

SIMPLY SHARING



Lakha Lama



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INTRODUCTION

These teachings have been transcribed by Kirsten Doctor and edited by Bob Sherwood and Kirsten Doctor mainly from teachings given by Lakha Lama in Århus over two weekends, one in November, 1996, and one in January, 1997. Any errors or infelicities are to be attributed directly to ourselves.

”Thirty-seven Practices of a Bodhisattva” is authored by the old Kadam master Gyalse Thogme, 1295–1369.

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Up to now the teachings of Lakha Lama have been communicated almost solely through oral transmission – through seminars and lectures – which emphasizes one of Lakha Lama’s principal points: that communication is a practice of sharing and that dialogue is the best method of transmission because life itself is a sharing activity of ongoing reciprocal connection. Hence Lakha Lama’s preferred method is one of dialogue where, by definition, the process after which this book is called and to which it is dedicated- Simply Sharing – takes place. In Lakha Lama’s teaching “simply” is equal in value to “sharing” and indeed inseparable from it. Sharing is a simple mode, a simple mutual expression, an immediate human interaction expressive and reflective of the universal interpenetration that is at the heart of the Buddhist universe, in which, like it or not, we all share space. This is not to say that Lakha Lama avoids or minimizes the traditional subjects of Buddhism or has diluted them into some kind of modern Californian “together-ness.” His teachings directly address such traditional subjects as karma, bodhicitta, tantra, mantra, etc., but they do so in a way that relates the wisdom and traditions of Tibetan Buddhism directly to the assumptions and experiences of modern Westerners.

The story of how Lakha Lama came to combine a deeply traditional background in Tibetan Buddhism and its practices with an experienced awareness of the practices and assumptions of a contemporary urban audience begins in the most conventional and traditional model of Tibetan Buddhism: a boy, born to a poor Tibetan family - in this case in Eastern Tibet in the village of Markam - is sought out at an early age by travelers from a distant monastery seeking a reincarnation of their late Lama, in this case Lakha Lama of Batang. The little boy greets the visitors in a Batang dialect he has never spoken before. A year later the travelers return and take the little boy to Batang and exchange his shepherd’s clothing for the

finest silken brocade, and he leaves his parents forever and goes into strict monastery discipline.

Two years later he is forced to escape from Batang to Lhasa as the Chinese moved deeper into Tibet, and he left Batang in deepest secrecy. He never saw his parents again, and he remembers still the sound of weeping when the people of Batang discovered he had left them. In Lhasa he studied at Drepung Monastery under the same teacher who had taught the Dalai Lama, and in 1959, he was, like the Dalai Lama, forced to flee to India. In *Simply Sharing* Lakha Lama recounts how in India he suffered simultaneously from malaria, tuberculosis, meningitis, and blood-poisoning and how all hope was given up for him, and how his Buddhist training helped him.

Once he had recovered he studied philosophy at the University in Varanasi, and in 1970 he was elected to the Tibetan Parliament, the legislative body of the Dalai Lama's government-in-exile in Dharamsala, and in 1976 he was selected to participate in an international conference in Finland. But by the time his travel documents arrived for Finland the conference was over and Lakha Lama was still in Denmark, stranded, with \$70, half of which he used to invest in bluejeans and divest himself of robes so he could find work. He did various cleaning and painting jobs, and he met Pia Kryger, a young artist and designer, and they married and in time Lakha Lama became a father and grandfather as well as a householder, handyman, and as he himself puts it "a freelance lama." Today he is a well-known teacher in Denmark and Sweden: he has established a charitable foundation, Tibet Charity, that, among other things, finds sponsors for Tibetan refugees in Nepal and India; a teaching and meditation center in Copenhagen; arranged and most recently organized H.H. Dalai Lama's teachings in Copenhagen in 2005, and is currently organizing H.H. Dalai Lama's next teachings to be given in Copenhagen in 2009.

This "sharing" of Lakha Lama's is not a theoretical matter, a simplistic repetition of the truth that we are one common body sharing space

and time. It involves a sharing of space and time in the most literal and practical ways. "Sharing" in *Simply Sharing* involves our normal ongoing activity of being in a world of others, at work, at play, at rest, at competition: a world of colleagues, lovers, families, and children. Lakha Lama's examples come from an ongoing professional, social, and emotional life, the life of husbands, wives, lovers, kids, workers, classmates, rivals, partners, friends – each of them represents lives of interaction, and, in almost all cases, lives of incompleteness, of something left out or lost, of grasping, confusion, competition, joys, shame, and bewilderment.

Lakha Lama teaches us again and again that much of our pain and confusion is unneeded and, in this respect, inauthentic, and that a little quiet and concentrated analysis on what is going on and through our mind – that is to say that just a little analytic meditation for which one doesn't even have to bend one's knees, will lighten up our tensions and uncertainties and allow our natural kindness more space for expression and development. Essential to Lakha Lama's teaching is the assumption that we have the capacity to investigate what blocks us, and therefore that we can cease being the slave of our reactivity. His analyses of the Thirty Seven Practices of a Bodhisattva, the basis of his teachings in *Simply Sharing*, return again and again to the common everyday experience Lakha Lama has for years shared with us, and by doing so he helps these teachings to be shared by us.

But with all this modernity of approach and reference, with all the illustrations of "relevance," Lakha Lama's teachings are firmly grounded in and informed by his Tibetan traditions. He is a recognized tulku and spiritual leader of over 100,000 people in Eastern Tibet. He was trained thoroughly in Drepung to take on that position, and he has never forgotten or replaced that tradition and training. Within his teachings given here on the Thirty Seven Practices of a Bodhisattva (these thirty seven verses were composed by the old Kadam-master Gyalse Togme, 1295-1369), traditional subjects and fields of Tibetan Buddhism are presented directly and clearly, not as occult matters but carefully and without misleading, frightening, mystifying, or

entrancing paraphernalia. They are, like Lakha Lama himself, simply shared, and we are simply grateful and share our gratitude here.

Bob Sherwood

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A seminar in the Thirty Seven Practices of a Bodhisattva

Lakha Lama:

In general mind training is nothing spiritual: it is basically using your own mental capacities and abilities to develop. As you develop in mind training it will become more and more a part of your life. But you have to be firm and give more and more effort. You have to join your basic mental capacity with your spirituality. When you use your basic mental capacity on the Buddhist path you also need to feel the importance of having and keeping a routine and of giving effort. Since the mind training based on Buddhist mind training is to be free from destructive mind one really has to look into ones mind, how it actually operates, and to really pay attention to that. We need to go more deeply into what is actually going on and what is really important to us when we feel that we get stuck.

Slowly, slowly you develop through the training, and your mind contains it wherever you are. So basically mind training in itself does not mean anything holy. You can use the mental capacity based on Buddhism to obtain harmony only in this lifetime, or you can think in terms of many lifetimes in order to obtain the final goal of full enlightenment – sometimes after many million years. What you have obtained in this way through training more thoroughly in this life becomes the seed or pattern in the consciousness. So in the next life you have the seed, and then it can flourish again. If you think that the next life continues into a next life then you have collected the seed, and the seed needs nourishment, and then nourishment becomes the number one priority. Hopefully one can be reborn in an area where there are masters and a more clean social environment, because our mental environment and our social environment very much mingle

together. By “society” I do not mean a whole society but a small group that gives you a kind of more spiritual environment. Then that environment will let that seed or pattern grow. That’s what we can wish for, and we can pray “I would like to be born next life in that kind of environment.”

You grew up in one culture, and I grew up in another culture, but we have the Dharma to share. The Dharma is not only meant for people born in a Buddhist country. Dharma is for everyone – Buddhist or non-Buddhist. I think that it is actually very hard to find out who is Buddhist and who is not Buddhist. As for “Lama,” that name is connected with Tibetan Buddhist tradition. And “Guru,” that is connected with Indian tradition. So “Guru” translated into Tibetan is “Lama.” La – Ma is two words: “La” means “life energy.” I don’t think I would translate “La” directly as “soul.” “Ma” means “mother.” We call the spiritual master “Lama” because people may take their master as giving right advice, as showing the right way, a way one can follow that becomes more or less like a kind of life-energy – an energy for survival.

But that “survival” is not only worldly or material survival – it is not! What is important is the deeper surviving, and when we do not have this deep survival energy then we feel dependent on outer material, on other people’s projections, on prestige, on ambition. These all become so important because you don’t know you have this other kind of basic survival energy. You feel instead that you have to use this or that to survive, this and that, going too much outside and not being within yourself, not able to survive from within yourself. The master or lama is the one showing you your inner surviving point. So we say “I take this master or lama as my life energy because that master and lama gives me the basic understanding of my own inner surviving point and helps me to build on that point, helps me to build up, to develop.

So why do we say “La Ma” – “mother” – why not “father?”

On one level we can say that it’s a matter of culture, of a very old culture. In Hindu culture, in Tibetan culture, and in many other Eastern cultures like China the mother-figure is very important for a per-

son’s life. These cultures emphasize respect for the mother and give her a high position. In Buddhism we emphasize the mother-figure because we see her as having sacrificed herself in order to save our life.

I grew up with the care of my mother. She chose my life to be more important than hers. My mother paid that high a price for me. Physically my mother cared for me in many ways. She did not have an abortion; she did not kill me. She cared with joy – many mothers do. In Buddhism when we speak about mother-kindness it is not to discriminate between mother and father. But it is more realistic to talk about the kindness of the mother. There are three types of mother-qualities:

- 1. The quality or ability to give birth – that’s on the female side.**
- 2. The quality of really caring when the child is a baby unable to manage by itself. That’s what both mother and father can do.**
- 3. An upbringing with some kind of really strong wish for the child to have a better future, a harmonic future. That kind of care both parents share.**

So as far as these three qualities go, the first one is connected only to the mother. Therefore all the “mother sentient beings” means “mother-qualities,” not the physical difference. Mother-quality does not mean woman-quality. Some of the mothers are mothers physically, but they lack the other qualities. Then, the other two qualities are with the father.

We also use this way of thinking in our respect for the lama: the lama cares about me; the lama puts in a lot of effort to make me a better person; the lama shows me how to take steps forward just as the mother showed me how to take physical steps forward. These two kinds of steps are combined in what we call “La” (life-energy/soul), and “Ma” (mother). About the father we don’t talk so much, though there is still respect for him. But we have this deeper respect

and deeper understanding in connection with the mother-figure.

Within this life my mother made so many efforts to save me, to save my life, to protect me from so many hindrances. She put my life as more important than hers – that is the big price she has paid. And since we have reincarnated in this world many, many times then, logically, we have a mother-child relation to all sentient beings. All sentient beings have been my mother in former lifetimes and have given to me in the same way. I should therefore be thankful. That is how we look at it in Bodhicitta practice, love and compassion practice. That is one type of practicing.

But here in the West we are in another kind of society. I used to talk about the difference between the West and the East, but now I see it more as a difference between old cultures and newer cultures. In this Western new society the dislike and misunderstanding between children and parents is very big. Very seldom do people think “My mother is great and I appreciate and forgive her.” That is difficult now for many people to do. Always I hear complaints, criticism, anger, or hate. We are more and more superficial: we stay on the surface, the intellectual, material surface; we do not have deep contact. We describe everything more in an intellectual way, and we demand technical proof. For example we say “Why do I have this problem?” Then we have to prove that it comes from our childhood. Many people trust these technical explanations and take them seriously: “Oh, yeah, I had this kind of problem when I was small.” Maybe you might remember a few actual things, but psychology encourages you to build them up, like some girls I have met who talk about sexual abuse: “Well, yes I was in the shower and naked and my father was looking at me.” Then they take this as real and serious abuse and make it bigger than it was. In this century there are intellectual people who have become what I call “western lamas.” In the West we don’t call them “lama,” but they have been given the “lama” position.

Many intellectual people do have deep spirituality, but some intellectuals just get more into smartness, into a clever way of expressing. And when you are clever enough to write a book, a really intellec-

tual juicy one, then you have a good business, and then you build up that business, writing more and more. So people become more and more dependent on books and at the same time more and more stupid. When we depend on reading, the intellectual dominates, and we are less likely to respect and use the natural talents we have. In the West it is very normal that when a girl gets pregnant she goes to the library and borrows books about how to care for the baby. But do the animals, who have six or seven at a time – or the pigs, who have up to ten or twelve at a time – read books? They just use their natural talent of being mothers.

As you can see, I do not want to simply go through the text saying “Oh yeah, a Bodhisattva does like this and like that.” I want to go deeper into the explanation of the text and share something you can use in your daily life.

Now I want to come back to Buddhism, to Dharma. Buddha’s teachings or Dharma are connected with your natural talents, your natural strength, your natural capacity, your natural abilities. Let all these grow! When Dharma grows you are freer from wrong emotions, you are freer from wrong projections! When you are freer from wrong projections, from wrong emotions, then peace and confidence and your natural capacity all get more and more space: when you get that space the stressing factors become less powerful. Less stress, less confusion because you have the space. That is how I see Buddhism operate in daily life: to give space for yourself and not to let the wrong emotions dominate your surroundings.

We need our surroundings to develop our inner capacities. So we don’t push away what’s around us: we use it. When you are interested in Buddhism, are practising Buddhism, don’t just take it as intellectual. Go beyond the intellectual explanations and connect your deeper feeling with the teaching.

I like to separate Buddhism from Buddhist traditions. Buddhism is not itself a “tradition.” Buddhist tradition has its basis in Buddhism. “Tradition” can refer to many different traditions. In Tibetan Buddhism, for example, there are basically four traditions: Nyingma, Sakya, Kadjupa, and Gelugpa. What is the aim all these traditions

have? To become Buddha – to reach a true way of seeing, to achieve Enlightenment! This path, that path, this tradition, that tradition – these are choices. You can choose all of them, or you can choose any one of them. My particular capacity may suit this tradition, or it may suit that tradition. So don't discriminate between the traditions themselves: measure your own capacity and decide where you can relate best.

You people here were born in a Christian country. The reason you are interested in Buddhism – if you are really honest, if you go back into your heart – is that you have a basic feeling that it is easier to relate to Buddhist philosophy than to the Church. So relate to Buddhist philosophy without being at all negative about Christianity. Avoid discrimination. More deeply, you are interested in Buddhist philosophy because you want to develop. That is the main thing: you want to develop so you follow Buddhism. You feel that Buddhism is something you can relate to. But if, beside that, you are blaming Christianity and being negative about it, I will tell you straight that you are not going to develop; you will get stuck! And then Buddhism will not help you.

While I respect the Christian path it is more familiar to me to study and practice Buddhism. I'm being honest with you. So be honest about your own reasons for being interested in Buddhism. Don't be negative. To the extent you stay in the negative you are not being a good Buddhist. Just because you say "I like this food," you don't have to hate another food. Just say "I really can't digest that one; I cannot relate to it." But don't be negative. That is the important part. Otherwise you are no-way: you are non-Buddhist, and you are non-Christian.

Before we start on the text of the Thirty Seven Practices of a Bodhisattva I would like to talk about the Lama-disciple relation.

You are not my disciple just because you come here. Coming here is not binding: you have a lot of space. If a person has been coming and listening to my teachings several times a kind of lama-disciple relationship can develop. Then the person feels more drawn into my teachings, and real trust and respect grow. When this trust and respect

become very strong then this person enters into being a disciple. The lama's responsibility is to teach, to explain, to show Dharma as the truth. But the lama has no responsibility to hold on to the position of "Lama!" The meeting point is that a person very much drawn to me is willing to accept me as a master and comes and asks "can you be my master?" Then I also have to be honest. When I say "that's o.k." then I can be your master. So there we have a true master-disciple relationship because each one agrees on it. It does not come automatically.

In that relationship there are good things, but I have to say it also creates a lot of problems. So I like to make the relation clear. How you understand it, how you want it to be, is up to you. You can appreciate but still not have a feeling of binding commitment. I think that is a beautiful way.

I would like to say a little about humbleness in connection with the lama-disciple relationship. We should not misunderstand humbleness. You can be highly developed and have great knowledge but still keep yourself in a low place. That means do not look down on others. Not looking down on you is the respect I show you. I don't look at myself as higher. "Lama" is my name, that's all. The name is not me. Buddhanature is contained in all sentient beings. The possibility to develop is contained within everyone. We are equal in so many ways. The reason that I am here today is to share with you something I feel is a good path. If you get to realize something in it that will be the result of your own effort. So I do not make you wiser, but the sharing makes you wiser. I have no reason to lift myself up – (Lakha Lama says in an exaggerated "holy" voice, "I help.")

But as long as you don't help yourself I cannot help you. Physically maybe I can give you a hand so you can stand up. But on the mental level you are responsible for yourself. I can share many things, and many lamas share from the Buddhist point of view and the Buddhist methods, but the result for you is very much dependent on how you make use of what they share with you. Knowledge alone does not give true development. Realization gives true development.

On the tantric level the lama-disciple relationship is more strict be-

cause gaining that deeper knowledge has very much to do with trust. And that really deep trust helps the disciple to gain more and more knowledge and gives more development. In the tantric relationship there has to be that deep trust. If you enter the tantric ceremony to get the blessing the relation is there. Why? Listen carefully! You cannot enter the relation – enter that tantric relation without developing your love and compassion, your Bodhicitta. You see! You develop Bodhicitta, and that becomes a very solid base. In that base you have trust, and your trust becomes very firm. That firmness you have here is not forced firmness: it is a naturally developing process. But I have to tell you I am not happy that tantric teachings have become so popular. In the old time really deeper tantric teachings leading into the deeper mandala had very few disciples – not 100,000 people! No! Maybe ten or two disciples or just one. There, then, you would really go into it. And you might have to wait half your life to get that. Lamas can be very difficult. They may say “No!” Or sometimes a lama will say “All right, if you want to get a tantric teaching then go and collect 10 kilos of gold, and then I will give it to you.” So, if I say to you you have to collect 10 kilos of gold to get one tantric teaching what do you understand by that?

Student:

We have to go through some hard efforts to show we are ready.

Lakha Lama:

Not only that. If I really want this teaching and the lama asks me for 10 kilos of gold and I don't really try to get it, my motivation is not deep enough. If my motivation is deep I am not even thinking that the Lama wants the gold but that I want to get that teaching because I want to be an enlightened person. That becomes the goal, and that goal is pure, and to reach that goal I have to clear up my impureness. So I spend ten years collecting gold, and each time I move to collect it my motivation is: I want to become enlightened. Every time you

give effort that effort purifies, becomes the purification. Everything you do collects more merit and more good karma. So by the time you have collected ten kilos of gold with a pure mind and a pure heart you may no longer need the teaching!

Therefore giving effort doesn't have to do with the lama: it has to do with yourself! If I say to a student “Go to the cave for three years!” what do I get? Nothing! It's the one who sits in the cave who gains. Right? We are a little spoiled and think everything should be easy – just press a button – no effort. But without giving effort we cannot really reduce our negative karma. We have to give effort! We may think that meditation is giving effort, but that is small, small effort. Real effort is in your daily life. Use your work to purify your negative karma with good heart. Say, “I am at this job, doing this job, and I really want to purify.” Add that purification to your work, whatever you do. Then you aren't just working: you are collecting more merit, more good karma, and you are clearing up negative karma. Work does not become heavy, become like a duty, because you have a much bigger intention. This is a way to use Buddhism in our daily life. When you develop that kind of training then when somebody says something wrong to you you can stay calm and take it – and not just take it but not even be hurt by what they say.

Maybe someone says some terrible thing to you. Think about it. Maybe you are doing something wrong, but don't immediately blame yourself. Give yourself space; that will save you and the other person a lot of pain. And then you are not being negative towards that person; you are not using the anger and negative feelings inside you. Otherwise you are just helping that person be negative again. Then it is like ping-pong, forth and back, forth and back – a waste of time! And since we are not perfect and can be negative why can't we allow another person to be negative towards us? If we can't we are being dishonest. We gossip about other people, but if somebody gossips about us we feel hurt. That is dishonest.

Don't be naïve and say “Oh, I am Buddhist, I will not say nasty things, and I want to be very pure and fine” – that's a very stiff way. Instead say “Buddhist philosophy has made me understand that my

emotions can take me into extremes of black and white, but through Buddhist philosophy I can understand and relax so that I don't blow up." That's a more realistic way of following Buddhism.

Buddhist teachings are not something high up. They are of basic use in being a good human. To be a reasonable, relaxed person – that is Buddhism, and when you are like that then you have the whole picture, the whole real picture – no part left out – in front of you. My wrong projections create a big curtain in front of me, so first of all I have to reduce these wrong projections. It is so easy to go into this projecting – “Oh yes, she looks a little funny,” I project. But I don't leave it at that. “...maybe she is...” and then I add an explanation, another point. “Maybe she is thinking something negative about me.” Then I ask myself “why is she so negative about me – she doesn't look very happy.” And finally I build a huge negative castle. But the one it's built around, the one who stays in that negative castle, is me, not her! I am misusing her, and I am staying in that big negative castle I built, and I feel miserable. People say “Oh, it is really difficult to reduce like that!”. I tell you if you can increase then why can't you reduce? You can fill a cup. Why can't you also empty it? But you have no confidence in your ability to reduce. So you have to tell yourself in a determined way at a deep level not “I want to reduce,” but “I will reduce!”

Sometimes we might have difficulty understanding the Buddhist way of training our mind. It is a somewhat advanced way of exercising. For example when we hear it said that we should “take the blame on ourselves and give the victory to the others,” we say “We don't want to do that! That's simply too much! How the hell can one do that?” If I “blame” you and you take it very hard, even though you realize you did wrong, then instead of looking at it and saying “Now I realize...” you go into “blaming” yourself (“Why did I do this and that?”), and that does not give you any kind of wisdom. On the other hand we could say “So Lakha “blames” me about this, and I have given thought to it, and, yes, that was my mistake, and now I am happy to recognize it.” That will help you from repeating the same mistake. Feeling guilty does not actually stop the repeating of the

mistake. Blaming the other person is an addition: “you did wrong!” – that's one way. Or we can say “what you did is not very good,” and not add “how could you act like that!” with that blaming tone. If you use the hard tone of blaming or attacking then the other person will close off and try to react. To act uses one's capacity: to react is actually to copy the other person. Someone can act rather heavily towards me, but I can choose to act more gently towards him rather than act as he does and want to give it back. Be aware of act and react. I think that will give you more space.

Often we have the habit of getting irritated over different things. Then what we can do – the method – is to say “right now I feel irritated by this person or what that person says.” Then add “that's o.k.!” When we say “that's o.k.” then we don't help our irritation grow too high. If we don't say “that's o.k.” then when the person has gone the irritation produces more and more irritation in you at home, and that other person has no knowledge about how much irritation you have collected. So does that kind of collection of irritation make you feel rich? If you know you won't feel happy with that irritation then you have reasons not to let it grow in your mind. Love yourself – that's the deepest love. Preserve your inner mental space. Do not fill it up with useless thoughts and emotions. Then when you are good to yourself you naturally become more relaxed with others.

If I doubt myself that creates more doubt towards others, and that doubt does not lead to good relations. I do not give space to the other one because my doubt is blocking me. One can have doubt, but don't make it a big deal. To say to oneself “I don't know that person” – that's fine – then sometimes you may say “I have doubts about this person.” The word doubt makes it much more stiff. The doubt is based on ignorance. Then it is better to express the ignorance – “I don't know.” If I am doubtful towards you you feel the doubt, and maybe you will have difficulty trusting me or being near me. I myself don't have any kind of doubt towards other people. On the other hand I don't try to feel close to them. I trust my own mind.

In Tibetan the word for doubt has the idea of narrowness. Doubting is making things much more narrow. But doubt is ultimately based

on wanting to know. If you stay with the willingness to know then there is a softness in it. It is the doubt that gives stiffness. When I doubt someone then it also blocks the way I express myself because I worry that my doubt might hurt him or might give him wrong understanding. All this doubt makes me more and more stiff in my expression. If I want to know the person I have a willingness to know him, and I say something straight. Then he reacts a little uncomfortably, and then I understand something, and he is not very happy about what I expressed. That's knowledge and not doubt.

Don't be afraid of making mistakes. When you realize that you have made a mistake do you feel bad or good? Regret needs to lead to some other action. I regret, but I will be aware, and I will not get into the self-blaming side. Let us say that you have done many unsuitable things – if you keep on blaming yourself, do you think you will dare to function freely? There is something blocking. Guilt blocks, and more fear of communicating and acting blocks. So realize the wrong actions that have happened and bring that realization into the learning process. One thing you can call that is “learning,” but you can also take it as a reminder.

Student:

Is it possible to control your mind without meditation, without being quiet and sitting down?

Lakha Lama:

That is possible. When Milarepa built the castle he wasn't doing sitting meditation. He was working like mad, right? Every process can go into meditation, into practice. You need Stable Awareness in your daily life. For example, right now we look out the window and we see a house and nature, and we add some Buddhist awareness to our looking at it. Looking at the house and the nature around it in this Buddhist way we will understand about the impermanent nature of things. So right there you are in a meditation. There are many differ-

ent ways to meditate – it should not be made too stiff.

In Buddhism we say we “believe” in former and future lives, but true Buddhists do not just believe “I have had a former life, and I will have a next life.” It is not just “belief” – it is more certain than that, a real certainty that “yes, life continues.” To practice Buddhism we have to know that in the course of many former lives we have collected a lot of our present bad habits, which are themselves connected with negative attitudes and we have done bad actions we may not even have been aware of. Unaware of our actions we have been following projections such as dislike, hatred, and anger, using these projections as excuses: I am angry because of this and that; I don't have a good time because of this and that; I don't like this person because of this and that - we create these excuses, and we stay with these excuses as reality. The reality actually is that we continue bad habits so long as we keep using such excuses or explanations. Many of our explanations are simply excuses to keep ourselves right and to keep others wrong.

To come back to yourself, you have two sides – a strong side and a weak side. We all have these two sides. The weak side is connected to all those excuses and projections. The strong side is much more able to accept, to just “be” and “be with.” Sometimes we don't make much use of this strong side that is capable of saying “I accept others; I can accept what has happened.” When you are able to accept “yes, that's what happened” then it is much easier to leave those kinds of projections. Buddhism is to put oneself together now and not get stuck with different excuses and different explanations. So use your strong side and don't give power to the weak side.

But we still have to be more clear about what is negative and what is positive. Many of the feelings we think of as negative – they are not. They are just cases of confusion. For example, if someone says to you “I don't have self-confidence,” is that a negative statement? Do you understand that statement as negative?

Student:

Normally I would look at it as negative.

Lakha Lama:

Well – if you don't have self-confidence does that in itself create negative karma?

Student:

No.

Lakha Lama:

Then why is that a negative statement? It's just weakness. Weakness! In Buddhism you need to see the negative really in depth. Take, for example, the three poisons – greed, anger, and ignorance (the English word anger doesn't exactly fit because the “anger” that is one of the three poisons is an anger that really wants to harm, wants to destroy). “Ignorance” can simply mean “not knowing” or it can be translated as “not having the correct view or vision, not seeing clearly.” These are types of ignorance. But the heaviest ignorance is the ignorance of ignoring: you know what is true, but you just ignore, you just say “No, that's a lie.”

We can talk of two ways of ignoring: straight ignoring and of just happening to ignore. For example, if I blame a person and say that that person is terrible I am of course blaming the person, but maybe indirectly I am ignoring the fact that that person may really be a highly developed person because I simply don't know. When I talk about a person as terrible, or when I start blaming, I am ignoring the fact that I don't know. If I realize that I don't really know then I can come back and be more reasonable, more real. For example I might not have real knowledge of who is who. Then I might say “It's better that I not blame so much and just stay with the more natural

feeling of like or dislike, of understanding or misunderstanding, and leave blaming alone.” That is a kind of return to equalness: you can misunderstand me: I can misunderstand you. It does not mean that you have bad motivation or that I have bad motivation. Even when we care a lot – or when we overcare – that can also sometimes lead to a lot of misunderstanding, of not understanding fully. So, maybe we have misunderstanding, but I shall not blame you. Maybe behind your misunderstanding you have caring. I cared about you, and you misunderstood. But I cannot blame you just because you didn't know what I deeply mean.

In that way you can accept, and when you accept from that equal way of looking then you don't need to have “the truth” or have explanations because in a deeper way you do really understand. Otherwise we will just chase each other around in order to get more proofs and more explanations; and the result of that is that we give more and more explanations and, at the same time, our doing so gives more and more misunderstanding. Our expression of care and love should not depend on words. Without words! You don't have to say so much; but you are being present with your love, with your care, with your compassion. You can express a lot without words! Being – that's the important thing!

Let me return to the Buddhist view: we have had many former lives, and we are going to reincarnate again. This lifetime is important. Today is important. I can pull myself together and say “all that has happened in my life up to now is o.k. – I accept it, and I regret if I have hurt someone else.” And, if I am honest, maybe I have hurt someone on purpose, or maybe I have hurt someone without knowing it – and I regret. If I hurt without knowing it I cannot blame myself – it just happened. If I did it on purpose I really regret that, and I want to purify that, to clear it up. If you clear up today then tomorrow you will have a good conscience. So then you save tomorrow.

It's the same within this life: if you can clear up all your negative karma, your negative actions, and you fully regret them and give up any more such actions, clear it all up, purify – then you don't have to worry about the next life because you have made the road clean. It's

the same as our clearing up one point today and then feeling the relief tomorrow. If you wait to clear up until tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow, then you just go on waiting and waiting and waiting, and you don't clear up anything. However, it is Buddhist practice to take on the action and not stay with the excuses.

Now we will start with the Thirty-Seven Practices of a Bodhisattva.

*The perfectly enlightened ones,
sources of benefit and happiness,
Appear from having accomplished the holy Dharma.
Since that accomplishment depends
on knowing the practices,
I will here explain the practice of the bodhisattvas.*

It is traditional that Tibetan philosophy books start with appreciating all the great masters, followed by the promise to teach and explain in a way that is clear and is without pride.

Bodhisattvas, they have not achieved enlightenment! They try to achieve enlightenment. Bodhisattvas proceed through ten levels. Up to the sixth level they try their best and try to follow as best they can – I mean try to use the best attitude of what we call “helping” or “sharing” – training in understanding and in the perspective of equality – that is what they do. At the same time they are gaining some kind of spiritual knowledge or wisdom so when they reach the fifth level then of course they are more stable, stable not only in their actions but also in their understanding, their development. But still they have not gained a full knowledge of emptiness: there are still some projections in there. One might still make things a little more solid than they are, not very heavy but still looking at things in a somewhat too solid way. So these persons – the persons who practice – they are the bodhisattvas.

For a clearer description of the bodhisattvas I will here use *gyalse*, the Tibetan word. *Gyalse* is rather similar to the Christian “Son of

God.” *Gyalse* means “Son of Buddha.” In a deeper sense Buddha is not “Buddha” the person; the true Buddha means the level totally free from the negative. The true

Bodhisattvas become sons of Buddha because their attitude is to follow the father figure, to become enlightened – as a Buddha. We call the Bodhisattvas sons of the Buddha because they follow the Father's way. The term in Tibetan for someone who has achieved the mind of enlightenment is *changchub sempa*, “pa” meaning a person and “*changchub sem*” meaning the mind (*sem*) of enlightenment (*changchub*). *Changchub* implies focusing on the goal of total enlightenment. *Sempa* is one who has the mind to want to become an enlightened person, to become a bodhisattva. That person is a bodhisattva or that person has a bodhisattva attitude. So bodhisattva has to do with life attitude and not with position. And life attitude involves understanding, respect, patience, diligence – all of these. We have two ways to practice the bodhisattva path: the more artificial one and the more real one.

I will tell you straight that you first have to try the artificial one and be an artificial bodhisattva. Then by getting into a little higher routine of being a kind of artificial bodhisattva you build up steps so that you can easily enter into the deeper bodhisattva actions. Therefore a way to train is to take one day's bodhisattva vow: we go into being an artificial bodhisattva for one day. But even as an artificial bodhisattva you still have the identification and the discipline. That identification and discipline save you from one day's wrong actions, and you achieve some level of peace in the mind. Then you increase that: I want to have the bodhisattva attitude – the artificial bodhisattva attitude – for two days, three days, four days. That is how you can start and how you can develop. When you develop in that way then stableness comes because you realize more, you recognize more, by having that attitude. The continuation of that stability brings you to the different levels of the bodhisattva path.

In this text it is explained how to get stableness in yourself. If you want to build a very stable house you have to be conscious of each brick. You have to be conscious about how to make the mortar with

the brick so it will not fall. If you only deal with the excitement your focus will go to the whole house and you will work faster, but you are not being very conscious about each brick. And I am not sure how stable or unstable, safe or not safe, this house will be. The Buddhist attitude is that you are conscious about each brick, but still you know that by that effort one day you will finish the big house. That's the goal – to become as the Buddha. To be conscious about each brick you have to be free from disturbing thoughts. There are different ways of being free. One way is to keep a distance – that is one kind of being free. Another way to be free is by taking in what scares you and using it. Then you will be free from fear.

You will be free from stiffness, and you will be free from disconnection, from deeper discriminations. So you find everything useful. When you realize everything is useful you have this great freedom – nothing is bothering you; your harmony, your peace, are higher, and you are developing. I will explain the necessary and beneficial practices in bodhicitta and how to be an artificial bodhisattva. Being an artificial bodhisattva at first is not wrong – it is the basic building process. Then you can become more stable – so that you then get more into the bodhisattva way of doing things.

Now we start with Verse 1.

1

At this time of having obtained
the rare great ship of
freedoms and riches,
Without any distraction day and night,
to listen, reflect,
and meditate,
In order to liberate oneself
and others from the ocean of samsara
Is the practice of the bodhisattvas.



We have this precious human life. The example is samsara as an ocean and my life as a boat, and I am sailing the boat to get across the ocean. That is what we do – we pass through. There are a lot of dangerous animals in this ocean, and my responsibility is to sail my life, this precious human lifeboat which has the capacity – a lot of ability is there – to pass through all this danger.

First of all I need to have some kind of goal – I need to have direction. To have direction I must be very conscious and be aware of all the dangers, all the disturbances there, but I still know the possibilities – not so much to avoid the dangers as to have the possibilities to overcome the dangers. You have to be very much aware of the possibilities – not just boast “Oh yeah, I am confident, I will get there.” But you know somewhere more deeply in you: “Yes, I can find a possibility.” You are then very flexible, very aware that the boat is moving and that you can get to the other shore of the samsaric ocean.

Njen, sem, gom – that means first listen (njen) to one who is experienced, who has the experience. Sem – that means “think,” you think about what you have heard, you pay attention. Gom means concentrate. In Tibetan we say that if you want to try to meditate without listening it is more or less like you want to climb a rock without fingers. So fingers are very important.

This verse says you have the choice now in your hand – don’t lose the chance! Don’t think that you have to sit crosslegged day and night doing nothing. That’s laziness! Conscious – be conscious day and night! Be conscious about your attitudes. Be conscious of not repeating bad habits. You have all the possibilities, all the facilities in your life so you can do it! You might say “Oh, we don’t have time because we have to work, because of our family, our children, our husband, our wife” – all those excuses! What are you

doing when you serve your children? You are paying back a debt; you are connected with them. You cannot leave your children; you have to take care of them. So take care of them in a more harmonic way instead of saying “oh shit!” If you speak that way, every day is shit. If you speak the other way – “I am somehow karmically connected, there’s something I have to give, have to pay,” then you are happy every day taking care, and you don’t owe more karmic debt. You are paying back, getting less in debt. That profit goes towards husband or wife or whomever. When I am washing dishes I do this. I use it as a purification; I get something out of it. If I sit and complain I only get complaining back and a bad conscience afterwards.



2

Toward friends, attachment rages like a river;
Toward enemies, hatred blazes like fire.
Therefore, it is the practice of bodhisattvas
to give up that home,
Where the darkness of stupidity, of forgetting what to
accept and what to reject, prevails.



Lakha Lama:

Suffering and pain are not always something you get from an enemy. Holding on to our friends – that can also create suffering. And getting rid of the enemy – that can also mean suffering. Either way, pain. To be a friend or relative means that it is natural to share. Look at the animals, at nature. Animal parents get five or six babies. So naturally parents share with all their babies. Then when the babies become bigger and more independent the parents don't keep holding on to this kind of more natural function, so both parents and children are able to manage. The parents care, and then they let go. But in the human realm of being family or relatives we take the position or prestige as something more important than the persons themselves. If I use my family position for prestige, for my identity, I am hanging on to my identity, and my identity becomes more important than my family. On the other hand, if I care for my family in a relaxed way then as long as my family is managing, as long as they are alive – that I appreciate. That's my way of caring – caring but not holding on. Leave even the daily projection – feeling good toward your friend and bad toward your enemy. Both “friend” and “enemy” equally create pain and suffering for you.

Holding on to a friend or holding on to an enemy – either way your hands are occupied. Do you find peace and freedom holding on to a friend or family? You don't! Holding on to the enemy do you find peace and freedom – NO! So it's the same! But our projections of friend and enemy make these kinds of boxes. Both create bondage: holding on to the friend and family binds me; holding on to the enemy also binds me. So I am bound by two types of rope. With this bondage I forget what is a virtuous attitude and what is an unvirtuous attitude. I forget – that is the darkness – not acting in a clear way. So

we have to leave that kind of bondage. That is what the bodhisattvas say. What do you say?

Student:

So to give up your home is to give up your emotions, your holding on.

Lakha Lama:

Yes, that is the home, that means being bound. Give up this field of bondage! To be in that field – I mean to be here on the earth – does not mean you have to be in bondage. You can be here without bondage. You see, this bondage: that is the thing! What do you say? How can we do that? Come up with some ideas!

Student:

Getting rid of ignorance – overcoming ignorance.

Lakha Lama:

Overcome ignorance – yes we can say that. But I want to look at it in a more practical way. For example, we have some kind of closeness, real nearness to someone. But we are not clear about it. When we say “I love you,” the ordinary way of looking is one of bondage: “I love you.” Some sort of bondage or ownership is there.

But then there is real love. But because of this bondage we are not aware of the real true love: surface love becomes important for daily life. But real true love is not surface love or bondage: it is more like being aware that I appreciate my mother, I appreciate my family, I appreciate my friends, I am thankful for them. There is no bondage in that – I am just thankful. I don’t say my family, my wife, my child – I don’t put all these borders and ties on it. I simply appreciate.

With this warmth I really want to do something, do something that is best for them, so action, pure action, comes into it. When you do have pure action then you are not expecting anything. You want to do something from your heart and not do business. As long as you put some kind of expectation there you are not giving – you do business. There is no security in that, and that insecure business we are involved in really creates a lot of wrong thoughts. We try to be smart, and that always creates a disturbance in the relations we are in.

Be aware – that is the basic Buddhist advice. When I realize that being bound is painful for me then I don’t stay in this feeling of bondage. I’m still not losing the relation – the relation is still there – but I remove the bondage which disturbs me, which creates the pain. I move it away! It is the same as having the knowledge that I am going to die tomorrow. Then I become very active! And having the knowledge that it is the bondage that creates the pain, I become active about removing that bondage, but I still have confidence in the relation.

This teaching is based more on the Buddha’s basic teaching of the Four Noble Truths. Truth number One says we have to know what suffering is. We are suffering because we don’t know the nature of suffering. In that way we are fooled. Then Buddha says: the explanation of suffering is that suffering creates more suffering. If I hate someone I am suffering, and my suffering creates suffering in another person, but that suffering again creates suffering in me; it is a kind of bad circulation of suffering. Then there is the suffering of death – human death. Another sort of death is when you hold on and cannot let go. And there is also a kind of suffering where we make things too solid. And when we try to make things too solid we are going against the impermanence of nature. Nature’s impermanence shows itself in changes, and when we cannot take the changes – that also is suffering. This type of suffering dominates more ordinary humans. But to practice in the bodhisattva way is to not hold on to your friends and relatives and to not push the enemy away. Therefore

find yourself and your inner capacity and understand that to hold on to the family or friend also creates pain. To hate the enemy also creates pain – both create pain – so leave them both. Leave these two areas – the holding on feeling and the pushing away feeling. Then you have someone around you, that is all, and you can be totally equal.

3

Abandoning negative places,
disturbing emotions
gradually subside;
Being free from distractions,
the practice of virtue
spontaneously increases;
With brightened awareness one feels
confidence in the Dharma;
To adhere to solitude is the practice of the



There are two areas of silence – the physical and the mental. If it is very difficult for one to have silence in the mind due to where one is physically then of course one should find a place where there is not so much physical disturbance. But if you find silence within your mind then the physical area does not matter, like when I meditate here and the dog is walking around. When you find the silence in your mind you don't really hear, you don't really notice, because you are not paying attention, just like sometimes when you are listening to some very beautiful music and are fully concentrated on the music. If you find inner silence then physical disturbance does not disturb you. What we can do in our noisy daily life is to leave our inner chatter and be more in the silent area.

As for “negative places,” negative places can mean physically bad areas or bad mental areas. A physical bad area is like if you are in a group and that group is not acting in a good way morally. Because of the group you have no power to say “no” and you have to be involved. So if you really don't want to be involved then you have to leave the group. That's a physical matter. Without the group you can decide more for yourself. You can follow more what you want, you can be more yourself - that's just a simple way to look at it. And on the mental level, to leave all the speculations and negative projections and stay in the silence – that's another thing you can do. So this verse does not exactly say that you have to go to a cave!

In Tibetan yul nyen, “bad area,” can be used in both ways: the outer and the inner negative area. We have to understand these two levels: one can just escape and be sitting in a cave and still not have left the inner negative area. If we leave that inner negative area then our negativity goes down because we are not giving it space: we are not sharing the space with our inner negative.

Nam nyen means something like scattered thought, i.e. not being

constructive. “Constructive” means to be conscious: that goes with being virtuous. Being constructive and being conscious will raise your virtuous side, and you will therefore be more clear about the essence of the Dharma. The Bodhisattva lives in the more silent area.

I may for example say “Due to my surroundings I cannot exactly control my emotions. So I intend to go somewhere where there is not this kind of surrounding pushing me.” That is one point. When you go to the silent area to meditate or practice, at the same time you have to build up your inner silent area. Otherwise you are just escaping from physically outer disturbances, but you are still stuck with your inner disturbance. So you have to combine these two.

To combine in this way, Tibetan Buddhism has practices. In these practices you pay full attention to what you are practising so that it occupies your mind. You say mantras, read prayers, do pujas, sadhanas, going through the process and staying there and not giving space to disturbing thoughts, and you develop a routine with the body - which normally is used to reacting very actively to negative thoughts – with the result that these negative thoughts become more and more handicapped because they don't get food. When you take over and stay in the meditation and somebody comes along with a knife, you just look at the knife, and the body- your body- doesn't react. When this meditative function gets its meditative food it grows and takes over other systems on the energy level. That kind of more developed combination of body and mind and focussing – you could call it controlling but that would sound more like fighting – is more a kind of focussing in a relaxed way. So there we use visualization and all these things in meditation.

Then the body does not try to disturb the mind, because the mind becomes firm, and the mind is more directing the body. When the mind is strongly accepting what is happening the body follows the mind. When the mind does not accept then the body also rejects.

Student:

About keeping away from negative places – sometimes I felt that I had to keep away from certain people because I started to fight with them, and I felt that that disturbed my peace. But when I become more developed can I then better deal with being with such people?

Lakha Lama:

A person has a wrong side and a good side. You look at the two sides of the person, and the person is in the middle – right? The person is using this side and that side – both sides he is using. You have two hands – as I told you yesterday - two hands! You use the right hand and you use the left hand, but right hand is not me and left hand is not me. Like I have two hands, that person also has two hands – right? What you actually don't like is when the person is using the negative hand. Why you don't like it is that you might be expecting the person to use the other hand – so then say o.k. I want him to use the other hand, but he is using the wrong hand – but that is o.k. That is a simple way to look at it. So you don't put the person as a right hand or the person as a wrong hand. You look at the person in the middle, having two sides. Then you can just say that is o.k. except I don't want to deal with that side. Then you are keeping the person in the middle – so that gives you more peace. You don't make the person into a person totally wrong. That is one method you can use.

4

Separated from each and every
long-acquainted companion,
Leaving behind hard-earned wealth and possessions,
Guest-like consciousness abandons
its guesthouse, the body;
To give up concern for this life is
the practice of the bodhisattvas.



Lakha Lama:

The first three lines are about what really happens. We do go from our friends and from all this material we think belongs to “me.” One day we have to leave all these material things: we are just guests in this “guesthouse,” this body. One day we have to leave this body, to “let go” of this life. It’s not exactly that you shouldn’t care about this life; it’s letting go of this life as a kind of solidness, letting go of the feeling of the solid. As I’ve said a lot of times – just enjoy what you have and be satisfied. You can have more – it does not matter so long as there is satisfaction. But if you emphasize the dissatisfaction then you are always poor, you have nothing.

When you emphasize the satisfaction, desire does not have power because satisfaction has taken over. Today I have whatever I have around me. I am satisfied today, so as for tomorrow wait and see. This satisfaction is a very great help for relationships: when two human beings are satisfied with each other there is no talk of divorce. Dissatisfaction creates a lot of complications in relationships. When dissatisfactions come I try to remind myself what the good things are one has together, and I pay respect to them. That way the dissatisfaction becomes lower, and you have the chance to discuss, to make realistic points. You are not complaining; you are not dissatisfied, but there are still practical things that don’t function well. So there is an openness where one can talk, and there is an understanding between one another. Otherwise each tries to protect himself or herself – so there is no meeting point.

This verse talks about using life and not just holding on to it, about understanding that you have to leave. The importance of this life is not to hold on to – but to use this life as a great chance to prepare for the next life. There are a lot of teachings on this. If you want to be kind

towards yourself then you better care about your next life. Be kind toward your next life by using this life, by being constructive in this life. Do not get attached to this life alone: life is continually moving. The future is a continuation of the present so being continually constructive gives the better future. Being unconstructive gives the unconstructive future. We talk about tomorrow – tomorrow becomes today, so this kind of just moving, moving, moving and the way you are moving – that is the important thing. Being constructive now and continuing to be constructive is good future – and at the same time gives a good past.

In this verse there is also an explanation about the nature of impermanence. We don’t “own” this “guesthouse” body; we are being with our body – we are not owning it. I don’t own the body. Body is independent – “I” am independent, but we are working together. Body and mind work together, are fellow partners. Body does not own the mind; mind does not own the body. Sometimes body complains and mind tries to agree with the body. Sometimes the mind says something and the body does not agree: Body says “no thanks!” We have this body so that mind can function. By having a body mind can function: mind has the possibility of reacting, of expressing itself through the body – that is the meaning.

The senses make us actually care for the body. To have the eye is to protect from dangers, physical dangers. To have the ear is to protect by hearing: it gives a good warning to take care now, that there is something that does not sound very good. So be conscious! Tasting says: tongue is in use – what is eatable, what is not eatable, what the body can take, what the body cannot take. That is also how the nose can protect us.

However, if we train in taking in more information from the senses, then the mind can alert the senses to provide still more information. In this way the senses can be trained to be over-critical. Then if the food is good but looks ugly, the eye says “No,” and the mind agrees with that. Then we add luxury feelings, and then the senses are not working on our basic needs; they are working on the more “luxury”

needs.

That is how the mind is directing the senses. To have clothes on is to keep the body warm – that is the basic thing – right? You can use clothes to protect against the wind or against cold and heat, to protect the body. People who live in a state of nature can just wear leaves. And if you get into luxury, there are many different levels of luxury. For nature people the very day they find new leaves and change them all at once might be luxury, and they might be very proud of that. So many differences! Like in Tibet. Normal clothes are to warm – that’s the focus, but of course we also have some nice clothes that have to be worn on special days. This is done to focus on a higher energy, a very good mood. Today, for example, it is full moon and a special day. I don’t want to just look kind of dull and with low energy. I want to have some fresh feelings – so then I put on something nice. And I put on clean clothes to go to the temple because the temple is the place of Buddha and the Bodhisattvas, so I should not go into it in my bad smelly clothes. Of course if somebody does not have good clothes then we accept it – that is fine. Some people who don’t have any other clothes to change into make a fire and put a little incense on the fire, and they go and clean all this kind of dirty energy. Then they feel clean and go into the temple. Of course there are also people in the high ranks who use fine clothes for prestige. There you have the luxury feelings. So there are many different levels.

Student:

What about the aesthetic sense? Instead of a statue of a Buddha you can just put a stone. But there is also that need of creating something, not just keeping everything at a basic level. This is also some kind of luxury.

Lakha Lama:

There are two levels of “luxury.” If you look at the statue as a

material thing then you can have a very “dirty” idea of luxury: you can make the statue out of pure gold with the motivation and the goal that “I will be proud to have a pure gold Buddha statue.” And then you are not respecting Buddha’s statue as a statue of Buddha; you are looking at its material value. Why then do these temples make all those Buddha statues out of very fancy materials? One level is a level of purity, but there are also levels of corruption: I must say that. The pure level is to say “I collect the money, and I really want to make one beautiful Buddha statue of pure gold for the sake of my own purification and out of respect, and I don’t want to make it kind of simple and cheap. I can give fifty years of effort to collect how much it will cost, and I am going to do that.” That is a pure way of doing.

As for the impure way – monasteries can get into competition; that monastery has a golden Buddha, and we don’t. Well, I tell you we are human!

Monks are also human. Don’t make them too holy. That kind of corruption is there too. Then, since the country is a religious country, the business people, the rich people, have to gain a position on the business level, and at the same time they want to have a position on the religious level. So they sponsor big Buddha statues to be made out of very fine things. The focus can be pure, but the focus can also be: people will look at me, high up, because I am giving this big Buddha statue. Or, I am decorating the monastery with gold and silver, I am sponsoring teachings, and lots of people can come to the teachings, and all these people will appreciate me. So that is a kind of tricky negative push to do something which is not very pure.

When the monasteries go into competition it is very easy for them to raise the competitive feeling, and that can influence a lot of monks, and then the monastery begins to get business, and that business is not based on the survival of the monks but on competing: we have the best temple; we have the best statue; we have this and that. So that can also go wrong. To practice in Buddhism you have to look back into yourself, you have to be here; then with your heart you can

say “Yes, I want to give one golden Buddha statue to the temple,” and you give it purely with no hanging on, no holding, nothing. If you give a piece of bread purely to a person who needs the food this pureness has enormous karma; you are not focusing on the karma, but it carries. So the best Buddhist is poor and at the same time rich. Buddha, he did not have anything, he did not have food, he went around begging for food. On that level he was really poor, but the whole world admires his richness. Richness is in you. When you are detached, then you are rich.

5

If, while befriending someone,
the three poisons increase,
The activities of study, reflection,
and meditation degenerate,
And love and compassion disappear,
Then it is the practice of the bodhisattvas
to give up this bad company.



Lakha Lama:

We are talking about “environment,” about positive and negative environment. If you are dealing more with negative environment, the environment can make you do negative things even though you don’t want to – like, for example, soldiers. Some soldiers absolutely don’t want to act, but the environment makes them think that they have to, that there’s no way out. On the other hand if you are in a group of bodhisattvas then of course you have to act in that environment: you have to be quite good. Right now, you are practising Buddhism in a group that helps you to be reasonable, more aware, and more conscious of your actions – so environment is very important.

Bad companions can influence you so that you might think “Oh, I can cheat a little, and that will be o.k.” That kind of influence goes against basic human morals. Basic human morals – that is what Buddhism is based on. Do you like to be cheated?

Student:

No.

Lakha Lama:

That is basic. Everybody will say “no.” It has nothing to do with religious influences. Even if you ask a dog, that dog will say “no.” You can ask yourself “Do I like to be hated?” No! Then comes the negative environment saying “oh yes! I would love to be hated!” Since that negative environment influences you to go against basic principles or morals, it is not a good partner. Do not follow that partner, do not involve yourself in that kind of environment. If you

do, your basic negativity – your greed, hate, and ignorance – will grow. The word ignorance can be used in different ways: not to know, and to know but ignore. For example, “I am so ignorant,” where we use this “ignorance” as an excuse. When I know I don’t want to be killed but nevertheless I kill her, I ignore her basic needs – I ignore her and I kill her – that is knowing and still doing it – that is the root poison ignorance – ignoring. That is the deeper, more basic point.

Then there are the small things – they do not matter so much. Still Buddhism advises us to care about these small things. A collection of small things can become big, and then you are back on the wrong track. I can cheat a little here and cheat a little there. When I get into this habit of cheating then I will cheat more and more – I can be more and more creative that way!

Therefore Buddhism says it is nice not to cheat even in small things. If you have very good reasons, positive reasons, then of course you can use the cheating attitude: there your focus is on helping to save. I see two persons, one is running and the other is coming with a gun and asks me “Have you seen this person running?” Then I will say “no,” because the reason to say no – to lie – is that this person is going to kill that one – so I will not just let him kill. Then there is the question of when you have a gun and the other has a gun, and this one is going to kill that person, and I want to save that person – or maybe the situation is one in which I can save 100 people from being killed if I kill one person. Then what should I do? The only way to save life is to kill him. So I kill him – I kill him to save 100 lives, that is my motivation. At the same time I know that killing is a negative action, but I am sacrificing myself, and I am ready to pay with my own negative karma for the sake of a hundred people. That becomes a personal decision.

Student:

How can a person be reborn as a human?

Lakha Lama:

That is not fixed. Reincarnation – you can be born as a human; you can be reborn as a cat, a fish, and all kind of things like that.

To get back to the subject of the verse: Buddhism has various ways of dealing with “bad company” and the disturbance that follows from that. In Hinayana the emphasis is more on staying away from things, and when you become stable in staying away from things you reach the level of discipline but not exactly the level of wisdom. You have the discipline of not being involved, and that saves you a lot of trouble, but your wisdom has not gained enough. On the Mahayana level we have tantric practices to gain more wisdom because in tantra we make use of all our anger and hatred. We don’t just push them away; we just take them in and want to find the possibility of transforming the anger. You see, the energy when you get angry, when you get hot – there’s very strong energy – right? This very strong energy is my energy. When I add anger this energy functions with anger, but when I add love this energy functions with love. So in the tantric way you should not be afraid of anger because the energy itself is not anger. In looking at the anger you are able to see the energy. That in itself will reduce the anger element, and you will be able to remove it and add the love element instead.

You can also reach this stability through the stableness of not being attracted, as in Hinayana. And I have talked about Bodhicitta – basic love and compassion. By being stable in Bodhicitta you can then go into the tantric level.

Student:

Before you can be stable you have to look at yourself, you have to look into your thoughts and emotions and be more aware. But so often the anger takes over, and I am lost and afterwards I can see it, but I am getting lost so many times that I don’t know what to do.

Lakha Lama:

How can you train yourself? Don’t try to be aware of everything. Just pick up one thing and use a whole week, just one point. Get into the routine of being aware of it. The next week you take one more point. So in one month you have four reasonably good routines.

Student:

I can do that.

Lakha Lama:

Yes. You take too much at a time, and that creates the confusion. It does not help to take too much at a time.



6

When relying on the sacred spiritual friend,
our faults become exhausted
And our good qualities increase like the waxing moon.
It is the practice of bodhisattvas to value such
a sacred spiritual friend
As more precious than their own body



Lakha Lama:

The Tibetan word that is here translated as spiritual friend means master. Master, then, is on two levels: positive master and negative master. The one who says the right things – that is the good master, and the one who says wrong things – that is the bad master. Both are “master,” and I think it is nice to look at it that way. That connects verse number five and verse number six: following the good master and not following the bad master. “Master” itself does not mean anything special: it is the negative quality or the positive quality of the master that matters.

Then the question is: how can one know who is the good master and who is the bad master? On one level it is by what the master says: you can go deep into what your own deeper moral sense says (not your intellectual sense!). If it goes against your basic moral sense you will say “this master I cannot follow because it goes against my basic moral sense.” There you have the clarity – that’s one thing. If your belief is very strong and you have this pureness in it then you are not going to stay with who is the pure master and who is not the pure master: you just take the master as a master, and you are very firm about your own pureness. So there you don’t have to doubt.

In the Buddha’s time a man had a master who told him if he could kill 1000 humans then he would achieve Nirvana. And he believed that, and he followed the master’s advice, and he reached to 999 killed. Then he is very eager to kill the last one so he can be free. He runs with his big knife, and he sees his mother. Then he thinks “Now I have to kill my mother,” and he runs after his mother, and then suddenly there is a monk standing there so he changes his mind. “I cannot kill my mother. That is really not moral, so I better kill this monk.” So he runs after the monk. And that is the beginning of his

waking up.

The monk walks away slowly. It is Buddha. And the man runs and runs and is sweating and sweating. He says to the man “Wait!” Then Buddha says “I am just walking very slowly, why don’t you reach me?” Then the man says “I don’t know. But I want you to wait.” So Buddha waits for him. The man comes with his knife and immediately wants to kill this monk. He lifts up his knife, but he can’t pull it down again – it’s stuck. Then Buddha says “Why don’t you kill me?” Then the man says “I don’t know. I can’t pull it down.” That surprises him. It has never happened that way before. Then he says “This is very strange!” Then he asks the monk “Who are you?” and the monk says “I am Buddha.” Then the man opens up more, and Buddha asks “Why are you doing this?” “My master has given this advice to me: when I reach the killing of one thousand I am free! I am in Nirvana!” Then Buddha says “if you want to reach Nirvana then you can follow me; you don’t have to kill the last one.” So he follows Buddha to the monastery. Then of course Buddha gives him teachings, and he becomes a monk after having killed 999 people.

The monks have to go out and beg for food, and he is the one monk who never gets food – instead people throw stones after him. But he is really going in the better direction: every stone he gets is a purification. He goes on to the purification level because he understands from the Buddha that he hadn’t been very smart, so the Buddha shows the other way he can reach Nirvana. In his life he reached a very high level of Bodhisattva, and he was able to purify all those killings. Some of the other monks got a bit jealous of him, and they said to Buddha “We have spent a lifetime with you, and we don’t get so high, and why is he by killing all those people able to become so high?” And Buddha said “His motivation was so pure, and with this pure motivation he believed so strongly in his master, and he did what his master said. It is not him killing, it is the master.”

In Buddhism if you look at your master as equal to a Buddha you are connecting with the Buddha. So you use the master symbolically to connect with the Buddha. That means that you gain knowledge,

spiritual knowledge, not only from the master but from the Buddha through the master. I have had a lot of lamas, masters – I guess I’ve had around twenty or thirty different lamas. I pay respect – whatever else they do, I don’t care – that’s none of my business. They have been my masters; I just pay the respect. I concentrate on being myself and not being negative. Not being negative – that’s what I feel is so important. Sometimes we do try to fool ourselves; sometimes we try to be too positive, and that becomes very negative. So we don’t push ourselves to be too positive – just take care not to be negative. That’s the good thing – then the positive is there, and you don’t need to be negative.

I myself create my karma. So I better be myself, for example like relating to a master is to gain some knowledge of how I can help myself. What you gain is knowledge. How much you can use, how much you can’t use – that is different from person to person, right? I think the best way is not to try to take everything and use it but to just pick up something and be firm on that. Then you can take the next step. Let us say “Now I am quite firm about jealousy, but I have a little doubt about my anger.” Then you take your next practice as one where you look at anger, and then you try to visualize that anger within yourself as a fire, and you draw the blessing as water, and you draw the water through your crown and slowly put out the fire in you. Then you are overcoming that anger.

I want to suggest to you not to try to achieve all thirty-seven of the practices at once. You might spend maybe one month on the first one and then say “next month I will practice the second one.” This way you go much more deep. If you try to achieve all the practices in one go then you’ll be confused. It’s best to acquire stability.



7

Bound, themselves,
in the prison of samsara,
Whom are the worldly gods able to protect?
Therefore, it is the practice of the bodhisattvas
To go for refuge
in the three unfailing Jewels.



When we talk about a spiritual person or protector we may not have a full knowledge of this kind of helper. Some helpers may not be perfect: they have some abilities and things they can do, but we don't know what kind of motivations they might have. Helpers and protectors are spirits, invisible ones. One type of invisible protector is equal to us and very deeply karmically bonded to us. Higher level protectors, for example protectors like White Tara and Mahakala, are beyond samsara and don't have this heavy karmic bondage, so we can trust them more. Sometimes we experience very funny things, and sometimes that experience can fool us because some of the helpers' actual help is nothing special. Somebody can help me to have a lot of trouble – ok.? That is also help. Focussing more directly on Buddha, Dharma, Sangha is a more safe way than focussing on the different forms of spiritual guidance – visions and dreams and all this – more straight and more safe. The only one who can save you is the one who is beyond samsara. The ones who are in samsara and have some special abilities, they cannot save you. They can of course temporarily help, but they can't help you to become an enlightened person.

In the Tibetan system we find many different types of spirits and protectors. Some are high-level bodhisattvas or Buddha aspects; some protectors who are not on that high a level are motivated to help fellow human beings practice the dharma. These we call “dharmaprotectors,” helping to bring us certain facilities according to their own power, their own capacity. The spirits helping dharma practitioners are on different levels. Some might have been terrible, with very negative aspects beforehand, and then happened to meet a master and came to realize that the actions they had done were not positive ones, so they then wanted to use their own power to promote positive actions. Their power is still there, but they have taken out

what was wrong and added something good to it. Still, this kind of person or spirit is not highly developed. But such spirits use their power to practice by helping practitioners who practice the dharma.

Then there are other types of spirits that are equal to ordinary humans. They have various abilities, but these abilities are still connected to their negative mind, so they have the same ideas of holding on to those who are near you and of disturbing those who are not close to you or who are your enemy. Sometimes humans misuse those spirits: for example if I have an enemy then I can connect with such a spirit, be friends with this spirit, use this spirit to really tease the other person. That's a kind of black magic way of using spirits. These spirits, like humans, have desires, they have dissatisfactions, so they also have a lot of demands. To fulfill their demands one has to every month or every day give something. Otherwise they will turn back on you. Because these kinds of spirits are wrong spirits or poor spirits and not the right kind of protecting spirit, to use them or look at them as a kind of protector is wrong. As long as we do not have a clear view of which spirits are good and which spirits are not good then we'd best leave that field alone. Take the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha as a protector – put all energy into that. In that, we have 100% security, full security – so we don't need a burglar alarm on the door!

But how do we know what is Buddha, what is Dharma, what is Sangha? In Buddhism there are two ways to learn about the Buddha. First, by believing in the Buddha as a great person you can begin reading and studying what Buddha says, and with this combination the belief that at first was more of a blind belief develops into true understanding and true belief. Another way is the intellectual way, reading Buddhist philosophy, understanding what Buddha says. That can lead towards “he is a great master” or “he is Buddha: I really believe in what he says.” When you believe in what he says then automatically you are believing in him as Buddha. So there are two ways: to have devotion toward Buddha, or to recognize Buddha.

Dharma is the teachings of the Buddha, the truth of how things really are.

Then comes the Sangha - Buddha, Dharma, and then Sangha: there are two types of sangha: high level sangha and symbolic sangha. High level sangha is the beings who are highly developed, developed in the sense of recognizing emptiness – that's the high level sangha. Then there is the lower level sangha or symbolic sangha. Monks are on the more symbolic or low level sangha, and the people we practice together with are also the Sangha. A dharmafriend or dharmagroup - that also becomes a sort of sangha.

We talk about khyab dro – taking refuge. Take refuge – khyab dro, that means having full trust in – that is one way to look at it. The Tibetan word kyab means “safe.” Dro is more a kind of devotion, a kind of being fully devoted – devoted to the Buddha, devoted to the Dharma, devoted to the Sangha. There is a reason or purpose – to be free of samsara – inner samsara and outer samsara.

My saviour is not out there, is not that external “Buddha.” My saviour, Buddha nature, is in me. In order to develop Buddha nature – let it shine! Now you listen carefully! This Buddha nature has to appear, has to grow, it has to shine. In order to shine, all this negative, this dusty, cloudy stuff that is covering my Buddha nature – all the negative patterns, karmic patterns and projections – all those things which go on on my mind level, have to be cleared up. We cannot use any kind of material physical technique to clear them up. It has to do with your mind, with mental techniques, mental effort, understanding. Then you can connect these two: the inner Buddhature and the Buddha who is already shining, who has already reached there. Connecting these two means to follow Buddha's advice on how one can clear up. And that “move” – that becomes the practice.

I can clear up all this mess and then let my Buddhature shine. There you make the good connection and don't just say “Oh save me!”

If I really practice methods I clear things up. If my wisdom is growing by using these methods there is the chance that automatically

I realize a lot of other things too.

It is also possible that without our collecting different methods or different teachings, realization just comes. Buddha was a prince and he escaped from the castle, went to the forest, meditated there, and practiced many, many years. Nobody can say he was reading some book. Right! So this I take as a kind of symbol: when you really go deep and make contact with the deeper basic wisdom within you, you find a lot of knowledge without books. Actually we do know so many truths. We know! But due to the environment we do not get in touch with these truths, we stay on the surface. What Buddha shows is that the Saviour is in you. When you get in touch with your “deeper” being, follow that, and do not give the power to the dominance of the emotional. Then you are there. You develop. One day you become totally free.

I tell you very honestly – don’t get stuck! Then you are not free. To be free means to be free from all different types of holding on, of being stuck: from all these you have to be free. If you are free from attachment you can have five cars as just objects lying there. Since you are in the human world you are using it – the human world - and it does not disturb your mind because you are not attached.

With a couple – you respect each other – but to respect each other does not mean becoming attached. The respect and understanding is equal understanding. Döchag – the Tibetan word in verse 2, translated there as “attachment,”

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“dö” means that you want – “chag” means glued – that is the explanation: you are glued to what you want. Then you can’t get rid of it.

So that becomes the problem – Superglue! “Dö” is light – you are interested, you like something. There are two human beings together and sharing – in a way there is equalness in it! Male and female. Male needs female and female needs male, that is the equalness. With this equalness if we go into equal respect from both sides, man respects the woman and tries to understand the woman, and woman respects

the man and tries to understand the man. Then there is harmony between them because you give the space: there is no holding on. When there is harmony between the male and the female, when there is peace, the man will not go away because this is a beautiful place to be. You see! So there is nothing to dominate and nothing to be holding on to, nothing to be attached to. Just enjoy the harmony and have peace.

“Respect” can be naïve however: “respect,” oh yeah I respect her whatever she does, it’s fine. I don’t care. I don’t bother – that is one way of respecting. But true respect is true understanding. If I say “All right, sometimes you do things I like; sometimes you do some things I don’t like;” but it is not a case of “I like” or “I don’t like.” I accept. I understand. That’s the point. So you give the space, and she gives the space, and we both have the space between. Then there is no point in creating arguments, because both are giving space to each other. If she says something, I give the space to listen and to understand. If I say something, she gives the space to listen and to understand. They both are sharing the space, giving the space and sharing the space. That I think is a more Buddhist way of being a family, a harmonic family. But holding on and being attached – sometimes we get so attached to Buddhism that we don’t let the Buddha go away!

Student:

- and so attached to the teacher.

Lakha Lama:

- to the teacher, that’s what I mean – to lamas. What Buddha says: “You might be having high development equal to mine, but remember you are human. You are in a human body, you are in the human world, so you have to be equal to the other humans.” For me what is important is that I do not create any situation where people would be dependent on me. I can share a lot without making people

dependent. When you meet a lama maybe there is some attachment coming up, holding on, so it can be very easy to fall in love with lamas, this kind of looking too high up or maybe being too excited. I have seen that. When I am talking I have to go deep and say what I mean, what I think. Then as for your daily consciousness, that is your own thing.



8

All the sufferings of the lower realms,
so extremely difficult to bear,
Are taught by the Sage to be the fruit of one's evil actions.
Therefore, it is the practice of bodhisattvas
To constantly refrain from evil actions,
even at the cost of one's life.

**Lakha Lama:**

All suffering comes from negative actions. But in order to take care not to do negative actions, especially very heavy negative actions, I think it's helpful to give some sort of vow. Too many vows, that will do no good. But if I say "I will never kill humans, and I will never involve myself in the killing and destroying of human life" – o.k., that's a vow. And then there is keeping that vow. For example if there were a war between Germany and Denmark nationality feelings of "enemy" might come up, and at that time you should not involve yourself in thoughts that project "enemies." Otherwise you will be breaking your vow, forgetting that we are all simple humans who want to live.

If we make that kind of vow, a vow we can keep all our lives, that vow has strong energy, and that energy helps other positive actions, because those actions belong to the same category as the energy. So now that kind of vow is firm. It's not something you have to go and say in front of someone. You decide. It's your own decision for the sake of spiritual development, for the sake of achieving Buddhahood, for the sake of all sentient beings. By keeping this vow you pray for and want to help all sentient beings. Even one single vow like this, given in this kind of century, has one hundred times higher effect, one hundred times more positive karma, because this time is a cruel time with less respect for life. Just take vows that are appropriate for you where you are now. Take those first, then have no excuses. Every time some excuse comes you say "No, this is my vow." Just take one vow at a time and try to go deeper, and when you are stable in that vow then you can take the next vow.

Student:

How about the vow "I will not kill?" I'm thinking about the present situation in your country, and now I have read that there are Tibetans who think non-violence does not lead anywhere. I don't want to make a political discussion, but would you, for example, change that vow in this situation?

Lakha Lama:

Non-violence is a point His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, emphasizes very much, and I think non-violence is the most beautiful policy. Of course Tibetan people are also human; some really want to destroy, and there have been bombs in Lhasa. I don't know if they were Tibetan or Chinese or whatever – I don't know. Even before we lost Tibet this kind of violence existed. I have no reason to copy that. If other people want to do something different I have no reason to imitate them. What I do is my decision. Even if some Tibetans want to fight, that's their decision. I cannot judge their motivations. They might have some pure motivation, but they have to face the consequence.

This verse says that suffering is the result of one's evil actions. There are two Tibetan words: ge and mege. Ge means pleasant; mege means unpleasant; pleasant action and unpleasant action. Pleasant action gives a harmonic result; unpleasant action gives a disharmonic result. So we have harmony/disharmony. I like this better than what is normally used in Western translation: positive/negative or good/evil.

Disharmony is negative karma. Karma is action. Harmony-action creates positive karma; disharmony-action creates negative karma.

Buddhism also talks about hell suffering, hell-beings, and heaven, the same as Christianity does. In Buddhism the word hell and the description of hell can be looked at in two different ways. One philosophy describes something like a fixed place where you will be reborn. The other philosophy describes a state of mind. One can say these are outer and inner states of mind. The outer is a hallucination; it creates an outer picture. Even in human society

some people are scared of seeing other people, don't dare to go near them, don't dare to act because the hallucination is so deep in them. At the same time they are alone, so they have a lot of suffering. Maybe they don't see the actual people, maybe they see them as some kind of devils or something really scary, and they don't dare to get near them. That kind of hallucination creates suffering, big suffering, within themselves and also in the world. For example in some areas of the world people always have to face catastrophes where many innocent people are killed, or there is war – such great suffering is there. That kind of hell-suffering.

In Buddhism we say that samsara is divided into six realms: the human world or realm, the animal world or animal realm, the god realm – not god as we call it, but two kinds, demigods and gods, the hungry ghost realm, and then the hell realm, which has a cold hell and a hot hell.

Sometimes I feel that all these realms are here on this planet. The god realm is material richness – that is a kind of god realm, where you have material richness and you are falling asleep in it. You wake up when you realize that you are going to die and leave everything. Then that turns into big suffering and pain, because you have forgotten about impermanence. The demigod realm has much to do with jealousy. For instance some countries are really jealous of Western richness. By their jealousy they might try to compete, and so they do that kind of jealous action.

As for the animal realm, it is not that we look down on the animals in it. But the animal attitude we understand to be a little passive and not functioning as actively as the attitude of humans. You also see this passiveness in the human world. Some people are very passive: they can only eat and shit and sleep – that kind of passiveness, not having the ability to use the opportunity of being human. Another realm is the hungry ghost realm. A hungry ghost is not a ghost saying “Boo!” Greedy people are like hungry ghosts: they don't digest, and they want more and more.

Then there is the human realm, more a kind of desire world. We talk

about the humans as being human but drawn into desire. But there are humans with no desire and who therefore have great pureness. Physically and mentally the human being has a great deal of capacity because the structure of the human body gives humans a great ability to work with the mind. Therefore in Buddhism we say that the human life is the most important basis from which to achieve Buddhahood. So we are taught to appreciate human life, this precious human life.

Sometimes we are very unclear about how we create negative karma. Like if there is war here, and we are human and we have these nationalistic feelings like in the Second World War, and all Danes would say “all Germans have to be killed.” We might think that that way of thinking was o.k., being not directly involved in killing but still being indirectly involved in the action. Then I would have my share in this action. And when I have to pay the karmic bill nobody pays for me. I have to pay it.

Some leaders of wars do lots of negative things. But the best thing is that you do not hate or use anything negative. Use compassion and pray that they can get in touch with their inner positive side. Then we don't have to change them; they will change by themselves. So much negative is already there, and if I am involved negatively I am adding negative on top of it. That does not help.

We stop here for today. All this good and positive energy we have been sharing today in this group we would like to share with all sentient beings, with whomever is in need. We wish that all sentient beings get in touch with their deeper positive side and become freed from their negative emotions and find the light within themselves.

Lakha Lama:

In Tibetan Buddhism there are many different forms of meditation, but basically there are two types. We call meditation gom. The word gom can be negative or it can be positive. So we talk about good meditation and terrible meditation. It depends on the subject of the meditation. You can go into a very deep concentration on “how can I

do something so that the other person can have a terrible time,” that kind of thing – this is also a kind of concentration – where you really concentrate on finding a trick, a way, and you are really practising deeply. That is one kind of meditation!

Another kind of meditation is to find a way to transform heavy feelings or to reduce heavy negative projections. If I am focussed on how to destroy my enemy, and I am planning, and I act, of course I might get some level of satisfaction when I succeed, and I might even be happy, feel good about it. This feeling good and being proud can last a whole lifetime. But what about the next life? So the question mark comes, due to karma. The karma will come, even though I am perfectly happy doing these things, because what I did was dishonest: I did not respect our deeper equalness, the deeper equalness that you don't want to suffer, and I don't want to suffer. You want to have more peace, and I want to have peace. That is equal. So if I make you suffer I am ignoring the equalness, ignoring this deep truth. That's why the negative karma comes. That's why ignorance is one of the root poisons.

On the other hand, of course you have to survive. To survive you might have to say “Yes, I am here. I am managing, and I am alright.” Those feelings are not negative! We have to sort things out and not be fooled and confused and take our feelings of strength as negative. If we say “I am confused,” is that negative? No! You have to go a little more deep into what is negative and what is positive. Selfish egotism – I don't care for anybody but myself – is very, very strong, and that becomes the negative feeling, because you ignore. Right? Or you hate – that becomes the deep negative, because in order to survive yourself you damage the other, and you try to make the person you hate totally black. You ignore all the good sides of the person, and you mix the person and the person's negative side together, and you look at the whole person as negative. That is total ignoring, ignoring the truth.

And desire – holding on. Holding on involves many processes. One process is that you might respect more what is yours, so that you

don't respect the other, and you try to say the other should be like me. Holding on also goes against the truth. I mean holding on in general. That's a kind of habit we have. That habit, that kind of holding on, can also come from a habit of negative actions from lifetime to lifetime.

Then what you want becomes the more important thing, and you lose respect for what the other wants, and you hold on to things and belongings – basically to your own egotistic satisfaction, so you don't share, you are unable to share. Being unable to share blocks many levels of sharing, for example, sharing with beings or sharing with the spiritual persons, as in a visualization where one can share “this is a beautiful room. I want to clean it, and I want to invite the spiritual persons in here. And this is my offer: they can be here and enjoy the atmosphere and the things I have.” Another way of sharing is “Yes, I have these things. I respect the things I have, and some day somebody else will enjoy what I have.” Then you are already sharing beforehand. Before you die it is nice to share in that way. If you have collected some nice books, for instance, then say “O.K. when I die, if I take care of these things in the meantime, keep them nice, when I die somebody will enjoy them.” So there already you are sharing. You have it, and you are sharing it, you are focussing on the fact that somebody will enjoy these things, but still you are enjoying them by having them, so you don't have this attachment. You are respecting what you have – happy, satisfied, and thankful. You don't go into being very closed, selfish. Family – first sharing is the parents. They share. Then of course will come a new life. Then the circle of sharing becomes a little bigger.

You share together with the children, and when the children become bigger, then of course there are more people to welcome. Children will come with their lovers, friends, whatever. This circle becomes bigger and bigger, that's the natural process. But when you have the feeling that you want to keep the small circle while it naturally is getting bigger – that becomes the tension, the fight. We can also make that small circle even smaller; the man makes his own circle smaller, and the woman makes her own circle smaller. We make our

small circle more or less like a prison wall, so there is no meeting, no sharing in it. Better to have the circle as a circle.

The dharma attitude is to combine dharma and family. Yes, I practice in the dharma, and I am with my wife, with whom I have a child, and the child will carry this dharma attitude, and it is this kind of attitude that will go further and further. Many bodhisattvas are sometimes very funny: they will go around and make many women pregnant, and they are motivated (Lakha Lama laughs) like “playboy” bodhisattvas. It is like that in the old stories: they like to produce more human life, and they carry it on, and their children carry on some of that level of bodhisattva practice. In this way more and more will help – that kind of focus is also there. So that means the circle enlarges the circle.

Let us look at the words “take” and “give.” Unable to “take” - is that mental strength or mental weakness? Unable to “give” – is that mental strength or mental weakness?

So we can agree that being able to take and being able to give is mental strength. If I can take another’s unhappiness on me then I will be happy. If I have sickness then I want to think of that sickness as symbolizing others’ suffering, and I want to share my happiness and riches with them. This process goes on in my mind, and in this way my sickness will give me joy, and I will be willing to share my little happiness with others. That also gives me joy. So what do I gain: unhappiness or happiness? That’s the main thing, the thing we want, happiness.

There is a big difference between surface-level Buddhism and deeper level Buddhism. The surface level is based more on an intellectual or emotional way of looking. When we try to look at the deeper truth this emotional level tries to block us so we cannot see the deeper truth. Therefore when you concentrate the first step is to relax. Relaxation is to not let distracting thoughts disturb you. A few flying thoughts – that’s o.k. – that does not disturb so much – like when you meditate and you think of what you are going to eat or drink – that does not matter, that comes and goes. The thoughts connecting to the root

poisons, they are the real destructive ones: attachment, aggression, and ignoring. We often ignore all the good qualities of a person. The person can be acting out of disturbing mental factors, so it depends on how these sides are dominating a person’s mind. The person is not black or white.

If I care for a person and that person is reacting quite negatively or more destructively I can tell that person “you are reacting in a disharmonic way,” or “you are reacting negatively.” I don’t say “You are a terrible person.” I am not just talking theoretically about this: some years ago I had a little difficulty dealing with a particular person. I had to act quite heavily towards that person. Then he would call me and say “Why are you so hard with me?” Then I said “I’m not hard with you, but I have been hard toward your attitude. It is an attitude I have difficulty in accepting because it was based on being too ‘smart’.” And I had to stick to that. “You as a person I have nothing against, but it is your attitude.” A person can be dominated by the destructive very selfish mental side.

With theory alone it is difficult to develop. You have to connect your mind to the theory and go a little deeper into it. Then you can use your capacity to develop in a more harmonic way. My capacity – I can be very loving – I can also be very aggressive. Both exist in me. So mainly I keep aware that I don’t support my aggressive side. I don’t so much think that I should be kind and loving in a very colorful way, but I focus more on not letting what is destructive in me grow. That is the real practice. It is really deeper truth for me. If you cannot love, that’s o.k. But you better not hate!

I know you are interested in Buddhism, that is clear. Then the way to follow the Buddhist mentality is to put in effort to reduce all those mental factors that fool you. That’s the main practice. Then you are making a clear field where love and compassion can grow. We have to get rid of all these weeds; they disturb!

(Lakha Lama now talks about give-and-take meditation and mentions that traditionally it is advised not to talk about ones practice.)

Lakha Lama:

If you tell someone “I am practising this give-and-take” that can create the attitude “Oh, I am doing some great practice.” This can lead to pride. When pride lifts us up we look down on others. But when you really do this tonglen (give-and-take) you are putting yourself low. “Yes, I want to take others’ suffering on me and share all my happiness in order to comfort them.” You do it in a humble way. That comes when you keep it as a very personal kind of practice. That’s why you keep it secret. But it is not something you are not allowed to tell anyone.

As long as you don’t let it get into pride then you can tell about it. But at least try not to look down: that’s the training. Up or in the middle is o.k., but don’t look down. As an equal way of looking you can say “If I have that kind of suffering how do I feel?” That’s a way to develop understanding of basic equality. Then I can express wishes, think of all the best wishes for others, based on my deeper understanding – not based just on my pity.

Meditation is to be used to get some clearness. Many meditations are formal kinds of meditation, like Guruyoga. You visualize your guru and lineage gurus and deities, protectors. You try to visualize them and try to receive the blessing from there and to let it go into your body. Then you send it from here (Lakha Lama points to his heart) to all the sentient beings as a beautiful light or colors, and then you go into the give and take meditation. You send all the beautiful energy and blessings, wishes, out, and you really want to take all their sufferings in and give the best, take the worst. That’s one strong meditation. It is a very good meditation, and it is a very good practice. When you practice that way don’t be naïve, be firm, not “oh I want to give everything, I want to take all shit back” – not that way. Focus here (Lakha Lama holds his hand on his heart): “yes through the meditation I am able to share.” Now comes the sharing. Give the best and take the worst. Say “yes I will take it and give you the best.”

Student:

Sounds very risky. What happens with that?

Lakha Lama:

You have doubt, o.k. Leave your doubt behind: be very firm and say “Yes, I give the best and I take the worst.” I want you to not just say the words but really be present and go into the real way of looking. “I give all my best. I share. And I want to take all the pain.”

Now we will start the meditation. Begin with the wish: “I wish to share all the best, and I wish to take their pain on me.” Not just a surface wish – you have to go more deep – go to the point of “Yes, I mean it.” You have to reach that point.

(Lakha Lama is silent for a long, long time. Then he continues.)

Now you go into sending out. All your satisfaction, happiness, good karma, all the precious things you have you visualize as beautiful colors going from your heart, and you share with all the sentient beings in need, and keep on sending beautiful light out, never ending. You keep on sharing, and they are receiving. Don’t hold on. Let it be shared.

(Lakha Lama is silent for another long period)

Now we again take all the sufferings from them. You visualize that you are really taking some very unpleasant things, and you are very determined “yes, I want to take it on me.” At the same time you keep on giving beautiful light, and at the same time you are giving you are taking in negative karma, pain, unpleasantness, everything you take in, and you enjoy that you are able to do that. Don’t forget that! Be happy that you are able to do it.

(Another pause)

Now we can say the om mani padme hung mantra.

(pause)

Lakha Lama:

I want you to use this meditation. Go deep into it. It is a very good meditation. I have used it all my life. In this world there is nothing we can hold on to. Everything is fluid, flowing. When you try to hold on you are stuck. In giving and receiving you keep the flow – you don't get stuck. When you are able to receive the hard things then you will have more joy in receiving something nice. It is our demand for something nice that makes the disappointment. Give the best and take the worst!

(A student asks about what to focus on)

Lakha Lama:

You can focus on one single person, or on an animal, or you can focus on where there is war. Never listen to the fear of taking. When that fear comes, say “No, I am firm, I will take and I will give the best and I will get into the firmness.” You might become weak: then you say “I am not going to think anything like these weak thoughts. I am just practising give and take. This is my field now. I am here and keep on because my taking the negative in – or, if not the negative, the unpleasant and painful in – does not stop my sending out. It does not stop it!” You keep on sharing, and you keep on taking: it does not stop your sharing.

Student:

Like you said this morning you are also one of the sentient beings, so you send light out to yourself.

Lakha Lama:

Yes, and the bodhicitta vow means “me and all sentient beings.” Oneself is not left out; it is included.

What do you think? What makes you doubtful about this meditation?

Student:

Kind of fear. And the thing that helped me – I was sitting here among all these good people, so I thought “Why can't you just let it flow?”

Lakha Lama:

When you are alone you think of all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas together with you – never forget that. Then you practice.

Student:

I also used to have fear of it, but when I feel I go more into it then I feel I get stronger. You cannot think of the result of it beforehand. You have to practice it. It is different from what you think.

Lakha Lama:

Yes, don't think about the result, not at all. If you are seeing a sick person and you are using this meditation don't think that that sick person will immediately get up and dance. Then you would be meditating on the result and not on your action.

Just use the action. Are you afraid of taking it?

Student:

I have tried before to do this. My problem is that I get stuck because I don't have the feeling that I am really clean enough to do it well. I am not pure enough in my motivation.

Lakha Lama:

You have a pure area and a doubt area. How much impure area do you have? You tell me.

Student:

Sometimes I get the feeling my motivation is good enough.

Lakha Lama:

O.K. That is good. You have that motivation, and then you go into action. Action is this sending out and taking.

Student:

If I really want to I can't. I want it too much, and then I get stuck: it cannot flow.

Lakha Lama:

What blocks? Can you see?

Student:

Expectations.

Lakha Lama:

O.K. Then we leave that. Just do it. You are doing it. Nobody is

watching you. You leave the area of expectation. You leave the area of fear. Just do it. All right, what do you lose?

Student:

Nothing.

Lakha Lama:

That's good confidence, isn't it? Stay with that confidence. "I do it. I lose nothing."

Student:

But some days it is more difficult than others. You have to let go of thinking that it has to be in a certain way. You have to do it the best you can that day. It does not have to be as good as yesterday. It can be so different with meditation, how it is.

But I have some demands, that is my problem.

Lakha Lama:

But you drop the demand. Really. Keep it away and still say "I am human. I can have some demands. That's o.k." This way you are not pushing; you are in the position of being very flexible, and you can be more yourself, right?

Student: (a different student).

I have this problem with visualization. I cannot visualize light or color. I just go blank. I am just sitting there. It is like nothing.

Lakha Lama:

Visualizing – that is in a way a kind of play. But without visualizing one can be very firm and say “I can share, I can wish all the best, that is o.k.” And then “I would like to take their suffering on me. I don’t mind.” Then you don’t have to go into so many visualizations. Then when you are thinking that way there might come “ If I take this sickness on me I might get sick.” Then you say “No, that is not true.” So this way you keep yourself in the position of a really strong person. And that is straight.

Lakha Lama then talks about a Kadampa practice that combines action and mind, in which the practitioner puts aside a white stone for every positive thought or action and a black one for every negative thought or action.

Lakha Lama:

The Kadampas are quite open, very basic. During the Kadampa time there was not much of ritual. It is very basic, very, very basic, very grounded. When Atisha came to Tibet there had already been some traditions built up – like the Nyingma tradition – with things like very fancy clothes. And he was met by many men with horses. They rode on horses to welcome him, and Atisha, who was a simple monk, saw the robes and thought “Now the Tibetan demons are coming!” And I think there has been – if I should be honest – a tradition built up that added fanciness, and that did much damage to the real Buddhism.

The monastery is not Buddhism. Buddhism is here, inside you. The Lama is not Buddhism. That’s the deeper Kadampa way of looking: everything is here inside yourself not out there. Moral is inside yourself. Honesty is within yourself, and also dishonesty is within yourself. So that means to stay with honesty and good morals and not to follow dishonesty and bad morals. Whether you are recognized as a Buddhist or not has nothing to do with that. So I say one can find a lot of really wonderful Buddhists who are not Buddhists. In the general environment there is too much focus on the outer, and I am

not happy about that. Inner is more important.



9

The happiness of the three realms
is like a dewdrop on the
tip of a blade of grass;
It perishes by itself from one instant to the next.
Hence, it is the practice of a bodhisattva
To strive for the supreme level of liberation,
always unchanging.



Lakha Lama:

Samsaric happiness should not fool us. We have to find a deeper harmony, a deeper happiness. Surface happiness is like dew – it is there, but it disappears. How then to find deeper happiness? What do you think “liberation” means? What does it mean, to liberate?

Student:

You make free.

Lakha Lama:

What is it you make free?

Student:

The clinging.

Lakha Lama:

To make yourself free from attachment you have to recognize the attachment. If you don't know the attachment then you cannot be free from the attachment. There are explanations of many kinds of attachment, of many different levels of attachment. And sometimes you might misunderstand it so that you think that everything you like is attachment – even your liking to become Buddha.

Like, dislike – I don't think that is something terrible in itself: one can be very neutral. “I like tea. I don't like coffee.” That's a kind of very relaxed way of like – dislike. Accept the basic, the immediate

reaction, because that reaction is small, it is o.k. But if I don't stay with the first smaller reaction I begin to add too much. If I like something, that's fine for me. If I don't like something I just leave it. I don't hold on to what I don't like, so I have a lot of space. That more soft, more simple way of looking we can use in our daily life. That way you can be very flexible and say "O.K. I like it." That's fine, and you enjoy it much more because there is no fighting in it. For example, I like tea, and I get one cup of tea after the other, but I don't have to think that coffee is terrible. Otherwise, while enjoying my tea I am not paying full attention but just projecting "coffee is terrible." Then you may add a sort of attachment, and, when you attach, revulsion and dislike come.

When you do not mix like and dislike up with attachment and revulsion, like and dislike become very soft. They don't really disturb you. But when attachment comes toward what you like then revulsion comes toward what you don't like. Still you have the option of leaving it in peace right there. Otherwise you come to hold on to what you like, and you want to get rid of what you don't like, and you begin to have a fight. You are worn out from wanting to get rid of and not being able to get rid of. But the Buddhist practice is not to get rid of but to reduce, not to let it dominate your mind too much. When you start to fight you have two different kinds of projections: you make this one more beautiful than that one, and you try to make that one more ugly than this one. At the same time fear comes up, and that fear reacts toward them both: fear of losing what you like, and fear of not being able to get rid of what you don't like. So that means the fight becomes bigger, and you continue with this kind of fight.

Since the mind training based on Buddhist mind training is to be free from destructive mind, one really has to look into one's mind, how it actually operates, and to really pay attention to that. Then we go more deeply into what is actually going on or what is important to us when we feel we get stuck. If you really want to have deeper harmony do not deny your negative side. Accept that side, those negative projections.

In every being there is a deep longing to be free. Then we make these blocks "I am not free because of this; I am not free because of that." We put up so many blocks and feel unfree because we don't want to accept that this is here and that that is there. If you really go deep you'll have to ask yourself "Who is blocking me?" It is myself, my projections that are blocking me. Are you free?

Student:

No, I am not free.

Lakha Lama:

What is blocking you?

Student:

Attachment.

Lakha Lama:

So attachment is blocking you. Do you need the attachment?

Student:

No, when I analyze I see that I don't need it.

Lakha Lama:

Do you understand that?

Student:

I understand that I don't need it, but I haven't realized that I don't

need it.

Lakha Lama:

To practice Buddhism, don't only intellectually understand something. Take some small thing and get the realization in it, get the deep understanding of it. Then take the next thing and try to gain deep understanding of that. Now look at the word attachment. The feeling behind the word is not wanting to lose this one – the fear of losing – and not being able to get rid of that one. Now tell me, is your focus more on what you want to get rid of or on what you have?

We spend more energy on what we don't want than on what we do want. That's not constructive. We spend much more energy – 75% here and 25% there. That's why it becomes shaky. The deep understanding is: yeah, this one that I like becomes shaky because I am spending 75% to get rid of this other one, and that means I am not taking care of this one fully. When I stay more with my fear of losing, my action to keep becomes a panic action, so it's shaky and not very constructive. For example, I love my wife, but if I am afraid of losing her I stay home and spend a lot of energy thinking “oh, if I lose her, what to do?” I don't want to lose her, and I go around in this kind of circle. So I try to do my best to keep her. Maybe I will try to please her and say yes to everything and devalue or close off my own demands. Or, if I am in a panic and have a lot of doubt in me due to my fear, then one of the doubts could be “maybe there is another man she likes!” Since I don't want anybody to take her over, that adds more fear. I begin to get jealous and watch with whom she is talking and how late she comes home – all those things, you know. I am really burning and burning. I realize “I cannot bear that.” Then I react by being a little tough, binding her in many ways so that she is beside me all the time. That gives safety, and I don't have to think about with whom she is going. But then my own jealousy and need for safety make her feel more and more distant from me.

I am not respecting her truth: I am respecting my jealousy, my fear,

my speculations. So she gets more and more distant, and she feels I am unreasonable, and she might feel that I don't understand her, that I don't respect her. I am not giving space for her – and that is what is needed, more distance. My negative fear is trying to pull her closer, but the result creates more distance – the opposite result.

That happens with many relations: friend relations, all kinds of relations, also relations between human beings and things. Things of course are different – things can't think. But if you are afraid of losing things you don't enjoy them so much, and then you lose the meaning of having things. The result is that you just have more things to torment yourself with. That is why the monks have to live so simply – so they will be less tormented, less dominated, by the mind. Buddhism says that to be free is to be free from disturbing thoughts and tells us how to be free from them. Be realistic and understand that realization means freeing oneself more and more, becoming continuously more and more stable. That's the way to achieve Enlightenment, the way to become Buddha.

So we go to the next verse.

10

When all our mothers,
who have cherished us since
beginningless time, are suffering,
Of what use then is our own happiness?
Therefore, it is the practice of bodhisattvas
to engender the mind of enlightenment
For the sake of liberating
sentient beings beyond limit.



Lakha Lama:

If you give food to the birds and say “for the sake of all sentient beings I want to throw some bread to the birds,” what do you lose? Nothing! You realize: by doing that I lose nothing. Then it is very easy to do it, right? It shouldn’t be something you have to be so high up about. “For the sake of all sentient beings” (Lakha Lama intones in an exaggerated, “holy” self-important voice). If, for example, you go and visit a sick person you have the wish: “I really want to visit all the sentient beings who are sick and in need.” This way the sick person you visit represents all the sick people in the world, and on the karmic level you are visiting millions of sick people. On the physical level it’s limited, but on the merit level it’s millions. So you lose nothing, but actually you gain quite a lot – and you don’t have to spend money on it!

Student:

Why is acquiring merit for your action that important?

Lakha Lama:

Merit has two levels: one level is the material level of attracting the facilities for a good environment for practice. Another level of merit is attracting spirituality. Each level of merit helps the other. Giving food to the birds with a pure heart and with good thoughts might for example create some kind of karma in the next life so that you are born somewhere where you don’t have to spend so much energy fighting for food and thus have no time to develop. It is not as if you give the money and therefore you get money. It is just that you will attain some energy that attracts what you need – the basic

needs, not the luxury needs.

This morning I was driving through a lot of fog. One couldn't see the road clearly, and I was thinking – I always do – that our life hangs by a thread always, just a thread. But at the same time we have a really strong life-force, a surviving-force, and this surviving-force just holds the thread. I really think it is so important to appreciate that we have this surviving-force that everyone has. We should not devalue it, nor should we use it as a kind of pride or anything like that – just have a basic satisfaction and thankfulness.

Student:

You explained one kind of merit. What about the other kind of merit, the spiritual facilities?

Lakha Lama:

Tibetan yeshe – that is “wisdom.” I am sorry I forgot to explain about wisdom-merit. Dharma-advice – to teach and to guide - creates wisdom-merit, and through this wisdom-merit in the next life you will have some basic knowledge that you came with, but on the expression-level you might need to study again. You have the knowledge, but you are not able to express it. For example, if you are born in Tibet in the next life that karma means that you have to learn the language and learn everything. Then you have to find out how you have to express yourself through that language, but still you have some basic points within you which we can call “wisdom-merit.” Or another thing is that the wisdom-merit you gain within this life or the next life will allow you to have the possibility to meet the wise person who can teach you more so that you can practice more, and you can be totally into this dharma. To have both facilities we have to use time now to create – to collect – more merit.

Student:

The meditation this morning – what kind of merit does it give?

Lakha Lama:

It depends on the motivation. The motivation was, you really want to help, you want to share. When you share you share two things; you share all the happiness and joy you have, and you want to share them with all sentient beings. When you have pure motivation each receives; you have a connection to each of them. You connect to them. So you have a good connection, a beautiful connection. For example, in my next life wherever I am born I might meet people I connect with. I will have some kind of nice surrounding. We are still human or whatever, but still there are nice surroundings we have connected to before. So merit is on both levels: the material level and the wisdom level. Because this relation is a pure relation when I meet them this carries on and we will go deeper into some kind of good or dharma or virtuous level. There is something clear about it, but still we cannot describe it.

Why I came to Denmark I cannot describe. Why I met you I cannot describe. Why you like me I cannot describe. So there is something beyond, and for those who don't like me there is also something beyond. When we try to see, to understand that there is something beyond then we are not so disappointed if somebody doesn't like us. We can look a little beyond that. So I say in my daily life if I am facing something hard “this is some karma I have to go through and have to pay.” I accept that. When I am happy I am thankful. I go and light a candle and say “thank you.” This gives me a kind of good balance inside so I am not miserable when something goes wrong. And when I am happy I don't “fly away.”

11

All suffering, without exception,
springs from the desire
for one's own happiness;
Perfect enlightenment is born
from a mind intent on benefiting others.
Therefore, it is the practice of bodhisattvas
To authentically exchange one's own happiness
for the sufferings of others.



Lakha Lama:

Do you really want to be a bodhisattva? (Laughs).
Now you better escape! (Laughs).

Here is one piece of advice. I like the explanation in Buddhism of what suffering is, what pain is: that you don't get what you want, and you do get what you don't want. According to this advice all suffering comes because one wants happiness. We have to understand this more egoistic and selfish joy. The focus is on my joy, and I don't care about the rest – that is the selfish way of focussing on joy. But there is the other way to look at it, to say “Yes, I care for others; that's my joy.” Then you are still not losing the joy. When you say “I want to enjoy. I don't care,” you have joy at some level, but the “I don't care” becomes disturbing. Therefore, by wanting to enjoy through caring for others, you are sharing. You have your joy. You have your own share, but still you share – that you also take as a joy. But sometimes when we try to share, a kind of tenseness is there, we are not relaxed. Remove the tenseness. “I am sharing” does not mean I have to share everything. I can share something with many young girls or women. That does not mean I have to go to bed with them all. Sharing is just to use what you can share without feeling pity or without having demands, just sharing.

Actually we do share a lot. When we go into a train we share the train together. When we are in a bus we share the bus together. So many, many places we are sharing – simply sharing, being there without any special focus. But when we try to focus on “happiness” it becomes more stiff. So it is better to focus on what is relaxed. I can talk to you – no big deal, I just talk. So I relax by talking to you. Then maybe somebody is having a problem with a bicycle. Maybe

I can look and find out something and give a hand just in a relaxed way. Then the other person says “No thanks.” That is also o.k. If that person says “yes,” that is also fine: both become fine for me. I don’t make too much show biz out of it; it is just there. If I do not have the chance to share on the physical level, then I say “o.k.” and share all the best wishes. I want to share my best wishes with whoever needs them. And I wish and I pray: that is also sharing. It is so limited to focus only on the physical level.

We are also lazy about reaching out. If we want to develop reaching out we have lots of chances. When you go to work just say to yourself “In this workplace I wish everybody to have a good day.” So you share your good wishes, your good intentions, with them. Whether they notice or not is not your problem. When you have expressed that wish you will become a little more compassionate during that day. If somebody comes and tries to be a little nasty toward you you remember your motivation, are more calm, and don’t add to their fire with another fire. So that also helps. Help, you know, can come in two ways: help to save – that is one way; help to destroy – that is another kind of help. Help is nothing special in itself. I can help you to become miserable. That’s a quite easy “help.”

Student:

I have thought about this being relaxed about situations. I think that sometimes I am too relaxed, and then I become careless and maybe lazy.

Lakha Lama:

“Relaxed” does not mean being lazy. Relaxed and “active” have to be combined – being active and still relaxed. Too lazy is more kind of being careless – not being active. Relaxed – active and still relaxed – that’s what I like the best. I myself can be very active – still I am relaxed. If things go right, that’s o.k. If things go wrong, that’s

also o.k. Because I am just there, you see.

Student:

But I think sometimes some wisdom is needed to see where one needs to be active.

Lakha Lama:

There are many levels of being active. Basically I look at activity as circulation. Bodily it keeps one much more strong, and being active also keeps one mentally awake. When one is lazy, the body becomes more heavy and the mind more closed. When I am here I am being active by concentrating, by going deep and really doing my best, and trying to get the best out of it. When I can do other things – like working, cleaning, digging, cutting – I try to be active. I try to do. That gives my energy good circulation. If you are asleep and then you wake up with heaviness, and then you go around and then you don’t see anything you can do and then you go back to the sofa again, you stall the energy and don’t use it, and then you become more and more heavy because you are not circulating energy.

At work it is also nice to take the Buddhist advice about equalness: sometimes I can be irritated, and sometimes the other people at work can be irritated – that’s equal, no big deal. Then irritation does not become more irritation: it becomes understanding. You understand. When you do not take the complaints of others as complaints or as an irritation then you go much more deep into what is really there. Going much deeper, and being firm, you say “No, I cannot blame myself, I don’t think I did wrong.” So without having fear or reacting with anger or fighting you express exactly what you need to express, what you can express. Then you aren’t short-tempered. If you are in a working place and complain to me “Why did you do this and that?” (Lakha Lama puts on an angry voice) then I can just protect myself and say “What the hell are you saying?” in this kind of provoking

way. Then of course you can't take my provoking, and you will try to provoke me again, and I will try to provoke you again, so then we are both helping each other to create a more negative environment between us. At that time I am not thinking about helping, and you are not thinking that I am helping you. You only think that I am stupid, and I only think that you are stupid. But who starts it? Both of us are creating this fire.

So when I am conscious about equalness I say to myself "What can happen?" We are human. Even if you come and talk to me in a provoking way, it can still be sort of relaxing to me. Maybe I will say "all right – what to do?" I come with kind of more dialog with you instead of closing off. When I come with dialog you cannot really strike back: you also have to go into the dialog, and since I am not being short-tempered you will feel really stiff about continuing to be short-tempered.

12

If someone, swayed by great desire,
Steals all one's wealth
or incites others to do so,
It is the practice of bodhisattvas
to dedicate to that person
One's physical body, enjoyments,
and virtues of the three times.



Lakha Lama:

Now it's getting worse! (laughter).

If somebody steals everything from me, and I know who it is, then the normal reaction is anger, hatred. But let's go more deep. If you steal everything from me, I become angry with you. Why do I become angry with you? One point is that you are stealing, which is against one of the basic religious morals: Do not steal. In the Buddhist way of speaking it is dishonest to take something which does not belong to you. So I become angry. Another part is "This belongs to me, not to you."

That stiffness makes me very angry, because I am holding onto "It's mine!" Because this very holding onto "mine!" goes deep into egotism. It is easy for me to react with anger and want to get the things back. And when I don't get them I might spend ten or fifteen years speculating on "Why?" and on "He is terrible," and keep making him more and more black. And as long as I am trying to make him more and more black I am also becoming more and more black. So two "black" people are there; it is no longer a one-sided "black," if I add the anger and hatred to it.

Or maybe I say "I want to help him." If I change into this helping attitude and say "Alright, everything you have taken from me is yours," then he will not have the negative karma of stealing. It's a gift I have given to him: so that means that the action that started with what he was taking without being given ends up with my giving to him so that he does not have to have the negative karma of stealing. And at the same time I have the merit of having honestly given something to him. So we have both earned something on it.

Student:

So when you give it away you are not trying to get it back.

Lakha Lama:

No. What I give away is a total give-away. When you give a present it goes out of your hands, you disconnect from it. It does not belong to you anymore. If I give a watch, at the point he receives it it is his, not mine. When you help and give money to people don't look at what they are buying for the money – forget about it. You don't have the ownership anymore. Even if he goes and buys a gun, that's his problem. Truly giving is you give, you are not holding on, no expectations. That's purely giving.

Holding on has many levels: I give you this sweater that can keep you warm – that's my expectation, my purpose. If you then cut it into pieces and use them as cleaning cloths then my expectation is not fulfilled. Then I hold on: "Why don't you respect my expectation?" So that is the difficult part: if you really can't give – then it's better not to give; then there is nothing to expect. When I get something I say "Thank you very much for the gift." I don't know whether it will stay with me or go somewhere else. I just say thank you, straight, and that is nice. When you say straight then people really can digest it. If somebody takes all your belongings and even your husband or your wife, then give it away – and that's it! Because you are powerless: you don't get your wife back, and still you are holding on. It's the same with children.

When I say "my child" it's in a relaxed way, isn't it? Then my child – here you give it a more strong expression, but the child has to be "child" and not kind of belong to me. So it goes with everything: my husband; my wife. It is a kind of dominating, so sometimes I find it difficult to say "my wife." So then sometimes I say "Pia, who shares life with me," and that is a very realistic way of identifying who is sharing my life with me, or "we have children,"

not kind of using this official position as “I am husband and my wife.” It really makes a difference, feels different. And she can also say “Yes, Lakha who is staying with me.” There are many ways to express so that people can understand. Some people ask “Are you Buddhist?” My practice in Buddhism is not my identity. It is not my position. Mostly I say “Yes, I have been studying Buddhism, and I feel good.”

And then some will ask me “What is your job?” and then I just say “I am a freelance lama.” I like that. Because I am not Danish lama to the Danes, because your culture does not have a lama position. And also because I don’t put so much on being a Danish lama as my identity. “I am Tibetan Lama!” Who cares?

Student:

What do you call your identity then? That you are human?

Lakha Lama:

Yeah, I am just human. Sometimes I am just functioning, functioning on many different levels. So you function there in the kindergarten; you function there in the hospital – it’s all function. That is very straight, and it is also more humorous. For ones life I think it is very important to break this stiffness. We still move, still function, but we don’t hold on to these officially stiff identities – we live, that is life. This is my best life philosophy, and I gained this beautiful philosophy one day when I said “Yes, I can accept all my stupidity.” From that day on I did not need to play clever. Our biggest fight is that we have to play clever. Our biggest wisdom is to accept our own stupidity.

If someone takes everything away from you – your family, your wife, steals or takes it by force then you just give up and say “I really wish that person will have more good karma, more good merit,

that this will open up this person’s mind to become a better person or achieve Buddhahood.” That’s a good thing if one can do it. If a thousand kroner note falls out of my pocket, and I come home and say “oh, I lost 1000 kroner,” then the best thing I can do is to say “whoever finds this 1000 kroner I wish that person well. I wish that person will enjoy it.” So then you are not holding on to it; you make a clear line, and then the person who found it will have the ownership of the 1000 kroner. As long as I am holding on to it that person has to go through the karma of taking something which is not given.

The joy of this life has nothing to do with material things. It has not! I like to have a fully relaxed attitude toward material things. Sometimes my altar is filled up with statues, and sometimes it’s empty. I don’t remember whom I gave them to: I just say “take it!” I leave, for example, my garden tools outside. I don’t worry if somebody comes along and takes them. Or if nobody takes them. I don’t lock the doors. I just leave it like that. I mean that’s my attitude. I feel good that way, relaxing and trusting. If somebody thinks they can use my things, that’s fine, then they are also using them instead of them just sitting there. This kind of attitude is very good. I really think so.

Student:

What about revenge, getting even, paying back? And how can I help the other person to behave better so that it won’t happen again?

Lakha Lama:

For example, you hit me once, and then I come and hit you. That is “revenge.” So we each have this anger and keep on hitting each other, and the “revenge” never ends. But I don’t want to participate in that endless process, so even if I’m not using my compassion or

Buddhism – just using the realistic point that it will just be endless, then I’d better stop and go away. When you are hit, take it and go away! It’s not always that we have to think of what Buddhism would say – we have a basic human intelligence. Sometimes we have control, sometimes we don’t have control. When we don’t have control we add aggression, anger, power – all these things together. When we have control, I mean the deeper control, then we have an honest way.

Student:

And you also have the skillful means to show that person – I mean how to help that person not to do it again.

Lakha Lama:

It is important that you don’t give your power to your emotional side. If you have your real power in the heart and not those emotional powers, then you can teach – or rather I don’t exactly say “teach,” but you can really give the right message, that’s the possibility. Some animals do that. They are very firm: “This is the border.” If you try to come nearer you are in danger. Then if the person goes away they will stop. Some animals have this instinct. They will not immediately growl; they just sit there very firm.

13

Even if someone were
to cut off one’s head
Though one is free from the slightest fault,
It is the practice of bodhisattvas
to take all wrongdoing upon themselves
Through the force of compassion.



Lakha Lama:

Here it says to cut off your head. In the West I think it's good to put it as "who breaks your heart." So you just offer everything to that person; you pray, and you wish all the best – that is being a very good bodhisattva.

Student:

So it doesn't necessarily mean here actually being killed – it's just how they say it in Tibet.

Lakha Lama:

Yeah, we take the worst things. When you have overcome the worst things then other things just disappear. That's very smart. All the heavy stuff we take in.

We have this heavy way of looking at it if somebody cuts our head off! But you are not killed: it's our human projection to think "I am killed." But you are not body: you are more deep. The person – yourself – goes away from the body to find a new body. So I can be determined that "if somebody cuts off my head" I really will pray for that person. I wish to help that person. The motivation lies within your consciousness. You have lost the body, but you have not lost your very, very valuable motivation and your karma.

For now I want to emphasize that if you really take Buddhism and the Bodhisattva Way to heart you have to think like this: I am clear that I am not guilty, that I have not done anything wrong. There is clearness and firmness in me, and if somebody tries to pun-

ish me or to cut off my head that person has a lack of compassion or understanding, so, in a way, that person is on a very poor level according to the dharma. So towards that person I use full compassion and love. Then, because of my motivation, my death does not become a hindrance for that person. My death will give some knowledge to that person, and that person can open up, become more intelligent, more understanding, more in the dharma. That is one way to look at it.

The normal attitude if somebody harms me is that I have to explain and prove I am right, and then when the other person doesn't understand what I am trying to prove I become either angry or depressed. In either case I am not staying with my truth, and to stay with my truth is of major importance to me. If I am really confident and clear about my truth then, if another person does not understand it, I understand that the other person does not understand. Sometimes it can become very funny: one says "I understand that I don't want to understand; I understand Buddhism, but in this case I don't want to understand Buddhism." But the important thing for us is to look, to understand, and to be aware of our tendency to ignore the fact that at some level we do understand. I often tell myself: "I know this is not good, but I don't want to understand it. I don't want to follow it up." Then I am taking the wrong steps. Deep down my understanding is there, but I don't follow it up.

I would not say that Buddhism is always a kind of religion you have to follow. When we study Buddhism we can go back to our basic understanding, but what is missing can be the deeper explanation that we get in the Buddhist teachings. So it is good to move between the Buddhist teaching and the basic human understanding we all have.

14

Even if someone proclaims
all kinds of defamation about me
Throughout the three-thousand-fold universe,
It is the practice of bodhisattvas
To praise that person's qualities
repeatedly with a loving attitude.



Lakha Lama:

We have to listen with our ears to both good and bad. We don't know from which side we receive the good. If we knew, for example, that the left ear was taking in the wrong, then we could plug that one and open the right side only (laughter). If somebody's talking negatively about me, who is being negative? That person! So better feel sorry for that person! Because I know myself; I'm clear that I haven't done anything wrong, anything against anyone. But that person is being negative towards me, so if I pray for that person and support that person – who has a good time, me or that person? In this way we care about ourselves – that's the best way to care. If somebody gossips about me, if somebody says terrible things about me, that is negative. Therefore I better pray and not be provoking, just be realistic, so that I have a good time. If somebody says you are wonderful you cannot be more wonderful than you are. If somebody says you are terrible you cannot be more terrible than you are.

Let's go a little deeper. How to handle gossip, that's important. Look at it in a very grounded way. If a person gossips about me, talking bad about me to a lot of people, and a lot of people do not like me due to that gossip, I might feel hurt. But think carefully about "I might feel hurt." Directly I might feel hurt because of the gossip, but my real hurt is "I am missing harmonic relations with others." So that means that, underneath, the deeper longing is the longing for peace and harmony, and that longing is not being fulfilled. Why is it not fulfilled? Because I take the gossip as a hurt. If I don't take it as a hurt then my harmony relation is not dependent on your reaction. Then it depends on something deeper – deep in myself.

Still I can pray for the others. I can wish all the best, and I can see gossip as not gossip, can see gossip as some kind of good message

through which I can develop in an active way. Not that I have to go into changing my clothes or actions, but I can take the gossip as advice or teaching, not as something hurting. That's how I can go deep. And we have that capacity, deeply we have that capacity. But emotions are very critical: emotions make everything go in a very funny way. The Buddhist advice is not to stay on the surface but to get more deep into oneself.

As for the last sentence of the verse, normally if I know a person is gossiping about me I want revenge. So from revenge – those kind of emotions – I begin to gossip about her. But instead of taking revenge I can talk nicely about her, and that will help her not to hold so strongly on to this negative projection. Perhaps she will think that that's the wrong way to speak, perhaps she will have the chance to transform something. Then she still has two options: one way, to transform something so that she becomes more kind and soft; another, that she goes back and blames herself, but that is of course less constructive.

15

Even if someone, amid a crowd of many people
Reveals one's faults and utters harsh words,
It is the practice of the bodhisattvas
to bow to that one respectfully
With the notion that this is one's spiritual teacher.



Lakha (with a smile).

Shall we give up being bodhisattvas? (general laughter).

This has something to do with feeling ashamed. Normally we can hide, we are hiding: then somebody opens our box in front of a lot of people, and so what I hide becomes totally official and on the emotional level becomes heavy, really horrible, like tearing off the skin.

Student:

You think it is easy to hide, but it is not easy.

Lakha Lama:

No, of course it is not easy to hide; we just guess that we can hide. But actually those who are hiding are looked through like through a crystal glass. Hiding is a way of fooling oneself. There can be different levels of hiding. Hiding small things I don't care about. It is when I am doing something terrible on the higher level and hiding it that it becomes a problem for me. So there I am, absolutely unreasonable, hiding. One can say it is a kind of instinct – and at the same time also a weakness. Animals also have a hiding instinct. Sometimes when a dog gets a bone it digs and hides it under the earth. And birds do the same thing. In Tibet we have a kind of black bird (I don't know whether this story is actually true or not) that takes the food, digs it into the earth, and looks up into the sky and “marks” a cloud, and when it comes back the cloud is gone. That bird will never find what is hiding under the earth.

There are different levels of hiding. Sometimes you hide because

the time is not ready, and you can see it's not a good time to be straight. Then, in a deeper sense, you are not hiding; you want to express, you want to say, but you are waiting for the occasion – so that's not hiding. Hiding has to say very deeply “No, I want to hide; I don't want to show it. I would be so ashamed.” This connects with very strong egoism and losing face and all this kind of egotistic mind. So this advice in Verse 15 says that if somebody tells the group everything that you are hiding then you take that person more or less as a teacher. It shows that your hiding is sort of an egotistic hiding but that there is no guarantee, no safety in it. Why is there no safety in it? One reason is that those who have the ability can look at you as if you were a crystal, and you are just being stupid to hide.

Student:

Is it true that the moment you are born there is a plan to your existence, and this plan is according to karma because of your old deeds of your previous incarnation?

Lakha Lama:

I don't look at it exactly like that. In Buddhism it's flexible, it's very flexible. I have the old karma as positive karma or as negative karma. Those are the possibilities. Through my positive karma I have the ability and possibility to purify my old negative karma. So it depends on my actions and my being conscious. When I am conscious I can clear up my old negative karma within this lifetime. So it is not fixed. That's the Buddhist way of looking at it.

Student:

If you are born in Denmark or Greenland, a human or a dog, you can't change that.

Lakha Lama:

Not as a reincarnation. But there is the possibility of some level of energy in which you can transfer your mind into a dog's body. (Turns to Ronja, the dog, and asks) Do you want to experience the human mind? (Laughter).

So one can look like an animal but still have the mind that has the full human capacity. Like the emanations we talk about in Buddhism: Buddha emanations, bodhisattva emanations. To emanate through the dog is to share a lot of love and compassion. If I am a bodhisattva I direct my energy of love and compassion into the dog-mind. That means the dog's attitude will carry that quality and directly help or radiate that quality. Another kind of emanation is "I want to find the dog-body and stay in the dog-body and help," so when I say "I" I don't always have to be recognized by my body – maybe "I" am bodiless – ok.? This bodiless mind enters into the dog form and functions – so that mind has the full capacity, but the outer look is "dog." Buddhism advises us not to blame anyone: you never know who is who! That's the Buddha's advice.

16

Even if someone whom I have cared for
as dearly as my own child
Perceives me as an enemy,
It is the practice of a bodhisattva
to love this one devotedly,
Just as a mother loves
her child stricken by disease.



Lakha Lama:

Yes, that is the normal expectation: we have made all this effort and are expecting something – that they will look at me as if I were something great and sweet, etc.. Then when they come and say one terrible word you get a shock. If you really have given from your true love and compassion you have nothing to expect. If you take care of a child with full compassion and love and don't expect anything then every time the child grows, the child develops, there is satisfaction, joy, thankfulness. Year after year what you gain is more joy, more happiness, more thankfulness – that's what you get.

Suppose I have taken care of someone as if it were my own child, and that person looks on me as an enemy. Then how should I react? Shouldn't I take more care of that person as I would of my own child suffering a very heavy sickness? Otherwise I will hate more and be more negative, which doesn't give anything good for that person or anything good for me, and then we are both in deep shit. You can be straight with the person and at the same time think that this being negative towards each other doesn't really give anything. It is just a waste of time.

So I don't like something; I don't agree. Then don't agree, but stop there. "I don't agree because you are stupid," why should I say that? At the same time you are aware "I am seeing she is stupid. I understand she is stupid, but why should I say it and make it bigger?" That's not being constructive. When I understand she is stupid then I should understand I can't argue with her. But that I don't try to understand. I keep on being stubborn and arguing. Then we both become stupid. I become stupid because I know she is stupid, and still I am arguing. That's my stupidity.

17

Even if a person
equal to or inferior to myself
Defames me due to the force of pride,
It is the practice of the bodhisattvas
to venerate this one
Like the master upon the crown of my head.



Lakha Lama:

You know, we have this way of acting: if someone is more clever and higher, and they really complain about us, then we can take it somehow. But when a person whom we look down on really says something negative about us – it's a little difficult to take. But this is kind of discriminating. If, for example, someone who is very selfish tries to complain about you, what will you do?

Student:

I will complain back.

Lakha lama:

Right – that is most often what we do. Why do you complain back?

Student:

You feel it's unjust.

Lakha Lama:

Unjust. So why do we feel it to be unjust – that means we feel I'm right, you're wrong. Is that right? You complain about me, but I'm right: I can't take that complaint. I feel I'm right, so then I complain back about you. At that time do I realize that you feel you are right? No, I ignore that. It's only because I feel that I'm right that I can't accept your complaint. Then what to do? Complain back or

explain? Complain or explain? What's the best? If I feel I am right then I can stick with that I'm right, and then I can say back to you I feel what I am doing is right so therefore I can't really agree with your complaint – that's another way to deal with it. I am firm about what I feel is right, but at the same time I am not using irritation or aggression toward what you say. The realistic point is that I cannot really understand the other person – that's the thing. So that makes it much more soft, much more realistic.

The person who is equal to you or the person you look down on – you never give a position on the crown of your head to them! If they say something really good you just ignore it. But the person you look up to – even if they say something stupid you think it's really something great – that's a big discrimination. So don't be caught in this negative discrimination; have some kind of equality between the person who is in the higher position and the person who is in the lower position. When listening one has to listen equally to everyone, not use our snobby attitude. Actually, if we go more deep, we can find many people on an equal level who can give a lot. If we are hanging out with someone who just looks clever it's difficult to find much.

In some ways we become more critical; there are some big teachers, then we want to choose them because of their names. But actually we might gain equally from another teacher. What we are choosing then is some kind of prestige.

Student:

You say that we shall be firm and we shall be tolerant to somebody, and at the same time you said here that you should stay away from places and people who are bad. I mean how far should you go in being tolerant?

Lakha Lama:

If I become powerless due to my own unstableness by being with people who are unstable, then in order to gain or to preserve my stableness maybe it's best if I go away from them. But still I can pray for them. I can send love and good wishes for them. It's not like I have to hate them and go away. There are two ways to act: you can say "I hate them, and I can't stand them" – that's one way to look at it – or you can say realistically "what I long for is so different that it's better to go away from them and follow my own longing." But still you care for them. Is that clear?

18

Even if I am deprived of a livelihood,
constantly belittled by everyone,
And stricken by a severe illness
or demonic influence,
It is the practice of bodhisattvas
to take upon oneself
All the suffering and evil
of all beings without becoming depressed.

**Lakha Lama:**

For example, I am poor, and I am sick. I really use my compassion and care, and I say “I accept that I am poor, that I am sick, but still I really want to, if I can, take the sickness of others and the poverty of others on me.” So I am not afraid of taking others’ sickness on top of my sickness. Intellectually you can understand, but now we have to go deeper than that. For example, imagine that you are sick and penniless and have lost all your family – you are totally alone. Then you might think “Oh, poor me! Here I am totally alone and sick, without money and without food.” In this way, you add your psychological poverty and sickness to the physical, so now you are doubly sick. Instead you say “I am sick. I am poor. And my whole family has left me. But it’s o.k. I really want to use my Buddhist practice, so I would like to take others’ sickness on me so that they can recover from their sickness. I want to do that, and I pray for it.” So you are looking at others’ poverty and sickness as more important than your own sickness and your own poverty. In this way your sickness and poverty do not disturb you psychologically because you are focusing more on the sickness and poverty of others, and you want to take it on you. On another level this kind of pureness has great energy and gives you a great karmic result, and you earn a lot of merit. So there is no loss actually. There is no loss!

I have done that practice. I have done it! It is my daily practice. Every morning I pray like that. I love it. I just pray to take it all on me; I am not afraid of it. I think I told you last time that when I was sick I did that very intensively. In 1963 I was sick. I had tuberculosis, malaria, and meningitis all at the same time. I was going to die – and that was fine, and I read about concentrating when you die, about bardo and all that, and then I left the book on my pillow, and I went into this practice, to take others’ sickness on me and wish

they could recover. That was my strong practice. So I had a great time, and I was very joyful and having fun, and those who were standing beside me and helping me didn’t understand me. That was o.k. I had the good time. So this is the basic meditation I have used.

One day my teacher came to visit me. He asked “What can I do?” and I said “If I have done something you don’t like, please forgive me. That’s the only thing I need, nothing else.” I was very clear. I wanted to make it clear. So he had no more to say. I have used this kind of practice since I was thirteen. That particular practice was my daily practice, so I am in the routine of doing it, and it really gives me a lot. And every morning still my starting prayer is “I want to take others’ pain and sickness on me so they can recover.” I am able to do that, very determined, very firm. I am not afraid of it, and I don’t become sick. (Laughter).

Student:

If I say I take the sickness of the whole world I feel that I am boasting. I have promised to do something I am not capable of doing.

Lakha Lama:

No, I am not promising to do it. I wish to if I can. I would like to, but I don’t promise. If it should come, if I get some illness, at that time I will say “Yes, that is what I wished, and I am able to face it.” So that brings up the next step, being able to face it should it come. In a way it is circulation: you really pray with this kind of wish, you strengthen your mind very much, and you reduce the fear. It gets more automatic. The circulation in the body will be more fed by the mind, the strength of the mind, which helps your body and which cleans the reactions of fear and speculation which lie in the body. So you become more healthy. Even though you might get some sickness from someone and become sick, this gives you the possi-

bility of recovering faster because your mind and body are ready to face it, to deal with it.

So we already are building up a lot of stuff in our mind and in our body. I think that at the time I was sick I saved my life this way. The doctors, they gave me up. I came to the big hospital, and they said they could give no guarantee at all. Due to the fever I became not exactly unconscious but crazy in a way. For one week I did not remember where I had been. After one week I woke up clearly conscious, and then I was thinking “Oh yeah, I want to get out of bed and stand up,” and then I fell, so then I realized I was sick. A funny thing then: I had a cup in my hand and I fell, but still I did not break the cup. During that week I talked so many different languages and said a lot of funny things that I don’t remember, so I had been kind of – I don’t know – what you call delirious. I can’t remember that whole week.

Student:

Can you recommend this practice especially for people with sickness?

Lakha Lama:

No, it is for all people, but it is especially good for sick people. It is a very, very beneficial practice – to take another’s sickness and give/share the happiness one has, the joy – to share, that circulation is very good.

Student:

Will that prevent sickness from coming about?

Lakha Lama:

Doing the practice purely will prevent sickness from coming, but don’t focus on that. You have to destroy the fear of being sick. When you have destroyed that fear then you can go on.

19

Though I may be eminently acclaimed,
be revered by many beings,
And possess a fortune
resembling Vaishravana's,
It is the practice of the bodhisattvas
to remain without arrogance,
Having seen how the glory and riches
of this existence are pointless.



Lakha Lama:

Buddha says that one of the biggest dangers for developed minds can be pride, so one should be very aware not to go into pride. Therefore in Buddhism – even if you are developed and have great capacity to remember previous lives and have the ability to be clairvoyant – to see very clearly – you actually are not allowed to reveal anything. At first you might speak with pure motivation, but if more and more people come to you you might become more and more proud of yourself because you have this ability. You might then happen to misuse the ability. The best thing is not to use it even though you can see very clearly. If I can see what is wrong with you I have no reason to say what is going wrong with you. The best I can do is to come up with a possibility, a method, that I can suggest to you. But as long as I have some kind of pride in myself and in my ability, this pride makes me ignorant, and more selfish feelings come up.

Even if lamas or teachers or thousands of people come to listen to you, you first have to do prostrations to the throne you are going to sit on; then you visualize some higher energy, some light-being there, and then before taking the steps to the throne you have to do this (snaps fingers). Don't look at the throne as a material throne; think of the impermanence of the throne: that it is just symbolic, that there is no solidness in it. And when you get up on the throne you have to understand that the use of the throne is to get in contact with a lot of people. It's not there because you are great.

So these many things have to be pure, and with that pureness you can teach. Then your teachings will also be pure. Otherwise it's some kind of pride, it's mixed, and if the teacher does not give the teaching purely the receivers will also get that mixture with impureness in it. And that might also disturb their understanding. So we have to understand that

reputation is impermanent and the economic richness, the material richness, is impermanent, nothing solid, nothing you can keep many lifetimes – no, it comes and goes. It can disappear. You can lose it. Therefore even if you are a very popular person, a master, for example, then a master should understand that in all these material things there is nothing solid, and one should not have this “I am the greatest!” To be equal – that’s the advice to the masters. There are some places where it is said “I am great,” but then there is some purpose in that, so when you have a pure purpose it is not connected to this more selfish egotism. That’s another case.

20

If I do not tame the enemy
that is my own anger,
Subduing outer enemies
will only increase them.

Therefore, it is the practice of bodhisattvas
to tame one’s own being
By means of the armies of loving-kindness
and compassion.



Lakha Lama:

Now you see – love-and-compassion-soldiers, that’s quite clear isn’t it?
There is not much to explain, so we go on to the next.

21

Sense pleasures are like salty water;
However much one partakes of them,
craving will only increase.
Hence, it is the practice of bodhisattvas
to abandon immediately
All objects that generate attachment.



Lakha Lama:

Satisfaction. If you have satisfaction then desire doesn't dominate; satisfaction says to desire "Goodbye!" So then desire cannot dominate, but it just becomes a kind of servant coming and giving the message "I don't think you really like what you already have." So if satisfaction is there then one can say "Yeah, desire, I like that, but I don't need it right now." It's kind of being more firm.

Without satisfaction you don't look at what you already have, and desire takes you over and says "I want, I want, I want." That goes on, and you don't really think about what you have, but you want more and more and more. And even when you are going to die, then there is the feeling of "Oh, I didn't get the things I wanted," so you stay with a kind of very deep dissatisfaction, and then you die at that point. So at the point of our dying if we stay with this dissatisfaction, that becomes a very strong part of dying that can create and lead our life into the life of a hungry ghost.

It leads to this hungry ghost level because you die dissatisfied with material things, because you did not digest the things you had. Being a hungry ghost means that you get things but you cannot digest. You are looking for something, something, something, but all those things you cannot digest. It's not exactly that you have to get rid of those material things you are so attached to, that you physically have to throw them away. You have to throw away the attachment and then say "Oh yeah, this I like very much," instead of saying "Oh, this is very, very precious, and I am so attached to it." Without the attachment you say "Yes, this is beautiful: I am happy that I can be with it; I can use it and enjoy it by having it." Still you respect it. "I like to keep it clean. I don't want to damage it because it is something nice." Then you look at it with respect and you value it, and still

you can accept that one day you can give it away, or one day, if it breaks, that's o.k. Maybe one day somebody steals it, that's o.k., but meanwhile I am enjoying it, and I respect it. So what to get rid of is not exactly the material but the feeling of bondage one can get.

22

Whatever appears is all one's own mind;
Mind itself is primordially beyond
all mental constructs.
Knowing this, it is the practice of bodhisattvas
Not to hold on to any attributes
of perceiver and perceived.



Lakha Lama:

This one is a little difficult. Our mind can create unlimited views, pictures, imaginations, and keep on running with all kinds of fantasies. But when you understand the quality of your mind, that your mind has the quality of unsolidness, of emptiness, then you will not necessarily follow the messages you get from the senses. The senses do give their messages: touching, smelling, seeing, hearing, and tasting – and all the messages they give, all those things they feel, are changeable: they have the quality of impermanence. They are not valuable messages in the sense of being messages of high levels of understanding. All the things we sense with the senses have the quality of emptiness, of impermanence.

I will talk a little on emptiness. “Emptiness” and “empty.” We usually mix them together, “Emptiness” and “empty.” The meanings are different.

Some people understand the word “emptiness” as “empty,” i.e. nothing. But we are not talking about “nothing.” It is not no – thing. It is something which comes from nothingness. We put things as “book,” “clothes,” “table,” “house,” “window.” If we did not focus and label in that way then what could it be! The same goes for our own name – I am called Lakha – when you say “Lakha” – oh there he is! If I change my name – if instead of Lakha I say my name is Lars, after some time you would get used to calling me Lars – “oh there is Lars!” You would focus on the name of Lars. You would recognize me as Lars.

Right now you recognize me as “Lakha.” But then we would kind of by hearing and eye-witnessing and then focusing, accept “oh, he changed his name; he is called Lars.” So that is accepting, and then we fixate on that. But if we do not fixate, then where can our desire come from? There will be no desire. If there is no desire then where

can hatred come from? And aggression? If there is no hatred and no aggression then the mind is quite peaceful. Therefore that method – recognizing emptiness - is also talked about and used in many rituals and many prayers and many teachings. It is a method and recognition that eliminates desire, eliminates dissatisfaction, because dissatisfaction and desire come because we are fixated, we hold on in an iron grip. That's the main point.

When you are free from all this you are automatically on a high level. Nothing bothers you. You are positive at all times. In some ways that is quite easy. But our physical level needs a lot – that level is the level of samsara, and trying to get out of samsara is what we are talking about here. In samsara we are dependent. Even if we say mentally “I am not dependent,” still we are dependent physically. But of course it's much better if we are not mentally so dependent: then our desire is so much lower, our attraction to things is lower, and our aggression is low, and our jealousy and all those other things are low.

23

When encountering a beautiful object,
One should consider it to be
like a rainbow in summertime:
It appears attractive yet is not
thought to be truly existent.
To so give up attachment
is the practice of the bodhisattvas.



Lakha Lama:

When you see something beautiful you shouldn't be attached.

24

The various sufferings are just like
the death of one's child in a dream;
How very tiring to grasp
illusory appearances as being real!
Therefore, when encountering adverse circumstances,
It is the practice of bodhisattvas
to regard them as illusions.



Lakha Lama:

Illusion – everything is illusion! You have heard that everything is illusion! What is illusion? Where is illusion? “Illusion” is also illusion – right? Then there is no illusion, or what? (Laughter). “Illusion” – that is a word used very often in the teachings. Everything is illusion! Is Buddha an illusion? Buddha is also an illusion. Myself also illusion. I think we have to understand about illusion. I wouldn’t exactly say that everything is illusion. I would like to give a little clearer or broader understanding.

Tibetan word for illusion? Could be trul nang.

The word trul is illusion or hallucination: you see a picture while it’s not there, and you recognize what is not really there. So you are holding on to something you can’t hold on to. That is trul nang, that kind of seeing and holding on. I would say that instead of thinking of just the word “illusion” and then thinking that everything is illusion, we need to think of everything as having the quality of impermanence, which means that everything has the quality of change. If we have the view or if we have the picture “I am unchangeable” that is illusion, because deeply things have the quality of change, although we look at them as unchangeable. Like, say, this flower; it was here yesterday, and it still is there. There is some kind of similar picture, but there has been change in it: what was yesterday is not here today – it’s gone. That’s also what we can call illusion, seeing it as unchanged, as just solid. Accordingly, the verse describes how you can dream in the dream that your child has died and you are so sad and cry, and when you wake up your child is lying beside you: you have this kind of misunderstanding, or, it’s a dream, and in the dream you suffered, but when you woke up it was not true.

25

If, when wishing for enlightenment,
one must give up
even one’s body,
So giving up external objects
goes without question!
Therefore, it is the practice of the bodhisattvas
to be generous
Without any hope for reward or positive result.



Lakha Lama:

Now comes the start of the six paramitas.

To give – there are many different ways of giving and different things to give.

Giving teachings – that is one way to give – giving teachings or advice, spiritual advice. There is material giving; then there is giving life or saving life, and to save life is to give life. So, on the more ordinary level, like in Tibet, some people go to the butcher, and before an animal is going to be slaughtered they buy the animal and put it in a safe area so that the animal will not be killed, and at riversides where people buy fish they buy them and throw them into the river again – that kind of saving life. This is quite a popular way of doing it in Tibet. That's another kind of giving.

If we go deep – what is this kind of special practice for giving? Being able to give, that's the mental point – to build up the courage so that I am able to give if it is necessary. Then if it is necessary I am able to give my body to animals – that kind of strength. When you have this feeling of being able to give and not holding on then when the time comes you are ready, and then the spiritual teaching or advice you give will be given very purely. There will be no expectations there and no bondage, nothing. Whether somebody listens to you or not doesn't make any difference: you just give what you like to give. If they receive it or not – that's another matter entirely. When you materially give you give that material in order to help; then of course when you give it's gone, it is not yours anymore, it belongs to the other one, so one should not hold on to it, one should not speculate about how that person is using it now and whether it is being used in the right or wrong way. As long as you watch you have not given: you are holding on. It's good to have this clear line. Then there is not so much wishy-washy speculating like

what kind of karma can I obtain, what kind of karma can I earn, what can I create by giving?

The karma is that in the next life you will have certain facilities as the result of giving. By facilities it's not exactly like we mean “big house, three televisions.” The true facility is that you will have facilities for survival in a good environment so you can continue to practice – Buddhists would say buddhist practice, but I will say “spiritual practice,” so you can continue practicing in your spirituality, like in Denmark, where there are facilities for almost all of the Danish people. Then you don't have to spend all your time fighting to survive. If one really wants to practice here there are more than enough facilities. This also comes from the individual's personal karma. To practice giving you can also go into meditation, to really try to think of the things you are most attached to, and then try to visualize that somebody wants them and that you are giving them and someone is receiving them.

Then come the emotional reactions to giving away: you have to leave all these reactions. Maybe you don't succeed. Then you meditate again and do the same exercise, and then you go on doing the same exercise and finally you reach the point of “that's o.k.” Then you are stable.

Sometimes there are some prayers – we have these kinds of wishing prayers where they say to give away your children or wife and everyone in order to achieve enlightenment. Of course I cannot just give them away, but I can kind of give them away – so that if somebody takes them I am able to accept that and not hold on. Holding on is stopping. I think this kind of practice is quite high level practice. It gives a very high capacity and makes daily life more comfortable.

26

Lacking discipline, one will not accomplish
one's own benefit,
And so the wish to accomplish
the benefit of others will be laughable.
Therefore, it is the practice of the bodhisattvas
to observediscipline
Free of any mundane ambitions.



Lakha Lama:

I think honesty is the best basis for discipline – and then also there are promises, vows. So if I am being dishonest and vow to help others, that's the kind of thing one can laugh at. Sometimes I translate honesty as a kind of discipline, *tsultrim* in Tibetan. That can be translated as “discipline” or to be disciplined – and to be honest is also a kind of discipline. When you have discipline you have a much more broad view and much more control of the things you have to do, and with this discipline you become more and more firm yourself, and you are more aware of your functions. Without discipline it's some kind of flying forth and back. So discipline can be used toward daily actions and also toward the mind – discipline in the mind – so we can apply discipline to all that we have talked about before. When non-constructive thoughts turn up then discipline is what we can use to find more peace.

Be very much aware of your daily discipline, and that discipline also goes with the body, with speech, with mind, with all levels. When you talk to someone be very much aware of discipline, aware of the way you express. Do we trust someone who is not honest? We don't. So to be honest is to be trustworthy. If you ask me to do something my honest answer can be “Yes, I will do it,” or “No, I can't do it.” Both are honest. Since being honest is not just to please, when I say yes/no that shows that I am very much myself and am being firm. I have a clear answer. Or I can say “I don't know. I would like to have a little time to think about it.” That's another way to answer, where one is still being firm. This being firm comes from daring to be honest and from also being able to take honesty.

Sometimes we demand honesty but we cannot take it. That's a big problem. You want to ask, and you want to have the honest answer;

and when you get the really honest answer then you freak out. First we have to learn how to take honesty without being hurt. Honesty can happen in many different ways, for example if somebody does something and doesn't tell me straight, should I be angry towards that person or should I be honest? Because I honestly feel that the person doesn't dare to tell me, my way of being honest is by being understanding. I don't become angry with that person – and I know that also that person honestly wanted to tell me but did not dare to tell me. That not daring is also honest: you want to tell, but you don't dare. Deep in your heart you want to tell, but practically you don't dare to face my becoming angry with you. So you don't tell – your motivation is to hide. You might have the reason that even if you come and tell me I will not understand. You can have true reasons or more imagined reasons. As long as you think you have the true reason then you need to find another way to explain, one that is not so direct, because one can also tell in a different way, as if you were giving me some thin string and then could add the thicker string afterwards. So there are ways of being clever.

Sometimes stupid honesty also exists, kind of being like a bull

The result of practicing discipline and ethics is that karmically you gain more peace in the next life. Then you are not so uncertain and others will not be so uncertain towards you, because you are being firm and being straight and don't have so much fear of being straight. Maybe in my next life I will be surrounded with reasonable trusting people where I don't have to waste my time speculating. I will then be able to use my time more for practice.

Of course there are many levels of this kind of discipline: monk-discipline, layman-discipline, marriage-discipline, relationship-discipline. And discipline in being in nature, in how to relate to nature. You can develop all those different types of discipline, and when you are on that high level of discipline, a level one can call tantric discipline – that's very high – then you are saved from many, many negative actions. So become more pure yourself. That is very important.

27

For a bodhisattva who wishes
for the enjoyments of virtue,
All harm-doers are like precious treasures.
Therefore, it is the practice of bodhisattvas
to cultivate patience,
Free of hatred and animosity toward anyone.



Lakha Lama:

Patience. Don't worry – be patient. Zöpa (Tib. patience). The Tibetan word zö means one who is able to take it. If you really want to develop in practicing bodhicitta all those hindrances you have are so precious – isn't that right? If somebody is so negative towards you it is so precious. "Oh thank you very much for being negative!"

If somebody is being nasty towards me, if I am not patient then I might feel hurt and become negative toward that person. If I am patient enough I don't take it as a hurt, I take it as something I can think about. That's a step. I can think about it and say maybe he is right and maybe he is not – it doesn't matter. That is kind of taking it in a more easy way. I take time to think "Is what that person complains about right or wrong – how do I feel?" Maybe that complaint is right because I am doing something in a not correct way, and that complaint is a great teacher for me. So that's what patience gives: if you practice patience it gives the chance to choose the right things.

Karmically patience gives you a kind of beauty: you are not shocked, you are not speculating, you don't have this attitude of fear, you are patient, and you are more dignified. That kind of beauty comes from being patient. When people deal a lot with fear and mistrust and misunderstanding and things like that their face expressions are always changing. The person who has more patience and who is more firm has a kind of more firm and smooth facial expression, not a doubtful one. These people are more straight, but still the way they are straight has warmth in it.

Student:

What is belief?

Lakha Lama:

One kind of belief – one way is that you want a proof so that you can follow; another kind of belief is "I listen to the teachings. I read the books and really listen from the heart. I feel that what Buddha says is the right thing, and I can use it, and I feel that Buddha is a very honest person who really speaks from the heart, so I can trust." So there are two kinds of belief: one with proof, one with trust. Then when I believe in the Buddha do I make any promise that I will believe in the Buddha and no one else? No! My belief in the Buddha does not hinder my belief in Jesus. Because the quality of trust is the same quality, same level of quality. For example in Tibetan Buddhism you place your master as Buddha, but at the same time you don't have 100% belief that your master is Buddha – do you see that? You make it equal. You give equal position, to your master and to Buddha, right!

The same applies to any kind of spiritual person. I do not need to know intellectually whether that spiritual guide is a high-level guide or what! I don't need to know – for me it's equal. There is a kind of oneness in it – no discrimination, no separation. Oneness! If I don't believe in the Buddha do I think Buddha will be so sad? No. If I believe in the Buddha what do I lose – do you lose something? No! Why do we have to be so skeptical about believing or not believing? It's just a personal decision, nothing to do with the group, nothing to do with the temple, nothing to do with church – nothing! It's personal – just remember that. If I want to believe, and I have the feeling and I have the reason to believe, I can believe. I can believe in you as a Buddha: that's fine for me, that's my decision. It's my own attitude. It does not make me weak. It is not dependency or bondage. It does not make me a loser.

Taking refuge, that's something in the Buddhist tradition, but in the deeper tradition taking refuge has nothing to do with your having to register here that from today you are a Buddhist. As I told you, as long as you really pay the trust and devotion from your heart – then

you are really paying full devotion toward Buddha – you are giving the position to Buddha as your highest master! I am not forced to take refuge. I give to Buddha this position. Sometimes taking refuge is used as a sign of being Buddhist or not being Buddhist. And I don't agree with that. I see a lot of very, very good Buddhists who are not Buddhists. It has to do with your heart, nothing official. I want to express this very strongly to you. If a Buddhist believes in Jesus Buddha will not get angry; if a Christian begins to believe in Buddha, Jesus will not get angry. If Jesus and Buddha can get angry then they are not pure, they are not high enough.

We humans make things too complicated. If you believe in a very highly developed spiritual person then don't be afraid of that person. Just be here. Care about your daily attitude, then practice or meditate.

We also read books, listen to teachings, we have intellectual understanding – these are tools, and we collect the tools. We need to know the different techniques, the different tools, but then we need to act. We have to be active. Who is the person being active, who is using the tools? Me! The tools are not me, but I am using tools to make my life more pure, or I am using tools to help others, I am using the tools to pray for others. The tool itself does not move, for example, a screwdriver – you have the screwdriver, but as long as you don't hold it and touch it it doesn't move by itself. It's me. The motivation I have with the screwdriver, to repair something or to hit someone, like a hammer, to bang the nail or bang the head – that's up to me. All this religious philosophy, understanding of philosophy – these are a lot of tools. But who is using the tool? It's me. The way you use the tool depends on what kind of motivation, what kind of pureness, you have. Good motivation will use the tools in the right way. Impure motivation will use them for selfish reasons – very strong selfish reasons. I know. I have the skill. I can use this. This is a kind of pride; I am Buddhist. I am Christian. I am Muslim. If I use the tools with this selfish motivation I am dominated by pride, and then if somebody says something against me I take the hammer and bang her on the head.

When we practice, when we follow religion, spirituality, the basic point is to reduce the strong egotistic feeling that has to be moved away. “Me” – that's o.k. ME – that is a strong expression of “me:” this is me, so there selfishness and egotism come. Me – that's kind of our normal identity, o.k.? I am Buddhist: that's my normal identity: you can use it that way. I am Buddhist – that is another kind of attitude that comes from egotism and from a discrimination that is connected to egotism. So therefore Buddhist practice has as a basic practice that we should think of all sentient beings as having equality.

Another reason we have a feeling of so many problems in our life is because we hold too much onto ourselves: we are forgetting this equalness, this balance. This me is so important, so then if someone acts in a funny way I cannot take it because I don't want to lose this feeling of importance, of me! Of course we are all important. If I am the only important one and you are nothing then there is no function between us. We are all important, o.k.? So then why don't we make it equal? That's the practice, Buddhist practice, bodhisattva practice, and that's something that really goes into “equal” and understanding and respect. That's basic in Buddhism – not being so egotistic, so self-centered.

It is important for me to talk about what it means to take refuge because it is a very big matter in Buddhism and there are many people who take it as a kind of bondage. I think that is wrong because taking refuge is our own decision; there is nothing forcing us and no reason at all to think in that way. Once a woman asked me about this: she was interested in Buddhist philosophy, and she was a Christian, and she did not know what to do. Then I said “You just continue being Christian; you don't have to feel you have to be a Buddhist, but still you may study Buddhist philosophy.” So you can study Buddhist philosophy even if you are a Christian or a Communist. Fine! Philosophy is philosophy. Belief is belief. Devotion is something different. So there is nothing to be confused about. As long as you look at it as being bound to a group then of course the confusion will come from that. True, when we talk about religion we mostly focus

on the differences between the religions, between the philosophies. Then we are not really talking about the religion; we are talking about the traditions. It's just tradition. I often say "Buddha, he was not Buddhist. Jesus, he was not Christian." But we small stupid ones talk about it like that.

Let us develop all these basic qualities we have: calmness, peace, understanding of equalness – let them develop. Let us not only focus on ourselves but also care about all others. That's one practice I like, as I've told you: Give and Take. So share all the pleasure with all others: take all the suffering of others on oneself. I want to use this practice as a meditation. Every time you go into meditation you might have doubts like "don't do it!" So when you take on others' pain don't focus on your family or friends. No! Go more for strangers whom you don't know and who you still know have lots of suffering and pain, really try to send the light to them, to send all your pleasure, all your happiness, all this good energy you have. You send out light, and then you receive some sort of light from them through which you take their pain and suffering on yourself, and you keep on sending and you keep on taking, giving and taking. Don't be afraid, don't fear taking. Don't hold on; just give and take.

I will say some prayers. You just meditate, o.k.? Imagine that you are surrounded with a lot of sick people, poor people – then use your compassion and care and love. So send a beautiful light – all those beautiful things you send out and they are receiving, and you take their sickness, physical sickness, mental sickness, karmic weakness – all this you take on you. There is some light you are receiving from them, and you take it and keep sending beautiful energy to them and enjoy that they are receiving your happiness. They are receiving your loving energy; they are receiving your compassionate energy. So just enjoy, and you can also enjoy that you are able to remove their sickness and take it on you. Enjoy that also.

Lakha Lama then recited

*Until I reach enlightenment I take refuge in all the Buddhas
And in the Dharma and all the noble Sangha.
By the merit of accomplishing the six perfections
May I achieve buddhahood for the benefit of sentient beings.*

*Lord, not veiled by any fault, white in color,
Whose head a perfect buddha crowns in light,
Gazing compassionately on all beings,
To you, Chenrezig, All-seeing One, I prostrate.*

Followed by many repetitions of the mantra om mani peme hung. Then Lakha Lama recited a prayer in Tibetan. Here follows his translation of that prayer into English.

*I pray to Buddha and my Guru
That I am able to take all my mother sentient beings`
pain on me,
That I am able to share all my happiness, love and
good karma with them.
Bless me that I have the strength to do so.
I wish that all sentient beings may have joy
and happiness.*

So that's the prayer I say every morning, and I think about it. It gives one more relaxation in the daytime, even when you work, whatever you do.

Before we go on I want to say a few things more about Verse 25, about generosity.

Give – When we say "give" we might focus on the poor and those who are really in need, but we "give" not only to the poor ones or lower ones – "give" has many different levels. For example you give offerings to the spiritual beings – that's one kind of "give." The

offering, the material offering you make, is mostly symbolic, but the true giving has to come from your heart. You have this strong wish – this will power or whatever you call it – and the strong wish transforms into strong action. The action is the visualizing. First you have a piece of cake like this (picks up a biscuit from a table next to him) and – this is just symbolic – I visualize this material thing as filled up with all the beauty of the world. All the beauty in the world I wish to offer to the Buddha and the bodhisattvas – that kind of wish. So I have this very good visualization. Then you think of the beings who suffer, who don't get enough food, or who need comfort and need support. But since we are dependent on this body we cannot travel around the world and meet all of those we don't know, so we work on the level of mind to visualize all the beauty and all the needs, and try to think "I am giving, and they are receiving."

Is this some sort of play, or is it the real thing? I say "it's not play." What you wish to give, even if you don't have it, that's o.k. – you have very good intentions, though you don't actually have everything. You go into your mind and create everything you don't have, that you want to give. Then this level of energy and this pure motivation create a space where they receive something if they are open to receiving. And at the same time I am relating to them with love and compassion.

Let's go into that relationship. Ordinarily a human relationship is very much based on seeing the person, talking, dealing with each other – that kind of relation. But actually even these relationships all come from my mind. The mind may relate towards one person as a friend, towards another person as a person one is having a discussion with – there are many types of relating beyond the physical level. We use that capacity of relating through the mind as a way of relating to the whole world. When you think of the world, the beings, there is no reason to think only of the ones who are poor on the material level. People who are very rich have power and can create lots of negative things, lots of conflicts that are misusing that power. So their poverty is in not having the Dharma – in not having the view of the truth, in

not having the view of honesty. For example, if we think of Saddam Hussein: there are many who hate Saddam Hussein, but when we hate Saddam Hussein are we helping him to save himself from his hatred, or are we adding to it? In practicing Buddhism instead of adding the same quality – hate – you just use compassion. I don't know who Saddam Hussein really is – I have to be clear about that – but from my point of view, from my understanding, he is someone who did a lot of terrible things and so he created a lot of negative karma, and so he might suffer a lot in his future lives. So I will not hate him. I will not be negative. I just want to help him, to send him some good energy that can communicate with him so that something that is hidden in him – love and compassion – can grow in him, like when you see there is a seed, and then you come with a handful of earth and a watering can – love and compassion – you put the earth there, and then you water. So that seed that Saddam Hussein basically has can grow. This is the best way to help, the best way to give. Because when this seed grows all this ability he has can be joined together with that plant, and he can transform into a great person because he has the basic capacity.

If you really want to follow the Buddhist philosophy, practicing Buddhism, then you have to look at it this way. If I hate his hate then he has to hate my hate. It is more or less like I pour water into water: then you can't separate – it joins. The bowl will fill up more. We are helping to fill up more hate. So don't help that way; help another way. That's the Buddhist way to look at it. That's our very best gift, and whether he is receiving it or not that's not our business. To be oneself and give – no expectation – pure motivation – that's enough. So what is he otherwise receiving? More hate, less love. If everyone hates you your love will disappear. Then you will go into hating others because they are not giving space for you. But if you are very firm and strong with your love and compassion then it does not matter if others hate you. So long as you are not strong you will leave your love and compassion kind of at the bottom, and you will use other negative abilities for – what? That's the Buddhist way of

looking.

Student:

I fully understand what you are saying, but isn't there a practical problem with criminals in prison? What to do then?

Lakha Lama:

Criminals – from the Buddhist point of view criminals are connecting to the basic ten unvirtuous actions, killing, stealing, etc. These are the crimes, the ten different crimes. These crimes – on one level they are connected with bad habits that may be from the previous life. You can also call them mental poison, what in the West you can call mental sickness. But they can't stop it – right? Of course there is nothing new in all this: thousands and thousands of years ago there were criminals and punishment, and all these things still exist.

But I have been thinking, maybe the good thing is for the government to reduce the number of prisons because to build up so many prisons creates more criminals. When there is some kind of strict punishment prisoners will react in negative ways. They go against it and do something that is illegal. Instead of just looking through those iron bars maybe they need to get many different courses, courses mixed up with different kinds of philosophy or other kinds of interesting things. That would be the sort of punishment they would have to have: to get these courses. So then they might find out something interesting that might save the rest of their life.

As for your question, whether or not to punish, there are two types of motivation: to punish with anger or hate – negative punishment; or to use the punishing attitude, but with the motivation based on compassion.

If we have done something wrong, regret is the basic purification. I am not very happy about using the word “guilt.” I like better to use the word “regret.” With “regret” you can do something. “Guilt”

is something you are just wearing, a metallic and heavy thing – you can't move it, and then you give up and just stay in that guilt feeling. Because I think the words we use mean a lot, we are better off using the word regret. Regret gives you a chance to act somewhat differently and responsibly. Still there is also something a little heavy and stiff even in “this is my responsibility.”

As for fear, if you are not afraid of the fear it has no power. When you are afraid of fear you give the power to fear and you stay with weakness. Fear in itself is not so bad. It says something important. It can give a message to be aware of possible danger.

As for discipline, you can go into very strict discipline, or into softer discipline. I stay with a kind of more soft discipline. One of the more basic disciplines that I stay with is that I never try to harm anyone purposely – that's my basic discipline – to stay out of the harming attitude. If I happen to harm, that's not my fault. If I walk I might step on an ant and squash it. I don't blame myself for that. I can blame myself only if I see the ant and then take a stone and smash it. It's a matter of intention: with intention – without intention: that's what matters. If I happen to harm or cause misunderstanding without intention then I will say that that was coincidence, but I am still caring.

Some Buddhist people go to the lamas and get teachings, initiations, and make a lot of vows. First one gets excited and has very fresh motivation; one thinks one can promise, and then one cannot keep the promises. You want to be disciplined, but you have not been examining deeply what your deeper discipline says so that you see what kind of discipline you can connect to your deeper discipline. It's very important to do that. So when you go to the lama and the lama says you shall do this and that and this and that, then I think the best thing to use is what you can connect to your own discipline. Then you can say “Yes, this I can manage, but the rest I will try my best to follow.” That's the honest way to look at it. Then you will not fool yourself. You won't just say “Yes, sir!” The lama is gone; nobody is judging what you are doing – right? It's only what comes out of

yourself. By not being honest you are fooling yourself. Discipline and honesty have to go together.

Student:

You talked before about attachment to what you are doing. In a situation where another person comes and irritates you unexpectedly and you suddenly give a response, shouting at that person, and after that – five or ten minutes after that – you suddenly realize “well, I have done, I have said, something wrong to that person. I have been upset.”

Lakha Lama:

That time you were not contained, you were emotional – right? You shouted – right? After some time you realize that only regret will clear up everything. With regret then you need to act, to clear up. So maybe you can go and say “I am sorry” – I mean on the physical level – “Sorry, I was just in a panic. I was just emotional, and I am sorry.” If there is no possibility of saying that directly one can use meditation: think of that person, visualize that person in front of you, and say “I am sorry. I want to clear things up. I regret.” You don’t always need a physical meeting – in order to purify you can visualize.

Regret reduces bad karma, but if you regret and don’t act it does not reduce it so much. Regret and action together reduce negative karma. In Buddhism, as I told you, one can purify millions of previous lives, purify whatever bad actions we have done. We have that possibility here in this life. But it’s not enough to clear up the past; one also has to care about the future – these two ends we have to hold on to. So how to stop this bad habit of shouting at people? For me it helps to think “why should I shout – I can explain without shouting,” to trust that I can explain without shouting. When we have trust then we see shouting as a waste of time. You can look to see if you

have something to say before you say something, and make what you have to say more contained and precise. Don’t use too many words. Too many words sometimes create misunderstanding instead of right understanding. So it’s better before you speak to try to make it more simple and more contained. About anger and hate, I really don’t know what to say. I have experienced strong hatred when I was young. I have worked on it, and I really think hatred is useless. By now I really don’t know what hatred is. I really can’t understand it.

Hatred is one word. We can focus on another word: non-agreement. Non-agreement is acceptable. It’s a little easier to accept “We don’t agree.” So then you don’t try to raise a feeling of hatred; you are on the more practical level of not agreeing or of misunderstanding. Those kinds of words, if you can take them in, might help you not to have to deal with hatred, and maybe anger might not come so fast because we can accept non-agreement or misunderstanding more easily. Hate is something that has the destroying feeling – very strong, you really want to destroy the other ones and their belongings and their surroundings. You really want to make a big mess. Before you make a mess there you already have a total mess in you! (Laughter).

Student:

So then you try to give your mess away?

Lakha Lama:

Yeah, it will never end – your mess (Laughter). Oneself hates the other one, and oneself is having a horrible time – and the other one is having a great time – that’s unfair!

(Then Lakha Lama talks about the Buddhist altar behind him and describes the symbolism of the objects on it.)

Lakha Lama:

I just want to describe what's here: why there are so many bowls and funny things. This is something basically to feed the senses. You can see 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8 things. First is water: the first water bowl symbolizes water to drink; the second is water to wash the feet; the third is flowers (Here the people in this house have put something else in that doesn't belong – Laughter). After the flower you go to the next bowl where incense is for the sense of smell. Then comes the fifth – candle or butterlamp, whatever (Tibetans use butter lamps) – that's for the eye. Then comes perfume – that one is supposed to be perfume, for the nose; then comes food – food is for the tongue, and then (8) comes music, for the ear. But the music one is not there – it is missing. But all of it is meant to feed the senses.

Basically the function of the senses is to protect the body and to feed the body. For example, the eye has the ability to look at something in the distance: if you see some danger then the eye can give a message – be careful! – there is something wrong. Then the ear – it can also give a message that there is something good or something wrong that has sound. It can give that message so you can take care of the body so that you do not face this danger. Tongue works with taste; to some kinds of taste the tongue says “not good” so that means tongue has the function of sensing what suits with your body, what the body can take or not take. And the nose is quite similar with smell, old or fresh, that nose can know. The tongue has to touch and then taste – the nose you don't have to put into anything. Nose has a little more distance you see. All senses actually help keep the body in a better form, keeping you away from danger and not taking in something which destroys the body.

Then of course there are the bodily sensations that say which sensations are suitable to your own functioning and which sensations are not suitable. Like when you are in the cold, and the body then says “Now it's not so good, put a little more clothes on.” When you are in a hot place it says “It's too hot; you need to take a little more

clothes off.” That kind of message. These are the basic senses. In Tibetan philosophy we say the five senses are a physical thing like a camera, a material thing, but that material thing is connected to the mind, so we call it eye-mind, ear-mind, etc., and because there are these five different functions of the mind we have five different types of mind; you can call them eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness – all functions of the conscious. These kinds of consciousness connect to satisfaction and desire – both. When the sense-consciousnesses are connected more to satisfaction than to desire the way you sense things has more to do with basic matters of survival and less to do with being critical. For example, when people can afford more they become more critical about food, about clothes, about everything. And those who don't have this critical outlook wear the same clothes every day and are perfectly satisfied. This shows that these message-senses can be connected more towards desire or more towards satisfaction.

To have clothes at all or not – that is something on a moral level. There are different moral levels – so these nature people who are supposed to go naked – if they wore clothes that would be bad morals. So whose morals are they, these morals of covering the body, of not being naked? Of course the real purpose of clothes is just to keep the body warm. Otherwise it's just a different way of culture. For example in Tibet women can have their upper half naked: it does not mean anything. But they have to cover their legs. But here you show the legs and you cover the breasts. There are different morals. But this also has to do with some kind of projection, with sexual projections. In the East I think there is less sexual projection on the upper body, more on the lower part of the body.

Anyhow, (Lakha Lama turns back to the altar) to offer – that means to offer to satisfy the senses. Therefore we have these different symbolic offerings, and I think Hindus also have the same thing. Washing the feet is something very much in the Hindu tradition. Children will come with water and wash their parents' feet and decorate them with

flowers. We also have that. With these offerings you make symbols of all these things, and then you pray and read the text or say it by heart, and then you make the offering, and this is symbolic. Then you visualize the offering as much larger than what you put there. In this way you create more of what I can call “karma,” or also call “collecting merit.” There are two types of merit: one based more on material merit and one based on wisdom-merit. To read a holy text creates more merit-energy on the level of wisdom. Physical offering creates merit so that in my next life I might have better material conditions. That’s how Buddhism explains it. O.K. now we go on to Verse 28.

28

Even the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas,
who accomplish only their own benefit,
Are seen to be as persistent as those extinguishing
a fire burning in their hair.
It is the practice of the bodhisattvas
to master diligence,
The source of all qualities, for the benefit of all beings.



Lakha Lama:

As you know, there are two levels of Buddhist practice: Hinayana and Mahayana. Each practice has the goal we call Nirvana – but “nirvana” is different in each of them. In Hinayana the goal is one of focusing more on oneself and closing off all the negative and negative thoughts and to stay in this more one-pointed way or stay in that kind of empty circle. Emotions are gone: not using emotion and not using all these speculations and all these disturbing thoughts, and then one stays with this total calmness and meditates on it. In Mahayana you use your intellect and your practice, combining these two together. You don’t just escape; you face everything, and in the Mahayana when you come to high-level tantric practice then you take in what you would normally say is not good and transform it, and what you take in becomes useful. When it becomes useful then there is nothing to fear because you have the ability to transform it and use it. Therefore in tantric teaching you can take the jealousy path, the anger path – there are different levels – we call them “paths” – so you deal with that.

Student:

Can you give an example?

Lakha Lama:

Yes, I can give you an example. Let’s say jealousy. Jealousy doesn’t

stand alone: there are a lot of other feelings connected with jealousy. Jealousy becomes the main figure we can point to, but the power of jealousy is not just the jealousy-power. In jealousy you discriminate: “I don’t have what you have.” Then desire, anger, and a lot of other feelings join with jealousy, so it becomes “I don’t have what you have, and I can’t take it from you,” and that becomes much more powerful. When it becomes more powerful I go into a new level of planning. The planning is not only “I want to gain what you have;” at the same time I want you to lose, I want to gain. Instead I say within myself “I will take the jealousy to my positive side in competition with my negative side.” Then my positive side is functioning to reduce negative power, and I am gaining more power on my positive side. On the surface level it might look as if it were still jealousy, but the real result is different. Then I use this jealousy and find all those points on the negative side that are helping to make my jealousy strong. Then I transform each of those points – for example there must be hate in it, so I transform the hate into love, and so on with all these points. That means that the power is still there but the quality is different. That is a kind of practice.

Then you can go into your internal system, into the chakras, the energy channels. In our internal system there are many different channels. Some of the channels get used for the more compassionate or loving side; some of the channels can very easily be used by negative thoughts because they are more sensitive in attracting the negative functions. One needs to go into a practice to know the channels, each single channel. And then one needs to have the power to lead the positive energy through all the channels and all the chakras. By leading that energy and repeating, repeating, repeating in that way, those systems we have in our body which normally easily attract negative feelings are trained into more easily attracting the positive and in resisting the negative feelings. In this way what is “hanging” in your body becomes clean. Then only the mind level remains as important. The body-level does not automatically demand this kind

of negative food any longer. Tantric training includes that kind of training.

Student:

Are you saying each channel has specific qualities? Can you, for example, point out the channel which operates with compassion?

Lakha Lama:

There are many channels. I can say that the central one (analogous to the spine) is empty and is “handicapped,” and that there is one channel on each side of that, a white one and a red one, basically male and female: the love and compassion channel, and the wisdom channel. These two channels bind the middle one. (There are seven such bindings – seven chakras). These two main channels bind the central one, making knots around it. So this middle one is, one can say, “handicapped.” With tantric training you loosen these knots, so that male and female energy can get union through this middle channel – a very high level practice. That has nothing to do with normal physical sexuality. Nothing! The orgasm we are talking about, high-level orgasm, is when you are able to unite these two energies through this middle channel. That is the highest orgasm, some total knowledge of emptiness.

Student:

When one reaches Hinayana nirvana then is one liberated and outside of the wheel of samsara?

Lakha Lama:

No. not even in the Mahayana. In the Mahayana we talk about bodhisattvas – the ten bhūmis (stages or levels), the ten bodhisattva bhūmis, ten different steps. When you get on the seventh step, the middle of the seventh step, then you are free from samsara. Up to that you are not; you are in samsara, and you try your best. So what kind of level can you reach? How can I know I am on that level? You have to come back and see what kind of stability is in you. Unshakable – for example you cannot really experience anger or hatred – that kind of stability. Then of course you are on a level free from that. Then there is a level of giving where nothing stops your ability to give; it’s kind of more natural there – so then you would be on that level.

Student:

On what level should one be able to know that one is outside of samsara?

Lakha Lama:

That’s the Seventh. First is the Six Paramita practice – that’s the first six levels. When you are very stable in the Six Paramitas then of course you come to the seventh level, which is another kind of practice. There you go more into practicing emptiness, so there you can have some level of knowledge about emptiness that is very stable. At that point you have no karma: you are not forced to reincarnate in samsara, but still you are free to reincarnate in samsara if you want to: you can decide by your own will. You are not forced.

Now let's talk about diligence. I connect diligence with patience. How to be patient? We really have to know how. Sometimes we can say "I am so patient; I don't give a shit about it!" That is not patient! Sometimes we can mix up patience with laziness. We sit on the sofa and have coffee and say "I'm patient," while watching football. Patient and active: they have to go together. You are really active to help, to do, to practice, but still you're patient, you are not saying "Oh, I've been meditating seven days, and still I don't feel anything." There you lose patience. Patience means that you are not just waiting, you keep on going. When you keep on going you are taking steps every time you take a step, so when you look back you have come a long way. If you focus only on the goal and not on taking steps you do not reach anywhere. You are here and the goal is there, and you look back and you have not come any step further, so that's why you don't take action. Action and patience: they have to go together, and diligent means not giving up easily.

Not easily giving up – that sounds like it means one should be stubborn, but stubborn and diligent I don't think go together. Stubborn is one thing, and diligent is something else. "Diligent," it's like you are very diligent doing things. You are diligent in helping, so you are not afraid of failing. You just keep on being diligent. And when you are diligent you are collecting a lot of knowledge, karma, or merit – all this you are collecting, and so somewhere you become more rich – in the karmic bank. So we need to open a new bank, the Karmabank. (Laughter).

Now I will give you an example of how to work diligently with hatred. As I told you, hatred is not only one point, it is several hundred negative emotions, so there I use analytic meditation and try to recognize how many negative emotions are connected to this hatred. Then I use that meditation to try and isolate one negative emotion with the very stable feeling of "this emotion is nothing useful." On the other hand, each negative emotion has a positive side. (e.g. often the demand behind anger is "I want you to do the right thing").

Therefore I can transform that negative emotion into its positive aspect, and then I don't see it as a negative emotion that disturbs me. Using negative emotions in this way I stay more peaceful and calm. I try to develop one point at a time. Then hatred is itself basically nothing: hatred itself is transformed into the loving side.

Then I take the next step, to deal with anger: what the consequences are of uncontrolled anger, what kind of karmic result, how many negative emotions are connected with anger. We can also go into the times we use anger, what kind of disturbance, what kind of blockage comes up on our physical level as well. That goes with anger, hatred – all that is negative. When you mentally clear up all this, your physical channels and blockages clear up too. This belief I have very strongly. So I can say to people who have cancer and are sick – try to focus there, where it is, and be positive and work on clearing up those blockages. If the person really goes into it it will give a result.

I don't know if I told you about this woman in a group. She had been in my meditation groups many, many times – for five years at least – and she had cancer, and of course that was before she knew that she had cancer, and she really wanted to take refuge, and I gave her some kind of meditation instruction. She is an artist, and she was meditating every day, and then one day she found out that she had cancer, and then she asked me what to do. I told her about a kind of visualizing and about drawing the blessing energy into it and that it goes through the channels and clears up the cancer. At that time she had a tumor, and it was quite big. In the hospital they didn't have time to operate immediately, but she had to be operated on before Christmas.

In the meantime she had been working a lot by herself. I told her that she should accept her death and not to worry about the children: they have their own capacity to grow up, that she had to trust in that – and that she was not leaving them, but that she had to accept

the limited time. So she reached the point of accepting her death, and she felt free within herself. Then before Christmas she went to the hospital and she had to have the operation. Before the operation they took an x-ray picture, and the tumor was gone, and the doctors couldn't believe it. But when they compared the new picture with the old picture – the tumor was not there. That's how it can work: if you really go into it and trust – it can do a lot. This is just a small example. So it is not the body that is always making knots or tumors; our mind is making them.

And then another kind of story. There was once a Tibetan shoemaker, and when Tibetans have to change the thread they put the needle in their mouth. One day he forgot where he had put the needle, so he thought he had swallowed it, and he became terribly sick, and he was going to die from that sickness. Lying in bed he said “O.K., I am going to die,” and he made his will and everything, and he was ready to die, and then looking around he saw the needle hanging on the drawer where he'd hung it, and he was so happy about seeing it that he recovered. That's one story.

In another story there was a Tibetan king who became very, very sick and was going to die. Then he asks a Tibetan doctor who was a very respected doctor and says to the doctor “Now you have to cure me. I do not want to face the danger of this illness: it is threatening. If you don't cure me your head is gone, cut off!” The doctor can see that there is no medication for the king's sickness – there is no medicine. So the doctor is very scared and just sits there. Now you need to know that Tibetans are very dirty: we don't wash much, so then the doctor happens to rub his hand on his forehead and then rolls the dirt on his fingers into a pill and then says “O.K., now here is a pill that can cure you. If this one does not cure you then you can kill me.” The king took it, and the king recovered. Later the doctor wrote in the medicine book “it has nothing to do with herbs; it has to do

with belief.”

If you believe, my dirt can cure you!

Student:

Could you say a little more about transforming the negative feeling into positive feeling?

Lakha Lama:

We should not think that transforming is so difficult. For example - there is something Kim does that I don't like, o.k.? So I stay with this negative feeling about what Kim is doing; then I want to transform it. I do not deny that I am seeing that he is doing something wrong, but then I look at the other side, at the good things he is doing. That means I am directing my force or energy of mind towards the good things he is doing, and in this way my focus towards what he is doing wrong becomes less and less, so I can accept “this not-so-good is o.k., but the good he does is much better.” It's of much more value. So we can be friends.

Another way of looking at it: the person has two sides. Instead of blaming the person you can talk about these two sides. Then there is a good chance I can tell Kim “I think this kind of attitude is wrong, but that kind of attitude of yours I like.” Then he is not blamed. I am speaking straight about some of his attitudes, but I give space for Kim so he can look at his own attitude – that's another way. So we can look at it that way. Do we say “I am anger?” Do we say that? No! We say “my anger.” Do we say “I am compassion,” or do we say

“my compassion, my jealousy, my love”? – we have these two sides with us.

If you can use your anger, why can't you use your compassion? What is wrong with that? Since I can use my anger I can also love. That gives me more balance and more confidence. Why do we lose confidence? Because we think we can only be confused and unstable and we don't trust the stable side, that ability that we also have with us. Nobody has to give it to us. We have it. So let it grow! Let it develop!

Within one lifetime one can really have growth of spirituality – very high growth! One does not need to fly; one can still walk and bike. Unshakable mind. Still you are seeing, you see, you understand: somebody has a different attitude, somebody else has another different attitude, someone is doing right things, someone is doing wrong things – you see it, and still you use your compassion – not kind of keeping them at a distance and hating them.

If somebody is doing something negative they don't stop what they are doing because of my hate. But maybe my compassion gives a chance that I will be able to connect somewhere. Because who does not like to be loved? Everybody wants to be loved. Everybody wants to have someone who is really honest with them. We all want that. Nobody wants to be cheated. Mostly when we get conflict it is because the conflict is based on someone's not being honest with us. Of course I can demand that you be honest with me, but then I also have to put the demand on myself that I should be honest with you. Then both sides meet. If I only keep demanding from you, and I am being dishonest, we are not meeting, we are colliding. These very simple things can be used within the family, between couples, between children and parents. Children very much like things to be straight and that you are straight. They really like it and respect it. When we just say “sweet talk” they don't really like it. I tell you

straight they think we are devaluing them, that we are putting them down, they have this confidence because they know, they are able to understand, they can function. When we are saying “oh poor little you” then they really are feeling “Oh shit!”

29

Having understood that clear seeing,
fully endowed with peaceful resting,
Completely destroys negative emotions,
It is the practice of bodhisattvas
to cultivate a meditative concentration
That truly transcends the four formless realms.



Lakha Lama:

Shiné (peaceful resting) – something used to gain this very stable mind, undisturbed mind. You can use a simple way of practising shiné. You just look at the light of a candle, and then you “close off” and take the light in until you have become very stable and don’t need to look at the candle; you can just visualize or have this very stable picture in your mind. That’s a simple way to practice. Then of course that leads into more visualization. For example there are some methods in which you visualize the figure of Buddha. You don’t take in everything at once. First you take the Buddhaseat and try to get used to that, then you move up to the knee, then til here, here (gesturing), then here, and finally you have the complete Buddhafigure that you visualize without any difficulty. So stableness is a kind of shiné practice, something you become more stable in so that you can make use of it.

One way to practice love is to think about equalness: all beings are longing for peace and harmony. They do not want pain and suffering. In the same way that you visualize details of forms you can go into some particular detail concerning pain and suffering. For example, there is one point you feel hurt about and don’t like. You examine that point and think of another person who would also not like to have that kind of pain. Then go deeper to see clearly that what you don’t like others also don’t like. Since you want happiness and peace others want that also. You can go into more specific points to get a more stable understanding. So instead of trying to examine everything you can use shiné to take up a single point. As for hlagtong (clear seeing) – that leads to realization. You are not just building up – such as “I don’t like the pain; they don’t like the pain” – that is something you

train in in shiné. But hlagtong means you already have this very clear understanding of equalness. For example, if we use this object, this Buddha figure, then with shiné meditation you are focusing on this statue. With hlagtong you come to see more beyond that: you don't need to see it as a Buddha figure – you see much more beyond as if a true Buddha were there. Then you go into a more special way of looking at his knowledge, his beauty, and at the many different kinds of radiance. So you see that, and you don't mix it up with the figure, the material figure. Hlagtong means you see beyond.

Student:

But you always have to go through the material statue to go behind?

Lakha Lama:

You can go through that. It depends on your abilities. If you have a very clear and stable mind you might have the ability not to go through that, but to go directly to a kind of meeting Buddha or seeing Buddha. When you are seeing Buddha – then of course there are many levels – first you see Buddha as a human form. Then maybe you go more beyond: there is nothing you can touch, nothing you can hold, but there is some kind of pureness behind. So there are many levels on which to see Buddha – this last one is the formless level.

We can divide samsara into six realms (God Realm, Jealous God Realm, Human Realm, Hungry Ghost Realm, Animal Realm, Hell Realm). Another way to divide samsara is into three different categories: dōpa, zug, and zugme. Dōpa means desire-world, zug means form-world, zugme means formless world. The first two, dōpa and zug, are form worlds, and the last one, zugme, is a formless

world. The beings attached to the earth are in the dōpa world; the beings who have form but are not attached to the earth and are above the earth are in what we call a kind of heaven where the gods have the facilities and the beauty, and all needs are met there – and these beings have form. That kind of heaven we call “heaven with form.” Then above that there is another kind of heaven we call “formless heaven. That is zug me (formless). There are four levels of that formless heaven. So this samten – this “meditative concentration” – has to be beyond these “four formless realms.” So “realm” does not mean exactly the physical field but means ability or capacity. So this meditation or concentration has to develop beyond samsaric ability, beyond samsaric capacity, because samsaric capacity is shakeable, not stable. You have to get real stability – so that while your body is in samsara your concentration energy or ability is beyond samsara.

Student:

So that means that even if a thousand lightnings are happening in front of you you are still concentrated.

Lakha Lama:

Yes, unshakeable.

Student:

Is it mainly through hlagtong that we can transform our disturbing emotions?

Lakha Lama:

Hlagtong is more unshakable. Shiné is the preparation toward hlagtong. Hlagtong means you are not getting stuck; you go much more beyond and are realising. Hlagtong is more realizing rather than trying: not trying – realizing! Much more beyond. So hlagtong, more realized, can be for example like a Buddha figure: first you try to get really used to concentrating on the figure. Then, when your realizing comes, the material figure disappears; there is another kind of realization, so you don't need the material figure. If you concentrate on impermanence: first you look at this book and try to focus on your knowing that this book can be burned and disappear – that kind of focusing. Then you no longer see this kind of solidness in what is around you.

Student:

So this is a way to transform disturbing emotions?

Lakha Lama:

Yes. Let us say, for example, you try to work with “desire,” and then you bring in impermanence: desire is coming and going; it really does not give anything solid. When you realize the impermanence of desire then you realize there is no use for desire, that desire is projection and entertainment. But there is nothing in it. Then you have hlagtong! So when you connect these kinds of realizations you have a lot of realization. Then you use the wisdom of all this

realization. You say “I gained this wisdom. I know it.” It becomes a stable knowledge.

Student:

You said before that if you deeply concentrate on an object then that object becomes transparent. What do you mean?

Lakha lama:

It disappears.

Student:

How shall I understand that word “disappearing?”

Lakha Lama:

I'll give you a very simple ordinary example. When you are really deeply falling in love with a girl first you are very focussed on how she looks and all that. But then if you really appreciate her you add all these qualities together and go far beyond how she looks, so that her looks in themselves don't mean anything special, but it is the quality beyond them which is what mostly attracts you. A statue does not mean anything: it's just good for the senses to get used to, but then you go much more beyond. You much more understand the quality behind it, and then that quality is not quality in the sense of material

quality – it's something totally different.

Student:

But do you need to have any knowledge about the object when you begin the concentration?

Lakha Lama:

If, for example, you concentrate on Buddha, first you have to have some knowledge of Buddha – I mean the true Buddha.

Student:

Can I meditate on a spot on the wall instead?

Lakha Lama:

That you can do as a training to have stableness and then use that stableness toward many different objects or subjects – for example a figure as an object, impermanence as a subject, or anger as a subject. So you kind of “go” – reach much more beyond.

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Lacking knowledge, the five other paramitas
are not sufficient

For the attainment of perfect enlightenment;

Hence, it is the practice of bodhisattvas
to train in knowledge

Endowed with method and beyond
conceptions of the three spheres.



Lakha Lama:

The level of wisdom has to be beyond samsaric wisdom, not a dependent wisdom: more of an independent wisdom.

31

When not examining one's own confusion,
It is possible to have the appearance of a Dharma
while doing what is not Dharma.
Therefore, it is the practice of bodhisattvas
to relinquish
Their own confusion through continuously examining it.



Lakha Lama:

That's what I keep talking about – one has to judge for oneself. I once was at the Niels Bohr Institute, and I had a discussion with a physicist, and we talked about the invisible, and I said there are invisible ones, and he couldn't believe that because he is a scientist, so finally I asked him straight "Are you visible or invisible?" Then he thought a little and said "Oh, yes, my body, I can see my body." So I said "the body I can see. I'm asking "you," – are you visible or invisible?" Then he thinks "Yeah, maybe I am invisible," so he agreed.

On some level we know. There is some sort of level of invisibility; somewhere we ourselves are invisible – otherwise we could not cheat anyone. We could not lie, we could not show something on our face and have something else behind. Because we have this confidence that "if I don't show, I am just being innocent. They will not know me." In that way this confidence can cheat ourselves, so therefore the advice is: if we are not aware that we are just tricking and cheating ourselves, then we are cheating ourselves. Because mostly we think "I can change your view," but at the same time I am hiding something: I am cheating myself. So that means I don't know how much I am cheating you and how much I am cheating me. Maybe I am cheating myself much more than I am cheating you.

For the religious person or the master practicing the religion, the dharma, it's very easy to show holiness outwardly while inwardly not being that holy. If you have the pure motivation that by your attitude more peace can be created in other people then of course even if you are not pure inside, you have good reason to appear like that – that's an honest reason. If the reason is "then they will look

at me as a high person and respect me or give me money," then all these reasons are egotistic reasons. This is how monks and spiritual masters – I mean those who are practicing to be masters – who are not highly developed, are in danger of fooling themselves. So always be aware of your inner quality; be conscious, don't just act and fool. You fool yourself!

32

If, due to negative emotions,
one speaks of the faults of
other bodhisattvas,
Oneself will become corrupted.
Hence, it is the practice of bodhisattvas
not to speak of the faults of those
Who have entered the Great Vehicle.



Lakha Lama:

We call these bodhisattvas gyalse “son of Buddha” because they grow up with Buddha’s teaching, so Buddha’s teaching and dharma teaching are as father and mother for the bodhisattvas. We also talk very much about the three kayas: the dharmakaya, the sambhogakaya, the nirmanakaya. As for dharmakaya – the bodhisattvas are sons of dharmakaya. I don’t know so much about Christian philosophy, but the God that you talk about in Christian philosophy is maybe something that can be looked at similarly to dharmakaya – but Christian philosophy does not put it that way. Dharmakaya does not have an image, like there is no image of God.

33

As quarreling back and forth
in order to gain honor and wealth
Degenerates the activities of learning,
reflecting, and meditating,
It is the practice of bodhisattvas
to give up all attachment
To the households of family, friends, and sponsors.



Lakha Lama:

This is one of the biggest dangers for the monks and monasteries. It's really dangerous. On one side it is to preserve the culture and to preserve the dharma and to build something where one can collect people who study there, but on the other side when it becomes transformed into having a more attractive, more decorative, and more economic function then of course smart business ideas turn up and there is fighting for sponsors and trying to be smart to get more sponsors. So it can happen that 80% of the functioning is focussed on economics. Within the 20% that is left there is something pure – but how much purity is there if things go like that? This is the danger, and Buddha has told about that very, very clearly. Somebody once asked Buddha “who will destroy your teachings?” and Buddha said “my own disciples.” It's the same with Christianity. Who will make this kind of very flat Christianity? It's Christ's own disciples, the church.

34

Harsh words disturb the minds of others
And cause the bodhisattva's conduct to degenerate.
Therefore, it is the practice of bodhisattvas
To give up harsh words,
which are unpleasant for others



Lakha Lama:

When you use these rough words actually you are losing your dignity. You look ugly. You have a lot of words to express yourself, so you don't need to use that kind of language. People will sometimes say "You stupid pig!" Why do you have to say "pig?" Then one girl says "Well, sometimes it really satisfies me to say 'pig.'" Then I said "if you can't help saying 'pig' then you can say 'you're a cute little piglet.'" The rough word doesn't really help anything, and if I say with anger "you are a stupid dog," then of course I am creating more negative karma for myself. "He is one stupid dog," I say. I am trying to create a picture with my anger, and that picture is a dishonest picture, and that means I have to face that dishonesty within this life or the next life. There are two different ways I can face it. One way may be that someone will say to me "you stupid dog," and I will have to take it. The other way is that I might myself feel like a stupid dog. (We use "dog," but I don't mean that a dog is something inferior.) So if I say "you son of a bitch," then I will come to feel this karmic pattern: I will feel like a son of a bitch. That is a kind of feeling where I punish myself. So don't use wrong words, hurting words, but use something more dignified – that's much better. We have words enough; we don't have to find extra words to make ourselves more ugly.

35

When habituated to negative emotions,
the antidotes can
hardly reverse them.

Therefore, as soon as attachment and so forth arise,
It is the practice of bodhisattvas
to, in the moment of mindfulness,
Take up the weaponlike antidote
and destroy the negative
emotions.



Lakha Lama:

I have talked about that already. We have this habit. We have had different habits. Now we need to enter into another habit.

36

In short, whatever I may do throughout my activities,
I ask "What is my mind doing?"
Thus, it is the practice of bodhisattvas
to accomplish the benefit of others
With continuous mindfulness and conscientiousness.



Lakha Lama:

When we do something for other beings – we lose nothing. The only point here is that we gain something in helping others without any expectation. We are not losing. By thinking of others we gain more happiness within ourselves. If I am sick or if I'm poor, instead of thinking of my poorness I try to think of those who feel much more poor both economically and psychologically. I really feel: use compassion and pray for that person. Then my poorness is nothing, so I feel much more happy about what I have and much more satisfaction is coming back. If I'm focussing only on me, me, me then of course there is always something missing, always poorness is there. Then life is misery – really life is misery. Think of others and life becomes more rich, I can tell you – that's very straight, very honest.

37

In order that all the virtue accomplished
diligently in this way
May clear away the suffering of limitless beings,
It is the practice of bodhisattvas
to dedicate all virtue toward enlightenment,
With the knowledge
of the three spheres' complete purity.



Lakha Lama:

That is the dedication. I have said that one should dedicate – rejoice and dedicate. Even if I just see one insect in the street and it's going to be driven over by a car then I take it and put it in the bushes and say with a good feeling “O.K. I saved this life for the sake of all beings, and whatever good karma there is in that I want to share,” that kind of more natural feeling. On the one hand you share, and on the other hand it is a deposit. But “deposit” we should not confuse with bank deposit. It is something you have, and you don't think about it – you just share, you just share, you should just share. You don't think “I am depositing.” Just leave it there.

Sharing – we can't live without sharing. Even on the practical level we share. Every day we share. To share you don't need to know with whom you share; you go into the shop; you don't know the shopkeeper, but you are sharing; you get something; you give something. You are sharing. Two different things: you get something, and you give some money – sharing. That sharing is – if you look more closely at it – a sharing of ownership. I go to the shop and I buy this thing, and I pay the money. When I receive that thing then the shop has no ownership of it. I have the ownership. The money I give – up to the point I am paying I have the ownership of it. When I pay it the shopkeeper has ownership of the money. We share all the time, material things, mental things, good and bad thoughts and feelings. If you go into the street and you appreciate someone you are sharing something positive.

You see someone and you think in a little funny way, then you are

sharing funny feelings. Every day you share! Then share something good! To share – that’s like when you walk in the street, when you see someone who looks sick or down – like that – then you share your wishes: “I wish that person – the sick person – might recover.” I pray. Then you are sharing, you are not waiting to give and receive something, you are simply sharing. If you pray for a sick person do you become poor? You’ll become happy, feel some kind of satisfaction and so become rich on the satisfaction level. You don’t become poor. Then why don’t you do it? You think of all the beings in the world and share. We don’t become poor: why don’t we do it? On the karmic level we are creating some good karma, so that’s something. If we really think in a realistic way we are losing nothing.

Student:

Does Vipassana lead to full enlightenment?

Lakha Lama:

I think it’s a very big help for enlightenment, but it itself is not enlightenment. It’s a tool for enlightenment, a very good tool – that I must say.

What we search for in Buddhism is some kind of method that we add to our basic understanding. That is a good way of searching. Otherwise, when you are searching for spirituality maybe it can be for something you can hang on to, more or less like a spiritual drug. Some people look at it that way. They get too much spiritual drug

and they are “high.” So because you take it as a drug you do not connect with your own abilities.

So anyhow we have been spending time together, and I have tried to speak from the heart according to my capacity, my abilities. I don’t say I am great or that I am clever. But I just want to deal with realistic points, and the important thing is to combine intellect and heart together with this kind of spiritual and dharma practice. When you combine them with your heart you don’t have to use a whole book. Just pick up one point and get used to it, become more stable, and then take the next step, then the next step, then the next step. Beforehand we should not say “Oh I can’t do that.” That’s a stupid way of talking. Why not try? We should not be afraid of being stupid.

During our time together you gave all your efforts to understand more deeply, and I gave all my efforts to go more deep, combining human nature and Buddhism. All this merit makes good karma. Now we will share that with all other beings who need the comfort, who need the support, who need more energy. In the heart we need to have this attitude of “Yes, I want to share!”

