of social recognition, or eating nice food or maybe winning the lottery, we'd be happy for a while, but sooner or later we would experience the same kind of dissatisfaction.

We may have this cultural belief that if we have money, then we'll be happy. But then we can have millions of dollars, and still we would be dissatisfied, thinking we should have more money. Maybe we should compete with Bill Gates. Then one day, maybe we'll be like Bill Gates with billions of dollars, and then have some kind of neurotic desire to build this huge bridge from the West Coast to Asia, then realize that we don't have enough money to build the bridge. Then that would cause lots of anxiety and dissatisfaction. This is called dissatisfaction.

Buddha calls it: "dodpa" which means attachment, dissatisfaction.

So we said this morning that dissatisfaction comes from believing in the notion of I, the sense of I. I think a Buddhist master said that all our worries come from believing in an I. All worries and troubles come from worrying about yourself. In fact, there's no one there. This is quite a powerful statement. We can remember this statement now and especially when we go through emotional upheavals. This whole phenomenon of worry and anxiety, is delusional because it's worry based on a non-existent entity - worry about a phantom.

In computers now there this thing called 'virtual pets'. This reminds me of the ego. It doesn't exist. It's just a virtual pet, like a dog or monkey. In the first place, we know it's a virtual pet so we don't have any emotional entanglement with that. But then, the problem is that if you don't feed it every day, it dies. So eventually, people who play with these virtual pet computers develop very strong emotional attachment and love, then anxiety and frustration if they forget to feed the virtual pet.

That's like ego. It doesn't exist but it has the ability to imprison us into a deep realm of emotional experiences, all the 84,000 defilements and kleshas. So, from a meditative perspective, then we can say that it's really ridiculous. This

worry is completely ridiculous: worrying about something that never existed. So we can apply the same logic to ego. Ego is like a virtual pet. We can say: virtual ego. We have the habitual tendency to become attached to it, believing that it's real, that it's who we are. Then we begin to experience worry, hope, fear, based on this internal phantom.

So whenever we're able to let go of the grasping ego then there's liberation. We don't have to seek liberation any further. Liberation's already there if you're able to remove this one fundamental misperception. In that respect, liberation is so close to us. Mipham Rinpoche said that the only reason we can't understand the Dharmakaya or the nature of reality is because it's so simple, so close to us.

There are many great, inspiring stories of enlightened beings, saints, yogis, yoginis who came to the realization of the nature of reality in very unexpected and sudden ways because enlightenment can be a very instant experience. If you let go of ego right now, then there's enlightenment. If you're able to relinquish the sense of ego, then all our karma will be purified at the same time. So this is perhaps the most powerful means of purification: letting go of attachment to ego. When our ego goes, so does our karma.

A Dzogchen analogy goes: if you carry a light into a dark room, immediately the darkness of countless aeons vanishes in a single instant. Ego, in Dzogchen teachings, is called duhpa, which means obsuration. Dzogchen teaches that there is Buddha mind in all sentient beings. This is the same as transcendental wisdom. Transcendental wisdom is inherent in all sentient beings, no matter who you are, whether you know dharma or not, on the path or not, ordained as Bodhisattva or not.

As a universal truth, Buddha mind exists in each of us, but somehow we can't experience it directly because of obsuration or duhpa. The ultimate obsuration is the perception of 'I', the ego. Whether you're practicing Atiyoga or Prajñāpāramitā, we have the same goal, which is going beyond ego. Buddha spoke about going beyond ego in terms of going to the other side; across the ocean of samsara. The other side always refers to the Dharmakaya mind or Buddha mind. Ocean always refers to samsara which is ego or the ultimate concept, the concept that we exist separately from the rest of reality. So ego is a wall or boundary that obscures from us ultimate reality which is non-dual reality.

So enlightenment is on the other side but not geographically on the other side, something that lies very far from us. This other side is already inside yourself. When Ānanda asked Shakyamuni: 'where is that perfect island where there's no suffering, no old age, no sickness, no famine?' The Buddha said that there is such a perfect island but it does not exist outside yourself. Your pure perception is that perfect island where everything's perfect.

So this perfect field, this Buddha field, this Dharmakaya realm is what we call transcendental wisdom. Transcendent wisdom is not mundane or human knowledge. It goes beyond any conceptual elaborations or knowledge or ideas about who we are, what is Buddha what is enlightenment. It's simply direct experience of the way things are. Therefore transcendent wisdom does not come into being out of learning, out of cultivating more views or concepts or ideas but rather it comes into being when we let go of all our desire, all our craving for material, sensual pleasures, knowledge, even enlightenment.

So transcendent wisdom is not knowingness, is not knowledge, it is direct experience of the way things are. That means all we have to do is to rest in the natural state of our mind. Then we begin to experience the way that things are. The nature of reality, as Dzogchen says, the nature of all phenomena, the nature of the five skandhas, the nature of your own mind as it is without any distortion. In that state, there's no longer a state of suffering or sense of conflict between one's self and reality. You're completely united with everything around you. It's ultimate unity. This is the purpose of dharma practice.

There's one phrase I'm very fond of repeating: to study dharma is to forget yourself. That means to transcend the duality between oneself and others-which means to unite with everything else.

So enlightenment is being united with everything - with death, with birth, with evil, with god, with samsara, nirvana, with sentient beings, with Buddhas, with five skandhas, with friends, enemies. That is the ultimate peace or mahā-nirvana. That is what we sometimes call mahāsukha which means great bliss. This is a very unique, exceptional bliss because all forms of bliss or happiness that we experience in this mundane world which is based on causes and conditions is subject to change and so they are not ultimate or infallible. They're a temporary nice feeling which is good to have which will eventually but most assuredly dissipate when the causes and conditions run out that brought them into existence in the first place.

When we experience the notion of bliss or happiness or freedom out of going beyond duality or the perception of ego, that freedom is everlasting. No one can take that away from you. Buddha said that this is ultimate wealth. You can have various types of wealth. You can have money, nice houses, cars, but all of them are perishable, changeable, right? Somebody can take these things away; somebody can extort your wealth away from you.

Can you find any wealth of perfection in this world beside the inner peace that is permanent, that you can count on? Like the American expression: what can you count on? No we can't count on anything. We can't count on our career even though it may be producing a lot of money right now, but career is impermanent. It can be changed, it can be lost. It can't also grant the ultimate satisfaction. So can we count on our house? No it can be burnt down or carried away by tornado, especially if you live in the south.

How about meditation? Meditation is also not very reliable because if someone makes a noise, then our meditation gets interrupted. Like Patrul Rinpoche was testing this yogi who was doing meditation in a cave. He said: 'What are you practicing?' The yogi said: 'I'm practicing patience.' Patrul Rinpoche said: 'Pardon me, what did you say?' 'I'm practicing patience.' 'What?' 'I told you I'm practicing patience!' 'What did you say?' 'YOU IDIOT, I TOLD YOU I'M PRACTICING PATIENCE!'

So even meditation is not reliable. It can be injured or interrupted by a noise or various uncomfortable sensations, or thoughts about what we're going to do tomorrow.

So enlightenment goes beyond meditation, beyond dharma. When you read the Heart Sutra, it says there's no attainment, not even dharma. This is going beyond everything. So you cannot really imagine that there's any wealth or perfection that is permanent. So sometimes it's good to reflect on these teachings, on these words of Buddha that everything's changeable. This is called reflection on impermanence. Buddha said that there are many forms of meditation but the supreme meditation is reflecting on impermanence, the nature of reality, which is changeable. He also said: 'There are many footprints, but the supreme footprint is the footprint of the cow.' This was for the benefit of Indians who think that the cow is a holy being so therefore they think that the footprint of a cow is very holy.

So meditation on impermanence is the supreme meditation because it can lead the meditator to awakening to the nature of reality. So what is the benefit of being awakened to the nature of reality? As Americans, we always want to know: 'what's the benefit?' Otherwise we don't want to try anything. So what can we gain by being awakened to the nature of everything?

So now you see the huge difference between being awakened and knowing. This is the fundamental characteristic of transcendent wisdom. Usually wisdom or knowledge has the connotation of knowing god or enlightenment or reality or some mystery. In this respect, as far as transcendent wisdom goes, there's no meaning of knowing or understanding whatsoever. It's all about being awakened to the nature of reality in this very moment.

Like when you wake up from the dream state. You can experience so many things in a dream, such as war, ambition, career, love affairs, family situations, but the moment you awaken, in one instant, all of the seeming reality of the dream is gone. In the same way, whatever we're experiencing right now such as samsara or personal struggle, desire, confusion, all of them vanish in one moment when you awaken to the nature of reality.

It's quite amazing when you think about the Buddha's attainment of enlightenment. He said the moment he experienced the Vajra samádhi under

the Bodhi tree, before that he was a samsaric being; after that he was an enlightened being.

So the benefit of awakening to the way things are or the nature of reality is to attain the ultimate peace or serenity. Enlightenment has many definitions. One of them is "giwa chembo" in Tibetan, which means great peace without the turbulence of one's own concepts and afflictive emotions where one can experience ultimate freedom which is everlasting happiness.

So in reality there's no suffering as solid or concrete. Suffering is actually a mind-manufactured experience. You have the choice to keep it for a long time or to get rid of it. In some way, when we study the Mahayana and Vajrayāna, we really begin to see that it seem we have the choice for everything. We realize that we have this tremendous choice: freedom. We have the choice to keep samsara as long as we want and the choice to give it up at any time.

Sometimes, even to think about that can be a liberating experience. To think that we have the choice to go beyond all our suffering right now. And to think that we have the choice to perpetuate, continue being in this realm. If we didn't have the choice to gain liberation, then dharma practice would be completely wasting time. Because we have the choice to gain liberation at any moment, we should practice dharma right now in this very moment. We should put all our effort, all our heart toward dharma practice as our priority.

The amazing thing is that there's no specific time for enlightenment. Enlightenment isn't like planting a seed in a garden. When we plant a seed in a garden, it takes a certain amount of time, a few months to grow. But enlightenment is not like that. First it's possible to obtain, second there's no time limitation. It can be attained at any time. Therefore it's so necessary to practice right now.

If we hold the idea that there is a time constraint about enlightenment and that it takes a long time, then we don't have to practice dharma now. We can practice slowly, little by little, once a week. But it's right now. So it's so worthwhile. There are so many reasons and so much purpose for doing dharma practice right now by putting your complete, sincere and open heart towards that direction.

So we have to be ambitious sometimes to a certain degree. I'm not talking about greed or ego-oriented ambition. We have to think: maybe I'm gong to be enlightened in this retreat. So you can make a plan for your entire lifetime based on the assumption that you're going to get enlightened. You might have some ideas about what you'll have to get rid of in your home and what you have to get. But do you have that ambition, that assumption that you're going to be completely enlightened through this retreat? Do you have that trust or not?

Or in the back of your mind do you think that it's impossible. "In a few years when I die, maybe; but not now." There's this doubt which hinders, lurking behind our mind no matter how much we listen to teachings, no matter how much we practice, there's always this doubt. So reflect on that doubt for a few minutes...

So samsara is a state of your mind which we call discursive thinking. It's some kind of perceptual/conceptual boundary between oneself and others, between subject and object, good and bad. This is called sometimes the conflict between oneself and reality. When we have this internal boundary, then we see everything as object. Either we like or we dislike. Either we're attached or we hate. Everything becomes separate from our self. Then there's death outside one's self to be afraid of. Then there are certain circumstances that we're supposed to be afraid of, or like, or love, or be attached to. It creates this whole entire experience of hope, fear, like, dislike, aversion, obsession. All of them created out of this internal boundary which is ego.

So the notion of being awakened to the nature of reality means being enlightened with everything which means there's no longer duality or boundary between one and everything else, between one and death, one and old age, one and reality. Everything becomes part of your own Buddha mind so there's no longer this sense of fear, obsession, hope, aversion. All of them come out of this one delusion, this perception of being separate.

In the Prajna Paramita teachings they talk about that enlightenment state where you go beyond birth and death. That does not mean that there's no birth or death which is obvious. There is birth, there is death, there is sickness which is undeniable. The idea of going beyond birth and death means that birth and death are no longer separate from you. It's part of you. It's no longer objective reality. Therefore one doesn't have to be attached to or afraid of anything else because everything becomes part of your self.

Ego is a form of paranoia. It is constantly afraid of everything else. Constantly afraid of reality. Constantly being afraid of change, impermanence.

Even more interesting is that it never existed even one single moment.

So this whole transcendent wisdom is about going beyond ego and being awakened to the great shunyata or emptiness. There are many understandings about emptiness. Emptiness does not mean that there's no existence. There are Buddhas, sentient beings, five skandhas, and so on. But emptiness means empty of thought, empty of concept, empty of ego. Tilopa said to Naropa: "Objects don't bind us to samsara. Attachment to objects bind us." Therefore, we don't have to meditate or reflect about whether a table exists or not, or house exists or not, or whether god exists or not. We don't have to worry about those things. We can experience what we experience.

Meditation is about opening our sensory perceptions. Meditation is not some kind of blank state of mind where we shut down our sensory perception, our emotions, our passions. But rather, opening up everything. So therefore we don't have to obstruct our consciousness, our sensory perceptions. We can open all our doors of sensory perception, to hear sounds, to see forms, to feel various tastes and flavors, whatever comes. But when we become attached to those experiences, then we create samsara, craving, desire, afflictive emotions. In that respect, nothing has to do with the emptiness of sound or form or anything but emptiness of attachment, emptiness of concept in relationship towards reality, towards five skandhas, form, feeling, perception, will, consciousness.

For example right now in this moment there's a table in front of us. This table does not harm you, does not prevent you from gaining enlightenment. In the same way the whole world is innocent to you. No one is obstructing you from gaining liberation. Sometimes we think there are so many hindrances toward our spiritual path. We think that relationships can sometimes be hindrances. But that's a misunderstanding.

Actually, nothing's a hindrance. Some people think that food is a hindrance to enlightenment. Some people think that enjoying your life is a hindrance. Some people think that this material world is a hindrance to enlightenment. So therefore, they become fanatical, renunciate. They give up nice food, nice clothes, which of course can be another extreme. In this respect, everything's innocent to us.

So the ultimate hindrance is attachment, concept, and the perception of I. When we can cut through that, then no matter whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you experience, non of them can be a hindrance that can prevent you from experiencing the awakened state which is Buddhahood.

So this whole meditation involves finding out the great shunyata or emptiness or transcendent wisdom which means the same thing.

This afternoon we're going to meditate of transcendent wisdom, great shunyata, meditation on the five skandhas. So I'll talk on the five skandhas. The five skandhas are like some kind of innocent objects which we're going to abuse. We're going to make that into objective ego. But it's an innocent object.

It's like the Buddhist analogy of the striped rope lying in the road. If you're walking along at night with a little moonlight, you can see it but not clearly. You might misperceive it and think that it is a snake. You may experience a sense of hesitation or fear or reaction in relation to that rope. Yet that rope is just a rope. But your mind begins to create all these emotions, defilements, hope, fear. What should be get rid of? The rope or the delusion? First we may think that we need to get rid of the rope. The problem with that is that will be another object that will be misperceived.

Therefore, as Tilopa said to Naropa, cut through that delusion towards reality which is ego. Ego is a delusion too. So the five skandhas are like the rope; ego is like the delusion or misperception that sees the rope as a snake. Somehow we've turned these five skandhas in an object where we experience delusion, the sense of ego, this sense of separate existence. That means that this meditation is going to help us see how we are attached to this misperception based on the five skandhas. This meditation is also a way of finding the nature of the five skandhas. The five skandhas are not ego. The five skandhas are not duality. The five skandhas are actually emptiness. They never exist. They exist as an entity of change, and entity of impermanence.

Simply observing and meditating on the nature of the five skandhas we begin to see that the ego is completely *jimepa saltro* - groundless, rootless phenomena. Completely phantom. So we'll finally understand the emptiness of ego by simply reflecting on the nature of the five skandhas.

First we'll talk about form which is the first skandha. This will be a meditation on form - *rupa* - *rupa* meditation. When we observe this body - this is not who I am. We think that this is who I am. We have this very strong, intimate attachment that this is me, this is I. I may think: this is Thubten. When people call your name, what comes to your mind? Your image, your body comes to mind suddenly. So when you call your name, what image do you see in your mind's eye?

We have very strong attachment to our body. More than we need. We have to practice reverence to the body as a Buddhist law. It's very important not to make the mistake that this meditation is not some sort of ascetic practice or some fanatic religious practice or self torment.

Whether we're talking about Hinayana, Mahayana or Vajrayāna, they all speak of the importance of respecting one's body. In Vajrayāna, for instance, the body is regarded as a mandala. So you have to offer to your body, take care of your body in the same way you worship your altar or sacred images or Buddha or deities.

So there's nothing wrong with the body itself. But somehow we develop this attachment and obsession in relationship to body which is quite obvious in modern society. Everyone has an obsessive attachment to their body. Especially in the western world. Somehow, in Tibet we have less of an attachment to our body. In Western culture, everyone grows up with some kind of obsession toward their body. So many people experience tremendous sense of suffering in relationship to their body-either they're not beautiful enough, or healthy enough, or their body doesn't measure up to society's standard of perfection. There are many people suffering constantly from that.

Some time ago, a Chinese woman came to visit Thinley Norbu Rinpoche, and he is a very direct teacher, compared to many other lamas. He didn't mean to hurt or disregard that woman, but he said to her, "You're fat." She didn't say

anything. Now she had come from out of town to receive these teachings, but the next session, she wasn't there. Three days of teachings (extraordinary Dzogchen teachings) went by, and after these three days, she finally showed up with her cheeks wet with tears. She had been crying by herself. Thinley Norbu Rinpoche said "Why didn't you come? For three days I've been giving these extraordinary teachings for you." And she said, "You told me I'm fat, so I have been so sad. I locked my door and have been crying all day." This is an obsession/attachment. This is a form of defilement or neurosis that we have to cut through.

Because we are dharma practitioners, we should be less obsessed with our bodies than other people. We might have a little bit of attachment, but it should be less than ordinary people who never heard the teachings of emptiness. This is a very subtle discipline; because unconsciously we have very strong attachments to the body. We may think, tonight we are going to have Tsog, so we're going to dress in very nice clothes, or let's fix our hairstyle-or then we worry about whether people will like how I'm dressed, or the hairstyle, or the lama won't appreciate my clothes, that it will be very catastrophic, if the lama doesn't like my clothes. On and on, and the anxiety grows, and then hope, fear, all of that comes into being again. So body obsession is very subtle. Even if we live in dharma centers or spiritual communities, we are still perpetuating the samsaric obsession or attachment in relationship to rupa or form.

Now I'm not saying we have to wear some kind of burlap bag or cut your hair randomly. They say you do have to do that in chod practice, you have to do counterproductive method. In chod practice you have wear unconventional clothes, wear unconventional hairstyle. This is part of chod practice, but we're not practicing chod right now. So we can of course take showers and wear nice clothes, but we must also reflect every moment to make sure we are cutting our obsession toward rupa, form, which refers to body in this case.

Why do we obsess about this body? Should we blame the cosmetic companies? Did they put too much subliminal information on the TV? We have to find who is the cause, the mastermind behind that! Maybe they want to sell lots of clothes or beauty products. In that case, it's very easy, we can just sue them for being the source of samsara. But actually, they're not really responsible. The ultimate cause of attachment, or suffering in relationship to your body, is ego. It's not really the companies, not those people who come up with those brilliant commercials and ads. It's ego. All this goes back to oneself, one's own misunderstanding of who we are.

In Buddhism there are great answers, in practicing cutting through attachment to one's body. That means to see that body is not who you are. You are not your body, because you do not exist. One does not exist in the first place. But somehow, we made this ultimate mistake to perceive our bodies as who we are. In the same way, we misperceive the world like the snake metaphor we used earlier.

So the meditation on rupa, or emptiness of form, is simply to reflect on the nature of the body, which is changeable, impermanent. At the same time the body is emptiness itself. What is the body itself? There's no real body that we're grasping onto. Body is also just like the table-a collection of various components: flesh, bones, hair, various atoms, cells and so forth.

Sometimes Mahayana can be very precise, can be too precise. There's one meditation that we have to go into all these details, and the meditation becomes almost like an operation. We have to think "What is the body? It's not your organs, not your lung. What is your lung? It's not your lung, because the lung is only a collection of cells." It's like a very detailed operation. We don't have to do that kind of meditation. First of all, there isn't enough time today. But definitely, it's very important to meditate on the nature of body; and to comprehend that we have this habitual attachment toward the body and that we have identified our body as who we are. That is the very source of hope and fear that we experience in relationship to the body.

This is not some kind of Buddhist view. This is very much a human, mundane experience that all of us go through - the fear, the shame, the guilt that we experience because of our body. It's not just a Buddhist concept. You experience that every moment, in some way or other, unless we practice this kind of meditation. There's so much hope in relationship to your body-either consciously or unconsciously, by yourself or at a party or at a meditation hall-there's this ongoing hope, fear, guilt, expectation, obsession in relationship to one's body. Clothes. Clothes are a source of attachment, same as one's body.

So body is one example, but we can add more toward rupa. We can have more, too. There are car skandhas, house skandhas, because all of them can be representations of ego, really. Especially the car, which is a symbol of your social status. People tend to judge who you are based on what kind of car you drive. If you drive a Mercedes, people tend to think you are a good person automatically. Or they might think you are a moral person because of it. If you drive a little bit of a funky car, people will have a very difficult time shaking your hand, or definitely they won't give you their phone number. They may think you're some kind of anti-government freak, or you could be one of those unibombers who live in the forest. But if you drive a nice car, people feel very confident and peaceful around you.

So I always make this joke: it's very important that you, as a practitioner, wear nice clothes. I even heard some lamas encourage people to wear nice clothes when they come to an empowerment. One of them is that people tend to look at who you are, and what your philosophy is, and maybe even what your worth is, based on what kind of clothes you wear. So I guess the intention of those lamas is to have people coming to dharma teachings wearing conventional, more normal clothes, so that people perhaps won't be so afraid of coming to dharma teachings. But if everybody wears very funky clothes,

then people think "Maybe that's some kind of cult." Or "Maybe what they're doing is not right."

People tend to be very reluctant to come to teachings too. Therefore Trumpa Rinpoche encouraged everyone to wear a suit and necktie. Because when he first came to the U. S., all his students were hippies, so no yuppies came to dharma teachings. But yuppies need dharma teachings too, because they have Buddha nature just like hippies do. Therefore, he came up with this idea that everyone should wear some kind of normal, or conventional clothing. That way the Sangha, or the dharma, coming wouldn't be such a threat to most of the mainstream people.

Therefore, it's all right to wear nice clothes, drive a nice car, but we also have to meditate on the very fact that we have so much attachment, identity, in relationship to various things: car skandhas, clothes skandhas. So this is the 7th skandha. What else? Business card skandha. We like to make really nice business cards. And what else? Job skandhas. Computer skandhas. Expensive dog skandhas. Count them while you're meditating. Skandhas in this case means "object of ego, or ego identity." Wristwatch skandha, (Rolex).

My friend, who's a monk living in a monastery, he's my cousin actually. He wrote me a letter to send some money from the U.S. Then I wrote him back saying "what do you want to use it for?" He wanted to buy a motorcycle. He mentioned a lot of reasons why he wanted to buy a motorcycle, one of them being "In the monastery, all the monks have bicycles, so a motorcycle would be more fancy." So this kind of attachment exists even in monasteries too. Attachment is everywhere, monasteries, towns, villages, and dharma centers as well. It doesn't matter if you're a monk or a nun. Attachment is an internal development.

So we're going to meditate on form. Rupakaya means the meditation of rupa is basically reflecting on "body." Buddha said "In one second, there are 364 subatomic levels. In each of those moments, your body is completely changed into new cells, new structure." And what is your body? There's no real body that you can point out. Body is a collection of various organs, hair, bones, various textures and so forth. In some ways there's no longer a body. This is called "emptiness of rupa." Buddha said: "form is emptiness. Emptiness is also form."

Then you can meditate on the second skandha which is perception, feeling. When you meditate, there are various feelings arising constantly. Nice feelings, unpleasant feelings, in relationship to conditions, environment, weather, or something you just heard. There's constant feeling, but when you meditate on feeling, they're impermanent, they're very transient, constantly changing. There's no feeling that you can identify as "me" or "I". In normal life, when we experience feeling, then we become attached to that feeling. If you're experiencing unpleasant feeling, we become attached to that. That's who we are.

We think we are that feeling. If we're experiencing sadness, we end up perceiving that "I'm" sad, or "I'm" angry, or "I'm" going to react to that person, or "I'm" going to react to that situation. "I'm" going to fix everything in my life. "I'm" going to come to reality. And then we begin to develop more kleshas, hope, fear, etc. It's feeling. If you meditate on the nature of feeling, it's constantly changing. There's no sense of ego in itself. So it's good to meditate on the nature of feeling, while you're meditating on the nature of truth, like clouds, or river, or changes of weather or temperature or changes of things about yourself.

This is a very necessary subject, because in Western society, we talk about feelings quite a lot. Feelings are very important in western society. We put great importance on feelings. We love to have nice feelings, and we don't want to have unpleasant feelings. We pay lots of money to have good feelings. Either nice food, or a nice place-it's all about having good feelings. And sometimes, we want to have good feelings during meditation, or during dharma practice. But what is feeling?

When you experience the feeling of sadness, if you simply look into that feeling, that feeling dissolves immediately without leaving any trace. It doesn't leave a single trace. And then we have a pleasant feeling. If you look into the nature of that feeling, it also dissolves, immediately, without leaving any trace.

Looking into the nature of feeling is a powerful meditation mainly because it does not give us any chance to develop the sense of "I", which is identifying with the feelings. And in that respect, whatever arises, either positive or negative feelings, pleasant or unpleasant feelings arise, none of them can affect you, none can cause harm. This is called the state of equanimity.

Even if you experience a positive feeling, it doesn't affect your meditation. You may experience a pleasant feeling and it doesn't affect your Buddha mind. It doesn't affect your meditation, or your consciousness. It's like mountains so majestic and so solid, that whether there's rain, hail, snow or strong wind-none of those movements outside can shake or disturb the mind. Mind always remains still and majestic.

In the same way, this meditation-called transcendent wisdom, or Rigpa or Buddha mind, or awareness of reality or the awareness of the nature of everything-this meditation is like a mountain, or like King of Mountains, Mount Meru. Good feelings come? It's just good feelings, it means nothing to you. You don't have any reaction to that, or no attachment. And then bad feelings come, and that means nothing to you as well. You simply observe that emotion of feeling which comes into being and then dissolves into the nature of reality. So it's like walking beside a riverbank, observing the waves of the river, which does not have any affect on your mind. But at the same time, you're experiencing everything.

Some of you may think that meditation is some kind of denial state, a way of shutting down your mind, or a way of being a happy vegetable. That is not the case. Meditation is actually supreme sensitivity, where we are able to experience even more intense emotions and feelings when you meditate right - but the unique thing about that is that they don't affect you.

In ordinary life, when we're not in sitting meditation, those feelings mean a lot to us. If we have positive feelings, we become very excited, we become attached to it, and we want to know what is the cause of that feeling. We think "Oh yeah, I know that's because someone said nice things to me. So I want to hear those words again. Or maybe I can please that person again, so I will act in a certain way in order to get them to say it again." And then hope, fear, insecurity etc. all come into being again.

Then you may have a bad feeling, and we become attached to it. Then we don't want to experience that bad feeling. We want to find out what is the cause of that bad feeling. What was it? Or maybe somebody says unpleasant things about you. Or it could be that maybe you're sick, or maybe you're poor. So we want to get rid of that circumstance.

Maybe you are meeting certain people in your life who are pushing your buttons, so you want to run away from that circumstance. Or maybe you're thinking "I'm getting old," and every time you think about old age, it causes anxiety, insecurities, etc.

So you are attached to those feelings. But meditation on feelings involves neither inviting any specific feeling, like pleasant feelings-nor trying to eradicate any feeling. It involves simply opening one's heart and observing the nature of the feeling of whatever arises without any effect on your mind, on your state of meditation.

When you look at a cloud, the cloud is changing constantly. Sometimes it gets bigger, sometimes it shrinks, but it doesn't affect the state of your mind. You are simply observing its motion, its changes. In the same way you have to meditate on feelings too. There's no truly existent feeling either. Feeling is constantly changing. There's no sadness, no grief, there's not even any of those feelings, because they are constantly dissolving, appearing, and disappearing in every single moment. Therefore, there's no feeling really.

When we think that we are the feeling, that is not the feeling. That's just us becoming attached to the memory of the feeling. If we experience sadness in one moment, then we have the memory, the recollection of that sadness, and through that memory, we begin to identify ourselves as that feeling. So Buddha said "Feeling is emptiness. The second skandha is emptiness."

The third skandha is perception. There are various perceptions in each moment. Right now I'm perceiving something. The next moment I'm going to be perceiving something else. When I look this way, I'm going to perceive

tables, people. When I look over there, I'm going to perceive houses, mountains, villages. Perception is constantly changing, too, in the same way that feelings arise and dissolve. So there's no longer any solidity or concrete existence of perception either.

In the same way, we can apply the same meditation or same reflection toward will (or concepts). For example, will is very interesting. There's constant will. For example, you are writing down notes. Without will, you can't write down notes. Without will you cannot move your body. So will is needed. We need will to meditate, will to write, will to chant, all of them come out of will. So will is the natural state of your existence. It isn't negative or positive. And it's changing constantly.

Every moment, there's a new arising will, and that will dissolve, too. But sometimes, we end up identifying with that will. So for example, if there is a will to write letters, we identify with that will and we say "I'm going to write that letter." Or the will to meditate. We begin to have this notion of "I'm going to meditate." This strong "I" comes. And based on that notion of "I" then we begin have lots of doubt. "Am 'I' going to do a good meditation or not in this session?" And then you can create an entire samsara based on that "I" that ego identity.

Then you can apply the same meditation on consciousness too.

So I think I'm spending too much time on conversation. We have to have some time for meditation. It's very good to leave some physical distance between ourselves. This meditation will begin by walking. I have said that in Tibet, the temple is not a place to meditate, it's a place to eat food and argue. Nature is a good place to meditate. We don't meditate so much in the temple. We listen to teachings, and we have meals and arguments, we practice, we hold 'dharma conventions'. But when we meditate, we always go outside. So each of you are going to meditate outside.

First we are going to chant a certain mantra, like: GATE GATE PARA GATE PARASAMGATE. The moment we leave this place, we will begin to walk, chanting into the trees, wander around a little bit, back and forth. And this meditation is called "finding who you are." According to the Tibetan tradition, this is called a Darksalwa. It means seeking for "I" or "me". So you're going to actually call your own name. Maybe silently, since we're all of us out there. Call our name silently, marching, "Jordan, where are you? Who am I? Who is Jordan?" And you're going to exercise that meditation for perhaps 10 minutes while you're walking around. You can use various exercises in relationship to that. This is called Dark means "ego" and salwa means finding, or seeking for.

There were some Chinese officials who came to my monastery to make sure that we are doing everything properly, legally. The leader always came with a few other officials. And one time, he went to see my master out of curiosity. And usually he goes to one of my teachers to talk about legal stuff like how

many monks live in the monastery, are they studying the red book or not. They actually forced us to read the red book.

So one time, he came to see my teacher, and asked "What is Buddhism really? What do you guys believe?" And my teacher said "Who are we? Who are you? Where is you?" And he was so scared he never visited my teacher again, because he was so scared to think about "where is 'I'?" It's a very threatening experience when we think "Who is 'I'?" Because there's no one actually. It's what we call an ego-shattering experience. It's like an earth quake, the ultimate earthquake. So when you call your name, it can be very ego-shattering, can be very threatening experience.

Only crazy people do that. So you have to be crazy somehow, crazy as we can be, calling our name. So you will be calling your name for about 10 minutes, while you are walking around, looking for "I". And then you are going to find various thoughts or perceptions when you call your name. Perhaps lots of pictures show up in your mind. Your body may show up, and you may think "oh that's who I am." It may show up in various forms. It may look like a child, like a teenager, may look like businessman, sometimes with short hair, sometimes with long hair. But your body is going to pop up as the first image when you call your name.

Then there will be perceptions, feelings that you are feeling, perceptions that you identify as who you are. And after you have all these experiences of finding various objects or perceptions of who you are, after 10 minutes, if you just keep calling, then you're going to find exhaustion. If you keep calling, you will reach a state where you cannot look for it anymore, or you can't find out anymore who you are after that.

When that happens, sit on the ground in vajra posture, and meditate, or simply rest in the natural state of your mind, or rest in the state of "not finding who you are", not finding any object or ego. At the same time, we are going to meditate on the nature of the five skandhas. When you meditate inwardly, you begin to see that everything's changing. A thought arises and disappears. A feeling arises and disappears. Consciousness arises and disappears. And we don't label them as good or bad or mine or yours. We're simply observing the constant flow of spontaneous change of all these internal experiences, without any attachment or reaction. If you become attached to any of your five skandhas, you can always use the word PHET! Very loud.

Today we are going to speak about the other paramitas. Yesterday we were studying and contemplating the 6th paramita, which is transcendent wisdom. As the Mahayana Sutra says, "Transcendent wisdom is like a general or chief on the battleground, and the other 5 paramitas are like the soldiers who help the chief or general to overcome the opponent or great enemies. In this case it refers to samsara or Mara. Mara means evil in Tibetan. In Sanskrit, it refers to ego. Ego is of course the ultimate evil, which causes all of our troubles and catastrophes in our lifetimes.

The actual priority on the Mahayana, or the path of bodhisattva is to obtain transcendent wisdom. That is the ultimate goal. But at the same time it requires lots of other aspects of training such as generosity, discipline, patience, meditation, in order to acquire or manifest the transcendent wisdom in our own consciousness in this very lifetime. When we comprehend the knowledge of chang chub which is a word for enlightenment, there are two meanings. Chang is purification, and without going through the process of purification there's no way we can purify the defilement that obscures our mind to realize the nature of reality. Therefore, purification is a very important step in this respect. In Dzogchen it says that the only way you can realize Rigpa is through purification and accumulation.

So there's a text here, a well known text, called The Thirty-Seven Practices of all Buddha's Heirs. We are going to look at Verse 25.

"The beings that strive to be fully enlightened
would give up their body pursuing this aim.
With this peerless example, what need is the mention
of gifts we should make of the objects we own.
Without any hope of return for our kindness,
Not considering even the merit gained,
Engage in the practice of generous giving -
The Heirs of the Buddhas all practice this way."

So this is the first paramita. It is called in Tibetan Dana, giving, and is a very powerful practice in order to go beyond discursive thought, or ego. This practice, each of these practices will help us to go directly beyond ego. Sometimes, if you read lots of books on Prajna Paramita teachings, by both Eastern and Western writers, you have to be very thankful to those writers and teachers, because they even updated the teachings. They've written many textbooks in very contemporary language. So the teaching itself is not so exotic or mystic or foreign. Very easy to understand. I put many of those books on the reading list this year.

So the view itself, the teachings of Prajna Paramita itself, are going to be very simple and clear to understand. It's very important to understand those teachings to an intellectual degree. There is a saying: "Without intellectual understanding of dharma teachings, trying to practice is like trying to climb the Rocky Mountains without arms."

In Tibetan Buddhism, the way we begin to practice dharma is through the three stages, such as view, meditation and conduct. View comes always first. View is the intellectual understanding of the dharma teachings, whether we're talking about four noble truths, or Prajna paramita, or Mahamudra or Dzogchen, each of them have quite a unique perspective, a unique philosophical system, which it's very necessary to comprehend.

So what is the purpose of coming here? Of course, we have to be ambitious as I have said, we want to come here to dig out enlightenment, like digging for gold. But another purpose of this retreat is to study and to learn by listening to the dharma teachings, and also reading dharma text, such as Heart Sutra, and also contemplating the meaning of the teachings, and integrating one's own understanding of dharma teachings with meditation and various activities. This is actually quite an amazing event.

Here we are developing and exercising what we call "the three wisdoms" in Buddhism: the wisdom of listening, the wisdom of contemplating, and the wisdom of meditation. So the three of them happen together. Don't think this is some kind of easy work. This is actually a triple-task activity. The three work together. Outwardly, it might seem like we're having quite a good time, sitting on our cushions, and relaxing, and not going to the office. But we are doing lots of work. We're "multi-tasking." The wisdom of listening, the wisdom of contemplating, and the wisdom of meditation. The Three Wisdoms.

Understanding view itself would lead us to a certain degree of awareness but would not lead us to all the attainment of internal insight and realization. In order to gain actual empirical experience of enlightenment or Rigpa, we have to actually practice or put those teachings into action. So practice, and the 6 paramitas, is a way of actually exercising the dharma teachings into actions in relationship to conditions in one's lifetime, whether one is in a monastery, or one is in the office, or in New York downtown, which would be a very challenging place to practice the six paramitas.

Therefore, the six paramitas is the path of the bodhisattva, and wisdom is the bodhisattva's ultimate religion, and the five paramitas are the ethics or the conduct of the bodhisattva. That's the bodhisattva's way. Because each of us has been ordained as a bodhisattva, we have to be sure that we are aware of what is the bodhisattva's way. I'm going to repeat these statements.

Wisdom is the bodhisattva's religion. Bodhisattva does not have any other religion except transcendent wisdom. It's quite nameless religion, doesn't fall into any categories. Sometimes, it doesn't even fall into the Buddhist category. It's timeless. Transcendent wisdom. Transcendent wisdom is the wisdom which is ego-less, which is empty of everything, empty of the five skandhas, empty of all duality, including samsara and nirvana. And that is the transcendent wisdom which Buddha Shakyamuni speaks about.

There's a story that when Buddha gave the teachings of the Prajna Paramita, at the Vulture Peak Mountain, before he sat on the throne (probably one of those rocks), he actually did the prostration three times to his throne in order to pay the ultimate reverence to the Prajna Paramita teachings. There's no higher realization or morally or sublime teaching than the Prajna Paramita teaching itself. Therefore, even Buddha gave prostrations to his own throne when he was ready give this dharma chakra.

So, transcendent wisdom is the bodhisattva's religion or path. And the remaining 5 paramitas are the bodhisattva's conduct, or training, or discipline, or purification exercise. When we practice the paramitas, including generosity, we begin to actually evolve from the level of intellectual understanding to the level of direct experience, or realization of nature of reality, or realization of transcendent wisdom. The same thing has been mentioned in the Dzogchen teachings.

In the Dzogchen teachings, they talk about three stages of development, which is known as korwa, gnam and tokpa. Korwa means intellectual understanding of the Dzogchen teachings. Gnam means experience, which is considered very temporary. And then, the ultimate realization is called tokpa, and that is completely permanent, one's habit is unchangeable, by outer or inner condition, it is completely steady.

There is a Tibetan saying which means that korwa (the intellectual understanding) is like a patch on your clothes, which will fall apart eventually. Gnam (the temporary experience) is like a fog or a mist, very insubstantial and ephemeral, and tokpa (the ultimate realization) is like a mountain, which cannot be moved or shaken or disturbed by any conditions from outside it. So once we have the realization, then we become what we call vidyadhara, or there are many names. Or Arhat. Basically nothing can challenge you, you become an undefeatable enlightened being, which is called Arhat in the sutrayanas.

And that means that you already went beyond hope and fear and any challenges you can imagine in these lifetimes (present or future). Whatever can arise in one's lifetime, either illness or misfortune or loss - nothing can take away your equanimity or sense of serenity from you, because you have gained the realization of tokpa, the realization of an Arhat or transcendent wisdom. Nothing can push your button, basically. No one can push your button.

But after that, we can be quite subject to outer circumstances. It doesn't have to be great challenges. Sometimes even quite small events can create mountains of emotions and passions in our mind.

For instance, if you drive on the highway, if someone cuts in front of you, immediately your experience anger or judgment or hatred. So this is an important practice for our minds-to start observing how much we are affected by outside conditions. Sometimes it doesn't have anything to do with outside conditions. All we need is the right catalyst from outside, and we are ready to experience what Buddha calls "inner turbulence".

Passions and defilements, 5 poisons, 84,000 kleshas, they're all ready to explode and be explored at any moment when there's a catalyst from outside. And of course, we have tremendous fear in relationship to various realities, such as death. Death is a tremendous threat to most people. Most people live every day in each moment, consciously or unconsciously, with some kind of

fear of death-and then we can project our fear onto losing a job, losing hair (especially for men, we all have that common fear. It unites us as brothers!). We become eternal comrades. You can meet cowboys in Texas, yakboys in Tibet - all of them are comrades through the bond of fear of losing hair! Quite and interesting perspective, isn't it?

Here, we have taken refuge vows and ordained as bodhisattvas in the same mandala so we're called vajra brothers and sisters - we're true brothers and sisters - enlightened brothers and sisters.

See, now we have all these things and conditions, and we often project fear, hope and insecurities on to that too. So every time we encounter certain situations we sometimes become very excited or we become overwhelmed with passion, either desire or attachment and so forth in relationship to wealth, entertainment, status, fame, and so forth. And sometimes we become very unhappy with various emotions in relation to something else - old age, illness, etc.

So if we become vidyadhara, which is Dzogchen terminology for wisdom holder or Arhat, then there's nothing in this universe that can challenge us, that can extort our inner freedom, our inner enlightenment. You become a rock - a divine rock or vajra. Nothing can challenge you. No one can push your button.

One of my practices was this. When I was at Pema Osel Ling, no one around me liked Rush Limbaugh's radio show. Every time when I turned on Rush Limbaugh, everyone got very angry and reactionary. Actually, first I was playing that for fun to challenge them. Later I actually became a little bit addicted to it. (laughter). This is just one simple example.

But Arhat has a very beautiful definition: da chumba. Da means enemy or Mara; chumba means defeated or conquered. The enemy conqueror. This is perhaps the highest bhumi or state that we can gain on the path to enlightenment, on the Buddha dharma path. But this does not mean conquering enemies or conditions outside oneself. We can't really conquer things outside of our self. How could we do that? There's no way we can control things outside our self in the world. We can't even control the fact that we're going to die. We may have a very strong engrained desire that we want to live forever. We may want to control the fact that we're going to die. We may want to control the fact that we're going to lose our hair. We may want to overcome conditions that subject us to sickness. We want to change things that have happened in the past, we want to control things in the future. We can't do that in this world.

Maybe we can do that in virtual reality, in a computer. Then we can be like god. I think that's one reason many Americans like playing computers because then they can be like god and create their own reality. But in this world in

some way, we're powerless. We can not actually control anything that happens - birth, death, old age, sickness.

For instance, I was with Khen Rinpoche and we were making jokes. He said you cannot control reality. One of the example he gave me was in Tibet when we do sadhanas, there's always the stage of exorcism to get rid of all the demons and ghosts. The sadhana often says: 'go away all you demons to the other side of the ocean.' (laughter). Khen Rinpoche said: 'this is where we used to expel the demons but now we've come to where we expelled them. We can't control reality.'

So one of the best meditations is to reflect on your life - past events, what happened in your childhood, what happened ten years ago, so many events that happened without our willingness or wanting. When you open your diary or journal, when you count all the things that happened, perhaps 80 percent of those things happened without your wanting them to happen. Maybe only 20 percent happened the way we wanted.

So if we want something to happen, there's a very rare chance, like winning a million dollar lottery. We all want to gain the million dollar lottery. But only a very few people have a chance to win that. In the same way, getting what we want to get in this world is like that. There's only a rare chance. Every time we wake up in the morning we want lots of things. We want good weather, good food, good news, good mood. We have lots of 'wants' on our list. As time goes by, maybe only one or two of them happen.

So as human beings we want so many things from outside. We want to control reality, we don't want to encounter with reality: birth, sickness, old age, death, changes, impermanence. This is attachment and resistance that's deeply rooted in each of us. Until we conquer that, the resistance and attachment within our self, if we're trying to impose our will and control reality, we become more and more stuck in samsara. We end up suffering more and more. This isn't just Buddhist teaching. This is very much a value and well proven situation in our own life if you reflect on the past and present.

So Arhat means someone who conquers the great enemy within himself or herself. The enemy is not outside your self even though we project our fear and resistance on the conditions. But actually, none of them are actually our enemy. None of them are actually negative because none of them can take away your freedom or your enlightenment. None of them can take away your Buddha nature. The greatest evil that we project onto conditions is death but even death cannot take away freedom in you. Death cannot take away your enlightenment. Death cannot take away your happiness.

So we can see that the greatest enemy lies within one's self. That is one's ego. Ego breeds attachment - attachment towards permanence, towards things such as illusions - material wealth, image, popularity. We also have resistance to encounter with reality such as old age, sickness, various countless situations.

So we're constantly in this war zone, fighting, resisting, being hurt, defeated, and so on forth. But if you're able to change this fundamental way of dealing with reality and not spend so much energy fighting with things outside yourself but to fight with yourself, your ego, then we will begin to experience the sense of true liberation within the self. We begin to experience that the moment we change that perspective.

So the bodhisattva's way is to not fight with the world, but fight with ego, one's doubt, resistance, delusion. Bodhisattva has the connotation of enlightened warrior or fighter. That means that a bodhisattva's main principle or vow is to fight with one's ego no matter how many challenges and fear and turbulence one encounters on the path, on the journey. One is committed to defeat the ego which is the source of all troubles, all suffering because a bodhisattvas see in the first place that true suffering is not being created anywhere outside of one's self but created by this inner enemy which is ego. Therefore a bodhisattva is determined to defeat the ego, the source of samsara.

One of the bodhisattva's vows is: 'not turning one's back towards samsara.' In Hinayana the main vow is turning one's back toward samsara - this notion that we should run away from samsara. But with the bodhisattva's vow, we have to go back to the world where we have escaped into our work, or society, or our community, or whatever is the source of suffering to you as the external condition. You have to go back actually.

You have to put yourself into the middle of conflict which is quite a heroic journey. If you experience tremendous fear and insecurity from living in the city, then maybe the bodhisattva should live in the city. If you have a tremendous experience of challenge in relationships, then maybe the bodhisattva must go back to the relationship. If the bodhisattva experiences tremendous stress, frustration in workplaces, in the social environment, then the bodhisattva must go back to the social environment and deal with all those people who have the capability, the magic wand to push one's button.

The bodhisattva is one who is always inviting and encountering challenges and using those challenges to realize that the source of suffering is not outside, not created by any outer circumstance, but created by this one delusion: this attachment to ego - then directly fight with that inner enemy. Once you're able to defeat that, then you become Arhat - enemy conqueror.

There's this beautiful saying in the Dharmapada that says: men who conquer themselves is a greater hero than one who conquers a thousand men a thousand times. So this is an alternate war, an alternate challenge. It's far more challenging than you can imagine sometimes. Compared to this challenge, all worldly challenges can be very simple. They can be quite easy.

So therefore, Bodhisattvas need lots of companions, soldiers, assistants to fight with the enemy. The five paramitas are like the soldiers, the tanks and airplanes that help the bodhisattva to overcome that war - to win that victory.

So now we're going to go to generosity. Generosity is the bodhisattva's training again. Bodhisattvas have five trainings, basically. The first one is Dana. Generosity has various levels of understanding, but basically it's a way of letting go of one's attachment and grasping. The reason we have attachment and grasping towards things in our life, towards objects, towards images various objects is because we have attachment to the ego. Ego is a state of mind which wants to possess everything because ego is a state of insecurity. In order to be secure, the ego wants to possess and own things. The reason we want to possess and own so much and grasp so much, either towards a house or car or money or one's body is because we want to feel secure; we want to exist permanently. Ego has this intrinsic desire to be secure and to exist.

Generosity is actually a method to challenge ego and to overcome ego's desire. Sometimes in Mahayana they talk about exercising remedies or antidotes. These antidotes are counter-productive to attachment, to ego, etc. But how are we going to practice generosity in our every day life? It's very important for each of us, as long as we're ordained as bodhisattvas, to exercise the principle of Dana or generosity in our everyday life by giving things away. That can be very challenging. Visualizing giving everything away to all sentient beings is also very good too.

All the six paramitas can be actual as well as performed in the imagination too. It's very important to think that you're giving away your body, your possessions, even giving away the entire universe to all sentient beings, to all Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Therefore in Tibetan Buddhism, when we practice sadhana, there's an aspect of offering.

The act of offering is basically an act of generosity. Either you're offering to the Buddhas or you're giving things to all sentient beings through imagination or creation yoga, all of them have to do with letting go of grasping and attachment. So, according to many Mahayana and traditional teachings it's very necessary to practice giving away things, giving up things to others who need help, who need sanctuary. It's a way to practice love, compassion and transcendental wisdom.

In the beginning of the DAP I introduced a daily assignment where we put quarters into a small basket and donate it to a charity program. I'm not sure whether we remember that or not.. This is a way of practicing generosity. I think it doesn't have to be a big effort. It can be a simple effort. You may sometimes like to give some money, a few quarters to homeless people who beg on the street. Or we may like to give tips to this person who's working very hard in a coffee shop; to a student who's trying to earn money.

So these things are the practice of generosity, the practice of Dana. There are many ways we can practice Dana. One of them is when you drive a car, and someone wants to get in front of you. If you give them the chance, the space,

that is also a way of giving away one's own grasping, one's own needs, greed and selfish motives. So there are many ways we can practice generosity.

I was telling Berry that what she did is exactly practicing generosity, that she shared this extraordinary space for the DAP members, allowing us to practice, to camp, and to do outdoor meditation. This is also generosity. So there are many ways, many moments, a lot of room in which we may practice generosity in our everyday life.

If you can never give anything, that can never be a good excuse. You may say that first I must be a multi-millionaire before I can practice generosity. Then I can build hospitals in India; then I'll have a lot of money to donate to homeless shelters, hospitals, and so forth. But that is never a good excuse. At least we can give something away. How about pleasant words. Pleasant words are free, generous. Even Shantideva talked about that in *The Way of the Bodhisattva*. He says: Give your smiles away. When you look at another person, look with a smile, a beautiful smile. A smile is free. It doesn't cost anything but it makes someone happy. Of course we don't want to smile because we want to have some recognition or compensation. But if we have a smile on our face, simply the motivation to help that person, so a give a sense of serenity or reverence to that person, then even giving away a smile can be a very powerful practice. That may have the power of the ability to change something in your life in a very powerful way.

See, we have a lot of material that we can use as a way to practice Dana in everyday life.

Most of the time, motivation can be a major factor in terms of bringing about change and transformation within ones self. So therefore we can use this American expression: the quantity is not so important, but rather the quality. This is definitely a wisdom statement. So when you have the right kind of motivation, the willingness to let go of the ego and exercising ultimate love, then the very simplest acts of giving away generosity can be the source of sudden enlightenment or great metamorphosis in this very moment.

when you think about the story of Asanga, he went to the forest in southern India and he meditated three years. He wanted to see Buddha Maitreya which is quite ambitious, but then he failed. When he came back he encountered this very odd event that someone was trying to make a needle out of this huge piece of iron by rubbing it with a feather. When he asked what the person was doing he said: 'I want to make a needle out of this piece of iron.' Then Asanga thought, this person is making so much effort, so much time for this very ridiculous project, so it may take an entire lifetime to make a needle by rubbing a feather on this huge piece of iron, so I should go back to meditate, I should be more diligent. So he meditated for nine years. He didn't have any sign of meeting the Buddha Araya Maitreya. He didn't have any sign of realization, any sign of experience. So he was completely disillusioned. So he decided to give up the retreat. On his way home, he saw this dog who was sick, dying, with pussy wounds, covered with insects and bugs. So he has this

instant compassion. He wanted to move away all those bugs but he was afraid of killing them if picked them up by hand. So he thought he'd have to pick them up with his tongue but it was so grotesque that he had to close his eyes. When he tried this, there was nothing. No object he could touch. When he opened his eyes, there was the Buddha Araya Maitreya with a golden aura shining, laughing and smiling.

Asanga said, he was actually quite direct, he said: 'I have been trying to see you for nine years and you're so stingy with your compassion. Why didn't you show your face before this?' And Buddha Araya Maitreya said: 'You have so much karma. If you have too much karma, then you cannot see me. Now by practicing the ultimate compassion, you were able to purify all your karma, therefore you were able to see me.'

So see, sometime a very simple act can be very transformative, a very life changing source of dharma practice. So motivation is always so important.

Sometimes, we may have some kind of plan or motivation to do the six paramitas or to do dharma practice, including generosity, but then if we meditate carefully in terms of checking or motivation, we may discover that we have ulterior motives. I like that saying 'ulterior motive'. We don't have that in Tibetan. We may have the motive that we want to gain something, like recognition, more recognition or we want to gain positive compensation from other people, or maybe we may want to be canonize eventually. There can be many ulterior motives that can get in the way when we're trying to practice the five paramitas.

Checking out one's motivation constantly is one of the Mahayana practices too. I would tell you another story which is relevant to this subject. There's this Kadampa master who is this amazing practitioner. One time he was at someone's place and he was having lunch and all the members and family went out to do something else, so he was by himself in there house. So he realized that he had run out of tea for his retreat. So he looked around and saw that there was this huge bag of tea so he wanted to take away some of the tea from that bag. So he went to the bag, put his right hand into it and suddenly he realized that he was stealing. He stopped there and he called everyone. He didn't take away his hand. He said: 'Look at me I'm stealing your tea!'. So he was checking out his motivation and teaching himself to check out his motivation. That is quite authentic. It is quite amazing that we can sometimes be so authentic, so honest to ourselves. It's very inspiring.

Each of us has the capability of becoming someone like that. Being honest to our self. Thoroughly checking out, examining one's motivations, ulterior motives and then dedicate truly our entire heart and our love towards the practice. if we're able to love practice then we're able to overcome all conventional conscience, shame, guilt, nothing would be a block in our road if we have so much love toward dharma practice.

I think there's this necessity of falling in love with dharma practice. We have to exercise how to fall in love with dharma practice. That's very challenging too sometimes. There are of course many of you who have already fallen in love with dharma practice. When you fall in love with dharma practice, what happens? You forget everything, right? Isn't that one of the signs when you fall in love that you forget everything? That has to happen some way or another. That's the only way to enlightenment. You have to forget everything. Free falling in love with dharma practice, the teachings of Buddha.

Perhaps you can write a love poem to dharma a lunchtime and you can read it at Tsog this afternoon. They have this tradition in every major tradition. They write songs about God and Buddha, enlightenment, Guru Rinpoche. These are actually love poems. Love poems that come out of the experience of falling in love with the dharma teachings, the wisdom teachings.

Until we're able to completely give our heart away to the dharma teachings there are always road blocks on the path, various obstacles. Sometimes dharma practice does not go along with conventional values, conventional morality. We have this experience that we have to choose one over another sometimes. When we begin to practice dharma with a full heart, then also we have to give away things that we have cherished. Either our lifestyle, our status, our social recognition. There are many things we have to give up.

Conventional morality is whatever is good in the eyes of other people in society. For example, driving a nice car is an example of conventional morality or making a lot of money is conventional morality. We don't have to give that up completely but sometimes we have this point or place where we have to choose one over the other. Also as we continue to practice dharma there will be various personal challenges too from your friends, from society. For instance, if you're practicing the Buddha dharma perhaps you've already encountered various challenges. Perhaps your neighbor doesn't like the fact that you're practicing meditation or your parent don't like the fact that you're practicing. There can be many challenges from those close to you and from society too sometimes. That's when we have to give away our attachment to social, conventional values and to completely get dedicated to dharma practice.

For example when I spoke about the story of the Kadampa master, what he did was completely amazing and very illogical too. Stealing is of course against conventional morality. If he cared about what people would think of him, that they might think he was a thief, he might have hid the fact that he was stealing. But he didn't hide his actions. He was able to admit that he was stealing. So this is actually very courageous - to act with integrity no matter what the possible consequences or worldly values might be.

Practicing generosity has various levels that we can exercise and nice words is one of them, a nice smile, and also sometimes one of the powerful way you can practice Dana or generosity is giving away something that you have been

really cherishing. You may want to go through some life examination. What is the thing that you are most attached to? What is the thing that always comes into your mind? It can be a very simple object like a text or a statue. It can be a car. It can be a very ordinary object but we can be very emotionally involved, attached and entangled with certain things in our lives.

There was a very high lama in Tibet who passed away. His followers, monks, they invited lots of other lamas and yogis to do a ceremony. They also invited a beggar yogi who is a little bit eccentric. He said: 'Your lama is stuck in the Bardo. He's not in heaven, in Buddha field.' He made everyone angry by saying that. All his students expected that he was in a Pure Land like acanishita. So his student were ready to beat him. One of the older monks said; 'Wait. Maybe there's truth in what he said. If he can prove it, then we should not beat him but listen to him.' So they asked the yogi if he had any proof. He said yes, if you go to the lamas bedroom there's a small box. If you open that box you'll find a huge bug and it will be crawling on the small statue of the Buddha. Your lama is attached to this statue and therefore he's not in the Buddha field, he's in the Bardo. So they went to the bedroom of the lama and they saw the small box which they had never seen before. When they opened the box there was a huge bug crawling in the small statue of Buddha. They were so shocked to see that evidence. So they asked the yogi what they can do. The yogi said: 'I can't do anything but if you take this box to Lhasa, there will be a market. There's a butcher there' and the yogi described all the body marks of the butcher, 'and he can liberate your lama.' So finally one monk took the box with statue and insect to Lhasa and found the butcher who was a very ordinary person selling meat at the market in Lhasa. The monk gave the box to the butcher. The butcher opened the box, ate the insect and said: 'Phet!'. Now I have liberate your master. Actually the butcher was a very famous master.

So see, small things can be the source of attachment. Sometimes its very easy to be attached to dharma objects. You may be able to renounce various attachments, obsessions, relationships, cars, house, but also we also we can direct that same attachment and obsession to dharma objects like statues, bells, vajras, and so forth. Sometimes we can become so attached to statues we may want to build quite an expense statue in our living room.

So there can be various sources of attachment. So try to think about what is the most important object that keeps coming into your mind, that you have so much attachment to. Something that you're so insecure about losing. Or that it might be destroyed or stolen or worn out. There's this constant fear and insecurity that comes in relationships, objects, things that we become so attached to.

It would be very powerful if you were able to give away that object to someone else. That would be a very powerful practice. Even if we can't give it, maybe we can loan it so someone for a few days and ask them to please use it freely. Like sharing our car. Sometimes that can be a very powerful practice.

Tonglen is a very good way of exercising Dana or generosity when you exhale, you're imagining that you're giving away all your happiness, freedom, objects that you cherish to other human beings without any discrimination. Tonglen is a very powerful practice. Think about giving away your freedom, giving away your happiness. That actually a very scary thought - much scarier than giving away your car or house. To give away your freedom or enlightenment to other beings is quite a scary thought, isn't it? But the interesting thing is that when we give up wanted happiness, wanting enlightenment, all of them come to us. When we want to have enlightenment or freedom, they become a hindrance. Rather than gaining it, we begin to lose it.

So the six paramitas are not different from the practices of Atiyoga, Mahamudra, or Mantra-yana. The very reason is that the view is the same. Whether you're practicing Dzogpachenpo, Rigpa is exactly the same as transcendental wisdom. Also practice is the same too. If someone asks who you are, you may say I'm Dzogchen practitioner or longrim practitioner or Zen practitioner but actually we're practitioners of six paramitas basically.

Some time ago, I asked one of my teachers, Lama Tsurgo, I said: "Many of us have been taking the Dzogchen teachings which are supposed to be very profound, known as the shortcut to enlightenment, but it seems that all of us remain being the same person with all the defilements without much sense of transformation. What is the problem?" He said: "The reason is that even though the Mantra-yana teachings are very profound, we have to also practice purification, depajenwa, which means that we have to practice the paramitas of generosity, discipline, and so on. If we simply practice Dzogchen without the support of the paramitas, then our karma cannot be purified."

So the paramita practice is a very powerful way to speed up the process of one's karma which is chang chub, enlightenment. Chan is purifying all our karmic tendencies of many lifetimes. Even Guru Rinpoche said: "My view is as vast as the sky but my actions with regard to cause and effect are finer than barely flour." That means that even though we may be engaged in a very esoteric, advanced form of teachings, at the same time we must practice the paramitas in our everyday life. The benefit of that is that our karmic tendencies are purified.

Everybody has this experience. We have been listening to very fantastic teachings like Dzogpachenpo, Mahamudra and Madhyamaka. These are very extraordinary teachings. This is the wisdom of Buddha. Buddha would not talk more than what we have been hearing right now. Many of you have already received initiation and received pointing out instructions. As far as teaching goes, there are no teachings higher than those that we can receive. Even if Buddha or Guru Rinpoche would appear in front of us, even they would not give a higher teaching than that.

So what is the reason that we remain as the same person? It seems that there's a very strong shell or cocoon or armor that we're bound by no matter how

much initiation we take, no matter how much practice we do. What is the main factor behind that? It is that somehow there is the lack of practicing paramitas. So from now on, we have to combine the teachings of Atiyoga, the transcendental or non-dual teachings, view, and practice the purification which is exercising paramitas in our everyday life.

Now you can make this ultimate statement to change your life. You can say: "My view from now on is the transcendental wisdom and my way of life is now based on paramitas. From now until the moment I die, I'm going to practice the paramitas every day, every moment in my relationship to my children, spouse, wife or husband, colleagues, dharma friends, strangers on the street. This is my way of life."

Dharma is a way of life. Dharma is not some kind of cultural or dogmatic ascetic discipline. Dharma is a way of life in which we reveal and manifest our basic goodness, our basic Buddha-ness. We are endowed with basic Buddha-ness. The six paramitas are already inherent in each of us. All we have to do is exercise them in everyday life, to bring them to bloom. Eventually they will bloom to their fullest degree. Then we become samiasambuddha Buddha.

This is quite important advice. This is not my advice. This is the advice of all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas in the past and present. So may want to record this message in our mind and our heart from this very moment. It's quite amazing when you make a huge promise or decision. You say: "From now on I'm going to do this. From now on I'm going to live out of paramitas." The moment you make that commitment, already some kind of very powerful shift already happens in your heart. It changes your perception entirely.

Question: If one is practicing Tonglen is one also practicing the paramitas?

Answer: Yes, they all can be integrated with each other. For instance, if you're practicing Dzogchen or any deity yogas, they can be combined with paramitas. Like the transcendental wisdom or Rigpa is like the building, the paramitas is like the foundation. If you have a very strong foundation, then the building can exist for a long time, it can be very still and secure. So the five paramitas of generosity, and so forth are the foundation of any practice we do.

For instance, if we practice a sadhana like deity yoga Avalokiteshvara, that's very beneficial. But when we drive our car we can't do the Avalokiteshvara sadhana. Or when we talk with people, we can't really do that sadhana. Or when we're working on the computer we can't do that. Or when we are arguing with someone, we can't do the Avalokiteshvara sadhana, but we can do the five paramitas always. So therefore it is a way of life. We can practice five paramitas under any circumstance, in any environment, no matter where you are. So it becomes a virtuous, enlightened way of life.

Therefore if any of are practicing Dzogpachenpo, either you call yourself a Dzogchen practitioner or Mahamudra practitioner or lamrim practitioner, all of

them have the same kind of discipline which is the paramitas. All of them have to be supported and based on practicing the ground of the five paramitas. If we are able to bring the five paramitas in everyday life as the ultimate practice or way of life, then our Dzogchen practice, our deity yoga will be quite dynamic and effective. We will be able to experience all things you've heard about Dzogchen, such as instant liberation, shortcut to enlightenment, we will then be able to actually witness all actual fruition of all these Dzogchen advertisements in real experience. If we don't practice five paramitas, then Dzogchen advertisements remains just an advertisements. We don't actually directly experience them. Maybe it would be nice to listen to them and read about them, but we would never experience them directly. The moment we integrate Dzogchen practice with the five paramitas, then we are able to experience them in our real life.

So this is the value and meaning of practicing the paramitas in relationship to whatever you're doing right now. One of you might be practicing Dzogchen, or you might be practicing Vipassana or other types of meditation like lamrim, it doesn't matter, all of them can be a very powerful practice if there is the support of the five paramitas. Generosity, discipline, which we're going to talk about. We've talked about generosity and we'll talk about discipline later. Then we can go through the rest of the five paramitas in a short, synthesized way.

Good after noon everyone. We're now going to talk about the following paramitas. Read the twenty-sixth practice from the Thirty Seven Practices of All Buddha Heirs:

'If, lacking strict moral control of our conduct,
We haven't been able to reach our own goals,
How can we fulfill all the wishes of others?
Undisciplined effort is surely absurd!
We first must renounce our attachment to pleasure
Which binds us so tightly to Samsára's wheel,
Then protect all our vows of sworn moral behavior
The Heirs of the Buddhas all practice this way.'

This is the second paramita which is called shila in Sanskrit. In Tibetan it is called tsiltim. Tim has the connotation of discipline and self control. Tsil mean moral or ethical. This is again a very essential practice of bodhisattvas. We say that tsiltim is like the life-force of liberation. Without tsiltim there's no liberation, no dharma practice. Dharma practice without tsiltim or shila is completely false dharma, pseudo dharma, cho dzinma. So it's very important to practice discipline or tsiltim in our everyday life.

There are many way we can look at the notion of tsiltim. This is not a cultural or anthropological discipline. This is a timeless universal moral discipline which are true in every tradition, every culture. Those disciplines that have

been taught in Christianity are exactly the same as what has been taught in the Buddha dharma, in Buddhist teachings.

There are basic disciplines we have to practice and also shila has very specific meanings too. As we enter into the Buddha dharma there are various disciplines: Hinayana vows, bodhisattva trainings, samayas of wisdom holders or vidyadhara in Vajrayāna path. In some way, each of us are actually what we call sindin dorje dzinba, the vajra master, the holders of three trainings because all of you have been ordained as upasca, we're practicing the five precepts, and also we're already ordained a bodhisattvas. You also practicing the six paramitas as your training and as your vow too, actually. Many of us have received initiations, abesheka, from different lamas. As least some of you have received some kind of empowerment from His Holiness Dalai Lama like Kalachakra. That makes you also a vidyadhara or wisdom holder or mantric practitioner.

So we are the holders of the three trainings. These are called shilas or disciplines. What is the function or purpose of practicing discipline? It helps us to focus on dharma practice and helps us to break down our habitual tendencies of many lifetimes. Actually, whatever we're experiencing as a condition or experience or conditioned mind, these are all habitual tendencies. If you're experiencing hope or fear or any form of defilement, none of them have to do with nature or the true expression of your consciousness, since your consciousness is already luminous, pristine Buddha mind. As we're experiencing violence, aggression, defilements, all of them are a conditioned state of your mind.

The pure state of your mind is Buddha mind. It's completely luminous and free from all obscurations. So what we're experiencing right now, be it suffering, any form of klesha, what we're experiencing is habitual tendencies of many lifetimes. So we have to break down these habits, these habits of mind, then allow ourselves to experience the pure, primordial state of your consciousness or mind, what we call in Dzogchen: intrinsic awareness.

Sometimes it's very important to take shila or discipline in the presence of teachers or sacred images or will symbolic initiations like empowerments. Sometimes we may know that there are moral disciplines. Everyone knows that. Not to kill or steal. These are universal cross-cultural moral disciplines. But sometimes in Buddhist training, especially if you're taking very specific training, then you have very specific vows, precepts. Like if you're a practicing Muslim you cannot eat pork.

If you're practicing Hinayana there are very specific precepts. Some of them are very scientifically rational. Some of them are completely difficult to understand. It's hard to figure out how Buddha came up with various ideas, precepts. But it doesn't matter. Either they make sense or it doesn't make sense: it's very important to keep those precepts, those vows, while we're on that path. Each of those precepts and vows, no matter how rational or

irrational they are, they have the ability to break down our habitual tendencies. That's the purpose of practicing these paramitas or shilas.

I think these days its very necessary for dharma practitioners to take some kind of precept. Even Buddha gave this prophecy when he was giving the Prajna paramita teachings, he said that in the future there would be a time called the kaliyuga, the degeneration time. Very few people would be interested in the path to enlightenment. At that time, if someone takes a one day of fasting ceremony, it would be equal in merit to someone taking an entire life as monk or nun. So this is a very unique, a very special time in which we live. So it would be very powerful and transformative if we were able to take some precepts or vows in our everyday life. Sometime it would be very powerful to take a periodic vow like fasting ceremony or doing retreat one day or several days. Every month you are able to experience immediately some kind of shift or change every time when you go a retreat or fasting ceremony. You can try that. At least you can take some type of precept in terms of quitting something, like quitting certain habits, certain physical habits, like drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes, or any of various habits you would like to break down or quit.

Even if you cant quit it completely at least you can practice minimizing such indulgences. Like minimizing watching TV. TV can be very intoxicating. Check out the underlying motivation: why do we want to watch TV? What is the root of the desire behind wanting to watch TV? Sometimes we want to read, we want to know the news, but most of the time there's a part of us that feels a certain sense of dissatisfaction. We want to somehow run away run that feeling, to be entertained or stimulated by various sensual pleasures through form, sound, taste, smell, touch, and so forth.

So as dharma practitioners, you may want to promise yourself either in the presence of a teacher or sacred images, to quit one of those habitual tendencies.

Dharma practice comes sort of as a package deal. Like Dzogchen practice. It's presented as an aggrandizing practice, an enticing commercial. We have all these promises: 'shortcut to enlightenment', 'instant liberation', 'luminous wisdom'. It's very juicy and fascinating, but we have to remember that it's a package deal.

It's like American commerce. First they talk about all the good things about a product and you become fascinated with it. Then you find out that the price is huge. Dharma practice is like that. So we have to give up something in order to practice dharma. If we're able to give up something then all of these promises that come along with extraordinary teachings, Dzogchen teachings, Vajrayana teachings, can be manifested in this lifetime. But at the same time, if we're not able to give up something, sacrifice habitual tendencies, either physical habits, addictions, indulgences, then all these teachings simply become dharma

commence - it's very wonderful to hear, wonderful to read about, wonderful to play audio tapes about these things.

So if we really want to actualize Buddhahood, especially if you want to actualize rainbow body or vidyadhara-hood, its very necessary to begin with the principle of shila or paramita. That means we have to not internally but physically give up something. when we talk about giving up internal habitual tendency, that's more on the subtle level. Its very possible that I may be able to fool myself thinking that I really quit internal habitual tendencies without anything really changing.

In order to make sure that we're practicing the renunciation of giving up habitual tendencies its very important to exercise physical disciplines in terms of refraining from certain habits. Discipline is always about refraining oneself from certain habitual tendencies such as conduct, speech, or indulgence with various sensual pleasures, for a certain amount of time.

I think all the precepts are periodic. Once you become Buddha, then you don't have to have any precepts - you're gone beyond any vows and trainings. Therefore Buddha said in the Heart Sutra there's no path, no precepts. Until we're able to reach or actualize ultimate freedom, freedom from all suffering, freedom from all kleshas, we have to exercise shila or physical disciplines. For instance, in the Buddha's teachings there are Hinayana vows called the seven classes of precepts such upaska, novice monk, novice nun, bukshus, bukshunees. There are seven precepts.

Even though we don't have the opportunity or interest in becoming monk or nun which is not necessary, it's very good to take some of those precepts. You're already ordained as ukaspa. These are general, classic vows which are mentioned in Buddha's teachings. As we practice more personally oriented precepts, you can actually quit something based on reflecting on what is the source of your indulgence. This can sometimes be a meditation itself. Then we have to quit meditation for a while. Meditation can sometimes be a source of indulgence because we get so much pleasure out of it.

One time this yogi was meditating, Dongtempa, the main student of Atisha, walked by him and said: 'what are you doing?' The yogi said: 'I'm doing dharma practice.' He was circumambulating around a stupa. Dongtempa said: 'It's very good to do circumambulating around the stupa, but why don't you practice true dharma, authentic dharma?' Then the yogi thought: 'Maybe doing circumambulating around the stupa is not doing really dharma. Maybe reading scriptures.' So he went back and spent the whole day reading scriptures. And Dongtempa saw him and said: 'Reading scriptures is very meritorious work, but why don't you practice authentic dharma?' So the yogi thought: 'Oh, maybe reading scriptures isn't real dharma practice. Maybe meditation is real dharma.' So he woke up early in the morning and sat in the meditation hall all day and practices meditation every day. Then Dongtempa came and saw him and said: 'Doing meditation is very meritorious work, but why don't you

practice pure dharma?' Finally the yogi became very confused, not knowing what is pure dharma. Meditation is not pure dharma. Circumambulating is not pure dharma. So what is pure dharma? He went to Dongtempa and asked him: 'What is pure dharma?' Dongtempa said: 'Practice renunciation. That is pure dharma.'

So that doesn't mean that whatever we're doing, meditation, circumambulating, reciting sadhanas is wrong, but all of these have to be done in the context of renunciation. Shila or discipline has to do with renunciation. Sometimes the discipline does not have to be rational. We may think that it has to be rational but it can be very irrational too. For instance, not killing makes sense. Of course if we kill, especially a human being, its very easy to understand scientifically, intellectually, its very negative conduct. First we're taking away someone's life. Second, you may have to go to jail. Third, you may have caused a lot of suffering to many people - to your relatives and friends, to the relatives and friends of that person. So that's very easy to understand. It's also quite easy to understand why we have to quit taking intoxicating substances such excess usage of alcohol. It's very easy to understand, especially if you're driving a car-it may take someone else's life.

So these are more universal cross-cultural vows. We don't have cars in Tibet but we say: 'Do not ride yak while you're drinking wine.'

These are good to practice. One does not have to be a Buddha or bodhisattva in order to practice this kind of cross-universe discipline or moral precept. If we meditate carefully, what is the source of negative karma or negative deeds? All of them go back to this one simple issue: ego. This sense of dissatisfaction. Not because there is evilness in each us or because there is intrinsic evil, but because we have dissatisfaction. Dissatisfaction breeds confusion, hope and fear. Then when we act from these kleshas, outwardly it become negative karma.

This is very general though. Shila goes into a much deeper level of training than simply applying a general level of moral discipline. Shila is a technical, transformative way to break down habitual tendencies which are very specific, based on what you're practicing. Therefore shila can be very irrational. For instance, being in silence. This is not a universal morality. This is a very specific practice that we may only do in retreat. Then there are certain practices or shilas that we do according to various specific retreats.

For instance, if you're doing a fasting ceremony, then you have to take a shower, shave your beard, wear nice clothes, eat healthy food, avoid red meat. Then when you do chod practice, there is another set of precepts which is almost opposite. With chod, you don't take showers, you let your hair and nails grow, you eat meat. So which is real? Which has more rationality? Which is the more pure, authentic precept? In some way they both have nothing to do with being rational or irrational, but its all about using skillful means or

transformative techniques to encounter and counter our habitual tendencies. In some ways our habitual tendencies are very frozen, they have their own life. It's like there is a flow and practicing those various transformative precepts or disciplines can help us to break down the flow or continuity of habitual tendencies, kleshas, or internal defilements.

So when we practice the bodhisattva's vows, we have this general shila which is practicing six paramitas every day. Then if you get into generosity, there are sub-categories of shila. Giving away what? There are actually three levels. Giving away properties, possessions, material to others, giving away dharma teachings, giving away kindness, love, compassion towards others too. In the same way, in terms of shila, as we're bodhisattvas we have to practice the basic virtuous disciplines: not killing, not stealing, and on top of that we have very specific shilas. 'From now until we become enlightened' - what are those specific shilas? To practice prayers, reciting sadhanas, scriptures, prostrations, various purification methods. At least we have to take the bodhisattvas vows three times a day.

At least from now until the moment we become enlightened we become enlightened we have to take every day the bodhisattvas vows three times and we have to practice very specific method of meditation like Tonglen or whatever we're doing three times every day. Morning, noon and evening.

We have also shila or precepts based on this training program, DAP. So there's a DAP morality or DAP shila. Perhaps we can recite Heart Sutra once every day until next month or until next year. These are called shilas. At least we have to recite the recitations such as the Four Immeasurables every morning. We have to make a promise or commitment to practice the Four Immeasurable development of love and compassion every morning when we wake up. In the DAP training, there's a book which comes with the Four Immeasurables (May all beings possess happiness and the cause of happiness, etc).

'For all Bodhisattvas with mind set on merit,
Who wish to amass a great store of good deeds,
Encounter with those causing harm and destruction
Which test their commitment are mines of great wealth.
For this very reason, abandon resentment
And anger directed towards those who do harm;
perfect meditation on perfect endurance -
The Heirs of the Buddhas all practice this way.'

I think this would be perhaps the most useful practice as paramitas, called dzopa in Tibetan, it can be translated as patience or tolerance. This is the most useful paramita in every day life. Patience and tolerance. We often encounter the experience of lack of tolerance and patience. Patience is actually better to say than tolerance. Dzopa. That means to not react to any situation from outside such as from the eight worldly dharmas (pleasure/pain, loss/gain, shame/fame, praise/blame).

For instance, we have a tendency to react to situations from outside. For instance, we like to hear certain things and we don't like to hear other things. We like to experience certain feelings or certain things and we don't like to experience certain events or environment or conditions. When we have patience, we don't react to certain situations but rather we practice staying in this moment and allowing oneself to be in the natural state of one's mind, which means experiencing serenity and equanimity in each moment.

So the state of patience is similar to the state of what we call nyambanichenbo - equanimity. Nothing makes you excited, nothing makes you depressed. Rather you're always dwelling in the state of internal peace and equanimity. That is patience. Patience is not tolerance. Tolerance has the connotation that you have really put up with some disturbing condition with great effort. Patience is not about trying to be patient or trying to be tolerant or trying to be compassionate or peaceful. Rather, the moment we allow ourselves to be in the state of natural mind, which is internal peace or serenity then patience is already there. Patience is actually a natural intrinsic quality we have as human beings. It's not something we have to develop and try to practice. If we try to practice patience, then it becomes tolerance, which doesn't work. The shortcoming of tolerance is that when we try to be patient, we can maybe be patient for a while but eventually we'll explode.

Patience is being in the natural state of mind; being in this very moment. Then we don't have to try to be patient or react to any conditions. That is patience.

Patience is also the understanding of courage. Buddha says to understand the nature of reality, the great shunyata, one has to have a unique patience or Dzogpachenpo or great patience. Patience means fearless courage to understand. Ego-less wisdom. This is a threatening subject to comprehend the nature of reality because the ego has to die. Concept has to die. So trying to go beyond one's ego, one's attachment to all identities, all concepts, this can be a very threatening experience. This means we're letting go of all our source of security, a lifetime of security. All concepts that we've accumulated, including who we are, ideas of what is the meaning and purpose of life, ideas about what is god-all those are concepts, but they have also been a source of security, giving some sort of meaning to our life.

So when we're ready to realize the nature of reality, we have to go beyond all those concepts, those cherished concepts - which can be very threatening. Therefore Buddha said that the ultimate patience is a form of courage and wisdom to let go of all of our attachment to all concepts and ideas of who we are and what is reality.

You can use this method to invite all the challenges. To use challenges to develop true patience which is internal serenity. Nothing has to do with effort or the nothing of being tolerant but rather being in the state of inner serenity. That means we can invite and liberate all the challenges - either a person or

condition or a situation that makes us impatient, neurotic. The opposite of being patient is being neurotic - not able to be in the moment but rather our mind is running everywhere, like monkey mind. So in that case, we can deliberately invite very difficult situations in order to learn how to be truly patient.

What would that be for each of us? One of them is to exercise encounters with certain individuals that somehow bring up your own personal issues of hope, fear, anger, jealousy and so forth. Or sometimes you may find in real life that such individuals can be very difficult to you, like your boss in your work place, or people who judge you or criticize you. Usually we don't like to hang around them. We like to hang around people who say nice things about us. In this practice, we can actually exercise by encountering those individuals. Maybe we can pay someone to push our buttons if we can't find anyone.

When we do chod practice we're supposed to have a lot of demonic experience, internal challenges, and sometimes we don't have experience easily. Sometimes people send somebody disguised as a demon to challenge you in your retreat.

Sometimes relationship is about that. I have this new revelation: the purpose of having a relationship is that you've in essence hired somebody 24 hours a day to push your buttons. If you're a Bodhisattva then you have a completely new understanding, perspective about relationship. If you're simply applying the American idea of what is relationship, then you have another purpose. What is that? Maybe to have a companion, trying to raise a family.

From Bodhisattva's perspective you have to have some sort of relationship either towards your teacher or your dharma friends or towards your neighbor. You have to have a relationship with someone. Either you have a positive or negative relationship or association with another human being. This will always mirror our own difficulties, our own kleshas. Whatever we see in that person is already in each of us. In that way, we can exercise in terms of taking the whole relationship as a way to develop patience and tolerance. That can be very good.

Sometimes we ourselves can be a very difficult person to get along with so maybe we can develop a relationship with our self sometime. So sometimes it's good for dharma practitioners to live in a solitary environment, to sit by yourself for a certain amount of time, for one week or two weeks. In Tibetan Buddhism they have a three year retreat. People think that going to a three year retreat is quite solitary but it the opposite. You're going to be in a very difficult relationship. With whom? With yourself. It's the most difficult person on earth.

So practicing patience with oneself or with others is the most useful paramita we can practice. No matter where we live - in our ordinary home or in a dharma center, we always have a chance to exercise this paramita.

'If Shravakas as well as Pratyekabuddhas,
Who work towards Nirvana for merely themselves,
Exert so much effort fulfilling their purpose
That were they in flames they not stray from their goal
Then how much more energy must be expended
By those of us working for everyone's sake;
Enlightenment calls for the most perseverance -
The Heirs of the Buddhas all practice this way.'

This is called diligence or fluendu in Tibetan. This is known as the sublime wealth in the Buddha's teachings. Fluendu is like sublime wealth, wealth that grants the ultimate desirable attainment which is enlightenment. Sometimes the attainment of enlightenment is determined based on how much diligence we're able to have.

We do have diligence as humans. We just have to learn how to direct that toward the right direction or goal. We have quite an amazing ability of having diligence in terms of pursuing worldly goals like money, fame, career, social status. People put tremendous time and effort toward these worldly, illusory achievements. Diligence is not some kind of discipline that we have to develop but rather we have to use and direct that toward the right purpose, the right goal which is enlightenment, which is dharma practice.

If we think about our everyday life, we actually put a lot of effort towards our various goals and projects, sometimes for work, sometimes for making money which is alright too. but in the same way that we put so much diligence and effort in pursuing worldly goals, also we can also put that much effort and diligence towards dharma practice too.

When you hear the stories of great teachers, lamas, like Patrul Rinpoche, many of them have tremendous diligence. They're extremely diligent practitioners. It seems that enlightenment is the result of being a diligent practitioner. Sometimes we also hear stories that enlightenment can be an incidental experience, but most of the time enlightenment come out of being a diligent practitioner, whatever that means.

We can also be a diligent dharma practitioner with our dharma practice, sadhanas, the training programs. For instance, in Tibetan Buddhism when you practice Ngñndro you have to do 100,000 accumulations. You have to go to three year retreat and there are various restrictive rules and precepts too. But more than that we can also exercise these paramitas in our everyday life too. What is the ultimate diligence? It's being a monk in every moment, whether you're in retreat or not. So awareness, mindfulness is the true diligence. That means we always have to be mindful, whatever we do and make sure that we are perceiving everything and acting on everything based on the enlightened mind, based on love, compassion and wisdom. That is diligence.

So diligence has those two connotations. One has to do with using a very specific daily routine or structural practice such as meditation or going to retreat, or having very specific schedules for your every day life. You may say: I'll wake up at six o'clock in the morning and do sadhana, then go to bed a very specific time, then of course sitting in lotus posture for a long time which requires a lot of diligence. Those are forms of diligence.

But also the true diligence means being mindful every moment. It requires tremendous diligence to do that.

'Higher insight that penetrates right to the essence,
Revealing the true way in which things exist,
Can only root out our emotional problems
If mental quiescence is laid at its base.
Thus surpassing the four formless states of absorption
We must work to achieve single-minded control
The full concentration of deep meditation -
The heirs of the Buddhas all practice this way.'

So this is what we call samádhi or meditation, which we have been actually practicing in every session. Meditation also has stages too; what we call gomrim such as form meditation, formless meditation, shamatha, vipassana. There are many systems of meditation. Basically all the teachings, meditations, Mahamudra, Dzogchen, chod: all of them are meditations. Meditation is the true path to the attainment of enlightenment. There is no other path to enlightenment beside meditation.

Either we're doing prayer or prostration, or taking precepts or going to temples or doing various religious, dharmic activities, all of them are actually a way to practice meditation. Dharma practice without meditation does not have the ability to transform our consciousness. Therefore, Shantideva said that no much you practice - recitation of mantra, taking vows for 1,000 years, if you've done them without meditation, without some type of internal awareness, all of them do not have any effect upon one's mind.

So meditation is really the true merit. Meditation is the dharma.

In Buddhism they talk about two dharmas: long topa. Long means the scripture dharma; topa dharma means the dharma of realization which is meditation. So the scripture dharma is not the real dharma. It is simply a way of supporting the true dharma, the dharma of realization. So whatever we do right now, all the activities we're doing, what we call dharma activities, coming to the teaching, writing notes, being really serious practitioner, all of these are called dharma activities. Maybe one day we're doing serious retreat, or we're reading dharma books, or doing Zen practice, or Vajrayāna practice, or doing sadhana, all of them are dharma practice in some way but all of them are ways of developing meditation. If we're able to use such methods and means of meditation, then all of them become dharma activities. In that way for

instance, if you're using any daily activities, it could be a very ordinary activity, for instance driving a car. If you use that as a way for developing meditation then that could be dharma activity too. Or sometimes we may have to apply very specific systems, structures of the way we live, the way we sit, the way we eat food - there are very specific structures as a way to develop meditation.

If we ask ourselves: try to point out one thing that is dharma, where is dharma? Buddha taught that dharma is not in fire, dharma is not in rock, dharma is not in water, dharma is not sky, dharma is not in any of those elements. What is dharma? Dharma is actually meditation. Meditation is dharma. Dharma and meditation are synonyms. There are synonymous

So what we're trying to learn here is how to meditate. Meditation is a very profound journey. I feel that I am just scratching the tip of the iceberg of meditation. Meditation is a very profound journey. We can actually spend our entire lifetime on this internal exploration - the path of meditation. It gets deeper and deeper, once we begin to explore that path. So meditation is what Trumpa Rinpoche calls 'journey without end'. That's a very beautiful way of describing meditation. Either you practice Mahamudra or Dzogchen, all of them are ways of practicing meditation.

Why does someone become a monk? There is only one simple reason: that person has a desire to live a life of contemplation, meditation. Why does someone become a yogi? That is also the same purpose - a way to have a life of contemplation. So whatever we do, we have to use everything as a way to cultivate meditation each moment. Of course meditation has various structures and systems, but whatever we do as dharma practice is a way to do meditation. Sometimes we may like to use various methods, upayas, to help us to develop meditation.

Our ordinary activity sometimes does not have the ability to help us develop meditation, certain structures of physical mental discipline. For instance, driving a car can be used as a means for developing meditation but it doesn't work that way most of the time. It could work like that in the future. In the same way, watching TV theoretically can be used as a way to meditate, but somehow our association with watching TV is based on indulgence. So usually when we watch TV it doesn't help us to meditate. It helps us to be distracted.

So it's very necessary to use some kind of method to develop meditation. What would that be? Buddha gave whole categories about that. One of them is recitation. As we're Buddhists, especially as we're Vajrayāna practitioners, we have to use recitation, reciting prayers, sadhanas, as a way to develop meditation. The written prayers, sadhanas are not for the sake of reciting prayers because parrots know how to recite prayers too. They're for the sake of developing meditation.

We have this one story. You can teach parrots to say; 'one shall not kill living beings'. There's this analogy in a sutra where there's a parrot reciting the

phrase: 'one shall not kill living beings' while he has actually killing a bug. So even parrots know how to recite prayers. In the same way, the reason we're reciting prayers and mantras are for the sake of developing mindfulness, awareness, luminous wisdom in each moment. That's the only, the single purpose.

So I would recommend for all of you to recite the Heart Sutra from now on until you get an email message saying now you're done with that. So we recite Heart Sutra. The Heart Sutra is a very beautiful prayer. It comes from the Buddha's own words and so it's very blessed. Buddha gave those teachings, sermons at Vulture Peak mountain after Buddha's parinirvana. His retinue, his disciples such as Ānanda Mahakashyapa, they have this ability to record all of the Buddha's teachings. That ability is called: dharani or recollection. Later, they collected all the teachings and put them into volumes called sutras, tantras, even Dzogchen teachings come from those recollections. It says in Dzogchen tantras, Buddha manifest as Samantabhadra and gave the Atiyoga teachings to a very few individuals who had the higher capacity and then those teachings were recorded later coming through visions of Garab Dorje, Vimalamitra, and Shri Singha.

So Heart Sutra is actually the words of the Buddha himself so therefore it's a very blessed and sacred and extraordinary prayer to recite. In Tibet we say that if you have the Heart Sutra in your house, that would bless the whole region, the whole country and that would have the ability to remove all the obstacles. I would recommend to recite the Heart Sutra once every day. When you recite the Heart Sutra, try to contemplate those phrases. They're very amazing. When you really reflect on the meaning, it's very profound. Buddha is talking about the emptiness, the luminous wisdom, the transcendental wisdom. So try to meditate on the meaning of emptiness or on Rigpa or Dharmakaya's or emptiness of five skandhas while you recite that prayer.

While you recite that prayer you don't have to meditate. Simple reflection on the meaning of those prayers leads into the state of meditation, in this case the meditation on the Prajna Paramita, or transcendental wisdom.

Sometimes deity yoga can be a powerful way to develop meditation. Tibetan Buddhism is filled with rituals and deities. Sometime people ask me why are there so many deities, so many rituals in Tibetan Buddhism. Why can't we revolutionize Tibetan Buddhism in a way that's more suitable to modern people. But this is a misunderstanding. One time I met this Jewish person and he asked me about some practice. I mentioned the Vajrasattva. Vajrasattva sometimes comes with 100 peaceful and wrathful deities. Then he said I'm a Jew. I believe in one god. I can't do this whole deity practice.

The purpose of having this deity yoga, rituals, sadhanas, music, very elaborate ceremonies, is because they're very powerful techniques or ways to cultivating the meditative experience or the samādhi meditation. When you're actually reciting sadhanas or doing deity yoga, it's quite easy to have the experience of

meditation or Dharmakaya mind. That's also possible when you're driving your car or watching TV or when you're talking with people on the phone. So there are many methods. Later maybe you'll come up with your own creative, innovative method. You can apply those five phenomena: form, sound, smell, taste, all those phenomenal ways to develop the meditation or the samádhi.

Again, meditation is the true dharma practice. Recitation is not dharma itself. It is dharma only insofar as it can be a means of supporting one's meditation practice. In itself it is not dharma practice. So what is dharma practice? It is meditation. If we are able to practice meditation every day, every moment, then it's possible that we may end up being a very ordinary person like a truck driver, or a hillbilly, without any sadhanas, but still you're an extraordinary dharma practitioner. So whatever has meaning to you in the sense of developing meditation, becomes dharma practice.

Carry those messages, those timeless messages of Buddha Shakyamuni into your daily life, to transform your daily life from this very moment since we all have Buddhahood in our own hands. We all have Buddha nature as our inherent quality. There's no other path to enlightenment besides the six paramitas. These are the avenues by which Buddhas of the past, present and future obtain liberation or saramukia.

Buddha Shakyamuni taught the six paramitas not as a philosophical system or dogma but from his own revelation, his own realization. Buddha Shakyamuni was the same as we are right now. He was a seeker of enlightenment and finally what he understood is a revelation that he experienced and he was able to share that revelation with all human beings, all sentient beings. Therefore, Buddha is known as the tomba. Tomba means the guide to the path of enlightenment. Because of that we have the means and the knowledge to enlightenment, we have a map of directions to the city of nirvana.

Now it all depends on our own motivation. Do we want to drive to the city of nirvana or not. We have the choice in this very moment. Even though each of us has experienced suffering through many lifetimes, the big news is that we have the choice to change our life. There's no better news than that - that we can change our life in each moment..

Teachers can give teachings and we can cultivate various dharma knowledge learning systems of meditation but the true transformation comes from yourself by being truly committed to the path, the six paramitas. The six paramitas are like lights or lamps on the path to enlightenment.

I will make prayers and wish to all of you to attain enlightenment of highest Buddhahood in this very lifetime through the path of the six paramitas. Let us make this aspiration together: from this very moment we're going to hold this very personal promise that we're going to live out of six paramitas every day, each moment. We're going to determine this moment that our way of life is no longer based on indulgence, based on hope or fear, but based on such virtuous

enlightened principals as the six paramitas. We're going to hold transcendent wisdom as our religion or the way of the bodhisattva and the five paramitas as our conduct, our practice, our training, all the way to the way of the moment of enlightenment. In that way, we create tremendous meaning out of human life. Human life is very precious as all the teachers write. It is very precious because based on this precious human life we can gain enlightenment and dedicate this human life in order to benefit all sentient beings.

Look at Buddha Shakyamuni and all the enlightened beings throughout history. They have benefited so many sentient beings by showing the path to enlightenment. In the same way we have the same ability to liberate and benefit countless sentient beings. This precious human life can be used as a source of enlightenment for yourself. It can also be used as a source of benefit and loving kindness, Buddha activities for all other sentient beings.

So we make that promise in this very moment.

TAYATA GATE GATE PARAGATE PARASAM GATE
BODHI SWAHA



The Dharma Protector Bodhisattva



Transference of Merit

*May the Merits and Virtues accrued from
this work,
Adorn the Buddhas' Pure Lands,
Repaying the Four Kinds of Kindness
above,
And aiding those suffering in the paths
below.*

*May those who see and hear of this,
All bring forth the resolve of Bodhi,
And when this retribution body is over,
Be born together in Ultimate Bliss.*

