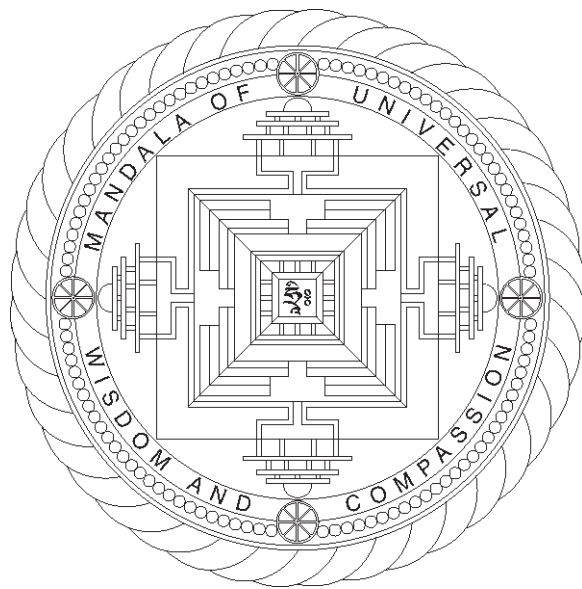


# Discovering BUDDHISM

*Awakening the limitless potential of your mind,  
achieving all peace and happiness*



*Mind and Its Potential  
Required Reading*



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## *Further required reading includes the following texts:*

- The Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche (pp. 1–3, 44–50)
- Make Your Mind an Ocean*, by Lama Thubten Yeshe
- Becoming Your Own Therapist*, by Lama Thubten Yeshe

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# *What Is the Mind?*

*by His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama*

*There is little agreement among Western scientists about the nature and function of mind, consciousness—or even about whether such a thing exists. Buddhism’s extensive explanations, however, stand firm after twenty-five centuries of philosophical debate and experiential validation. Here His Holiness the Dalai Lama explains the Buddhist concept of mind to the participants of a Mind Science symposium at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA.*

One of the fundamental views in Buddhism is the principle of “dependent origination.” This states that all phenomena, both subjective experiences and external objects, come into existence in dependence upon causes and conditions; nothing comes into existence uncaused. Given this principle, it becomes crucial to understand what causality is and what types of cause there are. In Buddhist literature, two main categories of causation are mentioned: (i) external causes in the form of physical objects and events, and (ii) internal causes such as cognitive and mental events.

The reason for an understanding of causality being so important in Buddhist thought and practice is that it relates directly to sentient beings’ feelings of pain and pleasure and the other experiences that dominate their lives, which arise not only from internal mechanisms but also from external causes and conditions. Therefore it is crucial to understand not only the internal workings of mental and cognitive causation but also their relationship to the external material world.

The fact that our inner experiences of pleasure and pain are in the nature of subjective mental and cognitive states is very obvious to us. But how those inner subjective events relate to external circumstances and the material world poses a critical problem. The question of whether there is an external physical reality independent of sentient beings’ consciousness and mind has been extensively discussed by Buddhist thinkers. Naturally, there are divergent views on this issue among the various philosophical schools of thought. One such school [Chittamatra] asserts that there is no external reality, not even external objects, and that the material world we perceive is in essence merely a projection of our minds. From many points of view, this conclusion is rather extreme. Philosophically, and for that matter conceptually, it seems more coherent to maintain a position that accepts the reality not only of the subjective world of the



mind, but also of the external objects of the physical world.

Now, if we examine the origins of our inner experiences and of external matter, we find that there is a fundamental uniformity in the nature of their existence in that both are governed by the principle of causality. Just as in the inner world of mental and cognitive events, every moment of experience comes from its preceding continuum and so on *ad infinitum*. Similarly, in the physical world every object and event must have a preceding continuum that serves as its cause, from which the present moment of external matter comes into existence.

In some Buddhist literature, we find that in terms of the origin of its continuum, the macroscopic world of our physical reality can be traced back finally to an original state in which all material particles are condensed into what are known as “space particles.” If all the physical matter of our macroscopic universe can be traced to such an original state, the question then arises as to how these particles later interact with each other and evolve into a macroscopic world that can have direct bearing on sentient beings’ inner experiences of pleasure and pain. To answer this, Buddhists turn to the doctrine of karma, the invisible workings of actions and their effects, which provides an explanation as to how these inanimate space particles evolve into various manifestations.

The invisible workings of actions, or karmic force (*karma* means action), are intimately linked to the motivation in the human mind that gives rise to these actions. Therefore an understanding of the nature of mind and its role is crucial to an understanding of human experience and the relationship between mind and matter. We can see from our own experience that our state of mind plays a major role in our day-to-day experience and physical and mental well-being. If a person has a calm and stable mind, this influences his or her attitude and behavior in relation to others. In other words, if someone remains in a state of mind that is calm, tranquil and peaceful, external surroundings or conditions can cause them only a limited disturbance. But it is extremely difficult for someone whose mental state is restless to be calm or joyful even when they are surrounded by the best facilities and the best of friends. This indicates that our mental attitude is a critical factor in determining our experience of joy and happiness, and thus also our good health.

To sum up, there are two reasons why it is important to understand the nature of mind. One is because there is an intimate connection between mind and karma. The other is that our state of mind plays a crucial role in our experience of happiness and suffering. If understanding the mind is very important, what then is mind, and what is its nature?

**B**uddhist literature, both sutra and tantra, contains extensive discussions on mind and its nature. Tantra, in particular, discusses the various levels of subtlety of mind and consciousness. The sutras do not talk much about the relationship between the various states of mind and their corresponding physiological states. Tantric literature, on the other hand, is replete with references to the various subtleties of the levels of consciousness and their relationship to such physiological states as the vital energy centers within the body, the energy channels, the energies that flow within these and so on. The tantras also explain how, by manipulating the various physiological factors through specific meditative yogic practices, one can effect various states of consciousness.

According to tantra, the ultimate nature of mind is essentially pure. This pristine nature is technically

called “clear light.” The various afflictive emotions such as desire, hatred and jealousy are products of conditioning. They are not intrinsic qualities of the mind because the mind can be cleansed of them. When this clear light nature of mind is veiled or inhibited from expressing its true essence by the conditioning of the afflictive emotions and thoughts, the person is said to be caught in the cycle of existence, samsara. But when, by applying appropriate meditative techniques and practices, the individual is able to fully experience this clear light nature of mind free from the influence and conditioning of the afflictive states, he or she is on the way to true liberation and full enlightenment.

Hence, from the Buddhist point of view, both bondage and true freedom depend on the varying states of this clear light mind, and the resultant state that meditators try to attain through the application of various meditative techniques is one in which this ultimate nature of mind fully manifests all its positive potential, enlightenment, or Buddhahood. An understanding of the clear light mind therefore becomes crucial in the context of spiritual endeavor.

**I**n general, the mind can be defined as an entity that has the nature of mere experience, that is, “clarity and knowing.” It is the knowing nature, or agency, that is called mind, and this is non-material. But within the category of mind there are also gross levels, such as our sensory perceptions, which cannot function or even come into being without depending on physical organs like our senses. And within the category of the sixth consciousness, the mental consciousness, there are various divisions, or types of mental consciousness that are heavily dependent upon the physiological basis, our brain, for their arising. These types of mind cannot be understood in isolation from their physiological bases.

Now a crucial question arises: How is it that these various types of cognitive events—the sensory perceptions, mental states and so forth—can exist and possess this nature of knowing, luminosity and clarity? According to the Buddhist science of mind, these cognitive events possess the nature of knowing because of the fundamental nature of clarity that underlies all cognitive events. This is what I described earlier as the mind’s fundamental nature, the clear light nature of mind. Therefore, when various mental states are described in Buddhist literature, you will find discussions of the different types of conditions that give rise to cognitive events. For example, in the case of sensory perceptions, external objects serve as the objective, or causal condition; the immediately preceding moment of consciousness is the immediate condition; and the sense organ is the physiological or dominant condition. It is on the basis of the aggregation of these three conditions—causal, immediate and physiological—that experiences such as sensory perceptions occur. Another distinctive feature of mind is that it has the capacity to observe itself. The issue of mind’s ability to observe and examine itself has long been an important philosophical question. In general, there are different ways in which mind can observe itself. For instance, in the case of examining a past experience, such as things that happened yesterday you recall that experience and examine your memory of it, so the problem does not arise. But we also have experiences during which the observing mind becomes aware of itself while still engaged in its observed experience. Here, because both observing mind and observed mental states are present at the same time, we cannot explain the phenomenon of the mind becoming self-aware, being subject and object simultaneously, through appealing to the factor of time lapse.

Thus, it is important to understand that when we talk about mind, we are talking about a highly intricate network of different mental events and state. Through the introspective properties of mind we can observe, for example, what specific thoughts are in our mind at a given moment, what objects our

minds are holding, what kinds of intentions we have and so on. In a meditative state, for example, when you are meditating and cultivating a single-pointedness of mind, you constantly apply the introspective faculty to analyze whether or not your mental attention is single-pointedly focused on the object, whether there is any laxity involved, whether you are distracted and so forth. In this situation you are applying various mental factors and it is not as if a single mind were examining itself. Rather, you are applying various different types of mental factor to examine your mind.

As to the question of whether or not a single mental state can observe and examine itself, this has been a very important and difficult question in the Buddhist science of mind. Some Buddhist thinkers have maintained that there is a faculty of mind called “self-consciousness,” or “self-awareness.” It could be said that this is an apperceptive faculty of mind, one that can observe itself. But this contention has been disputed. Those who maintain that such an apperceptive faculty exists distinguish two aspects within the mental, or cognitive, event. One of these is external and object-oriented in the sense that there is a duality of subject and object, while the other is introspective in nature and it is this that enables the mind to observe itself. The existence of this apperceptive self-cognizing faculty of mind has been disputed, especially by the later Buddhist philosophical school of thought the Prasangika.

**I**n our own day-to-day experiences we can observe that, especially on the gross level, our mind is interrelated with and dependent upon the physiological states of the body. Just as our state of mind, be it depressed or joyful, affects our physical health, so too does our physical state affect our mind.

As I mentioned earlier, Buddhist tantric literature mentions specific energy centers within the body that may, I think, have some connection with what some neurobiologists call the second brain, the immune system. These energy centers play a crucial role in increasing or decreasing the various emotional states within our mind. It is because of the intimate relationship between mind and body and the existence of these special physiological centers within our body that physical yoga exercises and the application of special meditative techniques aimed at training the mind can have positive effects on health. It has been shown, for example, that by applying appropriate meditative techniques, we can control our respiration and increase or decrease our body temperature.

Furthermore, just as we can apply various meditative techniques during the waking state so too, on the basis of understanding the subtle relationship between mind and body, can we practice various meditations while we are in dream states. The implication of the potential of such practices is that at a certain level it is possible to separate the gross levels of consciousness from gross physical states and arrive at a subtler level of mind and body. In other words, you can separate your mind from your coarse physical body. You could, for example, separate your mind from your body during sleep and do some extra work that you cannot do in your ordinary body. However, you might not get paid for it!

So you can see here the clear indication of a close link between body and mind: they can be complementary. In light of this, I am very glad to see that some scientists are undertaking significant research in the mind/body relationship and its implications for our understanding of the nature of mental and physical well-being. My old friend Dr. Benson [Herbert Benson, MD, Associate Professor of Medicine, Harvard Medical School], for example, has been carrying out experiments on Tibetan Buddhist meditators for some years now. Similar research work is also being undertaken in Czechoslovakia. Judging by our findings so far, I feel confident that there is still a great deal to be done in the future.



As the insights we gain from such research grow, there is no doubt that our understanding of mind and body, and also of physical and mental health, will be greatly enriched. Some modern scholars describe Buddhism not as a religion but as a science of mind, and there seem to be some grounds for this claim.

*Colophon:*

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# *Happiness, Karma, and Mind*

*by His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama*

**M**any billions of years elapsed between the origin of this world and the first appearance of living beings upon its surface. Thereafter it took an immense time for living creatures to become mature in thought—in the development and perfection of their intellectual faculties; and even from the time men attained maturity up to the present many thousands of years have passed. Through all these vast periods of time the world has undergone constant changes, for it is in a continual state of flux. Even now, many comparatively recent occurrences which appeared for a little while to remain static are seen to have been undergoing changes from moment to moment. One may wonder what it is that remains immutable when every sort of material and mental phenomenon seems to be invariably subject to the process of change, of mutability. All of them are forever arising, developing and passing away. In the vortex of all these changes it is Truth alone which remains constant and unalterable—in other words, the truth of righteousness (Dharma) and its accompanying beneficial results, and the truth of evil action and its accompanying harmful results. A good cause produces a good result, a bad cause a bad result. Good or bad, beneficial or harmful, every result necessarily has a cause. This principle alone is abiding, immutable and constant. It was so before man entered the world, in the early period of his existence, in the present age, and it will be so in all ages to come.

All of us desire happiness and the avoidance of suffering and of everything else that is unpleasant. Pleasure and pain arise from a cause, as we all know. Whether certain consequences are due to a single cause or to a group of causes is determined by the nature of those consequences. In some cases, even if the cause factors are neither powerful nor numerous, it is still possible for the effect factors to occur. Whatever the quality of the result factors, whether they are good or bad, their magnitude and intensity directly correspond to the quantity and strength of the cause factors. Therefore, for success in avoiding unwished- for pains and in acquiring desired pleasures, which is in itself no small matter, the relinquishment of a great number of collective cause factors is required.

In analyzing the nature and state of happiness, it will be apparent that it has two aspects. One is immediate joy (temporary); the other is future joy (ultimate). Temporary pleasures comprise the comforts and enjoyments which people crave, such as good dwellings, lovely furniture, delicious food, good company, pleasant conversation and so on. In other words, temporary pleasures are what man enjoys in this life. The question as to whether the enjoyment of these pleasures and satisfactions derives purely from external factors needs to be examined in the light of clear logic. If external factors were alone responsible for giving rise to such pleasures a person would be happy when these were present and, conversely, unhappy in their absence. However, this is not so. For, even in the absence of external conditions leading to pleasure, a man can still be happy and at peace. This demonstrates that

external factors are not alone responsible for stimulating man's happiness. Were it true that external factors were solely responsible for, or that they wholly conditioned the arising of, pleasure and happiness, a person possessing an abundance of these factors would have illimitable joy, which is by no means always so. It is true that these external factors do make partial contribution to the creation of pleasure in a man's lifetime. However, to state that the external factors are all that is needed and therefore the exclusive cause of happiness in a man's span of life is an obtuse and illogical proposition. It is by no means sure that the presence of such external factors will beget joy. On the contrary, factual happenings such as the experiencing of inner beatitude and happiness despite the total absence of such pleasure-causing external factors, and the frequent absence of joy despite their presence, clearly show the cause of happiness to depend upon a different set of conditioning factors.

If one were to be misled by the argument that the abovementioned conditioning factors constitute the sole cause of happiness to the preclusion of any other conditioning causes, that would imply that (resulting) happiness is inseparably bound to external causal factors, its presence or absence being exclusively determined by them. The fact that this is obviously not so is a sufficient proof that external causal factors are not necessarily or wholly responsible for the effect phenomena of happiness.



Now what is that other internal set of causes? How are they to be explained? As Buddhists, we all believe in the Law of Karma—the natural law of cause and effect. Whatever external causal conditions someone comes across in subsequent lives result from the accumulation of that individual's actions in previous lives. When the karmic force of past deeds reaches maturity a person experiences pleasurable and unpleasurable mental states. They are but a natural sequence of his own previous actions. The most important thing to understand is that, when suitable (karmic) conditions resulting from the totality of past actions are there, one's external factors are bound to be favourable. The coming into contact of conditions due to (karmic) action and external causal factors will produce a pleasurable mental state. If the requisite causal conditions for experiencing interior joy are lacking there will be no opportunity for the occurrence of suitable external conditioning factors or, even if these external conditioning factors are present, it will not be possible for the person to experience the joy that would otherwise be his. This shows that inner causal conditions are essential in that these are what principally determine the realization of happiness (and its opposite). Therefore, in order to achieve the desired results it is imperative for us to accumulate both the cause-creating external factors and the cause-creating internal (karmic) conditioning factors at the same time.

To state the matter in simple terms, for the accrual of good inner (karmic) conditioning factors, what are principally needed are such qualities as having few wants, contentment, humility, simplicity and other noble qualities. Practice of these inner causal conditions will even facilitate changes in the aforementioned external conditioning factors that will convert them into characteristics conducive to the arising of happiness. The absence of suitable inner causal conditions, such as having few wants contentment, patience, forgiveness and so on, will prevent one from enjoying pleasure even if all the right external conditioning factors are present. Besides this, one must have to one's credit the force of merits

and virtues accumulated in past lives. Otherwise, the seeds of happiness will not bear fruit.

The matter can be put in another way. The pleasures and frustrations, the happiness and suffering experienced by each individual are the inevitable fruits of beneficial and evil actions he has perpetrated, thus adding to his store. If at a particular moment in this present life the fruits of a person's good actions ripen he will recognize, if he is a wise man, that they are the fruits of (past) meritorious deeds. This will gratify him and encourage him to achieve more merits. Similarly, when a person happens to experience pain and dissatisfaction, he will be able to bear them calmly if he maintains an unshakable conviction that, whether he wishes it or not, he must suffer and bear the consequences of his own (past) deeds, notwithstanding the fact that normally he will often find the intensity and extent of his frustration hard to bear. Besides, the realization that they are nothing but the fruits of unskilled action in the past will make him wise enough to desist from unskilled deeds henceforth. Likewise, the satisfying thought that, with the ripening of past (evil) karma, a certain part of the evil fruit accrued by former unskilled action has been worked off will be a source of immense relief to him.

A proper appreciation of this wisdom will contribute to grasping the essentials for achieving peace of mind and body. For instance, suppose a person is suddenly afflicted with critical physical suffering due to certain external factors. If, by the force of sheer will power (based on the conviction that he is himself responsible for his present misery and sufferings), he can neutralize the extent of his suffering then his mind will be much comforted and at peace.

**N**ow let me explain this at a rather higher level. This concerns the strivings and efforts that can be made for the systematic destruction of dissatisfaction and its causes.

As stated before, pleasure and pain, happiness and dissatisfaction are the effects of one's own good and bad, skilled and unskilled actions. Skillful and unskillful (karmic) actions are not external phenomena. They belong essentially to the realm of mind. Making strenuous efforts to build up every possible kind of skillful karma and to put every vestige of unskillful karma away from us is the path to creating happiness and avoiding the creation of pain and suffering. For it is inevitable that a happy result follows a skillful cause and that the consequence of building up unskillful causes is suffering.

Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that we strive by every possible means to increase the quality and quantity of skillful actions and to make a corresponding paring down of our unskillful actions.

How is this to be accomplished? Meritorious and unmeritorious causes which result in pleasure and pain do not resemble external objects. For instance, in the human bodily system different parts such as lungs, heart and other organs can be replaced with new ones. But this is not so in the case of karmic actions, which are purely of the mind. The earning of fresh merits and the eradicating of bad causes are purely mental processes. They cannot be achieved with outside help of any kind. The only way to accomplish them is by controlling and disciplining the hitherto untamed mind. For this, we require a fuller comprehension of the element called mind.

Through the gates of the five sense organs a being sees, hears, smells, tastes and comes into contact with a host of external forms, objects and impressions. Let the form, sound, smell, taste, touch and mental events which are the relations of the six senses be shut off. When this is done the recollection

of past events on which the mind tends to dwell will be completely discontinued and the flow of memory cut off. Similarly, plans for the future and contemplation of future action must not be allowed to arise. It is necessary to create a space in place of all such processes of thought if one is to empty the mind of all such processes of thought. Freed from all these processes there will remain a pure, clean, distinct and quiescent mind. Now let us examine what sort of characteristics constitute the mind when it has attained this stage. We surely do possess some thing called mind, but how are we to recognize its existence? The real and essential mind is what is to be found when the entire load of gross obstructions and aberrations (i.e. sense impressions, memories, etc.) has been cleared away. Discerning this aspect of real mind, we shall discover that, unlike external objects, its true nature is devoid of form or color; nor can we find any basis of truth for such false and deceptive notions as that mind originated from this or that, or that it will move from here to there, or that it is located in such-and-such a place. When it comes into contact with no object mind is like a vast, boundless void, or like a serene, limitless ocean. When it encounters an object it at once has cognizance of it, like a mirror instantly reflecting a person who stands in front of it. The true nature of mind consists not only in taking clear cognizance of the object but also in communicating a concrete experience of that object



to the one experiencing it.\*\*

Normally, our forms of sense cognition, such as eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, etc., perform their functions on external phenomena in a manner involving gross distortion. Knowledge resulting from sense cognition, being based on gross external phenomena, is also of a gross nature. When this type of gross stimulation is shut out, and when concrete experiences and clear cognizance arise from within, mind assumes the characteristics of infinite void similar to the infinitude of space. But this void is not to be taken as the true nature of mind. We have become so habituated to consciousness of the form and color of gross objects that, when we make concentrated introspection into the nature of mind, it is, as I have said, found to be a vast, limitless void free from any gross obscurity or other hindrances. Nevertheless, this does not mean that we have discerned the subtle, true nature of the mind. What has been explained above concerns the state of mind in relation to the concrete experience and clear cognizance by the mind which are its function, but it describes only the relative nature of mind.

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\*\* These two aspects, 'taking cognition' and 'communicating experience' refer to knowing what the object is and how it feels, tastes, looks, etc.



There are in addition several other aspects and states of mind. In other words, taking mind as the supreme basis, there are many attributes related to it. Just as an onion consists of layer upon layer that can be peeled away, so does every sort of object have a number of layers; and this is no less true of the nature of mind as explained here; it, too, has layer within layer, state within state.

All compounded things are subject to disintegration. Since experience and knowledge are impermanent and subject to disintegration, the mind, of which they are functions (nature), is not something that remains constant and eternal. From moment to moment it undergoes change and disintegration. This transience of mind is one aspect of its nature. However, as we have observed, its true nature has many aspects, including consciousness of concrete experience and cognizance of objects. Now let us make a further examination in order to grasp the meaning of the subtle essence of such a mind. Mind came into existence because of its own cause. To deny that the origination of mind is dependent on a cause, or to say that it is a designation given as a means of recognizing the nature of mind aggregates, is not correct. With our superficial observance, mind, which has concrete experience and clear cognizance as its nature, appears to be a powerful, independent, subjective, completely ruling entity. However, deeper analysis will reveal that this mind, possessing as it does the function of experience and cognizance, is not a self-created entity but is dependent on other factors for its existence. Hence it depends on something other than itself. This non-independent quality of the mind substance is its true nature which in turn is the ultimate reality of the self.

Of these two aspects, viz. the ultimate true nature of mind and a knowledge of that ultimate true nature, the former is the base, the latter an attribute. Mind (self) is the basis and all its different states are attributes. However, the basis and its attributes have from the first pertained to the same single essence. The non-self-created (depending on a cause other than itself) mind entity (basis) and its essence, *sunyata*, have unceasingly existed as the one, same, inseparable essence from beginningless beginning. The nature of *sunyata* pervades all elements. As we are now and since we cannot grasp or comprehend the indestructible, natural, ultimate reality (*sunyata*) of our own minds, we continue to commit errors and our defects persist.

Taking mind as the subject and mind's ultimate reality as its object, one will arrive at a proper comprehension of the true essence of mind, i.e. its ultimate reality. And when, after prolonged patient meditation, one comes to perceive and grasp at the knowledge of mind's ultimate reality which is devoid of dual characteristics, one will gradually be able to exhaust the delusions and defects of the central and secondary minds such as wrath, love of ostentation, jealousy, envy and so on.

Failure to identify the true nature of mind will be overcome through acquisition of the power to comprehend its ultimate reality. This will in turn eradicate lust and hatred and all other secondary delusions emanating from the basic ones. Consequently, there will be no occasion for accumulating demeritorious karma. By this means the creation of (evil) karma affecting future lives will be eliminated; one will be able to increase the quality and quantity of meritorious causal conditioning and to eradicate the creation of harmful causal conditioning affecting future lives—apart from the bad karma accumulated earlier.

In the practice of gaining a perfect knowledge of the true nature of mind, strenuous and concentrated mental efforts are required for comprehending the object. In our normal condition as it is at present,

when our mind comes into contact with something it is immediately drawn to it. This makes comprehension impossible. Therefore, in order to acquire great dynamic mental power, the very maximum exertion is the first imperative. For example, a big river flowing over a wide expanse of shallows will have very little force, but when it passes through a steep gorge all the water is concentrated in a narrow space and therefore flows with great force. For a similar reason all the mental distractions which draw the mind away from the object of contemplation are to be avoided and the mind kept steadily fixed upon it. Unless this is done, the practice for gaining a proper understanding of the true nature of mind will be a total failure.

To make the mind docile, it is essential for us to discipline and control it well. Speech and bodily activities which accompany mental processes, must not be allowed to run on in an indiscreet, unbridled, random way. Just as a trainer disciplines and calms a wild and willful steed by subjecting it to skillful and prolonged training, so must the wild, wandering, random activities of body and speech be tamed to make them docile, righteous and skillful. Therefore the teachings of the Lord Buddha comprise three graded categories, that is *sila* (training in higher conduct), *samadhi* (training in higher meditation) and *prajna* (training in higher wisdom), all of them for disciplining the mind.

By studying, meditating, and practising the three grades of *trisiksa* in this way, one accomplishes progressive realization. A person so trained will be endowed with the wonderful quality of being able to bear patiently the miseries and suffering which are the fruit of his past karma. He will regard his misfortunes as blessings in disguise, for they will enlighten him as to the meaning of nemesis (karma) and convince him of the need to concentrate on performing only meritorious deeds. If his past (evil) karma has not as yet borne fruit, it will still be possible for him to obliterate this unripe karma by utilizing the strength of the four powers, namely: determination to attain the status of buddhahood; determination to eschew demeritorious deeds, even at the cost of one's life; the performance of meritorious deeds; repentance.



Such is the way to attain immediate happiness, to pave the way for attaining liberation in future and to help avoid the accumulation of further demerits.

*Colophon:*

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# *Everything Comes from the Mind*

*by Lama Thubten Yeshe*

**B**uddhism can be understood on many different levels, and people who actualize the Buddhist path do so gradually. Just as you pass slowly through school and university, graduating from one year to the next, so do Buddhist practitioners proceed step by step along the path to enlightenment. In Buddhism, however, we're talking about different levels of mind; here, higher and lower depend upon how much spiritual progress you have made.

Also, in the West, there's a tendency to consider Buddhism as a religion in the Western sense of the term. This is a misconception. Buddhism is completely open; you can talk about anything - the evolution of both the external and the internal worlds. Buddhism has its doctrine and philosophy but it also encourages scientific experimentation, both inner and outer. Therefore, please don't think of Buddhism as being some kind of narrow, closed-minded belief system. It isn't. And also, Buddhist doctrine today is not an historical fabrication derived through imagination and mental speculation. Rather, it is a true psychological explanation of the actual nature of the mind.

When you look at the outside world you have a very strong impression of its substantiality. You probably don't realize that that strong impression is merely your own mind's interpretation of what it sees. You think that the strong, solid reality really exists outside, and when you look within, perhaps you feel empty. This is also a misconception, the wrong mental attitude that fails to realize that the strong impression that appears to truly exist outside of you is actually projected by your own mind. Everything you experience - feelings, sensations, shapes and colors - comes from your mind.

If you get up one morning with a foggy mind and the world around you also appears to be dark and foggy, or when the world seems beautiful and light, you should understand that basically, those impressions are coming from your own mind rather than from changes in the external environment. Therefore, instead of misinterpreting whatever you experience in life through judgmental wrong conceptions, you should realize that it's not outer reality but only mind.

For example, when everybody in this auditorium looks at a single object, me, Lama Yeshe, each of you has a distinctly different experience, even though simultaneously you are all looking at the one thing. These different experiences don't come from me; they come from your own minds. You are probably thinking, "Oh, how can he say that? We all see the same face, the same body, the same clothes," but that's a just a superficial interpretation. If you check deeper you'll see that the way you perceive me, the way you feel, is individual, and that at that level, you're all different. These various perceptions do not come from me but from your own minds. That's the point I'm making.

So then perhaps you think, "Oh, he's just a lama; all he knows about is mind. He doesn't know about

powerful scientific advances like satellites and other sophisticated technology. There's no way you can say that those things come from mind." But you check up. When I say "satellite," you have a mental image of the object that you've been told is a satellite. When the first satellite was made, its inventor said, "I've made this thing that orbits the earth; it's called a 'satellite.'" Then when everybody else saw it, they thought, "Ah, that's a satellite." But 'satellite' is just a name, isn't it?

Before the inventor of the satellite actually made it, he speculated and visualized it in his mind. Then, on the basis of this image, he acted to materialize his creation. Then he told everyone, "This is a satellite," so everyone thought, "Wow, a satellite; how beautiful, how wonderful." So that shows how ridiculous we are. People give things names and we grasp at the name, believing it to be the real thing. It's the same thing no matter what colors and forms we grasp at. You check up.

**I**f you can understand what I'm explaining here, you'll see that indeed, satellites and so forth do come from the mind, and that without mind, there is not a single manifest material existence in the entire sense world. What exists without mind? Look at all the stuff you find in supermarkets: so many names, so many foods, so many different things. First people made it all up - this name, that name, this, this, this - so then, this, that, this, this and this all appear to you. So if all these thousands of supermarket items as well as jets, rockets and satellites are manifestations of mind, what then does not come from mind? That's why it is so very important to know the way your own mind works.

Thus, if you check really deeply into how your mind expresses itself, your various views and feelings, your imagination, you will realize that all your emotions, the way you live your life, the way you relate with others, all come from your own mind. If you don't understand how your mind works, you're going to continue having negative experiences like anger and depression. Why do I call a depressed mind negative? Because a depressed mind doesn't understand how it works. A mind without understanding is negative. A negative mind functions to bring you down, because all its reactions are polluted. A mind with understanding functions clearly. A clear mind is a positive mind.

Therefore, any emotional problem you experience arises because of the way your mind functions, and your basic problem lies in the way you misidentify yourself. You normally hold yourself in low esteem; you see yourself as a poor quality human being, while what you really want is for your life to be of the highest quality, perfect. You don't want to be a poor quality human being, do you? So, in order to correct your view and become a much better person, you don't need to squeeze yourself or to jump from your own culture into another. That's not the solution. All you need to do is to understand your true nature, the way you already are. That's all. It's so simple.

*Colophon:*

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# *Understanding the Mind*

*by Lama Zopa Rinpoche*

Before the discourse, we are going to recite and meditate on the *Heart Sutra*, the essential teaching of the Buddha which cuts off the root of all sufferings. Contemplate on the words that you hear. Even if you do not understand the meaning, simply following the words is sufficient. Meditating on emptiness is the essential method to pacify all the general confusion of life, and particularly the obstacles to your success in listening, reflecting and meditating.

## *The pure nature of the mind*

The nature of the mind is pure; the nature of the mind is clear light, not mixed with ignorance. Even though we have ignorance, our mind is not mixed with ignorance. Even though we have attachment and anger, our mind is not oneness with attachment and anger. The nature of our mind is pure. The problem is that we obscure this pure nature by following selfish attitudes and wrong conceptions. These pollute our mind, not allowing us to develop its full potential, interfering in the awakening of the mind. Wrong conceptions stop our developing the mental capacity to have continual temporal and ultimate happiness ourselves and, especially, stop our causing all sentient beings to have temporal and ultimate happiness.

The longer we leave a mirror out in the dust, the more obscured it becomes. Even though the mirror has the potential to reflect, if we leave it to collect dust and do not clean it, the dust does not allow the mirror to reflect anything. Like this, wrong conceptions continuously obscure the mind. If we do not meditate on the right path, which can remove these mental stains, even though our mind is completely pure in nature and not oneness with the obscurations, our obscurations get thicker and thicker. It then becomes very difficult to develop the potential of our mind.

We have the possibility to develop fully the wonderful capacity of our mind. We can achieve any happiness, even ultimate happiness, for ourselves, and end completely all problems and sufferings. We can also accomplish extensive works for all sentient beings, bringing every suffering being to the happiness of ultimate liberation. We have this incredible potential to benefit ourselves, as well all other sentient beings, who equal the extent of infinite space. We have this potential to offer so much to uncountable numbers of other beings.

However, we lack understanding of the path that can actually make our mental continuum pure by separating it from all obscurations and stains. We lack understanding of the cessation of suffering and the methods to achieve it. Also, we do not understand the different levels of suffering and their inner causes. Basically, we lack understanding of the nature of our own mind. If we understood our mind

well, there would be no problem. The basic problem in the world is this lack of understanding of the nature of the mind. The basic reason for such problems as religious wars is lack of understanding of the mind. Or if there is a little understanding, no effort has been put into developing this understanding. If we think widely, all world problems come from this.

At present our mind is like a dirty cloth or a mirror covered with dust. Because a dirty cloth is not oneness with its dirt, it is possible to wash it and separate the cloth from the dirt. If the cloth were oneness with the dirt, there would be no way to clean it. The definition of a cloth being clean is its being separated from dirt. It is the same with a mirror: the dust covering a mirror can be wiped off. If the mirror were oneness with the dirt, there would be no way to wipe off the dirt - except by wiping off the mirror itself! Our mind is not oneness with, but temporarily obscured by, obscurations, just as a dirty cloth is temporarily obscured by dirt.

It is obvious that you can clean houses by depending on such things as water, soap and vacuum cleaners. You clean the mind by depending on the mind. You can remove all the mental stains that block the development of inner peace and ultimate happiness, that bring so much confusion and problems in your life. With the right skilful thoughts, with the right realizations, you can stop the wrong conceptions that obscure your mind. Not only can you stop these wrong conceptions from arising and polluting your mental continuum, you can also purify the stains from the past.

We always have this possibility, this freedom. It is only a question of whether we put effort into removing these mental stains through listening, reflecting and meditating. Our own inner peace and ultimate happiness completely depend on ourselves.

Even when we do not meditate, do not practice Dharma, but instead follow wrong conceptions and create negative karmas, which pollute our mental continuum, the nature of our mind is pure. This great potential is still there. So there is no question that when we do practice Dharma, the nature of our mind is pure.

With even a little understanding of this, we can see how it is possible to develop the mind. At the moment we may see our mind as completely overwhelmed by selfish attitudes, with no thought of cherishing and benefiting others, or anger. Anger may arise every time you see somebody or somebody talks to you. However, even though your mind may be like this now, if you understand the nature of the mind, you do not need to feel depressed or hopeless. You do not need to think that it is impossible for you to change, that your life will always be confused. This is not true. By knowing the nature of mind, you see that there is great hope. You have the potential to change so that you have peace of mind and a better life.

### *Omniscient mind*

Buddhist teachings explain that the mental continuum can be separated completely from all mental stains, or obscurations. When purified of all stains, this mental continuum becomes omniscient mind. When you clean a dirty cloth, first the gross dirt is cleaned away, but there is still some stain left. When even that is cleaned away, the cloth is completely clean. Like this, generating the remedy of the path within your mind completely removes the gross disturbing thought obscurations and also the subtle obscurations. At that time, the continuum of this present mental continuum becomes omniscient mind.

This fully-awakened mind sees conventional truth and absolute truth, or emptiness, which is the reality of all existence. Like looking at an apple in the hand, omniscient mind sees directly and clearly the past, present and future of every single existent. At the same time, this mind sees all the existents of the three times. While seeing the past, this mind can also see the present and the future. By accomplishing the ultimate mental development of this omniscient mind, one has the perfect power to see all the different levels of mind and characteristics of each and every sentient being, and to reveal the various skilful means to them. One works for sentient beings unceasingly and naturally, guiding them without the slightest effort.

Only one moon rises but its reflections are uncountable because there is so much water on this earth - lakes, pools, and even dew. As soon as the moon rises, wherever there is clear water, this is immediately, naturally, a reflection of it. In all the different collections of water, including the dew, a reflection appears even though when the rises, it does not have the motivation: "Now I'm going to reflect in all this water." All the reflections automatically appear.

It is the same with the ultimate development of omniscient mind. Like the arising of the reflections, unceasingly, effortlessly, one is able to work for sentient beings. Until all sentient beings become enlightened, without any partiality of mind, one benefits them. There is no thought to benefit those who love you or make offerings to you and not those who criticize or complain about you and do not make offerings to you. Why is there no danger of this? Because the perfect power of omniscient mind is achieved through training the mind in compassion towards every sentient being. At this time, the mind-training in compassion is completed.

In the world it often happens that even though someone has the capacity to help others, he only helps those who love him; he doesn't help anybody who criticizes him. This happens because the compassion for others is not equal. You have compassion for anybody who likes and helps you, but not for somebody who harms or criticizes you. When you benefit others with your body, speech and mind, you benefit only those who like you. You do not feel compassion for those who do not benefit you; anger arises towards them. Because you have not trained your mind to generate compassion for those who harm or criticize you, anger and dislike arise and stop you from benefiting them. In addition, these thoughts cause you to harm those sentient beings.

### *The essence of Buddha's teaching*

Do not commit any evil deeds;  
Enjoy perfect virtue;  
Subdue one's own mind:  
This is the teaching of the Buddha.

This advice is the essence of Buddha's teaching. All the ignorance and obscurations giving rise to confusion in life come from the mind. Liberation, which means purification of all these obscurations, and omniscient mind, which has infinite capacity to benefit uncountable numbers of sentient beings, is also created by the mind. Everything has to do with your mind. All the suffering and happiness in your life come from your own mind.

The only reason Guru Shakyamuni Buddha descended on this earth was to lead sentient beings to liberation, the cessation of suffering, and great liberation, the state of omniscient mind. His only purpose was to lead sentient beings to happiness. How does Buddha guide sentient beings to liberation? As explained in the teachings:

The Mighty Ones do not wash away negative karmas with water; they do not eliminate sufferings with their hands; nor do they transplant their own realizations in others. Sentient beings are liberated by being shown reality.

The negative karmas are the non-virtuous actions that have been accumulated and bring problems.

The buddhas do not liberate sentient beings by arriving with thousands of trucks filled with water and washing them all with fire-hoses. They do not eliminate sufferings with their hands means that the buddhas do not remove sufferings like taking a thorn out of flesh. Since these first two methods are not correct, someone might wonder, “Maybe the buddhas transplant their realizations into sentient beings?” Not even by doing that.

How does Buddha liberate sentient beings from suffering? By revealing the teachings. Buddha revealed the teachings on suffering and the cause of suffering, and the path to liberation, the cessation of suffering, and great liberation, or enlightenment, the cessation of even subtle obscurations. Having realized these himself, Buddha then explained his experiences to other sentient beings. Like this, he allowed other sentient beings to practice and led them in the path to liberation and enlightenment.

In this verse reality, or truth, means in particular the teaching on emptiness. Buddha explained emptiness particularly to eradicate the root of samsara, the root of all suffering. To achieve enlightenment there are two paths: the path of wisdom and the path of method. Buddha taught 84,000 teachings as remedies for the 84,000 disturbing thoughts that sentient beings have. The fundamental teaching of the 84,000 teachings is the Four Noble Truths.

After Buddha showed the action of becoming enlightened, he turned the first Dharma wheel with the teaching of the Four Noble Truths at Sarnath, the holy place in India. All the other teachings explaining the path of method were given as a means to help actualize the path of wisdom, which means emptiness. The teachings on emptiness are the main ones that liberate sentient beings from suffering.

### *True suffering, true cause*

The disease is to be understood,  
The cause is to be renounced,  
The medicine is to be relied upon,  
And the cure is to be achieved.

As Maitreya Buddha explains in *Ornament of Sutras*, suffering is to be known, its cause abandoned, the path followed, and cessation actualized.

Just to be careful, a person may go to a doctor for a check-up. The doctor examines him and then



explains: “You have cancer”. The person did not know this before the check-up and this news makes him check for the cause of his disease. If the patient wants to know the cause and the doctor can explain it, he does. After this, the patient knows how to free himself from the cause of whatever disease he has; he knows how to achieve a cure. After discovering the disease, he finds out the cause of the disease, which has to be abandoned. To remove the cause and the disease, the patient relies upon the medicine and achieves the happiness of the cure.

In the same way, in order to liberate sentient beings from suffering, Buddha first introduces them to the meaning of true suffering, which he knows but they do not. Sentient beings experience true suffering but are not always aware of it. When a patient is not aware of all his diseases, his doctor explains them to him so that he will take the medicine and be cured. Otherwise, if the medicine were given without any explanation, the patient would not see any purpose in taking it. Like this, Buddha introduces sentient beings to the sufferings and problems of which he is aware but they are not. As sentient beings then check whether suffering has a cause, Buddha explains the true cause of suffering. And when sentient beings see that cessation of the true cause of suffering is ultimate happiness and check whether there is a method to achieve this, Buddha reveals the true path.

Many of you are familiar with the teachings of Lama Tsongkhapa, who says:

If you do not reflect on the shortcomings of samsara, you will have no wish to achieve liberation. If you do not reflect on the all-arising graduated entering into samsara, you will not know how to cut off the root of samsara.

Samsara does not mean this house, this area or this country; it means these aggregates. This association of body and mind that you have here now, which is the foundation of many problems, is samsara.

It is this body-mind which experiences birth, old age, sickness and death, plus many other problems such as heat and cold, hunger and thirst. As long as you do not break the continual circling of these aggregates in samsara, from one life to another, you will continuously have to experience suffering. Besides experiencing the eight types of suffering with these samsaric aggregates from birth until death, even the pleasurable times depend on external sense objects, which are only in the nature of suffering. If you analyse them, you will understand this. This is the suffering of change. Even the feeling experienced as pleasure by these aggregates does not last; if you continue the experience, the pleasure becomes less and less, and transforms into suffering. There is less and less pleasure and more and more suffering - the suffering of suffering. This is the nature of samsara.

For example, if you are hungry, when you take that very first mouthful of food, the suffering of hunger starts to decrease. But immediately after one or two mouthfuls of food enter your stomach, a very subtle discomfort starts in your stomach. Your previous problem of hunger starts to decrease from great to small, but this second problem of stomach discomfort starts to increase from small to great. Those few minutes when the problem of hunger starts to decrease are labeled “pleasure”, because when compared to the previous hunger, this change of feeling is pleasant.

Another example: You may still have a headache today, but it is less painful than yesterday, so today you feel “better”. This does not mean that today you have completely recovered and are happy. It is just that today the headache is less than yesterday, so you label “I am better” on that feeling.

It is the same with the example of eating. Because the previous discomfort of hunger has become smaller, you label that feeling “pleasure”. However, you can see that the base on which you label “pleasure” is only suffering. Because it is only suffering, if you continue eating, sooner or later, the previously pleasant feeling will become less and less, and the discomfort of having food in your stomach will become greater.

This second problem of stomach discomfort starts immediately after you change your action from not eating to eating, and builds up as you continue to eat. This second problem then becomes greater than the first. Because the base on which you label “pleasure” is only suffering, the pleasure does not last as you eat more and more. If the base on which you label “pleasure” were not suffering, the more you ate, the more pleasure you would feel. You would eat all day and all night for days, a week, a month, a year! Even by the first night you would feel unbelievable bliss, and there would be even more pleasure after one week, one month, one year of eating without a break. But we know that this does not happen. Just from this example we can understand the suffering of change.

Not eating is a problem; eating is a problem. Both are problems. It is the same with all samsaric activities: Sitting is a problem; not sitting is a problem. Sleeping is a problem; not sleeping is a problem. As long as we are not free from samsara, every activity we do or do not do with these aggregates is suffering. Even a pleasant feeling is only suffering. Because these aggregates are contaminated by the seed of karma and delusions, even a feeling of indifference is suffering. Until we are liberated from samsara, we continuously experience one of these sufferings, without a break of even one second.

If this body-mind did not experience the suffering of suffering: birth, old age, sickness, death, and all the other problems of heat and cold, hunger and thirst; if this body-mind did not experience the suffering of change, with feelings appearing as pleasant but becoming the suffering of suffering when continued; and third, if this body-mind did not experience pervasive suffering, being under the control of ignorance, anger, attachment, and karma, this would not be samsara. If this body-mind did not experience any of these problems, this would not be samsara. If this body-mind is experiencing any of these three, this is samsara.

### *The wish for ultimate liberation*

If you do not reflect on the all-arising graduated entering into samsara, you will not know how to cut off the root of samsara. Understanding what binds you to samsara, cherish renunciation of samsara. I, the yogi, have practised in this way. You, who seek liberation, I beg you to practise in the same way.

This is very important. Lama Tsongkhapa himself achieved liberation by practising in this way and he is begging us to practise in the same way.

Since we do not want to experience problems, Lama Tsongkhapa’s essential advice is that we should develop aversion to samsara through understanding what causes us to be caught in samsara like a fish on a hook. What ties you to this hook? It is easy to understand why a fish gets caught on a hook. Actually, if the fish is smart enough and does not come to take the bait, if it does not cling to the bait hanging on the hook, it will not have a problem. I am not saying that we will not have a problem! I am saying that if the fish, understanding that this is a hook and that it is dangerous to follow its grasping mind, does not follow its craving, it will be liberated from the danger of being hooked and killed.



We are caught in samsara in exactly the same way and, as Lama Tsongkhapa says, understanding what ties us to samsara is very important. Not understanding why we are caught in samsara is exactly like a fish being caught because it does not know what causes him to get caught on the hook. Through not knowing this, every time he is born as a fish, by following craving and desire, he will get caught with a hook. As long as he follows his desire, this will happen every time. Similarly, we are caught again and again. If we do not know what ties us to samsara and do not practise renunciation of samsara, like the fish, again and again, we will be caught in samsara. We will then experience all the problems of that samsara, one after another.

If the only sufferings a person understood were those of meeting undesirable objects and separating from desirable ones, birth, old age, sickness, death, heat and cold, hunger and thirst, his understanding of liberation and his wish for it would be limited. He would not wish for ultimate liberation - only for freedom from these problems. Without any understanding of the other two sufferings, just understanding the suffering of suffering, he would not have any way of achieving the everlasting happiness of ultimate liberation.

There are three samsaric realms: the desire realm (which we are in), the form realm and the formless realm. In the form realm there is no suffering of suffering: none of these sufferings from birth up to death. Even without meditating, without studying Dharma, ordinary people in the world recognize and want to be free of the suffering of suffering. To people with no understanding of the other two more subtle sufferings, the form realm where there is no suffering of suffering would be ultimate liberation. Even though it is not, such people would believe this state to be ultimate liberation, so their wish for liberation would not be exact.

The second, more subtle suffering of samsara is the suffering of change. The longer you continue samsaric pleasures, the more the pleasure decreases and the more it becomes the suffering of suffering. On the other hand, Dharma happiness can be developed, and completed. The happiness derived from samatha meditation or tantric practices can be developed. The more you meditate, the more mind-peace and bliss develops; it does not become less and less. And this can reach completion. The practice of Dharma does have an end, but not samsaric pleasures. No matter how many times samsaric pleasures are tried, again and again, there is never an end to them. If the desire clinging to samsaric pleasures continues, the work to achieve these has no end.

With any samsaric pleasure, at some point the pleasure decreases and then stops. So you try again - but that pleasure disappears. You try again, again and again, but that pleasure has gone. Each time you try with the expectation of gaining satisfaction, but in your heart there is always something missing. All the time you have a kind of hole inside. Even while you are experiencing pleasure due to some external conditions, if you are aware and check your mind, “Am I really happy or not?” – you are not completely satisfied. There is something missing. You have an empty feeling inside.

With desire clinging to samsaric pleasures, each time with the expectation of gaining satisfaction, you try again and again, again and again, again and again. Until you renounce this desire, there is no end to your experience of the suffering of change, and the suffering of suffering that comes from that. When the pleasure stops, worry and discomfort (the suffering of suffering) start. As long as you are under the control of desire and karma, it will always be like this. With that desire, under the control of karma and delusion, you again repeat the action. Being under the control of karma and delusions is the third

suffering: pervasive, compounded suffering. Just from this you can see how you experience the three types of suffering.

As long as the desire clinging to samsaric pleasures is not renounced, samsaric work has no end. There is no way to finish it. And the result is the three types of suffering – you experience problems and sufferings constantly. Each time you try to get satisfaction, because you are following desire, instead of receiving satisfaction, you receive dissatisfaction. This is the result that makes you circle continuously. Now you can understand the example of the fish. Craving and desire make you continuously create the cause of samsara, the compounded action. Each time there is the craving and compounded action, you create the future samsara – again and again.

Lama Tsongkhapa explains that this is the worst suffering. You try to get satisfaction but because you are following desire, there is no way to get satisfaction. As long as you follow craving, desire, you will never gain satisfaction. The proof is that you been trying to do this since beginningless time, but still you have not gained satisfaction.

However, enjoyment of sense objects alone does not mean there is desire clinging to those objects. Arhats and very high tantric yogis with achievement of the illusory body and clear light have unbelievable satisfaction; they experience everything as bliss. They experience happiness thousands of times greater than ordinary pleasure, but merely experiencing pleasure does not mean that they have samsaric desire. Buddhas, who have ceased all obscurations and mental stains and accomplished all realizations, have the greatest enjoyment. Their bliss is complete; they experience ultimate happiness. Constantly, without a break of even a second, they abide in peerless happiness.

From beginningless rebirths until now, we have followed desire but never gained satisfaction. This itself shows how there is no end to following desire, and is a prediction of the future: at no time will we gain satisfaction by following desire. Lama Tsongkhapa explains that not only do we not receive satisfaction, but following desire brings many other problems, hundreds of other problems. However, when desire for samsaric pleasure is renounced, there is immediate satisfaction. When that one act of renunciation is done, immediately there is satisfaction. That ends the work, and all the three types of suffering and the various problems that arise from them. All these cease.

Lama Tsongkhapa says that it is important to understand what ties us to samsara and to cherish renunciation of samsara. A person may recognize the suffering of change, that normal pleasures dependent on external sense objects are in the nature of suffering; but if he does not see the third suffering, pervasive compounded suffering, his wish for liberation will be limited. If he does not know about the fundamental suffering of being under the control of karma and disturbing thoughts, his wish will not be for ultimate liberation, only for liberation from suffering of suffering and suffering of change.

This third suffering, pervasive suffering, is the foundation of the other two sufferings. Knowing of this third suffering, a person would wish for the cessation of all karma and disturbing thoughts. A person who understands the three types of sufferings has the correct and complete connotation of liberation, of ultimate liberation. Realizing that liberation is the cessation of karma and disturbing thoughts, he would then check whether there is a path to achieve this. Finding such a path he would then practice it and achieve ultimate liberation. Once karma and disturbing thoughts have completely ceased, it is impossible for the cause of suffering to return.

## *Karma and disturbing thoughts*

Because you were not liberated in your past life, because you did not cease karma and disturbing thoughts, you were born in this life under the control of karma and disturbing thoughts. Even from your birth, you have been under their control. Not only do you experience the result of past karma but, under the control of disturbing thoughts, you again accumulate karma.

What makes disturbing thoughts such as anger and attachment arise within you even today? You may decide now to do a meditation session on patience, so you recall all the meditation techniques related to patience, and do the visualizations. After you finish the session, however, if an undesirable object appears or somebody shows you disrespect, says some bad words to you, even though there was no anger during the session, your mind is suddenly overwhelmed by anger.

When you meet a particular object, due to previous karma, anger arises because the imprint, or seed, of anger within your mind has not been removed. Even your best friend, from whom you cannot bear to be separated for even a minute, if he changes his manner towards you, right in that minute he can become the object of your anger. Before you may have believed, "I could never get angry with my best friend. How could I get angry with him?" Previously his appearance to you, which came from your own karma, was beautiful, but your karmic appearance changes into an undesirable one. The basic point is that the imprint of anger is there; it has not been removed. The second point is that this undesirable appearance comes from your own karma. And third, because at that time you do not practice lam-rim - patience, loving kindness, compassion - your mind is overwhelmed by anger. This also applies to attachment and other disturbing thoughts.

The main point is that the imprint has not been removed. Anger, ignorance and attachment are dependent arisings; they arise in dependence upon imprints. In addition to removing the delusions, if even the imprints left on the mental continuum by delusions are completely removed, it is impossible for anger, or any other delusion, to arise. This is one-time work.

There are no delusions so there is no karma accumulated out of them, and no suffering. You do not experience true suffering, problems. If you have no imprints of anger, attachment and other disturbing thoughts, even if every creature on this earth were angry with you and harming you, there would be no way for anger or the wish to harm them to arise in you.

The way an object appears to you depends solely on your own mind. On the basis of past karma your own mind discriminates whether or not you like something. You can see that the arising of disturbing thoughts and the actions resulting from them depend on causes and conditions. This is how samsara is created.

If you understand well how suffering and the cause of suffering are dependent arisings, you can see very clearly that once you have achieved ultimate liberation, with cessation of karma and disturbing thoughts, it is impossible for the cause of suffering to arise again, and for you to experience suffering. At that time there is no cause from which suffering can arise. The main cause, the imprint, has been completely removed.

If you do not reflect on the all-arising graduated entering into samsara, you will not know how to cut

off the root of samsara.

All-arising refers to karma and disturbing thoughts and may mean that all suffering and problems arise from these two.

You, under the control of karma and disturbing thoughts, joined from your previous life to this life. If you do not cease karma and disturbing thoughts in this life, still under the control of karma and disturbing thoughts, you will join from this life to your next life. This gross physical body of bones and flesh does not go to your next life and did not come from your past life. Your consciousness joins your past life to this life, and will join this life to your next. Of the six consciousnesses, it is the mental consciousness, or mind, which goes from one life to another. Separated from the gross aggregates of the body, the mental continuum continued from your past life to this life, and will continue to your next life. As long as you do not cease karma and disturbing thoughts, these aggregates will continuously circle from one life to another.

This is how the I, which is labelled on the aggregates, circles. Because the base, the aggregate of consciousness, joins one life to another under the control of karma and disturbing thoughts, the I labelled on these aggregates circles in samsara. Because these aggregates are under the control of karma and delusion, they circle constantly from one life to another. This association of body and mind is called “samsara”, but it is the consciousness that actually circles from one life to another.

### *The evolution of samsara*

Guru Shakyamuni Buddha has explained the evolution of samsara, this all-arising graduated entering into samsara, through the twelve dependent arisings, or links. Buddha has also explained how this circling in samsara can be stopped. Reversing the cycle means that by ceasing ignorance, you cease karma; you then cease craving and grasping; then becoming; you then cease the seven results, and do not experience the stages from birth through to death.

In the *Rice Seedling Sutra* Buddha explains external and internal dependent arisings. Holding a rice seedling in his hand, Buddha told his followers:

The bhikshus who see dependent arising will see the Dharma. Those who see the Dharma will see the Buddha.

This has great meaning. Whoever sees dependent arising will see the Dharma, which means emptiness, absolute truth. And whoever sees the Dharma will see Buddha. This means that the wisdom realizing emptiness is the direct remedy that removes all obscurations. It is only by removing the obscurations that one can achieve omniscient mind, become a Buddha.

The body is not the I. The liquids, heat and air inside the body are not the I. It may be quite easy to think that the body is not the I, but it is also very easy to think that the consciousness is the I – but it is not. None of what is here, from the top of the head down to the toes, is the I.

Yet the I does not exist separately from these aggregates. This is very simple to understand. If the I existed separately, there would be no need to buy tickets when travelling. You could completely

relax. You wouldn't need jobs, banks, shops, kitchens, bathrooms – you wouldn't need any of these things! You would not need summer or winter clothes. However, when you buy a dress, the one who wears the dress is this I. There is not some other I who wears the dress. When these aggregates are eating icecream, this I is not fasting and some other I eats the icecream. These aggregates do not sit comfortably in the bedroom while another I eats the icecream in the dining room. This is not our experience. The I is dependent on these aggregates. When you say, "I want to eat that steak!" it is these aggregates that will eat it – not some other I. There is not some other I, some other self, which will eat that steak. This is very clear.

Everything is to do with these aggregates. Every time you say "I am doing this" or "I want this," it is to do with these aggregates, this body and this mind. This means that the I does not exist separately from these aggregates. Yet none of these is the I; all of these is not the I; and the I does not even exist separately from these. But it does exist! It exists on these. There is nothing apart from the I you have labeled on these aggregates. There is not some other I that does the activities of meditating, listening to teachings, eating, sleeping, walking. There is no I other than what is merely imputed on these aggregates. This gives you a rough idea of how there is no I existing from its own side.

Even though the I exists by being merely imputed by thought on the base, the aggregates, ignorance believes that I exists from its own side, not as merely labeled. However, this completely contradicts reality. The I from its own side that appears to this ignorance is a complete hallucination.

"This ignorance not knowing the nature of the I is like the farmer. The karma, or action, done out of this ignorance is like the field, and the consciousness is like the seed. Craving and grasping are like the minerals, heat and water. Rebirth is like the sprout growing.

Ignorance, the farmer, motivates the action, which is like the field. The main point to understand is that the consciousness is like the seed because it holds the potential to bring forth the stem, flowers, leaves and fruit. One tiny seed can hold the potential for billions of branches, flowers and fruit, for a huge tree with branches that can cover many thousands of people. Exactly like the seed, the consciousness holds all the imprints, or potentials, left by karma. A good or bad plant grows depending on the potential of the seed. Similarly, all the imprints for various samsaric happiness and suffering are contained in the consciousness, or mental continuum. The consciousness holds all the imprints for happy rebirths as a deva or human, and for suffering rebirths as an animal, with little opportunity for temporal happiness; as a spirit experiencing the heaviest sufferings of hunger and thirst; or as a hell being experiencing the heaviest sufferings of heat and cold.

Craving and grasping are like the heat and water which germinate the seed, the imprint, planted by the farmer, ignorance, in the field of karma. The imprint then becomes ready to be experienced, and the consciousness joins to the next life. If the next rebirth is as a human being, the consciousness enters the womb.

This body, from your head to your toes, has come from your own consciousness. There were outside co-operative causes, such as your parents, but your body actually came from your mental continuum, which carries the imprints. Your body came from your own mind. Also, the desirable people and objects you meet every day come from your own mind, as do the undesirable people and objects, and the indifferent objects. All these come from your own mind.



It is exactly like projecting a film. With both electricity and a projector, a film can be projected onto a screen. What is projected is completely dependent on the film negative. It is similar with imprints on the consciousness. All these imprints have been left on the consciousness by you, the farmer. Just as the electricity and projector together project the film, when karma ripens, an appearance is actualized from this imprint left on the consciousness. From the seed and the karmic field, the appearance comes, just as you see a picture on a screen.

Karma is a thought. A thought comes from the principal consciousness and persuades the body and speech to act. Everything – all the various worlds – is born from karma. All the bad and good appearances from birth until death, including your own body, come from the field of karma, from your thoughts. Generally, everything comes from the mind; specifically, everything comes from your present consciousness and thoughts. All your appearances come from your own mind.

Since the whole thing comes from your mind, there is nothing and no one to blame. No matter what problem happens, there is no one to blame but yourself. By following wrong conceptions, you accumulated this karma, so there is nobody to blame. If somebody criticizes, harms or even kills you, there is no one to blame except yourself. The appearance of this person criticizing you comes from your own bad thoughts, or bad karma. (Also, the people who respect you and help you come from your own mind – from your good thoughts, or good karma.)

Therefore, there is no reason at all to get angry at anybody or to cling to anything. The appearance you see comes from your mind; it is your own creation. There is no point in clinging to your own creation. You make it up and then cling to it, creating so many problems. There is no reason at all to cling. Similarly, there is no reason to be jealous or proud. You can relate this to all other disturbing thoughts.

If, out of ignorance, you had not created the karma which left this imprint, you would not now have all these problems: relationship problems, criticism, other people harming you. Someone beating, criticizing or badly treating you simply means that you are experiencing the result of karma you created in the past. So, there is no reason at all to become angry about this.

By being aware all the time of this meditation on the twelve dependent arisings, on how everything comes from your mind, you do not find any other object to blame for your problems. This brings harmony and peace to you and to others. This allows you to practice patience, to control anger and also the dissatisfied mind of strong attachment, which bring many problems. This awareness stops many problems.

When you travel by air, each time you see a different country, all the appearances, whether ugly or beautiful, come from your own mind. When you pass through cities, villages and mountains in a car, every minute you see different things: trees, flowers, mountains. In each minute as you drive, every single appearance, or view, comes from your own mind. Even the word “view” refers to your own mind, your own way of thinking. Looking at the same place at the same time, some people see it as incredibly beautiful, others as terribly ugly. If a hundred people look at a country, each person will see it differently. Relating this to yourself, all these different appearances - the way you see a country - come from your own mind.

It is very useful to do walking meditation with this awareness. You have always been looking, but now

look with this new awareness. Be aware of the objects of your six senses. Concentrate on how every single thing wherever you go – sky, people, flowers, earth – comes from your own karma, your own thoughts.

This meditation on how you are the creator of all your own happiness and suffering is a basic Buddhist principle. No one else is the creator of your happiness and suffering. From this meditation you conclude that every day, every hour, every minute, you have to watch your own mind. Since everything comes from your mind, you have to be careful with your mind. You have to watch your mind continuously and not allow negative thoughts to arise. As much as possible, keep your mind in virtue, with a positive attitude. The essential point is to have a good heart: not harm others and, on top of that, benefit them.

### *The nature of karmic imprints*

*Student:* What is the nature of the imprint left on the consciousness by karma? And how is the imprint carried by the consciousness?

*Rinpoche:* The imprint, or impression, is not substantial; it is not mind; it is not a mental factor. It is neither a mental factor nor physical substance. It is not permanent. It is a produced phenomenon. That's all.

Let's say that yesterday you saw something nice in a shop; today you remember that and go to buy it. You saw that object yesterday but you still remember it today, which gives you the chance to go and buy it. I think consciousness carries the imprints left by past actions in a similar way.

When a seed planted in the ground meets perfect conditions of heat, minerals and water, it produces a sprout. Imprints function in a similar way. When karmic imprints are actualized you see different appearances. With one object you experience an indifferent feeling; with another, a pleasant feeling; with another, a suffering feeling.

Things that you have learnt or seen, you can remember and can also forget. You can forget things without conscious effort. But imprints left on the consciousness by negative karma do not disappear unless you put effort into making them non-existent. You have to put effort to change, decrease or cease these imprints; they do not just disappear by themselves after some time, hundreds or thousands of years, or eons. Without personal effort, you cannot decrease or cease them. It is by putting effort into generating the remedy of the path, particularly through the development of the wisdom realizing emptiness, that karmic imprints left by disturbing thoughts can be removed.

As long as there are imprints left by disturbing thoughts on your mental continuum, you cannot become omniscient. If your mind cannot become omniscient, you cannot see the level of mind and characteristics of every single sentient being and cannot see the different means that fits each of them. So, you cannot perfectly guide other sentient beings. This is the problem.

*Student:* How can imprints, which do not have form, determine something physical such as our bodies?

*Rinpoche:* This is very simple. Your own daily experiences give the answer to this question. Think

about what happens when you are angry: there are physical effects and changes because of that anger. It is the same when you have strong attachment or strong pride. These experiences are themselves the answer. Particularly when there is strong anger or attachment, the body completely changes, and even others are affected. It is simply the power of the mind.

All the desirable things in this world, and all the undesirable, come from the power of the mind. By developing a good heart and wisdom, one person can benefit many millions of people on this earth. Uncountable numbers of sentient beings can be led to temporal and ultimate happiness through the power of one person's positive mind. On the other hand millions of people can be killed and a whole country destroyed from the power of one person's negative mind, which is formless. All good things come from the power of the positive mind; all bad things from the negative mind.

A person can travel all over the world because of the power of his mind. The mind is very powerful. If the mind is not taken care of, it can be incredibly dangerous, not only for the self, but for numberless other living beings. However, if the mind is taken care of, if it is trained well in loving kindness and compassion, it can offer inconceivable benefits to uncountable numbers of sentient beings.

This question of how form can come from the formless is actually answered in the twelve links, which explains how everything comes from the mind. The consciousness carries imprints, just as a chairlift carries people. This is how form comes from the formless. All impure and pure things come from the mind in basically the same way: karma leaves imprints on the mental continuum. When you think of this question of how form can come from the formless, it looks difficult, but it is not. If you try to think of some explanation other than the twelve links, there is no answer. There is no other way to explain form coming from formless mental factors. If you think of karma, it is very easy to understand.

Remember all the ups and downs in your life, all the relationship problems and unhappy situations. Then remember all the happy situations and happiness in your life. All these things you have gone through in this life, just from birth until now, have come from your own mind. From your birth until your death, everything – all the objects of your anger, attachment and ignorance; all the unpleasant, pleasant and indifferent feelings; and even your body – has come from your consciousness, which is like a seed, and from your karma, which is like a field. Karma is defined as a thought, which comes from the consciousness.

Everything comes from the consciousness, which holds the imprints, and from the karma (or thought), which leaves the imprints. This is the answer to how form comes from the formless.

### *Continuation of consciousness*

Let's say that a family has five children and one child has been born with deformities. The immediate answer to why this happened is that there was some imperfection in the fertilized egg because the chromosomes from the mother or father were imperfect. This answer explains the physical condition, the co-operative cause, but not the inner factor, the actual cause.

Of the five children, why was this particular child conceived at the time of this imperfect egg? No one forced this conception to happen; no one obliged this person's consciousness to take place on that imperfect fertilized egg. When we ask the question, Why was this being conceived when there was an



imperfect fertilized egg?, the answer is given, Because conception happened at that time. But why did conception happen at that time? This is the important question. This is the interesting part. For this person to be conceived at that time there had to be a fertilized egg: Why was the fertilized egg at that time imperfect?

I have asked these questions many times and so far, apart from one or two answers concerning the time, I have not received any answer. The important point is the time: Why is this particular being conceived at this particular time? Explaining that the mother took drugs during pregnancy is just repeating that the baby is imperfect. The basic question is still unanswered. This question has to have a deeper answer.

Through the twelve links, the evolution of how everything comes from the mind, it is very clear why the being was conceived at that time. Just before this life, craving and grasping made the imprint left by karma on his mental continuum strong and ready to be experienced. No matter what the past life, at the time of the death prior to this rebirth, the craving and grasping from the twelve links to be actualized in this human life caused him to be conceived at the time there was an imperfect fertilized egg. This is very clear.

If you do not reason from the point of view of the being's mind, if you reason only from the external evolution, from what you can physically see with your eyes, the answer comes down to the time – and that is that. There is no mention of the continuation of the mind before and after this life. This view is completely ignored if you consider only the external evolution.

Now, if it were true that there is just one life, with no continuation of consciousness before or after this life, everything would be extremely easy. You would not need to keep busy with all these problems and depressions. You would not need hospitals, doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists – or meditation centres. Why would you need religions?

If it were the case that there was no continuation of consciousness, the longer you lived, the longer you would have problems. The quickest way to stop all your problems would be to die as soon as possible. All your problems would then be solved – no family or relationship problems, no fears of not getting a degree. Since life would only last a few years, why would you go through so much worry and fear? You would not need any spiritual life. It would be very simple. Since life would not last forever and there would be no continuation of consciousness after this life, the simplest and best solution would be to take your own life as quickly as possible. While there is such a simple way to stop completely all these problems so that they never happen again, why would you be worried and depressed? Why would you work so hard to have happiness and stop problems? The conclusion would also be that your having this body is a big problem for others. You can see that this line of reasoning becomes kind of nonsense.

Simply pressing this body brings pain. This itself demonstrates reincarnation, the continuation of this consciousness from a previous life. Otherwise there is no reason why these aggregates should be in the nature of suffering. Why are we born like this? Why aren't we born without these sufferings of hunger and thirst, heat and cold, and all the other problems? Perhaps you might answer, Because there is a mind. But why can't we have mind without having pain, suffering? Why can't we be born and not experience problems?

The answer is in the evolution of the twelve links. There is pain, this body is in the nature of suffering, because it came from the impure causes of karma and disturbing thoughts, which are motivated by ignorance not realizing the nature of the I. If these aggregates were not formed by karma and disturbing thoughts, they would not be in the nature of suffering. We would not experience all these sufferings of pain, hunger, thirst, and so on. And these aggregates would not experience the sufferings of birth, old age, sickness and death. Experiencing these without freedom, without choice, would not happen.

Our daily experiences, whether happy or unhappy, prove the existence of karma, and of past and future lives. On top of the explanation of the twelve links, there are people who can see the past and future lives of themselves and others. A person may not believe in past and future lives because he cannot remember or see them, but this implies that anything he does not remember does not exist. Saying that there are no past and future lives because he does not see them implies that if they existed, he would know about them. In other words, anything he does not know, does not exist. This is very funny reasoning. This means there is nothing left for him to learn; according to this reasoning, since he knows everything that exists, there would be no purpose in learning anything.

Another factor may be that your culture does not believe in reincarnation. You have to choose: Do you believe your culture, or the reality of the experiences of those people who can see past and future lives? Can other people have more knowledge than you or not? The whole point comes to this: If a person does not know himself, he has to choose whether or not to hold the beliefs of his culture, even if it is contradicted by the experiences of those people who can see past and future lives.

### *Generating loving kindness and compassion*

If there is no loving kindness and compassion in your heart for other sentient beings, your human life is empty, like an empty pot. If there is some compassion and good heart for other sentient beings, even if not for every sentient being, the thought to serve and benefit them naturally comes. And your attitude of mind, your thought to benefit others, shows in your actions.

Generating loving kindness and compassion is the responsibility of each of us. It is our own responsibility to generate these within us, even for our own peace of mind and happiness from day to day and life to life, and especially for ultimate happiness. But our own happiness is nothing - though it is better to be concerned about this than not to practice any proper means to achieve happiness for ourselves.

Think of the numberless other sentient beings who are devoid of temporal happiness, and especially of ultimate happiness. Think of their constant suffering. Each of them needs our compassion. They need us to help them and not to harm them. This is completely our responsibility. Because of the needs and wishes of others, we have to generate loving kindness and compassion. We need to practice compassion for the sake of others and for our own sake.

Just as you are dependent upon all sentient beings, they are dependent upon you. Eliminating their suffering and obtaining their happiness depend upon you. If your motivation to meditate and practice Dharma is for your own peace of mind and happiness, this is very poor. Especially since you have a precious human body with all the opportunities to develop your mind, you should generate compassion. You have every opportunity to develop understanding, compassion and capacity in order to help sentient beings. You need to stop harming other sentient beings and you need to benefit them.

When you have developed compassion, the question then comes, “How should I help other sentient beings? What is the best way to benefit them?” The best way is to liberate them from all suffering and true cause of suffering, and then from every mental stain. In this way they have perfect realizations, peerless ultimate happiness. There is no way to offer this greatest benefit to others beings other than by revealing the path to enlightenment to them; they can then practise this path and achieve peerless happiness. There is no other way. And in order to reveal the complete path to others, you yourself need to experience it. So, you can see how important it is to practise Dharma, to develop method, the good heart, and wisdom, particularly the wisdom realizing emptiness.

### *Generating bodhichitta*

With whatever capacity you have, you should try to benefit other sentient beings as much as possible. The best way is to practise bodhichitta. If bodhichitta is your heart practice in everyday life, all success comes and all problems are pacified. This brings every happiness to you and to other sentient beings. With this as your main practice day and night, everything succeeds.

The selfish mind is the greatest obstacle for you and for every sentient being. By abandoning this selfish mind, which is the root of all problems, you practise bodhichitta, renouncing yourself and cherishing others. This one practice of bodhichitta completely stops all the obstacles to the works and happiness of this life, and of future lives. If there is no selfish mind, you do not create obstacles.

Even if you do not have the actual realizations of loving kindness, compassion and bodhichitta, if you are familiar with these and have a very generous mind, so many of your normal everyday activities, whether living in a family or working in the city, become Dharma, the cause of happiness. Depending on how much good heart people have, they have that much chance for their actions to become the cause of happiness. Actions unstained by selfishness are the purest Dharma.

This loving, compassionate thought of bodhichitta brings all temporal and ultimate happiness, every success up to enlightenment. By achieving the peerless happiness of the state of omniscient mind, one can then lead every sentient being to this peerless happiness. The root of all success is this ultimate good heart of bodhichitta. To develop your mind in this way in order to offer the greatest benefit to every sentient being, you should study the teachings that explain how to meditate and train your mind in the graduated path to enlightenment. By listening and studying, you become familiar with the meditation subjects, and then try to transform your mind into whatever understanding you have of the meaning of the path.

### *The importance of motivation*

In everyday life, your motivation is very important. Even for normal daily activities such as working in the home or office, sleeping, walking, doing prayers, reciting mantras or meditating, your motivation is the first thing to examine and to change from negative to positive. You should have the greatest thought to benefit others that is possible. The beings for whom you work or meditate should be as many as possible. Even if you cannot cover every sentient being, your work or meditation should at least be for the benefit of as many as possible.

Motivation can change everything. If the motivation is wrong, the action and the result will be wrong.

If the motivation is stained by one of the three poisonous minds (anger, attachment or ignorance), both the action and motivation become the cause of suffering. If the motivation is not stained by these three poisonous minds, the action becomes virtue and both the motivation and action are the cause of happiness. If the root of a tree is poisonous, every part of that tree is poisonous. If the root is medicinal, every part is medicinal. It cannot harm; it can only benefit. It is the same with motivation. In your everyday life, your motivation is the most important thing. The greatest problems and unhappiness and the greatest benefit and happiness come from your motivation, your attitude of mind, in every day, in every hour.

Two beggars went to beg food from a monastery. One beggar went at the right time, while the monks were eating, so he got plenty of food. He was so happy that he generated the wish to build monasteries and offer service to the monks. The other beggar went to the monastery at the wrong time, when the monks were not eating, so he did not get anything. He got very angry and thought, "I will cut off the monks' heads and watch them drop to the ground!"

Later this beggar was lying beside a road. A carriage came past and cut off his head with its wheel. The other beggar, who had been very happy and generated the positive wish, was sleeping under a tree in a park. Due to the power of this beggar's merit, even though he slept many hours there under the tree, the shadow of the tree never moved away from him. During this time the local people were looking for somebody special to become their leader. Seeing this unmoving shadow and thinking it must indicate a very special quality in the beggar, the people asked him to become their king. Then, because he was wealthy, he was able to offer service to the sangha.

In Italy, there was one butcher whose mother went every morning to kill pigs. I think they had huge machines to do this. All the pigs were lined up (I think it must be like the long walkway in London airport), then went down to a huge, revolving machine. Everything immediately came out the other side in pieces.

One day the mother slipped. She went through the machine and was cut into pieces. This is amazing! This proves the existence of karma extremely clearly. You experience the same as you do to others. It was just a question of time. Because she collected many very powerful negative karmas, this woman experienced the result quickly, in that same life.

There is another quite interesting example that perhaps you saw in the newspaper. Somewhere in India - in West Bengal, I think - there was one huge, very long snake across a road. Many trucks were stuck there because this snake was blocking the whole road and would not go away. So, one truck driver went and killed the snake. After that he married. His first child was fine, but then every second child had scales like snakeskin all over the body. The third and fifth children were fine; the fourth and sixth had the skin of a snake. The truck driver had nine children all together and every second one had skin like snake scales. The father took the eldest one, who is now eighteen, around to many hospitals looking for a cure, but could not find any. Karmas like this, which you start to experience in the same life, are very powerful ones.

These problems happening every day to other people in the world are teachings and meditations on karma for us. Relate them to yourself. You have accumulated various karmas in this and other lives, from beginningless time. You have accumulated karmas, positive and negative, that you know about,

and many others that you do not know about. You cannot remember all the karmas you have accumulated in the past, from beginningless time. You have already finished experiencing much of this karma, but there is so much more yet to be experienced, that you have not yet finished experiencing. The happiness or suffering resulting from one action done in one second may be experienced for many hundreds of lifetimes, for many eons. Just from one karma done in one second.

The conclusion is that you should purify your previous negative karmas and, as much as possible, abstain from negative karmas and practise virtuous actions, small and great. Since you desire the smallest pleasure, even in a dream, you should try to accumulate even small merits by benefiting other sentient beings. You should perform even small actions such as trying to protect tiny insects such as ants when they are in danger of being attacked by other animals. You should not ignore even such small benefits you can offer other sentient beings, whether animals or humans, with whatever capability you have.

If you desire even the smallest comfort, there is no question that you want ultimate happiness. This is why you need to create the cause, which is great merit. Since you do not desire even the smallest discomfort or harm from others, you should abandon as much as possible even the smallest harms to others. Protecting karma in this way is the real protection of your own life.

### *The power of the object*

The karmas you accumulate in relation to your parents are powerful because your parents are more powerful objects than other people. Serving your present-life parents and creating good karma in relation to them are very powerful. Creating even a small good karma or small negative karma is very powerful because of the power of the object. You can start to experience the result in this life.

The Sangha are more powerful objects than your parents. By “Sangha” I mean those who are living in the vows of ordination. Next come arya beings, whether animal, human being or whatever. Bodhisattvas, those who have bodhichitta, are very powerful objects - more powerful than any of the previous objects. The lam-rim teachings explain how powerful an object a bodhisattva is: Looking disrespectfully or glaring at a bodhisattva, out of anger, disgust or some other disturbed mind is much heavier negative karma than taking out the eyes of all the living beings on this earth. And the merit from looking at a bodhisattva with a devoted or calm mind is much greater than making charity of your own eyes to all the beings on this earth. There is this unbelievable difference because a bodhisattva is a very powerful object.

In the categories of powerful objects, after a bodhisattva comes Buddha; after Buddha comes your guru. Doing small good things in relation to these objects results in unbelievable, inconceivable happiness; and making small mistakes in relation to these objects results in so much undesirable suffering.

This is quite clear to me just from checking my own family and relatives. My younger brother has offered much service to our mother. I am not sure when my father died, but I do not remember him at all, so my brother could not have seen him. Anyway, my younger brother offered much service to our mother when he was young, always taking care of her. Now he lives a long way from her but he continues to take care of her as much as he can, even though he has many children and many responsibilities. He has a very good heart. I think he practises Dharma more than I do, even though he has not



received many teachings or read much. Somehow there is no big confusion in his life, which is very easy-going and harmonious. He has a good way of living - the result of his good heart. Everybody respects him and things go very easily for him.

Some of my relatives do not have this type of mind, but are the opposite, very selfish and negative. And they have many problems, one after another. Even if they have some success, some relaxed life, it lasts for only a short time before some other problem comes and their life changes. Even among my relatives, it is like this.

The conclusion is that you will definitely start to experience in this life the negative or positive karmas done with these powerful objects. There is karma like this that you see in this life. Or you may experience it in your next life, or after many hundreds of eons.

Since you cannot see the realizations of other people, you cannot say who is or is not a bodhisattva or Buddha. Since this is difficult to see, you should be careful in regard to your actions towards other beings. It is of great profit not to create heavy negative karmas. As explained by great bodhisattva Shantideva in *Guide to a Bodhisattva's Way of Life*: If you are not a bodhisattva, merits that you have accumulated by making charity, offerings to the buddhas and so forth for one thousand eons are destroyed by getting angry for one second with a bodhisattva. Not only are you born in the heaviest suffering of the hells for one thousand eons, your realizations are also postponed for that many eons.

Not only do you experience suffering, but the attainments you were to achieve tomorrow, this month, next year, are put off for one thousand eons if you, who are not a bodhisattva, become angry with a bodhisattva. You will not be in danger of destroying merits in this way if you try to practise a good heart and control your mind in relation to other beings.

### *Controlling the three poisonous minds*

Anger is unbelievably harmful. It causes not only day-to-day problems of disharmony in the family and unhappiness for yourself, but many lifetimes of problems. Because you do not have clairvoyance or omniscience, you cannot see this long-term harm with your present mind - but you will have to experience it. It is extremely important to put all your effort and skill into avoiding anger. For the works of this life, such as a business, you put every single effort and skilful means you can think of into getting the greatest profit you can. That is nothing! Depending on your attitude, with your mind you can achieve something far greater in every hour, in every minute.

A teaching advises: Stop attachment which opens the unclean body, and cheats you greatly. Here, unclean is not a question of external dirt. The body contains thirty-six internal impurities: such dirty things as bile, saliva, blood, pus. If everything contained within the body were clean, there would be no reason for what comes out of the body to be dirty. This proves the body is unclean. Otherwise, the substances would be clean while inside the body and only dirty when they come out. I think which opens refers to the upper and lower doors: attachment opens the doors of the dirty body.

This advice is talking about the shortcomings of attachment, which opens the dirty body and cheats you greatly, or causes you great loss. Following desire, seeking a small temporary happiness of a few minutes, cheats you by interfering with your achievement of long-term ultimate happiness. You are

cheated because, while you are caught by desire and cling to that small temporary happiness, you do not think about ultimate happiness.

Stop anger by seeing the mothers tormented by karma and disturbing thoughts as crazy. Crazy means completely overwhelmed, with no freedom at all. Without control, a person may become wild, harm many people and do all kinds of things. This happens because he has no control over his mind; he may be possessed by spirits and so forth. In the same way, all sentient beings, who have been our mothers, are completely overwhelmed by karma and disturbing thoughts. Possessed by disturbing thoughts, they become completely crazy. Since their minds are completely hallucinated with wrong conceptions, what they do with their body, speech and mind is completely wrong, preventing happiness and causing only problems for themselves. It is like a crazy person with an uncontrolled mind: he does only things that harm himself. By looking at sentient beings as crazy, stop anger.

Think that the person has no freedom, no control at all. He is possessed by disturbing thoughts. He is a complete slave to disturbing thoughts; he is completely used by anger, attachment and ignorance. If you think in this way, it is impossible to become angry. Instead of anger arising, only compassion arises. This is the main point of this verse. Looking at them as crazy does not mean that you should not help them because they are crazy. By thinking in this way, you stop anger.

Stop ignorance by thinking of the subtle connotations of cause and result. This means karma and particularly awareness of dependent arising and emptiness. Look at how everything - self, action, object - is a dependent arising. Being a dependent arising, everything is empty; and being empty of existing from its own side, everything is a dependent arising. Awareness of dependent arising and emptiness stops ignorance.

Enemies and friends meet and separate. On the basis of a facial expression, you cling to someone as a friend. The enemies and friends who meet and separate change. When you see a face, just this small part of a body, with peaceful eyes and the wrinkles of a smile around the mouth, you grab that as a friend. The main thing is the face, not so much the rest of the body or what the person says. The mouth smiles and you grab that person as a friend.

However, with another movement of the face, this friend can become your enemy; then anger and aversion arise. One facial expression you call “enemy”; the other smiling face you call “friend”. This discrimination is not valid because the reason is so small and such nonsense. On such changes of facial expression, you cling to someone as a friend or an enemy, and then experience the sufferings of meeting the undesirable and separating from the desirable.

Carrying the burden of negative karma collected in this way, you scream in the lower realms. After death, when this body has become a corpse, carrying this burden of negative karma, you go to scream in the lower realms.

This whole verse describes the shortcomings of the three poisonous minds, the long-term problems of not controlling your mind, and also how to stop the three poisonous minds. By being aware of the nature of problems, by meditating, you can control your mind.

## *Protecting the mind*

When your mind is in danger, use every single means to protect it, as if your life were in danger. If you succeed, there is inconceivable profit; if you fail, there is unbelievable loss – more than any material loss. Of course, even before you meet Dharma, since you are a human being with all the possibilities for development, each hour that you do not practise mind-control is a great loss; but especially after you have met Buddhadharmā, each hour that you do not practise controlling your mind is even more of a loss. Each hour that you do not practise bodhichitta, or patience when there is danger of anger, is a greater loss than losing dollars equaling the number of atoms of this earth. Your mind can create that much wealth through accumulating merit by making charity to sentient beings or offerings to holy objects. You can see that if your mind is not transformed into virtue for an hour, or even a minute, this is the greatest loss. This is the greatest loss in life.

As Shantideva explains in *Guide to a Bodhisattva's Way of Life*: What is the use of any conduct other than the conduct of protecting your mind? What is the use of any other practice, if you do not protect your mind?

In other words, if you do not protect your mind, doing many external practices with your body and speech does not help. If you do not protect your mind, there is no happiness or success. Every single teaching of Buddha, both sutra and tantra, is taught only in order to subdue the mind. To stop the continuation of samsara, you must cease karma and disturbing thoughts. If you control the three poisonous minds at the very beginning, you do not accumulate karma.

When you do not watch your mind and do not use the meditations and teachings, your mind becomes the creator of suffering. You become the creator of your own unhappiness, your own samsara. When you watch your mind, use the meditations, and practise the teachings, your mind becomes the creator of enlightenment. Sometimes your mind becomes the creator of the heaviest suffering of hell; at other times, when you take care to practise, your mind becomes the creator of the highest happiness.

### *Colophon:*

*This teaching was given by Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche at Atisha Centre, Australia, on August 22–23, 1987. Transcript reprinted here for the Discovering BUDDHISM program with permission from Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive.*