

Annual Buddhist Philosophy Teachings

## Lamrim - Je Tsongkhapa's Three Principal Aspects on the Path

by His Holiness the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa Ogyen Trinley Dorje

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*Translator Lama Yeshe Gyamtso*

*This concise Lamrim text composed by Je Tsongkhapa, explains how the desire to be free from cyclic existence, developing the altruistic intention, and realizing the wisdom of emptiness constitute the three principal aspects of the path to enlightenment.*

[Video teachings](#)

### Session I

*Nov. 1, 2013 morning*

First of all I would like to express my very great happiness in having this opportunity here in New Delhi, the capital of India, to once again meet with all of you under the auspices and at the invitation of His Holiness Dalai Lama's foundation for Universal Responsibility. And I'm delighted to be here today and share a conversation about Dharma with all of you. I particularly want to welcome here all members of the Indian sangha as well as all of you who have come from different nations and continents to be here today.

As this Foundation for Universal Responsibility on an ongoing basis has scheduled and sponsored many teachings by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, I assume that many of you who are here today have received many teachings from His Holiness the Dalai Lama. I feel this puts me in an odd position, because usually I find teaching Dharma somewhat embarrassing. Teaching Dharma is not like giving an ordinary lecture or a public address. A person who teaches Dharma is supposed to have or embody the qualities of Dharma and at the very least to have some slight habit of dharmic virtue embedded in their mind. As I feel that I lack this, I try to avoid teaching Dharma and if I cannot do so at least reduce the amount of teaching that I do.

Nevertheless there do arise times like the present, when I am unable to avoid or escape teaching Dharma. And under these circumstances I have no choice but summon all my courage and remember that as it's taught in the Buddhadharma, we are not to rely on the person – teachers – but on the Dharma that is taught. This means that even if the person teaching Dharma is someone with hundreds of flaws, nevertheless, the Dharma that they present, if it's based on the authentic teachings of holy masters of the past, is still authentic. Even if the person teaching lacks many qualities, if what they are teaching is the authentic teachings or speech of holy masters, who possessed tremendous qualities, it's possible that there could still be some benefit. So therefore today and tomorrow I will possibly waste your time, but try to say a few words about the Dharma.

So the particular Dharma I'm going to share with you today is a brief explanation of the great Lord Tsongkhapa's Three Principal Aspects of the Path.

Lord Tsongkhapa lived from during the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup>, and from among the four great widely known schools of Tibetan Buddhism he founded the Gelukpa or Gandenpa tradition.

Among the many extraordinary deeds of Lord Tsongkhapa are two ways in which I think he had a profound and wondrous effect on the evolution of Tibetan Buddhism. The first of these two ways is the great emphasis that Lord Tsongkhapa placed on the Vinaya or the monastic discipline, and through this emphasis he ensured the good behavior, good moral discipline of the monastic sangha.

The second way in which Lord Tsongkhapa produced tremendous or extraordinary benefit for Tibetan Buddhism as a whole was in his formulation and interpretation of the view of the Middle Way School. Now,

throughout the centuries before Tsongkhapa's birth in Tibet there had been of course many great and wise scholarly masters who had produced different expositions and to some extent even different interpretations of Nagarjuna's Middle Way School. Lord Tsongkhapa researched and studied all of these and he synthesized all of them into a form of explanation which is extraordinarily and uniquely clear. That includes within it the best features of all the explanations and writings of all the great Indian and Tibetan masters of the Middle Way. This brought about very significant and beneficial transformation in the Tibetan understanding of the Middle Way.

Through both his great emphasis on the Vinaya and his illumination and clarification of both the Middle Way view and the reasoning through which it can be ascertained, Lord Tsongkhapa was unparalleled. And as a result his followers within the Gelukpa or Gandenpa tradition, up to and down to the present day or present moment have exhibited the tremendous benefits and example. These include their exemplary behavior with regard to monastic discipline and morality; their exemplary of study and understanding of the great treatises concerning the view. The sheer vast numbers of which their sanghas consist, so that down to the present day they are the most widespread of the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism. And all of this comes from the wondrous example of Lord Tsongkhapa's deeds and teachings.

Another thing about Lord Tsongkhapa's example and teaching, which is in a sense an integration of both the special features I have already mentioned and is particularly important for us today in the context of our study of this text, *The Tree Principal Aspects of the Path*, is his tremendous emphasis on Lord Atisha's exposition of the gradual path for the three types of individuals. Lord Tsongkhapa placed tremendous emphasis on the study of this tradition and teaching of Atisha's and also great emphasis on training of the mind in progressive and gradual way that corresponds with that exposition of the path. Because of Lord Tsongkhapa's tremendous emphasis on the continuation and propagation of Atisha's exposition of the path, his tradition, which we often refer to as Gelukpa or Gandenpa, is also sometimes called the New Kadampa tradition, because it is based so solidly upon Lord Atisha's teachings and approach. We find this expounded in great detail in both Lord Tsongkhapa's great exposition of the Stages of the Path and his concise exposition of the Stages of the Path.

In short, in all his teaching Lord Tsongkhapa sought to reveal to us how any one person can in its progressive and gradually implemented stages pursue the entire Buddhist path from beginning to end. And this is a special feature of his teachings, but it is also in a sense a defining feature of Tibetan Buddhism as a whole. I therefore think that Lord Tsongkhapa's teachings and he himself are in a sense a tremendous symbol or representation of the true spirit of Tibetan Buddhism. Because while some people feel that Tibetan Buddhism is just the practice of the Vajrayana or Buddhist tantra, this is not the case; Tibetan Buddhism includes much more than that. For example, for beginners it's far more important to study and practice the common vehicles; such as the Shravakayana, Pratyekabuddhayana and general Mahayana, than it is to study or practice tantra.

And this is revealed and expounded most clearly in Lord Tsongkhapa's expositions. He reveals and explains step by step how the three types of individuals can gradually progress and transform themselves, and he shows us specially the non-contradictory nature of the Buddhist teachings: how all of the Buddhist teachings of sutra and tantra constitute in their entirety a cohesive and non-contradictory path for anyone person to achieve awakening.

As the coordinated implementation of all the Buddhist teachings without exception is in a sense without special or unique feature of Tibetan Buddhism, I think it is very important for all of us who follow this tradition, to study and implement Lord Atisha's exposition of the stages of the gradual path, and especially using the extraordinary exposition by Lord Tsongkhapa, for it is largely due to Lord Tsongkhapa's kindness that this exposition survives as a living tradition down to the present day.

Long before Lord Tsongkhapa appeared in this world, Lord Gampopa also taught how to combine the implementation of the main practice of Mahamudra with Lord Atisha's teachings of the Kadampa Tradition as necessary preliminaries or pre-courses for that practice. We therefore refer to Lord Gampopa's tradition as the unified streams of the Kadampa and Mahamudra tradition. I therefore think that this approach, exemplified by Lord Tsongkhapa, but really recurring earlier with teachers such as Lord Gampopa, has great historical importance for Tibetan Buddhism and furthermore great implications for our understanding and practice of Buddhism as a whole.

I say this because I think that perhaps the greatest service that Tibetan Buddhist tradition can offer to world and to the various Buddhist traditions within this world, is to present, explain and demonstrate the non-contradictory nature of the three vehicles or the three types of vows. Now, of course these teachings, including their being free from contradiction, their being one cohesive path, originally came from India, but they came to be very clearly expounded in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, and I think that it is important for us of this tradition to offer this clear explanation back to the world.

Without such a demonstration one can sometimes gain the misunderstanding or misapprehension that the various vehicles of Buddhism or the various types of discipline encouraged in those vehicles are in some way contradictory. Through that misunderstanding we sometimes find that adherents of the common vehicle does not accept the Mahayana or the Greater Vehicle as authentic Buddhist teaching. And sometimes adherents of the Mahayana or Greater Vehicle do not accept its tantric component, the Vajrayana, as authentic Mahayana Dharma.

So, it can sometimes appear to the observer as though all of these teachings, all of which represent themselves as aspects of Buddhadharma are in some kind of conflict. In fact this is not the case. The teachings and practices of the three vehicles and the various codes of the moral discipline, which form the life of these various teachings, are not only not in disagreement; they are complementary and in fact all needed.

We don't need to divide the Dharma up into categories in this way and say: "This is the teaching of the Common Vehicle. The others are a teaching of the Mahayana, and we must keep them separate." We need to understand that all of the Buddhadharma presents one cohesive path and that every aspect of it supports and illuminates the other aspects as well. I think if we can present the Dharma in this way we will be offering great service to this world and to the various Buddhist traditions within this world.

I don't think it's necessary for me to say much more about this. I won't go on to explain the life or great deeds of Lord Tsongkhapa in any more detail. I think we can infer the greatness and tremendous goodness of Lord Tsongkhapa from his present foremost lineage holder, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who is really the embodiment and living demonstration of the great virtue and tremendous excellence in every way of this tradition. His tremendous goodness and the fact that this goodness is not random but a living tradition I think speaks for itself.

Today's topic therefore is Lord Tsongkhapa's exposition entitled Three Principal Aspects of the Path. Now the three principle aspects referred to in the title are the desire to be free, bodhichitta and the correct or authentic view. In the context of his exposition of these three Lord Tsongkhapa also incorporates and explains the stages of the path for the three types of individuals, the practice of both the Hinayana and the Mahayana aspects of Dharma and really all other aspects or issues embodied within the Buddhist teaching. Because they are all comprised in his exposition of these three points, they are called the three principal aspects of the path.

In expounding this text it is customary to divide it using an outline into three parts. The first part is the heading or introduction, the second part is the main body of the text or exposition and the third part is the conclusion. This first part really includes three things: Lord Tsongkhapa's initial expression of veneration, his promise to compose the text, and his encouragement to listeners or readers to hear it or read it. The words of the text which correspond to these parts are, first of all, homage to most venerable teachers, his expression of veneration.

And then the first stanza: "I shall explain here to my best ability the essential points of all the scriptures of the Conqueror, the path acclaimed by all excellent bodhisattvas." The gateway for the Fortunate Ones aspiring to liberation is his promise to compose the text, and the second verse: "Those who are not attached to the cyclic existence who strive to make meaningful this life of leisure and opportunity and to place their trust in path that pleases the Conquerors are the Fortunate Ones. Listen with the open heart," is the third part, the initial heading or introduction; his encouragement to listen this exposition.

Next we come to the actual exposition, the main body of the text, and in accordance with this topic this is divided into three parts: the desire to be free from samsara, the bodhichitta and the perfect or authentic

view. Lord Tsongkhapa's exposition of the desire to be free also has three parts. The first is: why the desire for freedom from cyclic existence is necessary, why we need to cultivate it. The second part is how to do so, how to give rise to this desire for freedom. And the third is how to tell, how to know if you have given rise to this authentic desire for freedom or not.

The first of these, the reason why we need to give rise to desire for freedom, is found in the third verse of our text which says: "Without true renunciation there are no means to pacify the yearning for the joys and fruits of the samsaric ocean, and as craving for existence changes us thoroughly, at first search for true renunciation or desire for freedom."

According to the Buddha's teachings all of us, all sentient beings have one thing in common, which is that we all fundamentally want the same thing, which is happiness, and we all fundamentally basically don't want the same thing, which is suffering. And this is our basic hope, our basic ambition: to be happy, to be free from suffering. But nevertheless, despite the fact that we don't want to suffer, we find ourselves suffering, and despite the fact that we want to be happy we find ourselves not experiencing the happiness we seek.

Therefore, throughout human history we have tried in all kinds of ways, whatever we could come up with, to prevent suffering and create circumstances which would make us happy, especially by now, in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, we have developed all sorts of sciences and technologies for this reason: to create happiness and avoid suffering. But in spite of all the scientific and technological development and all of our inventiveness in this regard, up to now we have never actually achieved true satisfaction. We have never actually succeeded in getting what we want.

We are unmistakable in our search for the result that we seek, the result which is the experience of happiness, and the avoidance of suffering. Although however we have correctly chosen the result, chosen happiness and not suffering, we often make the wrong choices with regard to the causes of those results. Through ignorance we fail to identify, correctly identify the causes of suffering, and therefore although we don't wish to suffer, we continue to suffer. The ignorance we fail also to correctly identify causes of happiness, and although we seek happiness, we fail to achieve the happiness that we seek.

So, while we are unmistakable in our choice of results, we are fundamentally mistaken in our choice of causes.

For example, if you ask someone: "What do you want?" the answer is very easy: "Happiness." One would answer without hesitation, without confusion. But if you then went on to ask the person: "And how are you going to achieve that happiness?" they would probably answer: "I'm not so sure, I don't know how to do it."

What we want is clear to us, but how to achieve it, the cause for achieving it is unclear to us, we are bewildered and confused about how to achieve happiness.

Sometimes we misidentify incorrect causes of happiness as authentic or true causes of happiness. For example, nowadays with our tremendous technological development and our ever growing hankering for newest technology we have the idea or the hope that eventually a day will come when every person in the world will be able to buy or somehow receive every single thing they want, and we imagine that in such a way through external material resources we will create a state where everyone having everything that they want, where everyone will be happy.

But I think that it's extremely unlikely that such a day will ever come. I think it's extremely unlikely that there ever be a time at which all the people of this world will get everything they want. I say this because the resources of this planet are limited but the desires of the beings that inhabit this planet, including ourselves, human beings, are unlimited. No matter how much we get, we will always want more. Limited resources cannot possibly fulfill unlimited desires. So if we are waiting for a day when each and every one of us will have everything we want externally, materially, I think we are waiting for something impossible. We rely too much on external material conditions for happiness, and this is an example of mistaking an incorrect or impossible cause of happiness as an authentic one.

We often have the idea that external things, objects of the senses, and the pleasures, which we hope to create through the objects of the senses, are indispensable, necessary for us to achieve any happiness. We

imagine that these things are true causes of happiness and fundamental causes of happiness, so that if we have these things, we will definitely be happy, and if we don't have them, we will definitely not be happy.

I think we need to make a distinction between things that we really need, that are truly necessary, and things that we just want. And we need to make a distinction between the root of happiness and branches or subsidiary circumstances that are merely sometimes conducive to happiness, but not the root of it. The determination of the true root of happiness is in a sense a vast subject. I don't think we can be gullible about it, I don't think I can simply sit here and say to you: "The root of all of your happiness is this," and deal with the subject in that way. But nevertheless, if we have to summarize it, as if it was presented by the Buddha in his teachings: the root of happiness lies within the mind; which means we need therefore need to scrutinize and work with our minds.

Sometimes we fail to make the distinction between what is really necessary, what is indispensable, what we cannot do without, and what we merely have come to want or desire.

We often mistake things that we don't need – that we merely want – for things that we need. For example, let's say that you need a watch. So you go to the store to buy a watch. But when you get to the store, there are lots and lots of watches, and you become bewildered by the sheer variety of watches to choose from. And as you become more bewildered by that variety you come to be seduced by the glittering appearance of all of these different watches of different features.

And all of the special features that these different watches have start to seem necessary to you, because you have lost sight of the fact that all you really need is a watch – one watch that keeps good time. And you really only need one, you don't even need two; nobody wears two watches, one in each hand. But sometimes nowadays we are seduced by such appearances, especially the advertising industry is devoted to such seduction: to convincing us that we need things that we don't really need. Therefore we come to mistake what we need and what we want. We become bewildered by the seduction of appearances.

I think it's important therefore, not to follow the influence of seductive appearances and to keep in our minds what it is we really need, and not confuse what we need and what we merely want.

Briefly put, therefore happiness really comes down to our minds. And our failure to achieve the happiness which we seek is caused by ignorance, by our not knowing how to achieve it. Therefore we need to scrutinize, analyze and reflect upon reality, the real situation. Now, I can't simply make pad or simple statements about this, it's a matter of each individual to pursue themselves. But as a general statement it can certainly be said that until we recognize the true causes of happiness and pursue them, our continuing pursuit of false causes of happiness is only going to lead to more suffering and not to the happiness that we all seek. Therefore studying this and thinking about this carefully are very important.

Now, this section of our text is devoted to the desire to be free from samsara. What is this samsara from which we need to seek freedom? Fundamentally samsara or "spinning" is ignorance, and because of ignorance there are kleshas or mental afflictions. Because of mental afflictions there are karmas or afflicted actions. Because of this cycle of ignorance, affliction and karma we are not free. We are under the control or under the power of that cycle, and fundamentally that is why we are not happy.

Samsara is not a place. It is this vicious cycle or circle of karma and kleshas, and it is ceaseless or continuous. Since its starting point is ignorance, we need to scrutinize our ignorance and to determine of what our ignorance consists as well as of what or in regard to what we are ignorant.

The second part of the exposition of the desire for freedom is the explanation of the means through which we achieve that desire for freedom, and this is divided here into two aspects. The first is how to reverse or eliminate obsessive craving for this life, and the second is how to eliminate obsessive craving for continued samsaric existence.

Essentially these two stages of the desire for freedom involve assiduous contemplation of the Four Thoughts Which Turn the Mind. Of these the first two: contemplation of the rarity and preciousness of the freedoms and opportunities of this precious human body, and contemplation of death and impermanence comprise the means through which one eliminates obsessive craving for this life. And the second two, the third and fourth

– contemplations of actions and results and contemplations of the defects of Samsara – constitute the means through which one eliminates obsessive craving for continued Samsaric existence.

Therefore the explanation of the means through which we develop desire for freedom or renunciation of obsessive craving for this life begins with an explanation of the rarity of acquisition of the freedom and resources, which comprise this precious human body, the necessary support for the practice of Dharma.

Fundamentally speaking, what is meant by freedom and resources refers in the case of freedom to one's freedom to practice Dharma, and in the case of resources to one's possession of and access to all of the resources needed for that practice. Freedom refers to one's freedom to practice Dharma and resources to one's ability to practice Dharma, because one has access to all the necessary resources. These two things: freedom and resources constitute what is called the special or extraordinary human body or life to support the Dharma practice.

Now, there is one thing about this definition of freedom and resources that I think is especially important to understand, and that is what is meant by the term or phrase "to practice Dharma", such as the freedom and resources needed to practice Dharma. We have to identify the usage of this term Dharma in this case. The word Dharma can mean many things. Of course in this context people assume that we mean the Buddhadharmā; what the Buddha taught, the practice of Buddhism, which is a particular religion among the many religions or spiritual traditions, which exist. But in this case Dharma does not refer specifically to the Buddhadharmā, the Buddhist teachings; it refers to all actions and practices which are virtuous, which induce goodness, which accumulate merit.

So, please do not think that because I am a representative of the Buddhist tradition that when I say "freedom and resources to practice Dharma" I mean freedom and resources to practice Buddhism. I mean the necessary freedom and resources to engage in all manner of virtues, all manner of things that are good and produce merit.

In thinking about or contemplating these freedoms and resources, what we are really thinking about is what is the meaning of our lives and how can we give our lives meaning, how can we make our lives meaningful. The understanding of our freedom, our eightfold freedom and our ten resources, we can come to understand that we have the potential in terms of freedom and resources to give our lives a tremendous meaning. We have the necessary circumstances, the necessary situation. So, in a sense, this kind of contemplation is an encouragement to undertake responsibility, the responsibility that comes with this type of human existence; the responsibility that we have as human beings living in this world.

And I think for followers of any religious tradition, the idea of undertaking one's human responsibility is very important. All of us who live in this world are interdependent in a sense that each and every one of us depends upon others for everything we need in order to survive. We depend upon other beings to grow and produce our food, to make our clothes. In short we depend upon others even for the very physical survival of our bodies. None of us could actually survive if we were absolutely alone without any other beings. Understanding this we should therefore call in the question how we usually think about self and other. We usually make a great or firm distinction between self and other as though they were completely separate, as though there were a very definite or uncrossable boundary or border between self and other.

But there is no such boundary or border. Really we are interdependent, and none of us lives or survives in isolation. Therefore the happiness and suffering of others is automatically and naturally connected to our own happiness and suffering. And our own happiness and suffering is naturally dependent upon the happiness and suffering of others. Therefore I think it is extremely important for us to contemplate these things, and contemplate the implications all this has for our responsibilities as human beings.

I therefore think that this contemplation of the rarity of these freedoms and resources is not intended to make us feel special, to make us feel like the big shots, as though we were a big deal individually, but to help us to understand how great our responsibility is in that we have this freedom and these resources.

If I can use myself as an example, regardless of whatever a capability I actually have, I was told at the age of seven that I am the Karmapa. And essentially what this position has done, it has afforded me a much greater opportunity to help or be of service with others. This opportunity of course comes with the fact that

others have treated me with whatever increasing respect and affection. But in spite of that I've never lost sight of what this really means. I never thought: "I'm special, I'm a holy being, I can do whatever I want." Rather, I take this recognition to mean that I have a tremendous responsibility, and given this responsibility, given these resources, if I do not succeed in significantly helping beings, it will be a terrible shame.

However, if we look at it carefully, I really think that fundamentally we all have the same responsibility. In my case this was very clearly pointed out. But I think the only difference between me and anyone else is that in my case this responsibility has been made more obvious to me. But other than it being more or less obvious we all share the same responsibility, because we all share the same status of interdependence with all others.

So, briefly put: I think that if the contemplation of the rarity of these freedoms and resources does not lead you to think: "I'm special, I'm great, I'm learned, I'm noble," but instead causes you to think: "I have tremendous responsibility towards others that I must at all costs fulfill," I think if that causes you to think in that way, that is a sign that your contemplation of these freedoms and resources has been successful.

Next comes the contemplation of death and impermanence. I don't think that the point of thinking about death is simply to become desperately frightened of death; to think: "Oh no, I'm going to die one day and there is nothing I can do about it. What should I do?" I don't think that's the point. Obviously it's the case that everyone dies, even animals die, and we all have some degree of fear of death. But the fear of death alone does not really do anything to help us.

I think the point is not to inculcate fear, but to help us to appreciate how precious, how valuable the time we have with these freedoms and resources really is. That we have no time to waste; that while we have these freedoms and resources we must use them as best we can to help others. We have a tremendous opportunity, we have tremendous resources; they are very rare, they are very precious, they are very important. An appreciation of our own mortality should highlight that importance, that preciousness, their rarity and help us understand that should we waste these resources, should we waste this opportunity, do nothing significant for the good of others with them, it would be a terrible shame.

Therefore I think the contemplation of our own mortality is designed to lead us to the resolution: I must not waste my life. And the understanding that as every minute passes by, that is one less minute that we have remaining to us to achieve something significant for the benefit of others.

I don't think it's necessary to think negatively about death and impermanence. I think it's quite possible to understand impermanence in a very positive way as the source of constant opportunity. It is because of impermanence that we have constant opportunities.

It is because of impermanence that we have the ability to make choices. For example if you think about a musical instrument, such as a flute, because of impermanence one can play a melody consisting of different notes on that flute. If things were permanent then that flute would only be able to play one note; music, melody would be impossible. Because of impermanence we can vary the note: high notes, low notes, melodies and so forth, and create something of beauty.

In a same way every moment is a new moment because of impermanence, and therefore every new moment is a new opportunity. This means that no matter what has happened before, we are always free to change. Even if we feel we wasted the first half of our entire life that means that we have the second half of our life and we are free to make good use of them. Even if we feel that we did nothing of significance in the morning, that means that we still have the afternoon and evening to do something of significance.

In short: because of impermanence we have constant new opportunities, and understanding this enables us to resolve not to waste this tremendously powerful and significant human lifetime. And it enables us to remember that because every moment is a new opportunity, every moment is important.

Now, if you look at stanza four, the first two lines explain the contemplation of freedom and resources and the contemplation of impermanence in order to eliminate obsessive craving for this life. The second two lines: "By contemplating repeatedly the truth of karma and samsaric sufferings preoccupations with next life will come to cease" refers to how we eliminate obsessive fixation with future lives.

With regard to these contemplations all composite things are interdependent, which is to say that as composite things of phenomena they are of their very nature composed or caused by their particular causes and conditions. This is true of everything we know; the whole world, indeed even the whole universe, which we are taught began with a single particle. In that way everything comes from each things, in particular causes and conditions, everything is therefore interdependent.

We can make a distinction, however, between things that are produced by causes and conditions that involve intention of a person, and those that do not. When we speak of karma, the results of our actions, these are causes and conditions that involve an individual's intention and effort.

With regard to our understanding of karma in particular, it's important that we understand that we are not just talking about how the actions of an individual affect that individual, but also – because of interconnectedness – how the actions of anyone of us, any individual, affect others.

Especially nowadays the world has shrunk, by which I mean that because of our communication technology we are much closer to one another than we were before. This is after all the era of information, which means that we are closer and closer, more and more connected, and more able to affect others tremendously.

Therefore the actions of each of us as an individual have a rippling effect on everyone else. As an illustration of this I've heard it said that a single butterfly can cause a typhoon. I don't see how that's possible, but they do say.

Especially nowadays our individual choices affect, can affect the choices of entire societies. The choices of an individual can begin to influence and form a trend that affects the choices of many. For example, given the current state of consumerism, when we make choices as consumers, then the predominance of consumers' choices form trends that have long term and far-reaching rippling effects that go far beyond the mere casual choice a given consumer appears to be making at any one time.

Through how we live and choose to live as human beings, given all of our supporting technology and the tremendous organizations and corporations and so forth that we have formed, has far greater power than at any time previously in our history, to affect the world around us for good or bad. I therefore think that we really have to place an emphasis on the choices we make in terms of what we do and how we live. And that in turn really fundamentally depends on our motivation, which means we have to put tremendous emphasis on assessing and training our motivation.

We have an unprecedented ability nowadays, because of technology and so forth, to affect the world for better or worse. And whether we affect the world for better or for worse, I think mainly depends upon our motivation. I therefore think that it's extremely important for all of us to carefully assess our motivations.

For example, if we apply this principle to the environment, certainly we all acknowledge that the condition and preservation of our environment in this world is perhaps the most important issue that we face as human beings in this 21<sup>st</sup> century. We have to accept, as we now know, that aside from what is naturally arisen in the environment, we, the single species among many, human beings, have transformed this environment to a great degree. In order to reverse the negative effect that we have on the environment, we have to understand that it is a matter of what we do and how we live and how we feed ourselves and so forth on a day to day basis.

We must not fail to realize the connectedness of this, because sometimes we think: "Well, my day-to-day life is one thing and that doesn't matter, I'm just one person, it doesn't matter what I do. It's important that I get involved with the environmental protection movement and the dissemination of information about the environment, but that's entirely separate from how I live; the two things are unconnected."

If we think that way, it's not actually going to do that much good, it's not going bring that much help, because if we do not change how we live, then this simple circulation or dissemination of information about the environment and the formation of environmental protection movements and organizations alone is not sufficient to reverse the negative effects we have had as species on the environment of this planet. Each of

us needs to take responsibility for the environment by asking ourselves: "How do I live, how do I feed myself, how am I using the limited resources, which are present?"

We need to understand that each of us as an individual has potentially unlimited appetites and desires, but the resources to which we can reasonably make use, are very limited. And therefore unless we limit ourselves – especially given how weak or easily fooled our minds can be by the seduction of appearances and so forth, if we don't change our motivation and if we don't apply our environmental concerns to our own day-to-day living, then the simple dissemination of information about the environment and the formation of participation in environmental activism will not be sufficient to heal the world; at least, that is how I see it.

The schedule says that this morning session is supposed to last until one, but time is moving very slowly and I'm running out of things to say, so I think it would be a good time to stop now. I think it's better to stop before we all start to burn out. So, I'm going to stop now.

## Session II

Good afternoon everyone. This morning we left off within the topic of elimination of obsessive craving for pleasures of future lives. You remember that's divided into the topic of contemplation of results of actions and the contemplation of the defects and sufferings of samsara. We went through in a way the results of actions and we began also to look at the defects of samsara.

Therefore, as I mentioned this morning, samsara is being in the control or under the power of karma and kleshas. Therefore we could define samsara as the continuous cycle of karma and kleshas.

When we talk about the understanding or recognition of suffering, we are not only talking about suffering which we think of suffering, which usually refers to painful sensations. Painful sensations are what we call the suffering of suffering, which is only one type of suffering. There is more depth to the understanding of suffering in this context, because there are also subtle aspects to suffering as well.

The Buddhist presentation of suffering involves degrees of progressive subtlety of suffering: the suffering which is suffering of suffering, the suffering of change and then the pervasive suffering of the transitory composite. Each of these is more subtle in a sense than the one that preceded it.

In this context where turning away from obsessive craving for future lives means turning away from all of samsara, achieving the desire to be free from all of samsara, the suffering that is of primary importance is the all-pervasive suffering or the transitory composite. And the understanding or recognition of this is not simply the recognition of the mere resultant suffering, such as painful sensations, but the understanding of the actual quality or actual make-up of entire process of samsara and suffering.

For example, the second type of suffering, the suffering of change, is characterized as primarily the suffering experienced in states of higher rebirth, such as our own, in which subsequent to that rebirth, one seems to experience some kind of temporary relief or happiness, but because it is not permanent, it is impermanent, it is not state of changeless happiness, but one that is fragile, subject to change and can often be followed by states of actual suffering.

However, the suffering of change is not merely a state of prior happiness becoming a subsequent state of misery; it is the fact that the happiness itself can change, which reveals that it is not true happiness at all. The very fragility, the very impermanence of that happiness only reveals the suffering that was already there to begin with. In other words, when we talk about pleasure and pain or happiness and misery in the ordinary context, what we identify is that happiness or pleasure is not really or truly absolute happiness. It is really just another type of suffering. And that other type of suffering is what is called the suffering of change.

To give you an analogy: it's like if you were carrying a very heavy burden on your right shoulder and you started to experience a sensation of pain and fatigue and so forth on the right side. So eventually, in order to relieve that you shift the burden to the top on your left shoulder. And initially you experience a feeling of

relief. However, if you continue to carry that heavy burden on your left shoulder, eventually it's going to become just as painful, just as unpleasant as it was to carry it on the right shoulder.

The suffering of change is just like that. In between the prior state of suffering, in the analogy carrying the burden on the right shoulder and the subsequent suffering, when the left shoulder becomes equally fatigued, there is a bit of sense of a relief in between. But in reality, because the sense of relief is part of the whole make-up of this form aggregate, this physical body, true, permanent relief from pain is impossible, because unless something happens to your brain that causes you to be temporarily incapable of feeling physical pain, the very design of your body incorporates the possibility and likelihood of painful sensations. Therefore there is no real state of perfect pleasure or permanent relief within this aggregate of form.

There is no real need for me to go into all the possible varieties of pain or suffering that we might experience. If sometimes, when we talk too much about varieties and the suffering and the extremities of suffering we can experience, then people are somewhat put off and they say: "This Buddhadharma just makes us miserable. And when you talk so much about such horrible things you are just being cruel and uncompassionate."

Here the real point is to understand what suffering really is and that suffering has not only a gross or coarse aspect but subtle aspects as well. We have to remember that what we don't want is to suffer; what we want is to be happy. And what we are seeking is not merely temporary happiness; we want permanent happiness, which is the complete and final end of all suffering.

Therefore, since that is what we really want, we need to remember also that it is insufficient for us to simply stop temporary painful sensations. That is not enough; the temporary relief from painful sensations is itself temporary; it's a mere stage, a mere transition in between one painful sensation and another. Temporary states of pleasure that we may enjoy also are not ultimate pleasure or happiness, because they depend on the presence of their respective conditions: as soon as those conditions are no longer present that pleasurable sensation we experience will automatically cease.

So therefore, more important than understanding all of the possible varieties of suffering is to understand the gradations of subtlety: that there are coarse, subtle and very subtle aspects to our suffering. And the temporary abeyance of mere coarse suffering is not the cessation of the subtle and underlying sufferings. Therefore we need to learn not to cling to temporary states of pleasure or happiness, but continue to seek what we really want, which is absolute and permanent happiness. And since we cannot achieve that through material means, we must seek it within our own minds.

The third and final part of Lord Tsongkahapa's presentation of the desire for freedom here is his explanation of the measure of that desire for freedom; in other words, how we know when we have achieved a stable and heartfelt desire to be free from samsara.

This is explained in the fifth stanza of our text, which says: "As you habituate in this way, when not even an instant of admiration arises for the prosperities of cyclic existence, and when the thought of aspiring for liberation arises throughout the day and night, at that point true renunciation, the authentic desire for freedom from samsara has arisen:"

What is meant here by renunciation is the desire to be free from samsara, and the measure of that desire, the measure of that renunciation is when – because you see suffering for what it is, you seek for complete liberation, you desire complete liberation from all of samsara.

Now, this does not mean that when we do experience temporary states of happiness we should reject them. We should not think that when we become happy temporarily: "Oh, go away happiness, I don't want you." Temporary states of happiness are fine; there is no problem with them. As long as we still remember in the midst of those states of temporary happiness that there is a far greater state of happiness, which is what we really want, and we should continue to seek it and not be distracted from that seeking by the temporary state of happiness, so in short we don't need to reject temporary states of happiness but we need to remember not to cling to them or mistake them for our ultimate goal.

And the same thing goes for suffering: sometimes we become so oppressed by an experience of pain or suffering that it is as if we were literally trapped under it. We need to remember that the actual experiences of suffering that we regard normally as suffering are really a very small part of the whole body, the whole scheme of suffering to which we are subject.

In fact the suffering which is pain is not even the main thing in the suffering. The main thing is this all-pervasive predisposition to suffering, which pervades or fills our entire lives, which is much more the issue. When through understanding that we gain perspective on temporary experiences of suffering, through that perspective we will feel much less oppressed by temporary experiences of suffering and we will stop exaggerating their importance. Often we regard really small problems as huge problems, which they are not. So the perspective we gain through understanding all-pervasive suffering will release us from our obsessive focus on temporary suffering.

To use a very famous example, consider Jetsun Milarepa: Milarepa practiced in situations of extreme austerity and great deprivation, living in mountain caves in utterly uninhabited and isolated places. When his sister saw how he was living she became extremely worried about him, because he had no food and essentially no clothing. She saw his temporary state of deprivation, the absence of food and clothing as his primary issue, his primary suffering. And she scolded him. She said: "You are not going to be able to practice Dharma properly, because you are not living under the right conditions; you don't have the means of survival.

But Jetsun Milarepa's perception about his own situation was entirely different. Of course he did suffer from the absence of food and clothing, he did experience suffering, but for him that suffering was very, very minor. Now, he lived in a situation of austerity so great, that in terms of food and clothing he was living under no better circumstances than a wild animal, and his deprivation was so extreme even his enemies would weep when they saw or heard about it. But for him this was a very minor difficulty compared to the great or primary suffering which is samsara; the suffering which is endemic in the cycle of karma and kleshas.

So, Milarepa was willing to experience a state of temporary (what he saw as) minor suffering in order to achieve liberation from that major and pervasive suffering of samsara. Because of that although he experienced difficulty, deprivation and hardship, he overcame it, which is to say that he experienced it but he was not that bothered by it, because his resolution to achieve freedom from samsara gave him tremendous courage, and that courage enabled him to continue to practice under such circumstances of great austerity. So, whether you call it courage or the desire to be free from samsara; that is it. Jetsun Milarepa therefore recognized that well, from a point of view of an ordinary person looking at an external situation, he would look miserable. Within his mind he was becoming Buddha, which he said to his sister.

Now I'm not saying that we should all run out and try to literally imitate Jetsun Milarepa. The point I'm making is that Milarepa consciously underwent by choice such great austerity and deprivation by going into retreat for the sake of achievement of Buddhahood and liberation. My point is that we do from time to time experience transitory sufferings, but we tend to exaggerate them, magnify them just as if we were using a magnifying glass to make a letter look larger so we can read it.

We make our little sufferings seem like big sufferings to us when they are not. And it is because we exaggerate and magnify little sufferings that they become so oppressive and we become overcome by them. So we need to not exaggerate the little sufferings and also not cling to temporary states of happiness, but remember that it is ultimate and permanent happiness that we really seek.

Now we turn to the second of the Three Principal Aspects of the Path, which is bodhichitta. Just as Lord Tsongkhapa's presentation of the desire for freedom involved the reason why that desire for freedom is essential, and the means for its achievement, here in the case of bodhichitta there are the same two topics: why we need to generate and cultivate bodhichitta and the means through which we can do so.

The first of these, the reason why the cultivation of bodhichitta is necessary is found in stanza six, which says: "Such renunciation too, which is not sustained by pure awakening mind, will not become a cause of the perfect bliss of unexcelled enlightenment. Therefore, intelligent ones generate the excellent awakening mind."

What this stanza is saying is that although one gives rise to the authentic desire for freedom from samsara, if this is not combined by the vast motivation of bodhichitta, no matter what dharma one practices, it can only possibly lead to one's own liberation and not to that state of perfect Buddhahood, which is the liberation of both oneself and eventually of others as well.

Therefore in the Mahayana sutras it is said: "In order to achieve the state of perfect Buddhahood it is not necessary to practice or cultivate many different dharmas, one alone is sufficient. What is that one? – It is bodhichitta, because it alone is the root of the awakening of a Buddha."

Many people are unfamiliar with the state of Buddhahood or explanations of that state, speculating what that state actually consists of, and they wonder: "Maybe the state of Buddhahood is a state where you lose everything; maybe it's not really that good a thing after all."

People ask "Well, okay, so if I achieve Buddhahood, what happens then?" In fact we don't really need to worry that much about what happens when we achieve Buddhahood, because we don't seem to be that close achieving it, but if we entertain those worries for a moment; people wonder: "If I become Buddha, if I achieve Buddhahood, will I lose all my friends? Will I have to get divorce? What else will happen to me?"

When we talk about the superiority of the state of Buddhahood, what is meant is that it is really insufficient for someone to achieve only their own liberation, even given the great happiness that comes with that, for the simple reason that everyone else fundamentally wants and therefore needs the same thing, that same state of perfect and permanent happiness.

So therefore, greater than a state of merely one's own liberation is a state in which you can bring about the liberation of others as well. So, that state in which having been liberated yourself you can liberate others is what we call Buddhahood. We don't necessarily need to use the term Buddhahood, it doesn't matter what we call it, as long as we understand it is a state in which one is capable of bringing about the liberation of others and not just oneself.

What is it that prevents those who achieve liberation (but not Buddhahood) from helping others? After all, such a person, if they have achieved liberation, is free from all suffering and its causes and therefore possesses a state of constant and perfect happiness. Why would such person not help others? Why would they be not able to help others? Certainly to understand the point of their wisdom, having achieved liberation their wisdom is certainly more than sufficient to help others tremendously.

The only thing that prevents such individuals from directly helping others is that they lack the prior intention to do so. They are without the prior aspiration or compassionate intention to bring about the liberation of others. And that's the only reason why such a person having achieved liberation would not benefit others.

For the same reason we can infer, that if someone has that intention to benefit others, if someone has that benevolence, even if they lack tremendous wisdom, they will be able to help others to some extent, because the ability to benefit others depends not simply on one's degree of wisdom or on one's intelligence, but on one's degree of benevolence, one's degree of commitment to the welfare of others. It is for that reason that it is taught that those who desire the achievement of perfect awakening of Buddhahood must begin by cultivating love, compassion and bodhichitta.

For example there are many people in the world, who reach the apex or peak of their particular endeavors, whether it is financial success in the business or the pursued of some aspect of learning or scholarship. There are many people who reach positions of great prominence in the world, but they don't bring other people up there with them, they don't bring other people to that same state of affluence or prominence, they just keep on trying to climb higher and higher themselves.

And the reason for this is that fundamentally they simply lack loving-kindness or compassionate desire to bring others to that same state that they have achieved themselves. In other words they suffer from apathy. Apathy is a state that we give rise to, when we witness the suffering of others or we know about it, but we simply don't care. Scientists tell us that compassion is actually hardwired in our brains, that compassion is

innate to us. The problem, however, is that we learn how to switch it off. We learn, as we become familiar to it and then jaded to the side of other's suffering, how simply turn compassion off and not feel it.

If we didn't do it, if all of us allowed our natural capacity for love and compassion to flourish, there would be no need for the many, many people who suffer so horribly in this world to suffer. We would compassionately take care of it. What enables suffering – gross suffering as it is present in this world to continue, is our apathy, our ability to turn off our compassion.

Apathy is a world killer. We think world killers as epidemic diseases, malaria and whatnot, but in fact the worst world killer is apathy, the absence of love and compassion, which is something that we see in the world around us. Nevertheless, the mere generation of good intentions alone is not enough; we also have to implement them. Otherwise our good intentions will not bring about actual help to others.

Next comes the actual means of generating bodhichitta. And this is taught in the next two stanzas, stanza seven, which says: "They are being swept away constantly by four powerful rivers. They are bound tightly with fetters of karma most difficult to escape. They are trapped inside the iron mesh of self-grasping. They are enveloped from everywhere by thick mists of ignorance. They take birth within cyclic existence that has no end where they are endlessly tormented by the three sufferings. By reflecting on all your mothers who suffer such conditions please generate the supreme awakening mind."

So, as I said, the greater your degree of the benevolent intention to really help others, the greater the amount you will actually help them.

The first thing we need to understand is the relationship between the desire for freedom and compassion. As I said before, the relationship between them is that they are very much like the two faces or two sides of a coin. When we hold up a coin one side of it is facing us and one side is facing out, but they are two faces of the same coin.

The desire for our personal freedom from samsara could also be called compassion for ourselves, and by the same token compassion for others is fundamentally the desire that all others become free from samsara. Therefore in that way compassion and the desire for freedom or renunciation are two sides of the same coin. They are basically the same attitude applied two different objects, the object of one being oneself, the object of the other being all other beings.

Therefore in developing compassion we need to start by reflecting upon our own experience and admitting to ourselves or observing how intensely it is that we desire happiness, how intense our desire to be free from suffering is. And then we need to begin to empathize with others, to understand that just as intense as my own desire for happiness is, others' desire for happiness is equally intense. Just as intense as my own desire to be free from suffering is, others' desire to be free from suffering is equally intense.

We observe that there are many other beings, countless other beings, who are presently suffering much more intensely than we are, and understanding that, and understanding the intensity of our own desire for freedom from suffering we can extrapolate that their desire for freedom from suffering must be at least as great as our own. In any case that recognition that others want the same things that we do, and that ability to extrapolate from our own experience and empathize with others is the basis of bodhichitta.

In a sense therefore it is simple to cultivate this in that one is cultivating the same attitude, one aspect of it with respect to oneself, what we call renunciation or the desire for freedom, and the other aspect with respect to others or facing others, what we call compassion. Like that there is really no conflict between the achievement of one's own good and the achievement of the good of others. One only achieves what is best for oneself by seeking the good of others and by achieving one's own liberation one becomes able to actively bring about the good of others.

But in order for this to occur we need to understand first of all that compassion is much more than mere empathy or mere sympathy. Real compassion is literally putting yourself in others place and exchanging your place with theirs. It is as we say, wearing someone else's shoes, but it's much more than that: it's not wearing their shoes, it's pouring yourself, whole body, brains and all, into their entire situation, feeling as intensely about their wellbeing as they do. Real compassion is when you want others' happiness as intensely

as they want their own happiness. It's a real feeling, and therefore real compassion is intolerably or unbearably strong.

As Jetsun Milarepa said: "The sensation of real compassion is like being cast in the middle of a blazing fire." It is a very intense feeling. It is not luxurious pity, where you look down on others and from distance give them a little gift to make temporarily feel better. Real compassion seems to be a complete and intense involvement like Jetsun Milarepa said "being cast in the middle of a blazing fire."

Human beings as we know and experience ourselves have lots of problems. We are constantly killing one another, imprisoning and oppressing one another and so on, but we are also not the only species for whom we bear responsibility. All of the countless species of animals who live in this world also suffer through mutual predation, through depravation, through enslavement by humans and so forth.

So we are responsible not merely for the wellbeing of ourselves and other humans, but for the wellbeing of all sentient beings and the wellbeing and preservation of the environment on which we depend and on which we live. We are participants in all this. So more than simply the need to develop compassion we have a real responsibility to act compassionately.

Basically this statement is not simply what is taught in the Dharma itself, but on the obvious reality on the world round us that we can all see. Don't think that I'm simply saying: "The Buddha said this, therefore you must do this." Or: "Gurus have said this, therefore whether you want or not, you must do as I say." This is a responsibility that we bear naturally and fundamentally simply through living in this world, which is above and beyond anything that we might be told we have to do; it is an innate responsibility.

The third of the Three Principal Aspects of Path is the perfect or correct view. The presentation of this has two parts: first, the reason why such a perfect view must be sought and secondly of what that perfect view itself consists.

The first of these: the reason why we must seek the perfect view is presented in the ninth stanza of our text, which says: "If you don't have the wisdom realizing the ultimate nature, even if you gain familiarity with renunciation and awakening mind, you will not be able to cut the root of samsaric existence. So strive in the means of realizing dependent origination."

Just as we saw that the arising of authentic path depends upon the desire to be free of samsara – without that desire one cannot begin the authentic path. And just as the arising of the authentic Dharma of the Mahayana depends upon the generation of bodhichitta, without that generation the Mahayana path will not arise. In the same way the actual eradication of samsara consists of the development of its principal remedy, which is the wisdom which realizes selflessness, profound emptiness, interdependence. It is this wisdom itself alone, which cuts through the root of samsara. Therefore without it there can be no liberation.

Second in this presentation of the perfect view is the actual view itself. And this includes an explanation of the attributes of that view and then the measure of that view; how to tell whether you have gained that view or not. The first of these involves the presentation of how – if you realize the non-differentiation of appearance and emptiness, you have added the path which is pleasing to all Victors or Buddhas – and how – if you have not realized that, as long as you think that appearance and emptiness are different things – you have not entered the path pleasing to all Victors.

The first of these is as follows, found in the tenth stanza of our text: "When with respect to all phenomena of samsara and nirvana, you see that cause and effects never deceive their laws, and when you have dismantled the focus of objectification, at that point you have entered the path that pleases the Buddhas." ...This is hard stuff:

This morning we looked a little bit at how no-one's existence or survival is independent. How we are all interdependent and we all depend on others for such things as food and clothing and so forth. But now I want to extend that idea of interdependence beyond our mere dependence on conditions of survival and investigate whether there is something independent within us at all. We certainly have this innate idea of our own independent existence, but do things, such as ourselves, really ever exist independently? It's extremely unlikely that they do.

For example, if we investigate this concept "I", which we use to refer to ourselves. To what does this concept "I" really refer? It refers to a person's body and we call that body that person; if we are that person, we call that body "I". Well, that body is not a single entity. It is a physical aggregate composed of and constantly influenced by various causes and conditions. Nevertheless we think of it as an independent entity, which we call "I", or sometimes "mine," and we go back and forth thinking our bodies as I and mine and so on.

But if we analyze our bodies, the basis for imputation of "I," we find that there is nothing within any part of the body that justifies such an imputation. This imputation is simply a mere designation. We designate that aggregate of phenomena that constitutes our body as "I", but there is nothing about our body which is inherently "I". If we investigate the basis of this designation and imputation, and if we investigate the attributes of this designation and imputation, we determine that there is no independent existence whatsoever of anything that could be reasonably be called either "I" or "mine".

The point of this is that while these designations and imputations are unreal, they nevertheless appear to us in an infallibly consistent manner. To give you an analogy for this: it is like a reflection of your face in a mirror. The reflection of a face in a mirror is a matter of obvious interdependence, because your face is positioned in front of the mirror, because the mirror is there and so forth, your reflection appears in the mirror. But if you ask: "Is what you see in the mirror really your face?" – It is not. It is not your face, yet it is nevertheless the clear and vivid appearance of the reflection of your face.

Ultimately that reflection is not really there at all, it is a matter of perspective and other interdependent factors, yet while not really being there and not really being your face, it nevertheless is the clear and vivid mirror appearance that is nothing more than the coming together of various interdependent causes and conditions.

The mirror provides a consistent reflection of our face. It is the mirror appearance of a likeness of our face reflected in the mirror. But when we say that it is our own face reflected in the mirror, our own face is not really there. Our own face does not abide in the mirror, dwell in the mirror at any point. Therefore there is no point at which our own face came to dwell within the mirror. There is therefore no point in which our face ceases dwelling within the mirror. It's never there, but at the same time through the coming together of the various interdependent causes and conditions one cannot really say there is nothing there or nothing going on at all. While one's face is not truly in the mirror the reflection of one's face arises through the presence of the mirror.

The mistake we make is to mistake the relative validity of appearances; in this case the consistency of the reflection of the mirror with the attributes of one's face – we mistake these to be the independent or inherent existence of the appearance, in this case the reflection. The reflection of your face in the mirror has no inherent or independent existence, because it is nothing aside from the coming together of your face as a basis for reflection and the mirror as a reflective surface. The mere appearance of the reflection is nothing aside from those things coming together.

So, our mistake is about the existential status of mere appearances; things do appear, but mere appearance does not mean that they truly exist. Because mere appearances are not the true or independent existence of a thing but its mere presence as an interdependent appearance, while things do not truly exist, one cannot say that there is nothing at all.

One can't say that, because while things do not truly or inherently exist, they nevertheless continue to appear and they appear with an internal or contextual validity or consistency. And this is called the unity or inseparability of the absence of inherent existence and the interdependence of appearances. In their nature things are without inherent or true existence, but in their mode of appearance they are examples of interdependence. So, in fact the emptiness of a thing and its appearance do not inhibit or prevent one another. The emptiness of a thing is its interdependence, which allows it to appear, the appearance of a thing is its interdependence, which means it is empty.

In sum it's important that we correctly understand emptiness; what it is and what it isn't. For example, in the study of mathematics it is taught that we can only have numbers, such as one, two, three and so on

because of zero. Without zero there could be no other numbers. And we know that computers run on the alternation between zero and one and so forth. In the same way emptiness is the space, the openness, which allows things to occur. Emptiness is not nothingness, it is possibility. Without emptiness things would be locked up into some kind of unchangeable solidity.

So, therefore to say that emptiness is non-existence is somehow too fusel, and ultimately incorrect. It would be more correct to say that emptiness is the true mode of existence of things. It is not so much that we mistake things which are not existent to exist that we are bewildered about the actual mode of existence of things. It is therefore better to say that emptiness is not non-existence but the mode of existence of all things, the way in which they exist.

I'm supposed to teach it seems until five. But I think if I go on much longer, my translator and I are going to have problems. It's just going to be a spectacle and at best cause for laughter. To put it in another way this car is running out of gas and I think I'd better stop driving for a while.

Tomorrow we will continue. I'll explore our text little further. And then you have asked me to give an empowerment. You know, really giving an empowerment has certain prerequisites: the prerequisites are that the person giving the empowerment be someone who I would say is unlike me and the people receiving the empowerment need to be people who are really going to practice. Otherwise, giving the empowerment as some kind of ceremony of blessing brings some benefit, I'm sure, but not the fully authentic benefits that are intended for the purpose of empowerment. So therefore I will think about this tonight what we do actually tomorrow and tomorrow I will perform some sort of empowerment.

I'm delighted that you all came today; I apologize if I have wasted lot of your time and thank you.