

The GRADUATED PATH to LIBERATION

Geshe Rabten



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INTRODUCTION

The following is an English rendering of the oral instructions of Geshe Rabten, a Tibetan lama who has been instrumental in bringing the pure teaching of Buddha Dharma to the West, making it clear, and causing it to increase and flourish.

From the time of his own childhood, in Kham province, Tibet, Geshe Rabten Rinpoche had admired the Buddhist "monks in their maroon robes." At the age of eighteen, he left home to go to central Tibet where he entered the great Sera Monastery and began the twenty-four years of continuous study and personal hardship that would lead, in 1963, to the highest degree award of lharampa geshe.

At Sera, while attending classes with his gurus and memorizing large numbers of root texts and related commentaries, Geshe Rabten Rinpoche spent most of his days, and nights, engaged in debate, the Tibetan learning method for honing the intelligence and deepening understanding. He thoroughly mastered the traditional curriculum leading to the geshe degree: basic logic, mind and its functions, and logical reasoning (**dfub U**); general study of the perfections (**d flub Jh**); specific study of the nature of existence (**a UArba LU**); ethics (**JJubh**); phenomenology (**UAJXUfa U**); review of ethics and phenomenology (karam geshe level); and final review of the the great treatises (lharam geshe level—only the two best students per year are awarded the title of lharampa geshe).

During this time Geshe Rabten Rinpoche also studied the graded path to the attainment of enlightenment via sutra practice and tantra. He has received many empowerments, first from the former incarnation of Gonsar Rinpoche, and later from His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama and his Senior and Junior Tutors, the late Ling Rinpoche and Trijang Rinpoche, and many other lamas.

When, in 1969, a group of Westerners interested in Buddhism wanted teachings, His Holiness the Dalai Lama requested Geshe Rabten Rinpoche to instruct them, as His Holiness knew Geshe-la would be able to present to these students such teachings as the four noble truths and the entire path to enlightenment, clearly and effectively.

Geshe Rabten Rinpoche remained in meditational retreat in the Indian Himalayas until 1974, when he went to Europe to conduct meditation courses. In 1975, at the request of his Western students, His Holiness the Dalai Lama sent Geshe Rabten Rinpoche to Europe again, this time to give sustained teachings on the Buddha Dharma. And in 1979, the monastic

institute, Tharpa Choeling, was established near Mt. Pelerin, above Lake Geneva in Switzerland. At Tharpa Choeling, a monastic education based on Geshe's own at Sera is available to serious Western students.

After Lord Buddha achieved supreme enlightenment he gave numerous sermons on the path to enlightenment, varying each teaching according to the mental state of the listener and the occasion. These teachings of the Compassionate One collected together comprise the three paths of Buddhism.

Among the vast quantity of Buddhist scriptures are oral and written teachings that have been passed on from Lord Buddha himself, through Maitreya-nātha, Asanga, Atisha and other great gurus up to the venerable Tsongkhapa, in an unbroken line. These particular teaching traditions have been carried on by the great Tibetan teachers so that we fortunate practitioners today still have the chance to be guided by them. The Graduated Path to Liberation is an English rendition of oral instructions of Geshe Rabten Rinpoche, whose being and teachings radiate both wisdom and compassion.

May this benefit all beings.

PART ONE

SUFFERING AND ITS CAUSE

The First Two Noble Truths

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

Religion (**Ṛuḥa**) is a means to leave suffering and attain happiness.

Shakyamuni Buddha taught four noble truths (1): The truths of suffering and the cause of suffering, and the truths of cessation of suffering and the path to the cessation of suffering. We must recognize and remove the first two and realize through practice the second two.

We can understand this deep subject by considering the simple example of physical illness. When we are sick, we suffer, and look for the underlying cause—a disease or other disorder. When we realize that the illness is curable we see that our suffering can cease and seek treatment—the path to the cessation of this suffering.

The following text is an expanded explanation of these four noble truths, and of how we can follow a path that leads us out of suffering to the attainment of happiness, not only for ourselves, but for all beings.

SUFFERING

The countless kinds of suffering can be divided into three:

1. Suffering caused by suffering (2)

This type of suffering includes the pain, sadness and everyday suffering recognized by all beings. Even the smallest insect can recognize it. No creatures want this suffering. The reason why all creatures are so busy and active is that they are trying to avoid this type of suffering. Ants, for instance, are busy all day and night to avoid suffering from hunger; countries fight each other for fear of suffering from domination (even though this method creates more suffering).

2. Suffering caused by change (3)

This type starts as happiness and then changes into suffering. Most beings do not recognize this as suffering. Worldly happiness looks like happiness, but in time it too changes into suffering. If we are hot and immerse ourselves in cold water it is very pleasant to start with, but after a while it becomes painfully cold. If we are cold and stay in the sun to get warm we will, after some time, suffer from being burnt. When friends meet after a long time they are delighted, but if they then remain continually together they may quarrel and grow tired of each other.

This type of suffering includes anything that appears to be happiness and changes into suffering. If a person wants to become wealthy, works very hard and becomes rich, suffering is produced from the need for maintaining the wealth, fear of losing it, and desire for more. If one country wants to take over another, the oppressed country reacts, and mutual suffering is caused.

The first of these two types of suffering is easily removable. The second is not, because it is not easily recognized. Thus, it is more deeply harmful. Even small insects can stop the suffering caused by suffering, and so can human beings, who, when they are ill, for example, can get treatment. But most people and animals think that the suffering caused by change is real happiness and spend their whole lives trying to achieve it; for example, people in business who devote their lives to making money and people who fight each other in wars,

all in search of happiness.

3. All-embracing suffering caused by mental formations (4)

This type is even more difficult to recognize than the suffering caused by change. It is the suffering inherent in **ḍḍ** (the whole round of existence) and the cause of the previous two kinds of suffering. It covers, or embraces, all beings in **ḍḍ**. As the earth is the foundation of our life, so this type of suffering is the foundation of the other two. If someone cuts us we automatically feel pain simply because we have bodies; our very existence is the root cause of this suffering.

Because all beings exist in a state of causality, all are liable to suffering. This kind of suffering (**ḍḍ**) is produced from a harmful cause and all other suffering comes from it. All beings recognize the first kind of suffering; some recognize the second. But this third kind of suffering is very, very difficult to recognize. Without recognizing it, escape from **ḍḍ** is impossible. This suffering is like a wound that does not give pain until it is touched. It is the ground containing all sufferings. When we remove this suffering we attain **ḍḍ** or liberation.

To practise **ḍḍ** understanding suffering is the first essential. Without this understanding, the will to get out of suffering does not arise. We are like people in prison who don't recognize where we are or how bad it is, and therefore have no wish to escape. If we are ill but do not recognize it, we have no wish to be cured.

If the first type of suffering is not recognized we can have no wish to escape from suffering. If the second is not recognized we will try to escape from it in the wrong way, only to return to suffering again. If the third type is not recognized, then even if our method is good, we cannot get to the root of all suffering.

Therefore, it is very important to recognize all three kinds of suffering. This recognition is the first door to practising Dharma and also the reason for practising. This is the reason that the Buddha taught suffering as the first noble truth. We can observe suffering directly by looking around us. The suffering caused by suffering is evident in everybody. The suffering caused by change, unreal happiness, is also quite obvious. We can see also that all other sufferings derive from the all-embracing suffering caused by mental formations. Although it is difficult to know what causes these sufferings, we must experience them and see them for what they are; from our experience our belief will be strong and steady. That is why the Buddha said it was important to judge and test his teachings for ourselves, giving the

example of assaying gold. When we see that reality is as the Buddha said, our faith in the Buddha will be strong and not be destroyed by what others tell us.

All suffering has a beginning and an end. Things are undergoing change all the time. There are two types of change: coarse, obvious change—as when a table is being made and the changes are plain—and subtle change, such as the molecular changes going on continually inside the table.

The changes in human life are obvious—people start small, grow larger, and age. But it is not so obvious that in the time it takes to snap your fingers everything has changed. If you pour water from a pot, the stream appears to be one unit, but in fact, at each moment, the stream has moved and become something else.

Not only sentient beings but also the whole environment—trees and so on—are undergoing change. All beings in **du** are suffering all the time. If we do not recognize suffering fully we will not practise what is necessary to get out of it.

THE CAUSE OF SUFFERING

All suffering has a cause. If the cause is not removed, escape from suffering is impossible. If rain is coming in through a hole in the roof, there is no use sweeping the water out of the house without blocking the hole as well. If we are sick and take medicine for the symptoms alone, we may be able to stop them for a time, but we cannot be sure they will not recur. If, however, we eradicate the cause of suffering we can prevent its recurrence forever.

Although we can do nothing about the suffering of the past, we must close the door of future suffering. If a thorn tree outside our house pricks us every time we pass, it is no real solution to cut off odd branches; we must uproot the tree completely. We need to find the real cause, not an illusory one. If we make a mistake about the cause of suffering, real progress will be impossible. So we must know the second noble truth, the cause of suffering.

The cause of suffering has two divisions: **Ufa U**(action) (5) and **YU**(mental defilements). (6)

At this time we are experiencing much suffering, whose cause we ourselves created in past existences. Therefore we ourselves have to do the work to escape from it. A teaching about the cause of and escape from suffering is useless if we do not practise it. If we are sick and go to the doctor, who gives treatment, we must follow the doctor's instructions in order to be cured. In school a student needs the teacher's instruction, but the most important thing is the student's own work. Up to now we have never practised the path, so we are still in **gh gJU** Those beings who have practised it, such as Milarepa, have passed out of **gh gJU** This passing was not easy. Milarepa's buttocks were covered in sores from sitting for so long in meditation. When Lorepa was meditating in the mountains, no-one brought him food, so he lived by gradually eating his shoes. Lama Tsongkhapa meditated in the high mountains, always offering mandalas (7) on a stone slab. The skin on his right forearm was rubbed away from polishing the stone. Escape from samsara depends on ourselves alone; if it depended on only the Buddha, there would be no one in samsara, because that was his great wish. As a good mother loves her children, he has equal love for all beings. In one sutra the Buddha taught:

The Buddha cannot wash away the delusion of beings with holy water;
Neither can he take away the suffering of beings with his hand.

He can not give wisdom to beings if they do not practise. The Buddha's responsibility is to show the true path. In another sutra it says:

I am my own lord and my own enemy.

"Lord" because if we practise Dharma, we can look after ourselves and bring ourselves much happiness; "enemy" because if we do not practise properly, we build up more and more suffering for ourselves.

The Buddha teaches the way; we practise it. This combination brings happiness.

KARMA (ACTION)

There are many kinds of ***Ua U*** but all are included within the categories of karma of body, karma of speech and karma of mind. Each of these categories includes actions of that particular faculty. Generally, karma is divided into skilful and unskilful, but here we are concerned only with unskilful karma—the karma that produces suffering. That which gives us real happiness and takes us to the goal is quite different.

UNSKILFUL KARMA OF BODY

?)`]b[`

Killing is the action that destroys the life of any being. It is the greatest malpractice of the present time. No one wants suffering, but by fighting to avoid it people create it. This action has the opposite effect to that which is desired. The action need not be done by physical attack with sword, gun, etc.; the person who gives the orders (the president or the general) also acquires the karma-fruit. When a person orders a bomb to be dropped and a thousand people die, though their deaths have roots in their own past karma, the person giving the order is the immediate cause. That person acquires worse karma-fruit than those who actually

drop the bomb. If a hundred people are killed by a hundred soldiers, each soldier may receive the karma-fruit of one death, but the person who gave the order receives the fruit of the one hundred deaths. Such people may think themselves very great, but they do not realize the suffering that they are bringing upon themselves.

When the world is in peace, deep as well as immediate benefits result. But to be really peaceful we must decide by ourselves to be peaceful by practising Dharma. Even if a person does not actually kill anyone or order anyone to be killed, if one approves of killing as a good thing or rejoices in it, the karma-fruit is also acquired.

ChYU]b[

Stealing is taking anything belonging to someone else that has not been given. It can be done secretly, by force, by cunning words, by cheating, and so forth. It includes laying claim to something that does not really belong to one, as when a country lays claim to another. If the stealing is done indirectly through someone else, it has the same karma-fruit. Its object can be any property, any people, and so forth, taken by any means. If we mistakenly take something that belongs to someone else, it is not stealing. Stealing requires not only the action but also the intention to take something that is not our own. Our mind must be aware that we are stealing.

GYI i U`a]gVbXi Vñ

This action occurs when a married person goes after another sexual partner, or has intercourse even with the right partner at inappropriate times such as on full moon or new moon days or in the daytime, in unsuitable places (such as holy places), or with inappropriate organs. This action includes having intercourse with monks or nuns. Whereas killing and stealing, even when performed indirectly, have the same karma-fruit, this is not the case with sexual misconduct. The first two actions harm others who are innocent; sexual misconduct concerns the people involved. For **W]g g** and **W]vi b]g** (Buddhist monks and nuns) any kind of sexual indulgence is forbidden.

Beating other people, attempting unsuccessfully to steal, putting people in prison for the wrong reasons, improper behavior on holy days, and any other bodily deeds that are harmful or provoke mental defilements are also unskillful karma of body.

UNSKILFUL KARMA OF SPEECH

འཇམ་ལྷོ་

Lying includes anything spoken with the intention of deceiving others, with selfish motivation.

གུ་བཟོ་ལྷོ་

Speech that creates enmity between friends, out of some motive such as jealousy of their relationship, is slander. The speech may be either true or false, but for it to be slanderous the desire to bring discord must be in the speaker's mind. Slander can take place between countries as well as between individuals. If a person says something false in order to break up a friendship, this is both lying and slander.

ལྷོ་གྲོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་

This includes angry words against another, or swearing by the name of some holy person or object for evil ends such as the reinforcement of a lie, or the use of words to make people sad or angry. The Tibetan for this is zig.tsup meaning "rough word." Just as a rough stone rubbed against the body creates pain, so harsh words hurt the mind.

ལྷོ་གྲོ་ལྷོ་གྲོ་ལྷོ་

Any kind of talk that provokes delusion—talk of violence, pornography and so forth—is considered irresponsible or gossip.

UNSKILFUL KARMA OF MIND

རྒྱལ་ལྷོ་

This term refers not to desire for beneficial things such as knowledge or wisdom, but to the insatiable desire for illusory possessions and sensory experiences. Greed is seen in the poor person who sees big, shiny cars and expensive possessions, and is always running after them, or in the rich person who is surrounded by possessions yet wants even more. Greed is born from desire. Other unskilful actions of body and speech, such as stealing, cheating, and so forth result from the mental action of greed.

AU]W'

This wish to harm others includes taking pleasure in their misfortunes. It can apply to all categories of life, from nations to small insects. At first glance this action of mind may appear more harmful than greed, but in fact greed is more harmful because it does not apply to just a single situation; greed is persistent and brings no satisfaction.

K fcb[j]Yk g

Any kind of thinking that denies the truth of **ḍi XMu ḍUfaU ḍb[VU** rebirth, the law of karma, nirvana and so forth constitutes wrong views.

Unskilful karma of mind is the worst kind of karma because actions of body and speech arise from mind. For instance, to kill an animal, first the wish to do so must arise in our mind. After so wishing, we may do the action on our own (body), or tell someone else to do it (speech). All actions of the body and speech must be preceded by the wish of mind. The mind forces body and speech to follow it; if we can control the mind, then other kinds of bad action can be avoided. Mind is very difficult to control, because its actions are so quick—many unskilful actions of mind are possible in one minute. For instance, if we want to harm someone else we can think of many different ways of doing so in one brief moment. Unskilful actions of mind happen so quickly that they cannot be counted; unskilful actions of speech are slower, and unskilful actions of body are the slowest of all. The first essential is to practise control of the mind. If we don't control our minds and just follow desires and instincts, we will not lead a good life.

All the sufferings of all beings in samsara are produced by mind. Beings out of samsara, in permanent bliss, are in that state because they developed their minds. Body and speech are only servants of the mind.

FRUITION OF KARMA

Many different kinds of fruit are possible from one deed. If in this life we were to kill someone, our immediate rebirth would probably be in a hot hell. Life in hell is much longer than on earth, and there is constant suffering from heat or cold. Hell beings and humans are completely different kinds of creature, and the particular properties of one existence are limited to that existence. Even in this world there are many kinds of spirit not normally visible to humans (although sometimes we may be aware of them), and they too have their own special properties.

Between one life and the next we experience the **वृषा** (8) We cannot see most bardos, but at a certain high stage of development, through special practices and meditations, we can. In order to strengthen all our qualities and not just one isolated faculty, we should practise both Dharma and those techniques that lead to special powers.

Some beings have the karma to be reborn in a state of such continual suffering that humans would not be able to survive. In some hells, for instance, there is no distinction between the fire itself and the beings living in the midst of it. Those who have killed in their past lives, even if reborn human, exist in a state of uninterrupted suffering from afflictions such as chronic illness. Treatment that preserves life and health cannot help them. When we suffer sickness, pain, and trouble, there is always an immediate cause, but the underlying reason is our karma. Two people may have the same disease and receive the same treatment, but one will progress better than the other because of different karma. If we attribute the difference to luck, we have only a superficial understanding of the situation.

Some people have bad tendencies from childhood; these are also karma-fruit. Parents may raise their children in the same way, yet they develop differently because of karma. Past lives produce inborn tendencies. The actions of past lives determine all factors such as the place of birth and type of death of future lives One is born in a dangerous or strife-torn place because of one's past karma. If a person murders another in this life, in the next life the victim may become the murderer and the murderer the victim. Each of our actions is a link in a chain with no beginning, for samsara has no beginning; it can, however, have an end.

To understand this chain, it is necessary to understand the relation of mind to body. Mind is like a river passing through different countries (bodies). A river takes different names (forms) according to the different countries. In this way the mind passes on, carrying the

accumulated karma with it. When a being dies, the body decays and the mind passes on, to continue in another bodily form, according to the type of body that it inhabits in that life.

Because they do not distinguish between mind and body, people think that both arise together from the parents and disappear together after death. After death the body does remain in a decaying state, but if the body and mind were the same, the mind should also remain in this state. In a living being, body and mind do have an immediate relationship, but when the being dies, this relationship becomes more and more remote. As the mind becomes further detached from the body, bodily feelings and functions gradually fade out until they finally cease. Some people think that the functions of the mind are dependent on breathing, but advanced yogis are able to live and concentrate for years without breathing. Because the mind and body are absolutely different, their causes must be absolutely different. The cause of the human body is the sperm-ovum union of the parents; thus children are physically similar to their parents. This immediate physical cause cannot produce the mind of the child, and could only do so if there were no difference between mind and body.

There are also some mental states that can be passed from parent to child. Some forms of madness, for instance, are caused by imbalance in the elements of the body, which can be passed on genetically. Mind usually follows the incoming and outgoing air; therefore imbalance in these airs can create mental disturbances.

Doctors can alter the temperament of a person by operating on the brain. Because the brain is the centre of the nerves carrying the airs that influence the mental processes, all the airs themselves are centralized in the brain. This is why we sometimes develop a headache when we concentrate too strongly; this overly strong concentration puts pressure on the brain. Although the mind is influenced by the nerves localized there, the mind itself is formless, not physical, and its cause must be of the same nature. Each mind- within-a-body causes the next. Bodies have a beginning; mind does not. Karma continues along with the mind.

The minds of beings in samsara are always covered with delusion. If, through the practice of Dharma, delusions can be removed and a high spiritual level reached, the mind can occupy more than one body; incarnate lamas (**hi`jg**) can take several bodily forms simultaneously. When a person attains the high spiritual level of arhatship, he or she is then completely out of samsara. An **UUh**(foe destroyer) is not necessarily a bodhisattva, but the highest arhat is a buddha. Before buddhahood there are different levels of mind, but the minds of all buddhas are equal.

If a person steals, the immediate fruit is rebirth in a cold hell. Such beings are born in ice and their bodies are indistinguishable from the ice itself. The cracking of the ice produces much suffering. After birth in a cold hell, these beings may be reborn as animals living in very bad conditions, such as the pariah dogs of India. Even when finally reborn into human form, those who have stolen find themselves in conditions of extreme poverty. People with this type of karmic background may become children with a persistent tendency to steal, or may be born in a place where it never rains and there is famine. Whatever the fruit produced, it is related to the previous deeds. Any difficulties connected with property, lack of food and so forth are the fruit of stealing. Karma affects the environment as well as the body and mind.

The heaviest fruit produced by sexual misconduct is rebirth in a hell. More usual is rebirth as an animal. A being cannot practise sexual misconduct in hell. If the being is reborn human, he or she will experience such marital trouble as adultery. Sometimes even small children like perverse sexual acts; this tendency is the result of past misconduct. Because of these types of past action, the person may be reborn in a very dirty environment.

If a person tells a harmful lie, rebirth can also be in a hell. If the being is reborn human, then he or she will have neither faithful friends nor enjoy the good faith of others. Such a person, from childhood, will have the tendency to lie. The environment itself may be a very deceptive one.

A person who slanders with murderous intention may be reborn in a hell. If reborn human, friends will be lost through slander, and from childhood there will be a tendency to slander others. Rebirth may be in a dangerous place, with earthquakes and so on.

If a person uses harsh words, rebirth in a hell may result. If reborn human, the person will be a slave, beggar, or someone who is always being scolded. The person may be born as an ill treated dog. There will be the tendency to abuse others. This karma can also produce a bad environment. For instance, some people in Tibet always live in places where the conditions are unpleasant, the ground is covered with thorns, and so on. These people realize how bad the place is, but for some reason cannot separate themselves from it, saying, "This is my country, I cannot leave it."

If by irresponsible talk people produce sufficient delusion, their rebirth may be in a hell. If human, they might be surrounded by friends with scattered minds much given to chatter. Even if they want to break free of this superficiality and delusion, the environment will prevent it. From childhood there will be a fondness for idle talk. Rebirth may be in a place where many useless weeds but no crops grow. Idle talk does not appear to be very

harmful, but it can be the worst kind of unskilful action of speech because if we encourage the tendency toward it, it occurs again and again, wasting our lives.

Greed, if it has extreme ill effects, may produce rebirth in a hell. If the person is born human, the fruit that results may be of the same sort as that resulting from stealing—a constant lack of property. Even if no unskilful physical action was performed in the past life, the bad fruit will be produced because of the person's actions of mind. The person will have just the opposite of what was wanted. Greed causes other unskilful acts, such as stealing, lying, slander, etc. Greed itself is also produced in the next life.

If wishing to harm others leads to killing, or if the mind-action is strong and harmful enough, rebirth in a hell can result. Mental action is the strongest and most persistent kind. If someone kills an animal, this involves only one unskilful action of body, but many unskilful actions of mind. A person can be sitting in a meditation posture, appearing to be very pure, but performing many unskilful actions of mind. If someone who in the past has wished others much harm takes birth as a human, that person becomes the recipient of harmful intentions and has only treacherous friends. A person who in the past entertained harmful thoughts toward others will have that same tendency even from childhood in a later birth. It is ironic but the fruit of greed is that the person does not receive what is desired, and the fruit of wishing to harm others is that the person receives what is not desired.

Wrong views prevent spiritual progress. A person who believes that actions such as killing, stealing, etc. are not wrong and practices these actions may be reborn in hell. Even though the person believes that such actions are morally right, bad results are produced. Consider the following for example: There is some fruit to eat on top of a mountain; a man is looking for the fruit and three people deceive him. One sends him round by a very long way, the second sends him on a very dangerous route, and the third tells him that there is no fruit to be had at all. By following the advice of the first two, it may take him a long time, but he will reach the fruit. However, the third has deceived him worst of all; if he believes from the start that there is no fruit, he will have no chance of obtaining it. Holding wrong views closes the door to happiness. If it does not cause birth in hell, it can cause birth as an animal (a state of ignorance) or as a human in a place where Dharma is unknown or forbidden. Wrong faith also opens the door to all unskilful deeds.

This is a simplification into ten general categories of unskilful karma and the respective fruits. If we sow wheat there will be many different results—stalk, leaves, grain,

etc. Similarly, one deed has many different kinds of fruit—types of birth, environment, tendencies, and so on. This is why Buddhists say that everything comes from karma; karma structures all things that happen in the world. All events have two causes—an immediate cause and a deep karma-cause.

KLESHA (MENTAL DEFILEMENT)

? **Ufa U** results from **_Y U** mental defilement. Karma and klesha are both considered **U UBU** **5 UBU** literally means "covering"—an avarana covers the mind, obscuring the realization of **bij UBU** Karma and klesha together make up **_Y U UBU** There is also another kind of avarana, which remains even in the arhat stage after karma and klesha have disappeared. This is called **byntj UBU** "the covering of what can be known," or obscuration to omniscience.

Klesha is the immediate cause of karma; karma causes suffering. If we can remove klesha, we can stop the flow of karma, prevent suffering from arising, and reach nirvana—though not the ultimate nirvana. **>byntj UBU** still remains in varying degrees in both arhats and bodhisattvas, and is finally removed only when the buddha stage is attained.

In the scriptures, **_Y U UBU** is said to have eighty-four thousand different forms. They can be simplified into three main categories, from which the others come or in which the others are included: desire, aversion, and ignorance. (9)

DESIRE

Desire is easily distinguishable from aversion. Desire must have an object and it makes the object seem more beautiful and attractive than it really is. Desire causes unskillful karma in any of the following ways. If we desire to eat meat, we kill animals; if we desire property, we are inclined to steal it; if we desire intercourse, we may commit, sexual misconduct. In the desire to create a false impression, we may lie; to obtain a desired object or goal, we may slander others; although aversion is more usually the cause, desire too may cause us to speak harsh words; in the grip of attraction to foolish things, we waste ourselves in irresponsible talk. Desire is the direct cause of greed; desire for the possessions of others can produce harmful thoughts. In brief, then, if any being, from a human down to the smallest insect,

desires something and this desire produces an unskilful action, that action has arisen from the klesha of desire.

AVERSION

Aversion is the opposite of desire: it makes its object seem worse than it is. Aversion can easily produce killing, and out of spite or the wish to deprive someone, it can cause stealing or sexual misconduct. Lying and slander are commonly caused by aversion, and harsh words usually arise from it. Irresponsible talk too can be the result of aversion, as when a person talks at length in a derogatory manner about another. Although greed is not produced by aversion, malice usually is.

When we have desire it is not as painful as aversion. It can bring temporary happiness with it, and this makes us want to be very close to the object. Aversion always produces pain immediately; we want to be very far from its object. In the scriptures, desire is likened to a flower, which is very beautiful at first but soon changes and becomes ugly, while aversion is likened to a wasp, which only stings. The face of a person filled with desire is bright and shining; the face of a person filled with aversion is grim and dark.

IGNORANCE

All unskilful actions except wrong views, which are always produced by ignorance, can result from desire and aversion. Although we can be misled by the ignorance of our teachers, wrong views are, fundamentally, the result of our own ignorance. Desire and aversion are active, making things seem better or worse than they are; ignorance is the failure to realize the nature of things. If we kill, not out of aversion or desire, but because we don't think it wrong or perhaps even think it good, this is the direct result of ignorance. Any unskilful act that arises from not knowing that it is unskilful is partly rooted in ignorance. For instance, people who make animal sacrifices think that they are doing something good—they have no ill-will toward or desire for the animal; they simply believe that killing the animal will please their god.

Fear can be good, bad or indifferent. If we have done a bad deed and repent out of fear of the karma-fruit, the fear is reasonable and wholesome in its effects. That very fear can lead us to practise Dharma and thence toward enlightenment. If we are afraid to practise Dharma because we are afraid that the practice will prove harmful in some way, this fear is the fruit of ignorance. When children are afraid of the dark, fearing ghosts and so on, this is

neither good nor bad. Similarly, while the fear of death is produced by our desire of clinging to life, the fear itself is neither good nor bad.

Desire and aversion are both produced by ignorance. We experience them because we do not know the real nature of things.

The reason for practising meditation is to overcome suffering; to overcome suffering we must overcome karma; to overcome karma we must overcome desire and aversion; to overcome desire and aversion we must overcome ignorance. Meditation overcomes ignorance.

Ignorance >> desire or aversion >> unskilful karma >> three sufferings

No beings want suffering; they all want to remove it. Most do not know how to, and some even create suffering in their efforts to remove it. People take medicines that cure sickness temporarily but cannot remove it forever. To remove suffering permanently, we must find its cause—karma; we must remove the cause of the cause—desire and aversion; we must remove the cause of these—ignorance. Ignorance is the deepest root of all suffering. If ignorance is removed, all that stems from it will automatically disappear. Escape from samsara is impossible unless ignorance is removed. If we sit in meditation without understanding the real reason for doing so we will achieve only limited results.

If we want to remove ignorance, we must first discover its nature and that of its opposite, **gi brbU** (emptiness). Then, through meditation on emptiness, we have to remove ignorance.

There are two different kinds of ignorance: ignorance regarding the ego and ignorance regarding external phenomena. (10)

⇒ BCF5B79F9; 5F8-B; H<9'9; C`

From **Xy Uj** to the smallest insects, all beings in samsara are subject to this kind of ignorance, from which the other mental defilements arise. This ignorance causes us to perceive our own nature the wrong way. To remove it, we must realize the true way we exist.

What we call "ego," or "self," can be divided into either the body (caused by the parents) and mind (caused by past existences), or the five **gUbXUj** (aggregates). These skandhas are the five elements of sensory existence:

1. Physical form (**fi dUg UbXU**). This includes air, blood, semen, bone—anything material, composed of atoms. The sound of the voice is included in this skandha, because sound is form.

2. Feelings (**j YXubUg UbXU**). These arise from bodily contacts and mental contacts (with ideas, concepts, and so on), and can be pleasant, unpleasant or indifferent.

3. Cognition, perception, differentiation (**gUg 'bUg UbXU**). This skandha is the mind that recognizes objects through seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and thinking.

4. Volitional formations (**gUg gUFUg UbXU**). Samskaras are the qualities or tendencies of mind, produced by karma, that control the various kinds of conditioned mental factors, or "**VJHU**" (**7UJHU** are in an inseparable relationship with the essential mind, "**VJHU**" These factors can be beneficial—for example, concentration, intelligence, wisdom, confidence, energy, tranquillity, friendliness and sympathetic joy at the success of others—or harmful—ignorance, desire, anger, greed and all that is unprofitable in the spiritual sense. Caitta are mental karma; karma of body and speech arise from caitta; most caitta are included in **gUg gUFUg UbXU** The sequence of time and the changing nature of things are included in this skandha.

5. Consciousness (**j J'buUg UbXU**). The function of this skandha is the awareness of an object. It allows the other skandhas to operate.

The five skandhas together support the concept of ego. This concept cannot be supported by any of the skandhas in isolation; it depends on all of them, just as the wheels, windows, steering wheel, engine, and other parts together make up the concept of "car." Any of these parts in isolation is not the car. If all the parts are piled together in a heap, it is still not a car. Those parts arranged in a certain order comprise what people recognize and think of as a car. If people did not give it this name and did not recognize it as such it would not be a car. The collection known as a particular human is built in the same way as is a car. A child is born composed of five skandhas and with all the usual qualities; his parents call him "Tashi." Then this collection of skandhas and qualities becomes generally known and recognized as Tashi.

In samsara there are three planes of existence: the desire realm (**_Ub UKUHi**), the form realm (**fi dUXUHi**), and the formless realm (**Ufi dUXUHi**). In the first two realms no being can exist without all five skandhas. In the formless realm, beings have no physical form **i fi dUg UbXU**—but do have the other four skandhas. Without these there is no ego.

All beings exist as a combination of skandhas and cannot exist without them. Buddha is also a combination of these skandhas, but ones that have been purified and transformed.

There are two ways of looking at the ego:

- 1) Through ignorance, negative understanding of the ego. This produces aversion and desire, unskilful karma, and suffering.
- 2) Through realization of *śūnyatā* understanding the emptiness of the ego. This is positive understanding of the ego. Meditation on shunyata removes ignorance and thus ail the other mental defilements and their results.

As soon as we think of "I" as an entity existing independently, our ignorance has apprehended the ego in the wrong way. When we are aware that the ego does not exist independently, we can find right understanding. Without this understanding, our ignorance persists. This is the main point about shunyata, or emptiness: that the ego does not exist independently. This emptiness is the emptiness of the ego as an entity existing independently. Ego exists only as a combination of the skandhas.

⇒ BCF5B79F9; 5F8-B; CI H9F D<9BCA9B5'

Ignorance about the five elements, mountains, seas, and so forth constitutes ignorance regarding outer phenomena. If we consider a biscuit, for example, it is a combination of various things—wheat, water, oil, fire and the activity of the baker. We recognize it as "biscuit," but really it is a combination of forces and qualities. This analysis applies to all external phenomena; ultimately we will understand that there is no difference between the ego and outer phenomena. But when we look at either of them without thinking carefully about what they really are, we see them as existing independently. Everything changes subtly in a split second of time. Scientists can see very subtle changes in things with instruments such as microscopes (though not the most subtle changes), but when they are not studying these changes, these same scientists see things as existing independently.

This twofold ignorance about the ego and outer phenomena is the root of all defilements, karma and suffering. To remove suffering we must remove this ignorance completely. The only way to do this is to meditate on emptiness. There are many other objects of meditation, but emptiness is the most important.

PART TWO

THE BODHISATTVA PATH

Cessation of Suffering and the Path,
the Second Two Noble Truths

BODHICITTA

NiBU (11) is not the carrier or what is carried—it is the carrying. Thus **<JbUhbU** means "carrying the smaller load," and **AUUhbu** "carrying the great load."

<JbUhbU practitioners are those who find samsara unbearable and want to escape from it into the state of nirvana. They help others enormously by renouncing the world and striving to obtain freedom, but their main thought is personal liberation from samsara. An arhat—one who has completed this path of personal liberation—has many spiritual powers, and can give spiritual teaching and aid to many beings, but still has to remove **byrbj UfUu**. The attainment of nirvana will prove not to be sufficient and the arhat will then have to enter the bodhisattva path and progress through the ten levels to the final, complete buddhahood.

Those who practise Mahayana also renounce samsara and want to escape from it. But because they identify with all other beings in samsara, Mahayanists do not want merely personal liberation. Through their great concern for others, Mahayanists' all-motivating wish is to give complete happiness to all beings. They understand first that all beings in samsara—insects, devas and the rest—are equal in that they all want happiness and do not want suffering. They also perceive that none of these beings has the satisfaction of complete happiness. For this reason, they develop the great wish to take all beings out of suffering. This wish, which is also a kind of caitta, is called mahakarunika, "the great compassionate one." Mahayana practitioners realize that all beings in samsara, though they may have transitory happiness, do not have true, lasting, happiness.

The next wish, that of giving all beings the ultimate happiness of buddhahood is called **aUuUjhyrbj** "the great wish of active love." These wishes are stronger than the dissatisfaction of the Hinayana follower. Before this stage of aspiration is reached, there are many other practices that have to be developed so that Mahayanists can fully realize the suffering of beings.

At first they want to bring all beings to enlightenment without any help. This is called adicinta, "the first thought." Then, when they examine themselves to see if they have enough power to do so alone, they find that the same defilements that other beings have exist within themselves as well. Thus they try to find who does have the power to help others in this way. Through this they find that only a buddha can do so, and develop the wish to reach the buddha stage quickly. This is **VcXJyHU** (12), "the mind dedicated to enlightenment."

When one has practised this a great deal, **aUu_Ufi b_l_U** **aUu_Ufi_yrb_l_U** **UXM_b_U** and **VcX_JM_HU** become part of the person's very nature. At this point the practitioner becomes a **VcX_Jg_Hj_U** though not yet an **Urb_l_VcX_Jg_Hj_U**—a very advanced bodhisattva, who has seen emptiness clearly. When the practitioner reaches the high state of a bodhisattva, all the devas pay respect. Once **VcX_JM_HU** has arisen, the seed of Dharma will continue to grow whether the person is awake or asleep, and even very harmful karma can be prevented from ripening.

Usually, people can remove mental defilements only by meditation on emptiness. Bodhicitta makes meditation on emptiness much more powerful. When a soldier is fighting an enemy he needs to use his weapon, but he also needs to have good food; bodhicitta is like this food.

To reach the final goal we need two instruments: **dfU_b_U** (wisdom), and **i dUhl** (right means), which contains both compassion and compassionate activity. (13) Mahakarunika, mahamaitreya, adicinta and bodhicitta are all included in **i dUhl** **dfU_b_U** is seeing things as they really are. A bodhisattva must have both of these. Arhats, who have completed the Hinayana path, are out of samsara and have attained the lowest level of nirvana, are strong in prajna—in the realization of emptiness—but weak in upaya. They have compassion (**_Ufi b_U**), but not the great compassion of **aUu_Ufi b_l_U** They have active love (**a_Ufi**), but not **aUu_Ufi_yrb_l_U** The main difference between their path and that of the Mahayana is on the side of **i dUhl** Eventually, arhats will have to develop it.

Pandit **G_Ub_Hj_Yj_U** in his **6cX_JM_Hj_UHU** mentioned all the different virtues of **VcX_JM_HU** for those interested in knowing more about the mind dedicated to enlightenment.

THE FIVE PATHS AND TEN LEVELS

There are five successive paths on which a bodhisattva develops:

1. The path of accumulation (**gpa vafub uf[u**)
2. The path of training or preparation (**dfuhofub uf[u**)
3. The path of seeing (**xufg ubub uf[u**)
4. The path of intense contemplation (**vuf ubub uf[u**)
5. The path of liberation or no more training (**ja i_ha uf[u**)

When bodhicitta has been developed until it is natural and intrinsic, the bodhisattva has completely obtained the **gpa vafub uf[u** (which has lower levels before this point). Then many spiritual powers (**fxv**) are attained, such as psychic power (**a uua]bu**), which enables the **vcx]ghj u** to know other people's thoughts, to know the past and future events of other beings' lives, to fly, to have multiple bodies, and so forth. A bodhisattva does not concentrate on these techniques specially to get a particular power; these powers come naturally. But the bodhisattva is able to put them to good use because these powers aid greatly in seeing the karma, spiritual development and potentialities of other beings, and whether or not they are in a state where they can be helped escape from samsara. The bodhisattva can see at which place beings can receive teachings from the buddhas and bodhisattvas in the various buddha-fields. (14) Many other virtues also accrue to the bodhisattva.

At this point the most important thing for the bodhisattvas is to meditate on emptiness, which is still not perceived clearly. When emptiness becomes clearer the second path, the path of training, is attained; this stage immediately precedes becoming an arya-bodhisattva.

Then, after much meditation, the feeling arises within the bodhisattva that the mind that meditates and emptiness are one, like water poured into water; (this feeling, though, is deceptive). This signifies the attainment of the path of seeing and the becoming of an arya-bodhisattva. Although the arya-bodhisattva still retains old karma as well as some

defilements, the bodhisattva is equal with the lower arhats, but in terms of the virtue amassed through such practice, the bodhisattva is much higher. These defilements are all removed by meditation on emptiness; at the level of the unshakable there is particularly strong growth in the strength of this meditation on emptiness.

At the ninth level, "The good mind," the bodhisattva begins at last to remove the wisdom-obscuration—*jneyavarana*. This is very subtle and difficult to perceive. If we put some garlic or onion into a pot and then remove it, the smell still remains. In the same way, although the defilement has gone, this obscuration still remains. At the level of "good mind," the bodhisattva is out of *samsara* but the wisdom is not quite perfect. At this point the bodhisattva can recognize and begin to remove the only remaining factor obscuring reality: the wisdom-obscuration. Without the removal of the wisdom-obscuration, the bodhisattva cannot help beings to the extent that a fully enlightened buddha can. The degree to which we can help others depends on the depth of our own wisdom.

While defilement-obscuration is like a cut that gives pain, the wisdom-obscuration is like the painless scar that remains when the cut has healed but not finally disappeared. "The cloud of dharma" is the level immediately before buddhahood, on which the last traces of the wisdom-obscuration are taken away. The removal of obscurations is like removing increasingly fine and wispy veils. The development of greater spiritual power is like having stronger and stronger binoculars to see more and more clearly. At the buddha stage, all obscurations are gone. Even a small part of a buddha's mind can see all things clearly at the same time. If there is even a tiny cloud in the sky there is still a small shadow on the earth, but when this cloud has disappeared the sun can shine everywhere. At the level called "The cloud of dharma," the bodhisattva meditates on emptiness with perfect concentration. Although emptiness can be seen clearly and completely, the tenth level bodhisattva cannot perceive both emptiness and phenomena simultaneously; a buddha, however, can see both at the same time. Things are empty of independent self-existence, but they themselves are not emptiness. The moment this final trace of the wisdom-obscuration disappears, phenomenal existence and emptiness suddenly appear together. At this moment a buddha can see phenomenality and emptiness simultaneously, not only with eye-perception, but also with the other sense-perceptions. At the time of becoming a buddha, not only is knowledge of the deepest nature of everything attained, but also the final virtues of body—such as easily multiplying the body an infinite number of times—and speech—such as being able to give teachings to any being without difficulty.

The virtue of a buddha's speech is unlimited. If, for instance, a thousand people each ask a different question in a different language at the same time, a buddha, by saying just one word, can answer all their questions immediately. We do not have the inner power to do this kind of action because of our avaranas. In all, there are sixty-four virtues of a buddha's speech: sweetness, softness, an attraction that makes people want to listen, a quality that gives a feeling of peace to those who hear it, and so forth. The different virtues of the body, speech and mind of a buddha can be found throughout many different sutras, and are presented collectively in a work by *འཇུག་པོ་ལཱུ་* (16)

There are one hundred and twelve different virtues of a buddha's body. The duty of a buddha is to help sentient beings; if it is helpful, in one second he can multiply himself as many times as there are beings, or can manifest as any kind of being or object such as trees, water, and so on. The buddha performs this type of miraculous action always and only to help beings find release from samsara.

To receive such help, we must also contact the buddha from our own side. At night, when the moon is shining on the surface of a lake that is clear and smooth, the light can shine on all parts of it, but if the surface is disturbed or overgrown the moon cannot penetrate or be reflected; when it is smooth and clear, the moon is reflected clearly in it, the reflection being just like the moon in the sky. In the same way, the buddha's help goes out to all beings equally; it is the beings' receptivity that varies. We must, for our part, make contact with the buddha; if it were not necessary for us to act from our own side, the buddha would have already taken us all out of samsara. A buddha has the ultimate mahakarunika, so he would not leave beings in suffering if by his own efforts alone he were able to take them out of it. If you clap your left hand with your right, your left hand must be there to receive the blow, otherwise there is no sound.

Once all coverings are removed and the power of the virtue that has been built up is at its full height, there is nothing we cannot do. We can multiply our bodies infinitely and can give teachings on all levels, from the beginning of the path to the goal; the virtue of a buddha's mind is that even a small part of it knows the reality of everything. This buddha stage is the effect of many causes, achieved through an enormous amount of Dharma practice.

After the historical Buddha, Shakyamuni, had finished his teaching on earth, all the beings there at the time who had the karma to see and hear him had done so, and so he went to continue his work in other realms. Although this form has disappeared, he can still help beings in other forms. Buddhas can take ordinary forms such as a friend, guru and so forth.

THE SIX PERFECTIONS

To become a buddha, a bodhisattva has to practise six perfections : (17)

1. the perfection of giving (**མཉམ་བུ་སྒྲུབ་ཀྱི་ལྷན་སྒྲུབ་ཀྱི་ལྷན་སྒྲུབ་**)
2. the perfection of morality (**ཉམ་ལུགས་སྒྲུབ་ཀྱི་ལྷན་སྒྲུབ་**)
3. the perfection of patience (**ལྷན་སྒྲུབ་ཀྱི་ལྷན་སྒྲུབ་**)
4. the perfection of energy (**ལྷན་སྒྲུབ་ཀྱི་ལྷན་སྒྲུབ་**)
5. the perfection of meditation (**ལྷན་སྒྲུབ་ཀྱི་ལྷན་སྒྲུབ་**)
6. the perfection of wisdom (**ལྷན་སྒྲུབ་ཀྱི་ལྷན་སྒྲུབ་**)

PERFECTION OF GIVING

This perfection is divided into four categories: the giving of property, Dharma, refuge, and active love (**ལྷན་སྒྲུབ་**).

1. The giving of property

For most of us, basic material needs such as food and clothing are the types of property easiest to give. High bodhisattvas, however, are capable of giving their eyes, flesh, and even their lives. The object we give is not the actual giving—it is only the means for giving. The real activity of giving is the strong decision to give freely, without avarice. In this way, even if we possess nothing, we can practise giving, because giving depends on our state of mind, not on the object being given. Milarepa had only a small cloth to wear and lived on nettles, but he still practised the ultimate perfection of giving. In the beginning when we try to start this practice, we may find that even the giving of money or material things is difficult, but when we have completed the perfection of giving, the giving of anything, even our own flesh, will be easy. To practise the perfection we need a very strong desire to help others and a very strong will. But if our motive for giving property is to gain fame, for instance, this is not the practice of giving at all.

2. The giving of Dharma

The giving of Dharma means that one gives, with pure mind, the true teaching to other beings. This type of giving is more beneficial than the giving of property. Possession of property helps for only a limited time, while Dharma is lasting and more deeply helpful. A person with property may still be suffering, but Dharma can not only remove this suffering, it gives the person a new wisdom eye as well. Included in the bodhisattvas' work to attain buddhahood is the aim to give Dharma as fully as possible to all beings.

3. The giving of refuge

To give refuge means that we work to save and protect the lives of all living beings. For instance, if we put water creatures stuck in the mud back into water, we are practising this kind of giving. The person who truly wants to put an end to war and killing is practising the refuge aspect of this perfection. If the life of any being is in danger, we have to help in any way we can. The practice of giving refuge results in very good fruit immediately and deeply.

4. The giving of active love

The practice of active love is the wish to give real happiness to all beings. By just having this wish, we cannot directly help beings straight away, but if it is cultivated it will eventually have great results. The immediate fruit of this practice is that no spirits can harm the practitioner.

All these kinds of giving help in two ways—they help other beings and they help ourselves. If we practise giving solely for our own benefit, it is not true giving.

PERFECTION OF MORALITY

The perfection of morality has three aspects:

1. The first aspect is the protection of our body, speech and mind from performing unskillful deeds. We have the tendency to act unskillfully, and this tendency needs to be controlled. We protect ourselves from acting this way when we stop using our body, speech and mind in harmful ways. We can think of our body, speech and mind as three naughty children, and of ourselves as their parent trying to keep them occupied in a room. Immediately outside the

door of the room is a dangerous precipice, which represents the harmful things to which the children are attracted. Whenever they try to run out of the room, we have to pull them back inside to safety. If we let our body, speech and mind go as they will, we shall experience much suffering in the future. This protection of body, speech and mind is the first aspect of morality.

2. The second aspect is to protect others in the same way as we protect ourselves. For instance, when someone is about to kill an animal and we demonstrate that it is wrong to do so, we are protecting that person from committing harmful actions.

3. When we perform any skillful deed, this automatically protects us from performing any unskillful ones. This substitution of skilful action in the place of unskilful is the third aspect of the perfection of morality.

PERFECTION OF PATIENCE

There are three types of patience:

1. Patience when we are harmed by others.

When we are harmed bodily or mentally by others we should not react by getting angry or harming them in return.

2. Patience when we are suffering.

When we suffer, we point to someone or something outside ourselves as the cause. The immediate reason for our suffering may be something outside, but the deep, or underlying, cause is our own karma, which is of our own doing. The fruit of our actions must come back to us. If a person stabs us with a knife, this injury had to happen to us. We cannot point to anyone outside ourselves as the cause. If, because of our religion, we have to leave our country and endure great suffering, this circumstance has been produced by ourselves. We should think that the seed of suffering has already been sown, therefore it must grow. This way of thinking reduces the power of suffering over us. We have to start practising patience with very small sufferings; later we shall be able to be patient with very large ones. As a

result of having practised the perfection of patience, a bodhisattva can withstand any suffering whatsoever for the sake of beings.

In Tibetan history there is a story that shows clearly how beneficial the practice of this type of patience can be. Some years after king Langdarma had eradicated the first spreading of Buddhism in Tibet, a king of western Tibet, Lha Lama Yeshe Ö (18) decided to reestablish and propagate the pure Dharma in the land. For this purpose he went in search of a sufficient amount of gold with which to invite the very best Indian pandits to Tibet. While on his search he was imprisoned by the king of Garlog, who demanded as ransom Lha Lama Yeshe Ö's weight in gold. But when Yeshe Ö's nephew came with the gold, the old king refused to leave the prison, saying that his life was almost over and that instead the nephew should bring a pandit from India. The nephew then was able to invite **ShigU** from **BULbXU** and Atisha re-established the pure Buddha Dharma in Tibet.

Not only did this king willingly forsake his own freedom for the sake of others, but he also did not try to retaliate against the person who had captured him. To harm someone who is harming us does not make sense from a religious point of view. When we seek revenge against others who appear to be hurting us, it does not relieve our own pain, but only gives rise to new suffering for us by creating more karma. If, because we have caused pain to others, they turn around and beat us with a stick, the immediate cause of the pain is the stick, but the person wielding the stick is reacting against our own action, which itself was caused by our being in the grip of an overpowering mental defilement. So logically, our anger should be directed against our own mental defilements. Anger with other beings is very stupid and serves only to create more suffering for us. A country, being attacked by another, fighting back, returning the aggression, is like a hungry person taking poison.

If all people were to practise patience it would bring real peace into the world, but those with no experience of Dharma find it very hard to believe in the efficacy of the practice of patience. If someone who is struck returns the blow, that person sets up a chain reaction with no end, but if one party shows patience, as a result others will do so also. We find this notion in the Christian tradition, when Jesus urged us to turn the left cheek to those who strike us on the right. In the Tibetan tradition, Lama Tsongkhapa composed two verses in which he prayed, (19)

When I remember, see or hear living beings
speaking harshly or hitting me

may I meditate on patience,
and, avoiding anger, speak instead of their good qualities.

By developing, in the stream of my being, the pure wish,
which is based on bodhicitta,
holding other beings dearer than myself,
may I quickly bestow supreme buddhahood on them!

The harm given us by the body, speech or mind of others is like a sword, arrow or spear. The practice of patience is the good armor of protection against this; possessing it, we cannot be injured. If we do not practise patience, trying instead merely to avoid conflict and say nice things and be friendly to everyone, we shall be unable to behave like this to all the countless beings, but with patience we shall be constantly protected from harm. If we walk along a very rocky path, it is impossible to remove all the stones from the way, but strong shoes protect us from all possible injuries.

3. The patience of keeping concentration.

The third kind of patience is that of keeping concentration on meditation, or anything else concerned with Dharma, without allowing distracting influences to harm the practice.

PERFECTION OF ENERGY

This means energy for Dharma. There are three kinds:

1. The first is the energy of the mind that stops the desire for unprofitable things. If we have a strong desire for ordinary things disconnected from Dharma, it disrupts our Dharma practice. Although we have to do everyday things, if our fondness for them is greater than our fondness for Dharma, our attention is taken away from our main work. A person may concentrate and work very hard, but if the goal of all that effort is a worldly one, then, according to Dharma, that person is lazy. People who really want to practise Dharma are in a hurry even when eating or excreting, so as not to waste time. Energy for worldly things is weakness; energy for Dharma is real strength. This aspect of the perfection of energy speeds

us quickly towards the final goal. Having energy for Dharma practice, the real purpose of life, prevents our being distracted by worldly goals. It protects us from all kinds of bad things.

2. The second kind of energy protects us against tiredness. For instance, a meditator who suffers from such tiredness that even the mere sight of the meditation place brings on sleep, overcomes this weakness by this kind of energy. One way to stop this fault is to consider the fruit of meditation or Dharma practice; if we bear this in mind, bodily tiredness does not make us lose our energy. People at work do not suffer very much from tiredness because they are thinking of the money they will get. If we consider the great fruit of practising Dharma we will work hard at it. High lamas living in the mountains with very little food and sleep are not tired and complaining; rather they are very happy, because they see that the fruit of their work is near. These lamas have many different ways of practising Dharma: some are always teaching; others live alone in the mountains and accept perhaps one or two pupils.

3. The third kind of energy is the confidence that we are not too small, weak or stupid to obtain the fruit of Dharma practice. Weakness of this kind stands in the way of achievement of the object. It can be overcome by thinking that the highest buddhas and bodhisattvas also once had only delusion, lived in samsara, and were worse than ourselves. By practising Dharma, they reached the highest stages of perfection; we can do the same. No one has perfect virtue from the beginning; when children first go to school they cannot even read or write, but later they learn to do not only that but many other things as well, and some become great scholars. The Buddha said that even insects living in excrement can become buddhas. If we bear all this in mind, we shall find no reason why we cannot practise Dharma.

The three kinds of energy overcome three weaknesses: the first that the mind will not turn to Dharma; the second is the fatigue we experience when we practise; the third is the doubt we have in our own ability to achieve the aims of Dharma. The person who wants to get to the top of a mountain has first to turn to the path, second, to keep going and not give in to laziness, and third, not to falter and think, "This is possible for strong people, but not for me."

The scriptures teach that all virtue follows from energy. With energy, someone who is not intelligent can get the Dharma fruit. A person who is intelligent but lazy will not get the fruit, and the intelligence is useless and wasted. With both intelligence and energy, there will be the greatest success. There is a simile in the scriptures that if the dry grass on a mountain catches fire and the wind fans it, the whole mountainside will catch fire, but if there is no

wind the fire will go out straight away. Intelligence is like the fire and energy like the wind. If a person has intelligence and no energy, nothing will be accomplished. Thus the perfection of energy is essential for achieving the goal.

THE PERFECTION OF CONCENTRATION AND WISDOM

Concentration must be on an object. It is very important in both Dharma practice and ordinary life. The Tibetan word for concentration meditation is **ལྷོ་བུ་ལྷོ་བུ་** means to "dwell" or "stay," and **ལྷོ་** means "in peace." In a practical sense, then, **ལྷོ་བུ་** means to live peacefully without busy-ness, and is often translated as "calm abiding." (20) If we do not examine it carefully, our mind seems quite peaceful; but if we really look inside, it is not peaceful at all. Our mind is not able to stay on the same object for a second. It flutters around like a banner in the wind; as soon as we concentrate on one thing, another comes to disturb it. Even if we are living on a high mountain or in a quiet room or cave, our mind is always moving. If we go up to the top of a high building in a busy city we can look down and see how much turmoil there is, but when we are moving around within the crowd, we are only aware of a little of the bustle. Among the various mental factors, there is constant movement between conflicting elements; these factors always lead the mind. The movement of a banner fluttering in the wind is not caused by the banner itself but by the wind. Mind is like the banner and the mental factors are like the wind. This constant movement stops the mind concentrating on an object for long. Of our mental factors, the defilements are stronger than the good qualities. We usually do not try to control them, and even when we do, it is very difficult because for a long time we have been in the habit of always following them. Concentration or calm abiding occurs when our mental factors are purified and thus our mind is able to dwell peacefully on the object.

There are two kinds of meditation: analytical meditation (21) and concentration meditation. (22) It is necessary to use both kinds of meditation to remove delusion and reach the goal. Some people say that thinking and learning about Dharma are not meditation, but the scriptures say that these activities are in fact also kinds of meditation. If we do not think carefully and know the nature of the object we cannot concentrate well. The bustle within the mind is mind-produced; to quiet it, therefore, action by the mind itself and nothing

external is required. The primary action must be by the mind; on this basis, factors such as a suitable place and the meditation posture can help.

The place in which we practise concentration should be clean, quiet, close to nature, and pleasing to us. Our friends should be peaceful and good. Our body should be healthy, not sick. Sitting in the correct position also helps. For meditation, there are seven aspects of the ideal posture:

1. If it is not painful, the *jumu* posture, (23) with the legs crossed and the feet resting upturned on the thighs is best. However, if sitting in this position causes pain and distracts the mind, the left foot should be tucked under the right thigh and the right foot should rest on the left thigh.
2. The trunk must be as straight and erect as possible.
3. The arms should be in a bow shape, not resting against the sides of the body or pushed back; they should be at rest but firm. The back of the right hand should rest in the palm of the left; the thumbs should be level with the navel.
4. The neck should be curved slightly forward, with the chin in.
5. The eyes should be focused straight along the sides of the nose.
6. The mouth and lips should be relaxed, neither open nor tightly shut.
7. The tongue should be pressed gently against the palate.

These are the seven aspects of the vajra posture. Each is symbolic of a different stage of the path, but each also has a practical purpose. The legs crossed and the feet on the thighs make a locked position. We can lock ourselves firmly in place with legs crossed and the feet on the thighs as described above; positioned like this we could sit in meditation for a long time, even for months, without falling. The straightness of the body allows for the best functioning of the channels carrying the airs on which the mind rides in our bodies. If the body is straight these channels will not be blocked. The position of the arms is also to allow the best functioning of these channels. If one looks too high one can easily see something distracting; if the head is too low one gets pain in the neck or becomes sleepy. The mouth should not be closed so tightly that breathing is difficult if the nose is at all blocked; nor should it be open so widely that strong breathing causes the fire element of the body to increase with high blood pressure resulting. If the tongue is pressed against the palate, the throat and mouth will be kept moist. These are the immediate reasons for the meditation

posture. Very rarely, people's arrangement of the inner channels is different, in which case they need a different position.

By just sitting in the vajra posture we achieve a good frame of mind, but the main work has to be done by the mind itself. If a thief enters a room, the way to remove him is to go in and throw him out, not just to shout from the outside. Similarly, if we are sitting on the top of the mountain while our mind is wandering in the village below, we shall not be able to develop concentration.

There are two enemies of concentration. One is busy-ness, wildness, or scattered attention; (24) the other is sleepiness, torpor, or sinking. (25) Our attention is distracted when a desire arises and the mind immediately races after it. Whenever the mind goes after anything other than the object of concentration, this is wild or scattered, mind. Sleepiness, or torpor, occurs when the mind is sleepy and not alert. If we want to concentrate well, we have to overcome these disturbances. If there is a beautiful picture on the wall of a dark room, we need a candle to see it, but if there is a draught, the flame will flicker and we shall not be able to see it properly. If there is no draught but the flame is very weak, there will not be enough light and we shall still not be able to see the picture. If there are neither of these difficulties, the flame will be strong and steady and we shall be able to see the picture clearly. The picture is like the object of concentration, the flame is the mind, the wind is scattered attention and the weak flame is torpor.

In the early stages of the practice of concentration, the first of these disturbances is more common. The mind immediately flies away from the object to other things. This can be seen if we try to keep our mind on the memory of a face; it is immediately replaced by something else. It is very difficult to quell these disturbances because, over many lives, we have built up the habit of following them, while we have not developed the habit of concentration. We may find it very hard to develop new habits of mind and leave old ones behind, but concentration is the basic necessity for all higher meditation and for all kinds of mental activity.

Mindfulness (26) and conscious awareness (27) are the antidotes to scattered attention and torpor respectively. The drawing here represents an aspiring meditator, who is following the path of meditative stages that ends in the accomplishment of calm abiding and the beginning of the practice of insight meditation. At the bottom of the page we see the practitioner, who holds a rope in one hand and a hook in the other, chasing after an elephant led by a monkey. The elephant represents the meditator's mind; a wild or untrained elephant can be dangerous and wreak enormous destruction, but once trained will obey commands and

do hard work. The same holds true for the mind. Any suffering that we have now is due to the mind being like a wild, untrained elephant. The elephant also has very big footprints; these symbolize the mental defilements. If we work hard at improving our mind it will be able to do very great work for us in return. From the suffering of the hells to the happiness of the buddhas, all states are caused by the behaviour of the mind.

At the start of the path the elephant is black, which represents torpor or sinking of the mind. The monkey leading the elephant represents scattering of the mind. A monkey cannot keep quiet for a moment—it is always chattering or fiddling with something and finds everything attractive. In the same way that the monkey is in front leading the elephant, our attention is scattered by the sense objects of taste, touch, sound, smell, and vision. These are symbolized by food, cloth, musical instruments, perfume, and a mirror. Behind the elephant is a person, who represents the meditator trying to train the mind. The rope in the meditator's hand is mindfulness and the hook is awareness. Using these two tools the meditator will try to tame and control his mind. Fire is shown at different points along the path to represent the energy necessary for concentration. Notice that the fire gradually decreases at each of the ten stages of zhi.nay, as less energy is needed to concentrate. It will flare up again at the eleventh stage, when we start practising insight meditation.

In the beginning, just as the elephant following the monkey pays no attention to the person chasing behind, the practitioner has no control over his or her mind. In the second stage, the practitioner, who has almost caught up with the elephant, is able to throw the rope around the elephant's neck. It looks back; this is the third stage, where the mind can be restrained a little by mindfulness. Here a rabbit is on the elephant's back, symbolizing subtle torpor, (28) which previously might have seemed to be a state of concentration, but now can be recognized for the harmful factor that it is. In these early stages we have to use mindfulness more than awareness.

At the fourth stage the elephant mind is more obedient, so less pulling with the rope of mindfulness is necessary. By the fifth stage the elephant is being led by the rope and hook and the monkey is following behind. At this point we are not much disturbed by scattering or distracted attention; mostly we have to use awareness instead of mindfulness. In the drawing, the sixth stage of practice is depicted with the elephant and the monkey both following obediently behind the practitioner, who does not have to look back at them. This means that the practitioner does not have to focus continually on controlling the mind, and the absence of the rabbit shows that the subtle torpor, which appeared at the third stage, has now disappeared.

Upon reaching the seventh stage, the elephant can be left to follow of its own accord and the monkey takes leave; the practitioner has no more need to use the rope and hook—scattered attention and torpor occur only mildly and occasionally. At the eighth stage the elephant has turned completely white and follows behind the practitioner; this shows that the mind is obedient and there is no sinking or scattering, although some energy is still needed to concentrate. At the ninth stage the practitioner can actually sit in meditation while the elephant sleeps peacefully nearby; at this point the mind can concentrate without effort for long periods of time—days, weeks, or even months. The tenth stage, where we see the meditator sitting on top of the elephant, signifies the real attainment of calm abiding. At the last, eleventh, stage, the meditator is sitting on the elephant's back holding a sword. At this point the practitioner begins a new kind of meditation called "higher vision," or insight meditation. (29)

If we practise the calm abiding type of meditation, we might use an image of Buddha as our object of concentration. The first thing we do is look at it very thoroughly. Then we start meditating. In meditation we do not look at the object with our physical eyes but focus with the mind's eye. At first our memory of it will not be at all clear, but even so, we should not try to force it to become clear—this is impossible at the start. The important point is to keep our attention focused on it, clear or otherwise. The clarity will eventually come naturally.

At the beginning, concentration is very difficult; the mind always turns this way and that. When we persist in the practice, however, we shall find that we are able to keep our mind on the object for one or two minutes, then three or four minutes, and so on. Each time the mind leaves the object, mindfulness has to bring it back. Awareness has to be used to see if disturbances are coming or not. If we carry a bowl full of hot water along a rough road, part of our mind has to watch the water and part has to watch the road. Mindfulness has to keep the concentration steady, and awareness has to watch out for disturbances that may come. As we saw in the drawing, we need progressively less mindfulness after the initial stages, but then our mind, tired from fighting the scattering of attention, produces torpor.

After a while there comes a stage where the meditator feels much happiness and relaxation, which is often mistaken for the true state of calm abiding; in fact, however, it is subtle torpor, which makes the mind weak. If we continue our practice with energy, this subtle torpor will also disappear. When we have removed this disturbance, our mind becomes clearer and more awake, and thus the object of our meditation is seen more clearly. As our perception of the meditation object increases in clearness and freshness, our body will be

sustained by our peace of mind, and we shall not have hunger or thirst. Eventually, a meditator can continue like this for months at a time. The feeling experienced in the mind at this stage cannot be described.

If we look at a piece of cloth with our eyes we can see it, but not in great detail. But a person who has concentrated on it well with the mind's eye can see it very clearly in all details. When we die our mind becomes weaker, but if we practise meditation then our mind, at this time, will actually become fresher and clearer. Normally, dying people experience delusions and fears which lead to a bad rebirth. If, however, we have meditated well, then during the death process our mind will be concentrated on Buddha, Dharma and so forth; this helps very much for the next birth.

The scriptures say that in the ninth stage of the practice of calm abiding, even if a wall crashes down next to the meditator, he will not be disturbed. As the meditator continues to practise, his body and mind experience a special pleasure; this feeling marks the attainment of the final goal of calm abiding. The meditator's body feels light and tireless, symbolized in the drawing by the person flying. His body has become very supple, and his mind can be turned to any meditation, just as a thin copper wire can be turned in any direction without breaking. The meditator feels as though the object and his mind have become one.

Although at the ninth stage of calm abiding we feel very happy and peaceful, this is not the real end of meditation. Firm concentration on the object is still not the complete achievement. Now the meditator can combine concentration with an examination into the real nature of the object of meditation. After continuing the simultaneous practice of both types of meditation, a special pleasure arises from the seeing into the object. "Seeing the object" involves seeing whether an object is suffering, seeing if it is permanent or changeable, and looking for the highest truth to be found about the real nature of the object. In Tibetan, the name for this meditation with insight is *lhag.thong*; *lhag* means more, or higher, and *thong* to understand or realize. (29) Through this kind of meditation the mind obtains more understanding of the object than it can through simple concentration; when this practice has been perfected, the mind can turn to anything. The perfection **འཇུག་མཐོང་ལྟོགས་ཀྱི་ལྷན་སྐྱེས་ཀྱི་ལྷན་སྐྱེས་** gives great spiritual satisfaction, but if one is satisfied merely with this, it is like having an aeroplane built, ready to fly, but left on the ground.

The mind can be turned to deeper and higher things. It has to be used on the one hand to overcome karma and defilements, and on the other to obtain the virtues of a buddha. For this, the object can only be emptiness, or **གི་བློ་བཟོ་བྱེད་ཀྱི་ལྷན་སྐྱེས་** other meditations prepare the mind for

this final object. If we have a very good torch that can show up anything, we have to use its light to find what is important. The root cause of all our trouble is ignorance. We have to use our knowledge of emptiness to dispel ignorance; we must use our mind, purified by calm abiding and special insight, to cut the root of the tree of ignorance. In the drawing, at this stage, the practitioner is holding a sword, symbolizing the realization of emptiness, to cut the two black lines symbolizing the two obscurations: the defilement-obscurations and the knowledge-obscurations.

The realization of emptiness is essential to remove ignorance. Once we come close to a thorough understanding of emptiness we are on the way to the perfection of wisdom—the complete comprehension of emptiness.

PART THREE

CONCLUSION and NOTES

CONCLUSION

The preceding is, briefly, an explanation of the reasons for meditation and a description of the path up to the buddha stage. If we really want to practise the Buddhist Dharma, we must first know what suffering is and realize the way in which we exist in samsara. To get out of samsara, we must have strong faith in the Buddha, and then practise as the Buddha taught. We should consider how other beings are also suffering in samsara, and out of compassion for them, we must wish to reach the buddha stage in order to help them.

It is important to try to find the right understanding of Dharma. Even if we buy a watch, which only needs to last for a few years, we try to find a good one. Because Dharma is not just for ourselves in this life, but for all beings in all lives, it is much more important to find the right and best understanding of it. If we want to trust another person, first we have to know that the other person is honest and reliable; we can only determine this by what the other one says or does. In the same way, we can have faith in the Buddha only by knowing what he taught, by looking at our experiences to see whether it is reasonable, and by practising it to see if it gives good fruit or not. Then our faith will be indestructible.

10. Ignorance regarding the self of persons; **di X[UUha UKf]gH/[Ub["hL [']XU["Xh]b[']n]i a UF]['dUF][Ub["hL [']XU["Xh]b[']n]i a UF]['dL'**
Ignorance regarding the self of phenomena; **XUfa Uha UKf]gH, Wc' _n]i XU["Xh]b[']n]i a UF]['dL'**
11. Carrying; vehicle; **'nbbU' hY['dUFhY['dL'**
12. The mind motivated or dedicated to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all living beings; the altruistic intention; the awakening mind; **VcX]M]H]V' Vnbb['WM V _n]i]gYa g f]Ub['WM V _n]i]gYa L'**
13. Wisdom; **dFUBU' g Yg'FU'f]g Y'FU'U' Method; means; 'i dUhb' h UGf]f]U'U'**
14. Buddha field; **Vi XXU _g Y'FU' g]b[g f[nbg _n]i n] b] f]g]b[['nY' nY' n] b] L'**
15. Ten levels or grounds; **XU]U]i a], g]V]M]f]g]U]M] L'**
16. "The Oceans of Clouds of Praises"; **g]cX' g]f]b' f[n]b' a h]g]c' f]K' f]b' [n]b] h]g]L** This is a prayer in praise of the **VcX]g]H]j U AUb]i g]f]**, which contains a description of a buddha's qualities of body, speech and mind.
17. Perfection; **dUF]b]H]V' dUFc' hi' d]n]b' dUF]b]U'fc' hi' W]b' dL'**
18. **@U @b U M]g]Y' x/ f]B]j U]i fi' > b]b]b]f]U]U'U'** This king was a descendant of '?]b]' **@b]XUfa UF][@b]XUfa U'U'**, who was responsible for eradicating the first spreading of Buddhism in Tibet.
19. Verses 19 and 20 of Je Tsongkhapa's prayer The Beginning and the End **f]h]c] 'a h]U' a U f]h]c] 'h]U' a U'U'**
20. Calm abiding; **g]U]b]U]h]U' n]i] [b]b]j]f]h] 'b]U]h]b** Calm abiding is the perfection of mental concentration.
21. Analytical, or investigative, meditation; **j]M]U]F]U]U]Y]U]b]U] X]d]h]X' g]ca' f]Y]f]ca' L'**
Discursive analysis of the true nature of the meditation object.
22. Concentration meditation; **g]h]U]h]b]U]U]Y]U]b]U] f]c] 'g]ca' f]c] 'ca' L'** Following discriminating or analytic meditation, one then single-pointedly places the mind on the meditation object. This practice is an aspect of calm abiding.
23. Diamond posture; **'j U'f]U]j]b]U' f]Xc' Y' Y' [X]U]b' f]Xc' Y' Y' X]Y]b]L'** This **U]j]b]U** is called the diamond posture or pose because in this position, one can sit firmly, "indestructibly," unmovingly, for a long period of time.
24. Scattered attention; agitation; mental excitement; **U XX]n]b]U] f]c] X' dUF]c' d]i' L'**
25. Torpor; sinking; lethargy; **b]f]a U] [b]U]U] V]h]b] ['V]U]f]h]b] 'k' L'**
26. Mindfulness; remembrance; recollection; **'ga f]h] / X]f]U]b' dUF]X]Y]b' dL'**
27. **7' YU' W]a d]f]Y] Y]b]g]cb/ Uk U'Y]b]Y]gg' a Y]b]U' g]h]n]i]g]U]a d]f]U]X]n]b]i' g] Y]g]V]h]]b] f]g] Y' h]n]i]b]L'**

28. $G \text{ VhY'hcfdcf/g_j_a Ub]fa U[bUW'Vh]b'WUd'fU'a c'f]b['kUhfU'a d'}$

29. $\text{-bg] \ha YX]Hjcb/\ Y][\HbYX]bg[\h'j]dUj \ntbU' \text{\textasciitilde} U['a Hcb'fAU['Hcb[\text{\textasciitilde} }$

