

**Vanavās with  
Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche**

**12<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> March, 2017**

**Vana | Dehradun | India**

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Day 1 | 12<sup>th</sup> March, 2017

## MORNING SESSION

So, Veer insisted that this is a space for a retreat – it is not a spa! (Laughter) I have to share the sentiment because many people, when they say the word ‘mindfulness’, it troubles me a little bit – it has become exactly like a spa! So Veer’s insistence is right, and actually, I have an empathy with the word ‘retreat’.

‘Retreat’ is a very important tradition in the dharma, even during the Buddha’s time. For instance, there was a tradition of a rainy season retreat, which was very important. When we talk about a retreat, we always talk about a boundary. I think the English word retreat is maybe not doing justice. In Tibetan, we call it ‘tsam’, which means a boundary. So you create a boundary. There are so many paradoxes in Buddhism, just like many of the Indian thoughts and wisdom. You can never really figure it out, have a fixed idea and say that ‘this is it’. This is the beauty of Indian thinking, too.

Ideally, anyway, in the Buddha-dharma, we have to go beyond the boundary. Boundary-less. I believe, there’s an Amitabha in Vana – in the cave nearby. Amitabha is also translated to ‘boundless light’, but it actually refers to someone who is ‘boundary-less’. No boundaries. In order to reach that ‘beyond-boundary’ stage, kids like us – we have to somehow reach it, with some sort of boundary! We need toys, we need references, we need encouragement, we need means. So, when we talk about a boundary in Buddhism – the word ‘tsam’ for retreat – we realize that the highest boundary – and this is very important, and I’d like to share this as this is a very intimate setting, which is good. When I’m teaching large audiences, I sometimes forget what I’ve been saying! At one point, one of the people was listening to one of my teachings in the car, they were driving me, and I couldn’t understand what I was saying! (Laughter) So it’s not cohesive, but I like small groups. I would also like to take this opportunity to experiment because I have done

this one in Hong Kong, and that was a pretty big group. It wasn't that successful there, but I want to present this here again.

Anyway, what I'm going to share is really rooted in the classical Buddhist texts although some of the means, for example, for the metaphors that I use will be modern, easy to understand, more simplified. But I will make sure that I don't go astray from the Buddhist sutras and shastras, because if I do that, then I'd fall into that department of 'mindfulness', the department of the 'spa'. (Laughter)

So, when we talk about a 'retreat', we're talking about a boundary. You may have heard of Tibetan Lamas doing a three year retreat, or doing a month – six month, or even a lifelong retreat! There are people who will stay inside the room, and once they're inside, they will build bricks on the door, wall it up and never go out! I have encountered more than 500 people still doing this kind of retreat. Very admirable, I have to say. But anyway, when we do a retreat for a month, we usually have a boundary – such as, I am not going to go out of this fence. I will not speak to more than this and that amount of people, maybe close friends or family members, or a doctor, or a plumber or whatever. I will not read magazines or newspapers. I will not read emails. You can basically create your own discipline.

This is something quite important in Buddhism, as the teachers usually don't create the discipline. You create it, and on the first day, you take a vow that this is going to be your discipline. Depending on what kind of time you have, experience you have, you'll carry it out. I know of people who will not meet anyone, who will not go out of their rooms. I know this one person in New York who has done a 3-year retreat in her flat! Something like the 25th floor. It must be very tough, but you can do that.

We usually create boundaries, and some of them are very decorated! Usually, this is not a good sign because people who put so much emphasis on these things – *you know, I'm doing a retreat, setting a boundary and so on* – actually, they end up doing less of practice because they put so much emphasis on outer rituals. Anyway, the point that I am trying to make is that in Buddhism, the real boundary is between the past thought and the future thought. That is your boundary. Now if you can do that, you can be in a nightclub, dancing and crazy – all sorts of wheeling, dealing in business or whatever – but still, there will be Yogis who will not go beyond the boundary of the past thought and the future thought – meaning, to be in the present. Always in the present. Whatever you are thinking right now, being in this present.

For instance, now. You hear rustling, air conditioner, maybe you're thinking of yesterday and tomorrow, whatever it is. Simply knowing that, being aware of it – but not really thinking about the past or future, and not judging – never judging! You may be thinking something so hideous, or something so wholesome – but you must just simply be aware. That is actually the king of retreats.

You might ask, what is the point of doing this? Is the point to be a vegetable? It feels like that – you have to think about it, you have to be creative – how can you just watch whatever is happening right now, this thought – just being aware of what's happening, what's the point?

I'm doing a big re-definition of your place here, eh? (Laughter) What's the point of doing this, why do we do that? Then comes the wellness part. Wellness is so important! Outer wellness, inner wellness, sacred wellness, and the innermost, most sacred wellness is so important! And how do you become not well? How do you get sick? Insane? Unhealthy, basically? Well, the moment you go outside of the past thought and future thought, the past mind and the future mind.

The moment you judge, the moment you think about things – I’m sure we do this all the time. Many times, we have expressions like this – drifting, getting worked up, getting entangled, lost in thought, daydreaming – all that! They all have a little bit of a different meaning, but are basically similar. Getting worked up is kind of more wrathful. Daydreaming is I guess more sentimental, more romantic, but nevertheless, actually, sort-of, not healthy. I should rephrase that – it’s not *being well*.

Real wellness is just being in the present. Whatever it is. I hope that in these few days, I can convince you how important being in the present is. Many of these teachings are now coming from spas! You may end up thinking this is one of those new-age techniques, but no – this technique came from the Shakyamuni Buddha, 2500 years ago from India, from places like Sarnath, Rajgir and Vaishali! This was not only taught, but was also practiced, analyzed, discussed.

And not only that! Being in the present is taught in many forms such as ritual, prayers – like what we did today. For instance in Japan – you must know the Japanese Tea Ceremony. The first time was very good, because it was new and all that. But after a point...perhaps it’s because we haven’t been trained in those, sitting like that, or there’s a lack of mindfulness. Anyway, you can see that this ceremony is all about grabbing hold of the present moment, appreciating the present moment. The tea itself – it’s sometimes disgusting! (Laughter) It’s not like, after all the rituals, the tea tastes any good. By then, you are so tired, you really want to drink some.

Anyway, you must know these – they are very, very elaborate. You have to do lots of things, the mixing of the tea, the color, the way you open – but all of this technique is designed to keep you in the present. Similarly, Japanese *ikebana* – the flower arrangement – balancing the

flower between heaven, earth and whatever – I don't know, its *ikebana*. This is also to put you in the present.

But in Tibet, you know, they are losing this. Not the technique! Most of the youngsters, they don't know that these have to do with Buddhism – they think this is art. In fact, many temples don't even know about Zen Buddhism. Zen is a Buddhist practice, derived from the Chinese word 'ch'an' that has come from the Sanskrit word 'dhyana'.

Then, they have *guido* – archery. The whole practice of archery, its technique is all for mindfulness. I want to tell you this because the moment I tell you the word 'meditation', I know what you are thinking. You are thinking about the meditation cushion! You are thinking about sitting straight. You can never imagine, that I could do chapatti meditation – you know, chapatti making? You could actually do this – from the time where you mix the flour, the kneading of the dough – you could make something very elaborate.

You should know that not everything about Buddhism needs to be so silent, so serious, so meticulous...so, like in the Japanese way! The Indian way is fantastic – you know, flowers everywhere, balloons everywhere – that in itself is its beauty. The point is to try, and grab and maintain the present moment.

I also want to share that we should go beyond meditation. The moment we hear meditation, most people think in terms of sitting straight, isn't it? Well, I want to say that sitting straight does have some benefit – because chances of you being in the present in a hammock with a margarita are a little difficult! Your chances are improved with a hard cushion, sitting straight – because these techniques have been passed down by the great yogis and the practitioners of the past. They have been tested. You are supposed to do meditation under the tree.

This actually does help sometimes! You are supposed to practice in the forest. You have this – metaphorically, Vana. You are supposed to meditate in front of a river. All has its own effects – a river, I think, brings sadness. In Buddhism, we say that the genuine heart of sadness is priceless. It makes you a fuller human. As a human, you should always have a little bit of sadness, and you then become a more complete sort of human.

There are all sorts of conditions like going into and meditating in the cemeteries. But one thing I want you to know is that – as long as you are in the present, you can practice meditation anywhere! In the kitchen, in the shower, while driving. This is important, otherwise your spirit and heart, and your day to day life will never mingle. Anyway, maybe you meditate half-an-hour in the morning, and the rest of the 23 hours you spend in the chaos – it's not going to do much. You need to be able to relate to a moment by moment life – and really, this is a big thing in Buddhism. If I just spill this out a little – no technique is ever rejected. If you go deeper into the Tantra, all emotions are used as a tool. As an attribute. Nothing is rejected.

Did you prepare some Basho? Maybe tomorrow? We were discussing about this poet – I want to tell you this. Poetry, for instance. You need to think, to be creative. The practice of haiku, in the Zen tradition of Japanese Buddhism – and it is also practiced in Tibetan, but it's sort of dwindling now – but the Haiku is a very good method. I'm no Haiku master, but I love Basho. It's basically noticing. You can notice three things that you hear, taste, see, feel – now, in this very moment, and jot it down, and you can actually create a beautiful, short, precise, to the point haiku of this moment. It really expresses this moment!

I've really said enough about the benefit of being in the present. I was talking about wellness, complete wellness. Complete wellness, if I put it from another angle, is when you actually realize the truth. Today is,

for Buddhists, a very special day. There are four special days in a year, and the first of the four happens to be today. It's called miracle day.

If you read the sutras and the shastras, you will not find too many mentions of the Buddha's miraculous powers like flying, manifesting food, drink, curing people – you don't actually hear a lot of that. In fact, you hear the opposite. For instance, the very famous story of a mother whose child died. She goes to the Buddha asking for help, to make the dead child come back to life. Buddha asks her to look for a sesame seed, or a mustard seed from seven families who have never had the experience of death, and of course, she couldn't even find one, let alone seven. This is one classic example – always about the truth.

When the Buddhists talk about the miracles of the Buddha, it is always to do with the most powerful realization of the Buddha: the realization of the truth. Such as the four noble truths.

I have to say, even from my childhood – I remember this very clearly. My grandfather used to have this very mischievous attendant who somehow had this strange sort of power – maybe power isn't the right word – he had a strange technique. Where he got it from I don't know, I've seen this with my own eyes.

We eat rice in the morning and sometimes, he'd flatten the cooked rice like a chapatti and put it on the fire to roast. When one side was roasted – he way always busy, always practicing – and he'd go like this (make a gesture), and the rice would flip! He probably tricked me or something, but I've seen this several times because I would always ask him to do it! He would do so many things. For instance – you should hear this one – ordained monks, their robes aren't like these. Their robes are hollow, and round – and they wear it a certain way. My grandfather was very strict. Whenever he wanted an attendant

to come, he would make this rapping noise, and they would have to quickly go in and attend to him.

This is so funny. So this mischievous man was one monk – my grandfather had two attendants. The other was the main attendant. There was a room where they slept, that had a pillar within. It has to hold the roof. While the other monk was sleeping, this mischievous monk put the robe outside the pillar, out of reach. Then the monk got up and he couldn't get his robes. He was angry, and he also got late in the morning, getting scolded.

What I want to tell you is, that my grandfather scolded this man a lot. He was never supposed to do this! I would pester him to do it, and only then he'd actually agree. One time, he actually caught a snake. He pretends to chant a mantra – I don't know whether he chants or not – and blow air on his hand, and then he held a snake. Only when I would ask, without my grandfather's knowledge, he'd do these things, and he'd get scolded severely.

Even I would be scolded – you're never supposed to do this, who do you think you are, you're supposed to learn, you know, the four noble truths – this is the real power. These kinds of shamanistic powers would only ruin other people and yourselves. So, from my experience, I learnt that Buddhist are never really fascinated by the power – the truth is the most important. When we talk about the truth, we're not talking about any exotic truth. We've talked about this in Delhi. It's not exotic, divine, supernatural – we're talking about some very simple truth, such as: All compounded things are impermanent. All thoughts in your mind, whatever discursive thoughts that you have – because of their uncertainty, it takes you to anxiety, suffering, pain. I don't need to give you logic to prove it.

All compounded things are impermanent. You don't need logic to know that! Nothing is permanent, you know. All your thoughts, your ideas, your principles – are never ever certain. They're going to change. What's next? We can assume that tomorrow, we'll be celebrating Holi. This is only an assumption! We can never be certain. So there's always an anxiety. That's the second truth.

Even the third one is very simple. The third truth is, whatever you project – its only your projection, and it is not the real thing. Also, there is nothing that you *do not project*. Emptiness, Sunyata – see? It is very simple. I want to tell you this because what we will be discussing is not spa mindfulness. If you ask me, *If this is so simple, why are we not understanding it?* Because of habit. Habitual patterns are what stop us from facing the truth.

We have them coming all the way from our ancestors, our culture, books, teachers, opinions. Democratic, individual opinions. All these opinions, they make your habits so strong. What do you need to know? The truth. What is stopping you? This habit. Who is feeding this habit? This is a strategy, this is almost like a war. We know that the culprit is the habit, and that we need to do something about it. We need to plan, set an economic embargo upon it, to starve this habit. To uproot this habit, to weaken it, to derail and discontinue, and disorganize these organized habitual patterns. This is what you need to do. So who is feeding this habit? I don't need to use logic, you can experience this. Never being able to be in the present.

Try now. Always thinking about something, and never being able to think about what you are thinking, or what you are doing. Basically, drifting, getting worked up. This is the food of habit. Whatever you are thinking right now, not knowing that. I'm not telling you to think about something wholesome, am I? I haven't told you this. What am I saying? Whatever you are thinking, just know it. That's it. As simple as that.

What is the benefit of this? The benefit of just knowing whatever is happening will not feed the habitual patterns. It will not drive, it will not lead to other thoughts. More thoughts mean more actions. More actions meant that you are planting these seeds really well, with fertilizer – you are ploughing, fencing and everything! The result – of course, anxiety will grow, it is the harvest! That is called karma.

Do you want to work with karma? Do you really want to? This is the one difference between Buddhism and Hinduism because in Buddhism, karma can be manipulated. Now, this very moment? How? By being in the present.

By being in the present, you are not judging, drifting. You are burning the seed of karma. Of course, at the moment, you may be able to be in the present for a bit. The next moment, due to our habits, you might drift. Of course you have to practice. You need to step out of the meditation cushion. Everything.

There was this French movie called ‘diva’ – a really beautiful film. There’s this really nice scene which I cannot forget. This guy is chopping onions and he has designed this big goggle – and he wears this goggle while he’s chopping the onion because he’s practicing Zen. The onion generates tears, so he wears it while doing that. Cooking, talking – in a heated argument with somebody. In the middle of the heated argument, if you are able to be in the present it would help you immensely.

It’s like a train coming in, sort of unhooked – and then it will become wobbly. What do you want? You want our train of thought to become wobbly. That’s what the Buddhists wants. We ordinary samsaric beings want all our thoughts organized in one place – that is very very difficult.

I’ve talked too much, I want you to experiment with this now. Don’t sit straight or anything, just sit however you are right now. Scratching, yawning, whatever. But be in the present. Have you done it? You know

what you are doing? No need to be all *I'm going to do this*. No need to do that. That's already – you've wasted three seconds. Just do whatever you are doing.

For instance, I was just thinking of asking Veer to tell me the timetable, and I was happy that by the end of it, I knew what I was thinking. For example –

I just now, noticed that my finger was like this. I was happy with that, and you should be also. Whatever you are thinking, just knowing that. Believe me, this is the mother of all wisdom. Why? You can see yourself. The moment you judge, you have become numb. When you are daydreaming, totally worked up, your mouth open, saliva, drooling – probably one fly even has the time to go in and come out! (Laughter)

You get so stuck, fixated. That very moment, you are completely aware. In the process of doing this, you think: Am I doing this? Have I done it? Just know that that's what you are doing! You're asking. It is this simple.

Simplicity is the biggest challenge of the Buddha-dharma. It is too simple! People don't like it. They say they want something simple, but it's a lie. I've come to a conclusion that they don't mean it. They want a totalitarian, dictatorial stuff – things like don't eat chicken, don't do this, don't wear this and so on – they love it! They call it 'direction'! (Laughter) Me too! I like this also! This is so difficult – you always keep asking am *I doing it*? You ask a meditation master, and if the master is good – and you say, I've been doing this for a year, and all I've managed after all this is simply asking myself *Am I doing this, am I doing that*. I managed to feel guilty for not doing it. A good master would say, *Fantastic*. At last, you've managed to become a spiritual person!

In fact, my teachers, they are more happy that I worry about not practicing the dharma rather than me stating I've practiced this much

dharmā! And it makes sense. When you worry that you are not in the present, it is the most beautiful gift! It's the best gift! You should have this guilt. You should feel bad for not being in the present. The more you feel bad, the more frustrated you feel, you manage to do it. You know that you are distracted.

What's the time? Am I okay? Okay, let's take a break – I think a break is important.

## Tea Break

Means, techniques are very tricky. Risky also. But, there's no choice. You have to have it. Every time you are taking a path, you have to take a risk. Especially if the means for the technique is beautiful – and especially if the means is making sense! It is so dangerous if it makes sense! Making sense is so dangerous, it can confine you, imprison you for generations.

Maybe you should bring a Taoist master over here. Tao is good, you know. I don't know much, but I read a little bit – it was so good! But, means are so difficult – for instance, like the word *nirvana*. We have to use this word. We do this consciously sometimes – we make it into something so colorful, and it's different for different regions! In China, *nirvana* is so lofty – swimming pools, swans, water buffalos (laughter) – stuff like that. Tibetans – they've never seen the lotus, but they have such ideas of the lotus! They have lotuses everywhere in *nirvana*. Words like *nirvana*, *samsara* – they're means, they're language. It's so risky to use, but we have no choice.

The real nirvana is when you can be in the present all the time. How can we do this? How can we ever cook an omelette being in the

present? It's almost unfathomable, isn't it, to you? How can we write a story? You know, to write a story, I basically have to get creative, get lost in the word of the story! Then I can write it down. You just cannot fathom, that you can do it. Why? Because, you've never had the habit of being in the present, you have the habit of never being in the present. It's very simple. This is the present state, and this is the past and the future. You always go from here to there. That's why you cannot fathom to be *here* all the time – you think it's the stage of being a vegetable, being in a coma – being comatose. Completely frozen.

No, not at all! Being in the present makes you the most generous. Why? What is generosity? This is when you have no clinging. No stinginess. When you are in the present, how can you be clingy? The more you invest in being present – you may not necessarily open your charity box and donate to the world – because that's not real generosity anyway. That is when you have no fixation, stinginess – and that happens by being in the present.

What's the next one? Discipline? What is discipline? The word is almost torturous – the moment you hear this word, anything to do with routine, we don't like this. Buddhists have very interesting definitions of discipline. It's the Sanskrit word – *shila*. What's the meaning of '*shila*'? Don't we have a Sanskrit expert here? Well, I'll just pretend that I am one! (Laughter)

*Shila* has the connotation of cooling, and not stressed. Our notion of discipline is different – we tell ourselves, we need to go to the gym, we should do mindfulness! (Laughter) Most of this sort of mindfulness, it causes constipation. (Laughter) You are prone to getting distracted. The core, the essence of discipline is no stress. How do we achieve that? By being in the present. How else? When you are in the present, you are like a child. Totally stress-free. I'm doing a run-down of the classic Buddhist virtues – generosity, discipline. What's next?

Patience, tolerance. ‘Mithon’ (unclear), tolerance is when you have non-aggression. We need to write this down, because that’s what Buddhists mean when they talk of non-violence. When you are non-violent, then not understanding the word ‘patience’ – this is why there are things like political correctness. When there is a lot of political correctness, then there are all these liberals, and they end up producing people like Trump. (Laughter) I’m trying to provoke here. It’s not aggression – some of us, Buddhists, Jains and so on – our so-called non-violence can be quite violent. It’s aggressive! *Non-violence* and looking down at violent people. Any such ideas are actually violent. General rights, all the good-sounding values – animal rights, dog rights, cat rights – how come there’s no such movement for cats? Don’t humans treat cats badly? I’ve seen some cats being badly treated.

Anyway, there’s some sort of violence – tolerance to everything instills patience. Now how do you achieve that? Not going to the past, not going to the future, but being the present is tolerance. So on and so forth.

Okay, what is compassion? Compassion is a very big...you know, hashtag? (Laughter) Selling point of Buddhism? What is the quintessence of compassion? Compassion is not *oh, the poor guy*, sympathy, teary, all those touchy-feely things. No. You can call that compassion, but that’s not the real thing. Real compassion is when you are in the present, when you are not judging. To put your feet in someone else’s shoes is so easy, then. Being in the present is the core essence of compassion. It is love, it is joy. Basically, there isn’t any reason why you should not practice being in the present.

It’s a tragedy if you don’t do it. You don’t have to buy it, download it – you have it. You don’t need to be qualified, you don’t need to be a special person. All you need is the mind, and I believe you have it. You are not a pebble, a stone, a piece of wood. You have the mind. If you have a mind, you are bound to be distracted. You will go to the past,

you will go to the future if you have a mind, and if it's not tamed, of course. If that's the case, then you can be in the present too.

Let's go back. What is being in the present? Without sitting properly or whatever. We will do it in two days – lets first do a very casual, spontaneous one. Whatever you are doing – such as reading a book. Yes, that's it. Be happy with this. I'm not saying you should only do this one – continue, by all means, but know that this is Samadhi. The word 'samadhi' is supposed to refer to something so exotic, so profound, so long-winded and so foreign – but that's what you just did. Because you're not thinking of the past or the present.

Let's listen to music now, and try being in that present.

Beautiful. You don't have to have any kind of sensation, or any kind of feeling. Just hear. We were talking about wellness. How would you become well? When you let your senses do their job in complete form – we're not letting them do their job completely. Some of you didn't even know what you were drinking, coffee or tea, because you were thinking of something else, you were talking about something, or thinking of the biscuit you were eating – I don't know! Just so busy – business, getting worked up.

I can understand these spa people talking about this stress-free kind of thing. That is the bonus of this! You can be free from outer stress – not get excited or whatever, but that's not what the end is when we use Buddhist meditation, or the path. Who cares whether you're stressed or not, happy or not, getting a good sleep or not? We don't care about that. We care about seeing the truth, and that's the only miracle we want.

That's nothing exotic – everything is impermanent, temporary, all that we are thinking about is projected, it's not real – what's the benefit of knowing that? Well, all kinds of unnecessary and unfair expectations then disappear. If you see an oasis in the desert and you know it's

not real – you’ll still enjoy it, because it’s a beautiful mirage! You can even take a photo if you want, and that’s it! Just enjoy it. Let us do a traditional, seated one – which is also important, you know?

Let’s start. Just know whatever is happening in your mind. No need to visualize anything, no need to think about lights, sensations.

So I heard a crow – in Japan, there are so many crows, actually, and it’s quite nice. Old Japanese movies, like Ozu – especially Ozu, there’s the sound of so many crows! It gives you a haunting feeling. Because of that crow, my mind went to Ozu while I was sitting, exposing to me how I was distracted, and then it made me think of my film which was being shown in Osaka. That led me to thinking, that the producers are arriving today in Delhi, and they need to be picked up. Entanglement, getting worked up? Getting distracted? But, somewhere, when my mind was at the Indira Gandhi International airport, my mind quickly came back. So there was nothing to regret. I don’t have to punish myself thinking that my mind is so distracted.

Do you want to ask some questions? We have, like 10 minutes.

**Q: Sorry Rinpoche, but I’m asking the first question. On this point of how you got from crow to the arrival of the producer. This often does lead to a productive thought that one needs to do.**

It would be even more productive if you can be in the present and think about it. But this is what I was saying, that this is something unfathomable right now, because you don’t do it. It’s a bit like – I don’t drive cars and it’s fascinating when people drive! They use their feet, hands, this mirror that mirror, the front – and now, lipsticks, sms, text, phone call! It’s amazing! I cannot even think of it. By the way, I’m supporting what I’m saying – I’m not making these things

up, and there's a word for this. In English, it's translated to 'effortless, spontaneously arising awareness'. Yeah.

When you read the Buddhist sutras, there are mentions of these – some of these very high Bodhisattvas. 10 people can ask him or her a question at one go, and he or she will hear all of them and give each of them different answers. When you read that, you'll of course see that it's a supernatural being – a special being giving answers – but that's exactly like the driving case!

According to the Yogachara (Chittamatra) Buddhist school, we are not even using – let's say, if the mind is divided into – what's one and eight zeroes – one million? A hundred million? So if the mind is divided into those parts, we are not even using one percent – the rest is just sitting there, totally useless. We're not using it. How do you use it? Instead of learning a lot and bragging, come back to the present! By coming to the present, at last, you are giving a chance to your mind to function! This is a classic question. I'm not bragging here, but 20 years ago, when I was reading *A thousand years of solitude* with 20 different uncles, and all those names – I couldn't make out which uncle was talking about! Now try being in the present and doing it – it's impossible! I have to make sense of the story, I have to be in the present, not possible.

After a while, I have to say, a little bit of carelessness slipped in when it came to the characters, but making sense of the story was easier – and isn't that the measure of understanding anyway, and if I practice this, then I can read ten varieties of ten thousand years of solitude types of books all in one go, and make sense of it!

This is the key. Creativity, compassion, generosity, leadership – these are all big Bodhisattva things. How to lead. The core essence of leadership is coming back to the present! The general has to sit on

the general's throne, and then you can pretend that you cannot see these things – the way to lead. We aren't even touching the subject of Sunyata, which is next I guess, but this will do for now, or it will be too much information.

**Q: You spoke about creativity, Rinpoche. I wanted to ask you as a storyteller, yourself – the idea is to get lost in your idea, or be taken away with your thoughts. Then being mindful and staying in the present through all of it. I was wondering if you could tell us a bit about how we can do both together?**

I think you can consciously get lost, isn't it? Yes? I think so, and that's much better! If you're not consciously lost, I don't think you're being creative yet. You're stuck. But I can understand it. If you have the fear of stumbling and getting stuck, you can consciously be in the present. You can be here in any way – there is no past thought and future thought! You know we were talking about boundaries? How not to go to the past, or to the future. I was bluffing, actually! Not me, Buddhism. (Laughter) There's no past, or future actually – it's all here! When we talk, we have to talk like that.

And anyway, you also believe in the past don't you – as a human being? That's good news for you, because the future, the past, when you're writing – is all in the present. Then you have more opportunity because you will not be stuck in any angle. For example, think about this one from Basho:

*In my new robe, this morning – someone else.*

So good!

*Year by year, the monkey's mask reveals the monkey.*

Really, this testifies that you can do both. Nowadays, it's all about means that lead back to the wisdom, and that's a sad thing.

Any questions?

**Q: Rinpoche, is it possible to reflect on the past while being in the present?**

Yes, yes – that is what I mean. Anyway, there is no past and no future. It's always in the present. We are really talking in a very deep way of the Buddhist idea of illusion. It's amazing isn't it? There is no past and there is no future, and yet we're so caught up by these concepts! There's also no present – but that we'll talk about in another time. We should first grind this one!

No present – whoa – well, just to give you the names – these teachings are taught in the Mahamudra, or the Mahasandhi. Yes. Those are beautiful teachings. Some of them are just so powerful. There's one called “Mahamudra by the Ganges” (Tilopa's pith instructions on the Mahamudra). It's amazing. Then there's the Mahasandhi. When the Mahasandhi was taught, it was hard to take for many Buddhists, even – because Buddhists love ‘sensible’ things. The Mahasandhi is beyond sense, and senselessness! They think you're crazy when you're stuck with being sensible! But that's for another time.

**Q: So actually I have two questions, but I think I'll put one of them first. For example, we are here today to learn something new which is born out of an aspiration. I am aspiring ‘to be’ something in the future – with mindfulness or whatever. Then I have to plan, thinking about the future so that I learn better now, and execute whatever I have learnt. So I'm trying to link it to what you've been saying – when you're talking about being in the present, are we talking about units of time, or something else?**

Very good! Really, very good! Actually, not. But before that, I want to say – thanks for reminding me of this – we need to discuss the

Bodhicharyavatara one of these days, and the Praṇidhāna Rāja – do we have it? This is the prayer of aspiration. Actually, in the Mahayana Buddhism, the real aspiration is this – being in the present.

I will give you the character of Mahayana Buddhism. The general character of Buddhism is believing in the four seals – but if you ask me for Mahayana in particular, there are three.

The view is Sunyata – emptiness. The path is ‘characteristic-less’. The result is beyond aspiration. Having said this, I will now quote Shantideva – whom I love to quote all the time. He says, “*For the time being, as a practitioner, we allow you to have one ignorance. What’s that? Thinking, that there is enlightenment.*”

Why should you have that? Because you don’t want to suffer. That’s Shantideva’s answer. So, aspirations – you can just make believe! It’s important! The path is make-believe, it has to be sensible make-believe. It’s called visualization, by the way.

**Q: Rinpoche, just wanted to ask you about being in the present while at work. Sometimes, you have to respond to people and other such – where is that ‘presence’ coming from, which emotion?**

You need to get used to this one. I would suggest that you guys put this into practice, and I don’t mean that you need to limit yourself by thinking, *I need to practice at a certain time*. No, you don’t only need to practice this next to a beautiful vista, or a shrine, or a room. You need to begin this practice without ritual and other such – don’t limit yourself to a time in the morning and the evening.

Don’t think that, while sitting on the toilet, *I must not do this. It is too holy to do this!* Not at all! You can’t think that. You have to do it all the time. Grab the chance, grab the chance all the time. And then,

after a while, this will become a habit. When you are talking to your colleague, and you are having a heated argument with somebody, you will have the present-ness. When you have it, you'll probably think everything is humorous! Or, probably, you'll instill this little bit of carelessness that is there in a warrior's attitude, and you'll also do things with more confidence. I think. Should we eat?

My mind is not working – Dhruvad? That is really challenging, when it comes to being in the present! The Gundecha Brothers? They will really take you elsewhere, and usually, their recitals last for hours! It's amazing!

*Further chatter about the Gundechas – End*

## **POST LUNCH SESSION**

Do you want to start off with some questions? After lunch, the mind is a little drowsy, dull. But, based on what we have discussed this morning, we should realize that there's nothing wrong with that! Just being dull, and drowsy, and being conscious and aware of that. No need to stop, no need to be so – tough with yourself. This is taught, especially to the gandharvas by the Buddha himself, when they were stressed about being very dull and drowsy, and murky and sleepy. Gandharvas – they're supposedly a bit like ghosts, they have an inclination towards dullness. I don't want to go – I always get carried away by these things.

If you read a sutra, there's so many interesting things one can learn, one can make notes about. The varieties of Buddha's disciples are interesting. There were gandharvas, Rakshasas, kings, queens, merchants, monks – that's important! This is what I would say – the Tibetans, after the lamas became very influential in Tibet, and I believe

that it was the beginning of the decline of Buddhism, when lamas became powerful. You know? Buddhism was never, ever meant to rule! It's not like other religions. This is probably one of the reasons why Buddhism will never really become so popular. This is not to say the Buddhism isn't interested in social things – it's like pure mathematics, or science – it just talks about the truth.

You know, the expounders and the practitioners of this – some of them, or almost all of them are human beings, and one of the weaknesses of humans is trying to convince others. In the process of convincing others, some become successful, and success is never enough. In Tibet, when the lamas became very influential, successful – politically, influentially – then that was when the decline of Buddhism began.

The reason why I said this is because – well, there are two different kinds of lamas. Those who are Yogis, and then there are those who are ordained monks. Somehow, the ordained ones end up choosing the references of monks! That's what we do usually. If you believe in a certain philosophy, you always refer to someone who thinks similarly. The Tibetan scene is so monk oriented, and that is not so good. In a way, that has really contributed in a different way – and that's to put it mildly.

You see, the Buddha taught to merchants, butchers – this is one thing I've always wanted to say – even when a butcher asked him, that it is his job to kill, for survival, so does he have a way? The Buddha said yes – why not take a vow, of never killing after sunset, till sunrise? Of course it's got the Buddha giving him a license to kill – it is the beginning of a discipline, the beginning of awareness. Of present-ness. This is something that needs to be revived.

Mahayana Buddhism has contributed a lot to the Buddhist world, but, I cannot ever deny – Theravada Buddhism, or Shrivakayana Buddhism – this is in Burma, Sri Lanka, Thailand – has also contributed immensely. Shrivakayana followers have images of the Buddha's life and other such; that is the model they follow. Mahayana Buddhists have idols, with robes, earrings, attributes, consorts – you have the Vimalakirti, isn't it? You can read his character, it's just fascinating! Very spoiled, overfed – a guy who basically after all that, was a Bodhisattva!

If you look at the disciples of the Buddha, their job, their origin – their faculties are different. When I talk about the Buddha and his disciples – the nagas, the gandharvas, the Rakshasas – they may sound like fairy tales. Monkeys, and birds used to listen to his sermons. In the Mahayana, many teachings are metaphorical. We all have a little bit of gandharva in us – We are all a kind of ghost. What is a ghost in Buddhism? Basically, beings that do not have a certain place to dwell.

Do we have a place to dwell? Well, we all have an address – but that's not really certain, is it? When the karmic wind blows, then we just transmigrate – if not physically, definitely mentally. We have that ghost-like element. One aspect of that element is dullness. Dull, drowsy, not clearly thinking. A little bit slow – such as we are, after lunch, this afternoon. (Laughter)

We must be going through the gandharva stage at this moment. By the evening, we'll probably moving towards the more human stage. Even in the late afternoon – more desire, more sentiment, and more romance – so on and so forth. Any kind of stage of mind, is good. You cannot say – I'm drowsy, I cannot meditate. I want to see this – it's unfortunate that people don't meditate because of all these conditions – sitting straight, closing one's eyes and on a cushion. Yes, that's one

method – a really good method – but yes, be drowsy, ask me questions and be aware of what you are asking, if you can.

**Q: Rinpoche, when we started the session after the first tea break in the morning – your first words were, we always want to do something. We want to fill up our time – you made some such comment. Could you say something more about that? And, should one refrain from doing that? Is it okay to do that, is it beneficial to do that?**

Again – as long as you can throw in, or insert this ‘being present’ moment, then I won’t be judging it. It could be good, it could be very beneficial! It could be. But if you don’t have the present-ness, then...

I always want to go to the source, because I don’t want you to think that you’ve heard something very ‘new-age’. It’s to do with the teachings. The reason why we always feel the need to do something (this is very technical probably) is that when you don’t do anything, what happens? When you are totally retreating from all that, what happens is that you become alone, and naked. Pure, like a baby. This is something ordinary people, who are so habituated, cannot bear. We have to pinch ourselves, so to speak – to tell ourselves that we are alive, we are not dead. The pure, pristine state is unbearable. So we like to keep ourselves busy.

Here my answer is: Yes, you can keep yourself busy, but put the present-ness of being into your awareness.

Because the other doctrine is: The idle mind is the devil’s workshop. Sometimes, the devil finds that empty mind – and to share for myself, I find that harnessing the mind; not from cluttering – that’s different from being engaged – and green – I find the presence of green, like the one in Vana – also helps improving your consciousness, making

now your friend – it helps a lot. So I’m just getting confirmation of whether I’m going down the right track.

Actually, strictly speaking, if you read the scriptures, Buddhists really don’t have the words ‘right’ or ‘wrong’. They have something called ‘valid’ or ‘not valid’ – and in Pali they say something like ‘good’ – but not the good or bad kind of good – it’s like, maybe I’m being too technical here but – in this context, it fits perfectly – that’s what it means. Like, at this moment – when Tara asked me what she should bring, I said coffee because that’s seems like a fitting drink for me *now*. It’s more like ‘fitting’ – just make it fitting. As for the green, well, Shakyamuni Buddha chose the tree to sit and meditate under. He said, that for different faculties and different atmospheres – different means are good, but trees seem to be very important.

Buddhists love trees – they keep mentioning the Sal tree, the Bodhi tree and so on. In Sri Lanka, if you go to a Buddhist monastery, the first thing they lead you to is a tree. Then, if you’re not convinced – then they take you to a stupa. That’s a mound that represents the Buddha’s mind. If you’re not satisfied still, because it’s a mound and you cannot really go and sit inside it, and you really want something more - then they take you to the temple, with the Buddha’s statue.

I thought that’s a good thing, but now it’s going the other way. People like the temple more. First thing, the tourists go to the temple, and only when they have enough time, they go to the tree. Isn’t this a Bodhi tree? The one in this room? So yes, trees are a big thing. The Sal tree is very important, this was where the Buddha achieved *parinirvana* – which is even more important than the Bodhi tree.

**Q: I hope I am able to ask this properly. When one does an action, and one is aware of the action in the present moment,**

## **how does it relate to the exhaustion of its karma? Is that the beginning?**

Generally, it's the beginning of the exhaustion but after a point, it may be furthered, and for some Yogis, it might be wrapping up with the karma altogether. Okay, the karma is a bit like this.

Say we're like a hand phone. The phone needs to be charged. We need charging too. We, as a samsaric being – what charges you? It's this fidgety action, you know! Doing. Doing is what charges you. Even not doing is doing in this context. Thinking, *this is not good* is also charging you. *This is good, I need to do this* – charging you. Now, when you're in the present state – no charging. I sound a bit strange, but as a Buddhist, you want to exhaust all the battery – you don't want to be a phone anymore!

You don't want to receive calls, you don't want to be connected, and you want to be free. Connected means someone's going to know where you are. It's a bit like that. Any kind of doing, poking – it's a good word – poking, rearranging, repositioning – these are classic words in the sutras by the way – immediately charges you. All this is karma. Karma in hindi is 'kaam' – what does that mean? Work, action? Something that produces an effect, something that has a reaction and so on. I guess Buddhists don't like that, because it means uncertainty. You have become a subject to whatever you have done and by doing that, you are now a subject of whatever the outcome of your actions is! Buddhists don't like that. Freedom, liberation is really from both cause and result, not just the result.

We're not only trying to be free from suffering – that is actually a bonus. We're trying to end the cause of the suffering, so that it discontinues.

**Q: Rinpoche, being in the present – the last time you also mentioned that – what is free from fear and hope, which means having a state of mind which is free. What I really want to understand is the process of really reaching the present. Because, to me, what it really appears to be is that people who are in the present, are always in the present. Now all these three times are mixed together – so unless I see my present clearly, I can't see my past and my future. The question is that how does one get that present moment extracted from this? If I'm in the sea, I cannot see the sea – I have to come out of it to see the ocean.**

A very practical thing I'll tell you. The moment you say that "I want to practice", you've already taken one step. The next step onwards, you are not practicing – you're just rearranging. This is what I'd said earlier! Good job, you took the first step but after that...yeah, well, you're good, but most of the time you're slowly hijacked by ritual. The ritual of sitting, and all of that. But, I'm really talking from the most profound level – if there's someone I'm supposed to lead, then I'd say *yes, please sit. Face the east.* And so on.

We've even recently come up with an act called finding Bodh Gaya! (Laughter) It's necessary – I'm really learning a lot! Next I'm going to suggest some dietary restrictions – some vegetables, I'm thinking. Then, an outfit! People like that stuff. That's the new age now, this stuff – but it's only a method. It just seems more practical.

Well, and the present. There's no such thing as the present – and you're talking from the ultimate level here. So, okay – just now, think this. There's one thing in the entire universe that knows itself, and that's the mind. The mind knows other things too – but only the mind knows itself! Just check now – not specific things like my mind is blue,

or red or whatever – but check – now! Of course, a moment later it becomes a story but that doesn't matter – what about right now?

You can feel it. You're cognizing yourself – nothing external, but yourself just now. It's cognition all the time. This is why also Buddhists love lamps! Lamp offerings. Because they say that the lamp is one thing that really represents the mind – it eliminates everything, like the darkness, but without it, it can't even see itself! So the lamp illuminates others and itself. This is why mediocre, distracted disciples like myself, when we do meditation – instead of banking on being in the present, we bank on gaining merit through making an offering of the lamp! I've done a lot in Bodh Gaya, especially there, every year, we take hundreds and thousands of them till the point where my mind becomes like a lamp – illuminating all, and illuminating itself.

Now, it's not like you will *make* the mind illuminate itself and others – *it is*. The Maitreya – and not just the Maitreya, the Buddha himself said that there is nothing to illuminate, and there is nothing to add. Just know itself – just cognize itself, do not add anything. Other than that, you have nothing to do.

By the way, we're kind of coming from a higher level here. I was thinking that maybe tomorrow, we'd talk about this. This is another thing. Actually, in the West, as the West is very individualistic, it sounds very nice. *Oh, the mind is already illuminating itself and others – I don't need a guru, or some shiksha, and I don't need to have all these rituals coming from the East – all these Indians and Tibetans coming in with their culture, I don't need them* – this is also very wrong. Very, very wrong.

If you read the Buddha's most profound teachings, like the *Vajrasekhara sutra*, that the beauty of Buddhism is – no ritual is rejected! Do it all,

it will all help you. It's good, and for beginners, it's more helpful than lying in a hammock, definitely – and the margarita, remember?

In the Tantra, this is the other way round. You must lie down on the hammock. You must have margaritas. These are the practices, but we don't talk about these to the general public. You know why? The general public likes the Buddha as a serene man, with a begging bowl – this savior image, you know? He has no house, no address, very trustworthy – he doesn't want anything, he doesn't need anything. We have that kind of image of the Buddha.

In the Tantra, however, we have *Vajradhara* and so on – all these tantric deities. The image is totally different. I want to say that margaritas are not really rejected – but I'm not encouraging it either! I don't want you to quote me and say you're going to practice margarita from now on. Whatever it is.

**Q: Rinpoche, I had a question about security. We were talking about it before, and notionally, one understands impermanence and non-attachment. But as human beings, we are wired to do action towards creating value and creating security. We look for relationships to meet expectations, especially for women in India. We look for security – physical, financial security – how do you reconcile that with the awareness that this is all transient?**

Hmm. Not just that, actually? What do you mean?

Well, it's really about building something. It's about building something beyond you, something that lasts. That's what you connect with – music lasts, ideas last. But then the idea that we are here, we live in the world – and we are here because some of us can afford it. So the reality is the *roti-kapda-makaan* thing. How do you reconcile the need for security? The need for a palace or a hut? We look for

relationships whether they are platonic or non-platonic because we want to feel safe, we want to feel accepted. I think we can notionally understand and respect the four truths and it resonates with me, but I don't quite know how to reconcile them with security.

Well, we've really been talking from a very high level. There are the teachings on the *lojong* – mind training. This is what I meant by cohesive. First, more practical – we need to go step by step and we need to habituate ourselves. Different kinds of habituation. Even in the Mahayana sutras – an example – it praises the Bodhisattvas who can give their limbs, flesh and bone, to hungry tigers. But then, in the same sutra, Buddha and the Bodhisattvas have prohibited doing the very same action to the young Bodhisattvas because if they try to even do that, it may result in them turning away from the path because you need – *you think* you need this kind of security. The body, dwelling, relationships – you know, references! But no. The Bodhisattvas now have to gradually learn to really, slowly – depending on the faculties of people – some Bodhisattvas are quite fast, some are very slow and calculated – you have to learn to have a different definition of what is 'need' and what is 'secure'.

This morning, I was talking about the Mahamudra teaching by the Ganges. One of the people that I can quote – so beautiful – the great Tilopa, a fisherman by the way, an Indian, torturing his student Naropa. Again and again, for 12 years supposedly. I think the Indians exaggerate sometimes – *from back then*, they say, you understand? This so and so palace, some 500 plus miles and whatnot – some room or something.

A yojana.

What is that? Is it like time? What is it?

It's a unit of distance, a measure.

So how much is it?

Nobody quite knows. 21 miles I think. One measure said 21 miles.

Really? Well, can never have a proper cup of tea, eh? Anyway, Tilopa, suddenly, dragged Naropa and said, *listen, you* – and so began the teachings – the Mahamudra of the Ganges.

*Son, it is not the appearance that is binding you – it is the attachment of the appearance that is binding you.*

So this is your answer. When we say *we need this, a house, a car, a vacuum cleaner, a dishwasher, a lock* and so on – well, it's basically making a big deal out of them! That is what binds you. That's something that we need to learn. When you finally learn that these aren't a big deal, they're uncertain, they're illusory – then you are *spontaneously secure*. You understand? This is a very different kind of security that comes in. I don't need to tell you much – in this country itself, you can see it! All those great wandering sadhus, I was just thinking about those Bauls of Bengal. They seem very secure, and don't seem to have many things to be afraid of, they sing songs...

Bauls? What does that mean?

Wanderers.

Wanderers. Ah. Is there any other culture that venerates wanderers? Apart from India? I mean, in Tibet, there is, but that came from India.

Gypsies? Didn't they come from India? Well not from India, but... Gypsies are looked down upon, really.

India used to really – well Indians treat wanderers like Harvard research officers. (Laughter) Very important people, you know. Those who deal with the truth, you'd like to give them food, bananas, fruits. You want to offer them whatever – and they take what they get! Tilopa

and Naropa, they're wanderers. Padmasambhava. All wanderers. Actually, you should maybe try to do that!

There is a practice. Not immediately, but you should have the aspiration. It's really good! I'm not suggesting you do it eternally, maybe for a week or so? There's a discipline, you know? Even the wanderers have a discipline. You are supposed to go to a place, and the moment you feel quite familiar with the place – you know, this road leads there and so on, this is the way to the next 7/11, since we're talking about the modern wanderer – there's a bank, ATM machine – bang, you move! That's what you're supposed to do. This is actually a discipline – especially if someone gets to know you and so on, then you *definitely* move on!

But, that method is all to bring you to the present moment. When you are wandering, when you have no *nest*, so to speak, then it brings you to the now and I don't see any reason why you can't do that driving a limousine too! Just for three years, maybe? Or 6 days. 9 days. You can do it, and India is a good place to do this.

In America, you'd probably get arrested for this! (Laughter) You're not supposed to have a plan, by the way. One of my tutors disappeared, totally. He received this very important teaching on wandering, and afterward, everybody kind of knew that this man would take off any day. He became my tutor for about 6-7 months. One morning, he had disappeared, and had left everything. No bag, nothing – everything was left behind. We don't know if he's dead – he's probably dead, he was already about fortyish around that time, and this was 40 years ago. I actually remember the night before he disappeared. He came to see me, and was sort of quiet – with more eagerness, somehow. But these practices are slowly going.

Oh! But yes, the wandering *attitude* you can practice without actually ever leaving home. You can practice that.

Can you please elaborate on that?

Oh...yeah... (Laughter) One thing I can elaborate on is that it makes the person a pain in the neck for others. Not really answering properly, you know? I'm talking about things like, when asked *Where are you going?* The answer is like *Can't you see? Where did you come from? What? The bank?* That kind of thing.

**Q: Where does the role of families and loved ones feature in the practice that you're asking us to do – with a direct correlation, or maybe...about the practice of being in the present. How do we link that?**

Well, the role is so much! This is actually a very important question! I've heard, from so many people, that this practice helped develop the appreciation of one's family so much more! Because, well, you might still argue and fight or whatever – but because you're being in the present, at the very least, you can look at them like this is the last time you're ever going to see them! Usually, you always take them for granted – a lot of assumptions, no appreciation, stuff like that. At the least, this. But more? As I said this morning, present-ness is the key to empathy. It's difficult, and very contrived otherwise – so much labor. But being in the present opens that up easily.

One thing I want to tell you guys is, you have two big challenges. You are not going to trust that this is the real key – because this is too simple. This is your challenge. We always think that the path has to be more complicated. Yes, Buddhism has 84000 complicated things – if you want, and you do want! And we should! Apply mantras, and mudras, and chants. Never reject them. But this one is too simple! My grandfather always talks of it like the eyelashes – too close, you never see it.

And when you actually do it, you'll never trust that you have done it! Because you think proper meditation is when you weren't thinking about pizza, you were thinking about something else, but the color, shape, light, I don't know – but, you won't trust your own meditation which you have done perfectly. As I said, the chances of you having done a meditation is – well, you might have done it actually! Then, the beginning of not doing is happening. You should still do it, I'm not stopping you from doing that – what all these practices will do for you is that it will bring more frustrations in the future, which is good, isn't it?

So yes, time it. A timer, a beeping sound – whatever is necessary. Like *rupas* – the images of Buddhas, the statues, they're supposed to exist for that. Otherwise, there weren't any images before – Buddhism doesn't need a carrot – it's just a reminder. All these methods, means, are very – they became a problem after a while! The statue of the Buddha in the corner of your room doesn't remind you of anything after a while. The statues become bigger and bigger in places like Bhutan, and they do less and less meditation. (Laughter) They see the real Buddha less and less, and then they try to put gold. As if that helps! Of course, loud blabbering, amplifying the sound of the mantras – it is happening!

**Q: Can you just explain, to the lay person, what Tantra is? My younger brother over her aspires to become a Tantric now, so how can we lead him in the right direction?**

Hahahahahahaha. Well, Tantra, just briefly. Tantra actually means *continuity*, or a continuum. In the Sanskrit language, of course. I know, Tantra is also often associated with sex nowadays, which also has its reasons obviously. The real meaning of Tantra is 'continuous' – what Tantric Buddhism is saying is that you should just continue! You are perfect, and that there is nothing to change. You have to continue *as it is*. Even in the Mahayana, they say – Tathagatha – as it is.

For the Tantra, you are the mandala. You are the deity. Maybe I should speak a little bit about this – we’re going to do the fire puja, which is a tantric ritual by the way. You are a deity. Buddhists don’t believe in an external god, but they say that you are the deity. Your essence is the object of refuge. It is the object of offering. It is very daring. In fact, it is so daring that even the general Buddhists shun them a lot. Tantra had a lot of problems from other Buddhists, yes.

So can we learn?

I would say, that this is the one thing that the Tibetans have kept quite well. This is the one thing we have to give them credit for. Tantra teaches present-ness in the most direct, raw form. So the tantric says *if I eat this with the complete confidence of being a deity* – let’s say you invite many Buddhas, and call them and invite them in for three months. Every day you offer them things – must have a lot of merit. The tantric would say eating one seed of cardamom with the pure confidence of being a deity – that has more merit than all these things.

Tantra is very daring. The reason why it is related to sex – there are other things by the way, other situations – where yawning, sneezing and so on – even on a mundane level, brings you the closest to the present moment. Someone was telling me about surfing – when he was surfing, there was a moment where he felt like he was in the present. Why not?

So where does sex come in all this?

Because, as I was saying, because as I was saying – it takes you to the most non-judged moment. Especially, during the climax. There’s no bad, good, no judgment – you understand? Okay, not even sex! Love, for instance. When you are in love with somebody, what happens? Reasons – gone! (Laughter) What are reasons? Reasons are judgment. It means the past and the future. When there is love, even the bad

smells fine! Whatever it is – the most pathetic words coming from the other side sound so nice! Stuff like that. There are used like tools to accentuate the present moment. As you can see, it is quite dangerous. If you give time to the wrong person, or time is being given by a wrong person – it could really mislead you. Basically, the tantric would say – wisdom is like the fire, and emotions are like wood. More wood, means there will be a bigger fire. But – if your fire is this small, and you put a heap of wood, the fire is dead! When the fire is big – then put as much wood as possible! More fire! A little bit of wisdom – anger, jealousy, pride, suspicion – they all lead to more wisdom. This is why Tantra is kept secret. Not that it is embarrassing or something.

So are you saying only a few people can learn it?

Well, a few people who are daring can. For instance, the tantric concept of a guru is unlike any other concept of a guru. Guru-shishya parampara in the Tantra is quite tough. It's just like, the guru is just there to pull the rug from under you, wherever you are sitting or standing. You are hiring somebody to do that. Guru-shishya parampara in this level is the most sophisticated human relationship ever. If you want to have this, there are so many beautiful images to show it. Hindu Tantra has the images like – a Devi cutting her own head and offering it to the guru, and stuff like that.

Shall we have tea?

**Q: Rinpoche, continuing this question...**

You're a bit worried, aren't you? (Laughter)

**Not the Tantra per se. But the pre-requisite for Tantra, is quite difficult to reach in itself. Because it is clearly said that to practice Tantra, the realization of emptiness, and *Bodhichitta* is needed. Without that, people can really go haywire.**

Generally speaking. But, you could have the faculties from the past life. Merit. You get it?

**But that's also transmitted – whether it is from the past or the present. There needs to be a ground for this.**

This is similar to Chandrakirti's answer – he was asked, to whom should we teach emptiness? You know, the Buddhist Sunyata stuff? Maybe to those who've graduated from Oxford or Cambridge (laughter), but he didn't say that. He said *those who merely by uttering the word Sunyata, they get goosebumps, have tears in their eyes – yes, to them you should teach emptiness, because they will understand.*

In Buddhism logic is so important, but parallel to that, teachers always make a mockery of logic. In fact, I read that Logic is one of the most sophisticated ways to make you an idiot! (Laughter)

Okay, another thing. When we talk about meditation, sadly, we have narrowed it down to things to do with the mind – mindfulness, I mean, the word itself contains that. So it's always something to do with sitting, and watching and directly connecting it to the mind. But this is not true!

You can meditate with all five senses. I've asked them to give you something to eat, because I thought maybe, the vision – what you see – actually, we can do that too. Because it doesn't have to be special. Okay, so this time, the posture is up to you. You don't have to sit straight, you don't have to do anything special. You don't necessarily have to look, or see – you got that? But whatever is appearing to your eye-consciousness, being in that present – it doesn't have to be interesting. You should become like a camera basically. The cameras don't think about what they're going to cut or anything. Whatever is happening, is there. We're really learning what production design – its highest level – is all about. So please do that. Just try- for instance, I

see this – this beige color. The moment I think carpet, then I'm losing a little bit.

Just look – using the wrong word – don't look, don't see, whatever is appearing to your eye-consciousness – I shouldn't think these are the rose petals. This is a big deal, by the way. You are a human being. You have a mind. You want to consciously live, or you might as well be dead. We're talking about really, consciously living right now.

That's it. Do this in your room, or whatever. Whatever is appearing in the sphere of your eye-consciousness – let me use the wrong word in this context – have you ever *seen* your doorknob, of your toilet? Have you really seen it? Probably not, because you're always busy closing and locking it. Have you ever seen your kitchen sink, the ceiling, the edge of the blanket, soggy towels or I don't know, all kinds of things – vision, light. Sound we did this morning, tomorrow we will also do more – tomorrow we will bring this strange music. Good music is very tough, because it can really take you away.

We can listen to some outdated trance music! (Laughter) So now, again, the other senses – the tongue, for taste. You can eat something and try being in the present. No judging, no confirmation, no acknowledgement. Actually, wasabi would have been good! (Laughter) You know, something you cannot escape! By the way, you can do together – for instance, listen to the sound of this biscuit. Look – not just at the biscuit, but at its shape. The second thing is to taste it now. Again, taste it. I was asking Veer – maybe Vana should do *orioke*? It's very difficult, you have to chew a morsel of food for like 52 times or something. These are all forms of a discipline – do it here, and chew it about a 100 times! (Laughter)

Im not making it up, it's in the Zen tradition. When you undress, or tomorrow morning, when you dress – so on and so forth. Do a

meditation on packing! Have you done it? I pack a lot, I pack all the time. It's terrible. Going round the world, realizing, bringing all sorts of useless things that you haven't even used once in 6 months, I haven't even seen that thing in my suitcase. You know, they used to ask at the airport – have you packed your bag yourself? I don't know why they don't do that anymore. I proudly used to say, yes, I packed it myself.

These metaphors may sound kind of new, invented – no. Yes, the metaphor may be different, but it has its roots elsewhere. Shantideva, in the *Bodhicharyavatara* has instructions on how to wash one's hand! These are not cultural! This should never become a cultural thing. This is not like a code of conduct, it is a means to cultivate awareness. If it doesn't, it is the real culprit. Means and methods are supposed to bring you towards wisdom, but very often, the means and methods take you away from wisdom because you end up getting too worked up with the method.

Thank goodness, that Shantideva's instructions on how to wash hands never became a part of 'Buddhist culture', otherwise you'd have a big problem! It's a very strange way of washing hands. Again, don't ask me why it is like that – it is just a method! You can do that too, but the instruction was given just to bring the awareness. Along the line, many people think this is a Buddhist code of conduct, something to do with ethics and so on – but this is not true. Then, there are other things like pointing towards any direction with all your fingers and so on – there are many things in the shastras. Readers should not take them as cultural codes of conduct.

Why do the monks shave their hair? It's not like if you have shorter hair, you'll have a faster enlightenment. Nothing like that! It's a discipline, supposed to take you closer to the present moment. If the Buddhists are so much into shaving, what about the yogis? They're supposed to keep their hair! Not cut it at all! Tantric yogis have

such long hair, after a while they cannot wash them, they become dreadlocked. One of my teachers, he had such big, long dreadlocks! So smelly! (Laughter) Really dirty. Whenever I used to go to receive teachings from him, the smell – it was so tough. Shaving hair to dreadlocks – it’s a paradox. That’s why it’s difficult for Buddhism to flourish. It should flourish, actually, it has quite a few options. But I told you, people don’t like options. People like instructions – *do it this way, this way, everybody must follow this*. Then, it’s simple. Buddhist methods comprise of too many things.

I was thinking of talking about *shamatha* and *vipassana* but I think we should do that in the morning. Probably more fresh – too much information today. We’re going to do a fire puja. Today is supposedly a very special day. The principal deity of the fire puja is *Avalokiteshvara*. Again, as I said earlier – in Tantra, the real deity is yourself but sometimes, in order to see how you look – you look at the mirror. So we create a mirror image of you, which is going to be *Avalokiteshvara*. Buddhists believe that you have all the Buddha qualities within you, and that there’s nothing missing – nothing at all! You could be roaming around in this filthy samsara for a long time, but it’s not like any of your Buddha qualities have gone rusty or have decayed. You have to have that confidence. When you wash your sup, you have the confidence that the stain is going to go, isn’t it? Just like that.

So how do you do that? How do you develop this kind of confidence? One method is visualizing the deity in front of you. Your mirror image, basically. So today, your deity will be within the fire that we will create. Now this is getting complicated. *Avalokiteshvara* represents peace, compassion, harmony and balance. This is a ‘wellness retreat’. Balance is key. So, we are invoking that energy especially. Also, supposedly, according to astrology – towards around now till the sunset – it’s supposed to be prosperity oriented. You know, Buddhists never reject

anything! Do you have a lot of superstitions? Perfect! You are then a really good vessel for this. Remember, lotuses never grow in clear water – they always bloom in the muddy water. The muddier the better.

All these hang-ups, superstitions – Buddhists anyway think everything is a superstition. Even  $4+4 = 8$  is a superstition! It's a label, an assumption, decided by a bunch of people long time ago, and we are just sucked into that! Who knows, maybe its 9! Ask these architects! (Laughter) But we won't give this up, would we?  $4+4$  is 8! It is difficult to think it is 5, or something.

Anyway, as a tantric practitioner you have to go a little bit beyond. Remember, if I told you –  $4+4$  is 1, then you *at least* should think – *Maybe, who knows? Could be*. Then you're good! *No! This is only 8!* Then, you're a reason follower. You are not in love! You're not a good vessel. You're following, you're dictated by reasoning and logic.

Anyway, in the center of the fire is the deity *Avalokiteshvara*. It is red in color. Red is magnetizing, and has passion. He holds a red lotus, and then we make offerings. Offerings of all kinds of substance. Especially – do we have red wine? Yeah, okay. Especially intoxicating substances. We offer that. I'll tell you the reason why. When you deliberately, consciously use intoxicating substances as an offering – you realize that the habitual mind is intoxicated already, and it's a bit like homeopathy, which is like poison. Your habitual mind is already intoxicated – and intoxication here means you are not thinking straight.

Do you all think this is a room? Well, from the Tantric point of view, you are not thinking straight! This is not a room! Room is imputed, labeled. You've been brainwashed to think like this. What is a room anyway? You are intoxicated! So now we intoxicate the intoxicated mind! Then what happens? You become sober! Finally, you are making sense now. We will be using a little bit of intoxicating substances,

so please don't get alarmed. Don't brandish it – Buddhism is using intoxicants and so on.

There are actually other substances that we haven't yet gathered – but we don't need to get into that right now. (Laughter)

So, later on, you can also participate by putting things into the fire, like petals. You can think that this petal is everything. Mountains, rivers, planets – everything. Shopping malls - whatever you think is good! Gold, and silver and so on – garbage, trash – and things that you don't like too! I don't know, whatever. Things that are remarkable, like Donald Trump. A very good substance! Something people are talking about, you throw it in the fire as an offering to *Avalokiteshvara*.

I said this morning, you can keep one ignorance of thinking there is enlightenment – just like that, you can beseech for a blessing. I think you should beseech for the blessing to remain in the present moment, to be compassionate, loving, harmonious – beseech for the surroundings to be peaceful, the people to be peaceful so that people will understand non-duality and so on.

Also, beseech for common blessings like longevity, dispelling inner and outer obstacles – health problems, family problems – everything, including problems are to be burnt as an offering. Everything can be an offering. Then, if you want to elaborate – the red light. Circles, animated become bigger, and bigger and dissolve into you. At the end of the puja, the front deity, *Avalokiteshvara* dissolves into you, and you and the deity become inseparable, staying in that state for some time.

I will give you guided instructions at that time. We begin with the good motivations of doing this – everything, all the tantric rituals, practices, we begin with the right attitude. We do it for the benefit of all sentient beings. That's it. Maybe you should put on something warm.

## NIGHT GUIDED MEDITATION

So, this is going to be a short, guided meditation. But I cannot stop myself from talking a little bit. We have been talking about the present moment. This is taught in many ways. We talk about the 'retreat' being in the past and future and never move to the past or the future. This present moment is sometimes referred to, in *Tantrik Buddhism* is also called *Bardo*. If I loosely translate the word *Bardo*, it means the 'in-between gap'.

So I'm using this guided meditation and some of you may, while I'm talking, do what we did in the morning. But if you can just follow my instructions, may be interesting for some of you. Anyway, this comes from which is a very important text in the *Tantrayana*; so, based on that I'm going to speak now. In Buddhism, everything happens between a *gap*. But this is all relative teaching by the way. There is no past; there is no future, so there is no *gap* actually.

Remember, you don't know these profound realities. We have to use tools. One of the tools is language, metaphors and also you and I; we use this reference of 'past' and 'future'. Even though the past is gone, we don't have it, future is not yet here, so we don't know, it's not material. But yet, we plan or use memory with a past memory or a future plan by assuming or imagining. Everything happens 'in-between', and this 'in-between' thing is so important. There are so many 'in-betweens'. For instance, today is, 12<sup>th</sup> March 2017, this day whatever happened, happened in-between, the time you woke up this morning and still continued till you'll be sleeping.

So, what is happening is happening 'in-between'; this is the truth. As you slowly fall into sleep you'll then go into another section of

‘in-between’; this is the ‘waking-up’ state until you wake-up in the morning. This is called the ‘dream state’ or the ‘dream gap’. Everything that is happening is happening between a *gap*. Now, this whole life of yours, as a pilot, a cook, a barber, all that is happening, sleeping, waking up, whatever happens between the time you are born, and I wish you live long, until you die, that is one whole big gap, one whole big present.

Then when you die, you go into another gap, and this gap is called ‘Bardo’ which is a big subject in the ‘Tibetan Book of the Dead’ and is often used to study the present moment. When you die, your senses look, hear, are not going to work as they are working now. Your elements are going to fall apart so therefore your sense consciousness is going to disintegrate. But that doesn’t mean you will become sort of stupid, it is the other way.

In fact, according to *Tantrik Buddhism*, you become much more astute and very sharp because at the moment your mind only functions through these translators, like your eyes, ears, so there are a lot of filters. After you die, no more filters. So there is a lot of direct cognition, and because of this direct cognition, you will also have fear, it’s a strange experience. White, is probably billions times more white. A small breeze, may feel like a typhoon or a desert storm. And as this process goes on, gender, that’s gone, as that is all physical related.

Of course, you don’t have to buy all of this. But probably might as well hear this, in case it is true; then you can at least refer to this (laughter). So, gender means nothing, nationality means nothing. You will have less and less and less reference. The less reference you have is actually good because you are becoming more pure; this something you can try to grab hold of. And when you grab hold of all of this, it’s like liberation.

So, try to sit comfortably. Breathe in and out. And I shall call you all Children of the Noble Family. I'm going to read this text. We are called the Children of the Nobel Family because as we spoke many times today, you are by nature, the Buddha. You are by nature, noble. Relax. The instructions I'm reading is composed by the most respected Tukiny Yuki ni of Tibet.

***Tibetans chanting as Rinpoche reads further instructions for meditation.***

Okay so this was just a brief exercise for the technical retreat to take advantage of a gap. And since we are going to sleep now, I guess, very briefly, there are two things you can do. One, when you go to sleep, have the motivation to, in case you dream, to know you are dreaming. If you can manage to do this, very good. Just imagine, you are falling from a building, like the 50<sup>th</sup> floor and suddenly you realise you are dreaming, then you might want to fly and take a tour! Because it is a dream, and you can't hurt yourself.

The other exercise and this is something you should do. When you go to sleep tonight, please think "I'm waking up" and then sleep. And tomorrow morning, think that "now I'm going to sleep, this is all a dream. I'm dreaming that I'm in Dehradun. This is not really happening. This is my dream." Can you try and do that? Reverse that, if you want. This was just a glimpse of what we call 'dream yoga'. There is an exercise called the 6 yogas of being in the 'retreat', the present. Just that this is a 'retreat center' (laughter).

Today, we talked quite at length about being in the present, which is the most important, the basis of everything. Then we talked about death. Then we talked briefly about 'dream yoga'. I will not give too much information, because as soon as you know, you cannot

forget. Like If I told you about ‘Wednesday’, you will know about ‘Wednesday’. Then you won’t be able to forget.

So, likewise, I should not tell you anything more now. I should not give out too much information. That way, you are pure, clean and you can *find*. It’s better to experience. It’s like when you’re on top of a mountain, when you walk and discover the way, the huts, goats cows and all kind of things. If I can tell you there is golden flower on top of the mountain, all you will think of is that golden flower. You will miss the cows and goats, and that will be unfortunate.

That’s it! Wish you a good sleep. Shall we go to wake up!

***Session concludes.***

Day 2 | 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2017

## MORNING SESSION

### *Commencing with the Prajnaparamita Sutra*

We will just begin with, out of a lack of words – sitting for a few minutes. I have to say sit, but I will explain a little more after we sit for a few minutes.

Thank you.

Dhyan. Samten. Yamja. In Chinese, they say it is Ch'an. In Japanese it is Zen. Anyway, *dhyan* is one of India's most beautiful, most profound gifts to the world. Now the Indians must try to recharge this a little bit. Dhyan is translated as *nyamja*, or *gom* in Tibetan. Let me talk a little bit of *nyamja* – *nyam* means equal, equality, unbiased or non-duality. Non-duality is the heart, the spine, the eyes, the brain of Buddhism. Lose non-duality, and Buddhism is just another theistic, superstitious – it becomes just religion. If you have non-duality, then yes, it is a religion but it is so many other things!

The Heart Sutra – it says no this, no that about so many things. It is just about one page. The longer version has 8000 verses. You want more? There's 20000 verses. You want more? There's a 100000 verses. These were revived by the great Nagarjuna, abbot of Nalanda University. And how many commentaries? So many. It's so big! I don't want you to go back thinking that Buddhism is just sitting and being in the present.

No. Being in the present is just one technique. The *Prajnaparamita*, the *Madhyamika* – it's really big. You can include everything there. Leadership. Management. Parenting. Gardening. I don't know, home decorating. Everything. If you have non-duality, success is guaranteed.

For instance – I remember Ganesha. Tantric Buddhism also has stuff like Ganesha. They have stuff like *Jambala*, *Kubera*, *Vasudhara* and all

that. You can practise it – there’s sadhanas, fire pujas, everything. The essence of that is non-duality – it is the highest prosperity. When you realise it, there is nothing to put in the trash-can, you understand? Everything becomes valuable. Everything is equally – good, bad? There’s no good or bad. Perfect, basically.

In order to achieve this, there are techniques like practising contentment and so on. Then there are mantras, and all those things – they aren’t rejected, not at all. Well, I’m going everywhere, this is my problem – I have to come back to *nyamja*.

*Nyam* means equal – in fact, even the gesture represents this. There are two types of gestures for this, and the hands are equally placed together. Then there is the tantric – more like the *Nyingma* tradition, they also sit like this. Now, more importantly within our context is the word *ja*. The Tibetan word *ja* is very rich. Of course, it has been translated from Sanskrit. *Ja* – I don’t know how to say this – this has the connotation of *leave it alone*. You understand, leave it alone? (Gesticulation)

This one is very important. They think we just don’t have the habit of leaving things alone and letting them be. We’re just so itchy, we have to poke and rearrange and paint stuff. Again, going back to Zen Buddhism – this is a big thing in their practise. Their temples are very minimalist. The beautiful thing about this is that minimalism is also *ja*, but a chaotic Tibetan temple is also considered *ja*. You can be *ja* in both ways – the minimalist, or that with blinky, colourful lights and so on. The attitude, *ja*.

This is not only the arrangement of the room, but just the body language. I can say that I’ve been lucky to have met some of the great masters who are now in extinction. During those days, when we were young, we never paid attention, but I can recall that their

whole presence is *ja*. It is continuously just leaving things alone. Never pausing. Sometimes when they do pause, you can tell that they are laughing at themselves. You know, like this kind of pausing? (Gestures) But they're laughing at themselves, and it is so good! So relaxed.

These spa people have stolen and plagiarised words like relax. Normally the word relax is *this*. (Gesture) But yogis don't think this is *ja*. This is just another pose. You just have to psychologically, emotionally, intellectually in every way – remain *ja*. You can use this for parenting, and you can actually lead the whole world with this attitude of *ja*. Leaders will really benefit from this. But you know, I have to say – whatever we have been saying all this while, we've been talking about technique. Technique is all very good, but then us, as individuals have our strength of habit formations, and how good we are at handling these habits – this will determine the kind of elaboration or simplicity you need.

For instance – in the Japanese Zen tradition, the first thing they teach you is *shikan taza*. This means to 'just sit'. They teach you this the first time you go into their temple – just this, and nothing else. Nine years later, they are still teaching this. But after 9 years, the word 'just' has become very very different. Right now the word 'just' means not writing, not eating, not drinking, not dancing – just sitting – the word 'just' eliminates all else.

After 9 years, the word has become so profound. After 9 years, the practitioner is doing *shikan taza*, but his 'just' means a lot. He probably is not even meditating – the word 'just' has eliminated the burden of meditation. Meditation is a burden you know – all paths are a burden! But yes, of course, this technique is probably not suitable for Indians. They have different faculties.

Tibetans too, maybe this is not so suitable. Tibetans love chanting. Equally reverent – chanting, prayer, circumambulating a statue. This is where the word ‘gom’ comes – it means ‘habituating’. Right now, you don’t have the habit of being in the present, you have the opposite. You have the habit of immediately rushing to the past or the future – that is your habit. How much willingness do you have to combat that? How clever are you? How much time can you put? How much energy are you willing to invest to combat this? Are you even willing to do it?

Probably yes, but maybe your willingness wavers from yes to no. It’s a pity, actually, that we don’t have that kind of willingness to habituate ourselves from being in the present. We don’t have the opportunity too. But it really gives you bliss, and saves you from all sorts of trouble. It’s not as if you never habituate yourself with anything – all the habits that you have, you’ve learnt! You’ve been practising those very diligently. You have become a perfect samsaric being, because you practised hard, and those things are not giving you complete satisfaction. Yes, here and there you have the bliss of ignorance. Those things cost you emotionally, financially. Many of those things you cannot do at all times.

But being in the present is economical, easy. There’s really no reason as to why you should not do it! But it is not easy, because there are just a lot of strange habits we have. For instance, we’re like a – what do you call it, a pack rat? A pack rat who collects everything. You just open your suitcase, or your house – so many things! A pack rat, who longs for some sort of space but you’re the one who does this pack rat kind of practise. We have that kind of habit and you just love troubles! We love it! We just can’t stay out of trouble. We love troubles, and we love hanging around with people who give us trouble. Like those with bad habits. We like them, somehow – you resonate with them!  
(Laughter)

There's six of them, which I don't remember at the moment – these are from Maitreya. We human beings usually like the wrong view, as intellectual as we think we are. So rational, blah blah. No. Many of our so called right views are permeated, sweetened and salted with the wrong view. We basically love being eternalists or nihilists. Yeah, we love being fundamentalists, extremists. There's something in us. That's why Sunyata, or emptiness – which is nothing to do with extremes, is very difficult to choose. It is useless, basically. From the Buddhist point of view, the definition of the spiritual path is totally useless from the worldly point of view. The worldly point of view looks at 'usability', so it is useless.

When I was travelling near Ajanta-Ellora – where is it? Andhra Pradesh? Maharashtra. In the middle of nowhere, there's a gate! On the mountain, just like that. For me, that is spiritual. Now, the gate has to be *useful*. It should have the facility to close, some sort of a check post and so on. Do you understand?

Have you seen a stupa? It is useless! You can't go in – if there's rain, there's nowhere to go in. A house is useful. From the worldly point of view, you're wasting so much time doing dhyana! What is that – Dow Jones – all those stocks are going up and down and what are you doing here, wasting so much time!

Contemplation. This is what I was going to share with you today, a little bit. What we have been talking about is quite – you know, I was representing it in a simplified, general way. I wanted you to have a taste of the value of cognizance, of mindfulness. But to really get into that, all the foundation practices, the mind training practices are important.

For instance, *shamatha* and *vipassana*. Shamatha is very common meditation. Vipassana is exclusively Buddhist. Nowadays we're losing that knowledge. Shamatha is basically, to put it really simply – the

technique makes you realise...how should I put it? Okay, very simply speaking – it makes you realise that you cannot meditate. That's it! That's the whole purpose of *shamatha*. To put it in a more classical way, shamatha makes your mind more malleable, more workable.

For example, if I say, for five minutes, get very angry with me – you cannot do it! Say you are angry with somebody now – and I countdown and tell you to stop NOW – you cannot do it! Why? Because, your mind is like a pebble. Rigid, like a stone. Remember, your train of thought? You just have to follow that speed. You have to follow that and see that we have no control – but shamatha is to make you gain control. I think the earlier explanation is easier to understand. It is to make you realise that you cannot meditate, or concentrate.

Choose your object. It could be the back of somebody's head, if you're sitting behind somebody. It could be breathing – maybe the floor can be too straining. The wall? Many times they ask you to concentrate on the space underneath your nose – that's it. Just concentrate on that and nothing else. I'm looking at the tripod for instance, and only that. The moment you realize that you are distracted, come back to the object.

Most probably, a moment later, your mind is somewhere else. You try to come back several times, and you keep on going. That's shamatha. This is complete, and you keep on doing that. You end up knowing that you are always distracted. If you know what you should not be doing, it is the same as knowing what you should be doing, you know? Buddhists say that if you know what ignorance is, 90% of the job is done – you will have wisdom soon.

The benefit of doing this – just this, looking at the doorknob, or the pen and the paper – it's probably not as beneficial looking at the

light or the television – but by doing all this, all your gross, discursive thoughts will settle. Gross aggression, gross jealousy – all emotions will settle. But know that this is very dangerous! This is *not* liberation! The mud has settled, it is underneath. Anytime, someone can stir it and instantly, the clear water can get muddy. But this is good – very good, actually.

So what do we do to take out, uproot all the mud? This is the big question, and this is where vipassana comes in. Vipassana is endless. You already did one. We've been doing it, being in the present is one way – the way in which I was guiding you yesterday. This meditation has more of shamatha, and maybe five percent of vipassana – other meditations have more of vipassana and not so much of shamatha. That's a little dangerous. That's really grabbing the mud and stirring it. You want to get rid of the mud as soon as possible and Tantra? That's working with the mud itself.

I will not advise too much for those who are beginners. This is very dangerous. It's like this – Buddhism, the dharma, has too many techniques. There are those that teach us how to solve a problem with the solution and the problem being the total opposite, which is easier for beginners. Oh? Problem? Black? Solution – white! Then there are others – the higher, the more profound the technique, the gap between solution and the problem is narrower. In the Tantra the solution is the problem and the problem is the solution – they are one. Don't go into that now, those who are new. It is easier to follow the other methods. Maybe not yet in the hammock, with the margarita, eh? Later, why not?

Maybe I will take one question, and then a break?

**Is Vipassana about non-duality?**

Well yes, vipassana is about that. Shamatha is not so much about it in the sense that yes, you just know that you cannot meditate but at the same time, we push you to meditate. Vipassana is altogether different. That has non-duality.

*Question from another participant*

This is what I was saying earlier. The experience of settling all the gross emotions has many, many benefits. Let me tell you about them. Forget vipassana – when you're so good at it that your gross thoughts have gone down, and I've seen it too. Let's say, usually you eat five plates of rice. After you do shamatha for say, three weeks, and if your shamatha has reached a certain level, five spoons will do! You will not feel that hungry because hunger is related to the mind. It's about emotion, about addiction, about – it's a bit like shopping. It's like we need to give ourselves a present. Buy things, gadgets. Food. Shamatha does that.

Then, your body will always feel very light. And then, this is also why people get so attached to shamatha, and this is also what a lot of Buddhist gurus warn us about – but by doing it, your intuition becomes so big! By just looking at someone, you can tell what they are thinking because there is not so much of a filter. Then people like that clairvoyance, and this is very dangerous! Because this is not liberation. Buddhists don't care about whether you're stressed or not, clairvoyant or not, being able to fly or not – we want to see the truth. And this taste of being so relaxed, 5 spoons of rice yet being satisfied, not needing to sleep so much – and this is good! Buddhists really earn a lot here – it's called the 'Bliss of Samadhi'. That's very identical to enlightenment also, at a glance.

*Question from a participant*

Yes, yes you can. Oh, many! A lot of people today – who do to vipassana but actually just end up doing shamatha, they sit for 9 hours! Burma – everywhere! I did it once in Burma. I was incognito, and joined for a few days and volunteered to chop vegetables for the monastery. Anyway, 9 hours is the standard Burmese way. Everybody says this – those who say that they cannot even sit for 10 minutes, I've met them later and they have been sitting for days, and what a fantastic experience it was, and blah blah blah. But then, a real Buddhist master has to shake it up and condemn all those experiences. You think this is great? This is *nothing!* There are many volumes of that. For the inexperienced ear, it is very discouraging, the scolding you may get because you've had a meditation experience. I carry one with me, it's written by Jigme Lingpa. From the first page to the last, it is full of scolding, warnings. Okay, one more and we go to our break?

*Question from a participant*

That's why – the Tibetans – and I'm going to speak like a typical Tibetan Buddhist now, they will say that you need to hire somebody who will dismantle you. We're talking about a guru. Or at least, you need to carry this book which will discourage you and your achievement. What do you think you are? Who do you think you are? You think you're omniscient? You think you're a clairvoyant? All those categories are nothing. One of the great masters, Jigme Lingpa said – a small insect eating wood (termites), they sit inside the space they create in the wood. Now the termite thinks that the space is the sky! And so on – you get the idea.

Okay, let's take a break.

## **Tea Break**

Sweet to someone who has never tasted sweet – yet, we know that only through letting this person taste the sweet, it will be his only key

to attaining liberation. It is very important that we tell them what sweet is, but we don't know how to say it to someone who has never tasted it. There's no reference!

I would say that all the Buddhist teachings are trying to talk about Sunyata – trying to talk about sweet, let's say. But, by giving you salt, chilli, masalas, turmeric, ginger, and saying each time – *This is not it*. This is not the sweet. So there's a lot of deconstruction. That's why you hear in the heart sutra – na (not) this, na that. It's so funny to hear the heart sutra in different nations. For instance, in Japan they use the word 'mu', which is 'na' in Sanskrit and Hindi. I think Chinese is 'wu' and in Tibetan it is 'me' - *na me, che me, lü me, yid me, zug me, dra me, dri me, ro me, reg ja me, chö me do*.

You know Osho Rajneesh? Yeah, Osho. He is so funny – he's quite good, you know, brilliant. He said that the Buddhist no is a very special no, because in the no there are a hundred thousand 'yes'. (Laughter) So that's it! The Buddhist 'na', the Buddhist 'mu' – it's very rich, very full. Instead of negation. But then you may ask, why do we choose the word 'no'?

Why not positive language? Actually we do also choose positive language. There's a whole school of Buddhism, in fact, bigger – very big, one that flourished in China, Japan and so on – they use more positive (maybe positive is not the right word) language. You see, you're hearing Tibetan at the moment – this is coming from the tradition of Nagarjuna. The Nagarjuna Company talks about no, no, no. Maitreya or Asanga talk more about luminosity. This means exactly the same thing, by the way.

I need to tell you this: Remember that we were talking about the truth? This is nothing supernatural or divine. It is very simple – all compounded things are impermanent and so on, especially

all projections – whatever your project does not exist externally, inherently – that’s a big one. If you know that not intellectually – actually, even intellectually – after 50 years of marriage to someone, someone told you that your wife or husband or whatever, your partner has a tail, have you seen it?

You understand what I mean? Wow! Your attitude will change. You will want to see it, right? At least! Your partner – what were they doing all this time? You’ll try to catch a glimpse of her, or him in the bathroom, and everything will change. Let me see the tail! Even a look-alike changes the whole dimension.

So even if it’s intellectual at the moment, you will go wow – all these are my projections at the moment, and projections aren’t really there. It will do something to you. You know, like the dream? You’re falling from a cliff, or a building, but you realise that it wasn’t real. You understand that truth.

Okay, now, there’s many ways. The best, the highest, and the simplest way is if the student (shishya) is totally surrendering, taking refuge in this truth. Not only intellectually but also from the heart. Just as what happened during the Mahamudra of the Ganges teaching where Tilopa tortured Naropa for 12 years! Hit him with his shoes on his head, and so on – and the dimension changed, shifted. Bengali, right, Naropa? Isn’t it? Prashant? Your fellow Bengali. Totally changed him with a slap on his head! No teaching, nothing! Before that, everything just – he did all sorts of strange things. Asking him to steal people’s soup, pinching the bottom of a princess during a procession and getting beat up – all sorts of things!

Let me describe the shift. There’s a description: Right now, the size of your palm and the size of the sky are very different. A big difference. A shift occurs, where size means nothing! A kilo of gold and a kilo of

dust – right now, there’s a big difference. A shift occurs – everything changes. This lineage is so important. Naropa taught this to Marpa, who taught it to his disciple and so on and so forth. This teaching went on all the way to the court of the Chinese Emperor. Many emperors actually became disciples. Today, this is one of the most revered lineages – you’re familiar with the Karma Kagyu? The Karmapa Lineage.

This is just one of them that I’ve talked about. There’s so many things like that – Virupa. Another great Nalanda guy who practised his mantras for a long while. Finally, he was so frustrated, asking *What is the point? I have gained nothing, there is nothing to gain from this.* He was so angry, he packed up his rosary and threw it in the toilet. At that moment, a shift happened! Now that lineage, at the moment is held by the Sakyapa people – the Sakya Lineage. The toilet guy. (Laughter) There’s many lineages like that.

The great Saraha. So special, Saraha – guru of Nagarjuna, the dean of Nalanda university – a big deal! The great Indian kings and queens and merchants of those days venerated Nalanda, and he was the dean, the boss of the university, heading all these monks. He wasn’t satisfied with his academic merits either. So he went searching for another guru, despite being so accomplished and learned himself. He finally found his guru – part prostitute, part arrow maker, a woman. When he first saw her, she was making arrows and shooting them towards empty space – no target to aim for. That struck him, and he asked her – *Don’t you need some sort of target to see whether your arrow is crooked or not?* Then her reply was – *This is your problem. You have a target, while I have none.* From there, came another lineage. All these lineages are still alive, by the way.

Most of them – so many Tibetans, translators and practitioners died bitten by mosquitoes, snakes, clashing with Indian dacoits – despite

that, managed to import the religion into Tibet, which is now being re-imported to India. The doha of Saraha – Osho has a teaching on that. He did quite a good explanation, I must say. A doha is like a – have you heard of the Bauls of Bengal, they sing something like a doha, it's an explanation of their realisation. Anyway, why am I saying these things?

Right, non-duality – the lineage of non-duality. So what is non-duality? It's difficult, because language is not good enough. There's many ways to experience it. I'm sorry to say this, but I'm not Tilopa, and I'm kind of assuming that you're not Naropa. So you are safe, I'm not going to use my shoes, it will not work! You understand? Because you're not totally surrendering, and if you surrender, I'm not willing to take responsibility. (Laughter) People surrendering, oh it's quite a thing – immediately I will have to bring my lawyer and tell you to sign this disclaimer. Very dangerous, these days, and that's something I will not do.

Then what can we do? The next thing? All that we can do is reasoning. Deconstruction, deduction. Reasoning. You have the Madhyamika, prajnapramita – hearing the argument, and so on – this is why there's all this Buddhist study. Volumes after volumes. If you meet someone like Tilopa and you have the Naropa attitude – no need! All this is a waste of time! All you need to do is wake up, and shift. Don't tell me the shift is not possible, it is! Drink margaritas! You'll have a shift won't you? But of course, this kind of shift is temporal, you get addicted to do that substance, and it is soon going to go away. This kind of shift will make you dull and will give you a little bit of superficial confidence, and that's it. I'm just telling you that it's not as if the shift is not possible.

Margaritas can do it, mushrooms can do it, peyote can do it – all you need is a shift. Okay, back to non-duality. You of all the people,

especially you Indians should be at home with non-duality. I always say this, I really mean it. You guys are people who can accept that Ganesha rides on a mouse. There, that's a really good description of non-duality. A big deity riding on a mouse, how is that possible? All your deities sitting on a lotus – try sitting on a lotus! They will be squished, flattened! But all your deities' lotuses are intact, beautiful. Stuff like that.

Instead of talking about non-duality, let us talk about why non-duality is not fitting in our head. Even though it always happens – stay in Vana for a week or something, it will feel like one or two days – but let's spend an hour or so in jail? Prison. You will feel it has been a year or something. Time goes very slowly. Ah, non-duality, see? Where is long and short? Beauty, ugliness – none of your projections exist inherently. Big, small, good, evil. Um, wholesome, divine. Everything is relative. Nothing truly exists as to how you experience it, or how you project it.

Did I tell you this? I was coming back from Goa, on a plane full of – what do you call them? Hari? Eunuchs? No, not – *hijadas*? A plane full of *hijadas*! I was so fascinated, I was like where are you guys going? They were all beautifully adorned. One of them said, that they were invited at a big wedding to bless the bride, or the groom or something. All this while, I was thinking – I was brought up thinking that the Indians look down upon them as inauspicious! Ah, non-duality. You, of all the people should be at home with it.

You know, something bad is suddenly good, and vice-versa! Do we have *hijadas* visiting us today? Okay. But I think no other country is really managing to chew and digest, and swallow it. Yes, when we teach emptiness, Sunyata and the prajnaparmita in Oxford, Cambridge, San Francisco, you know, westerners are intellectually aligned. They like it, they can sense the logic. They can really appreciate it. But for it to

seep into their bones, and blood and DNA – it is a little bit difficult. But this is how it is. Everything is like that, actually.

You know we were talking about the Vimalakirti sutra, there is a section – and even in Buddhism, there is a *yana* or a vehicle called the Sharvakayana where the practise is like *vinaya*. You know, monks, nuns – don't touch a woman – all that, hierarchy and so on. But in the Vimalakirti sutra, there is a section where Shariputra, the great monk, the right hand man of the Buddha visits the house. There's Vimalakirti's maid, and she herself is also very powerful, and miraculously turns Shariputra into a woman. This monk. And he was freaking out, *Oh, I'm a woman, what am I to do?* Then, there's a conversation between him and this woman – who asks *What do you mean by gender? I don't see any woman. Who are you talking about? What is gender?* There's a whole chapter on that.

People who're talking about women and gender equality? They should read the Vimalakirti sutra. People who talk about this still have dualistic notions of man and woman – they need to read this. They talk about the real equality of gender. What is woman? What is man? This is an illusion! This is a very non-academic way of understanding non-duality.

There are other things – like the reflection of your face in the mirror. Every morning, you go to the toilet and you see your reflection in the mirror. Everyday, you see your face, right? But never once, did you see a banana or something! (Laughter) Every time you look at it, you see your face. But even though it has always been unfailing, that does not prove that the person in the mirror is real. Time does not make it real. Consistency does not make it real. Function – the reflection in the mirror gives a lot of function. You can fix things, you can put stuff on your face correctly, straighten your ties correctly. But none of this proves that the thing in there is real. It is an illusion.

But an illusion *does not mean it does not exist*. The word ‘na’, ‘mu’, ‘me’ does not mean that it is an illusion, it just means that it does not have an inherent existence. Like the reflection of the moon in the water – it is beautiful, bright, but that does not mean it is real. That’s how the Buddhists see you and me. It’s not that we are not here, but we are not inherently here, in the way we project ourselves to be. That’s about all I can do for now. If you want to study this further, there are other books you can read – the Madhyamikakarika, the Mulamadhyamikakarika – oh, 60-70 verses, so many books, arguments. . .

Maybe I should let you ask more questions.

**Q: There are moments during meditation, where I just go blank.**

**Is that alright?**

Yeah, yes – you just have to aware of that, it is just an experience. Just be aware, and if you can do that, good. Blankness is not more special than discursive thought. It’s just another wave. You cannot go to the beach and say *this wave is good, this wave is not good*, because they are all one. They will come back again in different forms.

*Question from a participant*

I used the word deity, yes. That’s a big one. Okay, what is the subject of the heart-sutra? It is a discussion between the Avalokiteshvara and Shariputra. It is actually a big conference held on the peak of Rajgir. It’s like a . . . what do you call it? G-summit? G-20? It’s a bit like that, very important. How to solve the problem, just like those G-20 people.

So there were a lot of big people there – 500 something maha-sattvas, maha-arhats and so on. Anyway, the conclusion is one problem, and

that's thinking that there is an inherent self. So what is the self? This is the deductive logic. There's no I, no form, no feeling, no this, no that and so on...So, there's no self!

So if you ask a Buddhist, the self is just an illusion. Now coming back to your question. The question of deities. That non-self is sometimes practised as a deity, as that emptiness. Remember? I've been telling you that the Buddhist no is not a pure negation.

This is a little difficult, this will take some time to understand. Ten more minutes, and then I want to go and change. I don't want people thinking that I don't have colour! It's already red.

*Question from a participant*

Yes, you're talking about Advaita and Shankaracharya. You're talking to a Buddhist by the way. Me. (Laughter) so what I'm saying is, because the pre-Shankaracharya – the *purva-mimamsa*, the *nyaya* – they don't have non-duality. Then there is speculation that Shankaracharya himself got it from Nagarjuna, this non-duality – it is a widely known thing because in Buddhism, non-duality started from day one. From Varanasi, Saranath. After hearing that, I would say this. When we study Buddhist philosophy, we also study our opponents – our honourable, very appreciated opponents. Not like the Shias and so on – it is a good discussion, and it is not a fight for territory! There's no communal problems, it's all about philosophy. It's wonderful. The discussions between *nyaya* and the Buddhists is tough. It's just amazing, and it's all about non-duality. What I would say is, in Buddhism, as much as we talk about non-duality, the aspect of duality is never rejected. As you saw last night at the fire puja.

This exists even in the sutras, like the Vajracchedikā sutra – there's a commentary by Mr. Rajneesh – the Diamond sutra, it is called. If you read it, you'll see the meticulousness of the Buddha – how he washes

his robes, folds them, washing the begging bowl, the table blah blah – all that, and then suddenly, there’s discussions about there’s no such thing as the Buddha. Because what is the Buddha? What is form? If you see the form of the Buddha, you have a mistaken idea and so on and so forth.

So the relative, is never rejected. This is where the Buddhists talk about compassion. In fact, non-duality and compassion is synonymous in Buddhism. We are now opening a very big subject, I don’t know if we should go there. Compassion – actually the English word compassion is not doing justice to *karuna*, and so on. I think the word compassion is derived from the Abrahamic concept of having a God, and all those kinds of things. Forgiveness, sin – I think those religions believe in the original sin, and if you trust the God, you will gain absolution.

In the Mahayana, instead of believing in the original sin, you are originally perfect, you are the Buddha. Remember the cup? Why do you have confidence when you wash this cup? It’s really looking dirty, so dirty – you want to throw away the cup! You know you can clean it, the dirt is removable. The cup is you.

Let’s say it is clean. Neither clean nor unclean, it is just a cup. Clean and not clean only came because there’s a stain of coffee in there, which has nothing to do with the cup! When you bought it, it did not come with the stain, nor did the potters make it with the stain of coffee. IT is not one. This understanding is really important in connection with non-duality because we’re talking about real compassion.

Let’s put it in a very Californian language okay? Having compassion for others? It’s important, but having compassion for yourself is even more important! And how do you do that? By having the confidence of the Buddha nature. For instance, like a Bodhisattva – let’s say you are one. Your job is to enlighten all these beings. As a Bodhisattva, you

look at them – angry, greedy, stingy – all that. But how you look at them is with the nature of unpolished gold, or nuggets – that’s what you see. So it’s like you have all the raw materials here. When a gold businessman looks at gold, they don’t even see the dust or other things – they just see the gold and know it for what it is. Now you can do something, and that is compassion.

It gives you courage. If you need to turn dirt into gold, it is a guaranteed disappointment. You cannot. So that is quite important to realise. Okay Badri, what is it? We’ll have this discussion and then we will change – you don’t need to, you’ll go like that.

*Question from a participant*

A layperson’s. First of all, the conventional truth and the ultimate truth are both within the conventional truth. In relation to the darkness, you have to find the light. How should I put it...this is a very big subject, can we discuss this later? Can you remind me? Because this is quite important, especially if you’re studying Buddhist philosophy. Because – a lot of the Buddha’s teachings, actually 99% of them – he taught them, but he didn’t really mean it.

Do you get what I’m saying? Really, it is serious – I’m serious. It is like – the Cinderella story. You want to put the baby to sleep, what do you do? You tell stories. Your aim was to put someone to sleep. Skilful means. A lot of Cinderella. The Heart Sutra, the Diamond Sutra, the Vimalakirti sutra – they are what he means.

Okay, if you ask me – what are these Cinderella teachings of Buddhism? This is where he said, there’s good and bad. Don’t do bad things. Do good things. Samsara, Nirvana – you don’t want to go into there, you want to go into here.

All these are Cinderella teachings. Sunyata, non-duality – these are not Cinderella.

Actually, again, this is another Indian nuance. Very Indian. I read some Jain teachings – they also teach like that. For instance, if you’re talking to Stephen Hawking – even as he talks about the Big Bang, he doesn’t differentiate things by saying, ultimately, I’m saying this. They don’t talk like that. It’s all ultimate, basically, isn’t it? There’s only a few relative teachings like the Cinderella stories. It’s all ultimate.

This is the Indian way of talking, by the way. They have two ways – one, they mean it – the other, they don’t mean it. (Laughter) I’m serious! The whole thing is like that! We know it! Have you heard of the Pure Land school of Buddhism? Most of those teachings there – they didn’t really mean it. When the Buddha says, *Oh, once I was a monkey in my previous life* blah blah – all luring towards the ultimate truth.

I guess we need to go now.

***Concludes with Samantabhadra’s Prayer of Aspiration***

## **TEAM SESSION AT THE BODHI TREE**

So Veer insisted that this is not a spa – this is what, a wellness retreat? Just a retreat? Okay. I must say, I sympathise with this. I have been to several places that promise to rejuvenate the spirit, body mind and emotions. I actually know a few people who run these things in Thailand, Bali – but I have to say, this is quite special. I have said this in different places too because I think, you have some kindness. That’s the key. Kindness, to make people well, and sane, and sober.

Maybe many of you don’t know – there was a Buddhist master, Atisha, coming from Bengal – now Bangladesh, actually. He was very respected – he went to, and died in Tibet. The 12<sup>th</sup> century I think. Every time he talks about his gurus, those in India, he would fold his

palms like this every time he mentioned their names. But there is this one guru – I think his name is Dharmakirti in Sanskrit, but I think he's called 'Serlingpa' in Tibetan, which means 'the man from the golden island'. Anyway, every time Atisha spoke of Dharmakirti, he would fold his palms way over his head and cry. That's what happened.

So one day, Dromtönpa – he was Atisha's chief disciple – asked him, *you have so many gurus, but when you speak of this one, you fold your palms like this – you make a big deal out of him. Why is that?* Atisha said – and he is considered to be very, very kind, and he put a lot of emphasis on kindness and tolerance. He brought a Bengali friend who was supposedly very annoying on his journey to Tibet, just to teach himself patience and tolerance. He said, *if you can trace even a little bit of kindness in me, it is all because of Dharmakirti, because kindness is the most important.*

By the way, Dharmakirti is from Indonesia – and there's a beautiful story of how Atisha went to Indonesia by boat. The boat faced many thunderstorms and a lot of difficulties, but he went all the way there searching for Dharmakirti and learnt the lesson of kindness. Atisha used to have headaches – and all the physicians couldn't do much – he used to ask Dromtönpa to touch him – wherever it didn't matter – because he said, *you are a kind man.* Dromtönpa also ended up becoming very kind, I guess. Being touched by kindness will heal me, he said, and it cures my headache. I'm telling you this because you have so much kindness – within the staff, administration, all the people who do the therapy – and that, I think, you should maintain and somehow your Vanavasis will not forget this. They might forget consciously, but unconsciously they will remember this.

We forget things because life has too many things like this – but during their last breath, they will remember that they have been taken care of with kindness. In my own experience, because I've travelled at lot

during my teachings – I usually stay at people’s homes, but sometimes I have to stay in inns, hotels – all kinds of places. I have to say, that there are some places where people are so kind. I know this one bed and breakfast in London, and even if I stay there, I just have to go and experience the warmth and the kindness – they don’t have much, they only serve breakfast. Really good breakfast. There’s this lady who’s just so kind. I think this is something you already have. Individually, collectively, you seem to have it and I would like to remind you to maintain this. Touch people with kindness, open the door with kindness, play the flute, sing songs, put on your uniform – everything that you do, do with kindness.

You’ll be very surprised with how this get delivered and received. Unconsciously, but many times, even consciously. Other than that, if you have something to ask me, I’ll say it – whatever you want.

**I guess – taking today’s example, we have always thought of Vana as a place of healing and restoration but as importantly, eventually, a place of transformation and learning. Now those aspects of transformation and learning are getting stronger. So sometimes, there could be a bit of a butting of heads between the two. So, I’d just like to share that.**

I don’t know how I should put it. Are you talking about things like your creative activities, or going to places like Gaya? For learning? Vidyaloke?

**Also here. We don’t wish for Vana to become a place where you come to feel only relaxed and safe, and maintain status quo. We feel that our job is to also provoke and push you, and make you evolve.**

I think that’s happening, isn’t it? That’s a very big task, of course but that’s part of the healing and wellness too. Evolving, and creativity

is a very important part of wellness. I don't even want to think of wellness as just sitting on a sofa, and breathing normally, and having no headache or whatever – that of course, but it is also confidence, building confidence. That's actually the main part of wellness. So creating that situation, facilitating it through art, arrangement and so on – all these things are happening here. Installations. Pujas. Making a mess sometimes, cleaning stuff sometimes – all that will strengthen you guys, definitely, but also vanavasis.

Even in Bhutan, they are finally waking up. Bhutan is this sort of a tourist destination and now they've realized that tourists aren't just satisfied with pictures of the scenery, or fresh air and trees – they want to be provoked! Cultural tourism, I think it is called. So I think provoking, stirring, is a big part of Vana which is also quite special. It's not just a place to sleep and rest. I'm sure you guys are cooking up a lot of things, isn't it? (Laughter)

**Rinpoche, last year, when Phra Paisal was here, he spoke of constantly working on us – developing this culture of excellence. And today you spoke about 'ja', about letting things be – this could be in a chaotic way, or in other ways. How can we, as individuals (collectively, we somehow do it) develop our culture of excellence, our discipline, our mindfulness and awareness in being of service to others?**

This is a really difficult question. You know, you gave me that book. Wabi sabi? That Japanese book – actually, that's quite important and precious. After all, what is excellence? Wabi sabi basically states that things can be beautiful because they are temporal. Like these flowers – they are plucked, separated, and we know it is not going to last for long – maybe 24 hours at best, but it's because of that it is beautiful.

Wabi sabi is actually quite vast, I can't really talk about this in five minutes, and it's really a big one. This actually came from Zen Buddhist philosophy. The other aspect of it is beauty in imperfection. Certain things are not perfect, but they still can be so beautiful – the Japanese are quite good at that, as you can see. Extracting and appreciating the beauty from temporariness and imperfection – I think that could bring about some excellence. What do you think? But you have to really appreciate this stuff. India is quite good at that, no? The chaos.

**Going with what Mr. Singh was saying – if one's intention is to benefit oneself, then it is quite different. But when it is to do something to help others and for the benefit of others, when we feel like there are certain imperfections that should be directed – so how does one help that person, and so on?**

I understand. You should treat Vanavasis like children. They're so precious, and to a certain extent we should let them be, but after a point, you also have to guide them, isn't it? A great educator – I forget her name – she said *it is so unfortunate that we have to educate children*. Educating is brainwashing, basically, and ideally you don't want to do that.

But this is the reality, and you have to pay bills and so on, and the children can't just be left alone all the time – you have to guide them. Maybe, you should get some children here – some kids. Spoilt kids, some of them. Many of them like the princess and the pea. Like nothing satisfies them? You can cater to them to a certain extent, but then you can have some sort of boundary, some toughness – which they will appreciate, I think.

**Rinpoche, you had mentioned that whatever we perceive is actually a projection. I wanted to clarify something. You**

**feel that there is no amount of reality to certain situations? Suppose I have been treated badly by him, and day after day we have these confrontations to resolve things, and every time when I feel that way, I say I have to forgive him, I have to accept things and so on. Is that a projection, or...?**

It is a projection, but you need to manipulate things for the sake of harmony. Of course. You know, it's like telling a bedtime story to a kid – we know that it's not really happening, but we also know that that's the only way. So you still need to have some sort of guidelines and leadership.

**In our daily lives, to add value to each other and to promote harmony and everything – we know we need to be more disciplined, we know what our shortcomings are and so on – we do it for a few days, and then we let go. We make excuses for ourselves. How can we become more responsible towards ourselves by having this discipline?**

I think admitting and acknowledging a lack of discipline is already a good beginning. I would not have anything more. Keep on acknowledging, keep on admitting that you need to discipline yourself. You don't need to have extra discipline. That is also humility, and it is needed to have kindness.

**One of the things that always troubles me is that we get to have so many teachings, from so many masters and so on – but when it comes to practice, we can't just get out of the teaching hall and apply it. We find ourselves in confrontational situations, with the world around us, and it is a source of sorrow for so many of us. So I would like to know if there is a way where we can bridge the gap between what we receive as teachings, and how we act in general.**

That's where the discipline comes in. I can suggest something. You should allocate a certain time – not too narrow it for a particular hour, something like – everyday, altogether, I will contemplate for 10 minutes. These can be divided into many parts. It can be in the morning, for a few minutes, the afternoon, and before you sleep, for a few minutes. Then, do this, don't do it for too long. But it should be consistent – after a month or two, it will become really boring. Anything that is routine, you will lose inspiration in – but you have to force yourself. Do it consistently, and you don't have to do it for long – I always give this example – if you have never drunk alcohol, and you force a bottle down for the first time, you will never want to see the sight of it again.

But if you drink one spoon every day, after a few months, you'll be a very good drinker! Just like that! You have to be persistent and consistent. That's the best way. Most enjoyable, economical and most effective. The spiritual path is actually the easiest, but because of its easiness, it becomes very difficult. It is also very related to the mind. When you're going to the gym three times a week, after a while you don't want to – but there's discipline you need.

But I would say, 7 minutes – at least three times a week, if not every day. We're talking about habituation. All the negativity you have, it is basically a bundle of habit – and how did you get that? By doing it for a little bit at a time – the same tactics apply here to overcome it.

**Rinpoche, you talked of habit – how can I recognize if it is a habit, or an attachment?**

From the Buddhist point of view, they are very similar. Many habits end up becoming an attachment. You can say habit is the cause, and attachment is the result – they're almost like fire and heat. They're kind of the same, but a little bit different too.

**So that means that I would need to be in a constant discussion with myself?**

Yeah, but instead of constant, I was saying 7 minutes – every day, for three times a week. But everyday meaning, even it out during the day. Morning, afternoon, and before you go to sleep. Short is very important. Precise. And during that time, during that contemplation, you will have some insights – *wow, so that's how it is*. Don't get excited and do it for longer! You understand? That's dangerous. Just do two minutes, even if it's very nice, do something else. Eat something, read a book, talk to someone – whatever. Even if you're dull, uninterested, uninspired, don't really want to do this – Do it!

You have to balance gentleness on one side and discipline on the other, always. You should have the art of balancing the life – gentle, firm, gentle firm and so on.

**Many of us go through the conflict of being a professional manager – or a people's person – by which I mean we're taskmasters. We're assigned to do a certain thing, which we must accomplish. At certain times, it may be tough for the team members and the people you are working with. But the task is for a larger purpose and for the overall good. Sometimes, they may not appreciate it – but by being more precise and stern, and by driving them we may accomplish the task, and in the process, the team themselves may develop. What I mean to say is that, at heart, we have the good of people, for whom we are responsible for. Also, for the team members – but in order to drive them, we might not be the most kind when we drive them, and when we express ourselves. So how do we derive that balance?**

I don't think it's not being kind. You're just being skillful. You're being strict, straight, you're raising your voice a little bit – being firm – not necessarily not being kind. Being kind is actually quite a visionary thing. You've been talking about it you know? Because at the end, it is going to be productive – for the team, and the individual. So that's quite a good vision. Yes, sometimes you are stressed because of time, because of a certain situation.

I have to run monasteries you know? And yes, it's a very tough task. The situation there is, I cannot fire anyone! (Laughter) They're stuck with me forever! It's terrible. Then also – no one can fire me too! That's terrible too! And you know what – I cannot even resign! It's the worst! I cannot resign – to which department do I send my resignation letter? There's no such thing.

**Can I just remind everybody that you have 20 more minutes with Rinpoche – I cannot believe that there's a single person in this room that does not have a question related to their development, emotional development or their personal situation. So please use these 20 minutes very preciously and put forth whatever is in your mind. Please.**

**We all want to be very mindful and aware. And to be in the flow, no matter how many distractions we have. There could be 50 things in our mind, something that we may want to do. So how do we make that a universal thing, how do we bring it about?**

I think kindness is a very important thing. You are exuding this. I would only ask you to maintain that. That's the key, that's the universal caring. Basically, your job is the sort that cares. You're basically making somebody well by spiritually, emotionally caring for them. I think that caring can be demonstrated through all sorts

of things – like even where you put the dustbins. Or, I don't know, whatever you do! I'm not talking about caring aesthetically (that also, of course) but this is what I'm saying – subconsciously, people will appreciate it. As I age, I realize this more.

Even when I went to Japan, for instance. If you go to a shopping mall and you need to go to the washroom – basically, in any public place like that, a toilet is just about 20 steps away. That's so caring – that's in the design of the building. Stuff like that really makes a difference.

When I went to Taiwan, or the other day, in Delhi – I went there, I had to meet somebody (Select Citywalk) A shopping circuit or something. Whatever. I had to go to the washroom, and I had to go here, and there, and the signs were bad, and finally I found it. There's no caring. They just want to sell things. They are not caring about your bladder, I guess. (Laughter)

So, I think that kind of caring works – even if it is a fake one, it works.

**Rinpoche, today's times are very stressful. I believe meditation really helps a person to overcome their stress. But when a person sits to do it, there are so many thoughts that keep coming. We try to concentrate on our breath, or something – what according to you is the most important thing when someone sits in meditation?**

Well, as you said, just concentrating on your breath is very popular as a technique, and it works. The breath that you breathe in and out is very well connected to your thoughts. Buddhists believe that your body, your nadis and your veins are like a maze, and your breath (prana) is like a blind horse. Your mind is like the handicapped rider. It's not the best road – there's no signs, it's a maze, it's very complicated. The way we eat, we handle ourselves, no exercise, not sitting straight and so on – the poor blind horse, just guessing its way through. The

rider, handicapped, is just going wherever the horse goes – he is not in control! You cannot reign it in.

So, coming back to breathing – sitting is good, if you have the chance. Breathe in and out. When you breathe out, only breathe out. When you breathe in, only breathe in. When you breathe out, only breathe out. Don't huff and puff halfway. That's supposedly the technique. By sitting the road is little bit straightened. And suddenly, the blind horse has much better orientation, and the rider has an easier time.

**Rinpoche, I feel that in today's times, we have a lot of conflicting thoughts. We want to get rich, and stay young forever. But when it comes to kindness, we can only think of charity and so on – so how can a person think of kindness in other ways, for society? By doing a steady task and so on.**

There, you might want to have slightly extra information. From time to time, we get these opportunities that we must take – where else can we have these kinds of discussions? About more inner stuff? Emotional, spiritual stuff? That discussion is important. Banks, restaurants, government offices, schools – the people, if they begin their day with one moment of contemplation and if they end their day with another moment – a discussion, even – it would help a lot, but people don't really think of these things.

There's no need to do this every day too – maybe even once a week would do. More discussions on spiritual stuff – most of the time we're always talking about the external. How much money we can make, what brand of car we should buy and so on. But a very few people talk about – is what I see really there? Stuff like projections, no one wants to talk about. If the politicians talked like this in their parliamentary discussions, just for one or two minutes, it may really

help. Supposedly, dialogues are very important right, in the human realm?

It doesn't have to have a conclusion – there will never be one, and that is not the point. And kindness – if you're only talking about what's in front of you, things taken at face value, then kindness is the most useless! The people of Wall Street will think that talking about kindness and thinking about kindness is like – while the index is going up and down, you're wasting time! You better read the newspaper, you better think about the index, right? Buy and sell, buy and sell!

**The selfishness – when we are happy, we are being selfish. Where does this selfishness - when we say selfish, we're referring to ourselves and when we say the community, the kindness which we're talking about, it conflicts with that part. When we say we are happy, there's a selfishness there when we are doing kind acts, like charity and so on – it's not like for general happiness.**

Very good. I understand. You can be selfless here, but you have to train your mind. If the forest is on fire, you cannot save the tree, you know? You need to protect the forest instead of protecting the tree. We have to think of the long term, the whole. Even that, as you say – in the end, it's benefiting you. But that way, it's a good benefit because it's not harming anybody, in the very least. Right now, if you concentrate on one tree, you'll harm the others, and eventually, you'll harm yourself. If you want to really talk about selflessness especially from the Buddhist point of view, then we're talking about another level of philosophy, because the Buddhists think that the self is also a projection.

But I think on a more relative level – thinking big, being visionary is very close to being selfless. This kind of strategy is accepted and should be applied.

**Sometimes, we come across a situation where we want to speak the truth – but we don't, because the other person might not want to hear it. And sometimes, you know that it will benefit that person eventually. So how does one approach such a person who does not want to hear the truth?**

I guess this is a case-by-case scenario. Many a times, you should just say it. For other times, depending on the situation – you can say it in a different way, you can ask someone else to say it for you, you can wait until that person is in a better state so that he can listen and hear, but I understand. Sometimes you have to say things within these two minutes, and you know, you have a deadline – and it can be difficult. You don't have to micro-manage too much. Come back to the kindness, come back to being the visionary, the bigger picture, the group. If what you're saying these things out of kindness, then subconsciously, the other person will also not really mind, at the end. We experience these kinds of things, and many a time, we have to put things directly – this may not be soothing to hear, but you kind of respect and love them – and then they don't mind that.

**If it is for a long time, then I tend to keep things to myself.**

Then it maybe not so good. Then, you should find a way. All sorts of gestures exist too – bring a flower and say it. This is actually described in the Buddhist texts – a flower, glass of water – whatever. Make fun?

**Q: Normally it says that you should be happy but that happiness should not have a reason because you should not depend on reason in your life – so how can we achieve that kind of happiness?**

You can have reasons to be happy, but sometimes, you can be happy seemingly without reason. Right? I think, you're talking about contentment. When people are content, they seem to be happy no matter what. So, you don't necessarily need a specific reason to be happy, and that's probably what you're talking about. That's a very important aspect of the Bodhisattva path. Contentment in everything. I think that's a good lesson to learn. For instance, when you're going to bed – you should celebrate that you have lived this long. *Wow, I've actually managed to go through the whole day* – because that actually could not have happened. You could have been killed by a falling branch or something. You understand? Anything. Celebration – that's needed. Then, according to the classic Buddhist thought – thinking about the impermanence of life.

When you say good night, or good bye, or how are you to your friend, maybe sometime bring in this awareness – that this is it! This may be my last time saying good night, or good bye, or how are you. That brings in preciousness, and this kind of exercise develops contentment. It's a bit like – maybe you have a friend that has a sickness which guarantees that they will only live 6 months. Let's say you're a very fussy person – who cares about whether the room is clean and so on – but knowing that this person is here on Earth for only 6 months, you are not going to make a big deal out of it! That kind of thing.

**Q: I have a question – you said caring, even if it is superficial, makes a difference. So I wanted to understand that.**

Ideally, you should be genuine, of course. But when it comes to the superficial – now this is Buddhist training, I'm not making this up: but even a superficial caring can lead to genuine caring. There are a lot of techniques like that – some people who suffer from a lack of confidence, there is an exercise that tells them to think and talk like kings or queens in their privacy. Then, if you're very stingy – this is

by Shantideva by the way – a Gujarati man, and this is advice from Gujarat – he says you should exercise by giving things from one hand to the other. Then, begin to give things like water to other people – that are not too expensive and so on. Once that habituation becomes perfect, you will not even think twice if someone’s asking for your neck! You’ll say please, have it. The strength of habit – good and bad – is great.

Thank you so much for caring for me, personally, every one of you. I’m very happy to be here.

Day 3 | 14<sup>th</sup> March, 2017

## MORNING SESSION

You can say this is one of the most important things. If you're a serious Buddhist student, you learn something called 'pramana' which is Buddhist logic – these are simply tools. There, you find all the tools to be critical – critical to the teacher, critical to the teaching, all kinds of things. The purpose is to excel, basically. The real reason, the real purpose of Buddhist logic is to defeat the logic by logic. But this doesn't happen all the time, it is difficult. You always fall prey to the trap of logic. Logic is very convincing. Conviction is a very big defilement; you know? Once you get convinced, you will not have the courage to leap. But anyway, this is something that we study – not everybody. Just those who really wish to study.

Here and there, though, you will have a glimpse of this logic – if you try to study it. There's another subject called the *Abhidharma*. Very important, that one, I would say. There you study things like mental factors – you can almost say it's like the metaphysics and the psychology of Buddhism. There you study definitions. It's very interesting, I have to say, Buddhist metaphysics. For instance, when we talk about negative emotion, we hardly think doubt would be a negative emotion. Not in the normal situation. But in the *Abhidharma*, doubt is a very important emotion. It is one of the vicious ones. There are quite a lot of interesting things, and deconstructions there. I mean, Burma, Sri Lanka – the guys over there put so much emphasis on that. You know those biochemists (those who study fungus and so on), and microbiologists assisting me – and there's one of them I know, who is so trained in that science that she sees bacteria everywhere! Even in places like Canada she buys so much toilet paper and so on – I don't know what she will do if she comes to places like India, or Burma. But this *Abhidharma* is like that – people who study it then begin to relate

to things like the hand not being one single unit. It's skin, bone, blood – things that will disintegrate.

There are also a lot of mental factors. Remember, one night we talked about death and Bardo? Those who practice that, also relate it to metaphysics. We also study projection, which we talked about in Delhi. The 6 realms? Remember the 6 realms? The 6 realms are basically a projection. So you could be godly at the moment. You could be in heaven right now, but after lunch you might be an animal. As in dull, like that. That's one study.

Then, there another study called *Vinaya*. That's for those who want to take the path of the Bhikshu, the renunciant. They study this, but it's actually really interesting. Lawyers would really enjoy this. What is the concept of Buddhist ethics and morality? In Buddhism, ethics and morality are always secondary – the wisdom is what is more important, always above – because if you have morality and ethics without wisdom, then it causes constipation. Puritanical thoughts. You understand? You'll think *oh, I'm a vegetarian – you eat donkey's meat!* Things like that, there's prejudice. In Buddhism, hence, they are always secondary.

So it doesn't make sense when people say *oh you must be a Buddhist, you don't eat meat* – then I don't understand! *Oh you must be Buddhist, you're not that violent!* Well, okay, but there's a lot of room for interpretation for this one.

Anyway, the study of *Vinaya* is actually very interesting. Just to give you an example, you know, to entertain you. First of all, the Buddhist ethic is based so much on motivation! Action is secondary, you know. Truth, primary – ethics, secondary. So when we talk about ethics – motivation is more important than the action. So, you can only judge yourself – unless someone is omniscient, they can never really know

what motivations the others have! You are your judge – the Buddha hence said *you are your own master, who else can be your master* and so on and so forth.

So let's say an ordained monk – a monk's (bhikshu) vow dictates that if he does one of these four things, it will destroy his position as a monk. His vow is broken. One of them is killing a human being. So let's say, I want to kill this person and I have a knife in my hand. My motivation is to kill some person, and I'm going at him with the knife, but I end up killing some other person. Still a monk! Of course you've done a lot of bad things – you've killed someone – but the action is not yet complete.

Another one is a monk, holding a knife – stabbed the right person, okay? But it could also happen that the monk dies before that person! He will die as a monk. He hasn't broken his vow yet because the life of the other has to discontinue to complete the definition, to qualify it as killing.

The *Vinaya* is a very big study. The root text itself has 18 volumes. I didn't study it because, only the fully ordained people get this. We have to study it a little bit regardless. But I always thought, *Oh, the Indians are talking like this 2500 years ago*. This is so sophisticated.

Let's say the killer is a little bit crazy – this is also not counted as a broken vow. I was talking about this with my lawyer friends, they're very fascinated by it.

So these three – Buddhist logic, metaphysics and the code of conduct are the supplementary studies. The most important studies are actually the *prajnapramita* and the *Madhyamika*. The *prajnaparamita* is the heart, and you've been reading it every day – so I wanted to tell you what it is.

If I may share a glimpse about the contents of the heart sutra: As I said yesterday, it was a very important summit, and it is a very important subject. A conference, about how to solve the problems of the world – of course, always. Then, the root of the cause of suffering is clinging to the self. What is the self? The self is only a label. A label given to the five aggregates. This is why *no form, no feeling, thought or choice* – there are so many different translations. Whose translation is this? I see. Basically, the five aggregates – no form, feeling, karmic consciousness, and whatever is left.

The five aggregates are the base from which we label ‘me’. We then deconstruct individually – what is form? The eyes. Then, we say *no eyes*. The form also we deconstruct. This is really in depth. It’s actually quite a difficult subject. Let’s say – well, I’m borrowing from Chandrakirti. Chandrakirti used a chariot, but I’m going to use this table.

Well, the table is a label. It has four legs, a flat surface and the fact that I put some things together, suddenly, out of nowhere, I’ve made a ‘table’. You understand? If my butt is here – then it would be like *he’s sitting on a strange chair!* Suddenly, the same thing has become a chair. The label that you give to anything is just a label. Then you can declare other things. This is not a table, nor is this a table. The colour, the shape and all those things are not a table, nor are the components. This is how we deconstruct, and you will find that there is no inherently existing thing called a table.

Just like that, our so-called self, ‘me’, that we cherish so much is exactly like this. Of course, you will not hear this so comfortably – because of habit! If somebody steps on your toe, you’re startled. The toe is not you! You also have fingers – isn’t that you? Your nose? It’s all very arbitrary. Your self is very arbitrary, and flexible. But very

strong too! This is just a glimpse of an introduction to the heart sutra's approach.

Let us now actually begin by just sitting. This time sitting straight. I am going to apply a little bit of the traditional method. Not for too long, just for 2-3 minutes. Traditional means – I am going to give you some discipline. And discipline, remember, is only a tool. It's necessary. There are two-three things that you are allowed to do – you can blink your eyes, swallow your saliva, breathe. Other than that, for that period, no scratching, yawning, coughing – nothing. No sitting on your hands suddenly and so on. When you feel like coughing, clearing your throat – instead of doing that, just watch the feeling. If nothing is happening, just pick something – for instance, if you're wearing spectacles and earrings, just notice that. Have you been doing that? Perhaps not. Or hardness of the softness of the ground, the space touching your skin, your face – just be in the present. You may cough or yawn now. (Laughter) Okay? And, this time, since we're trying to be strict, we will do three minutes of this. And please, try to completely be in the present. If you have a headache too, just watch it. If you have nothing too, just know that. Let's start.

Okay, thank you. Just three minutes. I would highly recommend you to do this, as much as you can. Three times a week, or even every day is good. During that time, those 3 minutes, if a phone rings, don't attempt to switch it off, let it ring. If you suddenly think something is boiling in the kitchen, don't attempt to go there, just let it be. Keep on doing this. If you do it every day, I would say, in one year – let's say you're this kind of person who irons your underwear. You know? In about one year, you will not iron it. That's a little bit of enlightenment, I tell you! Maybe after 9 years, you may not even wash it – maybe that's not such a good idea! (Laughter) It's not good inspiration either.

But someone was asking me, what is enlightenment. Enlightenment is basically when you're free from – nirvana is basically freedom from obsession. When you are obsessed, when you are not worked up. Remember wabi sabi? When you see beauty in imperfections, when you see beauty in temporary stuff. Indians are quite good at seeing beauty in imperfections, but they're not so good at seeing it in temporary stuff. What do you think? It's something to analyze.

Okay now, next just do a few seconds of being in the present. No need to sit, no specific posture – just be aware. Yes that's it, good. Now, let's just see things. Maybe seeing is better – no need to look, just see. Colors, shapes. Okay, now back to the mind again. Just observe what your mind is thinking, at this very moment. Good enough. Have you done it? Let's try again. Whatever you're thinking or not thinking, doesn't matter. Yes, that's it. Very good.

Okay, now we've had so much beautiful music – now I'm going to play something strange. Just hear it. No need to like it, or anything.

### *Music plays*

Whatever you've been thinking. Just observe it. I was thinking it would be nice if someone came out with Listerine made out of cinnamon and cloves. Just that. Okay, you can ask some questions. You should really consider this as a Samadhi – this is all in the sutras and the shastras. My job is to protect the buddha-dharma – to prevent it from going astray. Sometimes, the nuances of language, culture and so on always go on hijacking this. Then, you hear the word meditation – you think it's to do with sitting down, having a quiet time and so on, which is really very sad, because you may not have that kind of quiet time. You will not sit, I know. But it's not like this, I'm not making this up – the culture of this is dangerously overtaking the dharma, especially now that the spa people are interested. The spa people are not interested

in the dharma, the spa people are not interested in the heart sutra – nothing to sell, you know? Doesn't make them feel good. So please ask. Is this about relative truth? No? Okay.

Yes, I think we talked about this a little bit. Was it here? You know, I've been teaching at so many places, I can't remember what I've taught where! I think we covered a little bit of this – being in the present is generosity. Not grasping is generosity? What does it say? Not clinging? Okay, not grasping. When you are in the present, where is the grasping? Only when you are day-dreaming, there is grasping. When you think about the past and the future there is immediate grasping. Every time you go to the past and the future, you are like water. The moment it falls on the ground – mixes with the dust. When you are in the present, you are like mercury – mix it with shit for a thousand years, it will not mix. You will remain as you were, pure.

The next one? Can you read that again? It's interesting. Not remaining meaning – I actually like that word, remaining, I think this is a good translation. Not remaining means – usually, discipline and morality always has this connotation of needing to keep something. Needing to keep something as precious. When you are in the present you are not keeping anything. IT is actually the most important letting go. When you let go, it becomes the core lesson of morality and ethics. What's next?

Guarding. Not losing control. No aggression. I think that should be easy to understand, and then? Diligence. Okay, yes, in the present, what are you trying? Another translation I would suggest is, *joy is diligence*. When you are in the present, you are joyful. Okay? Yeah, that one – thinking – it's a little bit dangerous. It's a correct translation, but it is a little bit difficult. We need to be careful here. People who are in a coma are not necessarily doing any samadhi. They're not thinking

– one needs to be careful here. Basically not going to the past and the future is samadhi, and then?

Ah ha. That's a good one. Saraha, remember? The arrow? Not grasping. Anyway, what's your next question?

*Question from a participant*

Very practically – being non-distracted is the effort. That is the real diligence, isn't it? But to get there, all the other effort is not rejected. I've got an idea. Maybe it's good to have in the future – to have a show on one of these masters.

Like Shaky Shri. Let me tell you about Shaky Shri. A great master. Not too long ago, by the way – only a 100 years ago. My grandfather's teacher basically. He went to Tibet – I mean, he went from east Tibet to central Tibet, and there is a statue of guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava). It's supposedly very precious. He went there with his wife, his children and his disciples. In the presence of this statue, he told his children and wife and disciples – okay, this statue is just like Guru Rinpoche – no difference at all, if you believe it. In the presence of this statue, you must now take a pledge. Whatever you can do. Some will do 100000 prostrations, some of you will chant these mantras and so on. All his disciples did it one after another, with him bearing witness. At the end, when it was his own turn – he had a rosary in his hand with which he chanted mantras. So he faced the statue and said, *till today I thought chanting and praying is the thing to do and I realized that this is my hang-up. Today I will pledge that I will not do one more prayer, or utter one more mantra.* He then took the rosary and threw it at the statue. This is a very important teaching.

He was a very important man. My grandfather – my mother's father, by the way – he walked all the way from Bhutan to east Tibet in search of him. For 4 years, he never received a single word of

teaching. My grandfather was quite a handyman with his knives and other such. Many Bhutanese are like that. He was always asked to do things. Finally, the Shakya Shri gave him a bone – the leftover bone after eating meat – as a gift. He boiled this for many days and drank the soup of the bone. Anyway, he received the teaching that actually traces back to Naropa, the Bengali man. But being a handyman never stopped him. Shakya Shri decided to renovate the Baudha stupa in Nepal, so my grandfather ended up being the foreman of this activity. My grandfather was also kind of close to the second king of Bhutan. The king of Bhutan contributed, sponsored the renovation. So my grandfather waked from Kathmandu to Thimphu – Bhutan, you know? I think several times! A month's walk, each time – that's a long walk, isn't it? The effort of these people sounds like fairy tales now. When I was 13, I went with my grandfather to Nepal – he used to remember a lot of things that had been – trees and so on. Things changed a lot for him.

Anything else?

This quotation is everywhere, in many sutras it is like that.

### **Have you ever been offended?**

Offended? Well not so much during the teachings or something – but I can give you a list of my annoyances. (Laughter) Yes. Requests for endless photos together – especially with the Tibetans and the Chinese. This way, that way, in group, single, with me holding this – all kinds of things! That, I get tired of, I say enough.

Ah yes, when Barcelona and Real Madrid is playing: even if you ask me if I want water, or juice – I'd say *what are you talking about?! Don't tell me all these things!* Interruptions during a football match. But yeah, Veer was there. The last time, in Brazil actually. I had the opportunity to watch it on the field. It was a really big match actually – France vs.

something. I had a really good seat, and as part of the arrangement – they have restaurants, isn't it? Like free of charge, everything. They serve drinks and so on. I was very thirsty, so they offered this really nice looking, full of ice, lemons, some green stuff in this – what is it called? Cachaça? Caipirinha, yes! That's what. I drank that completely! (Laughter – it's hard liquor) For thirty minutes, I could only hear random things! I was a little angry at myself also, for drinking that – I missed half the game, even though I was sitting right there.

Stuff like that. Small, stupid reasons, ending up becoming a big deal, I guess.

*Question from another participant*

Oh many. Sitting straight, all the things that we did. Hearing sounds, chopping onions and so on. Motivation? Okay, you say *I'm going to chop an onion* but this time I'm going to do it with present-ness. This is the means. A means – one has to make it into means. This is why in the tantra, there is nothing that cannot be a means.

*Question from another participant*

A very important question, this one. First of all, the dosage. The dosage of wisdom and skillful means. How much do you have? Wisdom? If you have quite a good amount, then you should push it a little bit more. Let me illustrate this. If you have less, or no wisdom, but a little bit of knowledge as concerns the method, then let's say you are dealing with annoying people, then remember the fake smile. In the worst case, avoid the situation. Because of your training, if you have more wisdom, then involve yourself! Argue. Maybe I shouldn't say this, but if necessary, beat the person! Really, this is tantra we're talking about. The amount of wisdom you have should give you the confidence to apply skillful means. I think parents usually demonstrate this very well.

I know many people who are really stern and serious. When they become parents, and play with their kids, they become kids themselves. They have to! They have to be skillful. They have to build sand-castles. They have the knowledge that this is not true, so they have the confidence to play more with it. If you as a parent think the sand castle is probably a real thing, then you are in trouble. Then the kids will overpower you.

*Question from another participant*

Yeah, that's why motivation is needed. I know we've been talking about the present moment, or wisdom a lot – but for the beginners, motivation is quite important. Try to have a good motivation as you begin. Then even if you get lost in the planning and the scheduling and all that, because it has begun with a good motivation, it has a greater chance to go to the right direction. That's why the *bodhichitta* practice is very much encouraged.

Is that what you're talking about?

*Question from another participant*

Yeah, for the time being, it is going to be difficult. Benefitting oneself is a very powerful habit. With enough training, you slowly begin to appreciate and cherish others more. And then one day, you will realize that the only thing that makes you happy is making others happy. Then you're becoming quite a seasoned Bodhisattva, there are a lot of people like that.

*Question from another participant*

Ah, okay. You have opened up a very big question. That's related to what we did one evening – the Bardo state. This is big. What do you have? You have head, feet, body, family, you have feeling, you have references, names, a job – but out of all that, what is the most

important? The mind – that’s what Buddhists think. Now if you try to see what the mind is – that’s actually the core practice of Buddhism. The essence of the mind is supposedly Buddha, according to the Buddhists. Shakyamuni, who was born in Kāpilavastu, who went to Gaya and so on – he’s symbolic, historical. Very precious, very good. But the *real* one, is your own nature of the mind, which you have, I have – okay? Everyone has it.

But for you and I, the full function of this Buddha nature is not happening because of so many filters. Many things, like name, culture, education, body. And even more than that, eyes, ears, nose, tongue. Let’s say I’m thinking about cloves – the taste of cloves. That’s my mind thinking, but I’m borrowing the tongue. So there are interpreters – the middle man, the tongue is doing it’s job too.

When you die – not because you’re such a great practitioner – the force of nature will bring about the decline of these interpreters, these middlemen. So you are forced to face reality in the naked state of mind. Especially in Tantric Buddhism, there is the Tibetan Book of the Dead – this is actually my job. I go to these places in Bhutan and Tibet – hospitals, where people die and then I have to sit in front of them, and I have to tell them – *Okay, you are dying. But we all have to die, not just you – don’t think that it is unfair* and so on. We begin like this. Then we say, *as a husband, as a wife, as a father and as a mother, you have done a great job. This is it! Now don’t think about it too much. Relax.* We have this talk. We tell them not to think of their possessions, and stuff like that.

Ideally, a master, or a monk, or a yogi will sit through this, look at the dying person and say *your elements are now dissolving*. We also do it in front of healthy people, that’s what we did the night before. It is also not wrong to do that because you are dying anyway. You can say things like – you can confess, and expose all the bad things that you

have done. Don't keep it in. We call it the shapa – which is to expose it. Exposing is forgiveness – it is not really a Buddhist thing – more appropriate is to understand, and so on. You can expose it mentally. We say things like *you're getting close to the Buddha mind, grab it, take it, don't go astray*. Things like that.

*Question from another participant*

This is very difficult, because you and I will always use the middleman to talk about it. I am using my mouth, you are using your ear. But, like, what we have been doing – one day, through your merit, through your wisdom, a shift happens and you will know that *this is it*. But you will never be able to speak. This is what the doha of the tantra says – you will be like a dumb mute, eating a sweet – you know what it is, but you cannot really say it. Inexpressible, basically. This is not an excuse, by the way.

**Let's take a break.**

Being well, I think is important. It has obviously many different meanings. I don't need to explain at length that being mentally well is utmost important – I'm sure all of you know that. If you're not mentally well, and I don't mean, not being crazy, nuts or a romantic and all that. That could be included too, why not? Just, being well, drinking a cup of tea and really drinking that – really being able to drink that cup of tea, and not getting caught up will all kinds of other things. That's a wealth. The Tibetan word for yogi, is *rnal 'byor*. This is quite a beautiful translation, I've always thought – '*byor* means 'wealth'. Prosperity. '*rnal*' means normal, genuine, as it is, present, unaltered, unfabricated, fresh, uninhabited and therefore elegant, and also, while being elegant, never losing the aspect of outrageousness. That wealth of being in the present, of being in the present moment is

key to wellness. And more than ever, we should pay attention to that wellness, because that is the key.

Actually, it is easier than being well physically. Physically being well is a little difficult, you know? You have to breathe this air – who knows what somebody next to you might be doing to it, you know? (Laughter) We never know. You cannot really control it. You have to wear things, you have to travel. You can't travel completely padded, in a secure situation all the time, because you'll lose your fun. Being able to mentally be well is easier. You just have to get used to this, you need to have the consistency, and the joy to develop that kind of wellness.

The world does not contemplate enough, especially contemplate on this moment. We contemplate too much on the future. Even when we talk about visionary – you hear these talks about being a leader, management, being a visionary. Usually, a visionary is someone who is always thinking about the future isn't it, in reference to the past, which is fine. But, along with that, I think you become much more visionary if you can really collect this wealth of wellness by being in this moment. As I said, when you are drinking a cup of tea, just drink that. When you're brushing your teeth, just do that.

Since I'm a Buddhist, as by now you must have guessed (Laughter) I can't help but talk about Buddhism because this is all I know anyway. The Buddhist teachings can be summarized through three statements: Try not to do harmful things to yourself and to others. On top of that, if you want to do more – try to do good things to yourself, and to others. That's the second one. But good and bad are very relative. We never know, if you meet a martian, you'll have to beat him up as a greeting. If you don't, they may be annoyed. So we don't know good and bad. Fundamentally, the last statement of the Buddha is *know your mind and tame it* because it is all essentialized into knowing your mind. Books, teachers, symbols, chants, prayers, the environment, all can

help. But the main tools and techniques to know your mind is just using what the mind does the best – knowing. That’s what the mind does, the mind knows. We spend so much time knowing other things, the environment, the politics and so on. Why not know the mind?

Knowing the mind is nothing like you think – something exotic, supernatural, colorful, no not at all! You have to have a mind, don’t you? You’re not a piece of stone, are you? Your mind must be, at the moment thinking of something, not thinking of something, not being conscious of something – I don’t know, whatever it does. Just, simply, know that, for a few moments, that is equivalent to the study of many academic years – it’s just that. It’s nothing exotic, nothing religious, nothing dogmatic, nothing moral or ethical, just – even if you’re thinking of something hideous, and something bad – we don’t know that’s what we’re thinking, and you get entangled in that, and that’s when you get into trouble.

Even when you think of something hideous, I’m not saying we should stop it or something. Just know that this is what you were thinking. Just simply knowing when you’re thinking something bad will change the way you think about these things. You may still breathe hard, you may be shaking your hands, shouting, yelling – but – the definition, the function of the so-called hideous mind will change. I can’t think of a really wholesome example, I have something really crude. But this is the only example that I can think of at the moment.

Let’s say that you are peeing. Okay? Suddenly, somebody looks at you from the front! What do you do? You’re still peeing, but there’s a different definition now. A whole new approach to your peeing now! (Laughter) For instance, while you’re peeing, and your cat walk in. Doesn’t matter, does it? It doesn’t know that you’re peeing, and all that paraphernalia. But if your master walks in, then you’re in trouble! Then you will forget a lot of things.

This is what *knowing* does. The moment you know what you are thinking – when you are not knowing but only thinking, that's like peeing. The moment you know, there is knowing – I didn't say you should stop peeing – but the way it will be manifested will be different. That is the key to wellness. A healthy mind, a well mind is confident. That's also compassion, kindness, forgiveness, that's a broad mind, that's visionary. That endeavour of knowing and taming the mind – the third statement of the Buddha – is something that we should pay some attention to.

Other than that, I have nothing much to say – if you have any questions, then I can answer them.

**Q: Talking about the mind – in Buddhism it is said that the mind is beginning-less and endless. I really find it difficult when this topic is really being discussed. In some places it is mentioned that we can't really take the mind back (the expression is beginning-less) so logically this doesn't seem to make sense.**

Okay, remember we talked about this is Bir – I was joking but not really joking? (Laughter) It's unfortunate that the finding of time being relative truth, that time is relative – modern people have attributed this to Einstein. You Indian people should really protest this. Long before Einstein, Shakyamuni Buddha taught that time is relative, it doesn't exist. For a follower of the Buddha, beginning, end, genesis, Armageddon – all! The concept all, what does it mean?

All doesn't really have a meaning. It could be 1, it could be 10, it could be 2, or 100,100 – all, infinite. Very. Beginning. End. Stuff like that – if you really want a practical answer, the beginning is now and the end is now. Together. Yeah, so – this is why, in Buddhist doctrine, the concept of evolution and genesis – *long, long ago, this is what had*

*happened* is not that important. IF you insist, relatively, they will say things like Shakyamuni came 2500 years ago. And that actually is so pertinent a habit of Indians.

Indians are really aren't so good with jotting down the manufacturing date. The Mahabharata, always *long, long ago*. They're not like the Egyptians or the Chinese that carve, or write everything down. This is how Indians like Nagarjuna think. The Egyptians, they carve – we don't carve. But really, who knows whether to trust one or the other. Because the mind of whoever is carving, who knows what state he or she is in, probably drinking too much grape juice! So she could be carving something wrong, so you are stuck with that. At least this kind of *long, long ago* you can't really go wrong! (Laughter)

That's how it used to be. Not so much anymore. I grew up learning everything by heart. Our masters, they used to scold us for leaving it on paper – we were not supposed to make notes! If you make notes, it's like a manifestation of laziness. They say that if you make notes, you already mentally say *I'll do it later*. You have to know everything by now. The tradition of the master speaking and the student listening, one at a time – that also backfired massively – nowadays, there's really know clarity. Sharvaka people say one day, theravadans say something, the Mahayana people say something else. If you hear the tantric people, oh my god, they say completely different things!

But that never was an issue, until Buddhism became the subject of study in places like Oxford. Oxford people, they really want a date, a proof. I'm always arguing with these academics. You know the scientists they always say they need proof. The Buddhist argument is, proof means you are talking about the knower of the proof. Meaning that it is subjective, and it really doesn't work. This is one example. You give two pieces of a stick to a Chinese person and they will use it as a chopstick. You give it to some remote Bhutanese village, they will

use it as kindling, to make fire. Never even think of it as a chopstick! And I'm sure the English, in the 1800s, they would be offended if they had two sticks instead of all those weapon like cutlery pieces – spoons and stuff like that. But that's how it is.

**Q: Rinpoche, we've been speaking of the wellness of the mind. I'm curious about the unwell mind. The mind which you've mentioned in the morning as being a little crazy, or sometimes being a little lunatic. I'm curious on the take on that.**

Very important, this question, I would say because in the process of talking about wellness, we forgot to talk about the unwell mind. I can only give you a Buddhist answer, again. The Buddhist answer for the unwell mind is the mind that is distant from the truth. So let's say you're going to a shopping mall and you buy things as if you're going to live another 1000 years. That's a little bit of an unwell mind. Let's say you are making schedules. Okay, 2019 let's meet in St. Petersburg, so and so date! Little bit of an unwell mind.

The Buddhist answer is this. Should you do it? Yes, make schedules until like, I don't know, 2050! But always keep in mind that these things may not happen. Maybe tonight may not happen, I may not go to the room. This is the last time I may see trees. Look, this is it – you better look at the trees now! That is getting closer to the truth. So the Buddhist concept of the unwell mind depends on how close, or how far you are from the truth.

**So who decides what's the truth?**

Again, primarily, you have to use your own hearing, contemplation and analysis. To have a tool to help you with that, you have the dharma and the teachings. They are all there in that, to provoke you. To really argue

and deconstruct your decisions. That's your study of the *Madhyamika* and all that. I mean that's an important question.

So there are two ways. One way is through hearing the truth, that way you can decide what the truth is. What we call hearing and contemplation. The more important is samadhi – meditation. These three – hearing, contemplation and meditation are like the tools in Buddhism. Amongst themselves, there is a challenge – the hearing people and the contemplators, they get so entangled within that, that they never manage to go into samadhi. Sometimes that happens.

Sometimes, some people go immediately into samadhi and they don't do enough hearing and contemplation which is also dangerous because suddenly, after years and years of meditation, you might still feel like something's wrong – it can be something so small, like a long-lasting pimple on your bottom, or something – then your meditation isn't working! That's when you need contemplation and hearing. These three you need.

**Q: Rinpoche, this was a question from yesterday's group. The question was, if there is no soul – an ever, eternal soul – then what stays and what goes through the Bardo state? What transmigrates?**

Hahahah. Okay. The soul is a new term for Buddhists. This is very technical, again. The Buddhists believe in an imaginary continuity. Again, you have to pay attention to words like imaginary. Forget about the next life, and after death – between yesterday and today, are you the same person? You can't really say that you're the same, or you can't really say different. Let's say you committed a crime yesterday. Today, this different being is going to prison! That's unfair, you understand. If you say you're the same, then no need to change, you know? Don't eat, for instance. You never go hungry, you know? But then there is

an imaginary continuity. That's all there is. That's what the Buddhists would say.

Just like yesterday and today, today and tomorrow – the past life, this life and the next life – these are all imaginary. When I say the word imaginary, I'm sure most of you think that it's not a big deal. No, it's a very big deal. Nightmares are a big deal, you know? This is an important question, I want to elaborate on this a little bit. You must have heard words like nirvana. Samsara? This is how it is.

You are sleeping here right now. On a comfortable bed, a cushion—nothing is happening. You're just sleeping. Then you're having a nightmare. A spider biting you. Before you sleep, there is no spider waiting outside. During your nightmare, there is no spider biting you. After you wake up, it's not like there's a spider that went out of the window. You got that?

But during the nightmare, you go through all the panic. All the anxiety and you cry, and whatever. This is samsara. Nirvana is a name given to a relief. Let's say your friend sees you, that something is wrong and he sees your state, and gets you awake by throwing a bucket of water on you. Your guru, okay? Your guru. You wake up. Then, there's a sense of relief from that nightmare, that's nirvana.

The most important thing that you need to know is that both are fake. The spider is fake, remember? If the spider is fake, how can the absence of a spider be real? So nirvana is also fake. So what is really, what are we really trying to achieve? What is the real nirvana? Let's call it the real nirvana? The bed. The cushion. That's what you need to actualize. So samsara and nirvana are really a game that you play – now you have to finish it, if you want. If you're bothered by spiders that is, and I would say you are. That's what is the samsara-nirvana concept of Buddhism. It's all about basically shifting knowing – knowing the truth.

In the middle of the dream – that the spider is just a dream, you will not panic. That state is called the ‘yogi’ state. It is not real, but you still haven’t woken up yet. Which just means that you still under the conditions. We want you to wake up completely – *parinirvana* they call it. So no spider in the beginning, in the middle, no absence of it later – therefore no relief of the spider. This is what you need to know.

**Q: This was a question from a group earlier. We spoke quite a lot about – sort of an adult concept – what can we do to prepare our children for this path, and also guard their naked mind that they are brought into this world with?**

The second part I didn’t hear.

**So when children come into this world, we all recognize that they are untainted, and with time, they become tainted – for want of a better word. So what can we as parents or people working with children do to prepare them or guard them?**

Actually, I’m not so good at this, but I’ve been contemplating about this recently. Actually, we teachers, we teachers, parents – I think we just need to have that acceptance that we are brainwashing them. You understand what I mean? That’s the fundamental thing – saying *okay, I’m brainwashing them*. Then, if you have that, then you sort of go by the book. There’s many experts on how to talk, and how to educate children – love, compassion, kindness and other such values would be good, but a basic understanding of you influencing them is needed.

As a Buddhist teacher – one of the teacher’s training nowadays, which are fading out – knowing that you are sort of imposing upon them, that this is an imposition. Knowing that they don’t really need this, but they may have told you they need this – and now you’re pompous and are giving them this, all this awareness you need. If you have that then both the parents and the children are safe.

But it's quite difficult – even making tomato soup is difficult, and at least, it has a standard recipe and procedure. Children, they are all different. You know, many children are too padded these days with safety and stuff. I don't know – maybe they need to get bruised and bitten by insects, and stuff like that – to become human – they have to face the world! Girls, for instance – young girls, wow, so much stress! Such as *there's too many choices for lipstick* – that's what they're going to face when they grow up? And now, then the world is not so understanding with gender issues? So many problems. Individually, though, we can create a lot of good things.

**Q: Excuse my ignorance in asking this. But you talked about nirvana right now as a relief from the fake spider. From what I understand is – is nirvana the ultimate relief, or is it something you can experience in your day to day life as well?**

I'll give you two nirvanas – one is the fake one that we usually talk about. Then, there is the one we want – which is the bed, which most of the people don't even think about.

**So nirvana is something one can experience in one's day to day life as well, and not just as the ultimate sense of relief? Is that what it would be? The second question which came from our group discussion yesterday was – nirvana versus moksha – is it the same, or?**

It's different for different things. For instance, the Japanese have the concept of 'satori'. This morning, we talked about how, after 3 minutes of meditation a day, you will not care so much about whether your underwear is ironed or not? That's kind of you know, a little bit of satori there – so in that sense yes, it happens in day to day life.

But as an academic, strictly speaking, then nirvana has a lot of definitions. This is also where both the cause and the result of the

suffering, is stooped. That what nirvana means. That's more technical. More correct. If you want to be more metaphorical, it is the end of obsession. It is a release, liberation.

**But as long as you live, every action will have a cause, everything will have an effect – so how can you really end everything? Because every action will have a cause!**

Very good! So that's why we have been talking about being in the present. The moment you are in the present, you are not being able to cut it – this is already confusing the order and speed of the chain of thoughts. This powerful train coming, this train of habit and you are damaging it's speed and rhythm by being in the present. Already confusing it. Remember we were talking about not poking, leaving it alone – the Tibetan word 'ja' – just leave it alone. The moment you do, you are not charging the battery. This includes a lot of things by the way, it could be both good and bad.

Of course, leave alone the bad things, but also the good things! Just simply leave it alone. Just for three minutes as a practitioner. After a few years, you can do more, and more, and more. So collectively – this is hypothetical okay? – if you can manage to be in the present or leave it alone for 6 hours a day – out of 24 hours, the Mahayana Buddhists will classify you as someone who is about to be a first-bhoomi Bodhisattva. Then so on and so forth – when you can remain there for 24 hours continuously, you are about to finish the tenth-bhoomi Bodhisattva stage and say goodbye to the path. But, I have to remind you that all the other practices like chanting, prayer, are never rejected.

They can only help you – if you don't chant, you'll be doing something else anyway! Those things are skillfully designed to alienate you from certain distractions such as – if you're chanting, you'll be alienated from talking about something bad, because your mouth is busy. Now

if you're sitting straight, that's already retreating you from doing something else.

The whole purpose of the technique is to retreat you, alienate you from the distractions, or being in the present. Even a flower arrangement. Remember? Like a Zen tea ceremony – tea making. I think somebody should come up with several of these. The Indians don't need to learn Japanese tea making – there's several other practices. There's something called – I forgot the name –

**When you are making a halwa, you have to concentrate on doing that for 30-35 minutes, just stirring it –**

Yes, like that. *Orioke*? Probably, if Veer hears about this, he might want to do it. You chew like 100 times, or 50 times or something like that, and all that sitting, and looking at the food, and all that – but you don't have to do that – you can do halwa-making, samadhi – watching it, wearing a dhoti, washing meditation, cooking meditation, brushing teeth meditation. It helps to create a ritual – human beings need ritual. It accentuates things. Let's say you're doing the chapatti making as samadhi – you have to see things like how you hold the chapattis, how you place it on your hand, and then look – and things like that.

How you open your laptop. How you enter your passwords. Stuff like that. And by the way – this is the problem, I should tell you. Suddenly, I have the samadhi in working – placing the computer like that, and bowing. Or the more Indian way – the Indian mercenaries, you know – they work and they touch their heads. All those actions with mindfulness. The problem is, if this technique becomes successful, let's say, 100 disciples are doing this – then in about 50 years, this will become a school. The Buddhist Laptop School or something like that. And then, this school will have a conflict with some other tradition. This is the human problem. Always something like that.

Then, talking about mindfulness – *no, no it is not this way, it is this way*. Stuff like that. Debate amongst the disciples. So we always have to come back to the mindfulness.

**Q: Rinpoche, about guidance based on gender – is there anything specific that men and women individually should focus on to enhance their journey – or does that guidance not exist in the spirit of non-duality?**

There's no specifics – especially in the Mahayana and definitely not in the tantra. Not in the Buddhist – as we spoke yesterday, in the Vimalakirti sutra. But in the Tantra, male represents the means or the method. And the female represents the wisdom. Left represents wisdom – right is method. The female has some sort of a spaciousness, and tolerance. You know? And male is more of attributes – color, shape. That's why there's harmony between these two.

Also, depending on different practices, if you're thinking specifically then – Tara, Tantra, Vajrayogini tantra, Vajravahni Tantra, then you know – I practice some of these Vajrayogini tantra. Especially in the morning. I am always trying – it's not really compulsory, but I have to try – I have to imagine being a woman. It is very important. I have to feel like a woman, act like a woman – it is very important. In this practice, the dedication is *may I always, until all sentient beings are totally enlightened, may I never be reborn as a male*. Tantra, you know, you're talking about shifting everything.

As I said earlier, human culture – Chinese, Indians – the patriarchal societies – they sort of hushed these things up, they don't talk about these much. Even if they do talk, they talk about them in a symbolic way. Yeah. But, as we spoke this morning – the prajnaparamita sutra – the wisdom of it is emptiness. The other name for emptiness – you know, we have it on the gate in Deer Park – anyway, the other name

for emptiness is the ‘mother’. So we know what we are talking about. Yum Chenmo. Yum means mother, chenmo means ‘the great’ – the maha mother. The grand mother. It is the wisdom, the emptiness, that supposedly produces all the Buddhas.

So in the Mahayana, it is the feminine, that gender – has the highest sort of regard, so to speak. But this is also a technique to work with the patriarchal habitual pattern.

**Q: Rinpoche, I just have a simple and practical question. Between two moments of practicing being in the present moment – as a lay practitioner whose mind is not used to accepting that time is relative, and it’s always result-oriented – how does one inspire patience during that in-between period?**

Are you talking about wanting to keep it longer? Is that what you are saying?

**No, one gets lost in the in-between period. So you have to be patient, tell yourself not to worry.**

Ah, yes. Now you’re talking about trusting the simplicity, isn’t it? That’s a difficult one. That’s not going to happen that easily. Try to treat distractions as alarm sounds, if you can. Actually, for people like you and me – beginners and ordinary people – when we are distracted, we realize we are distracted because ‘oh’, it’s a good thing!

In fact, there’s a doha by a mediocre practitioner – not the best, not the worst – sort of small time yogis – it’s a beautiful doha – *I can’t have enough distractions, come on – make me realise that I am not distracted, come on, where are you? Today I feel blank, like I’m in a coma – you, the distractions are not coming. Come on! Because I want to know that I’m distracted!*

Something like that.

**Q: My question is about sadness. Being in the present.**

Same thing – Sadness, joy. Actually easier to be in the present when you are sad. When you are happy it is so difficult, because you are excited. You are much more distracted. Sadness will force you to be in the present! Bad news is much more easier to notice. Good news we always want more!

**Q: I have a similar Question. What is the purpose of despair, hopelessness. What purpose does it serve?**

You can make it like it has a purpose. Like what the Buddhists would say; purpose or not, it is so much to do with your intention. Purpose of these statues can only be if you use it with an intention and action for it to become purposeful. It can be very magical if you know how to use it.

Have you been to Bali? If you go to Bali, the whole place is magical. It is not because of the 7-star spas, as you will see those places in Hawaii or whatever – those places are not magical, they're just nice. Bali is magical because the Hindus there, they do endless pujas. Every corner, every turn you will see a shrine, some sort of an offering, flower, incense. This motivation creates that magic, I think.

So, despair, sadness, they just bother you, torment you and make you feel not good if you do not have the right kind of motivation. With the right motivation, the Buddhists would say, I think there is a term in Buddhism, called the 'genuine heart of sadness'. It a very important wealth or attribute of a Bodhisattva, practitioner, to have some sort of sadness, to really make life full. It will make you feel that you appreciate more – like you can have a friend and think that it is the last time together, you're aware – yes, it has sadness! You know because knowing the truth, goes against the ignorance, the habit and usually they (ignorance and habit) don't like it so it becomes despair.

You have to somehow learn to appreciate the truth, but you don't have to get carried away by sadness and despair because then it becomes a problem as you will get addicted to that.

**Q: What in Buddhism is skillful means and how do we keep shades of self-loathing away from it?**

Skillful means in Buddhism must always have or accompany wisdom, only then it is a skillful mean, otherwise it is just a ritual. It is just a game. If whatever you do, be it elegant, refined, or outrageous, primitive, comb your hair properly, whatever. If it is accompanied with wisdom, in other words, it is done with the intention of taking oneself and others closer to the truth, then it is called skillful means. And that's priceless. But always remember, skillful means is not the end, like the finger, don't look at the finger, look at the moon. Finger is not that important, it is necessary. It is important, as it helps you. Skillful means should not actually become a tradition. Skillful means once applied, it has done its job. But having said that, some skillful means such as sitting straight has been ongoing as it does help because of its function. I've been talking to people here that chances of you being mindful by sitting straight is higher than lying in a hammock with a margarita. (Laughter) That's possible! You can do it! But chances are better sitting straight. Skillful means. If I'm teaching in Mexico with a bunch of rowdy, barhopping youngsters who detest the idea of sitting straight, then I would say yeah let's all lie down in a hammock! And let's mix some drinks, and think that this drink may never reach our stomach because we could die. Stuff like that! That we could do!

Okay. Anyway. Thank you listening to all these things. I hope we have managed to create some sort of curiosity about truth, illusion, life, wellness, not-wellness and all of that. If it happened, it is good because then it has a so called merit and this merit we will dedicate

to everyone including Donald Trump so that he can bluff all the way!  
Completely! Even himself! Also dedicate it to world peace, harmony,  
your own wellness, others' wellness so on so forth.

*Concludes with Samantabhadra's Prayer of Aspiration*



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