

Kalachakra for World Peace Graz 2002

## TEACHINGS BY HIS HOLINESS THE 14<sup>TH</sup> DALAI LAMA ON:

### The Middle Stages of Meditation

by Acharya Kamalashila,

### The Thirty-Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas

by Ngulchu Thogme Zangpo,

### The Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment

by Lama Atisha Dipamkarashrijnana

Day 2, October 16, 2002

Yesterday, when we started explaining the *Stages of Meditation* by Kamalashila, we studied the Buddhist concept of interdependent origination in a grosser form. In general, when we discuss interdependent origination, it has different levels – the grosser level and the subtler levels. There are also differences between different Buddhist schools of thought in terms of profundity of the interpretations. But what we have studied here at the beginning of the *Stages of Meditation* is the concept and the meaning of interdependent origination which is equally accepted by all Buddhist philosophical systems. The interdependent origination, as we have studied here, was seen in the context of cause-and-effect relationship, which primarily states that the happiness that we experience, as well as the sufferings that we experience, arise from their individual causes and factors. Therefore the happiness that we experience and the sufferings that we experience can be changed if we change the causes and factors that are responsible for experiencing happiness and suffering. Thus, this whole concept of cause-effect relationship or karma should be understood within the general context of the law of causality, that there is a general process, or a way how cause-effect functions as a natural phenomenon, as a natural process of the law of nature. It is within this context of the general process of functioning of cause-effect relationship that human beings commit certain positive deeds and negative deeds in relation to their mental emotions, in relation to certain motivations. And this is known as karma in the way we primarily understand it in Buddhism.

Here it is important to understand two things very clearly. First of all, the cause-effect relationship in general has nothing to do with the karma of sentient beings, it is just the flow of a law of nature. And secondly, within the context of this flow of the natural law of cause-effect relationship, when a particular action is committed due to the motivation of sentient beings, then this is what is known as the karma that is so much talked about in Buddhism. So just as certain types of causes produce certain types of results in the general process of the law of nature, similarly the happiness that we experience and the sufferings that we experience also have their source and origin in certain positive factors and negative factors. Since happiness is something that we want, it is important to cherish and nurture the causes that are responsible for producing happiness, and since suffering is something that we all do not want, it is important to identify the causes and factors for that and try to reduce and eliminate them.

It is extremely important to realize that, although we do experience suffering and happiness both on the physical and on the mental levels, those experienced on the mental level are much more important. And here it is essential to understand the factor that disturbs our mind. This disturbance of the tranquility of our mind is termed delusion in Buddhism. Delusion is defined as a thought which, when arisen in our mind, leaves us totally disturbed, unhappy and agitated. It is something that induces harm, it is these afflictive emotions that in turn produce a result, and this result is the experience of suffering. In short, if

you transform your mind, there will be happiness, and if you don't, there will be suffering.

With regard to the question of transforming the mind it is important to understand that this transformation should be done in an orderly and systematic manner. Likewise, when we engage in the spiritual practice, the stages of the spiritual path have been taught in analogy to three individuals with three different levels of mental capacity. The process of following such a spiritual path in stages is a very reliable and stable path.

When we talk about the three stages of the path in relation to the three individuals, it [Kamalashila's text] simply speaks about one stage of the path, which corresponds to the beginners' stage of the path. When you first engage in the spiritual practice of the path, you should undertake the first stage of the path, then proceed to the second stage, and then to the third one. Even though the higher levels of the path are much more difficult to practice, provided you have followed your practice in the earlier stages of the path, because of having laid a firm foundation during the practice of the first and the second stages of the path, it will be much easier to undertake the higher spiritual practice. In this way the path will also be very stable and very reliable, and the experiences that you will cultivate will also be very reliable and will be genuine, valid experiences.

If, in the absence of the fundamental practices, you try to reach out to higher spiritual practices, even if you feel like developing certain superficial experiences, they will not be reliable at all. Therefore this process of undertaking the spiritual practice stage by stage, as taught by Atisha, is extremely important. Of course, with regard to the terms of the three individuals, these terms are found in Asanga's text. At any rate, if you undertake such a spiritual practice stage by stage, the speed of the progress of your spiritual practice will be much quicker.

With regard to the happiness that we are trying to achieve, it can be condensed basically into two main objectives – the first is in relation to obtaining higher states like the life of a human being, and the second is the achievement of total liberation and enlightenment. What we first of all need is to achieve a good human rebirth, this is a kind of temporary need, and through achieving such a higher state of life like that of a human being we can then proceed towards achieving liberation and enlightenment. This is exactly what is being taught in the *Precious Garland* by Nagarjuna, where it says: "For temporary need you should achieve a higher status like the life of a human being, and for ultimate goodness you should achieve enlightenment." And then Nagarjuna explains the method by saying: "For achieving a higher state of life you should cultivate faith and for actualizing definite goodness, like that of liberation and enlightenment, you should develop wisdom." Of course it is a general feature of Buddhist practice that all the practices of development of methods, like compassion, faith, bodhicitta or altruism and so forth, must be supported or assisted by wisdom. Therefore, in one of the texts one reads about two types of development of faith – the process of development of faith in the case of a person with less intelligence, and the process of development of faith in the case of a person with sharp intelligence.

In the case of a person with sharp intelligence, this person would first analyze the teachings by himself or herself, find out about the faults, the advantages, the disadvantages, its temporary and ultimate benefit, the purpose of such practice and so forth. And having thoroughly understood the teachings he or she will then be able to develop a strong faith. This kind of faith is the genuine process of development of faith for a Buddhist practitioner. Therefore it is said that the development of faith must be assisted by the development of wisdom.

The same point is being explained in the *Four-hundred Verses* by Aryadeva, where it says that the non-meritorious practices should be stopped first, secondly you should stop self-grasping, and finally you should stop all types of wrong views. Here Aryadeva is explaining how we should engage in the practice stage by stage. This means, in the beginning you should stop all non-meritorious actions that would project you into a negative state of life, and then, secondly, you should stop self-grasping, because it is the self-grasping which is the root cause of our birth in samsara, in the cycle of existence, and it is this self-grasping, which is also the root of afflictive emotions. Therefore, in the second stage of practice, you

should try to eliminate the self-grasping together with its seeds, and by these means you should achieve liberation, which is merely the absence of obscurations to liberation, and finally you should also destroy all the wrong views.

This means it is not enough just to remove self-grasping and its seeds, you should also remove the imprints left behind by such self-grasping, because it is these imprints which act as obstructions to achieving omniscience, enlightenment. In order to remove such imprints, one must meditate thoroughly on selflessness by using countless analyses and reasoning and logic, and such kind of analyses should also be supported by the accumulation of countless merits. Aryadeva then sums up the point by saying: “The one who engages in such a systematic practice is a wise person.”

And this is exactly what is being made clear by the three stages of the path in relation to the three individuals as explained by Atisha in his *Lamp on the Path*. In his text Atisha also speaks about the need to take refuge and so forth, because when you engage in the practice of the stages of the path relevant to the individual with the small mental scope and you engage in the practice of avoiding negative deeds and accumulation of positive deeds, there should also be genuine trust in the teaching of the Buddha. It is in this context that you are asked to develop strong faith to the teaching of the Buddha – to the Buddha, to the Sangha, to the Dharma – and also to the infallibility of the cause-effect relationship. Furthermore you should develop a conjoined practice of a calmly abiding mind and special insight and by these means you will be able to develop a strong positive counteracting force, that will eliminate self-grasping with its root cause, the seeds and imprints. Such is the process of the practice explained in the three stages of the path relevant to the three individuals with different mental capacities.

The *Thirty-Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas* starts speaking about reflecting on the preciousness of human life, how difficult it is to be obtained, and likewise about reflecting on impermanence, death and so forth, and it also explains the process of taking refuge to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. All these points are explained in detail in the *Thirty-Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas*. It would take much time to explain each of these points in detail, but the principal focus of these teachings is that, having found a precious human life, it is extremely important to achieve the purpose of such a precious human life. And in order to achieve the purpose of this human life, it is important to know the path by which we can fulfill this purpose, the meaning of this human life.

The best way of fulfilling the purpose of a human life is through hearing, thinking and meditating on the teachings of the Buddha. But what hinders and what obstructs the practice of hearing, thinking and meditation is the mental distraction, mental excitement, and therefore the text also points out the necessity to undertake practices in a place of isolation, without being distracted physically and mentally, and it also explains the necessity to rely on a fully qualified spiritual master. For a sincere practitioner it is extremely important to rely on a fully qualified master, and for this reason the Buddha himself has taught extensively about the features, about the characteristics, the qualifications, that must be fulfilled by someone who wants to be a spiritual teacher. He explained the qualifications necessary to be fulfilled by a teacher of monastic discipline, the qualifications that are to be fulfilled by a tantric teacher who wants to become a lama and confer the initiation. All these points were explained in much detail by the Buddha himself.

Hence for those of us, who are seeking a good lama and who want to rely on spiritual guidance, it is extremely important to examine first the qualities of such a spiritual master. It is not good at all to rush towards everyone who has the title of lama, without doing any analysis and investigation. In the beginning, when you are not very sure whether a lama is reliable or not, you can simply listen to his talks and attend his teachings, regard him as a spiritual friend, and seek advice and instructions from him, but there's no need to regard this person as your root spiritual lama. If you regard someone as your spiritual lama and later on face some complications, this is not good at all. In the beginning it is therefore extremely important to analyze and examine the reliability of that lama. If the person is a reliable and fully qualified lama, in whatever way you examine that lama, he should always be found correct, reliable and a compassionate lama, he should be externally pure and internally pure. Having found these qualities in a

lama, then you can regard such a person as your lama, and then you can enter into receiving certain vows and precepts, receiving certain initiations and so forth.

For this reason the beginning of this text explains about the need to take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Out of these three, the main object of refuge or the main protector is the Dharmaratna. The Sanskrit word dharma refers to holding the identity, and in this case the word dharma refers to all phenomena, because each and every phenomenon holds its own individual characteristics and identity, but here we are not talking about dharma in that sense. Here we are talking about the Dharma in the sense of a practice that would help you, protect you not to fall into negative states of existence. This means that undertaking such a spiritual practice will help you not to fall into a negative state of existence within the three realms. Therefore, here the actual Dharma is the true cessation and the true path of the four noble truths.

When we talk about the true cessation, true cessation refers to a quality of cessation of certain negative faults, which have been eliminated by developing positive counterforces. It is not just the absence of something which was present at the beginning, because it is a natural trend of all impermanent phenomena that they will come and go. Here we are talking about true cessation, which is achieved, which is cultivated and realized, through the effort of an individual practitioner in the sense that the cessation will not be achieved, unless you cultivate certain positive counterforces. If you do not develop these counterforces, the negative faults will continue to abide within your mind. It is only through developing such positive counterforces that you are able to remove those faults. Thus, this state of having removed, having eliminated the afflictive emotions is called true cessation. And when you achieve such a state of cessation, then you have reached a state where there will be no falling back into the negative states of existence, and what induces this state of cessation is the true path. There are many different types of paths, but when we talk here about the true path, it primarily refers to the path, or the wisdom, that directly perceives emptiness, perceives the ultimate reality. Therefore it is this true cessation and true path, which are the actual object of refuge.

In order to develop such Dharma, such a true path, it is important to rely on the guidance of a spiritual teacher, the Buddha. Therefore the Buddha is also treated as the ultimate object of refuge. And likewise we also take refuge to the Sangha. Here, Sangha refers to all the spiritual practitioners who have achieved one or the other level or form of the true cessation or the true path. It is important to take refuge to this Sangha, because they are the examples in our spiritual practice. So it is these three objects of refuge – the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha – which a Buddhist should wholeheartedly rely upon.

Further on in the *Thirty-Seven Practices* certain other practices are explained – in addition to taking refuge one should also develop a genuine conviction towards the infallibility of cause-and-effect relationship. This point is explained by certain verses like “seeing the pleasures of the three realms like dew drops on a grass”. They are transient and impermanent, and in this way we should understand that everything we experience within samsara basically has the nature of suffering. It is through reflecting on the nature of suffering, particularly reflecting on the conditioned suffering, that you will develop an aspiration to achieve liberation. And the method to achieve liberation is the practice of the three trainings – the training of morality, the training of meditative stabilization and the training of wisdom.

These practices entail the practices of the individual with small mental scope and the individual of middle mental scope, but these practices related to the individuals with small mental scope and middle mental scope are necessary preliminary practices for entering into the stages of the path of an individual of great mental scope.

If I try to summarize the essential points of what I have been explaining, it is important to understand that our mind is afflicted by what is known as the three poisons – attachment, anger and ignorance. The extent to which we are disturbed by the arising of these afflictive emotions will become quite clear if we give it a little thought. In our daily life, for example, we can easily observe how our mind gets disturbed when attachment arises, or when anger or hatred arises. However, the problem is that we normally tend to see

the arising of attachment, anger and so forth as a natural process of mind and we do not see anything wrong with these things. For example, when you encounter misfortune or a negative circumstance you develop hatred and anger; when you encounter a favorable, pleasant situation or object you develop attachment.

Therefore it is extremely important to understand that what makes us totally unhappy is due to the arising and presence of these negative emotions like attachment and hatred. If you give it a little thought, it will become very clear how the arising of hatred and anger makes you unhappy. As soon as anger arises, the peace of your mind is totally disturbed. In the case of arising attachment it may be slightly different, because attachment arises with reference to an object, which seems quite dear to your heart, which seems quite attractive, however, when you let your mind sink totally into that object due to obsessive attachment, then again gradually your mind will be disturbed. For example, the more you are obsessed, or the stronger you have attachment to a particular person or a particular object, the less you will be able to tolerate minor irritations or faults committed by that person. Thus, not only when we are widely awake, even in our dreams it is the presence of attachment and hatred, which totally disturbs the peace of our mind, and such a disturbed state of mind in turn leaves a negative imprint. It is the awakening and activation just of these negative imprints, which makes us suffer in the future. As long as we possess attachment and hatred we will definitely not be able to experience long-lasting peace and happiness.

Now the question is whether such negative afflictive emotions like hatred and attachment can be eliminated or not. We can all understand and we can all see that the strength of attachment and hatred can be minimized, can be reduced. But the question is, can they be completely eliminated or not? Here it is important to understand whether ignorance can be eliminated or not, because attachment and hatred have their root in ignorance. Therefore the critical task in our hand is to see whether ignorance, which is the root cause of cyclic existence, the root cause of samsara and the root cause of suffering, can be eliminated or not.

At this point it would be quite relevant and helpful to reflect on some natural processes of how things function. Take the example of heat and cold. Heat and cold are mutually exclusive and they are opposite. Now take the example of this particular hall where we have all gathered. If you increase the heating temperature, then the cold will naturally get reduced, minimized, and if you increase the cold, the heat will get reduced. This is so because heat and cold are mutually exclusive in terms of their continuum – when one becomes stronger, the other naturally becomes weak, its strength is reduced. So this is how things function within the law of nature – when you bring together two conflicting forces, positive or negative, heat or cold, then you will observe that if you increase the strength of one, the other becomes weak. So let us take advantage of this natural process of how things function, also in the case of the internal human mind, even though mind is non-physical, colorless, shapeless. In the case of the mind you will also find that there are two types of mind, which are conflicting in terms of their mode of perception and mode of apprehension of the object.

Take the example of a mind that sees the paper as having a white colour, then another mind which sees the paper as black. The modes of perception of these two minds are conflicting and totally contradicting. Now it is important to find out which one is right, one perceives the paper as white and the other perceives the paper as black. In such a case, if you are not very sure which one is right, what you need to do is to look closely, study that particular paper again and again, look from different sides and see whether it's black or white. And if you still are not very sure, you can also seek the help of other people and ask them whether the paper is white or black. In this way, gradually you will be able to discover that the mind perceiving that paper as white is right, and the mind perceiving the paper as black is wrong. Because the perception of the paper by the mind as white has a valid foundation, and what is perceived can be validated with the help of many other persons. In the case of the other that perceives the paper as black, it may be so because there is a defect in the eye, or there may be some other factors. Thus, the more you prolong your analysis and examination, the more you will be able to validate your point, and you will be able to see that the mind which is valid with reference to its object is true.

According to this example, in the case of understanding the mind perceiving things as having independent, inherent existence and the mind seeing objects as having no inherent existence, which one of these is right? These two minds are conflicting with regard to the process of apprehension of the object. Even in the case of a mind grasping and seeing things as having inherent existence, if it can be validated, if it has very strong foundation and support, we can say that the mind perceiving the object as having true existence is a correct mind. However, in this case there are no such validating points, there is not such a valid foundation, the only reason you can put forth is to say that “I say that everything has inherent existence, because my mind sees it.” Your statement “my mind sees it” is not a valid reasoning, because whatever you see is not necessarily true, because there is always a disparity between the appearances and reality, and when we go after the appearances, we are unable to understand the reality.

Now, in the case of the mind perceiving and seeing the things as having no inherent existence, this can be validated by reflecting again and again on your various experiences and also by the recognition that, when we try to pinpoint the objects of designation, they are no to be found, and that things by nature keep on changing. When you observe all this, it clearly shows that things are interconnected, interrelated, things change, and things do not exist as we perceive them.

On the other hand, if you say that things exist inherently as is perceived by the mind, then you will confront many conflicting experiences. On our ordinary level we tend to accept everything on a very superficial level, without entering into deep analysis, examination and investigation, therefore we do not see the conflict, we do not see the contradiction. And for this reason we tend to feel that whatever one has experienced in the past and whatever one has planned for the future – we tend to see all this as if it is existing right in front of us now, having true inherent existence.

But if you take some time and analyze to what extent this is true, then you will be able to find out that this is not the case – what you have experienced in the past is gone, what you are planning is yet to come, these are all interrelated, interconnected, everything keeps changing and therefore nothing has true independent existence. Therefore you will not find any other reason than saying that “things appear to me as having inherent existence.”

Now, in the case of the mind perceiving the things as having no inherent existence, the more you reflect on it, the stronger will be your conviction, the stronger will be your experience. This is so because what you have perceived has a valid foundation, a solid foundation. There is truth that backs what you have understood, and therefore the more you examine, the more you fathom, the more that object will become clear.

Another extremely important point in the process of removing afflictive emotions like attachment and hatred, is to realize that it is not necessarily so that wherever there is a mind, there should be attachment and hatred. This is not the case. And it is also important to realize that these afflictive emotions like hatred and attachment do not abide within us all the time, we do not remain angry all the time, we do not develop attachment all the time. Even with reference to one object, in the morning you might be developing attachment to one particular person, one particular object, and later, in the evening, you might be developing anger or hatred against that same person, against that same object.

We all experience the arising of hatred and attachment in our daily life, and this attachment and hatred and so forth keep on changing, do not remain all the time. This clearly shows that they can change, they do not abide with us forever, as long as our mind abides. Another clear example is that there are occasions when you have only attachment and no hatred, there are occasions when you have only hatred and no attachment, there are occasions when you have only ignorance without attachment and hatred, there are occasions when all of these are not there at a manifest level. In this way you will be able to develop a conviction that they can be reduced and can be eliminated.

What makes us unhappy and uneasy, as I said earlier, is due to afflictive emotions, and when we remove those afflictive emotions, particularly the ignorance, which is the root of all types of afflictive emotions, then we can free ourselves from samsara. This state of the cessation of afflictive emotions is called

liberation or nirvana. And this is the meaning of liberation as explained in Buddhism in general and particularly in the Madhyamika school of thought.

If you give it a little thought, you will be able to find out that what makes us really unhappy are attachment and hatred. Of course you might try to argue by saying that we do sometimes experience happiness when we develop hatred and attachment. For example, when you develop attachment towards a particular object or person, this might give you some kind of temporary relaxation or happiness, and similarly, when you get very angry and use harsh words towards those persons that you do not like, you might also get some sense of satisfaction, but these are temporary and very superficial experiences. In the long run they will bring much suffering.

Therefore it is very pertinent here to recall a verse from *Ratnavali* by Nagarjuna, where it says: “You do get some kind of pleasure when you scratch an irritation, but isn’t it better not to have any irritation?” Similarly, when you have attachment you do feel some kind of temporary pleasure, but it would be much better not to have any attachment at all.

And from time immemorial, these attachments and hatreds have lived with us like friends and they seem to benefit us temporarily and in a superficial way, but if we were without these negative friends, we would have long-lasting happiness. Thus, the main question is if it is possible to remove ignorance, which is the root cause of all types of suffering and afflictive emotions. If you reflect on the points that I have explained, you might get some idea about the possibilities of removing them. If this is the case then it is worthwhile to make an attempt to remove ignorance, and it is in this context that the Buddha taught the *Four Noble Truths*.

Among the four noble truths the true suffering explains the three types of suffering, particularly the conditioned suffering. The root cause of the conditioned suffering is the true origin; the true origin is of two types, the contaminated karma and the afflictive emotions. Out of these two, the main cause are the afflictive emotions, among which the main cause is ignorance, which refers to the misconception of reality, or the true grasping. And when you totally eliminate this true grasping, then you achieve a state where the afflictive emotions cease, which is known as liberation or nirvana. And the method to achieve this liberation is the cultivation of the spiritual path, the true path, primarily the wisdom that realizes emptiness.

When we reflect on the question of how we are controlled by the afflictive emotions, first of all it is important to see how these afflictive emotions bring suffering and problems upon oneself. Now, when we are trying to reflect on our own sufferings, we are here not engaging in empty reflection, where we have no suffering but try to discover some suffering, that is not the case. If you reflect on yourself, your personal reality, you will find that even though you want happiness, maximum peace, maximum pleasure, you keep on encountering ceaseless streams of suffering and problems. And when you encounter such ceaseless streams of suffering and problems, it is worthwhile to pause and reflect: “Where do these sufferings come from? Where do these problems come from?” They obviously come because you lack sufficient control of your mind, you lack discipline of your mind and lack pacification of your mind. And it is due to the lack of control and discipline of the mind that we see turmoil and conflicts all around the world.

The conflicts and turmoil that we see around the world is not something we all want, not something that we all look forward to, but although we do not want them, we do encounter all these ceaseless problems because we have not pacified our mind, because we have not purified our mind. Therefore, unwillingly, we have been dragged into this situation of conflicts and problems. So it is important to ask this question: “What is the main cause of these problems, what is the main cause of these sufferings?” The main cause of these sufferings is within yourself, that your mind is not disciplined, that your mind is not purified.

And in this context there is an interesting explanation in Buddhism, which speaks about two types of wrong view. One wrong view is called defamation or denigration or denying the existence of something,

the second wrong view is called exaggeration. Denial here refers to refuting something existent as non-existent, exaggeration here refers to saying that something exists even though it does not exist. Whichever of these two extreme views you follow, they will lead you to destruction, lead you to problems and sufferings. This clearly shows that it is extremely important to understand the reality as it is, without exaggeration and without any denial. I think this is a very interesting presentation.

With regard to pursuing denial and exaggeration against reality, you might develop some kind of superficial pleasures. For example, if you just make up something, and then reflect on it and try to experience some sense of relaxation and so forth, you might tend to feel some kind of relaxation. In the long run, however, this will not only be of no help, but it will lead to your destruction and unhappiness.

Therefore it is extremely important to meditate on suffering in general and particularly on the conditioned suffering. Unfortunately, even though we are confronted by countless sufferings in our normal life, we do not pay much attention to the actual source of these problems, the actual source of these sufferings. It is in this way that you should clearly understand the sufferings by which you are afflicted, and then you should try to develop compassion towards other sentient beings. Compassion, as I have explained earlier, is a mind wishing that all sentient beings are without suffering, and it is here that you should see all sentient beings as very dear and close to your heart, and develop loving-kindness and compassion. Loving-kindness is a mind, which aspires that all sentient beings meet with happiness, and compassion is a mind which aspires that all sentient beings be without suffering.

These points are explained in Kamalashila's *Stages of Meditation* from page 6 onwards:

Therefore, see all wandering beings as immersed in a great fire of misery. Think that they are all like you in not desiring misery at all: "Alas! All my beloved sentient beings are in such pain. What can I do to set them free?" and make their sufferings your own. Whether you are engaged in one-pointed meditation or pursuing your ordinary activities, meditate on compassion at all times, focusing on all sentient beings and wishing that they all be free from suffering.

The important point is that you should think: "Just as I want happiness, all sentient beings want happiness, just as I do not want suffering, all sentient beings do not want suffering, just as I have the right to have happiness and to remove suffering, similar is the case with other sentient beings."

When you reflect on the point how sentient beings are afflicted by sufferings then you are able to cultivate compassion, and when you reflect on the process how sentient beings are deprived of happiness, then you develop loving-kindness.

As is very explicitly and very clearly explained in the *Bodhicharyavatara* or *Engaging in the Ways of Bodhisattvas* by Shantideva, it is important to reflect on how sentient beings are kind to us directly and indirectly. This point will become particularly clear, if you reflect on the interdependent and interconnected reality of the present world. You will be able to clearly find out how the success of your personal life and your personal happiness is very much dependent on the overall development, happiness and stability of the society, the nation, the world as a whole. If the society, the world as a whole, is successful, happy, stable and progressive, then you as an individual member of that society, that nation, will also experience happiness and success. On the other hand, if the society and the nation as a whole is sieged by conflicts and without happiness, then it is not possible for you as an individual person to experience happiness.

It is through a certain understanding that you will naturally be able to develop a strong sense of responsibility, a strong sense of concern towards the well-being of others, and it is in this way that you will be able to gradually develop an aspiration to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. And for this reason Kamalashila, in the *Stages of Meditation*, treats the development of compassion as the cause, the bodhicitta as the foundation and the practices of generosity and so forth as a means to perfect that path, to achieve enlightenment. Now, when we talk about compassion as the cause,

we are not talking about all types of compassion, but we are primarily talking about the great compassion. It is the development of this great compassion, which instills mental strength within oneself to personally make an endeavor in removing the sufferings of other sentient beings. And for this reason, Chandrakirti, in his *Madhyamikavatara*, in the verse of paying homage, pays homage to the great compassion, and does not pay homage to Buddhas or bodhisattvas, because he says that it is this cultivation of compassion which is the cause for achieving bodhicitta, which is the cause for achieving enlightenment, which is the cause for becoming a bodhisattva.

When we reflect on the nature of compassion, it is the mind, which is totally focused on the sufferings of helpless mother [?] sentient beings. Therefore such a wonderful quality like compassion cannot be developed in the absence of sentient beings. And when we talk about the state of enlightenment, this is also a quality that is achieved by reflecting on the well-being of sentient beings. Furthermore, when you talk about developing wisdom realizing emptiness which will become a cause for achieving enlightenment, the wisdom realizing emptiness also cannot become a cause to achieve enlightenment in the absence of an altruistic wish to achieve enlightenment. Therefore, whether it is a Mahayana path or a Mahayana fruit, all these positive qualities are possible to be cultivated with reference to these sentient beings and in their absence it is not possible to cultivate any of these qualities. In this way you should be able to realize the preciousness of all other sentient beings and how they are kind to you in all terms of your practice, your day-to-day life and so forth.

When you develop such great compassion, wishing that all sentient beings be without suffering, this mind then induces a special attitude. This refers not only to developing a benevolent mind, but oneself is taking the responsibility to actually engage in the act of removing the sufferings of other sentient beings. This in turn produces bodhicitta and this in turn will gradually lead to the achievement of enlightenment.

With regard to training of the mind in bodhicitta, we will read from the *Thirty-Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas*, verse number 10, which says:

What is the use of one's own happiness if mothers  
Who were kind to oneself since beginningless time suffer?  
Therefore, it is a practice of Bodhisattvas  
to generate the altruistic intention to become enlightened  
In order to free limitless sentient beings.

From this verse onwards the text speaks about the practice of training the mind in bodhicitta, and then, in the subsequent verse, it also speaks about the practice of exchanging oneself for others and of generating bodhicitta by these means. Further on it also explains how to enhance and sustain the strength of bodhicitta that one has developed.

With regard to the process of cultivating conventional bodhicitta, there is a much clearer explanation in the *Stages of Meditation* by Kamalashila. On page 6 it says:

Bodhicitta is of two types: conventional and ultimate. Conventional bodhicitta is the cultivation of the initial thought that aspires to attain unsurpassable and perfectly consummated Buddhahood in order to benefit all wandering sentient beings, after having taken the vow out of compassion to release all of them from suffering. That conventional bodhicitta should be cultivated in a process similar to that described in the chapter on moral ethics in the *Bodhisattvabhumi*, generating this mind by taking the Bodhisattva vow before a master who abides by the Bodhisattva precepts.

Here we read about two types of conventional mind, generation of conventional bodhicitta. This conventional bodhicitta is rooted in the development of great compassion, as I have highlighted earlier, and the great compassion induces a special attitude which in turn leads to the development of bodhicitta. This not only aspires to help other sentient beings by making them achieve a higher status, but its main target is to help other sentient beings achieve the state of enlightenment. And with regard to the nature of

the conventional bodhicitta, it is of two types: the aspirational bodhicitta and the engaging bodhicitta. Engaging bodhicitta refers to that kind of bodhicitta that you cultivate after having received the bodhisattva vow, when you actually engage in the deeds of a bodhisattva. So these two types of mind are categorized as conventional bodhicitta. The process of receiving such a bodhisattva vow and the process of generation of such bodhicitta is explained much more clearly in the *Lamp on the Path* by Atisha, if you read from verse 6 onwards:

For those excellent living beings,  
Who desire supreme enlightenment,  
I shall explain the perfect methods  
Taught by the spiritual teachers.

This explains the process of receiving such a bodhisattva vow. After having developed the bodhisattva vow, it [?] then proceeds towards developing calm abiding, special insight and so forth.

As you have watched the wheel of life [during the break], the root cause of the wheel of life or the cycle of existence are the internal mental afflictive emotions like attachment, hatred and ignorance, which are symbolized by three animals. Attachment is symbolized by a pigeon [cock?], hatred is symbolized by a snake and ignorance is symbolized by a pig. The illustration is drawn in such a way that the tail of the bird and the snake come out of the mouth of the pig, symbolizing that attachment and hatred have their root in ignorance. And as I have just mentioned before the interval, it is the ignorance which is the root cause of the multifarious things that we see within the cycle of existence.

And this five-part illustration of the wheel of life is something that was instructed by the Buddha himself to be painted. Furthermore, the monastic institutions were advised to draw this painting of the wheel of life at the entrance of the monastery or temple.

Regarding the process of development of conventional bodhicitta, when you develop some kind of feeling or influence within your mind, or appreciation of the need to develop conventional bodhicitta, then, in order to stabilize it, based on a ritual or ceremony, you should develop aspirational bodhicitta. Such a process of developing aspirational bodhicitta through ritual has the advantage of stabilizing the mind and so we will briefly do the ceremony of generating the aspirational bodhicitta tomorrow. With regard to receiving the engaging bodhisattva vow, it can be received while conferring the initiations.

A person, who has cultivated bodhicitta and strives to achieve enlightenment, should accumulate the two collections of merit [?? should be method?] and wisdom. When we talk about the collection of method and wisdom, this is quite relevant to the results that we achieve at the state of enlightenment. When we talk about the resultant state of an enlightened being, enlightened Buddha, then this is a state where there is complete perfection of fulfilling the purposes of other sentient beings. The achievement of the fulfilling of purposes of other sentient beings is not done through some external blessing; it is achieved by properly understanding what is to be eliminated and what is to be adopted. It is by developing the discriminative awareness about what is to be practiced and what is to be abandoned that one is able to cultivate positive counterforces against the obscuration to liberation and the obscuration to enlightenment. And in this way one eliminates these two obscurations and then achieves enlightenment.

Therefore, when we talk about following a path leading to achieving enlightenment, it is extremely important to rely on the teachings of the Buddha, the activity of the speech of the Buddha. And in order to rely on the speech of the Buddha, in order to hear directly the speech of the Buddha, this can be done only by actually seeing the Buddha. It is in this context that the Buddha appears in the shape of the form body, and therefore the form body is said to be the body for others, and the dharmakaya or truth body is said to be the body for oneself. The form body is said to be the body for others because it is this form body, which is able to directly appear before the sentient beings, and then the sentient beings, by relying on his speech, are able to follow the path. The manifestation of such a form body to other sentient beings depends very much on the actualization of spontaneous and effortless fulfillment of activities, and in

order to achieve that state you should achieve the complete state of enlightenment, possessing the omniscient wisdom.

A clear explanation of achieving such a state is found in the Tantra, where it speaks about the simultaneous engagement of the mantra and energy, or the simultaneous engagement of the energy and mind. We will not be able to achieve a state of spontaneous and effortless fulfillment of the wishes of sentient beings until and unless we achieve total control over the simultaneous engagement of the energy and mind. Finally, when we reach a state where there is a simultaneous engagement of the mind and energy, then the sublime activity, which spontaneously and effortlessly fulfills the purpose of the sentient beings, is achieved. And here one achieves a state, which is called the indivisibility of the three secrets, that means that the secret body, speech and mind become indivisible. They reach the most subtle stage, where they become indivisible. Achieving such a state of inseparability of the three secrets – the body, speech and mind – has to be cultivated right from the training stage. In other words, one should achieve a state of activity of the speech, omniscient mind and body as inseparable and of one taste. And in the absence of such an achievement it would not be possible to spontaneously and effortlessly fulfill the purposes of other sentient beings. Such a process of practices is explained only in the *Highest or Anuttara Yoga Tantra*, such a profound explanation is not found in the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutra*.

This form body, which is said to be the body for others, has its origin or source in the dharmakaya, and in fact it is a reflection of the dharmakaya. The dharmakaya is said to be the body for oneself, because it is a body, which is achieved by oneself and which cannot appear as a visible object to the followers, to the sentient beings. And it is from this state of dharmakaya that the form body arises. This is also the meaning of *tathagata* – *tatha* refers to suchness, which refers to the truth body. It is from this *tatha*, or suchness, that the form body comes; *gata* means to come, to appear, to descend.

If you reflect on the nature of the form body, you can see that it has the nature of multiplicity, it has complex aspects. And when you reflect on the wisdom truth body, then you will find that this wisdom truth body is a state, where all these diverse, multiple aspects of the object disappear and dissolve into one taste of suchness. In this state of dharmakaya all the manifestations, elaborations of subject-object duality and so forth, cease to exist, and it is a state of total cessation of all those conventional manifestations.

Both these two bodies, the wisdom truth body and the form body, they are cultivated by their respective causes, and therefore the causes of these two should also be similar to them. In other words, the fruit, the dharmakaya and the form body, have similarities in their causes. Thus, when we talk about generating conventional bodhicitta, or bodhicitta as such, then this is a mind, which focuses on countless sentient beings – you can see the diversity of the focus of this mind – it focuses on countless sentient beings. Also in terms of its practice, it adopts countless varieties of methods, like the practice of six perfections and so forth. It is through such a practice that one finally actualizes a form body. So therefore you can see that the cause has similar aspects to the result, the form body, which also has the nature of multiplicity.

With regard to the cause for the wisdom truth body, this cause is wisdom that realizes suchness or emptiness. When we talk about the wisdom that realizes emptiness or suchness, it is a wisdom that is without dualistic appearances, it is a state where there is no subject-object duality and therefore it is a state, which is totally free from all types of manifestations and elaborations. Therefore it is an aspect similar to the dharmakaya.

In order to actualize these two bodies, the truth body and the form body, we need to rely on the accumulation of two collections, the collection of merit and the collection of wisdom – these are the two causes. In the case of the collection of merit again the collection of merit becomes a cause for actualizing the form body. In the case of the collection of merit again it has a similar aspect to the result, the form body. Because when you engage in the accumulation of merit, you engage in the accumulation of diverse means and methods, engage in collecting different types of virtues.

On the other hand, in the case of accumulation of wisdom, you are simply reflecting on the ultimate mode of existence of all phenomena. In the case of the ultimate mode of existence of all phenomena, their ultimate nature is such that they do not have inherent and independent existence, because if there were such an independent or inherent existence, then this should be found when searched for. But when we search, such a reality is not found. So in the ultimate analysis or in terms of their ultimate reality, all these diverse, complex varieties of phenomena that we see, they all have the same nature, they all have the same entity, namely the entity of emptiness, the entity of lack of inherent existence. This ultimate reality can be called by the terms emptiness, ultimate truth, suchness and so forth.

So these countless aspects, which we perceive, which we see on the basis of the conventional truth, are there when we refer to them, when we relate to them with a mind that does not analyze their nature, which does not examine their ultimate reality. This multiplicity of the conventional reality, these countless aspects are found only by a conventional mind, not by a wisdom mind that seeks to find the ultimate truth. This, in short, is the meaning of the two truths, the conventional truth and the ultimate truth.

From the perspective of a conventional mind there are dualistic appearances, whereas from the perspective of a mind that perceives the ultimate reality, all these dualistic appearances cease to exist, they disappear. And this leads us back to the fundamental truth, the two truths – the conventional truth and the ultimate truth. When we talk about two types of mind, one having the appearance of varieties of phenomena, another, which only sees the ultimate reality, such perceptions are possible because in reality, at the foundation there are two truths, the conventional truth and the ultimate truth. Therefore we have two different minds, one seeing the multiplicity, the countless aspects of phenomena, and another, which only sees the ultimate reality.

The conventional method is necessary to accumulate merit and to directly help countless sentient beings, and the ultimate reality is absolutely important to cut the root of the cycle of existence. It is by developing these two, the collection of merit and the collection of wisdom, that one will gradually achieve the two bodies, the form body and the truth body. And as a means of achieving that state we also engage in the method of collection of the six perfections, as a practice of the conventional truth, and on the side of the profound practices we develop wisdom that truly ascertains the way things exist. Therefore it is important to collect merit and wisdom to achieve the two states of the body of the Buddha, the form body and the truth body.

Then we continue reading from the *Stages of Meditation*:

After generating the conventional awakening mind of bodhicitta, endeavor to cultivate ultimate awakening mind of bodhicitta. The ultimate bodhicitta is transcendental and free from all elaborations. It is extremely clear, the object of the ultimate, stainless, unwavering, like a butter lamp undisturbed by the wind.

This shows that after having generated the bodhicitta in the sense of the conventional bodhicitta, you should develop ultimate bodhicitta in the sense of the wisdom that realizes emptiness. This ultimate bodhicitta, or the wisdom realizing emptiness is a mind that is influenced by the development of conventional bodhicitta. This wisdom is said to be transcendental because you have directly realized emptiness and in this way you have transcended, or crossed the level of the worldly perception, worldly existence. Therefore it is called transcendental. And it is also free from all types of elaboration, be it the elaboration of self-grasping – in that case the elaboration is something that is existent, the self-grasping is something that is existent – or be it the elaboration in the sense of the object of negation, that is true existence. Even though true existence is non-existent, it is an object of negation and it is an elaboration, which also ceases to appear to that wisdom that directly perceives emptiness. And such a mind is also free from the elaborations of the subject-object duality. This is so because when that ultimate bodhicitta, or the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, is totally focused on the object emptiness, it is one-pointedly focused on the object emptiness and it does not have any dualistic appearances of the subject of mind. Furthermore, because this ultimate bodhicitta directly perceives emptiness, there are no dualistic

appearances of any type. This ultimate bodhicitta is also called something that is extremely clear, because it is the mind that totally fathoms, totally perceives the object in its entirety. It is also called the object of ultimate, because it is a mind that perceives the ultimate truth. And it is also called stainless, because when you have reached the first ground of the bodhisattva bhumi, out of the ten bodhisattva grounds, when you achieved the first bodhisattva ground, then you develop this wisdom that directly penetrates and perceives emptiness. When you reach such a state, then you have either totally eliminated the objects of negation, objects that must be abandoned through the path of seeing, or, even in the case of the uninterrupted path of seeing, even though the object of elimination or negation is not totally eliminated, but as long as you have cultivated that path of seeing, the stain and the fault simply cannot manifest, cannot arise. It is also called unwavering, because you have here and now achieved the special insight with respect to emptiness, and in order to achieve special insight, you must achieve calm abiding. Therefore this is a state where there is a total union of calm abiding and special insight. And because of having achieved calm abiding, the mind does not get distracted, it does not waver and it is totally and one-pointedly focused on emptiness. Since it is free from excitement, free from mental distraction, free from mental dullness or sinking, and since it is totally focused on the object, it is called “unwavering, like a butter lamp undisturbed by the wind”.

Then in the *Stages of Meditation* it reads:

This is achieved through constant and respectful familiarity with the yoga of calm abiding meditation and special insight over a long period of time.

And then it quotes the *Unraveling of the Thought Sutra*.

In order to cultivate and develop this ultimate bodhicitta, which is influenced by conventional bodhicitta, it is not enough that you have simply realized emptiness and that the mind is influenced by bodhicitta. In order to develop a powerful union of calm abiding and special insight targeted towards emptiness, it is important to realize that one is able to achieve such a state of union of calm abiding and special insight focusing towards emptiness after a long period of repeated reflection, analysis and investigation. And therefore it is important to undertake a systematic practice of first developing calm abiding, and then generation of the special insight with reference to emptiness.

In general these two qualities, calm abiding and special insight, are common qualities for both Buddhists and non-Buddhists. In the case of the non-Buddhists, they also practice the development of calm abiding and special insight, and through that way they are able to free themselves from certain levels of desires, and they will also be able to traverse from one level of concentration to other higher levels of concentration by seeing the lower levels of concentration as disturbing and afflicted, and the higher levels of concentration as peaceful. By seeing this they are able to achieve the four levels of concentration and so on. However, when we talk about the Buddhist practice, or rather the Mahayana practice of achieving enlightenment, it is important to undertake a systematic practice of developing a calm abiding mind first, and then special insight, which leads to the achievement of the union of the two – the calm abiding and special insight. It is in this way that one is able to develop a very strong one-pointed wisdom of special insight with respect to emptiness.

Then, as is found on page 7, Kamalashila says:

Yogis cannot eliminate mental obscurations merely by familiarizing themselves with calm abiding meditation alone. It will only suppress the disturbing emotions and delusions temporarily. Without the light of wisdom, the latent potential of the disturbing emotions cannot be thoroughly destroyed, and therefore their complete destruction will not be possible.

So this explains the reason why we need to develop a union of calm abiding and special insight. As is clearly outlined in the text, developing only a calm abiding mind will not help us to remove the afflictive emotions with their seeds. If you develop just the calm abiding mind, that might help you to relax your

mind, that might make your mind gentler and softer, but it will not be able to help you to reduce the afflictive emotions with their seeds.

There is a difference between the seeds of afflictive emotions and the imprints of afflictive emotions. When we talk about the seeds of afflictive emotions, it refers to those types of potentials, which, when we encounter certain outside factors and conditions, can get activated and again produce afflictive emotions. Whereas in the case of imprints of afflictive emotions, this is an obscuration to enlightenment. Even if it encounters factors and conditions, it will not be able to produce afflictive emotions, however it remains a very strong obstruction to achieving enlightenment. So the main point is that by merely developing the calm abiding mind you will be able to suppress and remove some of the grosser levels of afflictive emotions, but it will not be possible to remove the afflictive emotions and the seeds of afflictive emotions. You will be able to remove them only by relying on the light of the wisdom, the wisdom that realizes emptiness.

His Holiness is here correcting a printer's error. In the case of this citation from the *Unraveling of the Thought Sutra*, it says:

Even if you meditate with single-pointed concentration  
 You will not destroy the misconception of the self  
 And your disturbing emotions will disturb you again;  
 This is like Udrak's single-pointed meditation.

His Holiness is saying that in the Tibetan version it reads: "You will not destroy the misconception of permanence", whereas he says, the correct version is "the misconception of the self" and not "permanence". So His Holiness is wondering, since he has seen this misprint in the Tibetan version, what was the English translation. It seems the English translation is fine. His Holiness is then asking what is the translation in German. The German translation is also fine.

The *Unraveling of the Thought Sutra* also says:

Even if you meditate with single-pointed concentration  
 You will not destroy the misconception of the self  
 And your disturbing emotions will disturb you again;  
 This is like Udrak's single-pointed meditation.

When the selflessness of phenomena is examined specifically,  
 And meditations are performed on the basis of that analysis,  
 That is the cause of the resultant liberation;  
 No other cause can bring peace.

As is quite clear from the verses itself, it says that if you just meditate on the calm abiding mind, this may help you reduce the extent of manifestation of afflictive emotions. However, sooner or later these afflictive emotions will arise again, and you will not be able to uproot them by relying just on a calm abiding mind. Now, if this is the case, what is the best method of removing these afflictive emotions together with their seeds? This is explained in the verse:

When the selflessness of phenomena is examined specifically,  
 And meditations are performed on the basis of that analysis,  
 That is the cause of the resultant liberation;

This means, you need to realize the selflessness of phenomena, and then you need to make your mind repeatedly familiar, or get yourself totally habituated with that understanding, that realization. In this way you will be able to get rid of self-grasping and you can achieve liberation.

Now, if you ask a further question: “Is there any other path, other than wisdom realizing selflessness, which leads to achieving nirvana?” Then Kamalashila says:

No other cause can bring peace.

Peace here refers to liberation. There’s no other cause that can lead to the achievement of liberation, the only definite cause is the realization of the selflessness of all phenomena.

Then His Holiness reads from page 8 of the *Stages of Meditation*:

A yogi’s mind will be distracted to various objects if he cultivates only special insight without meditating on a calmly abiding mind. It will be unstable like a butter lamp in the wind. Since clarity of pristine awareness will be absent, these two [special insight and a calmly abiding mind] should be cultivated equally. Therefore, the Sutra of the Great and Complete Transcendence of Suffering says: “Hearers cannot see Buddha-nature, because their single-pointed absorption is stronger and wisdom is weaker.”

“Bodhisattvas can see it, but not clearly, because their wisdom is stronger and their single-pointed concentration is weaker. Whereas Tathagatas can see all, because they possess a calmly abiding mind and special insight to an equal degree.”

His Holiness says that in general the development of special insight must be preceded by the development of a calmly abiding mind. However, if you think of developing special insight in the absence of a calmly abiding mind in a particular situation, then that special insight will also not be very strong, because it lacks the side of the stability, which is achieved through calmly abiding meditation. And because of that lack of stability, the analytical process that is being carried on by special insight will not be penetrative enough to fathom exactly the depth of the object, be it a conventional phenomenon, or an ultimate phenomenon. Therefore the text emphasizes the need to develop the calm abiding and the special insight on an equal level. And therefore the text says that in the case of the Shravakas or Hearers, they have stronger single-pointed meditation but not wisdom, the Bodhisattvas have stronger wisdom but not single-pointed concentration to the same degree, whereas the Tathagatas can see everything clearly and strongly, because they possess calm abiding and special insight to an equal degree.

This is not as easy to be understood as it seems, because when you say that the Tathagatas can see all, because they possess a calmly abiding mind and special insight to an equal degree, the interpretation of this meaning is no easy task. His Holiness says that perhaps this can be explained by looking at the difference between a practitioner who is at the stage of training and a Buddha, who is at the stage of no more training. In the case of a practitioner at the stage of training, he has to alternate the meditative session and the post-meditative session, whereas at the level of the Buddha, he does not have to alternate the meditative session and post-meditative session. The Buddha has reached such a state, where one is able to see all phenomena, be it conventional or ultimate, very clearly. Perhaps this can be explained from such a point of view. Or you can also cite a quotation from Maitreya’s *Uttaratantra*, where it says: “Even though the conventional truth and ultimate truth are not seen as clearly and as precisely as is seen by the Buddha...”

And then the *Stages of Meditation* explains the common prerequisites for meditating on calm abiding and special insight:

The prerequisites necessary for the development of calm abiding meditation are: to live in a conducive environment; to limit your desires and practice contentment; not being involved in too many activities; maintaining pure moral ethics and fully eliminating attachment and all other kinds of conceptual thoughts.

The meaning of a conducive environment and so forth is clearly explained in the text, so what we need to

realize, for someone who is determined to achieve calm abiding, is that it is important to cultivate these causes for achieving a calm abiding mind.

And then the text explains the necessary causes for achieving this special insight. Three causes for achieving special insight are explained.

It may be better to leave here for a more detailed explanation tomorrow.

It would be quite helpful, if tonight you find some time to reflect on topics, which deal with the process of development of bodhicitta, which lead to meditation on loving-kindness, compassion and so forth. This would be quite helpful for tomorrow, when we will actually participate in developing aspirational bodhicitta with commitment, and then after the ceremony of the cultivation of aspirational bodhicitta with commitment we will finish the rest of the texts.